

## **My AmeriCorps Experience with Pass It Along - Liza Cotter, AmeriCorps**

“Yeah I’ll help; it looks good for college.” That is the most common statement I hear around school concerning community service. So many people fail to see that by giving back, you are giving the best possible gift to, no, not the people you are serving, but to yourself. To be involved and to know that you made a difference in someone’s life is the true reward, not being accepted into some college. Happiness and being truly content with one’s inner self are what matter in life, not success and material things. Pass It Along can give you the things that truly matter, and much, much more. The benefits of being involved in such an amazing program are infinite and I really encourage those who have not reaped the reward of giving back to get involved, in any way, at any time. It’s never too late to start.

Through my participation in Pass It Along as a minimum time AmeriCorps member, I have grown an incredible amount. Nothing is more inspiring to me than to see the smile of a child receiving the backpack that she couldn’t afford or to hear the laughter of a man receiving his food for the week. Through Pass It Along, I have developed a second family and a new outlook on life. The people I work with have greatly influenced me in their dedication and encouragement. I have learned that heroes are not people dressed in super-costumes with amazing powers, but the rare few who commit their lives to bettering the lives of others. The people I work with at Pass It Along are, in every sense of the word, true heroes.

Since becoming an AmeriCorps, I honestly have become a happier and more positive person in every aspect of my life. Giving back is not just a check on a college application to me; it is something I want to continue with for the rest of my life. I have established a much stronger sense of self and belonging by helping others; to know that I can make such an impact has genuinely changed my life. I have seen the same kids from one Pass It Along event to the next and they remember me and come to me with smiles and hugs. No words can describe the feeling it gives you to know you made that kind of difference to someone. I know that if I can get such a remarkable amount of joy and personal growth out of Pass It Along, anyone can. Anyone can find the time to get involved, and honestly once a part of the Pass It Along team, you’ll never want to stop.