



## Michigan Community Service Commission

### Michigan's AmeriCorps Member of the Month – August 2013

Since beginning her service in November 2012 as a full-time Huron Pines AmeriCorps member, Helen-Ann Prince has demonstrated that she knows how to “get things done!” The Huron Pines AmeriCorps program focuses on environmental stewardship and helps strengthen rural Northeast Michigan and our Great Lakes through habitat restoration and developing conservation services. Placed at the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, Helen-Ann is steeped in place-based environmental education projects, otherwise known as ‘hands-on feet-wet’ education.

The Initiative has hosted AmeriCorps members for the last four years in the role of Education Coordinator. The Education Coordinator is principally responsible for supporting new and existing place-based education and environmental stewardship service projects with schools. Helen-Ann supports a variety of school projects including water quality monitoring, habitat restoration, invasive species management, recycling programs and community gardens with K-12 students. There are currently 32 schools and 3,406 students involved in the Initiative.



Helen-Ann was well poised to succeed in this position. As a Northeastern Michigan native, she has been immersed in conservation projects for decades. She was a very active member in the Alcona High School FFA Chapter and 4-H. She went on to graduate from Lake Superior State University and has spent several summers working outside, including a position with the U.S. Forest Service on the Huron-Manistee National Forest and with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at the Harrisville State Park.

“I wanted to join AmeriCorps so I could make a difference in Northeast Michigan by educating area youth and community members on the importance of our natural resources and the role they play in our environment,” Helen-Ann stated. “My year of service will give me the necessary skills, experience and training needed to broaden my horizon.”

One especially fascinating project known as the ‘Bat Cave’ is an effort to protect rare bats. Bats were found hibernating in old mining tunnels, a remnant of the former Rockport Quarry in Alpena County. The bat species discovered included little brown, big

brown, and tri-colored bats. Tri-colored bats are listed on the state's threatened species list. A project was then set in motion to conserve the bats' habitat and ensure public safety at the site.

Helen-Ann is coordinating with Alpena area students to promote conservation and wildlife habitat restoration by helping to protect the hibernacula with support from the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 4-H Youth Programs, and the Organization for Bat Conservation. Welding students are making specially designed steel gate structures to protect the hibernacula. These gates will protect the bats' habitat by safely excluding the public from accessing these dangerous tunnels while enabling the bats to come and go freely. Woodshop students are making summer bat habitat houses to put at the park. This will help provide additional habitat for bats at the recreation area. Helen-Ann's service is critical in keeping this project in motion and coordinating between all the partners.

According to Huron Pines program staff, "Helen-Ann exemplifies the spirit of service through her positive attitude, passion for conservation, and dedication to students. Her coordination with educators, students, and conservation partners is expanding the classroom beyond the traditional walls into the community for real-world, high-impact projects. Through the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program, our organization is able to provide support to great initiatives, like the Bat Cave project, by placing AmeriCorps members with partner conservation organizations."

For more information about the Huron Pines AmeriCorps program, contact program director Jennie Jandron at [jennie@huronpines.org](mailto:jennie@huronpines.org) or visit [www.huronpines.org](http://www.huronpines.org). For more information about AmeriCorps, visit [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov).