



Amanda Natalie

Jumpstart Pittsburgh Corps Member 2003-2006



Amanda Natalie served first as a Jumpstart Corps member then as a team leader in Pittsburgh.

During her three years of service, Amanda worked one-to-one with children, mentored peers, and discovered a passion that she plans to pursue in her career.

When I began with Jumpstart as a freshman in college, I was just looking for a campus job, some extra cash for the weekends. I didn't realize I was about to change my entire life. I spent my first year with a very special boy named Tony. Tony was only three at the time. He was shy and reluctant to participate in our songs and activities. By the end of the year, Tony was able to write his name, knew the words to every song, and was often the center of attention during choice time as he directed everyone to play "Spiderman." It was incredibly hard to leave him at the end of the school year. He had become the highlight of my days at school.

As a team leader [my second year], I was given a team of 14 amazing Corps members. [My] task was daunting at first, but my team made my life a breeze-- every single one was dedicated to the work and the Jumpstart mission and philosophy. My partner child, Gabriel, was extremely intelligent. I found myself learning lessons from him some days instead of the other way around. I watched him go from writing just his first name to writing both his name and mine in full; I watched him go from being apprehensive in social situations to having so much self-confidence he was a leader among his peers; I watched him go from listening intently to the stories I read to actually reading entire books to me instead. Gabriel amazed me each and everyday I spent with him.

"Most of all, you do [Jumpstart] for the children. For their smiles, their hugs, their endless appreciation for your presence in their lives. And you do it for yourself. Because only an organization like Jumpstart could teach you that you have the ability to change the world and the lives around you."

Jumpstart is a way of life, a passion to fulfill. It has affected my life in every way imaginable. When I entered college, I didn't know where my life was going or what I wanted to do with it. Two years later, with the help of my Jumpstart experience, I have decided to major in Developmental Psychology so I can continue helping children throughout my life. Had I not joined Jumpstart, I would have probably never done any community service in Pittsburgh. As a Corps member, I have

been able to make contact with several community organizations in the Pittsburgh area.

Talk to any Jumpstart Corps member, and they will tell you the reason they do Jumpstart has nothing to do with the money they make. You do it for the Saturday

service projects with your team at the local children's museum. You do it for three-hour conversations with the staff after session has ended and everyone has gone home. You do it for the friendships you'll discover in your Corps. But most of all, you do it for the children. For their smiles, their hugs, their endless appreciation for your presence in their lives. And you do it for yourself. Because only an organization like Jumpstart could teach you that you have the ability to change the world and the lives around you.