A passion for encouraging students to get a college education drew three of the AmeriCorps Notre Dame Mission volunteers to the "I Have a Dream" Foundation of Boulder County ("I Have a Dream").

Anna Archer, Eric Cherrie and Becky Kivlovitz, all first-year AmeriCorps volunteers at "I Have a Dream", were looking last spring to deepen their involvement in working with youth education and in the non-profit field. While searching for AmeriCorps jobs that matched their passions, they all found the "I Have a Dream" postings -- and were hooked.

Summers spent as a counselor working at an academic camp in Durango for children with dyslexia is what drew Anna to Boulder. She has degrees in public policy and environmental studies from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, but she found that education, especially addressing the achievement gap, was becoming a passion. Anna serves as the special projects volunteer coordinator for "I Have a Dream."

“I realized I want to work in a non-profit environment focused on education, and this is a great fit,” she said. “And I enjoy the coordination work I get to do.”

Learning strategies and how to leverage efforts, doing outreach and working with the press, managing volunteer efforts and planning for special events are all part of a typical day for Anna. “I’m learning that there are a lot of aspects to coordinating volunteers, planning events and running a successful non-profit,” she said. “There’s quite a bit of unseen effort and problem solving that is very important to supporting the program.”

Eric, a University of Houston grad with a literature degree, had already spent a year as an AmeriCorps volunteer working with high school and college students through the College Forward program in Austin, Texas, before coming to Boulder. As an "I Have a Dream" college coordinator, Eric expected to again focus most of his efforts on college and high school Dreamers. Instead, his mission has broadened to include working with younger students.

“I’ve found that I really enjoy guiding the younger Dreamers and helping to set the expectation that they will attend college,” Eric said. “That’s actually what I enjoy most.”

Eric’s day might include touching base with a Dreamer alumni now in college to see how it’s going, followed by planning and then presenting a pre-collegiate program to middle school
or high school Dreamers. He also helps to arrange and then attend college tours for high school Dreamers. “It’s pretty busy,” he said.

Becky holds a very hands-on position as program coordinator for the Phoenix Dreamer class. She earned a degree in English/journalism from the University of Texas-Austin, and was working for a magazine when she decided to apply to AmeriCorps. “I wanted a career change,” she said. “I was actually on a backpacking trip in Great Britain when I applied.”

Becky spends most of her day with the Phoenix Dreamers. “I’m in the classrooms during the day, and I tutor during lunch and when there’s time in the class day,” she said. “Then after school I help run the after-school Dreamer program which also includes tutoring and special programs. I also run soccer practice and I hold the Friday Girls Group.”

“I think it is important to be a role model and lead by example,” Becky said. “I spend a lot of time with the Dreamers and also get to know their families, so I have a pretty close bond with the kids. And I get wonderful support and training from IHAD. This program really sets you up to succeed.”

Both Anna and Eric will be enrolling in graduate school this fall to earn master’s degrees in public administration. Becky has already confirmed her plans for another year as program coordinator for the Phoenix class.