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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & CO-OP

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## A 'Promise' fulfilled

August 23, 2012 by Matt Collette



The newest class of fellows. Photo courtesy Massachusetts Promise Fellowship.

Catherine Noel, B'10, started feeling antsy shortly after she

landed her first professional job as a portfolio accountant for a financial services firm.

The office life, she explained, simply wasn't for her. Instead, Noel wanted to continue the community-building work that she had begun as an undergraduate volunteer for a student-led organization called Social Change through Peace Games.

Noel started looking for new opportunities in Boston and quickly found the **Massachusetts Promise Fellowship**, a nonprofit **AmeriCorps** organization that is housed within Northeastern's **Center for Community Service**. The organization places 40 fellows who commit to a year of full-time service at nonprofit organizations, schools, and city agencies across Massachusetts to create, lead and manage youth-development projects. The program also gives participants the option of taking free classes through the university's College of Professional Studies.

At the beginning of August, Noel started serving with America Scores, a Boston-based urban youth-development program that combines soccer, mentoring and service learning. "Now I'm working with a group I really believe in," she explained. "I'm working with more senior fellows who have experience, and I know what we're doing is really making an impact."

Mass Promise fellow Hatsie Haley.



Hatsie Haley recently completed her second year of service as a Massachusetts Promise fellow for an organization called MassPower. Haley, who served with children and facilitated the building of a new site at the South Boston Boys & Girls Club, noted that the experience has prepared her for a teaching job in elementary education.

“I feel like I grew up with this program,” said Haley, who is pursuing a master’s degree in education through CPS. “I graduated from college and I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do, so I went into service so I could try a few things out.”

She added, “Through this fellowship, I gained a real appreciation of the importance of service and community, which helped focus what I want to do with my life.”

The Massachusetts Promise Fellowship is the only AmeriCorps program in Massachusetts to dispatch its fellows to locations across the state, and not just within a specific region or city. The Fellowship is funded with federal money that is then distributed by the Massachusetts Service Alliance, a nonprofit organization that serves as the state commission on service and volunteerism.

Fellows, said program director Colleen Holohan, spend about 80 percent of their time in the field and 20 percent in professional training and development seminars.

The program helps strengthen the lives of the fellows, from both a professional and humanitarian perspective. “Our fellows become very close professional colleagues and are ready to make real changes to their communities once they complete the program,” she said.

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