

## My Thoughts on Service by Christine McDermott, 2<sup>nd</sup> year AmeriCorps member

Can you imagine a whole generation coming out in throngs to solve the epidemics of the world? No more homeless, no one going to bed hungry, no more loneliness. I can imagine this and more because of my service with *Pass It Along*. Through this organization I have seen dozens of youth gathering together for one cause. Whether it be sleeping in a box to increase awareness of local homelessness, going down to Newark to feed hundreds of hungry men women and children, or even just spending some time with an elderly resident at an assisted living facility. Every act of kindness brings us one step closer to solving the world's problems.

*Pass It Along* has tapped into our youth's innate desire for service and expanded their social consciousness. We have created a lifelong commitment to service in our youth volunteers. I am living proof of this lifelong commitment. After serving with *Pass It Along* for more than seven years I am now serving full time with the organization as a Citizen Action Americorps member.

In the beginning I just enjoyed the service, but at sixteen I was asked to serve in the very first *Pass It Along* Youth Council. I had been a very active member of the newly formed group, having participated in programs on a weekly basis. So I decided to join the Youth Council to better understand the organization I was serving with. I had already been awakened by the idea of service and wanted to do as much as I could to help. However, it was not until I became a member of the council that realized that I could spread service beyond myself. With the council I helped to plan the first Youth Conference at which I saw first hand that my peers were also being awakened by this change in service.

My experience with *Pass It Along* had encouraged me to continue serving in various organizations in college and after college I went on to join the Americorps National Civilian Community Corps. With Americorps NCCC\* I was able to travel around the country and participate in service work outside of my circle of comfort. While volunteering in Louisiana, Montana, and California I was able to see many more young people like myself who believe that there was something we can do to change the problems of the world. We could get out there ourselves and build houses for the homeless, teach a struggling child, even stop forest fires out west from spreading.

My generation has gone past volunteerism to activism. *Pass It Along* has taught many of us that change is not only on its way - it is here now. *Pass It Along* understands how to reach out to an untapped willing resource, the youth. With each youth that serves with us we know we have awakened another young mind to serve. We place the youths in situations where they do not only see the work; they feel the frustrations of those in need. This first hand account changes the attitude and lifestyle of our volunteers. We have been able to foster a culture change in service which can be duplicated in any area of our country and our world.