



GETTING THINGS DONE

A COLLABORATION OF THE 2015 RURAL CAP VISTAS

WELCOME TO THE RURAL CAP VISTA FAMILY!

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This year as Alaskans across the state came together to serve on Global Youth Service Day (GYSD), I was starting my new adventure as the Rural CAP VISTA Leader. While youth volunteers from Juneau high schools worked with organizations such as Glory Hole, AWARE and SAGA, Rural CAP AmeriCorps VISTA team (a.k.a. the Anti-Poverty Ninja Squad), packed our bags and headed down to Kasilof, AK to support our rural VISTA, Ally Bril. We were on our way to help the Ionian community build high tunnels in their greenhouses and to assist with their Annual Sea Weed Harvest.

In the two days we spent there, we bonded while working alongside the people of Ionia and over their delicious food and company. We learned about each other through stories of our past experiences and sharing the hope and excitement of what the future will bring. Ionia created the perfect setting. It combined our past and future while helping us stay in the moment. The clarity and peace of mind that is so apparent in community helped bring us together not only as a team but also as a family— the Rural CAP AmeriCorps VISTA family. For me, it is the best welcome I could have ever asked for and I am thrilled to be onboard, looking forward to working along side my VISTA to eliminate poverty in Alaska! As for the tales of our GYSD adventures I can go on and on, but I think I'll let the VISTAs tell you all about it.

- Anna Boyko, VISTA Leader



KC and Anna hard at work moving freshly dug up dirt to the greenhouse.

“It was an honor to help out with the activities, such as shoveling compost, helping to prepare the soil for spring planting. You can imagine our surprise to realize after working in the compost, that the “honey buckets” had an essential role in compost! Gives new meaning to the term what goes around, comes around.

- KC McAuliffe

“ In a time where society is always on the go, Ionia is a place where you are removed from the everyday hustle and bustle and the typical stresses that are prevalent in modern society. Contemporary society places immense pressure and isolation on the individual, and Ionia shelters individuals and families from winds of that blow.”

-Anna Wong

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY: VISTA STYLE

HIGH TUNNELS, MACRONUTRIENT EATING & HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

By Anna Wong, Resource Basket Vista

On April 20-21, 2015 our VISTA leader Anna Boyko, along with Rural CAP VISTAs participated in the AmeriCorps VISTA service project for Global Youth Service Day. On Monday we traveled to Ionia, which is located in the South Central portion of Alaska in the Kenai Peninsula. We were presented with lunch upon arrival and quickly learned about the significance of food and healthy eating to the people of Ionia. They cook utilizing a macrobiotic diet, which is a dietary regimen which involves eating grains as a

staple food, supplemented with other foods such as local vegetables, and avoiding the use of highly processed or refined foods and most animal products. Ionia has expanded their macrobiotic knowledge through teaching classes to educate others the benefits and methods of macrobiotic cooking.



grounds from all over the world and create such a welcoming and unified community. The minute you step into the hand-built community center you feel at home and at ease. There is an endearing sense of calm and togetherness you feel throughout Ionia.

Our first day in Ionia we assisted in the high tunnels (green houses) mixing soil and compost and preparing beds for growing vegetables and grains. Everyone in the community volunteered to help; from pushing cartloads of dirt through two foot deep ruts, to planting seeds, hauling wood chips, to digging trenches. While Ionia has been thriving for over twenty years- they still have huge plans for the future. They hope to be completely self-sufficient and are in the works of completing their barn project to then move on to growing and harvesting their own grain. They are working on cultivating the soil as well so they are able to grow their own root vegetables. They currently house two green houses and a vegetable garden on the property and looking to expand their produce production.



KC McAuliffe, Elder Mentor Vista



Christy McDonald, ANTHC Vista



Anna Wong, Resource Basket

THE MAGIC OF IONIA

By Ally Bril, Ionia Inc. Vista

25 ago, a disparate group of individuals experiencing mental illnesses along with their families, gathered in Anchorage hoping to find a common solution to their common problems. Paying a \$300 land down payment for a raw piece of spruce forest in Alaska, began their story..

Fast forward to present day, Ionia has grown to become an eco-village located on 200 acres of spruce forest in Kasilof. It is a family oriented, self-help community where many people now come to stay to learn macro-nutrient-based cooking, organic gardening, natural building, community or just to be inspired.

Ionia is figuring out collected approaches to the pressing questions of preventative health care, transportation, financial comfort, companionship, sustainable employment and housing. Read more about the tools they use in the Spring 2015 "Only in Alaska" VISTA Newsletter

"Ionia - where common sense comes alive."

- Ionia Mission



Top L: Christy, Nick & KC; Top R: Anna Wong; Bottom L : Ally, & KC; Bottom R: Anna Boyko

BONDING OVER SEA WEED

By Christy McDonald, ANTHC Vista

I am the only VISTA member located at my host site, so I do not get to see fellow members very often. This is why service projects are an important part of the service year. The service project to Ionia provided us a chance to come together and learn as a team. It gave us all an opportunity to step out of our host site bubbles and bond over some service and some seaweed. It is important for members to bond, because we are the only ones that know what each other are dealing with. A year of service can be hard and it helps to have a group to turn to when you have questions about applying for food stamps, or the AmeriCorps insurance, or living on a budget in a place that costs a lot. And with a group of people from different backgrounds and experiences the best way to bond might just be to have them work together and freeze their hands numb while hanging seaweed up to dry.

Ionia acted as a great bonding experience for all Rural CAP members. For some of us the highlights involved meeting and getting to know each other for the first time, for others it was eating vegan/macrobiotic diets for the first time and most of us were hanging seaweed for the first time as well. These new experiences we shared as a team has bonded us through our service. Our service year's is about supporting our organizations though capacity building to end poverty, but another part of our years is to enjoy new experiences as we serve and create a strong network with other people who want to make change happen.

Reflections

“As we were leaving Ionia I looked around at the amazing beauty that surrounded us and saw some of the contrasts of the first days 30 years ago – with teepees still in use, contrasted with the magnificent structures that were built utilizing the wood on their property sweat equity and their own sawmill. It is empowering to see how a group of people came together, had a dream for a better life and did something about it. They are a living, breathing, thriving example of how it can be done. Thank you Ionia for opening our eyes and our hearts.”

-KC Mcauliffe

“As the day neared to an end we finished our trip with a steaming bowl of stew made from tempeh and vegetables. Goodbyes were said and we headed off to Kenai for our flight back to Anchorage. We all ended up falling asleep on the car ride physically exhausted, but mentally renewed after our stay in Ionia.”

-Anna Wong

“It was really nice to go in and get my hands dirty for a few days after working in an office. Also, who knew seaweed could taste so good!”

- Nick Mauro

For more information about Ionia, Inc, visit their website: <http://www.ionia.org/>
For a copy of the 'Only in Alaska' VISTA Newsletter please email: aboyko@ruralcap.com

Thank You...

..to the people of Ionia for welcoming us to the community and allowing us to learn some much from you. I would also like to thank all of my amazing VISTAs for your not only your contributions to the newsletter but also for everything that you do. You are truly inspiring!!

