

Is this the opportunity you have been waiting for?

Do you feel like you could accomplish more with your life? Would you like the opportunity for a deep, meaningful experience? Are you creative and project oriented? Can you commit one year of service to design and build a long lasting program that serves the poor and needy in Livingston County?

The Corporation for National and Community Service has granted Catholic Charities of Livingston County (CCLC) an award to fill five positions with AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members. All VISTA members earn a stipend which puts them at the poverty income level in the community they serve; in Livingston County, that's \$199.62 weekly, \$10,380 annually. The message is clear; it is easier to empathize with the poor when earning poverty level wages. Upon completion of one year of service, VISTA members receive a \$4,725 education award to use for their continuing education or as payment toward existing student loans. If an education award is not appealing, a \$1,200 cash stipend would be paid. Medical insurance is provided free of charge during the year of service and a child care stipend is available. These are the cash and fringe benefits of VISTA service.

The greater benefit is the new, rewarding experience in your life. We want to develop five new projects to educate and serve the poor and needy in our county. While CCLC has a vision for the services these projects will deliver, we want compassionate, creative people who can design and start up:

1. A *Healthy Food Pantry* in Mt. Morris. Traditional food pantries primarily provide foods that are quick to prepare and often high in fat and calories. Obesity is becoming a national problem, especially for people in poverty. Envision a pantry that is like your supermarket, with fresh produce, tasting stations and recipes. Your customers will be educated on making nutritious meals that taste good and are healthy. Then you will provide the ingredients to make this meal at home. We see this pantry becoming a model operation for other pantries to consider. Once the pantry is successfully operating, we would like to open a Kid's Café, providing a healthy, hot meal to children in Mt. Morris once a day.
2. The *Furniture Link* project. There are many households and businesses ready to donate appliances and furniture to our agency. The supply is available. People living in poverty use all their income on basic life necessities; rent, food, utility costs, clothing and medicine. The need for a couch, kitchen table or stove may exist, but many families do not have the financial resources to purchase them for themselves. *Furniture Link* will be the conduit that brings gently used appliances & furnishings to needy people.

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3. A *Retail Operations* outlet for Connections, a first worksite job training and support program that assists women living in poverty to develop skills, gain confidence, achieve employment and ultimately become self-sufficient. Women are trained in technical sewing, computer literacy, office administration, and on-line and retail sales. The *Retail Operations Specialist* would be charged with developing a successful outlet, both in our storefront and on the internet, to sell the items produced and donated to Connections.
4. A *Technical Training* program for Connections. We see the need to expand and standardize the skills taught in the job training program. The *Technical Training Specialist* will design and implement a curriculum that will provide women with skills that will be transferable into today's workforce.
5. *Home Safe Home*, a safety assessment program that helps low income seniors continue to live at home independently and safely. We will utilize the experience and skills of a Safety Inspector to design and implement the program. *Home Safe Home* will train volunteers to perform in-home safety assessments and minor home safety modifications. The program will ultimately have three components: home survey & inspection, client education, and safety plan implementation.

Do any of these projects appeal to you? Would you like to invest one year of your life in an exciting, rewarding experience? If you would like more information on any of these opportunities or would like to apply, contact Joe DiMino, Executive Director of CCLC, at 585-658-4466 or jdimino@dor.org. You can also explore these AmeriCorps VISTA opportunities at <https://recruit.cns.gov/index.asp> then click on Find a Program. You could be searching for the opportunity of your lifetime.