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### **Gardner-Webb Provided Opportunities for Alumna to Serve Others**

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# Gardner-Webb Provided Opportunities for Alumna to Serve Others

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Office of University  
Communications

February 4, 2019

## *Keanna Caldwell '16 Completes Two Terms with Americorps*

Keanna Caldwell, a 2016 alumna of Gardner-Webb University, was raised by a single mother who taught her the value of serving others and the importance of community. “I don’t know where I would have been if not for the people who supported me all my life,” shared Caldwell, a native of Hendersonville, N.C. “I grew up in a family who was very service oriented. Both of my grandmothers were active in civil rights, so I always knew service was going to be a big component of whatever I did.”

When she started her college search, she only looked at Christian schools. Her mother suggested Gardner-Webb, and Caldwell discovered GWU had everything on her list. “Gardner-Webb was checking off all the boxes for me,” she said. “It was small, had the sense of community and Christian character.”

Once on campus, she started to find her place in the GWU community. She became involved in different organizations and helped to start a Campus Civitan club, serving as vice president. The focus of Campus Civitan is helping those with developmental disabilities and engaging in service projects. She also participated in GWU’s human-trafficking awareness club, Release the Captives, and was a member of FOCUS (Fellowship of Christians United in Service), a campus ministry involving teams of GWU students who visit local churches to provide programs for youth groups.

Through her involvement in these clubs and participation in her classes, she developed lasting friendships. “If you are looking for somewhere you can grow spiritually and have



During her time with AmeriCorps NCCC, Keanna Caldwell cleaned out abandoned houses in Ohio, in an effort to clear a neighborhood of blight.

meaningful and impactful bonds, Gardner-Webb is the place to find it,” she observed. “You will get the nurturing you need. You will find a mentor and develop close relationships with people.”

Caldwell majored in psychology and minored in American Sign Language (ASL). Since graduating, she has worked two terms with AmeriCorps. Her first term was with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). “It was the most life-changing experience I have ever had,” she asserted. “I did a range of things, but the most impactful was disaster recovery in Texas after Hurricane Harvey. It was some of the most brutal work I ever did, but it was definitely fulfilling.”



Keanna Caldwell helps children in a first grade class at an elementary school in Asheville, N.C.

In her second term, she is a school engagement coordinator in Asheville, N.C. She serves as a mentor and a tutor, helps in classrooms, and is the volunteer coordinator and facilitator for an afterschool program.

When her second term is finished, she plans to pursue a master’s degree at the Institute for Global Learning in Portland, Oregon. The degree will prepare her to manage a non-profit organization. Her ultimate goal is to work with children who have intellectual disabilities. “I’ve always wanted to work with children, because I’ve never liked seeing kids suffer, especially since I was from a difficult background,” Caldwell affirmed. “Whatever I can do to prevent other kids from suffering, that’s what I want to do.”