Mississippi Learn and Serve
Five Years of Progress

Robert Shumer, Ph.D

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Introduction

This report covers the impact of Corporation for National and Community Service funds from 2001 through 2006. Funding was received primarily in two categories[0:] Community, Higher Education, School Partnerships (CHESP) through the Lighthouse Partnership, and the Community Based Organization support focused on three major communities and a youth leadership program (Youth Engaged in Service). The report provides a summary of the individual yearly reports submitted between 2002 and 2006 which covered more than 260 pages of data, analyses, and recommendations.

There is little doubt CNCS funding made a positive impact on Mississippi and her service-learning programs. From elementary schools through college, from the Gulf Coast to Marks, educational institutions and community organizations developed partnerships that strengthened their educational offerings and laid foundations for service-learning to prosper and grow throughout the funding periods. Colleges that started community collaborations in 2001 have continued to support programming and community organizations that initiated service-learning efforts.

The kind of impacts recorded varied from personal growth for those providing service, to educational achievement for those receiving educational services, to organizational expansion for programs providing service, to expanded service and improved quality of life for those receiving service. Faculty learned to implement service-learning courses and programs. Community members learned how to expand their services by connecting with colleges and schools. And school systems learned how to provide special tutoring and educational services by engaging college students and community-based organizations in focused programs that supported educational outcomes.

The only outcomes that were of major concern were those related to sustainability. Colleges and school systems seemed to maintain some program stability over the years (although one excellent program didn't survive despite excellent evaluations). Community- based organizations, on the other hand, experienced greater periods of expansion and contraction, with the most profound reductions occurring after the CNCS funding disappeared. CBO funding sources were more fragile than those of the educational institutions and were harder to sustain over time. Implications for these findings suggest there are potentially different funding approaches that might be developed for CBOs that allow for longer periods of support and greater emphasis on developing alternative funding sources while the CNCS money is still in play.

Organization of this report

Because this summary of five years of progress is cumulative in its scope, the basic results of each year's report is included to provide a context for the data presented

and the analysis of the information collected. Reports are presented on a year by year basis. Full reports are available from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service.

Yearly Summaries

2001-2002

The Center for Community & Civic Engagement at the University of Southern Mississippi received funding for partnership development on three levels of organization: K-12, higher education, and community-based organizations. The focus of these "Lighthouse" programs was to develop partnerships between community groups, higher education, and schools to support and improve the quality of service-learning offered to after-school programs in Mississippi. Twenty partnerships were initially funded.

Evaluation work proceeded along two lines. First, an empowerment evaluation design was instituted to create university courses that included service-learning and data collection as integral components of academic activities. Faculty from Delta State, Jackson State, Mississippi State, and the University of Mississippi developed and implemented courses that included data collection activities as part of their course requirements. College students were involved with Lighthouse programs in a variety of ways collecting information about after-school youth participants, as well as their own learning activity.

In addition to the creation of evaluation networks on college campuses, an external evaluation was conducted on 3 higher education directed CHESP programs, one K-12 and one community-based program. Using focus groups, interviews, observations, and document analysis as methods of collecting data, information was gathered on network development and on the impact of the CHESP initiative on service-learning quality in these programs.

While there are several issues and concerns involved with starting a new program, the evaluation capacity building of the participating colleges and universities, and the impact of the Lighthouse programs studied on students, institutions, and communities is making impressive progress. Limited to the five programs studied, there is evidence that:

- Networks are expanding and improving in their capacity to deliver good service-learning
- Lighthouse Coordinators are serving as important "conveners" of networks both internal to the university and to the external collaborative.
- College students have collected important data about the Lighthouse programs that are useful in our understanding of impacts and outcomes
- College students have helped youth participants to pass state tests and to do better in school
- After-school programs have helped to provide teachers with opportunities to try new teaching approaches, such as individualized instruction and utilization of college tutors to help improve basic skills of students. They have also provided

teachers with opportunities to "blend" special education students with regular education students.

- College students have learned a variety of things from their involvement in Lighthouse projects, from learning patience and tolerance, to learning how to apply theories covered in academic classes
- School districts and community-based organizations have provided additional resources through the CHESP programs to attract and support college tutors and mentors as they help younger children
- After-school programs have had a positive effect on regular school programs by improving the attitude of youth participants, helping teachers experiment with new approaches, and offering individual and small group attention to engage youth in personally satisfying ways.
- The CHESP initiative is making a difference in some Mississippi communities by focusing people and resources on building partnerships between colleges, K-12 schools, and community organizations. The quality of the service-learning experience for both the college and the K-12 school students is improving because of these cooperative relationships.

There is still much to do to continue to develop and expand the CHESP initiative because not all the partners understand the power of partnering nor are they always able to participate as fully as one might expect. Issues of sustainability and continuity are two of the pervasive problems that affect the future success of the venture.

2002-2003

The Mississippi Lighthouse Project accomplished many goals during the 2002-03 program year. The empowerment evaluation effort proved quite successful. Many college and university faculty members engaged their students and themselves in evaluation activities throughout the year. Many data were collected that addressed the goals of the program: impact on student learning, institutional change, and improvement of the quality of service learning.

Highlights of the Mississippi Evaluation

Empowerment Initiative

- Engaged 4 universities in conducting evaluation-related work
- Involved 18 faculty members from around the state in evaluation activities related to the Lighthouse Project
- Involved 4 high school students in evaluation of Lighthouse after-school program

Products

- Submitted book chapter based on faculty learning and Lighthouse Project

- Submitted professional journal article written by 3 faculty members engaged in evaluation of Lighthouse project to the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*
- Conducted 5 presentations in 2002-03 at professional organization national conferences about empowerment related topics (American Educational Research Association, American Evaluation Association, International Service-Learning Research Conference, National Civic Education conference)
- 2 professional papers produced
- 1 doctoral study completed on Lighthouse program

Outcomes

Higher Education

- Improved evaluation course at University of Mississippi (UM)
- Improved delivery of service-learning in several courses, focusing in increased effectiveness of reflective activities
- Improved delivery of service-learning in teacher education at 2 institutions of higher learning

K-12

- Improved attendance and academic performance of high school student evaluators
- Improved reading and math achievement scores with an elementary school in Jackson, Mississippi supported by Lighthouse programs; rate of achievement almost double that of non-after school students
- Significantly improved reading and math achievement scores with elementary after-school program supported by UM Lighthouse program

CBO

- Outstanding evaluation plan developed by University of Southern Mississippi (USM) School of Social Work to support a community-based initiative of the Lighthouse Project.

It is apparent from these highlights that the Lighthouse initiative in Mississippi has made a difference in the quality of service-learning delivered throughout the state at the higher education, K-12, and community-based organization levels. Information provided in the body of this evaluation demonstrates that both qualitative and quantitative outcomes were observed and documented. Students and faculty members became more reflective practitioners of service learning, and academic skills and knowledge of those participating in the after-school programs of the Lighthouse Project improved significantly.

Of course there is always room for growth and improvement in any program. The successes and outcomes of the Lighthouse initiative in Mississippi during this year have laid a strong foundation for future development. With the partnerships forged between the universities, K-12 systems, and community-based organizations, collaborative development of service-learning programs could continue to flourish in Mississippi for the foreseeable future.

2003-2004

This evaluation covers the third year of the Corporation for National and Community Service funded program in Mississippi known as the Lighthouse Partnership Project. Organized in three separate sections, K-12, Higher Education, and Community-Based organizations, the initiative is designed to provide after-school programs in several areas of Mississippi and improve the quality and impact of service-learning programs delivered throughout the state. Funding for the Lighthouse Project comes from three different sources. The Higher Education Consortium Learn and Serve Higher Education grant funds programs at Jackson State University, Delta State University, the University of Mississippi, the University of Southern Mississippi, and Hinds Community College. The Community, Higher Education, School Partnership (CHESP) funding supports programs at Cypress Park Elementary School and Quitman County Public Schools. The Community-Based Organizations funding provides financial support to the Family Network Partnership and the Quitman County Development Corporation. All these programs are managed by the Mississippi Center for Community and Civic Engagement, at the University of Southern Mississippi.

This evaluation focuses on two specific areas. First, it assesses the state of the empowerment evaluation system designed to engage colleges and universities in the overall evaluation of the Lighthouse programs. Second, it measures the level of service-learning quality operating in the various program components and the impact of that service-learning on recipients, participants, and institutions.

2004-2005

This report builds on the study completed last year on two of the four community agencies investigated this year. It covers programs funded by the Corporation for National Service under the Learn and Serve program. Each program, operated as a Lighthouse Project under the auspices of the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, functioning in an after-school format, usually serves children from 5 years old or older. Each effort had program characteristics consistent with the goals and purposes of the sponsoring organization. The goals and purposes of each program differed, however, and are treated separately in the initial portion of the evaluation. The programs evaluated this year include DREAM of Hattiesburg, the Family Network Partnership (Hattiesburg), the Quitman County Development Organization (Marks), and the Voices of Calvary Ministries (Jackson).

This report is based on two site visits to each agency, held in December 2004 and May 2005. Each visit included observations of the program, at least two focus group meetings with youth participants, a focus group meeting with staff, and individual interviews with the program director and selected staff.

There were several points in common shared by all four programs. Not only did each function as an after-school program, every program had a drug/alcohol/tobacco prevention component, as well as an educational/tutoring initiative. Programs had paid and volunteer tutors assist youth with homework and other school-related learning. Some added educational components that focused on reading and math. Others provided enrichment through art education and peer counseling.

Program improvements can still be made by applying service-learning principles to more of the activities, especially the educational programming. More collaboration with colleges and universities, combined with efforts to have volunteers spend more time at the program sites, will help to improve program effectiveness.

Overall, the programs were successful in meeting the educational needs of the youth and in providing structured, safe places for them to go after school. For those youth who were prone to get into trouble, these after-school programs filled an important community void by providing caring adults who worked to keep the youth engaged in positive, pro-social activities. Each program involved youth in intellectual, social, and recreational activities that made the initiatives engaging and fun.

2005-2006

The Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) is completing its third (and final) year of a three year cycle for the Lighthouse Project and other Learn and Serve programs. The focus of the Lighthouse initiative has been on the development and implementation of four after-school programs in separate locations across the state. Described in detail in last year's report (Shumer, 2005) the continuing programs of DREAM of Hattiesburg, Family Network Partnership, Quitman County Development Organization, and Voices of Calvary Ministry all focused on after-school and summer initiatives that saw youth, ages 5-18, working and learning in a variety of settings and situations. Programs all coordinated efforts with local school systems and provided tutoring and recreational/arts/crafts activities that met the educational and developmental needs of young people.

Surveys from the four programs indicated that the primary impact of the three year program sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service was the financial support for a full time service-learning coordinator. This allowed programs to provide special training for coordinators and to expose them to additional knowledge and experience through state and national conferences. Such support allowed the organizations to also leverage money from other sources to not only do more service-learning, but to develop many other youth serving programs. It also provided for more collaboration with other agencies and organizations, especially schools and public housing/public agencies. University partnerships which flourished with the initial funding of the Lighthouse project were still operational in three of the four programs.

The Youth Engaged in Service program, sponsored by MCVS, was also part of this year's evaluation effort. Promoted as a youth leadership model, 25 youth from around the state gathered periodically to perform service activities and to develop a youth leadership structure for the state. Youth performed several service projects, including assisting with rebuilding/renovating a home for a family devastated by Hurricane Katrina, rebuilding a playground in southern Mississippi, and organizing and implementing a Youth Summit for more than 500 youth from across the state. They also engaged in other smaller projects.

For their outstanding service and accomplishments several YES members received national honors. One member was honored at the state of the Union Address by First Lady Laura Bush, and two others were also honored at the White House for their service during Black History Month in Washington DC. Perhaps no other program in the country had more than 10% of its members receive national recognition, illustrating the outstanding effort by the youth and program coordinator to deliver high quality service.

Five site visits in December 2005, and January, February, April, and June 2006 provided data for the study. Surveys, interviews, and observations produced more than 55 pages of notes that provided the basis for the evaluation. Data were analyzed using Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence (1980) and Stake's case study analysis (1996), where notes were coded for general themes and patterns. The goal of the study was to understand the situation for each program and determine how and what outcomes were produced. The result of those patterns is presented in this report.

Summary Report

Given the five years of study, there were several important outcomes and impacts of the CNCS support. The most important, based on criteria of overall impact on program quality and program effectiveness, were:

1. **Additional personnel focused on service-learning**. There is little doubt that the most important contribution of the Learn and Serve money was the support of additional staff at each institution. Whether people were assigned full time or part time, the availability of someone who was specifically concerned with developing service-learning programs was perhaps the single greatest feature in program implementation. Whether in a K-12 school, a college/university, or a community based organization, the additional staff person(s) ensured that attention was paid to issues related to service learning. Staff provided a variety of services, including coordination functions, training, resource development, and evaluation. Staff at elementary, middle, and high schools provided support to teachers developing new service-learning programs. They also helped coordinate programs with universities, bringing in college students and community members to assist with the challenges of the service-learning programs.

Staff at colleges provided similar support to faculty, helping them learn how to modify existing courses to include a service component. They also helped coordinate the placement of students in schools and community based organizations. They even assisted with developing resources, such as AmeriCorps members, to engage college students and others in effective community collaboration.

Staff at community based organizations provided a host of services. They provided necessary training and supervision of other staff involved in implementing the service-learning programs. They provided coordination functions, leveraging resources from colleges and other community institutions, bringing in additional people and services to support their efforts.

Staff at the regional and state level provided many opportunities that would have been unavailable without the financial backing of CNCS. Such individuals created opportunities for statewide training, where people from a variety of settings learned about service-learning theory and practice. They also helped encourage collaboration between local and statewide programs to develop stronger systems supporting the service-learning effort. Lastly, they provided the kind of leadership necessary to engage many people in the service-learning movement.

While there were many people who provided exceptional leadership, several individuals stand out as being exemplars of outstanding work. From the planning and development skills of Tom Schnaubelt, to the incredible work of Sharonda Bristow (Youth Engaged in Service), participants spoke of the strong leadership and personal traits that led to outstanding work. In the case of Sharonda, for example, data from the youth participants indicated that "although they had many service experiences before, but none were as fulfilling and helpful as those had with Ms. Sharonda." Here knowledge, skills, and leadership ability turned a good program into an incredible one, where three of the youth members were honored by President and Mrs. Bush at the State of the Union Address and at the White House.

Every program leader, every faculty member involved, and even all the coordinators and supportive personnel turned out to be exceptional in their understanding of service-learning principles and its high quality practice. CNCS funds helped bring out the best in Mississippi personnel.

2. **The second most important impact of CNCS funding was in the area of training.** There were state, regional, and local level conferences, workshops, and specific educational sessions that helped people at all levels of community engagement to understand the challenges and triumphs of high quality service-learning programs. CNCS money was also used to support travel and attendance

at national conferences. Such conferences, according to staff, exposed them to new ideas and new opportunities to present their own work. It helped instill a sense of pride in their accomplishments and helped refine their level of understanding and application.

Embedded in the trainings was a philosophical stance of empowerment, from approaches to evaluation, to development of local resource exchanges between all levels of collaboration: schools, communities, and higher education. Certainly the concepts behind the CHESP initiative helped to support this effort to work together and to ensure that resources and personnel were shared so that programs could develop collaboratively. The notion that Mississippi could produce and develop its own style of service-learning, molded to its own historical traditions and institutions, helped the development of strong teams that were willing to share their knowledge and expertise for a common purpose. While the concepts of empowerment and self-determination came initially from the top, it certainly spread over the course of the years to become embedded in most of the Lighthouse partnerships.

The manifestations of empowerment philosophy, embodied in the original programs sponsored by Tom Schnaubelt from the Mississippi Center for Civic and Community Engagement (located at the University of Southern Mississippi) and Marsha Meeks Kelly, from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, has led to the existing state of service-learning after CNCS money has not been available to support such programs. While not having external support, many vestiges of the Lighthouse initiative are still around. Due to the investment of many of the program leaders over the years, service-learning is still being practiced in areas all around the state. For example, service-learning is included in the dropout prevention strategy for Jackson Public Schools. Service learning programs are still in existence at schools in Quitman County, partly as an ongoing effort by Pearl Watts and Evelyn Jossell, long time Marks residents who have continued to find ways to keep the concept alive. The Family Network Partnership is still engaging youth in limited service projects, even though their staff has been cut significantly in the past two years. This continues because of the efforts of Laurie Wisher and support from the School of Social Work at USM. All of the colleges initially recruited for the Lighthouse project continue to have some representation for service-learning in their courses and programs. From USM, to Jackson State, to Delta State, to Mississippi State, to the University of Mississippi, there are still efforts to connect students with community for the improvement of both. The AmeriCorps program, connected early on to the schools and community ventures, continues to work on improving the skills and quality of life for Mississippi's children.

3. **A natural complement to the focus on empowerment was attention to documentation of programs and results and efforts to include evaluation into the regular educational activities of the initiative**. Program leaders and staff

worked to intentionally incorporate evaluation practice into regular programming practice. From elementary school principals to graduate school faculty and students, almost every program intentionally include evaluation practices to document the impact and outcomes of their work.

For example, during the 2002-03 year, two studies were conducted on the impact of the CHESP initiative on student development and program affect. One elementary school principal in Jackson conducted a study, along with faculty and staff from Jackson State University, to measure the impact of their after school program (funded by Learn and Serve) on learning and change. Using standard research practice, including a comparison group, the principal found that students who attended the after school program, supported by the Learn and Serve funds, were twice as likely to improve in their reading and math performance. Interviews with college students involved in the program, along with teaching staff, indicated that the college students were readily available to assist and were responsible for contributing to the increase in reading and math achievement.

A similar program was assessed in Oxford, MS with a program that supported K-12 students to improve in academic achievement as a result of academic inspiration and tutoring. Data on reading and math indicated that both reading and math achievement significantly improved and performance on statewide tests also increased. Pre/post data in these two areas demonstrated that the reading and math scores increased dramatically and that the program was beginning to take hold in the classes. Supporting interviews with college students, local teachers, and staff indicated that it was, indeed, the college student input that helped to improve the achievement scores and make the ordeal worthwhile.

Thus, there were data provided through external and internal evaluators that provided support to show that the CHESP effort really had documented impact on both the recipients of service and those providing the service. The power of documentation helped to move the projects forward and to become more intentional in monitoring progress toward their goals

Leadership from MCVS helped to ensure that the evaluation process was integral to the development of programs. Marsha Meeks Kelly and MCVS staff worked diligently to ensure that evaluation process was an integral part of the programming. They used evaluation outcomes and information to not only demonstrate that the program was having impact, they used the evaluation outcomes to involve others in the program and to show that all programs that they worked with had demonstrable and measurable results.

Yet, the Lighthouse initiatives in Mississippi also learned the reality of using evaluation data to make the case for service-learning: it didn't always work. In several instances, even though evaluation data were strong and demonstrated clear, positive outcomes, institutions were unable to continue programs. For

example, the University of Mississippi was very involved in service-learning through their teacher education programs and their social work efforts. Many programs were developed and each program was assessed. Some of the assessments were very strong, showing that Lighthouse programs and students clearly made a difference in the lives of all the participants. Yet, despite these data, the institution failed to keep its coordinator and eventually the program faltered. It is now only currently being run on a limited basis, with the initiative and effort coming primary from the goodness of the faculty and staff.

However, like many of the Mississippi programs, there were always secondary outcomes that marked the success of the overall program. Susan Turner, who served as the service-learning coordinator at the U of Mississippi during their year of funding took her skills and new knowledge of service-learning and community engagement and literally started the first shelter for abused children in her home county. She has operated this unique project for several years, now, and is becoming a strong leader in the non-profit community in Oxford.

4. **One additional area of contribution was in the area of professional literature development**. As a partial result of strong evaluation work and engagement of university faculty, several professional reports were produced from Mississippi programs and several faculty and students presented at professional development conferences. As noted in some of the reports, articles were written about the development and impact of the Mississippi programs and submitted to professional journals. During the third year of the program, for example, articles were submitted to the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, one of the premier publications in the service-learning field. A book chapter was also produced for a publication on service-learning practice.

In addition, presentations were made at several premier educational organizations: The American Educational Research Association, The American Evaluation Association, The International Association for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement, the National Civic Education Network, and the Gulf South Summit. Each one of the presentations involved both Mississippi faculty, in collaboration with community sponsors and even some youth.

Other professional studies were produced as a result of the Mississippi program. One doctoral dissertation (by Tom Schnaubelt) contributed excellent information about the faculty development process in relationship to service-learning. Other studies by faculty from Delta State (Alinda Sledge and Beverly Moon), University of Mississippi (Debbie Chessin and Kaye Pepper), and presentations by Jackson State faculty (Tabitha Otieno) all contributed to the development of the field. Thus, the impact of the programs sponsored by Learn and Serve funds not only benefitted the people and programs of Mississippi, they also helped others to learn about the principles, practices, and outcomes of engaging in high quality work.

Some Challenges

While these obvious successes in leadership and personnel, empowerment systems, and evidence-based, evaluation-based programming have had a great impact on service-learning in Mississippi, there have been a few challenges. Perhaps the most glaring is the fact that Mississippi remains a relatively poor state, without the resources available to states with large populations, urban centers that have strong industrial bases, and a multifaceted economy. As CNCS resources began to dwindle there were relatively few economic sources that were available to take up the cause of service-learning. Unplanned disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, kept money flowing into the state for service efforts, but few of those were effective in supporting service-learning. With resources being diverted, it was difficult to sustain the programs and momentum generated over the previous years in a positive direction.

This lack of alternative resources was felt most dramatically in the non-profit sector by those community based organizations that had been active participants in service-learning for more than six years. It demonstrated that non-profit programs that are not as strongly affiliated with funding sources existed in more fragile settings, where there were not always readily available resources, such as those found in larger institutions with direct lines to state or federal funding. It reinforced the idea that CBOs needed to have a better funding stream and more time to develop alternative funding sources while they were still operating with CNCS money.

Another challenge was loss of leaders in the early stages. The program models started by Tom Schnaubelt were sustained, but not with the level of intensity and background knowledge that he brought to the system. Tom was conducting his dissertation on faculty involvement with civic engagement and thus had a compelling reason to work with faculty around the state. His level of expertise and degree preparation brought a sense of authority and collegiality with college faculty, something that is more difficult to accomplish by people who are not "in the club; those without Ph.Ds who had not conducted research." So Tom's loss did have an impact on the overall direction and intensity after he left. The leadership change, plus a reduction in funds, did have an affect on program intensity and overall ability to reach other colleges and universities.

Similarly, the loss of Learn and Serve coordinators at Delta State University and the University of Mississippi had a slowing effect on those institutions. While both had people in place to assume the mantle and maintain the service-learning initiatives, there was clearly a change of focus and energy after those individuals left the Lighthouse project. The service-learning coordinator also left Jackson State for a while. His loss

resulted in a transfer of leadership to faculty who had other commitments besides service learning. While those who took over did an excellent job, they did not have the same level of freedom and university wide access as the coordinator. It did make a difference.

Changing personnel did not always have a negative or slowing impact on all programs. The transfer of leadership at the Family Network Partnership did not see a reduction in energy and enthusiasm for service-learning. In fact, new director also brought a new sense of purpose and program direction. Of course, she was also assisted by the continuity of faculty in the social work department, as well as an increase of funds for the program. Staff size went to 21 persons during her tenure, only to return to a much smaller staff after the removal of Learn and Serve funds. There is still a good service-learning effort at the Family Network Partnership, but it is greatly reduced by the loss of CNCS money.

Another challenge was caused by external factors, those outside the purview of the Learn and Serve program itself. Some programs, which had excellent evaluations, were simply not refunded or continued because of influences that had little to do with the program. Several examples come to mind. First, the after-school program connected with Delta State University and Cyprus Park Elementary School (Cleveland Public Schools) had outstanding evaluation results. Data were provided to show that there was good academic growth on the part of the students, that students received enriching experiences through programs connected to the University (such as the no-chemical mosquito abatement program), and the overall opinion of school personnel and parents was very positive. Yet, funding cutbacks in the school district cut after-school programs. Thus, the excellent program was not continued simply because of funding considerations.

Similarly, the program evaluation at the University of Mississippi showed equally as impressive evaluation data. College students were shown to have an important effect on K-12 youth in the after-school program, increasing their reading and math scores by a statistically significant amount. Data from many sources pointed to the college students as the primary cause of the increase. Also, evaluation and mentoring work by faculty and students in the social work program proved equally impressive. Youth were helped to adjust better to their school situations and the social climate in after-school initiatives was positive and supportive. Again, despite the data, the university cut the program because of financial considerations.

Lastly, the evaluation of the Youth Engaged in Service program was stellar. They provided excellent leadership to the state in providing important programs for leading young individuals and each member grew in skills and attitude toward working with others. Their service to a family affected by Hurricane Katrina was excellent and much appreciated by the family. In turn, the woman who owned the house provided scrap booking instruction to the YES youth in a truly reciprocal exchange of service and learning. Most notably, one member of the YES program was honored by President Bush by being invited to the State of the Union Address and actually sat with Mrs. Bush during

the speech. Subsequent to that event, two other members were invited to the White House to receive commendations from the President, himself, for their service and commitment to the people of Mississippi. The entire group was hosted by Mrs. Bush at an event to assist school children affected by the Hurricane. By all accounts, YES was one of the best programs in the country. Yet, when the program year ended, it was not refunded. CNCS cited reduction in funds as a reason. This was perhaps one of the most disappointing decisions for Mississippi programs. No matter how good they were, economic concerns trumped outstanding program impact and implementation.

In a move to re-establish the YES! program, MCVS Director Marsha Meeks Kelly brought a graduate student from Harvard's Kennedy School (a Mississippi resident with an interest in returning to the state to work with youth) to conduct a study of the program and to develop a strategy to restart the effort and involve more youth. Using Learn and Serve funds for this effort, Ms. Kelly hoped to use the plan to find other funding sources and recreate this incredibly successful program. As of the writing of this report, the young woman, Rachel Hicks, is still affiliated with MCVS and is working on youth programming for the state.

Concluding Comments

It is difficult to summarize the results of five years of study, over 260 pages of information, in one brief evaluation report. Suffice to say the impact of the investment of Learn and Serve funds helped service-learning gain a strong foothold in Mississippi communities. Developing programs operated by committed and creative leaders, encouraged to collaborate through the CHESP requirements of connecting communities, higher education, and schools, produced initiatives that grew service-learning across all three levels of institutions and settings. Built on pre-existing connections, the Lighthouse partnerships made substantial inroads into the institutions involved and were strongly supported by a wide array of faculty, teachers, administrators, and community partners. It is clear that the infusion of CNCS funds into all the programmatic areas of Mississippi society changed the culture and place of service-learning as an accepted and respected approach to education and community engagement.

After reading this report it is hoped that individuals will be drawn toward reading the original studies for each year of the effort. They spell out in great detail how the connections between higher education, schools, community-based organizations, The Center for Civic and Community Engagement (USM), and the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service changed the landscape of service, volunteerism, and education. As many of those collaborations remain in place today, it speaks volumes about what a national effort can do to make service-learning a viable pedagogy through which to engage young and old in civic engagement.

It is hoped that some of the lost money from Learn and Serve programs can be replaced by new, more stable sources and channeled into efforts that seek more institutionalization of the service-learning philosophy. Clearly the people, the institutions, and the communities have benefitted from previous work and stand ready to

continue the excellent efforts of the past and make for a better, more effective future for all the citizens of Mississippi.

[0] This report does not cover the evaluations of the school-based programs that were operated out of the Mississippi Department of Education.