



## B-H-K CHILD DEVELOPMENT BOARD

700 Park Avenue  
Houghton, Michigan 49931

*'Serving children and families through comprehensive  
early childhood education, health and family support services'*

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From: B-H-K Child Development Board  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Local AmeriCorps program expands to seven U.P. counties

### 57 members to serve youth education needs in schools, childcare and community agencies

HOUGHTON – B-H-K Child Development Board has been awarded a \$702,867 grant through the Michigan Community Service Commission to expand its AmeriCorps program to serve the seven western counties of the Upper Peninsula.

The expanded program, called Superior AmeriCorps, is now accepting applications. It will place 57 members each year in public schools, childcare centers and community agencies in Baraga, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon counties.

"We're very excited about this expansion," B-H-K Executive Director Rod Liimatainen said. "Dozens of extra AmeriCorps members will provide needed assistance to area schools and agencies. This will yield positive educational benefits for children."

Superior AmeriCorps members work mainly in educating youth through tutoring and mentoring, after-school programs and clubs, volunteer recruitment and character-building activities. Members receive intensive training before beginning their one-year term of service and biweekly training during the course of the year.

Also, members take part in several community-service projects each year. In the past, local AmeriCorps members have participated in national Make-A-Difference Day in October, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in January, and Alcohol Free Weekend in April.

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In return for their service, members receive \$11,000 in annual pay, health and childcare benefits, and loan forbearance. After successfully completing a year of service, members qualify for a \$4,725 award to attend college, training or other post-secondary education.

Superior AmeriCorps Director Michelle LaCourt said devoting a year to AmeriCorps can be a wonderful personal and professional experience.

“Members are often surprised at the wide range of training they receive and meaningful tasks they undertake,” LaCourt said. “They often comment on the personal satisfaction of helping others as well as the professional development they receive.”

The expansion is part of a plan by the Bush administration and Congress to support 75,000 AmeriCorps members nationwide in 2004. Nationally, the program currently supports more than 50,000 members.

U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, co-sponsored the legislation that created AmeriCorps in the mid-1990s. He was pleased to hear the news.

“I am proud that northern Michigan is now home to another AmeriCorps site,” Stupak wrote in a recent letter. “Each year, AmeriCorps engages more than 50,000 Americans in intensive volunteer service with more than 2,100 non-profits, public agencies and faith-based organizations.

“Northern Michigan depends on AmeriCorps service members to meet critical education, safety, homeland security and health needs.”

The local AmeriCorps program began in 1997 with 18 members. In 2001, the program earned the Governor’s Service Award for Outstanding National Service Program from Gov. John Engler. By 2002, the program had expanded to 32 members, but in 2003-04 it was reduced to 15 members due to over-enrollment and accounting problems at the national level.

For more information or to apply, call LaCourt at 482-3663 or 1-800-236-5657 or visit [www.superioramericorps.org](http://www.superioramericorps.org)