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Got a Minute with Julianne Johnson

AmeriCorps volunteer at Carolina Land Conservancy

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Age: 29

Question: Why did you decide to become an AmeriCorps volunteer at Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy?

Answer: After college I took a job that I thought was going to be temporary. It turned into five years. It was a for-profit position and something I never wanted to do. Through all of my working years, I found places to volunteer, but I wanted a chance to volunteer exclusively or serve exclusively for something that I am passionate about. AmeriCorp is the perfect place to do that.



Q: What process did you go through to become an AmeriCorps volunteer?

A: Through the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy Web site, I found the AmeriCorp positions listed. You apply for the positions that you are specifically interested in. It's a very extensive application.

Q: If somebody wanted to be an AmeriCorps volunteer, what would you tell him or her?

A: I would tell them — do it. The rewards of serving in AmeriCorps are incredible. Not only have I met and worked with so many inspiring volunteers, my position also gives me the personal satisfaction of having contributed in some way to permanently protected lands in Western North Carolina. I can't imagine a more gratifying experience.

I have gained such an education in conservation work.

Q: What was it about a land conservancy that interested you?

A: I have always had a strong concern for the environment and environmental issues. Living in Oregon on the Oregon coast (where I worked before AmeriCorps), I saw a lot of deforestation first hand. It was very devastating. When I found this position, I knew it was a natural fit for me and my interests and helping to protect the environment.

Q: How long have you served in the position?

A: The position started Sept. 1. It is 11 months, so I will work here until July 31. I am very strongly considering doing a second year here in this same position. You can serve up to two AmeriCorps terms, and I feel I will benefit from doing that.

Q: What is it about Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy that you have embraced?

A: The people here are amazing. The staff and the volunteers are very inspiring in their dedication to protecting the land. There is nothing better than coming to the office knowing this is what we are all here for. We have such camaraderie. It is something that I think really matters. It is probably the most important work I have been involved in.

Q: What are your job duties?

A: I am the volunteer program associate. In a nutshell, I am responsible for volunteer recruitment, placement and recognition. I conduct volunteer interviews and orientations in order to find the best fit for volunteers. I also take every chance I get to work side by side with volunteers in stewardship and outreach activities.

Q: What do you find beautiful about the land in Western North Carolina?

A: The beauty here is overwhelming. To be honest, I had not been here before I moved from Oregon. I thought that I would miss the ocean. I found it was nothing to be concerned about because the mountains, the forests, all of the places that I have been have been beautiful and absolutely worth protecting.

Q: Is AmeriCorps a valuable program and something worth continuing?

A: Absolutely. It provides you with an amazing education. I don't think I would have had such a hands-on experience otherwise. It was a growing experience.

Q: What do you want to do when your AmeriCorps service ends?

A: I intend to stay in this area and hopefully work in land conservation in some form. I would love to work with a land trust.

— Interview by James Shea/Photo by Mike Dirks

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