# OAKLAND UNIVERSITY™

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## AmeriCorps program ends with celebration

*By **Rebecca Wyatt**, OU Web Writer*

AmeriCorps commemorated 10 years of community service with a farewell celebration Nov. 12.

Former OU AmeriCorps members from around the country came together to reflect on accomplishments and motivate each other to continue the work of AmeriCorps. The members were joined by representatives from AmeriCorps sites, members of the Michigan Community Service Commission, OU staff and area children involved with AmeriCorps programs.

AmeriCorps provided education enrichment, conflict resolution and other community service projects to Pontiac churches, schools, community centers and residents in need.

Due to declining funding sources, OU closed its AmeriCorps chapter in August, but organized the festivities to reunite the students and celebrate a decade of service to the community.

Jason Kinley, who served with AmeriCorps from 2001-2002, flew in from Spokane, Wash., for the event.

"I wanted to be here to support the program and see the people," he said.

Currently a gym teacher at a private school, Kinley said a lot of what he learned through AmeriCorps is valuable to him today, with one of the biggest lessons being how to do a lot with a little.

Kinley said his best memories of AmeriCorps are the kids who not only overcame economic misfortunes but also physical disabilities.

Kristin Howland, who worked with AmeriCorps in 2002-2003, also enjoyed spending time with the kids, including field trips to the Detroit Science Center and the overnight camps.

"I love to work with children, and AmeriCorps was a noble program," she said. "It was work, but it wasn't."

Howland also enjoyed working with other AmeriCorps members on a Habitat for Humanity project   and said the experience of meeting the family that would live in the house was a bonding experience for the group.

Kyle Caldwell, former Michigan Community Service Commission director and president and CEO of ConnectMichigan Alliance, addressed the group and said while the program is gone, it has left a legacy.

"The legacy is not that we have served and the service is done, but we have served and the service continues," Caldwell said.

Over the past decade, AmeriCorps' 441 members served more than 30,000 children at 32 sites in the Pontiac community.

"These students have been changed forever by this program," said Vice President of Academic Affairs Mary Beth Snyder.

One former AmeriCorps member, Lenny Compton, grew up in the Pontiac area and decided to give back through AmeriCorps.

After starting at OU, Compton suffered some setbacks in his life and said AmeriCorps helped save him.

"I had another opportunity at life again," Compton said. "We were helping the world, one child at a time, and that brought a smile to my face and pumped new blood into my life."

President George W. Bush recognized Compton for his efforts with AmeriCorps and Compton was a guest of the president and first lady at the 2003 State of the Union address in Washington, D.C. He also spent time with legislators demonstrating the value of the program.

Compton stressed to the group how important it was to continue the work they started in AmeriCorps.

"As a part of AmeriCorps, you have a light in you," he said. "It doesn't stop."

Although the AmeriCorps program is ending, there are still OU students who want to share their time and talent with the community. The Center for Student Activities is one department on campus that is working to provide community service opportunities to students. For more information, visit the Volunteer Opportunities page on the CSA Web site.

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