



A City of Philadelphia
AmeriCorps initiative



NEWS RELEASE
Samantha Byles
sbytes@bellevuepr.com

Former Corpsmember/Current Staff Member of PowerCorpsPHL Named 2017 Corpsmember of the Year
The Corps Network Will Recognize Philadelphia's Kalef Jones with One of Six Awards Granted Nationwide

Philadelphia (December 13, 2016)— Kalef Jones, an alumni Corpsmember and a current crew leader of PowerCorpsPHL will be recognized by [The Corps Network](#), the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, as a 2017 Corpsmember of the Year.

The Corps Network presents the [Corpsmember of the Year Award](#) on an annual basis to a select group of extraordinary young adults chosen from the thousands of individuals who serve in member organizations of The Corps Network every year. The Corpsmembers of the Year are young people who have demonstrated personal growth, a sincere commitment to service, and outstanding leadership skills. All winners of the Corpsmember of the Year Award are nominated by their Corps and selected by a panel of unbiased staff from The Corps Network and its member Corps.

Jones and the other Corpsmembers will be honored at a ceremony on February 15th on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC as part of The Corps Network's 2017 National Conference, "Moving Forward Together: Promoting Racial, Environmental and Community Equity."

During his time with [PowerCorpsPHL](#), Kalef Jones rose from general member, to Assistant Crew Leader, to Associate Crew Leader, to eventually becoming the first Corps alumni to be hired as a full-time crew leader on staff.

Kalef enrolled as an AmeriCorps member at PowerCorpsPHL serving Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in March 2014 on a referral from the Youth Violence Reduction Program. At the time, Kalef says, his "life was in shambles" and he was beginning to lose hope in the future. His mother had just passed away from heart disease and his sister had moved to Seattle, leaving Kalef with little structure or motivation.

"Prior to PowerCorpsPHL, I was what you considered a 'waste of talent'," said Kalef. "I didn't know my purpose in life or what I wanted to do. I didn't have any ambition, goals or direction. I was a convicted felon who sold narcotics in order to provide for my family."

Once in the Corps, Kalef began to feel optimistic and appreciated. He knew he was in the right place. His supervisors note that though Kalef had experienced major life setbacks, he was mature enough to acknowledge his issues and openly work through them with his peers and program staff. He began using his own experience as an anecdote to motivate other Corpsmembers. One staff member in particular who worked with Kalef during these hard times said, "I felt like Kalef was a colleague before he was a colleague. Even though I was his supervisor, it felt like we were professionals, both learning from each other."

Kalef has earned a great deal of recognition for his service and leadership: as an Assistant Crew Leader, he won PowerCorps' Organic Leadership award and won the Outstanding Youth Partner award from his sending agency, The Youth Violence Reduction Program. As an Associate Crew Leader, he completed the Corps' first ever internship with

the Mayor's Office at City Hall, and served as a featured speaker in a My Brother's Keeper lecture series. He has consistently gone above and beyond, helping with optional after-hours and weekend service projects. When he put in his name to be considered for a Crew Leader position, nobody on the hiring committee had any trouble promoting Kalef.

Using skills he gained during his 18 months of AmeriCorps service, Kalef now leads a Green Stormwater Infrastructure crew. He takes the mentoring aspect of his leadership position very seriously, striving to build camaraderie among his Corpsmembers while maintaining a professional atmosphere where everyone is focused on learning and bettering themselves. Two of PowerCorps' current Assistant Crew Leaders account their success to Kalef's constant coaching. As fellow staff at PowerCorps say, "We are nominating Kalef not only for this level of commitment, but also for his humility and desire to constantly be better while serving. His outlook on life and service has impacted so many."

Kalef plans to use his AmeriCorps Education Award to attend college and study non-profit management. He eventually sees himself in politics, where he can take a stand against violence among young black men.

"I need to lead by example in the most positive way," said Kalef. "Anyone can speak on all the things that are wrong in our communities, but it takes a certain individual to seek a position where they can change the way things are and make things better for the youth to flourish and thrive."

"All our member Corps and Corpsmembers make significant contributions to communities across the country," said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, CEO of The Corps Network. "With the Corpsmember of the Year Award, we have the opportunity to celebrate extraordinary individuals and programs from our network and shed light on the vast capabilities of Corps; our awardees are symbols of the impact of national service. The Corps Network is humbled to represent such inspiring people as Kalef Jones and programs like PowerCorpsPHL."

For more information about the conference, please visit www.corpsnetwork.org/national-conference. For more information about PowerCorpsPHL, please visit www.powercorpsphl.org.

ABOUT The Corps Network

The Corps Network provides leadership and support to over 130 of America's Service and Conservation Corps. Through advocacy and providing Corps access to funding opportunities and expert guidance, The Corps Network annually enables over 24,000 Corpsmembers, ages 16-25, to strengthen communities, improve the environment and transform their lives through service. To learn more about The Corps Network, please visit www.corpsnetwork.org.

ABOUT PowerCorpsPHL and EducationWorks

PowerCorpsPHL is a City of Philadelphia Partnership with EducationWorks and Philadelphia Youth Network. PowerCorps is an AmeriCorps Initiative designed to support the City of Philadelphia's environmental stewardship initiatives, youth violence prevention and workforce development priorities. Partnering with EducationWorks PowerCorpsPHL will annually enroll 160 individuals, ages 18-26, in a 9-month program: 6 months of full-time service and professional development as AmeriCorps members with City departments of Parks & Recreation & the Water Department followed by 3 months of intensive job placement support.

EducationWorks is a nonprofit organization that provides academic support, career readiness, and enrichment programming throughout Greater Philadelphia. EducationWorks equips approximately 17,000 students annually with the tools needed to be successful in school and life. For disconnected youth outside of the traditional K-12



Operated in Partnership with



990 Spring Garden St, Suite 601
Philadelphia, PA 19123
P: 215.221.6900 F: 215.221.6901

setting, we focus on experiential, on-the-job training, shadowing and career exploration. EducationWorks creates Opportunities for Learning and Skills for Life.

###



Operated in Partnership with



990 Spring Garden St, Suite 601
Philadelphia, PA 19123
P: 215.221.6900 F: 215.221.6901