



My Journey to Help Others

By Morgan Jessee



Mother Nature has kissed Wisconsin with snow. The ground is frozen. No new life blooms. Many creatures are in hibernation, except for me. Life takes all souls on fascinating adventures. There is a reason why all events happen to certain individuals and why some do not happen. At the moment, life takes me on the adventure of serving Wisconsin and the school district I attended from fifth grade through high school.



My name is Morgan Jessee, and I am an AmeriCorps Farm to School Specialist serving at the Howard-Suamico School District. I recently completed my bachelor's degree in Applied Food Studies with a concentration in Farm-to-Table. I also completed my associate's degree in culinary arts in 2017. Many people ask me, "So do you still want to be a chef?" Yes, I do, but at the moment I focus on the topics I have learned throughout my bachelor's degree, which consisted of improving food systems, and the capacity to communicate about complex issues like food waste, food insecurity, sustainability, and food justice. I see the importance of learning all aspects of our multiple food systems. School nutrition is one of the main food systems. Many changes need to be made to benefit the children. That is why I chose to serve my community with thirteen other passionate individuals who understand the importance of farm to school.

To improve school nutrition, I help children understand food through the topics of MyPlate/food groups, where food comes from, diversity in food and nutrition, building healthy habits, and exposure to a variety of food. Throughout this adventure, I realized that many young minded individuals are unaware of how food is grown and produced. When I teach them about these topics, I can see the gears in their brains start to turn. Their eyes light up and suddenly I see a sea of hands before me. The questions they eagerly ask help uncover the secrets they do not know about food.



Aside from educating children, I provide fresh, local, and healthy produce to five elementary schools and three secondary schools in Howard-Suamico. I help manage the school's two-acre garden with our local farmer. All of the produce harvested goes back into the school lunch system and is added to all of the lunch menus. In turn, fresh produce helps change the school food environment not only for the kids, but also for the staff. I help increase the school food service director's confidence in their ability to incorporate local fruits and vegetables in their menus, as well as increase positive attitudes towards the incorporation of fresh foods in the lunch system. Students and staff become educated on local procurement, participate in local food taste tests, help in the garden, and engage with local farmers.

I could not have asked for a more fulfilling experience that my service journey has brought me. These past few months have consisted of long hours in the garden and kitchen, working with children, coordinating events, and promoting and sustaining the farm to school program. I am so grateful to help make a change in the community I grew up in.

"I am an AmeriCorps member and I will get things done."

