

Danielle Siegel

Program Assistant

What is your education & career background/goals?

A lifelong resident of Shelby, I graduated from Shelby High School in 2007. I began my post-secondary education at Muskegon Community College with a focus on Early Childhood Education. After a brief hiatus to earn money, I returned to my studies at Grand Valley State University in 2013, earning my Bachelor's of Science in Sociology in 2015. I served in the education sector of the Peace Corps from 2015-2017 and as an Americorps/VISTA member at the Community Foundation for Oceana County from 2017-2019.

What do you do at the Foundation?

After serving two terms as an Americorps VISTA member, co-sponsored by the Community Foundation for Oceana County and Oceana College Access Network, I was hired on as full-time Foundation staff in January 2020. I coordinate the early literacy program, Read early. Read often., advise the Youth Advisory Council, and do programmatic work on scholarships and grants.

Why do you work at the Foundation?

When I applied for the AmeriCorps/VISTA position, I was just finishing up my service with the Peace Corps, overseas in Burkina Faso. I wasn't planning on working right away upon return, but when I saw the posting position, I couldn't pass it up! I was interested in continuing to work in the realm of education, but on a larger scale, helping families to improve their quality of life through education. And to be able to do this right in my hometown, to give back to the Community that raised me, was a match made in heaven. The Read early. Read often. and College Access Programs were the perfect fit for me!

What is something most people don't know about you?

Outside my friends and family a lot of people don't know that I served in the Peace Corps- teaching preschool in West Africa for 28 months. I lived in a small community named Rouko, where I had about 50 preschoolers ranging in age from 2 to 8 years old. The preschool consisted of one classroom with a small playground and an outdoor hangar for lunchtime. I learned French, made some amazing new friends, even consider myself a member of another family there. Outside of teaching, I received funding

for the construction of two Moringa gardens- a superfood to supplement elementary school lunches. Other projects included an English Club, Malaria and HIV/reproductive health classes, and the exchanging of culture and tradition.