

## Sarah Berna- AmeriCorps Summer 2003

### Rotator

This summer I served my second and final term with AmeriCorps and I wasn't really sure how this year would be any different. I thought that having been involved in last summer's program I should be able to contribute more than before. What I soon came to realize this summer was that it was not about outdoing myself, but simply about being there. It became obviously clear that sometimes our efforts were reversed when the children went home. However discouraging it was to come back the next day and find the child's attitude had reverted back to defiant, we had to push on to fight the losing battle.



By being in a rotator position, I was able to interact with many of the kids. Each week we all boarded a bus and took trips to visit new places throughout Dubuque.



Where I found it made a difference was not in the constant discipline that was sometimes necessary to keep the children from harming each other and themselves, but more than anything they wanted someone to really listen to them. I was absolutely astounded by the response that I got when, after all else failed, I tried internalizing what the child was trying to communicate to me. When the child felt treated as an equal and an important individual, they would confide in me, clam down and listen to reason, and quite simply open up and show me how truly precious and impressionable they can be.

I didn't realize in all my efforts to have a positive effect of the children, what effect they were having on me. As I was growing up I barely realized what a small part of the world I occupied, but was content and self-absorbed. I grew up lacking nothing and had parents that gave me every opportunity and all the love that I needed to grow up to be a contributing member of society. And no matter how difficult the children were, or how much inattentive parents hurt our efforts, I owed the community in which I grew up some reciprocity. From this summer's experience I will always carry with me that need to any community that I live in.

