

Creating Great Stories

[Follow this guide, and in no time you will be composing really great stories on your own.]

Who can submit Great Stories?

In the AmeriCorps tradition, great stories are collected from HealthCorps members, national service participants that serve through the Community HealthCorps. However, great stories about the impact of Community HealthCorps can be shared by anyone!

Sure, stories from members will always be the highest priority. However, the HealthCorps experience as told through the eyes of other people such as community volunteers, coordinators, supervisors and service recipients are also very important. Stories regarding impact are as valuable as the numbers about what got done.

What types of stories are acceptable?

Simply put, stories must be completely true - real people, real situations. Without getting too technical – it must have a beginning, middle and end. Story endings tend to be the peak of the story.

What can I write about?

The key is to be descriptive. You are not just sharing words. Great stories express the images of words to readers - the sights, smells, sounds and emotion. As a result, readers become part of the experience, believe and get inspiration. The central tone of stories should be goodness, because the whole point of AmeriCorps and Community HealthCorps is the do good, improving our nation one person, one family, and one neighborhood at a time. Examples of word images:

- **Sight:** “After the third time I helped Jason find help, he no longer walked into the health center with slumped shoulders, and eyes filled with frustration.”
- **Sound:** “The construction outside was such loud clamor, I could barely think.”
- **Combination:** “The neighborhood seemed like a place that once was, but the sweet scent of flowers and laughter carried by the summer wind gave me a sense of possibility, hope for this place, and the people in it. So then I asked myself, ‘what can WE get done’.”

Really, how you tell a story is totally up to you, but a Community HealthCorps story should contain expressions of encouragement, hope, happiness and joy.

How to Make of Habit of Documenting Stories:

- **Seize the Moment:** The best time to write down thoughts is as they come to mind, but not always possible.
- **Write Most Every Day:** Establish a routine of writing stories at the end of each day as needed, editing can come later. Journaling is a really great way to keep track of it all in one place. If you are someone who is uncomfortable with writing, the more you write, the better writing becomes.
- **Ask for Help:** Have someone you trust review stories you want to report. Receiving constructive feedback, such as through a writing coach significantly strengthens writing skill over time. It’s OK to also get help with the actual writing.
- **Have Fun:** This type of writing experience can be fun and feel good – a relief from the stress of life.