

2021 *FIRST* AmeriCorps VISTA Program

2020 - 2021 *FIRST* AmeriCorps VISTA Leaders

<u>FLORIDA</u> <u>West Palm Beach</u> Kate Sample	<u>NORTH CAROLINA</u> <u>Wilmington</u> Zephaniah Long	<u>NORTH CAROLINA</u> <u>Warrenton</u> Angel Jones
--	---	---

2020 - 2021 *FIRST* AmeriCorps VISTA Members

<u>ALABAMA - Birmingham/Huntsville</u> Emmy Bray Scarlett Bautista	<u>NORTH CAROLINA - Greensboro</u> Jessica Clark
<u>ARIZONA - Flagstaff</u> Patti Strones	<u>PUERTO RICO - San Juan</u> Maria del Pilar Angulo Martha Rivera
<u>FLORIDA - Jacksonville</u> Nickie Chatman-Brown Sachin Sundar	<u>TEXAS - McAllen</u> Victor Menchaca Andre Adame
<u>FLORIDA - West Palm Beach</u> Marion Ross	<u>TEXAS - Houston/Pasadena</u> Reed Thornton Devin Varnado Reggie Williams
<u>INDIANA - Indianapolis</u> Matthew Malinak	<u>TEXAS - San Antonio</u> Adam Miller DeAnna Wood
<u>NEVADA - Reno/Las Vegas</u> Lauren Halvorson Nathanial Holliday	<u>WISCONSIN - Milwaukee</u> Amber Wycklendt Bridget Lee
<u>NEW HAMPSHIRE - Manchester</u> Tyler Jones	
<u>NEW YORK - New York City</u> Srikar Gudimella Lianza Yap Gabriella Guimaraes	

FIRST AmeriCorps VISTA Leaders

FLORIDA- West Palm Beach

Kate Sample

ksample@firstinspires.org



Kate has spent the better part of 15 years around the **FIRST** programs. An alumnus of the **FIRST** Robotics Competition Team 1108 Panther Robotics, she has been involved with all four programs of **FIRST** in a number of roles including helping to found, support, coach, and mentor teams. Kate's experience with **FIRST** extends to being a volunteer for all four programs as well. She has held nearly every role, from safety glasses to judge advisor, Control Systems Advisor and is even a well-known emcee and game announcer in the Kansas City area.

Kate chose to be a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA because she wanted to pay it forward. Her goals for this year include getting to know the already existing **FIRST** community, increasing the number of individuals who recognize **FIRST** in the community, and ensuring that the growing number of **FIRST** LEGO® League students will have a continued pipeline with **FIRST** Tech Challenge and **FIRST** Robotics Competition.

NORTH CAROLINA – Wilmington

Zephaniah Long

zlong@firstinspires.org



Zeph Long brings ten years of **FIRST** experience to the AmeriCorps VISTA Program, having been involved with organization as a **FIRST** LEGO® League participant, and moving on to **FIRST** Tech Challenge for four years. For the last six years, he has volunteered extensively at **FIRST** events around the nation. Zeph graduated from high school in 2014 and earned a Bachelors of Science in Natural Science/Mathematics in 2016.

He currently serves as a VISTA leader located in North Carolina. His efforts are driven by the belief that **FIRST** is an inspiring and life changing program that should be available to all students, regardless of their background. In addition to Zeph's responsibilities to the **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA Program, he is also a representative for LGBTQ+ of **FIRST**, is on the board of directors for the Rainbow STEM Alliance, and is also involved with local organizations focused on advocacy and support of the LGBTQ community.

NORTH CAROLINA - Warrenton

Angel Jones

ajones@firstinspires.org

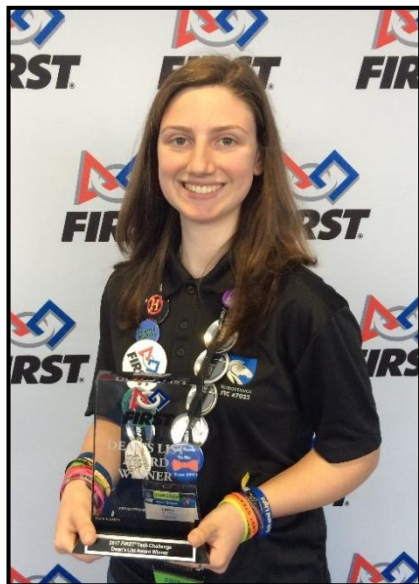


Angel has extensive training in bookkeeping and entrepreneurship logistics. She has been in leadership roles within sales companies, nonprofit organizations, as well as personal small business ventures. Angel has volunteered for nearly a decade in educational programming and community awareness activities.

Angel learned of **FIRST** 4 years ago and believes it to be the cure for educational gaps in poor communities. In her own words *“Through collaborations and strategic partnerships **FIRST** can catapult any kid with curiosity and a drive, out of poverty and into purpose. **FIRST** is about engineering robots but more about the little engineer inside each one of us that’s waiting to build their own future.”*

Her background in business began at age 14 keeping accounting records for her father. Angel has since furthered her education to develop these skills, so that she may pass them along to the next generation within her community. Her focus and passion has been centered around coordinating volunteers, students, and employees; as well as her strong dedication to organizing communities to positive action.

FIRST VISTA Members



ALABAMA – Birmingham

Emmy Bray

ebray@firstinspires.org

Emmy discovered her lifetime passion for **FIRST** when she was six years old and **first** laid hands on a box of LEGO® with the intention to build a robot. Now, she has 14 years of **FIRST** experience and is ready to use it during her time as a VISTA in her home state of Alabama. Over the next year she hopes to create several new teams and setup a sustainable network of support so that, even after her service has ended, her work will continue to grow into beautiful new **FIRST** teams.



ALABAMA – Huntsville

Scarlett Bautista

sbautista@firstinspires.org

Scarlett Bautista has been involved with **FIRST** since her freshman year of high school in 2013. She chooses to serve as a **FIRST** VISTA because she feels that it is important to help today's youth become leaders in STEM and in their communities by using the resources and skills that she has gained through **FIRST**. She is currently an electrical engineering student at Calhoun Community College and intends to continue her education at UAH in the spring. For

four years of her involvement with **FIRST**, she was a member of Team 538, The Dragon Slayers. She then was given the position as the Social Media Director for **FIRST** in Alabama and joined the **FIRST** LEGO® League Alabama Planning Committee. **FIRST** has had a great and positive impact on her life and she is very grateful to have the opportunity to be able to share it with those who may not otherwise have the chance to experience it.



ARIZONA – Flagstaff

Patti Strones

pstrones@firstinspires.org

Patti initially got involved with **FIRST** when her children participated on teams in high school. Currently she is a 10-year volunteer for the **FIRST** Robotics Competition Regional in Arizona as well as a 6 year volunteer for the **FIRST** World Championships. She began her journey as a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA this past November. During her service, her goal is to encourage all students to take advantage of the opportunities provided by **FIRST**

and making sure everyone has access to the programs in **FIRST**. Helping the community and youth organizations overcome barriers to participating in **FIRST**. She aims to help the youth in her community to be able to experience what her son and daughter were fortunate to participate in.



FLORIDA - Jacksonville

Nickie Chatman-Brown

nchatman@firstinspires.org

Nickie has an extensive background in Education. She has been an educator for 16 years with her first teaching job at the high school she graduated from. Nickie learned about **FIRST** while serving as an AmeriCorps member for Communities in Schools of Jax Duval Reads Program. She was asked to volunteer as the robotics coach at the school where she was serving in the afterschool program. She accepted the position and hasn't looked back since. Nickie has served as a coach and mentor for many teams.

Nickie chose to become a VISTA because she wanted to learn more about the **FIRST** programs and become a resource for other coaches, mentors and volunteers.



Florida – Jacksonville

Sachin Sundar

ssundar@firstinspires.org

Sachin serves because he was a part of programs for underprivileged children and it significantly contributed to who he is today. He hopes to be a part of a high impact environment so that he may pass on what was given to him. Sachin hopes to gain an understanding of the disparities that members within the community he is assigned are

affected by and create an impact by introducing FIRST programs in schools. He hopes that he will learn from his coworkers and community members.

This is his first year with **FIRST**. Sachin has previously volunteered with Gus Bus Tutoring, College Bound DC, Virginia Student Refugee Achievement Project, and worked for the NIH for the past two years. His involvement in the NIH Academy Enrichment Program increased his knowledge base and awareness on the disparities various groups face. Sachin is a research-oriented individual with a strong ability to connect with others and be resourceful. His favorite thing about being a **FIRST** VISTA is having the chance to introduce high yield concepts in STEM in a fun, engaging manner to underprivileged students.



FLORIDA – West Palm Beach

Marion Ross

mross@firstinspires.org

Marion serves because she would like to see the whole child nurtured and not just aspects. Through reading comprehension, to food delivery, and STEM skills she would like to encourage our kids to strive for positive change. Marion hopes that this experience will provide her with long lasting

connections within my community. She has experience as a Coach/Mentor for her children's **FIRST** team and was asked by her local PDP to become a VISTA. Her favorite things about **FIRST** is seeing “ah ha” moments within the community and its children.



INDIANA - Indianapolis

Matthew Malinak

mmalinak@firstinspires.org

Matthew joined his high school's FRC Team 862: Lightning Robotics as a freshman in 2011. At the University of Michigan, he graduated with a degree in Industrial and Operations Engineering in 2019 while being heavily involved with **FIRST** through UM's alumni group (FAMNM). Matthew decided to

serve as a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA because of his passion for **FIRST**, and to have the opportunity to be able to directly help with **FIRST**'s mission. With a history in **FIRST** volunteering, coordinating, and mentoring at all program levels Matthew is looking forward to bringing his experience and skills to benefit **FIRST** Indiana Robotics.



NEVADA - Reno

Lauren Halvorson

lhalvorson@firstinspires.org

Lauren wants to serve because she wants to have a positive impact on the world and today's youth. By the end of this experience she wants to have new, lasting connections and a want to gain more computer skills. Her father served in the Peace Corps (Micronesia, 81-83), so she always knew she wanted to join a service organization at some point. Her social skills from working for Disney World might help with a project at some point. She is also very persistent, which always comes in handy. Her favorite thing about being a **FIRST**

AmeriCorps VISTA is the people she has been working with! They are all so kind and welcoming.



NEVADA – Las Vegas

Nathaniel Holliday

nholliday@firstinspires.org

Nathaniel is a first Alumni as a **FIRST** Robotics Competition team member and **FIRST** Tech Challenge and **FIRST** LEGO League volunteer/mentor. “I was introduced to the sport for the mind, by my father. For he was the mentor of the team I was recruited to. In my three years of experience, I’ve had the opportunity to compete, and coach. Along with my competitive experience with my team, I had the opportunity to speak at a VIP guest event, ultimately allowing me discover my innate public speaking skills. **FIRST** was an amazing experience for me, because it allowed me

to learn so much about myself and what’s possible for the future. As we continue to innovate as a country and world, the future is full of tech. Without first, I’m not sure I would be as aware of what the future beholds, as I am now.”

Because of Nathaniel’s unique experience he was given the opportunity to give back to the organization that helped him find himself. “Thank you **FIRST**,” Nathaniel says.



NEW HAMPSHIRE - Manchester

Tyler Jones

tjones@firstinspires.org

In 2016, after graduating from college, Tyler moved to Manchester, New Hampshire to serve with AmeriCorps as a member of City Year New Hampshire. After two years of service, one of which was as a VISTA, he took some time to consider his options before finally deciding to return to national service as a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA. During his time with City Year, Tyler was fortunate enough to see the positive changes that **FIRST** programs can have on students. He chose to return to AmeriCorps in order to contribute to making these positive changes even more accessible and available to children nationwide.



NEW YORK – New York City

Srikar Gudimella

sgudimella@firstinspires.org

Srikar joined **FIRST** as a VISTA because of **FIRST's** important work in increasing the accessibility of STEM education and opportunities in underserved communities. As a **FIRST** LEGO League alum, he believes that **FIRST's** programs play a key role in inspiring future STEM professionals. Srikar hopes to use his year of service to explore the challenges that face the country's largest school district and how New York City's government, nonprofits, and community work together to address those issues. He is looking forward to working with his incredibly talented and knowledgeable colleagues and hearing about their experiences in education and service.



NEW YORK – New York City

Lianza Yap

lyap@firstinspires.org

Lianza serves as an AmeriCorps VISTA because she has a passion for helping others and making a positive impact in the lives of everyone around her. She has worked in organizations, such as the Peace Corps, that focus on solving real-world problems through a creative interdisciplinary approach with an emphasis on sustainability. As a **FIRST** Tech Challenge alumni, Lianza enjoys giving back to the **FIRST** community through her VISTA service.



NEW YORK – New York City

Gabriella Guimaraes

gguimaraes@firstinspires.org

Srikar joined **FIRST** as a VISTA because of **FIRST's** important work in increasing the accessibility of STEM education and opportunities in underserved communities. As a **FIRST** LEGO League alum, he believes that **FIRST's** programs play a key role in inspiring future STEM professionals. Srikar hopes to use his year of service to explore the challenges that face the country's largest school district and how New York City's government, nonprofits, and community work together to address those issues. He is looking forward to working with his incredibly talented and knowledgeable colleagues and hearing about their experiences in education and service.



NORTH CAROLINA – Greensboro

Jessica Clark

jclark@firstinspires.org

Jessica Clark is currently serving in her first year in Greensboro, North Carolina. Prior to serving with **FIRST**, she was a high school science teacher for four years. Through teaching, she saw the effects of how poverty and inaccessibility to adequate STEM resources and training negatively impact student's education outcomes. She decided to serve with **FIRST**, because she is very passionate about providing underserved students with a quality and intentional education. She is excited to serve with **FIRST** and work alongside with individuals who are also dedicated to decreasing the education gap.



PUERTO RICO – San Juan

Maria del Pilar Angulo

mangulo@firstinspires.org

Pilar has a PhD in Biology and was a Professor at the University of Puerto Rico. Pilar was particularly motivated by low income students and ensuring they have the necessary tools to be able to be successful students. Pilar, sees the “fire in their bellies” that will allow them to really succeed and become agents of change. What inspired Pilar to become a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA was that it is important to her to be able to work with low income/underserved students and communities.



PUERTO RICO – San Juan

Martha Rivera

martha.rivera@firstinspires.org

As an immigrant from Mexico and later on, a military wife, Martha R. Rivera experienced first-hand what it meant to make do with what was available, and thankfully accepted help from those around her. When she relocated to Puerto Rico back in 2002, she felt the need to break the poverty cycle around her, and in her thirties went back to school and acquired a degree in journalism. All three of her sons and even Martha’s husband followed her steps and acquired their degrees. But Martha’s mission is not over, she knows that she is not able to help

all the kids in Puerto Rico, but with **FIRST**’s support, the seeds of curiosity will be sowed, and with time they will bear fruit.



TEXAS - McAllen

Victor Menchaca

vmenchaca@firstinspires.org

Victor serves because **FIRST** has inspired him and made an incredible impact on his life. Victor says his favorite thing about being a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA is giving students who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity, a chance to show their talents and skills in this program. Being a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA allows Victor to give back

to his community and the **FIRST** program.



TEXAS - McAllen

Andre Adame Ceballos

aadameceballos@firstinspires.org

Andre serves because he wants to be able to help his community out while inspiring others to pursue a career into a STEM related occupation, just as Andre is doing himself. Andre participated in a **FIRST** Tech Challenge team from his sophomore until his senior year. His favorite thing about being a VISTA is being able to help eliminate poverty in his community.



TEXAS - Houston

Reed Thornton

rthornton@firstinspires.org

Reed has been involved with **FIRST** for over 7 years. He is a **FIRST** Alumni and participated on a **FIRST** Robotics Competition team and a **FIRST** Tech Challenge team during high school. After high school he is now a mentor for the **FIRST** LEGO League, **FIRST** Tech Challenge and **FIRST** Robotics Competition community teams and is also

a referee for **FIRST** LEGO League and **FIRST** Tech Challenge competitions. As a **FIRST** AmeriCorps VISTA a goal for his service is to help build the **FIRST** program in his Houston community so others may have the same experience and opportunity he was given.



TEXAS - Houston

Devin Varnado

dvarnado@firstinspires.org

Devin Varnado is from Houston, Texas. He joined **FIRST** after meeting a VISTA leader/mentor and hearing that he had something to offer to the underserved communities with his academic background in STEM. He enjoys all

things mechanical, but especially cars. They are like moving puzzle pieces to him, which is a passion that's been with him since he was a child. Because of that this he majored in and graduated with a mechanical engineering degree. Devin plans to share the access this degree offers him with those who may not have the opportunities allotted to them that a STEM degree can offer.



TEXAS – Houston

Reggie Williams

rwilliams@firstinspires.org

Reginal Williams recently graduated from Texas Southern University, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Electronic Engineering Technology. He is serving so that he can give back because he can see the personal impact that **FIRST** has had on each of his three daughters' lives. He sees this as an important opportunity to be a voice to help others from the community learn about **FIRST** and gain exposure. After graduating high school, Reggie went to the Army for four years and trained as a Combat Documentation Specialist in Denver

Colorado. He has worked for many corporations, including Continental Airlines as a lead agent, Brush Country Taxidermy Studios as a habitat and wildlife artist, Weatherford International as a Computer Numeric Control machinist, and National Oil Varco as a vertical mill and lathes CNC machinist. He was a member of the 10K Disaster Relief Team and is certified in CPR, (SAMA) Non-violent Crisis intervention, and received Swift Water Rescue Training at Fathom Academy. He would desire to use this experience as an opportunity to network more. Reginal is a family man and enjoys spending time helping his three daughters in robotics competitions, gardening, archery, and travel.



TEXAS – San Antonio

Adam Miller

amiller@firstinspires.org

Adam Miller is a first year Americorps VISTA member with a background in the automotive and construction industry. He is also a **FIRST** Tech Challenge and **FIRST** Robotics Competition alumni with podium finishes in both programs. He is currently living in Von Ormy, Texas and services the greater San Antonio area.



TEXAS – San Antonio

DeAnna Wood

dwood@firstinspires.org

DeAnna Wood is a FIRST alumni competing with FRC team 5754 Brooks Academy Robotics for 4 years in San Antonio. She decided to serve as a **FIRST** VISTA in order to give everyone the opportunities that she received, and she believes everyone has the potential

for greatness but not the necessary tools to achieve it. So, she works to achieve the goal of giving everyone an equal opportunity.



WISCONSIN - Milwaukee

Bridget Lee

blee@firstinspires.org

Bridget is new to **FIRST** and joined because she is passionate about giving back to her community by focusing on providing resources to underserved youth in STEM. She recently graduated with a degree in Mathematics and has worked with underrepresented populations in STEM during her time in University. She is excited to continue uplifting women and other minorities in STEM. Bridget hopes to further develop her public service skills while finding new ways to connect people. Her favorite thing about being a VISTA is the emphasis on capacity building and seeing the excitement that **FIRST** can bring to students.



WISCONSIN - Milwaukee

Amber Wycklendt

awycklendt@firstinspires.org

While Amber is new to **FIRST** VISTA, she is passionate about encouraging kids to be involved in STEM. In high school, she was inspired by her old chemistry teacher to be an engineer and has not looked back since. Although she will not be doing engineering this year, she is looking forward to giving back to the community in a way that will create a better future for everyone. She is also excited to learn more about Milwaukee and the unique challenges the schools in the city face. Through listening, understanding, and collaborating with the community, she hopes to come up with creative solutions to overcoming obstacles and inspiring children to dream big.