



# NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release  
January 2010**

## **Energy Express program shows tremendous impact on children throughout the state**

**West Virginia** – Children throughout West Virginia increased their reading scores and received two nutritious meals each day this past summer thanks to the Energy Express AmeriCorps program.

The summer reading and nutrition program targets low-income and rural West Virginia children with a focus on reading, writing and art. The program also provides nearly 600 college students who serve as AmeriCorps members with the opportunity to take responsibility, be a positive role model, learn valuable skills and make a difference in someone's life – all while serving the community.

The 3,052 children benefiting from the six-week summer program showed significant increases in letter-word identification, reading fluency, passage comprehension and broad reading. Approximately 72 percent of the children maintained or increased these skills. The average child gained 5 months in broad reading achievement.

Energy Express had more than 4,515 volunteers at 83 sites in 41 counties in West Virginia. Of those volunteers, more than 72,400 volunteer hours were contributed as a whole, with an average of 872 hours by 54 volunteers at each site. Children served by the program received 168,258 nutritious meals and 21,312 take-home books. In addition, AmeriCorps members who completed the summer of service showed an increase in their personal efficacy, knowledge of children's learning and knowledge of volunteer management strategies.

Energy Express earned three distinguished awards in 2009. The program was selected as one of three recipients of the Excellence in Summer Learning Award from the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University. More than 80 programs were nominated for the award. Recipients are summer programs that are recognized for their excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for young people.

“Energy Express stands out as an outstanding summer learning program,” Ron Fairchild, executive director of the National Center for Summer Learning, said. “This program is a perfect example of the kind of educational innovation that closes the achievement gap.”

Energy Express was also one of five recipients of the Annie E. Casey Family Strengthening Award, which is a collaboration between the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National 4-H Council. Recipients of the Annie E. Casey award are selected for their ability to improve outcomes for rural and disadvantaged families. Finally, Energy Express was named a Program of Distinction by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2009.

Statewide, 533 college students served as AmeriCorps members with Energy Express in 2009. Of those students, 439 served as mentors and 97 served as volunteer coordinators. Energy Express mentors work directly with children in creating a print-rich, art-rich environment that is focused on acclaimed children’s literature. Volunteer coordinators connect the Energy Express site to the community through recruitment, training and supervision of community and family volunteers. These volunteers read with children, assist with art and writing projects as well as other site duties.

For serving 300 community service hours, Energy Express AmeriCorps members receive a \$1,600 living allowance, and an AmeriCorps education award of \$1,132 to be used for tuition or the repayment of student loans.

AmeriCorps is a national service program whose members help meet the nation’s critical needs in the areas of public safety, education, homeland security and the environment. Through more than 400 sponsors, AmeriCorps involves 25,000 people nationwide in impact-driven service learning each year.

As an AmeriCorps program, Energy Express is under the leadership of the WVU Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Program, and is funded in part by a grant from Volunteer West Virginia, the state’s Commission for National and Community Service. Volunteer West Virginia encourages West Virginians of all ages to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism.

For more information about Energy Express, visit the web site at [.energyexpress.wvu.edu](http://.energyexpress.wvu.edu) or by calling 304-293-3855. For other AmeriCorps and national service opportunities, visit [.americorps.gov](http://.americorps.gov).

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