

VISTA Monthly Web Feature

Daina Salayon Schoolcraft College



Daina Salayon is a first year MCC*AmeriCorps VISTA serving at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Michigan. She is a recent graduate of Grand Valley State University where she studied Advertising and Public Relations and minored in Applied Statistics. While at GVSU, Daina was involved in GrandPR (the full-service student-run public relations firm) the Michigan Humane Society of Kent County and Local Threads (charity fashion shows put on by local designers). After graduation, Daina decided to take a gap year before pursuing her masters degree and chanced upon the AmeriCorps when seeking post-graduate internship opportunities. Daina firmly believes in the ideal that “what the world needs is people who have come alive,” and there’s nothing more awakening than helping others. Thus, here she is today working as the Project Coordinator in the Student Activities Office managing service learning data collection, a Detroit volunteer project, the Schoolcraft College Student Food Pantry and other service programs.



Daina’s recent success was the fifth annual Empty Bowl Luncheon held on Monday, December 5. The [Empty Bowl Luncheon](#) is part of an international grassroots movement started by The Imagine Render Group to help end hunger. The premise is that participants of this luncheon will purchase a handcrafted bowl donated by local potters, students, and community members, as a symbolic reminder of all the people who are hungry but have nothing but empty bowls. Participants also receive a bowl of soup, bread and water as yet another reminder that, for some, this simple meal would be considered a feast. The proceeds then go to an organization working to end hunger and food insecurity.

In April 2011 the [Schoolcraft College Student Food Pantry](#) co-founded by the 2010-11 Schoolcraft College MCC*AmeriCorps VISTA opened to the Schoolcraft community. The pantry functions solely on donations from Schoolcraft College students, staff and faculty. Considering the pantry’s mission is to end hunger for the Schoolcraft community, the Empty Bowl Luncheon serves as the perfect fundraiser to help keep the food pantry sustainable, so all proceeds from this year’s event benefited the Pantry.

Daina played an integral role in planning this event. She contacted Continuing Education and Professional Development as well as the Art Department to request donated bowls from students, staff and faculty in ceramics courses. She was also able to work with Food Services and the Culinary Arts Department for donations of soup, bread, and water. These departments have supported the Empty Bowl Luncheon each year and were more than willing to provide their resources once again.

This year Daina wanted to work on gaining the event more publicity to increase the attendance of community members therefore increasing the success of the event. Daina wrote a press release, which the marketing department then sent out to local media. The event received placements in the [Detroit News](#), [Detroit Free Press](#), [The Observer & Eccentric](#), and local event calendars. She worked closely with

the marketing department who placed the event on the marquee and on the school's website. Daina placed flyers in high traffic areas of the campus as well as local coffee shops and sent out weekly email reminders to faculty.

All of Daina's efforts working with the various departments and spreading the word about the event paid off on December 5 with 130 attendees at the luncheon. The CEPD and credit courses donated 355 bowls of varying size and complexity. Of these bowls, 180 were sold resulting in a profit of \$2,687. With this money she is able to purchase 19,192lbs of food through Gleaners Food Bank to supply the pantry, which currently serves over 40 students and their families.

A community member at the event asked, "Can we have this event more often?"

At Schoolcraft, they take that as an indicator of success.

A note from Daina's supervisor, Todd Stowell:

Daina has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty since taking over as the Schoolcraft College AmeriCorps*VISTA. True to form, the Empty Bowl Fundraiser raised an astonishing \$2,687. This effort will ensure that the food pantry established last year by our previous AmeriCorps*VISTA will sustain itself and actually expand to our Radcliff Campus in Garden City.