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Katia Vantries '13, Morris, volunteers and learns from senior citizens through Americorps program

Summary: The experience is professionally and personally fulfilling.

(May 18, 2011)-When a great opportunity pops up, the best choice is to seize it with both hands and enjoy the ride. At a small campus such as the University of Minnesota, Morris, students are almost tripping over advantageous prospects. One such student is Katia Vantries '13, Morris, who is a member of the Americorps [Students in Service](#) Program on campus.

“Somehow, opportunities at UMM seem to find you,” says Vantries. “By chance, I walked by one of the program coordinators, and she knew I was interested in gerontology (the study of aging). She asked if I would like to work on this program. I wasn’t entirely sure what the Students in Service program was about, but I thought it sounded like a good experience, and I decided to give it a go.”

Americorps is a network of volunteer programs similar to the Peace Corps, but all the service is within the United States. The Students in Service (SIS) program is a part-time Americorps program, which encourages and supports college students in providing valuable service to their local communities. SIS requires students to complete a term of service, which can range in hours depending upon part-time or full-time status. Vantries is in a 300-hour program and has one calendar year to complete her service. Once her term of service is completed, she will receive compensation in the form of an academic scholarship.

“I got to choose my location of volunteer service, and I can directly use this experience as a career exploration tool,” says Vantries. “I chose to dedicate my service time to West Wind Village because I believe that our elderly populations are deserving of my time and energy, and I want to pursue a career in gerontology in my future.”

Vantries has found her time working at West Wind Village, a local nursing home, to be a very rewarding experience. Through volunteering, she has made close friends with people who are between four and five times her age.

“My favorite part of volunteering is definitely visiting one-on-one with the residents. I get to learn about life from people who experienced a lot more than I have, and I get to show residents that they are appreciated and respected.”

In addition to visiting with residents, Vantries runs activities and helps residents with small tasks. “I get the experience of working directly with people, and the satisfaction that I have cared for many other people in a day rather than just myself. By participating in the SIS program I have direct experience of working in the human services and gerontology field, and I feel very confident in my choice of career paths.”

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility

in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.