



Thursday, June 7, 2001

OU to host Michigan AmeriCorps members

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

More than 300 **AmeriCorps** members from around the state will come to Oakland University June 8 and 9 to participate in the Michigan AmeriCorps Signature Service Project.

The project is an annual event in which AmeriCorps members visit a selected area to perform a day of community service. In previous years, the group has worked in Detroit, Flint and the Muskegon area. Pontiac is this year's selected site.

Michigan AmeriCorps members will stay on OU's campus in Vandenberg Hall and use the Oakland Center for training sessions.

Members will spend the first day in training and activities to become acquainted with each other. They also will learn about Pontiac's history and background. On the second day, members will be transported to Pontiac where they will work from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at various community centers to plant flowers, paint, collect trash, renovate playgrounds and help beautify the area.

Lenny Compton, an OU junior and Elementary Education major, joined Oakland University AmeriCorps last October. As a Pontiac native, Compton said this weekend's volunteer work would be extra satisfying.

"I love giving back to the community," he said. "And I live in Pontiac, so it will be great to help redevelop the area so the youth there can have the same or even better opportunities than I had while growing up. This will be my first project, but it won't be my last."

Compton says the most valuable aspect of AmeriCorps is working with youth. He related a story in which he worked with a juvenile who had repeatedly been expelled from school.

"I sat down with him and had a man-to-man talk," Compton said. "He didn't have a solid male figure in his life. I told him he had to work hard to overcome his obstacles. He went through a positive change after that talk.

"AmeriCorps helped give me that special training on how to correctly mentor different types of children. I've learned how to inspire the kids and talk to the parents. That's something you can't always get in other kinds of volunteer programs."

AmeriCorps is the national domestic Peace Corps, which helps provide community service needs and mentoring for children. In exchange for their services, AmeriCorps members receive education awards to help finance college or pay back student loans. The Oakland University AmeriCorps group has 38 members.

Non-AmeriCorps members are welcome to participate in the Signature Service Project on Saturday, June 9. For more information, contact Carol Anne Ketelsen, AmeriCorps Oakland Program Director, (248) 370-3216.

SUMMARY

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