

# Do a 'gap year' with City Year

**E**ach year more and more high school seniors are deciding to take a year off from academic studies before going to college.

There are many reasons why a senior might want to take a gap year, but they usually share one goal: they want to set themselves up to have a rewarding college career and life experience.

There are many great year-long programs that can help a recent graduate achieve this goal, and City Year is right at the top of that list.

City Year is a nonprofit organization that unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them

to become more active and involved citizens and community leaders by developing communication, research, organizational, leadership and public speaking skills, all while working in a



the skills and opportunities to change the world. City Year is about young people really making a difference as tutors, mentors and role models to the middle school youth of New Hampshire.

"I serve to empower youth and help them realize their potential," said Andy Johnson, corps member serving on the Young Heroes Team.

City Year helps its corps members, like Andy,

diverse team environment.

City Year also offers many other great benefits to all of the full-time corps member volunteers. Each corps member receives a weekly living stipend, uniform provided by The Timberland

Company, cell phone provided by T-Mobile and health insurance while enrolled in the program, as well as a \$5,550 education award received after completing the program.

*If a gap year sounds interesting to you and you would like more information, contact Ted Wing at 773-1862 or [twing@cityyear.org](mailto:twing@cityyear.org). You can also find more information at [www.cityyear.org/newhampshire.aspx](http://www.cityyear.org/newhampshire.aspx).*

## My City Year experience

Coming to City Year out of high school was full of uncertainty. I was excited to serve and joined City Year because I wanted to spend a year giving back. I had decided not to go follow the college path that all of my high school friends were on because I struggled in school. Not with the workload, but with my personal investment in my education, why I was there and what I hoped to gain from school.

While I was extremely excited to start, I was unsure about the work I would be doing because I had never worked with children before. I was unsure of my roommates because I had never lived with anyone other than my family. I was unsure of the new city I was going to be living in because

I was moving across the country. I was also unsure of how the people I was going to work with would see me; I knew they would mostly be college grads and I was worried that they might see me as a "lowly" high school student.

Almost immediately, I was able to learn that all the uncertainty I was feeling was almost completely unfounded. I was trained and prepared to go into a school where I confidently led a classroom. My roommates turned about to be some of my best friends; I learned how much three people can laugh over the silliest, most mundane incidents. I realized that the city I was in had so much to offer in new cuisines, new cultures and new friends.

Most importantly, I learned that the value of my effort, the commitment I had and a strong desire to grow mattered more than my level of education. I learned that you can work with anyone of any age as long as you are honest, respectful and dedicated.

City Year has given me the experience to find out why service is so important to me. I can be part of something that is larger than myself and that service is a responsibility. We all have to find some way to serve, in whatever capacity we are capable of. I learned the value of education. Not only for the students we worked with, but also how I needed to continue my education passionately and dedicate myself to my own growth as well as others.

My experience with City Year has enabled me to look at the potential I have and what I am capable of. Through serving with City Year and with the input of my peers, I know I have the drive and motivation to pursue my dreams and become an officer in the Marines. I have gained a basis for the leadership I will need and an outlook on service and commitment to a team that I know will serve me well throughout my lifetime.

**Dan Blahnik, City Year  
Corps Member 2010-11**