



## Tennessee AmeriCorps Programs Serve Students

The majority of Tennessee's AmeriCorps programs focus on children and youth through mentoring, tutoring, and in-class teaching. Due to the ongoing pandemic, back-to-school looks different this year and poses new challenges for AmeriCorps members that serve in schools or after-school programs.

We asked Tennessee education-focused AmeriCorps Programs to share how their AmeriCorps members are adapting their service for the 2020-21 school year. During difficult times, National Service always finds a way to persevere.

- **T.E.A.M. – [Emerald Youth Foundation](#)**

Emerald Youth AmeriCorps members have been able to continue serving young people amidst the pandemic. This summer, 29 AmeriCorps members were placed in Summer Day Camps across the city of Knoxville for eight weeks. Summer programming looked a little different compared to past summers, but members were still able to have “clean” fun while facilitating academic activities to combat the Summer (and COVID) Slide. On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, Emerald Youth swore in a third of their AmeriCorps cohort for the upcoming academic year. Part of their pre-service training included a service project of filling backpacks for their students. These members will serve in Emerald's afterschool programs to continue safely providing academic support to young people. Whether in-person or virtual, Emerald Youth is prepared. Anyone interested in joining Emerald Youth's AmeriCorps team can visit [www.emeraldyouth.org](http://www.emeraldyouth.org) to learn more.



- **[Memphis Teacher Residency](#)**

AmeriCorps members serving with Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR) are heading back "to school"...virtually! For their own time as learners, all training will be conducted online. Through these weekly trainings, MTR staff are modeling to the AmeriCorps members how to teach virtually. At the start of the school year, members will draw on that modeling and the support of their mentor teachers and instructional coaches to digitally serve in classrooms just as they would if school were operating in-person.

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- [Relay New Teacher Pathway – Relay Graduate School of Education](#)

Relay Graduate School of Education's Relay New Teacher Pathway is supporting current AmeriCorps members through unprecedented times. As the 2020-21 school year begins, and their school service sites in Nashville and Memphis have shifted to distance learning for students, Relay has needed to support their AmeriCorps members in developing new skills that can best meet student needs. In response to survey data collected from their members, schools, students, and families, Relay created trainings and resources for their AmeriCorps members on topics such as: Engaging Students in Distance Learning, Navigating Trauma during COVID-19, and Facilitating Asynchronous Learning. Relay AmeriCorps members have helped distribute laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots to their students, have engaged with their students' families in online town halls, and have spent hours practicing teaching online.



Relay Memphis AmeriCorps members in a Zoom AmeriCorps Training session

- [Teach For America-Memphis](#)

We got to hear from two Teach for America-Memphis AmeriCorps members on what inspired them to serve and how they are adapting this year.

**Kelly Heniff - High School Math Teacher at Memphis School of Excellence - 2019 Teach For America Memphis Corps**

*What inspired you to want to serve with students? What are you most looking forward to from your service?*

“Teaching is something that I have found so much joy in with from such a young age. Students have such an imaginative way of thinking that provides so much room for growth and collaboration. This upcoming year, I look forward to tapping into that imaginative side of students through new platforms and discovering the ways that digital engagement helps prepare them for their futures.”



*How has COVID-19 changed what your service experience will look like?*

“The COVID-19 pandemic is giving me the opportunity to reimagine my role as a teacher through incorporating a variety of new technological tools. It’s allowing me to strengthen my communication with students right from the start and connecting with students through multiple platforms, including over email, text, Google Classroom, and even Instagram.”



**Ronnie Payton - High School Special Education Teacher at Trezevant High, Shelby County Schools - 2019 Teach For America Memphis Corps**

***What inspired you to want to serve with students?***

“I grew up in a low-income community and went to the bottom 1% schools in Philadelphia, PA. Once I finished college, I wanted to give back to the low-income communities by inspiring students through my

teaching. This year, I am looking forward to expanding my teaching methods through the use of multiple platforms for virtual instruction.”

***How has COVID-19 changed what your service experience will look like? What are some ways you’ll still be connecting with students?***

“COVID-19 has changed my service experience by preventing me from interacting with my students in person. It really makes learning a whole new ball game for high schoolers who have never been exposed to much technology. I am connecting with my students through email, texting, phone calls and social media.”

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AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and leads the nation's volunteering and service efforts. For more information, visit [NationalService.gov](#).

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