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Celebrating volunteers for National AmeriCorps Week

May 10 through 16 is National AmeriCorps Week, which means it is time to celebrate the Oregonians who have volunteered their time to help others in their communities.

DHS participates with AmeriCorps through HOPE's program in which volunteers bring activities aimed at preventing risky behaviors to kids in Oregon communities.

Over the past 13 years, 260 AmeriCorps volunteers have touched the lives of more than a quarter million youth.

This year 17 AmeriCorps HOPE (Healthy Options through Prevention and Education) members are working from Astoria to Bend, from Portland to Medford and places in between. Here are just three of the program's superstar volunteers:

- Audrey Sweet serves in Woodburn School District, working with middle school and high school youth in positive youth development activities and pregnancy and drug abuse prevention education.
- Devin VansCoy serves with the statewide STARS program (Students Today Aren't Ready for Sex), training high school teen leaders to deliver the abstinence-focused curriculum to 6th-graders across Oregon.

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- Angela Giandomenico is the team leader for the AmeriCorps HOPE team, supporting all the members, coordinating team events and connecting members and program staff. She recently led a four-month "Semester of Service" project that brought together high school students from Willamette Academy and Oregon School for the Deaf. The students jointly planned and delivered three community service projects in Marion County celebrating Martin Luther King Day, Cesar Chavez Day, and Global Youth Services Day.

The Serve America Act, which Congress passed and President Obama signed earlier this year, is expected to increase the current 75,000 AmeriCorps members serving nationwide each year to 250,000 by 2017.

In Oregon, DHS's AmeriCorps HOPE program has applied for funding to increase from 17 full-time members to 22 beginning in September 2009. Members serve for an 11-month term.

You can learn more about AmeriCorps HOPE on the DHS Web site:
www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/teens/americorps/.