

## December VISTA Feature

Monica Martinez  
Kirtland Community College



### Empty Bowls Project

Monica Martinez is from Mineola, Texas and graduated from Austin College with a Bachelor's Degree in both Political Science and Philosophy. She was actively involved in student government at Austin College. While serving as student body president, she organized various campus-wide events, worked with the college administration to improve the quality of student life, budgeted all student organizations and developed a process to provide money to unbudgeted organizations. Monica was also a Global Outreach Fellow, which allowed her to live and serve abroad. She currently serves as a Michigan Campus Compact AmeriCorps\* VISTA at Kirtland Community College, working to strengthen the collaboration between KCC and a local nonprofit through service-learning and awareness projects.

Monica used her organizational and leadership skills to help make The Empty Bowls Project a successful reality. Empty Bowls, which started in Michigan, is a national program developed to increase awareness about poverty and hunger across the world. At Kirtland Community College, the Empty Bowls project was made into an entire month-long art show. After learning how to make pinch pots as part of the ceramics class curriculum, students were asked to continue practicing by making even more pinch pots to present during the art show. There, 270 bowls were sold in a silent auction to raise money for a local nonprofit, River House, Inc., which provides safety and empowerment to survivors of domestic and sexual violence and homelessness. Over \$2,200 was raised. This event was a great opportunity for students to practice what they learned in the classroom, and allowed them to apply what they learned to real world situations by meeting a genuine need in the community.

**A Note from her Supervisor, Nicholas Holton:** "Monica took the Empty Bowls project from dream to reality. We had talked about doing this for several years, and Monica took the concept and made it a smashing success. Without her leadership and organizational skills we would still just be discussing it."

Jean Paul Cortes and Monica Martinez  
Olivet College and Kirtland Community College

River House, Inc. Service Project

Jean Paul Cortes, Michigan Campus Compact AmeriCorps\*VISTA at Olivet College , and Monica Martinez, Michigan Campus Compact AmeriCorps\* VISTA at Kirtland Community College, worked together to bring 18 Olivet students to the Kirtland Community College campus for a weekend of service. They painted the shelter portion of River House, Inc., a place of safety and empowerment for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and homelessness. This project was the second half of the major paint job the shelter required. The first half of the project was completed by Kirtland Community College students on Make a Difference Day. According to one of the clients of River House, the students brought “sunshine to the shelter” by way of their service. The students were able to learn more about domestic and sexual violence and homelessness, and had the opportunity to talk with some of the survivors at the shelter. This experience allowed students to understand what their service meant to others. Monica and Jean Paul did an excellent job of collaborating to make a great impact for their community.

Jean Paul Cortes  
Olivet College



#### Campus-wide Service Day

Jean Paul Cortes was born in Mexico, as the son of missionaries, and raised in both Mexico and in the United States. He has lived in Texas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Jean Paul graduated from Olivet College in May of 2009, with a Bachelor's Degree in both Organismal Biology and Environmental Science. He was in the Science Club, EarthBound (Environmental Awareness group), and the International Group. Jean Paul is now serving Michigan Campus Compact as an AmeriCorps\* VISTA at Olivet College.

Jean Paul was involved in coordinating and bringing awareness to Olivet College's Service Day projects. He found projects for volunteers and supported them all. He also documented these projects by taking pictures of the students and staff at work to be put on the Facebook page dedicated to Service Day at Olivet College. The various events he coordinated include : helping at the Siren Shelter (domestic abuse shelter), helping at E.A.R.T.H (Educated Animal Rescue and Teen Haven), cleaning and organizing of the local thrift store, making bibs for babies, writing cards to soldiers, cleaning the highway, and helping out at the humane society. Jean Paul's organization of this day led to great Service Day participation by the students at Olivet College.

**A Note from his Supervisor, Mike Fales:** "Jean Paul....."