

AmeriCorps mentors make a difference

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By Dr. Heather Biola - Kump Corner , Inter-Mountain

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Kump Education Center is very fortunate that AmeriCorps on the Frontline and VISTA have provided National Service members to help with STREAM and other programs.

We have two AmeriCorps mentors, Steven Carpenter and Jeanne Johnson, who work with students in the public schools and one VISTA member, Jill Fisher, who supports our programs by seeking funding, planning special events and organizing records.

Mentor Jeanne Johnson said, "There is something very nurturing about reading with a child. It is amazing that spending 30 minutes a week (one-on-one) can make such a difference in their reading fluency and comprehension. Time used to mentor a child is time well spent!"

Jill Zurbuch, a counselor at Elkins Middle School, said Ms. Johnson is "almost like a saint." She tries to bring out the best in each student, and she makes learning fun.

The limericks written by students of Steven Carpenter were featured in this column two weeks ago. They are good evidence that Mr. Carpenter understands how to engage students in active learning. He also provides avuncular advice for guys who make foolish choices and try to get around the system.

VISTA member Jill Fisher came on board in November - just in time for the fall fundraising season.

She created a spreadsheet to help evaluate the various fundraising efforts Kump Education Center has employed.

Through the winter months Ms. Fisher has engaged in various service activities, but she has focused on planning special events for the STREAM Program.

The acronym STREAM: Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, & Math represents a program designed to help students in the STEM subjects.

Students develop nonfiction reading skills and personal artistic talent to support science and math learning and career exploration.

Ms. Fisher brings together both science and art. She has graduate level schooling and work experience in environmental science, and she runs her own pottery business.

She also has many friends who share her interests in natural science and the arts. One of these friends is the excellent local naturalist, Rodney Bartgis, who will be a guest speaker for the STREAM students.

Ms. Fisher is also working with Principal Shanna Parlock at Elkins Middle School to plan a STREAM fieldtrip to the Kump Education Center for water monitoring and a stop at the Elkins Water Department for career exploration.