



March 25, 2011

Celebrating 25 Years!!



Denise Haynes with Mickey Kantor in 1998



Denise is now the Program Coordinator for the Corps' Youthbuild, Brownfields and CA Science Center programs

1. When were you in the Corps and for how long?

I came into the Corps in November of '97 and was a member of Session 117. When I first came to the Corps, I had dropped out of the 12th grade and was looking to finish school and get my diploma. In the program, I alternated between school and work for about a year and a half, and then got my diploma June of 1999. When I wasn't in school I would work as a driver for our Young Adult Corps program's graffiti crew, and at the time I was the only female in the whole group. We used to work in Council District 15. Every morning we would pressure wash the streets and paint over any visible graffiti that homeowners and businesses wanted removed. When I graduated I applied to be Noel's Education Assistant and was hired. So I started with the Corps doing assistant work, driving, filing and tracking participants for the education department. I would eventually be promoted to "Education Specialist," "Full-time Intake Specialist," "Program Associate" and my current position, "Program Coordinator."

2. Please tell us about your life now, both professionally and personally.

Personally, I'm graduating from college this June with a Bachelors of Science in Psychology. I studied Psychology because I wanted to know more about thought processes so that I could help people more effectively and have a better understanding of who I am and why I went through some of the things that I did. I also have a brother who is mentally ill that I help care for. Getting my degree has been a long journey and I'm thankful that in 2011 I'm done. There were times when I wanted to give up but I knew that it was important to finish and that my mom – who passed just 3 years ago – would have wanted to see me become the first person in our family to graduate from college. When my mom changed her life

for the better that gave me the strength and focus to finish my degree, and I'm so proud to say that in June I'll finally have it! I'm also working on a new project in my life, where I am going to have the opportunity to give back to others. I am looking forward to bigger and better things come 2012. Giving back and helping people is a personal mission of mine. I think a lot of people paved the way for me and gave me the help and encouragement I needed to get to where I am now, so it's important to me to pay the way for others.

I also go to church and love to sing. Music is something that I'm very passionate about. I don't want to be a singer but singing in the church is important to me. I'm also a very sociable person and make sure to spend time hanging out with my family and friends.

Professionally, I'm currently a Program Coordinator for the Corps' Youthbuild, Brownfields and CA Science Center programs. I was promoted to the position after being a "Program Associate" with Youthbuild, and am now responsible for recruiting, setting up trainings, networking with agencies on our advisory board, making purchases, prescreening corpsmembers and making sure that all employees are in compliance.

3. How did the Corps influence who you are and what you are doing currently?

I'm so thankful for the Corps. I always wonder: if my siblings hadn't told me about it, where would I be now? Would I have even gotten my diploma? There was a point where my life stopped mattering to me – I just didn't care anymore. The Corps changed that and gave me the sense that there are people out there that do care about me and were willing to support me and provide me with the encouragement and motivation that I just wasn't getting enough of at home. The staff helped bring out the passion and talent that was always there but just didn't have a chance to develop and express itself.

The Corps pushed me to continue school, get my diploma and work towards getting my college degree. It also really helped me develop professionally by allowing me to take initiative and bring new and fresh ideas to the vocational department. I've continued to work with the Corps because I love seeing the new participants come in, set goals and be put in touch with the resources and encouragement necessary to create new opportunities for themselves. Where they sit, I sat before. I was looking for that encouragement, and when they gave it to me the Corps got to see me grow and change my life. The power of that experience really helped bring out my passion for helping others – someone helped me so I just want to pay it forward.

4. Is there anything particularly memorable about the Corps that you would like to share?

My strongest memory is probably of my first time being a speaker at the Russell Kantor Scholarship Luncheon. I was asked to share the history of my life – where I'd been and where I was going. I was so nervous because I shared a lot in that speech and didn't know what people were going to think of me after hearing it. Would they still accept me? Before I gave it one of the board members told me "Just find one person in the audience that you know and focus on them; pretend that you're only speaking to them." I was still nervous but I took that advice to heart. I stood in front of everyone and shared my story and a few tears, and people in the audience shared some tears with me. After the audience's reaction and all the people that came up to me afterwards and thanked me for sharing my story, I finally felt like I belonged. I realized that nobody cared about my background and weren't going to judge me for it.

When I was a corpsmember I also remember really admiring Bo. He oversaw the graffiti crews when I was in the program and made sure that we had everything that we needed. I admired him for who he was and for always making sure that we had all the necessary tools and resources to do our job.

Welcoming all Staff to Join ETO

Mona Khalil, the Corps' Quality Assurance Coordinator, was invited by Social Solutions to lead an informational webinar about data and performance management through Efforts to Outcomes (ETO™) software! This national webinar, *Innovative Practices for Youth and Workforce Development with Los Angeles Conservation Corps* will take place on Thursday, March 31, 2011 at 12pm. Space is limited, so please [register here](#) to participate.

Young Adult Corps

This Saturday, March 26th, in honor of Cesar Chavez Day, Carlos Campero from ELA will lead a campus beautification project at Eastmont Intermediate School in Montebello with volunteers from Starbucks and the school community. Volunteers will plant trees and shrubs, clean various areas around campus and spruce up the entrance and library areas to provide a nice learning environment for the students. The project will take place, rain or shine, so look out for photos in next week's update.

ELA crews continued work on the El Cariso Smart Garden at EL Cariso Park in Sylmar. Crews are working with Los Angeles Parks and Recreation and the garden should be completed in three weeks.



El Cariso Smart Garden