

ACTION

April 9, 1980

update...

**April 20-26, A Time to Honor
our Nation's Volunteers**



Volunteers--Part of America's Heritage... A Hope for the Future

The 1960s were years of protest and the '70s came to be known as the "me decade." The '80s, however, portend a new era of reaching out to others, according to ACTION Director Sam Brown and Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste. Brown notes that "the tradition of volunteering in America dates back to the very beginnings of our country. This heritage is still strong today and all indications are for an even stronger tomorrow." At a recent meeting of Peace Corps staff and returned volunteers, Celeste discussed recent findings of Pat Caddell, the President's pollster. "We see a new commitment on the part of individual Americans to have an impact on the local level, through volunteering. This is good news for both domestic and international volunteer organizations," he said.

At present, an estimated 60 million Americans—nearly one out of every four persons—volunteer their time and talents to help improve the lives of the 230 million citizens of this nation, and the ratio is constantly increasing.

In honor of the commitment and dedication of these volunteers, President Carter has proclaimed April 20 - 26, 1980, National Volunteer Week, and has urged the nation to... "reflect on the aspects of American life that have most benefitted the continuing growth and progress of our society. Foremost among these is the voluntary involvement of our citizens in the affairs of their communities and country."

Among American volunteers are the nearly 300,000 who serve through ACTION programs—in the Peace Corps, in VISTA, in the Older Americans Volunteer Programs and in UYA. Their volunteer service and their dedication to the concept of voluntary citizen involvement, contribute to the effort to make our society responsive to the basic needs of its members.

In a unique salute to these volunteers, and to all volunteers, Brown and Celeste have encouraged ACTION and Peace Corps staff to devote time to a volunteer activity of their choice during National Volunteer Week.

"It is our hope," they said, "that this initiative will serve to salute, compliment and promote vol-

unteering in the community and throughout the nation."

Recognizing the importance and need for community volunteers, Congress, in 1974, expanded ACTION's role to include the private voluntary sector, to "stimulate and initiate improved methods of providing volunteer service (to) encourage wider volunteer participation..." This resulted, in 1978, in the creation of ACTION's Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation (OVCP).

According to OVCP Director Mercedes Miller, "OVCP strives to stimulate self-reliance and community involvement through volunteer and voluntary citizen participation efforts. OVCP also advocates private voluntary organizations and public volunteer efforts in the U.S. and overseas."



(cont. page 7)

VISTA 15th Anniversary Goes Nationwide

"The whole thing about VISTA that sets it off from other federal assistance programs is the belief that change can be self-wrought," emphasized ACTION's Deputy Director Mary King. She was addressing a group of VISTA volunteers and state officials in Tallahassee, Fla., March 12-13 during one of 32 community celebrations of VISTA's 15th Anniversary.

King reiterated the theme of VISTA's uniqueness - the concept of self-reliance through self-help - in Texas where she spoke at another VISTA 15th anniversary event. Ceremonies were held consecutively in Houston, San Antonio and Austin.

In Austin, King, VISTA Director Marge Tabankin; Region VI Director Trini Garza; State Program Director Robert Hernandez; Texas Governor William Clements local officials and nearly 100 VISTA volunteers participated in a ceremony at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Library.

VISTA volunteer Juanita Cox presented Luci Baines Johnson, daughter of the late President, a quilt - handmade by members of the Grass Roots Craftsmen, a self-help handicraft cooperative.

At the ceremony, Tabankin said that the presentation symbolized "a unity of effort in fighting poverty - the effort of low-income Americans in

helping themselves, VISTA volunteers aiding in that effort, and the effort of people like yourself and your family who, on the national level have always supported anti-poverty programs."

Ms. Johnson in turn, presented the quilt to the library where it will hang over a plaque saluting VISTA and all volunteers who have served in the program.

In both Texas and Florida, ACTION officials appeared on radio and TV talk shows, held interviews with the press, and attended special receptions honoring current and former volunteers.

According to the VISTA Anniversary staff, 28 more events will be held nationwide before the anniversary celebration culminates in Washington, D.C. next June. At that time, a "Conference on Poverty in the 1980s" will bring together more than 1,000 persons, including low-income people, VISTA volunteers, community leaders, government officials and legislators, to explore the progress that VISTA made in its 15 years of existence and the contributions of its volunteers in addressing the problems of the poor and underprivileged in America.



At VISTA presentation ceremony are (l. to r.) Marge Tabankin, Mary King, Robert Hernandez, Luci Baines Johnson and Juanita Cox.

President Orders Federal Hiring Limitations

In the face of worsening economic conditions, President Carter endorsed a reduction in federal spending as essential to achieving a balanced national budget. As one part of this process, the President ordered a limitation of federal hiring. The order for a hiring freeze was issued on March 14, effective immediately, and is of "indefinite" duration.

This means that hiring will be strictly controlled until we come down to the on-board personnel strength on February 29. Once that figure is reached, we will fill only one out of two positions."

There are several exemptions contained in the hiring limitation order. These include emergency hiring of those involved in the health and safety of volunteers and staff at ACTION or maintaining

"The freeze doesn't prevent reassignments within the agency."

The words "hiring freeze" always create an immediate concern on the part of government employees, however, according to Tom Hyland, director of Personnel, "there are no requirements in this order for rifting of personnel, nor does the freeze prevent reassignments within the agency."

Hyland explains that the freeze affects only full-time permanent employees, not part-time permanent hire nor temporaries. However, temporary employees may not be hired to fill a permanent position. Hiring consultants and outside contractors in order to alleviate the effects of the order is also not permitted.

Effective March 14, agencies may fill only 50 percent of the vacancies that occur after February 29. "Essentially," says Hyland, "this means that the freeze is retroactive. The new agency personnel ceiling is now the number of employees working at ACTION the last day of February. But, this agency will honor all official written commitments for hiring made up to and including March 14."

In effect, this puts ACTION above its new personnel ceiling. This does not mean that the necessary reduction will be accomplished through rifting, rather it will be achieved through normal attrition-retirements, resignations, etc.

"The usual attrition rate at ACTION, except in Peace Corps," explains Hyland, "is usually somewhere under five percent, slightly lower than the average throughout the rest of the government.

operations that directly protect human safety; filling positions that are outside the employment ceiling, such as summer-hire or Federal Junior Fellowships; firm, written commitments made prior to March 1; the U.S. Postal Service; reassignments within the agency; appointments to Executive Level positions; and the shifting of employees from one agency to another because of a transfer of functions resulting from Presidential reorganization or legislative action.

An appeal to the hiring freeze is also provided. Appeals would be granted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) if a determination is made that such action is necessary to assure that basic services are carried out or that legal requirements as to the function of a particular agency are met.

Government officials estimate that the 50 percent limitation on hiring will result in a reduction of some 6,500 full-time positions per month. During each quarter an estimated 19,500 vacancies would not be filled at quarterly annual savings of \$57 million.

"In my opinion," Hyland comments, "this is a genuine effort on the part of the President to cut federal spending. And, depending on the effectiveness of the freeze, I believe it will last as long as it takes to help achieve a balanced budget."

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Michelle Chargois

"I sometimes feel that 80 percent of my work is in public relations," says Michelle Chargois, an evaluation specialist in the Office of Policy and Planning. (OPP/E). "In my job, it is essential to establish rapport and a feeling of mutual trust."

According to Chargois, who evaluated social programs for several Washington, D.C. organizations before joining ACTION last year, this is easier to do in an agency like ACTION.

"ACTION's size makes it easier to communicate and establish good relationships with policy makers and those we are helping," she says. "The rigidity and bureaucracy in other places I've worked didn't lend itself as readily to that sort of thing."

"Many people view evaluators with distrust, if not outright hostility. The beneficiaries of the programs we evaluate often see us as 'the feds' coming in from the outside with no real feeling for the programs we deal with."

"It takes a lot of work to overcome that feeling," she continues, "but it is rewarding to see the reserve break down. We have to show that we care, and at the same time hope to gather data to show that something is working. Unless we can communicate and establish a rapport with those whom we are trying to help, we cannot get that data."

Chargois says she "always had a thing about helping people. When I was small, I wanted to be a doctor, then a child psychologist. I especially wanted to help children and adolescents."

After earning a BA in psychology from Oberlin College in Ohio in 1968, Chargois became a case-worker and probation officer in Chicago. She later decided that kind of work wasn't for her.

"But I still wanted to help people," she says "I wanted to do something that would have an impact on their lives. Teaching wasn't for me either," says Chargois who taught, part-time, during and after her term at the University of Chicago where she earned a Master's degree.

"While at the University of Chicago, I became interested in program evaluation and research," she explains. "It was a viable way for me to apply what I could do best and still have a positive impact on people's lives."

Chargois moved to Irvine, California in 1974 to teach and perform human development and cross-cultural research. Then she moved to Washington, D.C. in 1976 to work with the National Council



for Black Child Development, where she developed and managed a study of child abuse and neglect in minority families.

"ACTION later attracted me because it provided an opportunity for further cross-cultural research," says Chargois, who is currently involved in a study of the Peace Corps strategy contract program with minority colleges to identify potential PC volunteers.

"This study will provide the first specific data on minority involvement and decision making. I am excited about it," she says.

Another study involved the impact of the Senior Companion Program on deinstitutionalization of the elderly. Chargois feels this program will show "How very important the services of older Americans are. This is particularly significant with the White House Conference on Aging coming up next year."

Chargois' time outside of ACTION is largely spent finishing her doctoral dissertation on "Directions of Change Across Three Generations of Creole Women." "But I also play a lot of tennis," she says. "I am a tennis fanatic. I play as if it were a job, five days a week in summer and three in winter." She is also an enthusiastic bridge player.

"I am very involved with my job now," Chargois concludes. "I believe in the research we are doing, and I enjoy evaluating programs that seem to be working. In OPP/E, we are furnishing vital information on which to base some significant agency policy decisions. It's good to be part of that process."

Cardona Heads-Up Flourishing ACTION Programs in Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands

Since May of 1979, VISTA has experienced a dramatic resurgence in Puerto Rico, and the man largely responsible for reactivating this program is Carlos Cardona, newly appointed State Director for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. On February 20, Sam Brown announced Cardona's appointment.

Within the past year Cardona established seven new VISTA projects in Puerto Rico, following an agreement between Sam Brown and the governor of Puerto Rico to resume VISTA after several years absence.

The first two VISTA programs involved community organizing, one with health education emphasis and the other providing agricultural extension services in isolated rural communities. These were followed in September by five additional VISTA projects involving 78 volunteers.

Cardona joined ACTION in 1974 as the state program officer for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In addition to the projects he established in Puerto Rico, he also negotiated four ongoing VISTA projects in the Virgin Islands. After December, 1978 he ran the Regional Office as "Officer in Charge" following the resignation of the state director.



Cardona has spent his entire career in Puerto Rico where he was born and attended school. He received his BBA degree from the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras in 1959, and went to work as an accountant for the local Department of the Treasury. Two years later he joined the federal government as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration, and during that time attended night law school.

In 1971 he passed the bar and joined the Veterans Administration as a general attorney, a position he held until coming to ACTION three years later.

However, his very first job was as a farmer and paid laborer on his family's and neighboring farms in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico. As the oldest of five children, he took over the family farm at 13 following his father's death. Cardona worked on the farm half a day and attended high school the other half. "I earned \$22 a week in those days," Cardona recalls. "Laborers make more than that in one day, now." He left the farm after high school for a short stint in the army, and went to college on the GI Bill.

Cardona lives in San Juan with his wife and two of his four children, and his brother still cultivates the family farm, which serves as a place to draw the family together. It is important to Cardona that the farm is still in the family, and he wishes he could visit there more often than he does.

But, his work for ACTION keeps him busy, particularly the VISTA projects.

One of the most successful projects is the "Las Marias Rural Development Program," which Cardona describes as "a beautiful program to me," and hopes to develop other similar programs. The project's goal is to revitalize a remote mountainous community that has been dying out because the residents take their business to larger neighboring towns. VISTA volunteers are encouraging people to stay by assisting in creating a cooperative drug store and a credit union, and by educating residents to take advantage of a mobil health unit being established by the volunteers. "Before the volunteers came, people had to bank in San Sebastian or Mayaguez, and that took business out of town," Cardona says. Through their work with the com-

munity, the volunteers hope to halt the continuous flow of young people from the town.

Other projects include working with handicapped children, establishing rural youth organizations, and providing aid to senior citizens. "We are grateful for the resumption of VISTA in Puerto Rico. We've sworn in 100 volunteers since May '79, and that's a real accomplishment," Cardona says.

In the Virgin Islands similar community organizing programs are being developed. Cardona hopes to work with the Department of Commerce to build up the Fredricksted area through education campaigns in labor and consumerism.

"We are aware of the need for new programs," says Cardona, who has many plans for his region. "We would like a UYA program in the Caribbean. We need more VISTAs, and an RSVP as well as an SCP program in the Virgin Islands. We also need an urban crime prevention program for Puerto Rico. Many people here are interested in this."

Although Cardona does not see the same dramatic growth in new projects this year because of lack of funding, the interest and growth potential exists for more of the kind of service ACTION's programs provide.

Volunteer Week *(from page 2)*

In the U.S., OVCP supports the development of Governors' Offices of Voluntary Citizen Participation. It currently works with 26 State OVCPs to achieve effective expansion and coordination of voluntary involvement, as well as citizen action, at state and community levels.

The concept of volunteers working in their own communities helping their neighbors is a basic one, and it is at this local level that most volunteering takes place. For example:

- In Atlanta, RSVP volunteers counsel those on fixed incomes through the FICC program;
- In Torrence County, New Mexico, VISTA volunteers assist low-income residents to insulate their homes and construct solar water heaters;
- In southern Illinois volunteers, with the aid of an ACTION mini-grant, are starting a recycling center which involves 16,000 residents in Champaign and Urbana;
- In Salt Lake City, Utah, another mini-grant is enabling 400 volunteers to help renovate deteriorating housing;
- In communities around the world, Peace Corps volunteers help develop clean water systems, teach math, assist in aquaculture projects and a variety of programs targeted to meet basic human needs.

The community volunteer is literally everywhere, and many of them work at ACTION.

Brown and Celeste gave special thanks to those "employees who volunteer their time, money and skills in their own communities. It is this sort of unselfish effort that reflects the character of our programs and makes us each active, responsible and caring citizens."



NANEAP Countries Visited by PC Programming and Training Director

David Levine, director of Peace Corps' Office of Programming and Training Coordination (OPTC) spent more than one month visiting five countries in the NANEAP region. "I came back with the feeling that Peace Corps is alive and well," says Levine of his trip to Malaysia, Micronesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Fiji. "Our programs in those countries are making real contributions in addressing national development problems."

One of the purposes of Levine's trip was to gain information on field activities and to inform overseas staff of support resources available from Peace Corps in Washington. "I wanted a first-hand knowledge of our programs in that area, their focus now, and how PC staff viewed the future role of Peace Corps," he explains.

Levine also talked to country staff about current programming, training and assistance available from Washington. "I reviewed with them the range of technical skill training we now have, as well as future training plans.

"We discussed the Center for Assessment and Training and other training modules—both pre- and in-service — and our ability to provide them with consultants and materials for technical assistance programs," he explains.

Levine urged PC staff and volunteers to make better use of the Information Collection and Exchange (ICE) program. "ICE is an excellent source of technical assistance information, which is either standard and pre-prepared here at headquarters or is researched in order to answer a specific request. It is also a source for problem sharing. For instance, if a volunteer in one country has set up a rice-milling system and effectively solved any problems, that information would be transmitted to a requesting volunteer in another country working on the same type of project."

While increasing the awareness of training and programming capabilities of the staff in the countries he visited, Levine also saw his trip as a consciousness-raising experience for himself. "I hoped to increase my effectiveness as a field advocate in the forums I participate in as a member of the Peace Corps executive staff. I want to help guide future Peace Corps plans and activities in a dir-

ection that is consistent with our programming mandate, acceptable to staff and volunteers overseas and responsive to the needs of a host country.

"I am also of the mind," he explains, "that training is an ongoing thing, starting with recruitment, and continuing through a volunteer's entire tour of service. Peace Corps, and particularly OPTC, must become increasingly responsive to changing training and programming needs. In fact, we at headquarters should see ourselves serving a continuing resource and support function, and that's the way we want the field to see us."

Peace Corps' present philosophy of dealing with basic human needs at the grassroots level is being carried out according to Levine. "What we have been advocating for the last two or three years is really taking place out in the field. Many of the volunteers I met are working with the poor in remote villages, on farms, in rural health clinics..."

He describes a project he visited in Fiji where a PC couple are helping introduce diversity in a single-cropping area and how the cash benefits will be used to improve sanitary conditions in the villages. "Peace Corps has been emphasizing the need to concentrate on capacity-building for the poor. The project in Fiji is doing just that, and it is a program that could easily be replicated in other countries, and this is true of other projects I saw."

Levine believes that the volunteers' awareness as to their roles is due to better recruitment and selection of volunteers, their higher commitment to working with the poor majority in the Third World, improved pre- and in-service training, which assures that volunteers have a range of skills to function effectively as grassroots development workers, and more effective programming and support from Peace Corps field staff.

"There are exciting, successful programs in those countries! They are having a significant impact on the people served, and are playing a significant role in national development," says Levine. "And, they fit into the larger picture of an ongoing, vibrant Peace Corps."

Sam Brown Inaugurates Second Community Energy Conservation Project



ACTION Director Sam Brown reads a proclamation at a February 14 ceremony in Carbondale Ill., at the inauguration of the Jackson County Action to Save Energy (Jackson/CASE) program.

Pictured with Brown (clockwise) are Chris Robertson, Jackson/CASE chairman; Paul Morrill, Special Assistant to Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill.); and (seated) Carrol Frye, Carbondale City Manager.

Jackson/CASE is one of 18 similar endeavors in towns and cities throughout the country, under ACTION's newly established Community Energy Project (CEP). The Department of Energy (DOE) provided funds to ACTION's Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation to develop these 18 self-help, low-cost energy projects over the next three months, and to disseminate information on voluntary energy conservation efforts to other interested communities. (See February 29, 1980 issue of Update).

At the ceremony, Robertson said the new program would provide for a cutting of red tape "which before had been so extreme that people

were prevented from taking advantage of available resources." He also stated, "I want to make sure we all understand that in order for the program to succeed, the entire community must be involved."

CEP is an extension of the Fitchburg Action to Conserve Energy (FACE) Program. In September, Fitchburg, Mass became the nation's first city to undertake a voluntary, community-wide energy-saving program. (See October 31 and December 20, 1979 issues of Update.)

In addition to organizational and technical assistance, CEP is providing Jackson/CASE with a \$5,000 mini-grant to support the program. Residents will be instructed in a variety of energy saving techniques and eligible households will be provided with low-cost weatherization kits free of charge.

CEP staff member Tamara Stanton said that Jackson/CASE, unlike the urban FACE program, would involve rural county communities as well. Jackson County has a population of 48,000 including 28,000 in Carbondale, the county's largest city.

1980 Federal Personnel Guide Available

Federal Personnel Publications has recently published the second annual Federal Personnel Guide. The guide has been prepared specifically to provide a handy comprehensive reference book containing detailed, accurate, up-to-date information on all aspects of federal employment.

Included are computerized pay tables to enable employees to determine bi-weekly deductions for income taxes, retirement contributions or, if applicable, Social Security withholding.

The guide also contains explanations on retirement, life insurance and health insurance. Promotions, grievances, awards, training, leave, flexitime,

transfers, overseas employment, unemployment, job injury compensation, EEO and veterans' benefits are covered in detail. There are also segments on the Office of Personnel Management, and the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The guide is priced at \$1.65 plus 35 cents for postage and handling. It may be purchased by writing P.O. Box 24144, Washington, D.C. 20024, and enclosing a check for \$2.00 made out to: League of Federal Recreation Associations (LFRA).

Deputy Director Tours Refugee Centers in Virginia



ACTION Deputy Director Mary King chats with an Indochinese refugee child at an ESL (English as Second Language) class at the Bailey Elementary School in Fairfax County, Va., which she visited on a recent tour of refugee assistance programs in northern Virginia.

The visit presented King the first opportunity to tour local refugee assistance projects in which she has been deeply involved.

During the six-hour tour, King also visited the Arlington Career Center, which is providing English language training and job counseling to refugees, as well as native language training for those who are illiterate in their own language. English language training, King learned, is the major training for refugees at the center, as they often cannot get even entry-level jobs without some knowledge of English.

In addition, King visited and discussed housing problems with Jackie Bong Wright, Director of Welcome House in Alexandria. Sponsored by an Indochinese self-help organization, Welcome House helps ease the acclimation of newly-arrived Indochinese refugees to American culture.

Criteria for Rewarding Employee Performance Outlined

"Employee recognition," stresses Jim Lancaster, head of Administration and Finance, "in the form of monetary reward or simple recognition, is one of the most effective ways supervisors can improve employee morale and increase productivity." Lancaster explains that there are several ways this can be done.

Quality Step Increases (QSI) are designed to recognize and reward employees at all levels who display a continually high standard of performance. On the other hand, Special Achievement Awards provide a lump-sum cash bonus and a recognition for excellent performance over a shorter period of time.

During the past two years, there has been an unusually high rate of QSIs versus Special Achievement Awards made to ACTION employees. Con-

sequently, the Office of Administration and Finance has issued a list of criteria for managers and supervisors who wish to reward an employee's performance.

A special one-time cash award may be granted for exceptional job performance on a *special assignment* beyond the duties outlined in an employee's regular job description. This is known as a Special Act/Service and is one of the criteria under the Special Achievement Awards category.

In order to choose the most appropriate way to reward deserving employees, Lancaster feels that managers should be aware of all the options open to them for recognizing superior performance. The distinguishing criteria, listed below, for QSIs and Special Achievement Awards, should facilitate a supervisor's choice.

QUALITY STEP INCREASE

(an additional within-grade pay increase)

- Performance substantially exceeds normal requirements in the most important job functions.
- Total performance is highly effective.
- Performance sustained for reasonable period; must give promise of continuing at the high level.
- If the above criteria are met, a Quality Step Increase in pay should be considered; unless the employee is at the top step of the grade, or the employee would receive benefits too short a time, or a large cash award would be more fitting.

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

(a lump-sum cash award)

- Performance substantially exceeds normal requirements in one or more important job elements.
- Performance must be superior in one important element, but not necessarily in all.
- Performance sustained for reasonable period.
- Award granted for past performance.
- Special act/service.
- If the above criteria are met, a lump-sum cash award is granted in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) award scale for job performance.



KUDOS TO:

GRETNA FREEMAN, director of the Cleveland, Ohio Foster Grandparent Program, who received an award from the ACTION Ohio State Office for her outstanding contributions to the FGP program. Freeman was honored for a number of accomplishments, including the development of a grant under which FGPs will work with abused children.

MIKE HAMMOND, public information officer in the Rochester, N.Y. area recruitment office, who was cited in the Albany FGP newsletter for his photographs of FGP programs in New York State.

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PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER CHICAGO SERVICE CENTER

Ben Foriest, new public information officer in the Chicago Service Center will handle press, radio and TV coverage of ACTION programs, staff and volunteers in Illinois and Indiana.

Foriest, who was a VISTA volunteer in Chicago in 1977-78, joined the ACTION staff following the completion of his service. He first worked as a clerk in the Region V Office of Domestic and Anti-Poverty Operations and then as a recruiter in the Chicago area recruitment office before assuming his new position. He has a BA in human service and an MA in interpersonal and organizational communications from Governor State University in Park Forest, Ill.

NEWS BUREAU WRITER

William Barrett, new writer in the Office of Recruitment and Communications' News Bureau, handles agency news stories and responds to media requests concerning ACTION programs.

Barrett has served as a writer/editor since joining the agency in 1977, first in the Office of the Peace Corps Director where he helped establish Peace Corps Times, and then with the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation's Former Volunteer Project as editor of Reconnection, the newsletter for returned VISTA and Peace Corps volunteers.

Earlier Barrett taught English and literature at the University of Arizona in Tucson. A former Peace Corps volunteer in St. Kitts, West Indies, he has an MA in English from the University of Arizona.

ACTION UPDATE

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