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AmeriCorps Volunteer Helping with Literacy Council at MSCC

Crystal Daniel of West Memphis has been selected as an AmeriCorps volunteer for the Crittenden County Literacy Council located at Mid-South Community College.

Daniel, a student at MSCC and Arkansas State University, is serving as a tutor, trainer, and recruiter. AmeriCorps is a federal government program established under President Bill Clinton through the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.



“I’ve only been working with her for the last month, but I love her creativity and her ideas,” said Jacki Murase, Literacy Council Coordinator.

“We can brainstorm some basic ideas about a project, and then she’ll turn it into something amazing.”

“Crystal is also full of ideas about how to teach and encourage our students. She is patient with them and works to instill in them that inner confidence that they can succeed with their educational goals. That’s exactly what our students need.”

Daniel said she had already given some thought to helping with the program before accepting the AmeriCorps appointment.

“It was funny because I had already seen the slides in the hallways about becoming a volunteer tutor,” she explained. “I was thinking about doing that anyway; I was just trying to find the time.”

When Murase approached her about the possibility of joining the literacy effort and explained the living allowance that accompanied it, Daniel couldn't resist.

"I was already interested in the program, but when she mentioned becoming an AmeriCorps member with a stipend, it just made it that much more exciting," Daniel said. "I love the literacy program; it's awesome. On my first day, the students were so helpful and supportive of each other that it was just amazing."

Daniel performs one-on-one as well as group tutoring. She also helps with program brochures and fliers and is in the process of creating a more-user environment friendly in the computer lab.

"I just try to do whatever I can to make the program better," Daniel said.

And she is succeeding.

"Crystal has been working to incorporate elements such as of collaborative learning and camaraderie into the class structure, and by all accounts from the students, they are responding positively," Murase said.

"While the mission of the Council is to still 'each one, teach one,' this opportunity to branch out and have the students learn in group settings is building a team-like atmosphere among the students. They like helping and encouraging each other, and Crystal facilitates that."

Daniel, a 2013 MSCC honor graduate with an Associate of Arts in Teaching degree, is pursuing a bachelor's degree from Arkansas State University through the MSCC University Center. She is focusing on mid-level math and science.

"Ultimately I want to teach in college because I love this environment," she said. "I love kids, but I also love working with adults."

She started at MSCC as a full-time student at the age of 16 after earning a GED. "I had no idea what I wanted to do, but the college was like my home."

Daniel said the decision to become a teacher was not hers.

"That was a calling; I didn't decide that. After I graduated with an Associate of Arts in General Education in 2010, I decided that I needed to do something else. I kind of had the thought that I might want to be a teacher by how much I loved it when I helped other students figure things out."

In addition to her new role as an AmeriCorps volunteer, Daniel serves as an MSCC Academic Coach, a Structured Learning Assistance facilitator, an Ambassador, and president of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry. She is also married, to Terrance Daniel who is attending MSCC this fall with hopes of completing the Diesel Maintenance Technology program.

“Sleep is optional,” she said with a smile. “Somebody asked me the other day, ‘How do you keep up with everything?’ I feel like everything I pick up God calls me to do it. So, if He calls me to do it, He equips me to keep up with it, too. It’s just a pure miracle I can up with anything considering how much I have going on. I wear a lot of hats; I’m just all over the place helping.”

Daniel’s volunteer opportunity is part of an “Arkansas Reads” grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The grant is administered by the Arkansas Service Commission through the Arkansas Department of Human Services’ Division of Community Service and Nonprofit Support.

For information about the Literacy Council of Crittenden County, visit the office in the Arkansas Workforce Center on MSCC’s North Campus, 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call Murase at (870) 733-6834, or email her at jlmurase@midsouthcc.edu.