

MEET THE ALLIES



Advancing diverse young leaders to strengthen communities, nonprofits and civic participation.



Class of 2011/2012

Greater Bridgeport Team

Isabelle Delgado

FSW, Inc. of CT

Isabelle is a 2011 Bachelor's of Social Work graduate from Saint Joseph College in West Hartford, CT. A native of Bridgeport, CT, she has returned to her hometown to be the Public Ally for Family Services of Woodfield. She will be working as their Development Assistant to develop the agency's volunteer program. Isabelle is looking forward to putting her social work education and various volunteer and leadership experiences to good use in this position. A self-declared "life long learner," she plans to pursue her Master's in Social Work in the next few years.

Akira Ford

St. Luke's LifeWorks

Akira joined Public Allies to gain more leadership experience as well as make a difference in lives of youth. She believes youth are our future and she has a passion for helping them achieve their goals in any way possible. Public Allies will help her to grow as a person and create a better community for the youth that live there. It will help her know if she should further her education or just go straight in to the workforce.

Melissa Gabso

CT NOFA

Melissa applied to Public Allies in the effort to be a part of something that

would be meaningful for both herself and her community. She wanted to get more directly involved in issues that she is passionate about, but in the past was unable to find an appropriate and effective outlet to do so. In becoming a part of Public Allies, she believes that she has found a way to make an impact in her community that's rewarding and long lasting, both to herself and to those around her, and her experience will enrich everyone's lives as a result.

Heaven-Lee Giovinco

St. Luke's LifeWorks

Heaven-Lee is a Magna Cum Laude graduate from Delaware State University where she not only earned a Bachelor's of Science in Community Health, but also received



the Dean's Award of Excellence in Community Health. She was drawn to Public Allies out of the recognition for the persistent need to look within the United States to address disparities in areas such as poverty, healthcare, and academic achievement. She truly hopes that whoever crosses her path is touched by the work she may accomplish within this year. She is looking to make a difference, small or big in someone's life. She is also looking forward to her second year as an AmeriCorps member.

Shon McKenzie

Bridgeport Housing Authority

As a Second Year Ally, Shon is looking for a new opportunity to help others and get an education at the same time.

Bennie Pharr

Operation Hope

Growing up in Bridgeport, CT. Bennie witnessed and experienced his fair share of issues. There are so many people in need of some style of guidance or positive influence. Anywhere he turned his head there was someone who needed something. He has always been the type of person who took pride in lending a hand to those who can't do or don't have. When he found out about Public Allies, he seized the opportunity to learn more productive and effective methods of reaching out to not only his community but to other communities as well. He believes Public Allies will be a great beginning of an amazing future toward change.

Beatriz Santiago

St. Vincent's Dispensary of Hope

Beatriz is 22 years old and was born in Puerto Rico. She was raised in Bridgeport since the age of 2. The

main reason that she applied to Public Allies was to give back to her community. She has always been very involved in the community and this was another opportunity to give back. For her, growing up in Bridgeport was a very interesting and educational experience. She feels that being a part of Public Allies will give her the opportunity to make a difference in her community. She believes that if she can affect the life of at least one person, she has accomplished her goal.

Christine Santos

Domus

Growing up in Bridgeport as a youth, Christine had been involved in her community either doing clean ups or small community gatherings. She can remember those who were leaders and helped her to see the importance of a strong community and helping others. After graduating with an Urban and Community Studies degree, she didn't know what she wanted to do. When she learned about Public Allies during their Team Service Project in Bridgeport, she was immediately interested, knowing that this is what she wanted to do. She saw it as an opportunity become a leader in her community so that she can help those youth around her become leaders for the future.

Samantha Santos

Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust

Samantha was born and raised in Bridgeport, CT and graduated from the University of Connecticut in May 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Her experiences at UCONN have motivated her to diligently work towards positive change in her community. She joined Public Allies with the desire to gain leadership skills necessary for a future in social services. During her time with Public Allies, she hopes to learn more about the greater Bridgeport area. She is very excited

to be a part of Public Allies because she thinks it is a great opportunity to gain experience, work with the community, and positively influence others around her.

Sharaya Smith

Bridgeport Public Library

Sharaya decided to come back to the PACT program as a Second Year Ally because of the knowledge, growth, and experiences she gained from her first year. Before she came to the program, she was able to travel while in the military but she always knew that she wanted to come back home to Bridgeport and do great things! As a First Year Ally, Public Allies allowed her to do that, while at the same time teaching her how to better communicate with her peers and the world around her. It also taught her how to improve herself and her attitude. She wanted to come back as a Second Year Ally to dive deeper into these experiences, to try and make use of the networks that I now have access to, and to help with the First Years.

Tinesha Sneed

Southwestern CT Area Health Education Center

Tinesha joined Public Allies to gain knowledge and experience in doing what she loves. She has lived in Bridgeport, CT for most of her life and has been an active participant in the community, working with various organizations and churches who all desire for the people of Bridgeport to have the necessities needed to survive and succeed. She found satisfaction in sharing with the sisters and brothers of my community with hopes that it will greatly empower them. She is excited about Public Allies and she predicts that this experience will aid in her continuous work in the community.



Veronica Swain

Greater Bridgeport Area Prevention Program, Inc.

After interning for the Jane Goodall Institute, Veronica decided to stay in the non-profit sector. She spent five years working for the Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut's humanities branch known as "ESCAPE to the Arts." There, she worked with underprivileged, at-risk youth in painting, drawing, dance, leadership development, and service-learning. Realizing she wanted to do more and needed to learn more, Veronica applied to Public Allies. Spending a year in this intensive leadership program convinced her to do it again, and so she applied again, was accepted, and is back for more.

Greater Hartford Team

Erinn Arbalaez

Husky Sport

Erinn grew up in CT and attended the University of Connecticut, double majoring in Economics and Political Science with a minor in Human Rights. During her senior year of college, she started volunteering and then interning with the non-profit organization, Husky Sport, which does youth programming in the North End of Hartford. She was excited when she learned about the Public Allies program and saw it as a chance to continue working with the Hartford community. In the future, she would like to continue working in public education and advocating for the right to education.

Claudine Constant

Hartford Food Systems

Claudine is coming back to Public Allies as a second year and she is really looking forward to it. She had

an amazing experience the first year, and had a lot of personal growth, and found a place that she feel like she could call home, Hartford CT. She discovered where her true passions within social justice are, and that is food justice. Before Public Allies she was a public health major at Southern CT State University, but didn't have any idea what she could do with that degree. Completing her second year will give her the necessary tools and knowledge to fully grasp the degree of Public Health, and make an impact on her community of Hartford.

Kim Dirschka

Hands On Hartford

Kim moved to Hartford a year ago for another AmeriCorps position. As she finished that term, she continued to realize how much non-profit agency staff is stretched thin while the need for the services provided only continues to grow. The closer the end of her term got, the more she realized she wasn't ready to leave the population she had been working with. She was lucky enough to join Public Allies and Hands On Hartford, which allows her to continue working to meet the basic needs of Hartford residents.

Philip Drew

Our Piece Of The Pie, Inc.

Throughout his first year of AmeriCorps service, Phil interacted with Public Allies at multiple Hartford-area organizations. The Allies exhibited professionalism, dedication, and kindness at all times and seemed like a team he would feel fortunate to join. So, when time came to think about a second year of service, Public Allies was his first choice. He is so excited to become a 2011-2012 Ally and he can't wait to see what the Allies can accomplish!

Ashley Hamel

CT Association for Human Services

Ashley joined Public Allies because it will help her become a more involved member of her community. The program is unique, and the experience is dynamic and challenging. Public Allies will help her grow as a professional, as a person, and as a new leader in her community.

Emily Kaas

Hands On Hartford – Peter's Retreat

Emily chose to become a Public Ally because she saw this as a wonderful opportunity to experience what it means to be a community, and how she can better help to build and strengthen them. She chose to come back for a second year to continue that education and fully immerse herself in the Hartford community.

Lanham Marks-Hamilton

YWCA

There are many reasons Lanham is excited to join Public Allies. She looks forward to the co-op opportunity between nonprofit organizations and a continuing leadership development program. She believes in the advancement in organizations that have less of a goal to make money and more of a goal to achieve a civil purpose. She is also an advocate of constant learning. No matter where you are in your profession or what your age might be, she thinks that everyone can gain from continually engaging in development programs that foster personal leadership and cooperation in their career fields.

Allison Musgrove

The Village For Families And Children

Allison is completing a second year



of Public Allies because she had such a phenomenal experience last year; yet still feels as though she have more growing to do personally and professionally. After graduating from the University of Rhode Island in May 2010, she wanted to gain experience working in social services. She was able to do that and more while participating in Public Allies and working at the Village for Families and Children. She is excited to now be living in the community in which she will be working in and to see what another year of Public Allies has in store for her!

Al Riccio

True Colors

Al grew up in greater New Haven and recently moved to Hartford. As a transgender youth, he experienced firsthand some of the struggles common to LGBTQ kids today. He understands the need for promoting inclusive spaces, learning environments, and resources for sexual and gender minorities. After attending Southern Connecticut State University for a year and a half, he became an anti-war and LGBTQ rights activist. He believes that my experience with Public Allies and True Colors will give him the skills necessary to operate his own non-profit organization or work in the non-profit sector. He hopes to bring about social change in a way that strengthens and builds communities and positive connections among all people.

Amarillys Rodriguez

Community Renewal Team

Amarillys' parents had careers in the public and non-profit sectors, which ignited her interest in social justice issues; particularly in education, housing and community development. After graduating from Pomona College with a degree in Public Policy Analysis, she wanted to gain experience in these fields. She

heard about Public Allies from friends who were Allies in other cities and thought it would be a great way to learn as well as reconnect with and give back to her hometown. Eventually, she hopes to go to graduate school for public policy and non-profit management and continue working for positive social change.

Linnea Rudeen

Hartford Public Schools

Linnea was born and raised in Olympia, Washington and recently graduated from Whitman College with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Sociology. Linnea was drawn to the Public Allies program because of its emphasis on community building both amongst the allies and through nonprofit work. In the past she has worked with nonprofits focused on food security and urban agriculture, but she is very much looking forward to tackling a new issue which she has cared personally about for many years: the quality of public schools. She hopes that her experience with Hartford Public Schools and Public Allies will help her gain the skills to strengthen communities and address the needs of those around her in the years to come.

Derek Santiago

Husky Sport

Born and raised in Hartford, CT Derek intends to find new ways to contribute to the community that shaped him. Derek's goal is to continue his education while concentrating on non-profit work. He participated in events volunteering with Public Allies before he knew he'd even apply. Having seen how enriching a program it is he hopes to gain experience, enhance leadership qualities, and narrow his focus on what career path to pursue long-term. Derek is very enthusiastic about volunteering, working with children, and the arts. He considers himself an advocate for fitness and healthy living especially regarding

the youth.

Nordia Savage

Hartford Public Library

Anyone can get by, but Nordia wants to make a difference. Having emigrated from Jamaica and growing up in Hartford, the cycle of poverty and violence was a constant presence. Choosing to turn negativity into positive results, she thrived academically and took advantage of various opportunities. As a 2010 Williams College graduate, she credits her continued success in large part to her family and the positive support systems that she was introduced to and has worked to establish. She realized that these same systems are not readily available to everyone and would like to change this. PACT affords her the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make a difference.

Jennifer Sweat

Northwestern CT Area Health Education Center

Jennifer applied to the Public Allies Program after serving with the Youth Health Service Corps AmeriCorps Division at Northwestern Area Health Education Center (NWCTAHEC). She had an extremely positive experience with NWCTAHEC and is looking to increase the depth and breadth of her understanding of the non-profit network in Connecticut after working the greater part of the last 10 years in the Food and Beverage Industry. Public Allies offers that opportunity as well as new ways to develop as a leader in her community.



Greater New Haven Team

Shaquila Bruno

Domus

Shaquila applied to become a Public Ally because she loves helping others and making a difference in her community. She has always been very active in her community as a peer mentor and she has always loved learning. She applied because she wants to learn more about herself and how to accomplish her goals so Public Allies was something that will help complete her.

Julie Carson

Solar Youth

Born and raised in Caribou, Maine, Julie graduated from Dartmouth College in 2010 with a BA in Environmental Studies and a minor in French. After spending four years trekking through the White Mountains, she knew that she wanted to combine her love of the natural world with her passion for teaching and learning. She is excited to hit the ground running at Solar Youth, where she will gain experience in environmental education, youth development, and community service. She is hoping to apply her experience to a future career in teaching, environmental program management, or conservation.

Andrew Christie

New Haven Land Trust

Andrew joined Public Allies to learn more about community development and to take part in a sharing of experience with a diverse group of forward thinking people. His path to Public Allies may have started in his last two years of college where he took on a human rights degree. He was lucky enough to meet a Public Ally in his first year out of school and

their experience showed me an excellent path to explore and further develop his interests in social justice and community development!

Ileana Garcia

The Diaper Bank

Ileana heralds from Puerto Rico. She decided to relocate to the East Coast for a taste of living in a city and a different environment. Having had experience helping at-risk university students, Ileana knew that she wanted to contribute to her new community in some way. Finding out about Public Allies from a sister, she applied, seeing an incredible opportunity to not only explore her new city home of New Haven in a unique way, but also to give back to the residents.

Jeff Hardin

Yale University: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement

What excited Jeff about Public Allies was the opportunity to participate in a program that emphasizes both the value of grassroots social change and the need for self-awareness. To receive training in such a setting and be able to grow alongside his peers will make PACT a wonderful environment for him to enter into the nonprofit world and face a variety of new challenges. The chance to gain experience within an established nonprofit while also working on a group service project in a local community will make this a productive and fulfilling time for him.

Nikki Lunceford-Hilgert

Squash Haven

When Nikki first heard about Public Allies, she knew immediately that she wanted to apply. She has always been drawn to service opportunities and college exposed her to many areas of need in the world that she is eager to do something about. However, she is still in the process of searching for the intersect where her

strengths will most benefit others. As an Ally, she hopes to utilize the experience and process of reflection to learn more about herself in order to more fully serve others.

Nydia A. Roman

New Haven Academy

Nydia was fortunate to have discovered Public Allies at a time where she wasn't sure what direction to take in her life after graduating college. She knew that she wanted a career in the non-profit sector but she didn't know where she fit in. She needed to explore, build leadership skills and gain experience to get closer to finding where her passion lied. She had an incredible life changing experience during her first year as an Ally. She experienced much personal growth, but she wanted to grow even more on the professional side. She just started to dig deeper into her leadership abilities and she is excited to see where a second year with Public Allies will take her.

Lizzy Star

Artspace

A New Jersey native, Lizzy spent four years in the Elm City as an undergraduate at Yale. There, she promoted sustainable agriculture, food access, and environmental education through her work at the Yale Sustainable Food Project and Common Ground High School. Since graduating, she has worked at Scholastic Book Clubs, specializing in books for second and third graders and supporting literacy in children of all ages. She is thrilled to be returning to New Haven to work with Artspace this year.

Rebecca Theise

Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services

When Rebecca graduated from Brown University in 2010 with a degree in Public Health, she knew



that she wanted to begin a career helping people create safer, healthier communities. That summer, she biked across the U.S. with Bike & Build to raise money and awareness for affordable housing. Upon returning to Providence, RI, she worked for a year on a hospital-sponsored obesity intervention and planned youth programs. When she heard about Public Allies, she thought it was the perfect mix of active learning, community service, and hands-on leadership training. She can't wait to begin working in New Haven with IRIS!

Common Ground High School this fall!

Daniel Vieira

Youth Rights Media

Daniel joined Public Allies to get more insight and experience in the Non-profit world. He came to Public Allies after graduating from Southern Connecticut State University and a short run in managing a community garden and anti-sweatshop campaign on campus. He is super excited about starting a second year and looks forward to learning more about developing strong and healthy communities and organizations. After all they help us form who we are and what we do.

Christina Wakefield

Common Ground

Christina joined Public Allies in order to develop her leadership and organizational abilities in the nonprofit sector, to learn from and collaborate with other like-minded people, and to continue to live and serve in New Haven after attending Yale. Though she will admit that she wasn't too sure about the snow when she arrived as a freshman (she is a native Californian....not too surprising), she knew that she wanted to be immersed in the community that quickly became her home away from home. Consequently, she is excited to be serving as Development and Community Engagement Ally at

