

## City Year making impact on students' lives

Chanel Hill Tribune Staff Writer | Dec 13, 2016



Photo by Abdul Sulayman/Tribune Chief Photographer

Enter any classroom at Southwark School and you will see City Year AmeriCorps members working one-on-one with students. When they are not helping students with their literacy and math, they are mentoring them and getting to know the students on a personal level.

"This is our first year working with City Year and it has been a great experience for the school," said principal Andrew Lukov. "They have really helped the students out in so many different ways. You can feel their excitement and presence throughout the building. We're really lucky to have them as one of our partnerships."

The partnership with Southwark has City Year AmeriCorps members at the school throughout the week. The members also run after-school programs Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays where students can participate in various clubs including movies, LEGOs and art.

"We literally become coaches, mentors and friends with the students," said City Year AmeriCorps member Samantha Retamar. "I'm in the classroom helping students with literacy and math as well as social and emotional learning. I also work closely with students who may need some extra help in areas, whether it's making friends, learning self-control in certain areas or being a little bit more confident."

"I work with those students daily," she added. "Either in reading groups or with multiplication quizzes. With my social and emotional learning students, sometimes we do confidence builders or we're talk about things at home or what's going on in their life. Just so we can build that relationship. It's really nice to know that you're making an impact on their lives."

Matthew Foster, Impact Manager with City Year Philadelphia, knows firsthand the importance of being able to connect with students in the classroom and out. Foster was a City Year AmeriCorps member for two years prior to entering his current position.

"Being a part of City Year is one of many experiences that I have had that has truly shaped my life," Foster said. "I help facilitate a relationship between Southwark and City Year Philadelphia. I was so enamored by the leadership opportunities that was presented to me through City Year that I decided to transition over to staff. I manage the entire team of AmeriCorps members. I don't work directly with students anymore, but I support and guide them through their work."

"City Year AmeriCorps members are put on intentionally diverse teams of people," he added. "They come from different backgrounds from all different parts of the United States. The most important part for us is to make sure those intentionally diverse teams helps students see that a group with different backgrounds can work together for a common purpose by building a community, collaborating with each other and becoming a part of the school in a fun way."

Retamar is hoping that through her work City Year, the students she mentors will strive to succeed.

"Through City Year, my students see people who look like them and who don't look like them," Retamar said. "They also see us come together for a common cause. My goal every day is to at least impact one student. By the end of the year, I want every student with an AmeriCorps member to know that the sky is the limit for them. That every goal is within reach."