

Neighborhood House AmeriCorps 2016-2017

Member: Joe Donohoe

Site: Seola Gardens Youth Tutoring and Resource Center

Joe serves the Seola Gardens community in Seattle, Washington providing support to an after school program that supports low income K-12th grade students. His work this year will focus on working with students by assisting with homework, planning and implementing engaging project-based learning activities and working to create stronger community partnerships.

Let's learn more about Joe...

Q: Where are you from?

Joe: Salt Lake City, Utah

Q: What are your hobbies/interests?

Joe: Many of my interests are active ones. I enjoy camping and hiking, surfing (yes, it's possible up here!), skiing, and playing pickup basketball. There is so much awesome natural beauty in the Pacific Northwest that I try to get out of Seattle on the weekends and into the outdoors as much as possible. I'm also a proud Husky alumni and like to watch as many UW sporting events as I can!



Q: What made you choose to become an AmeriCorps member?

Joe: I chose to be an AmeriCorps member for two main reasons. The first is that I wanted to find fulfilling work that I looked forward to doing every day, and getting to spend time with the NH Youth Tutoring Center students in Seola Gardens definitely fits the bill! I love seeing new concepts click for them when we're working on challenging homework, learning new things from my students, and even just chatting about their days. The other reason I chose to volunteer is that I would like to become a high school science teacher, and I'm picking up lots of education and classroom management skills every day.

Q: What are you looking for most this year?

Joe: This year, I want to form strong connections with my students. I'm excited to find out what they do in each of the next steps in their educational journeys. I want them to know that they always have myself and my coworkers (AmeriCorps member Yvonne Alvarez and NH Supervisor Ashley Rundell) in their corners, rooting for them and supporting them every step of the way. If we can improve their grades, that's a double bonus, but I really want them to know that we care about them, and care about us in return.

Q: What have you enjoyed most so far about your service term?

Joe: I really enjoy working with Yvonne and Ashley every day. The three of us get along and communicate with each other very well. Each day we share some good laughs about funny things our students have done or said, and then we roll our sleeves up and get to work on planning for the next week and improving the program every single day. I appreciate that we've done a good job of creating a welcoming environment for students, because it seems that the kids and teens really look forward to coming in every day.

Q: What has been most challenging?

Joe: The first month or two of this new position have come with a very steep learning curve for me. It's been my first formal experience with tutoring, teaching, or classroom management. Working with two other adults to keep a classroom of 20-25 schoolchildren or teens on task is definitely a new and serious challenge for me. It was a bit sink-or-swim at first, but I'm happy to say that with the support of Ashley and Yvonne I've definitely been getting the hang of classroom facilitation and been able to find teachable moments almost every day.

Q: Anything else you want people to know?

Joe: I really want people to know just how important it is to be personally engaged with children and teens as they navigate their educational challenges. Whether they are your own children, nieces and nephews, neighbors, or you're volunteering somewhere, every one of them can benefit from having more people take a specific interest in their lives and educations. Take the time to find out what they're interested in, what they're struggling with, ways that you can help them, and sometimes just places where you can agree with them that things are tough. A little bit of caring and personalized attention goes a long way!