

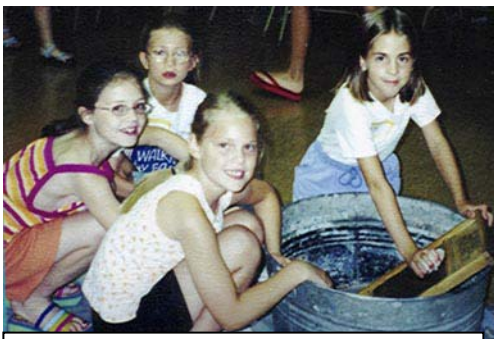
## Sarah Berna- AmeriCorps Summer 2002 Rotator Position

Before beginning my AmeriCorps service I had quite a different outlook on life. Being young meant I had the world in my hands and responsibility held ultimately little consequence. Making a huge difference in anyone else's life during a single summer didn't seem likely. The most unlikely outcome happened, not only did I have an impact on the youth, but also they had a huge impact on me. I never knew or was quite prepared for how much I would care for the children that I mentored.

Despite how much I grew attached to the youth that we served, I found a new level of meaning for the word aggravation. There were many nights after playground that I would come home and rack my brain for ways to get through to a child. Many people listened to my stories and told me to give up on the child all together and just ban him from being around the others. My fellow AmeriCorps members and I agreed that was not an answer that we would accept. After many talks about right and wrong and much discipline the most amazing breakthrough happened, the young child started to listen and at some points was rather enduring and helpful.

When do you know that your experience makes a difference in a child's life? All the time when my fellow members and I would get frustrated, that was when we really had a chance to make an effect. These youth that we would spend our evenings with were in desperate need of an influence. It came to the point that I would go home with a smile on my face and most importantly the children would go home begging us not to leave, I knew that the kids that I spent every evening with were connecting with me.

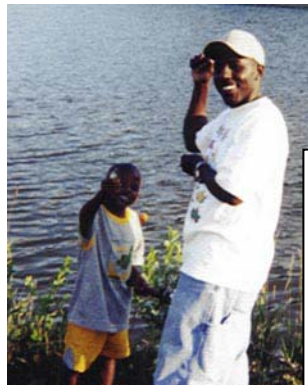
I will take with me more patience, better understanding for those with less opportunity, and most importantly a sense that I can help if only one step at a time. I came into AmeriCorps very naïve and somewhat unprepared for the lesson that I was going to learn whether I liked it or not. I left with more people in my heart and a heightened sense of the human spirit.



I was able to help in many different educational programs over the summer. Here the girls learn what it was like during the Pioneer Days.



Laughter was part of our daily medicine. Everyone tried to make the best of the hot weather, and unpleasant situations we were presented with daily.



Families were invited to our field trips. Incorporating parents into the time we spent with the youth was extremely valuable. Hopefully, this would carry over into their home life.