

Kristopher Breyer- AmeriCorps Summer 2003 Comiskey and Audubon Playgrounds

I have to admit, at the start of AmeriCorps I was worried and nervous, a bit overwhelmed, and more than a little timid. I love working with kids, but I didn't know exactly what I was getting into. I was concerned that I wasn't going to be accepted by the kids I would be helping or that I wouldn't be able to connect with them and gain their trust. But I would come to find in the days and weeks of my 300 hours, a child inside; and I would understand that the best way to connect, gain acceptance, and teach the children, was to become one-a much bigger, bolder, wiser child.



I was fortunate to work with one boy at Audubon. He has some difficulty with concentrating and behavioral problems and is a paraplegic. For three weeks we worked on reading, writing, and having a blast. One day he turned to me and said, "You know Kris, some people just don't get it." It was then that I realized there was a significant breakdown somewhere in the communication lines between children and adults. Working with him was amazing.

I found that children can sometimes be a struggle, especially when in large groups. Comiskey and Audubon playgrounds proved to be extremely exhausting, but absolutely rewarding. As hard as we tried to run the show, in retrospect, I think it was the children who ran us-up, down, and crazy...but it was worth it.

All that worry about connecting and fitting in with the kids and I turned out fine. I realized the importance of kids and their guidance this summer, especially after the government threatened to end this incredible organization. I realized that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose-after many games of four square at Comiskey playground. I found an inner child inside me, as cliché as it sounds, that helped to connect with the kids I was with. I realized that, like I had been told so much in training, you only get out what you put in. And I found that you know exactly how hard you worked on any given day; by how easy sleep comes on any given night.

