

Melissa Riesberg- AmeriCorps Summer 2003

Audubon

Participating in AmeriCorps taught me some incredible lessons, some that I even thought I would never learn. When I signed up I hoped that when I was finished I would know for sure whether or not I really wanted to teach. This was a bit scary for me because I have wanted to teach for as long as I can remember. I could not have asked for a better opportunity to find this reassurance.

I have struggled with patience for a long time; I have not been able to find this “virtue” in my hectic life. I soon figured out and was informed that this would be a major requirement to teach. The opportunity to work on this ability presented itself in great abundance this summer, from Smart Start Baseball, to helping in the summer school classrooms, and to the Audubon and Comiskey playgrounds.



Through face painting and games on the playgrounds such as four square, the kids were able to use teamwork and strategy to solve problems. They also learned patience, cooperation, and fairness in dealing with each other during these activities.

It was on the playgrounds that the children gave me the experience of a lifetime. Where else could I play with kids all day and still know I am making an impact on their lives? We dealt with a variety of situations that always ended up with children receiving positive reinforcement and many times a better alternative to address the situation.



It was moments like these that helped me realize that I would be lost in any career other than teaching. Even though I hope to teach secondary education, I will use the lessons I learned from these children every day. I can finally say that patience is one of my virtues, or at least I'm much closer to it. I also know that I have helped children in many different ways, whether it was advancing their reading ability or just learning how to react to a tough situation on the playground. These life lessons will stay with them forever and this makes me feel as if we have done an amazing thing. These children have taught me how to be a kid again and I think many people would benefit from this feeling and experience.

Kids from the playgrounds on one of the many field trips that we took each Wednesday night.