

ACTION update...

December 20, 1979

VISTA 15th Anniversary: A National Effort to Eliminate Poverty



Washington, D.C., December 12, 1964 – In a White House ceremony today, President Lyndon Johnson greeted 20 people selected for training in the new Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program.

In addressing the volunteers Johnson said "Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor will often be difficult. But you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man."

Fifteen years, and more than 50,000 volunteers later, VISTA still leads the national effort against poverty and improving the conditions of the underprivileged in this country. President Johnson declared an official war on poverty in March of 1964, which led to the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). OEO was authorized to administer several anti-poverty programs, among them VISTA. The declared purpose of the pro-

VISTA... 1964—1979

grams was the elimination of "...poverty in the midst of plenty - by opening to everyong the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. ."

The celebration of VISTA's 15th anniversary will open at the White House on December 19, 1979. President Jimmy Carter will meet with 24 VISTA volunteers and VISTA Director Margery Tabankin to discuss the program and its goals. That same evening, a congressional reception will be held for some of the original VISTA volunteers, the 24 current VISTAs, ACTION officials and congressional leaders. This inauguration of the VISTA 15th anniversary will be the first of many activities to be held nation-wide through June 8, 1980.

Ed Asner, TV's "Lou Grant," is the honorary chairman of the VISTA 15th Anniversary Committee. He is one of several celebrities spearheading an intensive media campaign honoring VISTA's accomplishments over the last 15 years. He, along with Cliff Robertson, Jack Lemmon, Henry Fonda, Angela Lansbury, Phil Silvers and Joe Frazier have taped radio and TV spots which will be aired from now through June 1980.

During the next few months, ACTION officials

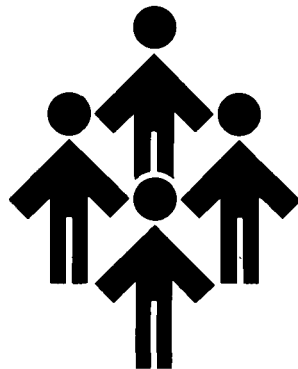
will travel to communities throughout the United States appearing on talk shows, meeting with the press and visiting VISTA projects.

Initial plans from each region have been received and are currently under review. Region II is mounting a photographic exhibit of Banana Kelley, a VISTA urban rehabilitation project in the South Bronx.

Region VII is planning to organize a "Chautauqua"—public lectures, concerts or entertainment. The "Chautauqua" was very popular in the central plains region during the late 19th century.

Several regions have suggested "VISTA Days" and "VISTA for a Day" projects which will provide ample opportunities for publicity. And former VISTA volunteers will be asked to organize and present VISTA slide shows in 3,300 high schools across the country.

The theme of the anniversary celebration is "Making a Good Place Better"...a theme of continuing efforts. The war on poverty goes on, the "great national effort" to eliminate poverty is still underway, and future VISTA volunteers will carry on the work of their predecessors by helping the poor of this country help themselves and, in the long run, achieve self-reliance.



VISTA

**MAKING A
GOOD PLACE BETTER**

**VOLUNTEERS
IN SERVICE TO AMERICA**

Massachusetts Community Meets Challenge of Energy Crisis

Can a self-motivated community respond effectively to mounting problems brought on by the energy crisis? The people of Fitchburg, Mass., a small industrial city 50 miles west of Boston thought so, and then went on to prove it.

They decided to tackle the problems of soaring gas and oil costs through an intensive self-help energy conservation program, and mobilized human, technical and financial resources to meet the situation head-on. (See October 31, 1979 issue of ACTION Update).

ACTION's involvement began last September when Mayor David Gilmartin accepted the agency's challenge for Fitchburg to become the first city in the United States to demonstrate that a short-term, do-it-yourself campaign to save energy can make a positive difference.

With the establishment of Fitchburg Action to Conserve Energy (FACE), city leaders, businesses

and many community organizations began an all-out drive to introduce residents to a variety of low-cost/no-cost steps to reduce home fuel consumption, from caulking windows to weatherstripping doors and insulating hot water heaters.

By December 15, mostly young student volunteers, under the direction of local FACE staff, had undertaken all or part of these steps on 3,500 of the 14,000 homes in Fitchburg to reduce energy use by at least 25 percent. Most of these were ac-





completed by the residents themselves who had attended short training sessions in one of the nine FACE centers set up throughout the city, or by young volunteers who went out into the community to work on homes of the elderly or handicapped. The whole job, depending on the size of the house and number of windows and doors, takes about two hours, and an average of \$30.00 worth of material.

"Young people from the public and parochial schools and Fitchburg State College have clearly been the backbone of the whole project. You can't beat their willingness and enthusiasm as volunteers," said M.J. Duberstein, a former Peace Corps volunteer serving as a FACE consultant under ACTION.

Last September, when the FACE project was just an idea, Duberstein and others responsible for its conception, sought the cooperation of Fitchburg school and college officials. "The response was great," Duberstein said. "Dr. Richard Wallace, the superintendent of schools told us we could do anything we wanted in the schools—use them as centers of conservation activities, mobilize volunteers among the students and generate many other kinds of support."

Teams of student volunteers from the schools

and Fitchburg State College were seen all over town helping residents, particularly the elderly and disabled, seal up drafty doors and windows and lower thermostats.

According to ACTION staff member, Tammy Stanton, who spent time in Fitchburg working with the FACE program, "ACTION was able to assist the community in addressing its particular energy situation. A principal way we helped was to intercede with other federal and state agencies in order to tap existing energy-related funds for the FACE project.

"The response of the community was tremendous. What this agency hoped to do was challenge the residents of Fitchburg to answer their own needs. And I believe they have met this challenge."

Francis Luzzatto of the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation (OVCP) and project director of ACTION's energy conservation program agrees that, "This is an example of a positive, creative relationship between the federal government and a local community."

The success of Fitchburg has elicited inquiries from other cities and towns around the country. ACTION's original expectation that the project could prove to be a prototype for similar energy programs appears to be a reality. During the next few months, ACTION, through OVCP, plans to

disseminate the organizational and technical lessons learned in Massachusetts. This will be achieved through an aggressive national outreach program designed to distribute technical information for communities wishing to develop their own conservation programs, based on their ability to mobilize citizen volunteers.

Mercedes Miller, director of OVCP, said that that office will give assistance to a limited number of communities based on the complexity of their needs. "A few localities," Miller added, "would require sustained on-site efforts by OVCP staff. Additional cities may need either on-site consultations, or only an initial visit. OVCP also expects to

be able to make available small grants to some of those communities to pay for volunteer mobilization."

Meetings have been held with White House energy staff who expressed an interest in the concept that was developed in Fitchburg. Steps are being taken to transfer funds to ACTION to assist OVCP in disseminating information and providing direct assistance to selected communities.

ACTION program and field staff are encouraged to share their knowledge of the Fitchburg project and to refer interested communities to Tammy Stanton in the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation (FTS 254-3545 or 800-424-8580).

King Attends Opening of CSA Annual Opportunity Boutique



ACTION's Deputy Director Mary E. King (l) congratulates Nettie Young of the Freedom Quilting Bee at the Opening of the Community Service Administration's (CSA) Annual Opportunity Boutique. Joining the festivities are actor Ossie Davis (c) and CSA Deputy Director William W. Allison (r).

The Freedom Quilting Bee, a member of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, has had VISTA affiliation since 1967. In recent years, the Freedom Quilting Bee has not only sold its exquisite quilts and crafts during the holiday season at CSA, but has marketed products through Sears and has been featured in Vogue.

Volunteers may be able to provide unemployed disadvantaged youth with access to long-term job development and employment that is similar to that of their more advantaged peers, according to Mercedese Miller, director of ACTION's Office of Voluntary Citizen Participating (OVCP).

OVCP is testing that idea through an 18-month

YES~Youth Employment Demonstration Program

demonstration program known as YES (Youth Employment Support). The purpose of that program is to create a personalized, one-on-one support system of volunteers to act as successful role models in providing minority and disadvantaged youth with greater access to career jobs.

"The YES volunteers will provide personal support to those youth who often lack the network - friends and contacts, training, college education and previous experience - for finding long-term employment," says Robert Taggart, administrator of the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Youth Programs. "This kind of support, until now, has never been available, on an organized basis, to disadvantaged youth."



DOL entered into an interagency agreement with ACTION which provides \$1.6 million in DOL funds to OVCP for the establishment of five 15-month YES demonstration projects in Arkansas, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina and New Mexico. OVCP will administer the program through the governors' state OVCP offices in the five states.

The first YES program was launched in Little Rock, Ark. on November 27 by Governor Bill Clinton at a kick-off luncheon for over 200 persons representing business and industry in that city.

ACTION Deputy Director Mary King, who attended the opening ceremony said, "According to the findings of the Vice-President's Task Force on Youth Unemployment, 80 percent of the people in the workforce found their jobs through people they already knew, so the importance of an individual volunteer assisting youth cannot be overemphasized."

The major YES approaches include the following:

- Pledges from private industry to develop jobs with career ladders.
- Volunteer personal support to youths for six months after the beginning of employment in order to maintain each youth's motivation and thereby enhance his or her chances for success.
- Sensitizing the community to the problems of youth unemployment and to the positive potential of youth in order to strengthen community commitment to youth employment.

The five state OVCPs will select local sites to recruit, train and coordinate community volunteers to be matched with the youth. The volunteers will provide CETA-certified youth between the ages of 16 and 21 with work-related skills, referrals to potential employers and subsequent assistance during the youth's initial employment period.

Volunteers may include anyone who has ever sought employment - secretaries, bank tellers, custodians, lawyers, retail clerks, waitresses, computer operators, barbers, mail clerks, mechanics, teachers or retired persons. The main criterion for a YES volunteer, according to OVCP's Barbara Sugarman, is the commitment to provide support to the youth in his or her efforts to find, get and keep a job.

Governor Clinton announced at the opening luncheon that he had committed 100 state jobs

(cont. page 7)

Governor Clinton Announces YES Program.

D.O. Authorization, Continuing Resolution Passed

Since ACTION Update's last report on legislation covering the agency's programs (October 31, 1979 issue), some significant developments have taken place on the Hill that will be of interest to our readers:

Domestic Operations

The final legislation authorizing VISTA, Service Learning Programs, including UYA, authority for urban volunteer programs, and administrative support for D.O. was passed by Congress. The differences in the House and Senate versions of the bill had been worked out by a conference committee. On November 5, the Senate, by voice vote, accepted the compromise version of the bill; the House approved a similar vote on November 29. The bill was signed by President Carter on December 12, 1979, authorizing these programs through September 30, 1981.

Besides VISTA, the authorizing legislation covers UYA and the National Center for Service Learning. Urban volunteer programs included in the bill are Fixed Income Counseling, Helping Hand and Technical and Management Assistance. The first provides community volunteers to assist people on Social Security and other fixed incomes budget wisely and get the most out of their dollar. Helping Hand involves young and old volunteers in a mutual service relationship, such as youngsters assisting disabled senior citizens with their shopping. Technical and management assistance pro-

grams will match volunteers within a community with groups needing assistance. Although not specifically mentioned in the bill, the urban volunteer programs also will include small Good Neighbor Fund grants to neighborhood groups, similar to mini-grants.

The legislation also authorizes administrative support funds for all ACTION domestic programs, including the Older Americans Volunteer Programs.

Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is still awaiting FY 80 appropriation, which is bound up in the Foreign Assistance Appropriation Act. The House and Senate Conference Committee that is considering the bill has not yet completed its deliberations.

Continuing Resolution

Although the continuing resolution of appropriations, which was signed by the President on October 12, expired on November 20, 1979, the Congress passed a second continuing resolution appropriating funds for all ACTION programs through September 30, 1980. The President signed this bill on November 20, thereby avoiding any interruption of agency operating funds.

Although Peace Corps, VISTA and the Service Learning Programs are still funded at the FY 79 level, the continuing resolution places Older Americans Volunteer Programs at the higher level of \$83.3 million for FY 80.

YES (from page 6)

for the youth and asked the private sector to provide 350 jobs.

In Florida, Jacksonville and Orlando were selected as YES sites. "We are blessed with tourism and retirees," notes Dody Ziler of the Florida Governor's Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation. "There are over two million retirees in Florida and it is anticipated that our program will utilize a large number of these persons as volunteers and that tourism will provide many jobs."

Steve Cowell, director of the Massachusetts Office of Citizen Participation, says the YES program in that state will cut across racial and ethnic barriers. "We will focus on kids who, without this program, just couldn't get jobs," Cowell says. Pro-

grams will be run in the Springfield, Worcester and Boston areas.

Because of its multi-cultural population, New Mexico will involve Hispanic, Native American and black youth. Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Los Cruces are the projected local sites.

Charles Petty, executive director of Governor James B. Hunt Jr.'s Office of Citizen Affairs, says that the North Carolina YES program will be structured so that one volunteer will identify an eligible and interested youth, another will locate a job for the youth, and others will offer support services to that youth throughout the life of the project.

Peace Corps to Recruit More Older Americans

In May of 1978, President Jimmy Carter honored America's senior citizens, and issued a proclamation saying, "Older Americans are an invaluable source of talent, skills and experience."

There are more than 33 million persons in the United States over 60 years old. This vast resource of skills and experience can be a tremendous asset to the Peace Corps.

In a recent interview with United Press International, Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste said, "We've found that many of our most effective volunteers are people in their late 50's and early 60's."

In order to tap into this reservoir of talent, the Peace Corps and the Office of Recruitment and Communications will undertake a program to recruit older American volunteers. John W. Chromy is coordinating Peace Corps' efforts and exploring ways to interest older Americans in serving in developing countries. "Helen Kelley, OAVP director, met with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and they have publicized our needs in their magazine," says Chromy. "We are currently discussing other ways they can assist us in our recruitment efforts.

"The other obvious resource is our own Older Americans Volunteer Programs. Within the next 30 days," explains Chromy, "ACTION will be contacting state directors in several pilot states, asking them to get in touch with RSVP, FGP and SCP project directors requesting they make information on Peace Corps service available to all OAVP volunteers."

Additionally, Richard Celeste has been talking to groups of older people around the country about the adventures, personal satisfaction and benefits that older volunteers experience while serving the people in the developing world.

For example, Lillian Carter, the President's mother was 67 when she went to India as a Peace Corps volunteer. And Bea Alford, 76, now a widow, recently rejoined the Peace Corps and is serving in Jamaica. She had previously spent three years as a volunteer along with her husband in the Central American country of Belize when she was 62. In the intervening years, Alford served as a recruiter in Los Angeles, focusing on the recruitment of older Americans..

"One of the things that amazes people who have their first experience in living in the Third World," says Celeste, "is the respect that is accorded to older people. Peace Corps service can be a rich and fulfilling experience for an older person, and that's the message we'd like to get across to future volunteers."

Peace Corps is particularly looking for older volunteers who have experience in agriculture, vocational or special education, small business; nurses, teachers and people with practical skills such as plumbing, equipment repair, brick laying, carpentry and general construction. For more information contact John Chromy (FTS 254-9830).

Janet Watlington

"I hope whatever service I can render always contributes to the good of our people. What exact form this will take in the future, I don't know," says Janet Watlington. For the present, Ms. Watlington is committed to her role as assistant director of Legislative and Governmental Affairs for ACTION.

In this position, Watlington is primarily responsible for formulating legislative policy and for guiding and directing ACTION's congressional relations. This includes liaison with more than 30 House and Senate committees.

Born into a poor family in the Virgin Islands, Watlington, 40, says that growing up in poverty, "has helped me understand and appreciate the true value of ACTION programs. When I was asked to join ACTION in January 1979, I was very excited because this was exactly the kind of service to which I have been drawn all my life.

"ACTION is a small agency where each employee can add significantly to the total output. I am enthusiastic about the programs undertaken by ACTION, and find it stimulating to work with others who feel the same way. If you really care for people, this is the place to be."

Watlington began her government service in 1960 as a staff member with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Following this, for five years she was Executive Secretary for the Legislative Counsel of the Virgin Islands Senate. From 1968 until 1972 she served as the chief administrative officer for Ron deLugo, the Virgin Islands Washington Representative, helping to design and implement the strategy which led finally to Congress' approval of a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives for the Virgin Islands. When deLugo was elected to fill that seat in Congress in 1972, Watlington continued as his principal political advisor and administrative assistant. In 1978 deLugo sought the Governor's office and Watlington won a hard fought Democratic Primary battle for his congressional seat. She was narrowly defeated in the general election.

When the National Democratic Party undertook a comprehensive reformation in 1974, Watlington was selected to participate in the process as a member of the Charter Commission, and was one of 12 black members of the 163-member commission.

She also played a key part at the mid-term Democratic Party Convention when she, along with two other nationally prominent black women, California's Yvonne Burke and Barbara Jordan of Texas, spoke before the meeting's 2,000 Democrats. She served on the steering committee of the Black Caucus and authored language prohibiting discrimination at any level of Democratic Party activity in the Charter.



“...these programs make a significant contribution...”

Since coming to ACTION at the beginning of this year, Watlington has been involved with the passage of ACTION's domestic authorization bill.

“I am particularly pleased to have played a part in this successful effort,” she stresses. “My satisfaction comes from realizing that these programs make a significant contribution to meeting the most basic needs of the poor, the elderly, the handicapped and the lonely. In so doing, they attain what is probably the highest cost/benefit ratio of any projects funded by the federal government.”

She was also instrumental in devising and implementing a successful legislative strategy to prevent an attempt to remove the Peace Corps from ACTION. Watlington said that the attempt was a very serious threat to the existence of the agency. “But when the Administration, Sam Brown, Dick Celeste, John Lewis, Mary King and all the administrators in ACTION worked together to show Congress that the agency was very much needed and a viable operation, we won the battle.”

Because Watlington had worked on Capitol Hill before coming to ACTION, she is “intimately familiar with the workings of Congress. With this background, I feel I was able to put this knowledge and experience to work to help solve some of the agency's problems,” she believes.

“One of these problems,” she continues, “was that Congress was focusing much of its attention

on the personalities at ACTION and not on the agency's programs and accomplishments. The programs sell themselves. The testimony of our volunteers during the Congressional hearings was totally persuasive.”

Watlington gives full credit for the success of ACTION's programs to “the volunteers themselves. They're exceptionally committed people. They're helping others live better lives. They practice the highest form of caring and responsible citizenship. The more you know of our programs and the people who make them work, the more you realize the lasting contribution being made toward improving the human community.”

Watlington resides in Washington, D.C. with her eight year old daughter, Kafi. Her 18 year old son Gregory is a sophomore at the University of Michigan. In viewing her dual roles as professional woman and mother, Ms. Watlington notes that “in many ways it's more difficult for a woman than a man. You want to do a really good job and also want to be a great parent. The superwoman image, I've decided, is a myth.”

Watlington is a charter member of the Administration's Senior Executive Service, a program established to attract and keep highly qualified executive personnel in management positions of government. She is also a member of the American Judiciary Society, the National Council of Negro Women, the League of Women Voters, the Business and Professional Women's League, the Virgin Islands Conservation Society, the American Civil Liberties Union and Common Cause. She has studied at Pace University in New York City and George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Editor's Note.....

Beginning with the next issue, ACTION Update will periodically run a column recognizing ACTION employees who have won awards or who have been cited for special achievements either inside or outside the agency. We would like our readers who know of such employees to contact the ACTION Update Office at FTS 254-7595.

ACTION Union/Management Negotiating Contract

After a two-week hiatus, ACTION union and management negotiations for a new employee contract are again underway.

The negotiations began on October 22, but were suspended several days later in an effort to reach agreement on the impact of Peace Corps autonomy on them. They resumed on November 8.

The new contract, when ratified by AFSCME union members and by management, will replace the current contract which has been in effect for the past four years.

AFSCME negotiators from headquarters include: Vic Basile, chief union negotiator; Ken

Greene, chief steward and Tom Lee, Computer Services Division, Financial Systems Branch. Union representatives from the field are Gene Rigler, San Francisco Area Office and Christine Tabbs, State Program Office in Pittsburg.

Management negotiators from the Personnel Management Division, Labor and Employee Relations Branch, include: Roena Markley, chief management negotiator; Jim Lechleitner and Peter Wright. Other management representatives are Sue Fahy, Domestic Operations; Stewart Davis, Office of General Counsel and Donald Green, Office of the Director.



AFSCME
in the public service



D.O. Director John Lewis Resigns

John Lewis, ACTION's associate director for Domestic and Anti-Poverty Operations has submitted his resignation to President Carter effective December 31, 1979. In his letter to the President, Lewis said, "I want to thank you for providing me with the challenge and the opportunity to direct programs that enhance the quality of life for those Americans most in need.

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and have been uplifted by an impressive reservoir of committed and dedicated individuals (ACTION staff and volunteers) who are ready and willing to take advantage of the opportunity to help fellow human beings."

In accepting Lewis' resignation with regret, the President stated that, "Your service over the past two and one-half years on behalf of poor people is but one more example of your lifelong dedication to making our country a better place for all of its citizens."

Although Lewis is leaving ACTION, he will continue to speak on behalf of programs "that benefit the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the minority groups—those who are still disproportionately left out and left behind in the American society." Lewis will also serve in a volunteer capacity as a member of the VISTA 15th Anniversary Committee.

personne

OVCP DIRECTOR

Mercedese Miller, new director of the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation, has been acting director of that office since March, 1979. She joined ACTION in 1976, serving first as planning systems officer and acting director of OPP's Planning Division, and later as director of AF's Management Organization Division. Miller, who was ACTION's representative to the White House Work Group to Develop Health Care Policies for the Handicapped, also represented ACTION on several interagency committees concerning de-institutionalization, the disabled, and productivity improvement.

Before joining ACTION, Miller held management positions in various state and local agencies and in private business. She has an MBA from American University in Washington, D.C. and a BA in journalism from Drake University in Des Moines, Ia.

ACTING DIRECTOR OPP/E DOMESTIC BRANCH

Mel Beetle is the new acting director of the Domestic Branch of the Office of Policy and Planning/Evaluation Division (OPP/E). He served

on the OPP/E staff for the past four years where he participated in, and eventually headed domestic evaluations. During that time he also assisted the Syracuse YCS project in developing its volunteer training program. He also worked with YCS in its initial areas of project development, community awareness, and information systems. A former volunteer and staff member in the Philippines, Beetle has directed a wide range of Peace Corps training projects in Hawaii as well as the Philippines.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER/DENVER RECRUITING OFFICE

Doug Johnston is the new public information officer at the Denver recruiting office.

Before coming to Denver, Johnston was an editor/writer and visual graphic specialist supervisor with the U.S. Marine Corps in Washington, D.C. He was responsible for editing, writing, layout and production in the publications division.

A native of Oklahoma City, Johnston had worked as managing editor, assistant editor and sports editor of daily and weekly newspapers in the Washington, D.C. area, and in the South and Western United States.

ACTION UPDATE

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Seasons Greetings

The Staff of ACTION Update extends to all its readers best wishes for the holidays and health and happiness in the new year.