

Nomination for 2020 Governor's Service Award, National Service Award for AmeriCorps Alumni

Operation UNITE and the UNITE Service Corps (USC), would like to nominate Stacy Usher, a former USC Alumni, to receive the 2020 Governor's Service Award for National Service. Mrs. Usher served with the UNITE Service Corps from September 1, 2016 until July 31, 2018. UNITE Service Corps is a 54 Corps, managed by Operation UNITE. The 54 members are located in Kentucky's 5th Congressional district in 17 counties. Members are required to tutor students in math, implement the "Too Good for Drugs" Prevention Curriculum, co-sponsors a UNITE Club, and be a member of their local UNITE Coalition.

As a member, Stacy Usher served at Campton Elementary in Wolfe County Kentucky, where she completed two full years of service. Mrs. Usher was no ordinary USC member. She was different, noticeably different. She was different in so many ways. Her communication skills were excellent and her vivacious attitude was contagious. She would always go above and beyond our expectations. It was quickly noted, Stacy had remarkable leadership skills and could get things done. She became a voice for the children, and her community. The area of substance use and abuse issues hit home for Stacy, in conversation, she would not hesitate to tell you the negative impact it had upon her life growing up. With tears and a compassionate heart, she would unashamedly share her story. She was sensitive to the needs of others and had a genuine love and concern for them. She would do whatever she needed to do to enhance their lives. During her time at Campton, her efforts paid off when test scores revealed, targeted students, soared 31% in math knowledge. Also, the students showed remarkable improvement in knowledge acquired in regard to the "Too Good for Drugs" Curriculum, utilizing the measurement instrument of pre and posttests.

Stacy was a team player. She worked well with the staff and administration in the school district. She cooperated well with others in getting things accomplished. Her expertise was team building. She played a large role in the school and community culture. She engaged in various extracurricular and prevention activities. She sponsored the UNITE Club at her school which

included projects geared to serving others. She volunteered for the Archery Club and taught youth to play soccer.

Stacy was an energetic young lady and enjoyed continuous learning. She was the type of person, throughout her life, that would take advantage of any available trainings that she thought would be beneficial. She received training in disaster emergency management and she is also a trained EMS. She learned to speak Spanish fluently. She has received conflict resolution training. And was self-trained in technology, in which she excelled.

Stacy represented AmeriCorps well and wasn't shy in speaking on behalf of Operation UNITE or USC. She attended the AmeriCorps Launch two years in Frankfort and in Owensboro. While in Owensboro, we observed her putting her EMS skills to work, when a Senior Corps member was in distress, Stacy was quick to respond using her skills while calling 911 for assistance. She kept the lady calm until emergency services arrived. During her last year as a member, she received the honor of being invited, by Operation UNITE CEO, to attend the National RX Drug and Heroin Summit in Atlanta. She graciously accepted the invitation and volunteered her service as a facilitator for four days, rendering her service with a smile.

While serving as member, she worked vigorously to promote UNITE Camp in her school. She knew the impact it would make on those who attended. The camp is a four day and three night camp for at-risk middle school youth which is hosted every summer by Operation UNITE and other sponsors. The camp is located at the University of the Cumberland and the youth participate in many fun-filled activities. They are given the opportunity to meet new friends and share similar life situations. The university atmosphere gives them of a vision of furthering their education. Stacy, joined her students, and attended camp every summer volunteering her service. She continues to volunteer at camp as an AmeriCorps alumni.

Stacy's life experiences and the connections she made, serving as an AmeriCorps member, afforded her many opportunities to connect and network services. It seemed, as though, she became driven to make a difference in her community. And that she did. While serving as a USC member, she served as the chairman of the Wolfe County UNITE Coalition from August 2016 through

March 2019. Even though her term with USC was coming to an end, Stacy remained committed to her service with the youth and the Wolfe County Coalition. Her passion for the need of addressing the problem motivated others to become active members. The community coalition was behind her efforts and was willing to work with her to continue the good work that had been started. She sought funding, and received the Request for Proposal for the Drug Free Communities Grant. She had never written a grant, but was ready for the challenge. She put in motion a plan and she worked the plan, drawing community support. Hours, days and months she volunteered her service to put together a needs assessment for her county. She worked diligently with others as they gathered pertinent information. She, then, wrote the grant's Request for Proposal and submitted on behalf of Wolfe County. She portrayed in writing their concerns, the needs in their community and the purpose of requesting funding. She was successful. She received grant notification of acceptance and was awarded the grant in September 2019 for \$125,000 per year for five years. At the end of five years, Wolfe County will be eligible to apply for additional six years to continue to implement environmental drug prevention strategies. Stacy currently serves as coordinator for the project with an office donated by the Wolfe County Judge and Fiscal Court, who are supporters of the program's efforts and initiatives.

Stacy resides in Wolfe County with her husband and their three sons. She remains committed to serving the youth in her home community. Stacy, stated, "I want to be a positive influence in the lives of our youth and be their advocate. I just want to be there for them when the chips are down." I want to do my part to help future generations of Wolfe County make better choices regarding substance use."

Stacy's quotes puts in action Operation UNITE's Mission Statement: To Create Hope and change the culture. Stacy rose to the challenge, and made a difference in the lives of many. She served as an outstanding member. Therefore, we nominate Stacy Usher for the 2020 Governor's Service Award. And we thank you for your consideration.