

University of Mississippi

eGrove

University of Mississippi News

4-24-2014

VISTA Volunteer Finds Her Passion is Service to Others

Elaine Pugh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

Recommended Citation

Pugh, Elaine, "VISTA Volunteer Finds Her Passion is Service to Others" (2014). *University of Mississippi News*. 6720.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/6720>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

VISTA Volunteer Finds Her Passion is Service to Others

Lauryn DuValle has developed programs to connect UM students with youths from underserved schools

APRIL 24, 2014 BY ELAINE PUGH



Lauryn DuValle

OXFORD, Miss. – An interest in filmmaking and a passion for helping others led Lauryn DuValle to dedicate two years as a volunteer with the **North Mississippi VISTA** – or Volunteer in Service to America – project at the University of Mississippi.

The project connects the university and its resources to low-income communities throughout a 23-county area. The 20 VISTAs working in the area are full-time, one-year placements supported by **AmeriCorps**, with a

modest living allowance, health benefits and an education award, which can be used for graduate school or to repay qualified student loans.

In the last year alone, UM VISTAs have brought more than \$100,000 into Mississippi through grants and donations and have supported more than 4,100 volunteers at nonprofits and schools across the state.

In her second year with the project, DuValle is a VISTA leader in the **College of Liberal Arts**, tasked with training and supporting UM's large group of other dynamic VISTAs.

"The theme of VISTA is to eliminate poverty through education," DuValle said. "Our goal is to build educational programs that benefit children and adults in Mississippi."

Duvalle served her first VISTA year in the **School of Education**, developing programs to connect UM students with youth in underserved schools. A high point came when she brought to fruition the program Rebel Road Trip, which connected around 300 local elementary school students with around 200 UM seniors. (Note: This Rebel Road Trip is not affiliated with the UM Alumni/Athletics annual event with the same name.)

"It was an overnight bus trip to Birmingham, where we visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the McWane Science Center," she said. "We created an opportunity for those kids to think outside the classroom and be actively engaged, and to see their faces light up to a world they had never seen was unbelievable. The first trip was such a success, it has become a School of Education tradition."

With a bachelor's degree in history from Grambling University, DuValle enrolled at UM in 2010 to study for a minor in screen writing and production. Her first film "Pickett" was chosen as runner-up in the UM Cinema Competition.

As a result, she was offered an opportunity to mentor students at Memphis' Booker T. Washington High School as they produced a short film to make the school's case for why President Barack Obama should select BTW as winner of the White House's Race to the Top Commencement Challenge.

"I helped the students create their vision and understand the whole process of film, because they didn't know," she said. "They thought you could just set up a camera and that's it. I assisted the (student) producer and the editor with camera angles, lighting tricks, shot lifts and the equipment."

The resulting film won over hundreds of other entries and President Obama presented BTW's spring 2011 commencement address.

"I didn't believe it at first," DuValle said. "I was so happy for the school. Those students really deserved to win."

As it turned out, DuValle may have been the big winner. She was chosen for a national award given by the **Center for HBCU Media Advocacy**, but more importantly, she said, was finding her passion.

Follow us on social



Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

"It's one of the most beneficial points of my life," she said. "The entire experience and helping the kids validated what I want to do: to open doors and give people opportunities who otherwise wouldn't have any."

Her next move was to join the UM VISTA project.

"Lauryn has been an exemplary VISTA," said Stephen Monroe, director of UM VISTA. "She cares deeply about our state and country, and she is a wonderful representative of our university. Through VISTA, I've seen Lauryn develop into a strong and effective leader."

DuValle added that she is considering continuing her national service through a 20-year commitment to the Air Force, where she hopes to be assigned as a journalist in film and photography.

More service-oriented individuals are being sought for UM VISTA, said Susan Nicholas, project coordinator.

"VISTAs like Lauryn make a tremendous impact, and there is no better way to develop as a professional," she said. "We are looking for talented, devoted Americans of any age to join our project and to make a difference in Mississippi."

For more information, contact Susan Nicholas at nicholas@olemiss.edu or Lauryn Duvall at liduvall@olemiss.edu.

The North Mississippi VISTA project is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and affiliated with UM's [McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement](#).

 FILED UNDER: [COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS](#), [HOMETOWN NEWS](#), [NEWS RELEASES](#)

"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)