



## **For AmeriCorps worker, service is the common thread in her life and future plans**

Corrie Mixon's smile speaks of what she's been through, reflects where she is now, and points toward an intriguing future.

The smile itself was hard-earned. Born with a cleft lip and cleft palate, she had 12 surgeries and procedures to set things right. "I spent a lot of time at MCV in childhood," Mixon said. "That experience is always in the back of my mind. There were a lot of doctors who worked on me, but one surgeon stood out. His individual impact on my life was incredible. With graduation around the corner it occurred to me: That's how I can impact people's lives."

It was also that way of thinking that she brought with her to the University of Richmond.

Wanting to help in whatever ways she could, Mixon became a Bonner

Scholar, which requires students to commit 10 hours of community service each week as part of their scholarship. Before long, her fellow Bonners led her to a course in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies. When she took Thad Williamson's Justice and Civil Society course, she said she found it to be the first course to connect her love for justice and her passion for social issues. Mixon applied to the Jepson School, where she continued to pursue service opportunities. "I'm happiest when I'm serving others," she said. "I don't get excited about the bottom line."

Her Bonner experience also led her to realize more needs and opportunities within the nonprofit sector. During fall break in 2005 she, along with other sophomore Bonner scholars, went to Mississippi to help with Hurricane Katrina relief. She was one of the founding members of the Collegiate Disaster Relief Team (CDRT). Mixon and five other students on the trip were so inspired by the experience that they decided the team should always be in place. "So we formed an organization to make that happen," she said.

For her required Jepson internship the summer before her senior year, Mixon approached Boaz & Ruth. Located in Highland Park, the organization helps rebuild lives of formerly incarcerated men and women through jobs training. Boaz & Ruth restores lives as well as buildings, with the hope that "individuals will no longer look to society to support themselves but look to themselves to support society." It is also the organization's goal to connect Highland Park to the wider community through activities that bridge racial, economic and geographical barriers. More. This social entrepreneurial venture has seven businesses where program participants practice work readiness skills and do tasks such as food service, moving, furniture repair and restoration.

Boaz & Ruth's mission resonated with Mixon. "I have a personal connection to the incarcerated," she said. "My father was incarcerated for an alcohol-related offense. I am a strong believer in second chances. One thing I know very clearly: You may be released from jail, but you're not free."

Deciding what to do after graduation, she concluded: "I enjoy serving others and traveling to the places that other people don't want to go. I thought 'how can I live a life that encompasses those passions?' I didn't want to have to settle, to pack up all my idealistic visions."

She thought back to her own experience as a patient and decided she could make a difference as a nurse. "With nursing, you can practice it in the U.S. or internationally. My ultimate goal is to go on medical missions. Nurses have the most flexibility." She is preparing herself first by taking classes at a community college and said she hopes to attend Bon Secours Memorial School of nursing.

While studying part time, she is a full-time AmeriCorps worker at Boaz & Ruth. AmeriCorps places thousands of volunteer workers in various anti-poverty projects nationwide. This year in Virginia alone, AmeriCorps is providing some 740 individuals the opportunity to provide intensive, results-driven service to meet education, environmental, public safety and other pressing needs in communities across the Commonwealth. [More](#).

At Boaz & Ruth, Mixon works with a team of people charged with connecting "culturally and economically disparate communities across the Richmond metropolitan area."

"There's a lot of thinking outside the box," she said. "Here you see the impact of individual ideas." She is also learning from the leadership in action that she sees around her. "Leadership is everywhere," she said. "The nonprofit sector has the unconsecrated leaders who are constantly coming up with solutions to problems or ways to combat them. Boaz & Ruth has a lot of charismatic leadership in action, and perseverance."

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*This is one of a group of articles featuring Jepson School graduates and students as part of the [150 Days in a Lifetime of Service](#) campaign.*

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