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[Scrapbook of Success - Chicago, East St. Louis, & Two Rivers] [2]

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**AmeriCorps
in Illinois**

*Getting Things Done
for America*

MEARL J. JUSTUS
SHERIFF

ST. CLAIR COUNTY
700 NORTH FIFTH STREET
BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS 62220-4499

August 14, 1995

To Whom It May Concern:

In our ever changing times it is refreshing to see people who are making a positive difference in their own lives and in the lives of other people. Through President Clinton's service program AmeriCorp's 29 people from the East St. Louis/ LoveJoy metropolitan area have had that opportunity.

Each AmeriCorp member through their service helped a community to accomplish tangible and intangible goals. Americorp members pitched in with clean up efforts to make the East St. Louis/LoveJoy areas cleaner and safer. They planted flowers, cut weeds and removed tons of debris from abandoned and neglected properties. They were trained how to use chain saws, tractors, tillers and other equipment. They worked in the hot sun and in the cold of winter to accomplish their assigned tasks. Through their efforts at least 22 abandoned and neglected properties were reclaimed from being used as lares for criminals and drug users to positive symbols of change. These properties became vegetable and flower gardens , as well as parks for young children.

In their efforts they assisted in the installation of gabian baskets to inhibit stream bank erosion. They also assisted with rehabilitation of a local park lagoon and fountain so that the magnificent beauty that has been lost will begin to return. All of these tangible cost- saving measures made a difference in a community strapped for dollars. A community struggling to regain the prominence it once enjoyed as an All-American city.

Sheriff's Drug Hotline

1-800-640-DIME

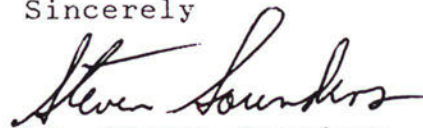
"No Questions Asked"

In addition to these very visible efforts to improve the environment, there were some not so visible personal growth changes for the AmeriCorps members. For many who had never operated a computer, learning some computer assisted drafting, was a very valuable addition. Some members became certified "Master Gardeners" through classes offered by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. Members became the first certified chain saw operators in the state of Illinois. Their skill levels in projects grew with their knowledge. But most importantly, their confidence and self-esteem became obvious in the pride they took in being affiliated with AmeriCorps. Clothing decked with AmeriCorps patches became a common sight on the State Community College campus where the project is based.

Members learned communication skills and were introduced to techniques of planning and goal setting. They made mistakes and learned valuable lessons from their mistakes. Lessons both formal and informal that will make AmeriCorp members better people and the East St. Louis/LoveJoy communities better places to live.

I have lived in this metropolitan community more than 40 years. I have worked as a law enforcement official in this area for almost 12 years. I have seen many programs designed to invigorate the East St. Louis area come and leave with little sustainable progress. But never have I seen the climate and conditions so conducive to recovery as they are today. It is self-help programs like AmeriCorp and a positive glimmer of hope that has many people in the East St. Louis area believing that there will be a brighter tomorrow if we just keep "Getting Things Done."

Sincerely


Lt. Steven Saunders

EAST ST. LOUIS PARK DISTRICT

LEONARD JOHNSON
Director

KELVIN L. ELLIS
Director of Planning

DARLENE WARD
Secretary

PEARSON BUSH
Attorney

2950 CASEYVILLE AVENUE
P.O. BOX 2465
EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS 62202
(618) 874-3600
FAX: (618) 874-6924



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Commissioner

August 14, 1995

Dr. Don Wallace
Director for State Community College
East St. Louis AmeriCorps
601 James Thompson Blvd.
East St. Louis, IL 62201

Dear Dr. Wallace:

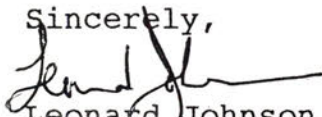
On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, I wish to thank-you and the AmeriCorps members for the support in maintaining Hall and Lincoln Park. These dedicated community service workers deserve a firm pat on the back! I can assure the sternest critic that the members working in our parks have put in long hours and done an excellent job.

The AmeriCorps program has allowed the Park District to tackle projects that have been neglected for years. They have removed several dangerous trees, cleaned over 1,000 foot of shoreline along the lagoon, and cleaned out our one remaining greenhouse. They have developed action plans and helped maintain the park.

When one considers the early summer rains and flooding followed by the record breaking heat waves, one has even greater appreciation for the work that has been accomplished. AmeriCorps members have represented the best in East St. Louis residents.

Once again, we at the Park District want to give a gracious and heartfelt thanks to each member of AmeriCorps.

Sincerely,


Leonard Johnson
Director



Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agriculture

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

August 14, 1995

EFNEP Training Center
1269 N. 89th, suite #3
East St. Louis, IL 62203

East St. Louis/Lovejoy Americorp
601 J R Thompson Blvd.
East St. Louis, IL 62201

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you very much for your support of our youth programs in East St. Louis. The youth gardens were a success thanks to the assistance of many agencies within the community. Your contribution was greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Betty A. Cameron
Extension Educator
EFNEP

MECCO/OPERATION NEW SPIRIT NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE
771 Vogel Place
East St. Louis, Illinois 62205
Business Phone (618) 874-0312 ☎ (618) 874-0221

August 14, 1995

Americorp
Attn: Mr. Rufus Williams
State Community College
601 James R. Thompson Blvd.
East St. Louis, Illinois 62201

Dear Mr. Williams:

This letter comes to say how grateful we are for the collaboration and help you and the Americorp volunteers have given to our office. We are most appreciative of the help your program has been with our community gardens (spring & summer), beautification (fall) and neighborhood clean-up project (summer).

It is essential that programs, such as Americorp, become a working and integral part of the community in which they serve. Therefore it is hoped that there may be future projects in which Americorp may be a part in the revitalization of the East St. Louis community.

Again our thanks to you and the Americorp volunteers and we look forward to working together on future endeavors.

Sincerely,



Venessa Marion
Administrator



Make East St. Louis Beautiful, Inc.

301 River Park Drive
East St. Louis, IL. 62201
(618) 482-6621 or 271-2855

August 15, 1995

Rufus C. Williams
USDA, NRCS AmeriCorps
601 J. R. Thompson Blvd.
East St. Louis, IL 62201

Dear AmeriCorps Participants:

Contrary to the article in the Belleville News-Democrat newspaper, we know that AmeriCorp has been a great help to the communities of the our city and to our organization Make East St. Louis Beautiful, Inc.

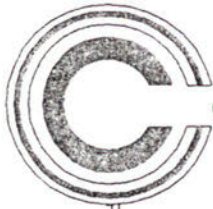
The Greenhouse in Hall, formerly Jones Park was totally useless until it was rehabilitated and put into use by AmeriCorp. Both city Parks, Hall and Lincoln are now more people friendly because of your efforts.

Again, Thank You! for all your efforts.

Sincerely,

Geri O. Jenkins
Exec./Dir. MESLB, Inc.

Sincerely



THE CENTER

Comprehensive Mental Health Center
of St. Clair County, Inc.

Delores S. Ray
Executive Director

August 15, 1995

The AmeriCorp Project
Mr. Rufus Williams
N.R.C.S. Coordinator
State Community College Building
601 James R. Thompson Blvd.
East Saint Louis, Illinois 62204

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Mrs. Jacqueline R. Settles
Mrs. Catherine Stewart
Dr. Katie H. Wright

Dear Mr. Williams and the Americorp participants:

We are expressing our gratitude to you and Americorp participants who helped ensure the success of the Comprehensive Mental Health Center's MI/DD Treatment Program Gardening and Beautification Project.

The presentation you gave and the demonstration shown to the CMHC's group on tilling the soil, planting seeds and plants, also how to care and nurture them has enhanced the client's abilities to recognize their values, and to appreciate the contributions they have made to nature by visualizing and identifying their creations.

This project has been both educational and experimental. The client's have learned that plants are like people, they require fresh air, sunshine, a nice place to live (rich soil) care and nourishment to produce a strong, healthy and beautiful plant.

We are happy to say that this will be an on-going project each summer.

Again Mrs. Barbara Forbes and I, give thanks to the Americorp participants, especially Mr. Testa Buckles who worked so diligently with our group for the contribution made to our project and to the Beautification of the City of East Saint Louis.

Dr. William Gathright
Dr. William Gathright
MI/Daytreatment Coordinator

Barbara Forbes
Barbara Forbes
Coordinator, Residential Program

Carmen Smith
Carmen Smith
Therapeutic Aide

CS/krh

3911 STATE STREET • EAST ST. LOUIS, IL 62205
Phone 618/482-7330 • 618/482-7331 • Fax 618/482-4351 • TDD 618/482-7389

"Reaching Out to Help"

LOVEJOY SCHOOL DISTRICT #188

800 Madison Street
Lovejoy, Illinois 62059
Phone: (618) 271-1014 & 271-7238

ELNORA H.G. WILLIAMS
PRINCIPAL

ROBERT J. ISOM, ED.D
SUPERINTENDENT

August 15, 1995

Dear AmeriCorps Members:

Your efforts in the East St. Louis and Lovejoy communities during the last ten months has been without a doubt one of the best things that has happened to our Lovejoy community. The enthusiasm is exactly what we need to make things happen in our own back yard.

I wish to let you know that Mrs. Singleton and Mr. Winston, who are excellent master gardeners have more than once expressed their feelings of how wonderful it is to have you as a catalyst to stimulate the great effort of our community. The opportunity to have our very own to share in this effort is more than enough to make us proud. I will be willing at any time to let others know that AmeriCorps is more than just another community "make work program."

We are excited about the gardens and the tree nursery that has been placed in the community of Lovejoy.



Robert Isom
Superintendent
Lovejoy School District

742 North 41st Street
East St. Louis, Illinois 62203

August 15, 1995

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I would like to thank you (AMERICORP), for your help to the 4-H Youth and to our community. We appreciate all your help and support. Your loyalty has restored the faith in the group.

Do keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Willie Dell Beard

Willie Dell Beard
4-H Leader

State Community College
East St. Louis / Hobby AmeriCorps
East St. Louis, Ill.
62201

8/15/95

The vegetables grown in the State Community College is greatly appreciated. We at Dorris's Helping Hand were able to add fresh vegetables on our daily menu, which serves about 50 people. The presence of the AmeriCorps has been ideal for the elderly, low income, and the needy. We are looking forward to the continuation of AmeriCorps in our community. We always need a helping hand with feeding.

Thank you,
Rev. Dorris Davis

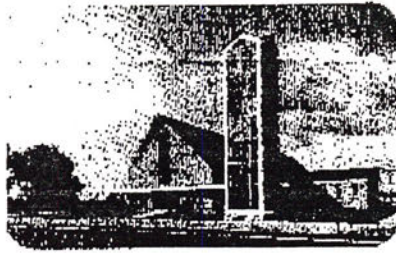
REV. DORRIS DAVIS
Director
(618) 271-4160



DORRIS'S HELPING HAND ORGANIZATION
SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS
(Non-Profit Organization)
Tax Exempt



P.O. Box 213
1501 Winstanley Avenue
East St. Louis, IL 62204

**Mount Zion Baptist Church**

24th at Bond Ave.
EAST ST. LOUIS, ILL. 62207
618/274-8350 - 271-5745

Rev. John H. Rouse, B.A., B.Th.
D.D., Pastor

Residence - 606 Alhambra Ct. - 618/274-8356

August 17, 1995

Dear: AmeriCorps

We the Mt. Zion M.B.Church food pantry appreciate the food and produce you have given us the past months. It has made a profound statement in feeding the hungry here at Mt. Zion M.B.Church.

In the future we hope that you will continue to bless us here at Mt. Zion so that we can continue to bless others through out the neighborhood. If there are any questions please feel free to contact the food pantry here at (618) 274-8357. Thank you in advance for what you are going to do for us.

Yours Truly

Deacon Prentice Johnson
Prentice Johnson
Supervisor



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

ANOTHER PROJECT THAT SPELLS
SUCCESS FOR E. ST. LOUIS/LOVEJOY
AMERICORPS

By: Rufus C. Williams
NRCS AmeriCorps Coordinator

The AmeriCorps Program came into our lives only one year ago, but now it is hard to imagine how it would be without our participants. Today it is a strong reality for 20 participants, who have stuck with the program to help the East St. Louis/Lovejoy communities to realize changes that they have not witnessed in the last decade. An example of this is the presence of the program that offers a scholarship that will allow participants to put \$4750.00 into their education plan, continue to receive a stipend towards living cost, health benefits and child care where needed. In addition to this, the participants are able to demonstrate their skills and ability as they involve themselves in community activities. Many of these participants are within four weeks of completing their required 1700 hours for qualifying for the above scholarship. One of the success stories that can be talked about with great pride is a community project that was carried out by NRCS AmeriCorps Team in Centreville. Who are the people that got things done? They are AmeriCorps, and the Belleville Methodist Church working together to complete a very well recognize project in someone's neighborhood. Whose neighborhood?

It is Florine and Arthur Johnson's. They have worked together as leaders in the AmeriCorps Program from start up to present this couple has done it all and are looking forward to doing greater projects in their community. This is a project that Florine got started through networking with her Master Garden partners while taking that course back in April of this year. She made an agreement with one of her instructors, to talk to one of his church group meetings about the AmeriCorps Project that she was working with if he would help her with her recreation park, which was being prepared for development. He agreed and it has been fun to watch as things begin to happen.

During the month of June, Florine was able to get closer to finalizing the project as she had planned. With a team of five other AmeriCorps members, four community members and fifteen young people from the Belleville Methodist Church, they leveled, tilled, planted flowers, and installed a gym set for the young people in that park.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

AMERICORPS: WINS HIGH MARKS IN THE COMMUNITIES OF
EAST ST. LOUIS AND LOVEJOY

BY
RUFUS C. WILLIAMS

There are thirty participants from these neighborhoods working together with their communities to bring about changes, long overdue changes. Since this group came into existence some six months ago, they have made a definite impact. They have focused their energies into various projects that intensifies into visible results daily.

The environmental effort involves the team in the communities of East St. Louis and Lovejoy.

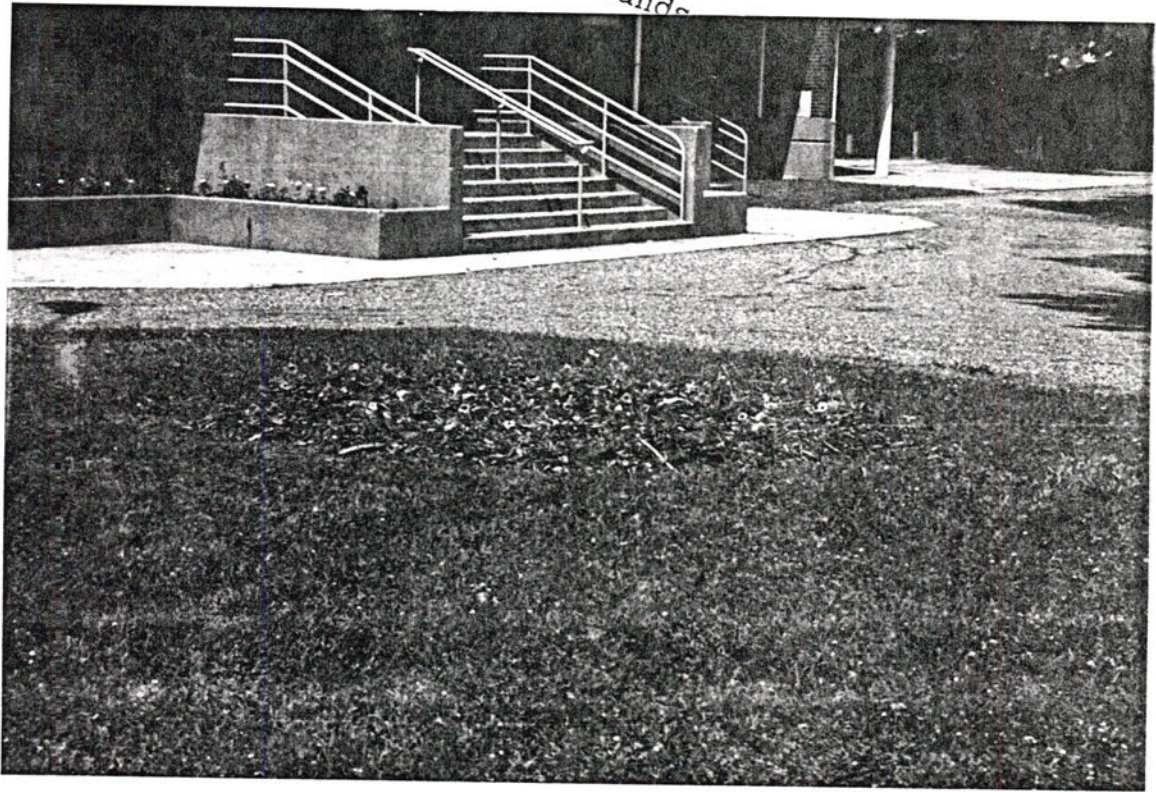
Restoring and landscaping lots, participating in the cleanup of the fountain and bandstand in Jones Park area, are a few of the projects that they are involved with. A more recent project, participating with the Operation New Spirit, and with members of the Rush City Community, to install a raised bed garden. This idea was to avoid contamination to growing plants that may be cause by heavy metals, which are present in the soil.

In addition to the above areas of involvement, the flood team has participated with the city of Belleville, in the restoration of the Mt. Pleasant Storm Drainage Area. This location had heavy runoff during the flood of 1993, which created erosion that damaged the road bed. This inhibited entry into the neighborhood. It caused problems for several business and many homes. The team surveyed the drainage area, and have worked with a professional tree service to eliminate trees and roots that caused serious soil erosion. They are now preparing the course to shield the road bed. The project should be completed in August 1995, with the support of the City of Belleville, engineering department and NRCS Field Office. This group has also assisted the Caseyville Drainage District, on the O'Fallon Drive Project. During the 1993 storm period, extreme flooding, on the O'Fallon Creek, threatened homes of many residents in the area. The team supported the flood district people in putting together many of the Gabion Baskets and filling them with rocks to help to stabilize the channel.

Since our AmeriCorps project started, the efforts has been to help develop skills for the participants. Using the chain saw, starting and maintaining tractors, tillers, and other small engine power tools is now routine. Eleven of the group received Master Gardeners Certifications. They have been able to learn how to get things done quickly and more efficiently.

Our biggest accomplishment is the recognition of the efforts having been made by AmeriCorps participants through National Resources Conservation Services, State Community College, Us Forest Service and other partners to help the environment.

Through great efforts, the Ecosystem Council applauds SCC, NRCS/AmeriCorps, US Forest Service, IL Conservation Service and their partners who are working together to create progress and awareness for communities of East St. Louis and Lovejoy. The photos enclosed will show some of our AmeriCorps Team members making it happen, "Getting Things Done!"



top: Lincoln Park completed by AmeriCorps participants and members of the Lincoln Park Committee. See plants at base of steps to left and in foreground.
circle flower bed



bottom: Derrick Orr, top, and Dr. Don Wallace as they place plants into the landscape at State Community College.

A Greenhouse Production



top: Florine Johnson shows Marigolds grown for Spring planting. Many different varieties were grown for Spring planting.

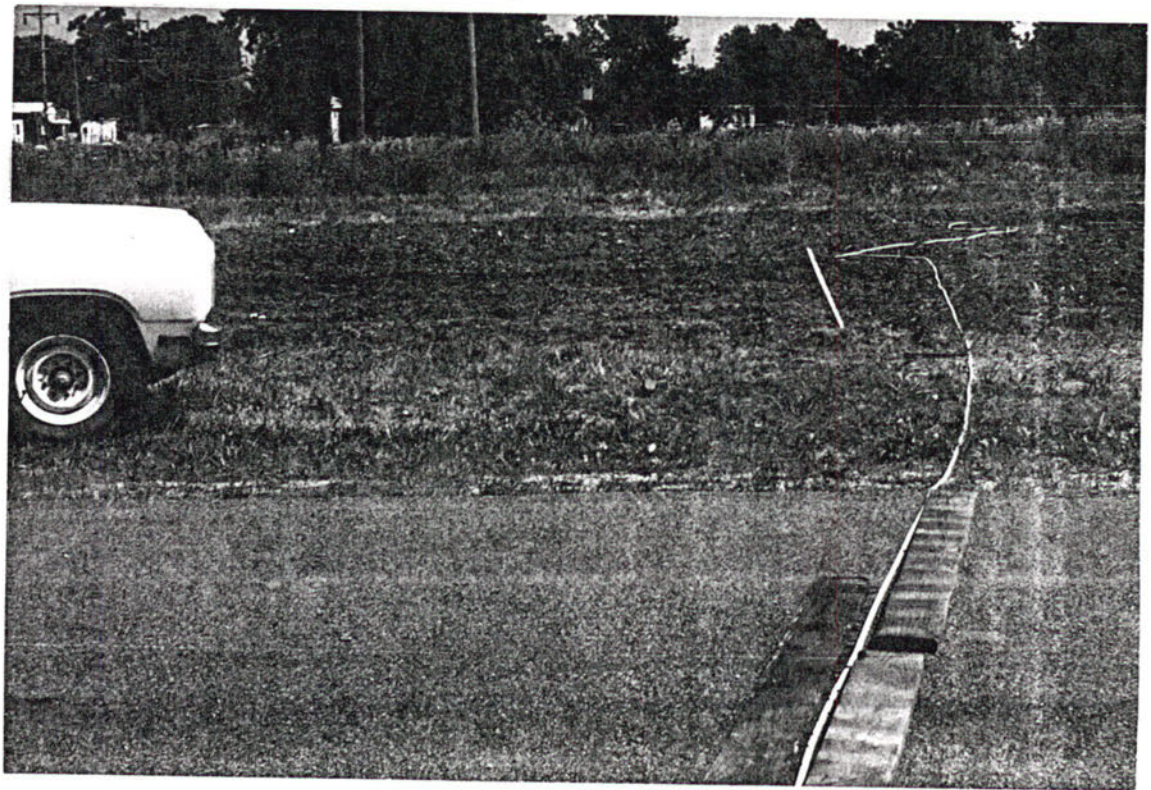


bottom: Derrick Orr on bench and Charles Massie do inside K. Hall Park restoration process.

AmeriCorps Supports St. Clair County Mental Health Program



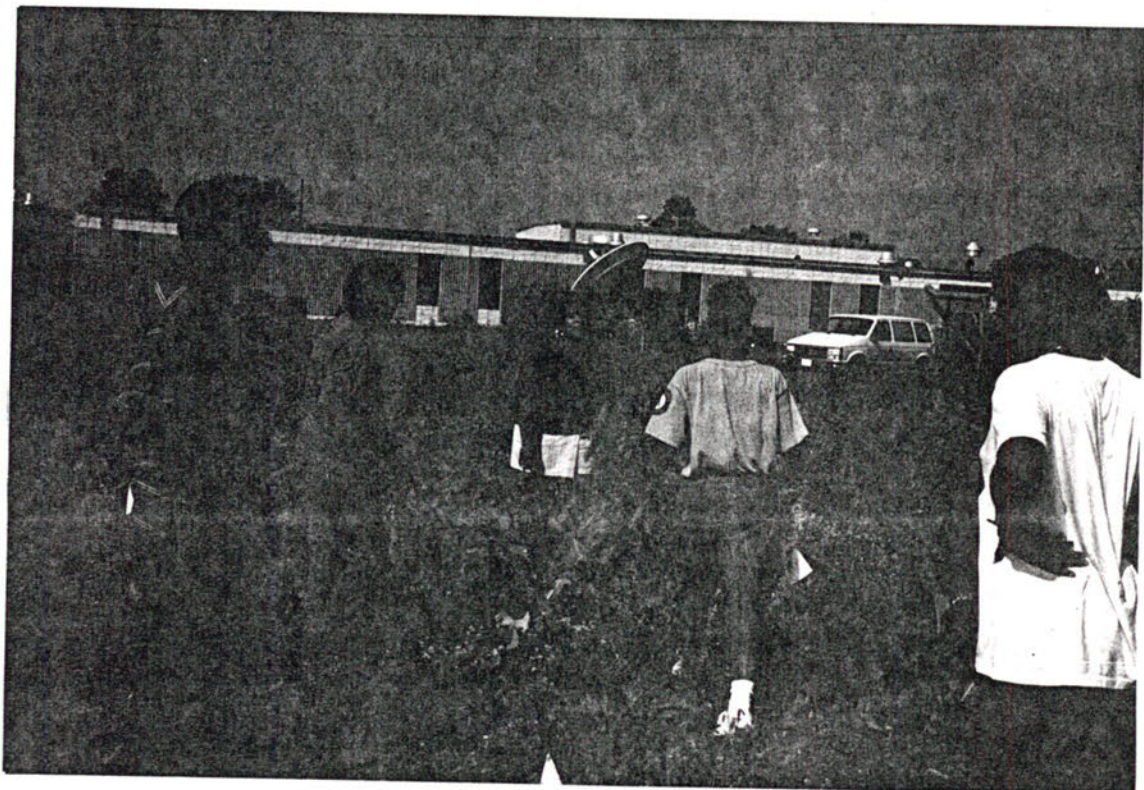
Top: 1. Ms Forbes, Center Mgr., met to look at garden site to be tilled and planted



Bottom: Mental Health garden site on G Street which was tilled and prepared top planting.



Top: top center. Ms Flossie Singleton and top right Mr. Winston discuss with Karla Kenton b. left. Theresa Taylor, Dione Hych and Tonia Brown. The plan of action to clean around trees at the Lovejoy Tree Nursery Site



What A Cleanup!



top: Members of the South End Cleanup Committee and AmeriCorps' James Pace working together to clean up a serious pollution problem on 29th and Trendly in ESL.



bottom: AmeriCorps' Karla Kenton, Tammy Archer, Florine Johnson (sunhat) and Dana Tibbs at the above site

South End Cleanup



Payson Village Board Recognizes New Businesses; Establishes Savings Account For Purchase Of New Equipment

The Payson Village Board reviewed recent happenings in Payson and recognized the opening of a new business, "Wheels Unlimited". They also noted that another new business, a grocery store, is scheduled to open between 30 to 60 days, owned by Don and Phyllis Billings of Kinderhook. The store will be located in the former grocery store building and will probably employ one or two people part-time initially.

The Board also voted to set up a savings account to be used strictly for the purchase of new equipment. Effective immediately, the Board will put \$500 per month into the account. It was noted that there are some needs that will be coming up and this account should help the village be prepared.

The Board listened to representatives of AmeriCorps, a newly developed national organization that operates similar to a domestic peace corps with volunteers. Darlene Ivarson spoke to the Board about some things that her rural development team can do for the village. Some of her suggestions included making needs assessments through questionnaires distributed among the residents, creating a brochure that highlights the best features of the community, do environmental surveys, or help with obtaining grants. AmeriCorps had two teams, the Rural Development Team and the Environmental Team. Both teams will do volunteer work around the village. She provided some materials for the Board to look over and plans were made for her to meet with the Village Planning Commission at a later date.

Veda Graves, who is in charge of bookings for the town halls and shelter houses, turned in her annual report. It was noted that there are still people smoking in the hall, even though there are "No Smoking" signs posted. The signs are for everyone. It was also noted that there are some groups who are not cleaning the hall after

son would not be satisfied with anything but a whole new well. He also reported that the engineer, Doug Siebers, felt the same way.

It was reported that maintenance man, Bill Humphrey, has been enrolled in a school on water and waste water at Taylorville. It is given by the Illinois Rural Water Commission.

It was reported that the combination of salt and chips seems to be doing a better job on the snow covered roads than previous mixtures used, but that the Board needs to find a better way to store the chips. This will be looked into.

It was reported that the shelter house in South Park has been closed off due to the poor condition of its roof. It is believed that a heavy snow fall, could cause the roof to collapse. A special meeting will be held in the near future to make a final decision on what should be done with the shelter house after each Board member looks over the shelter house with Bill Humphrey.

A report was given on the caucus that was held Monday evening, Jan. 9. On the Citizens' party, Norbert Buswell, Bob Mitchel and Dave Williams are running as incumbents. There was no nominations made at the Independent Party caucus.

The various committees made up of trustees were told to begin making up "wish" lists to be reviewed for the new budget. Work on the new budget will begin at the next regular meeting.

Police Chief Seldon Cheney asked the Board to authorize him taking the car and responding to emergency calls within a four mile radius of town in the event that no other state or county office was within range. After some discussion, the Board approved.

Mayor Charlie McCallister handed out a proposal for a new income structure for elected officials of the village. The structure includes a cut in pay if a trustee misses two or more meetings. The trustees are looking over the proposed income structure.

The next regular meeting of the Payson Village Board will be Tuesday evening, February 14, at 7:30 p.m. in the Payson Town Hall.

Service program volunteers at work in rural Illinois

By Kay Shipman

Remember President Clinton's program to let college graduates help pay for their education through community service? The program's name is AmeriCorps. Its volunteers through the U.S. Department of Agriculture are tackling rural and environmental projects in Illinois — projects that likely wouldn't be done otherwise.

"That's the beauty of this (program)," said Bill McCartney, AmeriCorps coordinator in West-Central Illinois.

"It will help get things accomplished that haven't been done, that needed to be done, but wouldn't because of a shortage of manpower or funding."

Five-county area

McCartney, head of Two Rivers Resource Conservation and Development, based in Pittsfield, oversees 15 AmeriCorps volunteers in five counties, Adams, Brown, Calhoun, Pike, and Schuyler.

Area farmers and other landowners will directly benefit from a project to help find alternative uses for land no longer in the conservation reserve program (CRP).

About 2,500 surveys were mailed to landowners with CRP acres, and half to 70 percent have been returned, McCartney said. The questionnaire sought information about the land's future, listed potential alternative uses, and had landowners indicate if they wanted more information.

Clinton support

President Bill Clinton voiced his support for the AmeriCorps service program during his state of the union speech last week. "We shouldn't stop it," Clinton said. He also introduced an AmeriCorps volunteer who works with Kentucky elementary students and sat in the audience near Hillary Clinton.

This summer, the culmination will be a one-day fair with exhibits and workshops on alternative uses and programs, McCartney said.

Another project in the five-county area is assessment of the infrastructure, businesses, services, and services of individual communities. The volunteers will survey residents for their opinions about the towns and their needs.

Fall through the crack

The Department of Commerce and Community Affairs and CIPS (Central Illinois Power Service) do similar surveys for larger communities, but the size of community that the volunteers will deal with often "falls through the crack," McCartney said.

The data will be compiled for the communities' use for economic development, brochures, or other activities, McCartney said.

A variety of beautification and environmental projects are planned, although work has

slowed during the winter. The projects include flood recovery work and streambank stabilization, development of a five-acre wetland for an education center, and creation of hiking trails and park facilities.

Each volunteer must work 17,000 hours, which is approximately 11 months, McCartney said. For their work, they each will receive a \$4,725 voucher to repay college loans or to be used to further their education. The money goes directly to the college, he noted.

Volunteers also receive a living allowance. The federal funding comes through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service).

USDA AmeriCorps projects also are under way in the East St. Louis and Chicago areas. Much of the work involves landscaping and general beautification projects.

Market calendar

Friday, Feb. 3

• USDA Cattle Inventory Report

Money watch

Gold: Down, \$381.35

Fed funds: Up 5 5/8%

U.S. dollar: Down, \$96.60

Treasury bills: Up, 6.24%

*Index of the dollar's value against a selection of foreign currencies weighted for their importance to U.S. trade. 100 equals 1980-82 period. Source: Morgan Guaranty Trust.

HAVE A NEWS TIP?

Call the
Herald-Whig
Newsroom
at (217) 221-3361.



*Quincy
Herald
Whig*

1-24-95

Uptown plans second survey about parking

Uptown Quincy Inc. will again survey downtown businesses beginning Thursday for ideas to solve the area's parking problem.

The group surveyed businesses last April to determine the number of employees and residents in the central business district, Uptown Executive Director Jill Arnold Blickhan said. The first survey showed there were 1,365 parking spaces for 2,186 vehicles. About 62 percent of the area's business owners and landlords provide parking for employees and tenants.

Last time, business owners offered suggestions such as ticketing employers for employee violations. Others suggested adding more decks to public lots. But Blickhan said she later learned ticketing employers is illegal. It also would be too costly to add more decks to public lots, officials told her.

"When we get these results, we'll sit down and talk with them again," Blickhan said.

Four AmeriCorp volunteers will canvas businesses in this survey. They will go door-to-door to businesses between Third and 12th streets and from Hampshire to Jersey streets.

What's Up DOWNTOWN

By: Jill Arnold Blickhan

What goes around, comes around.

Last spring, I happened across a 1978 news clipping from the Quincy Herald-Whig. The headline contained the words "parking, meters" and, I think, "controversy."

It caught my eye since Uptown Quincy, Inc. had been asked to conduct a parking survey to determine the number of employees and residents in the central business district, (CBD), how many had cars to park, the number of parking spaces available, and whether employers or landlords provided parking.

I read the 16 year-old clipping. Then I looked at the byline. It was written by a college student (me), working as a summer intern at the newspaper. It presented the controversy and concerns of removing parking meters here.

What comes around, goes around.

Uptown Quincy, Inc. conducted its 1994 parking survey. In addition to the questions about numbers of people, cars and parking spaces, time limits, employees playing "musical" parking -- akin to musical chairs -- which ties up parking along the streets for clients and customers, residential parking, or something else?

The answer? All of the above. Not every day. Not in every instance.

No business district has enough parking spaces for everyone to park within a half block of their business or residence and still allow customers and clients to park near business and office entrances. Yet, the few merchants we've talked with thus far did very well in 1994 -- some reported record sales.

Time limits may not generate "enough" turnover in some areas. However, if limits are shortened, will that discourage customers and clients from coming to the CBD?

There are employees in the CBD who play "musical" parking. (Of course, those reading this think it doesn't apply to them, or they may not realize the problem created by "musical" parking, or they simply may not care).

The above paragraph applies to some residents also.

While solutions have been offered, not all are viable. Some are illegal or beyond budget constraints of Uptown Quincy, Inc. and the City of Quincy's Police Department.

The addition of new businesses and the reputation of established businesses in the CBD has increased traffic. The location and completion of the new Quincy Medical Group building has also brought more people and cars to the CBD. Finally, tourism and convention traffic will increase with the opening of the Oakley-Lindsey Civic Center.

What goes around, comes around. Once again, we have to address parking and traffic flow. (No guarantees. No quick fixes).

AmeriCorps program coordinator Bill McCartney has agreed to assist us. Four AmeriCorps workers will attempt to contact more than 300 businesses bounded by Third to Twelfth Streets and Hampshire to Jersey. They'll gather additional information about employee parking, leased parking, time limits, enforcement issues, and one-way streets in the CBD. They'll present some choices for possible alternatives and solutions.

Thanks, in advance, to the AmeriCorps team for the work they'll do: Starr McDaniels, Mike Miller, Chad Denison and Darlene Ivarson. And, thanks to the business owners, employees and others as you assist us by giving these four a few minutes of your time.

Quincy Herald
Whig
January 1995

Feds Charge Local Paper With "Hatchet Job"

AmeriCorp Supporters Defend Image

By ERNEST R. MERCER

In an August 3, 1995 memorandum a high level government official charged that the Belleville News Democrat is engaged in a campaign intended to smear the accomplishments of a \$610,000 federally funded program in East St. Louis and that a Reporter at the paper implied in a telephone conversation that all government agencies and community based organizations in the city are corrupt.

The twelve page memorandum, written by Joel Berg, Director of National Service at The U.S. Department of Agriculture served as the basis for a letter to the editor which was published in the August 9 edition of the "News Democrat" and accuses Reporter, George Pawlaczyk of knowingly using incorrect information and incorrectly quoting officials concerning the East St. Louis operations of President Bill Clinton's highly publicized AmeriCorp program in a late July article.

AmeriCorp was first introduced by then candidate Clinton during the 1992 Presidential campaign and has since compared not only to America's Peace Corp of the 1960's but also with President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal program, the Civilian Conservation Corp (C.C.C.).

During the 1930's Roosevelt put millions of Americans emerging from the Depression, to work in the C.C.C. on a wide variety of government sponsored jobs - from construction workers who built the nation's highway system to artists who produced beautiful work inspired murals.

Since January of this year AmeriCorp has financed twenty-two East St. Louis gardening projects and several other activities including flood relief programs utilizing as many as twenty-nine workers.

The budget includes a benefits package for each worker which gives a small salary and a \$4,725 educational award

to be used to pay off existing college loans or to pay for future education.

Program officials charged that "News Democrat" article damaged the image of the program by overestimating the East St. Louis budget by \$48,000, failing to report that the food from several still active community gardens provides vegetables for hundreds of local families, largely ignores important flood damage control projects and purposefully omits other information which would have reflected a more positive picture.

Willie Dell Beard, a long time community volunteer who maintains one of the AmeriCorp gardens agrees that the "News Democrat" story and uncomplimentary editorials on the same day left an unfair picture of the local program.

Beard, whose garden is a product of an AmeriCorp partnership with the East St. Louis Eco Systems Council, "I was looking forward to the story, because I'm proud of the work we are doing, but when I finished reading it I felt heart-sick. I felt that the report was unfair."

Beard, whose gardening project began as a 4-H activity five years ago said that she is afraid that left unchallenged, the image left could add fuel as Congress gears up to cut AmeriCorp programs which some have characterized as a

'boondoggle'.

However, concluded Ms. Beard, "While it would be unfair for the program to be abandoned simply because someone in Belleville does not like what we are doing, we started without help and if we have to we'll go back to doing our work alone."

In his August 3 memorandum the U.S.D.A.'s Berg also attributes the following to "News Democrat" Reporter, Pawlaczyk, "...he admitted the bias of both himself and his editor, saying that neither of them personally believe that East St. Louis needs either more gardens or more trees. He also implied that neither he nor his editor believe that East St. Louis could govern itself and that any government agencies or community groups in East St. Louis were inherently corrupt (I took his comments to be patronizing at best.) It seemed clear in our conversation that he had made his mind up that the hole idea for the program was stupid and that his article would say so, regardless of the factors presented by myself or anyone else."

Pawlaczyk, speaking from his office on Wednesday, admitted speaking with Berg, but denied expressing the sentiments attributed to him.

Said Pawlaczyk, "I never said that, never implied that and don't know where that reference came from."

East St. Louis Monitor

8/9/95

Program to provide help for renovation

By Mike Viola
Staff writer

A federal program will allow 20 workers to spend a year in East St. Louis working on a variety of beautification and renovation projects to improve the city.

The AmeriCorps project is coordinated by the United States Department of Education and will begin in East St. Louis in September.

Rufus Williams, project coordinator, said the East St. Louis AmeriCorps project is the only one taking place in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Jones said the program is beneficial in two ways: providing clean-up work to East St. Louis and providing the 20 workers with a job that also earns them college and vocational school scholarships.

"They work for a year and during that time they also earn money for their education," said Jones.

AmeriCorps is President Bill Clinton's national service initiative that allows diverse groups of young people to earn college or vocational school scholarships while performing critical service to meet human, environmental, public safety and educational needs.

"AmeriCorps is grounded in the mainstream values of community, responsibility and opportunity," said Mike Espy, Secretary of Agriculture. "It is good for

the participants who benefit from their increased ability to attend college or vocational school, good for communities which benefit from their service and good for the country which benefits from a renewed civic spirit."

Participants in the program work full time for a year and earn a salary of at least \$7,500. In addition to the salary, the worker is given an education award worth \$4,725.

Anyone age 17 or older from the St. Louis metropolitan area is eligible to apply for the program. There are no income requirements to apply and applications will be accepted until Aug. 5.

Williams said the easiest way for area residents to inquire about applying for the program is to call the USDA AmeriCorps hotline at 1-800-880-4183.

Work to be performed starting this fall in East St. Louis includes restoring neglected and abandoned lots in residential neighborhoods, beautification work at State Community College, renovating the greenhouse at East St. Louis High School, creating garden sites and renovating local parks.

Williams said the work being performed by the AmeriCorps employees will be in conjunction with other agencies involved in beautification projects in East St. Louis, including Make East St. Louis Beautiful, Operation New Spirit and the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department.



Renyold Ferguson

AmeriCorp workers prepare the soil for a garden in Rush City.

Gardens A Matter Of Pride

By Margaret Gillerman
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff 5-26-95

It won't be long before the lot next to Jesse and Donna Haire's home in the Rush City neighborhood will be ripe with yellow peppers, plump red tomatoes, tasty green peas and summer squash. Marigolds and zinnias will bloom.

The gardeners who are tilling and planting this week are building a community garden. And backers of the project hope this community garden — and about a dozen like it around East St. Louis — also will grow a bumper crop of neighbor-

Crews Are Preparing Community Project

hood pride.

Crews of workers from AmeriCorp and neighbors are helping prepare the soil, build the wooden sides and walkway, and plant seeds and cuttings at the garden at 910 Sycamore.

Other folks also helped get the community garden project — called Harvesting Good Neighbor Relations — this far. MECCO/Operation New Spirit, a citywide

neighborhood organization, started the garden program about two years ago and has been expanding it since. At least four community gardens are new this spring. AmeriCorp joined as co-sponsor this season.

"Community gardens serve as a way of bringing neighbors and neighborhoods together for a common purpose . . . and of harvesting good neighbor relations," said Venessa Marion, administrator of MECCO/Operation New Spirit.

See GARDENS, Page 4

Cowell

Gardens

From page one

Florine Johnson, an AmeriCorp worker, coordinates the tilling and planting and was busy on Sycamore this week. Johnson, 46, of Centreville, recently completed a master gardening course offered by the University of Illinois' Extension Service.

She joined AmeriCorp because she wanted "to give a year of community service." In March, she and others started surveying the land and plotting the designs of the gardens. They plan to use only organic fertilizers.

The garden at 910 Sycamore is in a neighborhood near heavy industry. Because of the risk of industrial and chemical pollution, the gardeners are

experimenting with a raised bed garden, Johnson said.

Sheets of plastic were placed on top of the original neighborhood soil, and then covered with clean soil, so any possible contamination would be eliminated. The original soil has been sent to a lab for tests.

James Pace, 40, an AmeriCorp worker from East St. Louis, helped install wooden planks around the garden and till the soil. He recently completed the master gardening course and joined AmeriCorp "to try to beautify the community" and improve the environment. He said he wanted to get rid of the city's "eyesores" and the dangers they pose, including hiding crime.

"All over, there are lots where the weeds are taking over," he said. Besides, "once you start cleaning up the lots, people will gain a new respect

for their community."

The garden on Sycamore is just outside the window of the Haire's house in Rush City, on land donated by the Haires. Most years, Donna Haire, has planted a smaller garden on the lot. "I love gardens and I like to see stuff grow," Donna Haire said.

She already has plans to freeze the tomatoes and make stew and chili for her husband and two daughters.

MECCO/New Spirit and AmeriCorp are sponsoring 11 gardens in the Winstanley, Olivette Park, Dayton, Wedgewood, Fairlawn and Lansdowne neighborhoods and the central business district. AmeriCorp also has about a half dozen more community gardens in Lovejoy and Washington Park and at State Community College.

AmeriCorps:

7-30-45

\$658,000 allotted for garden project in East St. Louis

By George Pawlaczyk

Belleville News-Democrat

EAST ST. LOUIS — Does this sound like getting things done for America?

- Community gardens are planted but become overgrown with weeds.
- Workers are paid during the winter to sit around and do nothing.
- The same workers are sent home at noon during the summer because it's too hot.

These and other factors have turned an ambitious \$658,000 federal jobs program in East St. Louis into what the director admits has been a disappointment.

This is AmeriCorps — a program begun last year by President Clinton that was supposed to provide job training and education benefits for workers and raise community spirit in poor neighborhoods.

But after 10 months, the local program still lacks basic equipment, and Director Don Wallace plans to lay off 15 workers early because the program is nearly out of money.

"I'll take the blame for letting them sit around all of January," Wallace said. "I should have given them the month off. Maybe then we would have had enough money to pay them."

With the motto "I will get things done for America," AmeriCorps workers set out to work for a year in their communities while earning minimum wage and money for education.

But the program has since come under fire nationally from congressional critics who call it an inefficient, overpriced bureaucracy.

"We're told we're getting a good government program," said U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa. "Instead it appears to be a Great Society-style boondoggle."

The program — a domestic version of the Peace Corps — currently is budgeted at \$376 million for 20,000 workers. Clinton wants it

AmeriCorps in the metro-east

EAST ST. LOUIS

COST:

\$658,000

PARTICIPANTS:

29 full-time

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

15 gardens begun

8 lots cleared

Flood control work

BELLEVILLE

COST:

\$375,000

PARTICIPANTS:

14 full-time, 12 part-time

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Computer center renovation

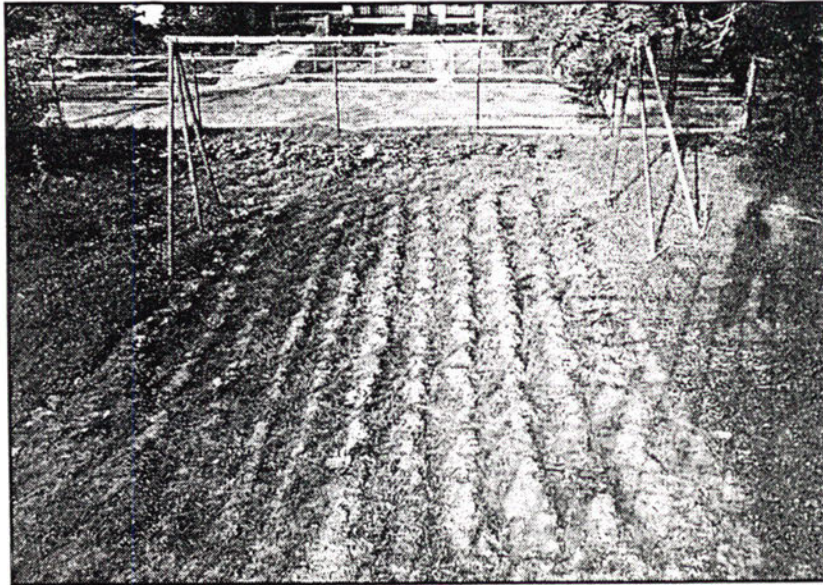
Tutoring of students

Rotary Park cleanup



News-Democrat/J.S. Nussbaumer

Boon or boondoggle?



UNTENDED: Dying okra plants fill a garden behind Lessie Bates

AmeriCorps —

Continued from 1A

expanded to \$575 million and 33,000 workers next year, while Grassley and others in Congress want it killed.

Overhead has been estimated as high as 50 percent, although local programs claim only 10 percent of their money goes for administration.

And the cost to field each worker, originally estimated at \$13,000 to \$15,000, has escalated to \$27,000, according to a report by the General Accounting Office.

"Taxpayers are paying far more for this program than advertised," Grassley said.

AmeriCorps officials disagree.

"This is community service," said Joel Berg, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's AmeriCorps division. "It's not just a feel-good plan to change the world. It's supposed to change the people who participate, and not all of them are poor."

Community gardens

A small garden in Rush City that was supposed to provide fresh vegetables for neighborhood residents has been abandoned and is overgrown with weeds. A "no trespassing" sign was posted after it was learned the garden mistakenly was placed on public land.

Behind the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, another gardening effort has failed. A few cabbages can be seen in it, but little

else. Kids yanked out most of what was planted there.

These and 13 other gardens are the most visible results of the horticulture program funded by AmeriCorps.

Twenty-nine workers were hired for the East St. Louis program, which began Oct. 3. Nine workers later were shifted to a separate flood control program.

As the program nears the end of its first year, the 15 gardens built by AmeriCorps workers have been turned over to residents to tend. Many have been overtaken by weeds.

Lacking equipment and supplies, workers now spend much of their time mowing grass, pruning trees or picking up trash. They quit at noon on hot days. During the winter, they sat in their office at State Community College with little to do.

"Because of the obstacles, we did not accomplish what we set out to do in our first year," said Wallace, who earns \$45,000 a year.

"People think we got a wheelbarrow full of cash down here that we just frittered away, but it just isn't true. I think we've done pretty well considering the circumstances," he said.

Besides building the gardens, AmeriCorps workers cleared eight vacant lots and cleaned out a small greenhouse at East St. Louis Senior High School.



PARK DUTY: An AmeriCorps worker uses a chain saw to cut down a tree in Kenneth Hall Park in East St. Louis

News Democrat/Erin H. Liu



News-Democrat/Erik Mahr

WEEDING: A plot behind State Community College is the only garden cared for by AmeriCorps

But some of the lots are overgrown again, and a second greenhouse project in Kenneth Hall Park has barely been touched.

A plan to sell the vegetables from the gardens was scuttled when it was learned that the gardens could not be placed on public land.

Homeowners who later agreed to have gardens planted on their lots said they were unwilling to tend the plots, only to see the produce trucked off for sale.

"I'm not selling this stuff," said the Rev. Johnny Davis, who said he daily weeds a 50- by-20-foot garden on 8th Street around the corner from his home.

Davis, 63, said that while AmeriCorps workers cleared the ground, he planted the garden himself.

"They gave me some seeds. I haven't seen them since," he said.

Two local programs

Belleville and East St. Louis have the only AmeriCorps programs in the metro-east; there are 22 programs in Illinois.

Cities must apply for AmeriCorps grants. The applications are evaluated and approved by commissions set up by the government. The amount of money cities receive is determined by how much they ask for in their applications, and how well they make their cases.

Full-time workers are paid minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour or slightly higher and receive health insurance coverage for a year worth about \$1,200. Those who stick with the program for a full year also get a \$4,725 grant for college tuition.

Belleville Area College and the Franklin Neighborhood Association administer the Belleville program,

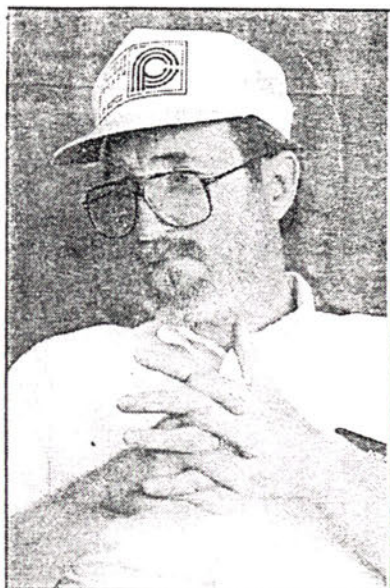
which is budgeted to cost \$375,000 if all the education grants are used. The program's 26 workers have performed a variety of neighborhood improvement projects and worked as tutors in Belleville schools. Its director, Jody Lauf, earns \$23,000 a year.

"Obviously this is taxpayer money that is going into the project, but it's a program in which taxpayers can actually see things that are being accomplished," Lauf said.

Wallace said he didn't plan how to obtain equipment — such as garden tractors and back hoes — when he wrote the project's grant application.

"We thought the city and state would help us out with things, but we found the opposite to be true," he said.

Much of the \$30,000 allocated for



DIRECTOR: Don Wallace

equipment and supplies was spent on gasoline and other expenses. Wallace said. Last week, only \$500 of that money remained and is reserved for emergencies.

"We never anticipated being short of equipment this late into the project," he said. "We have had to fight for everything we get."

Wallace said that despite the failures, he is proud of the way the program's workers have adapted.

"They have worked hard and have been willing to learn," he said.

James Pace, 40, of East St. Louis said he is proud of the master gardener's certificate he earned in the program after attending a 12-week course at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

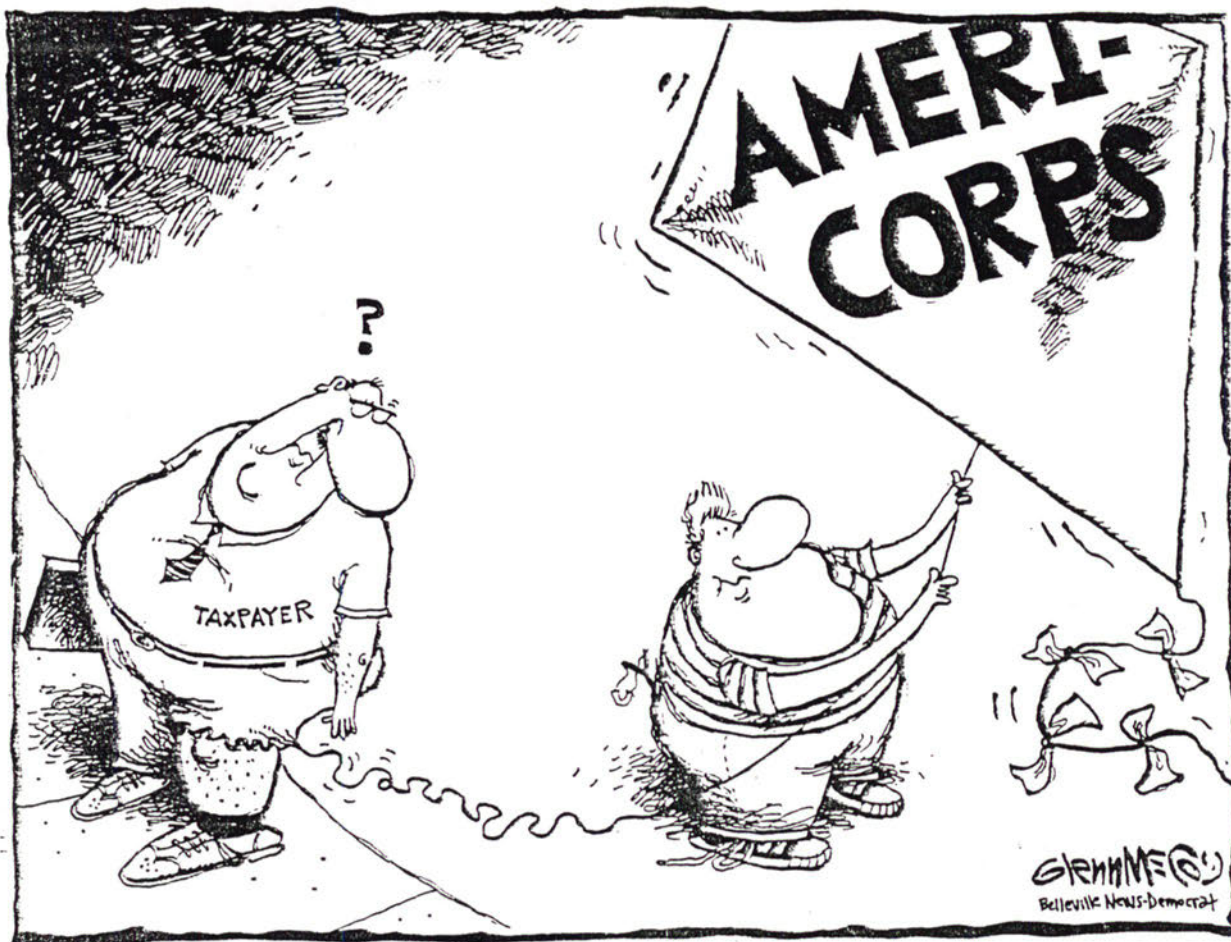
"It's hard making ends meet on minimum wage, but it's been worth it," said Pace, who plans to start a landscaping business.

Mike Smith, 48, of East St. Louis said criticism of the program's \$27,000 per worker estimated cost is unwarranted.

"That ain't no money for what we're doing," Smith said last week while using a chainsaw to cut tree limbs in Kenneth Hall Park.

Wallace said the program should not be judged on its accomplishments but on how it has benefited the participants.

"These people have learned responsibility. They've learned what a hard job it is to plant a garden," he said. "They are better off for it. It's better than having them on welfare. Is it better to be sitting around doing nothing or picking up trash?"



Our viewpoint

AmeriCorps waste

Today on the front page we update the AmeriCorps projects in the metro-east. Read it and weep.

The stories confirm what many people suspected: AmeriCorps is a blatant waste of taxpayers' money, a feel-good social program that doesn't even accomplish that. The East St. Louis project is such a disaster that even its director, Don Wallace, considers it a disappointment. (Of course he's still getting his \$45,000 salary and additional benefits.)

The problems with the East St. Louis program were obvious from the week the program started without tools for the workers. "Don't judge us by what we are now. Come back in a year and see," Rufus Williams, co-director of the program, told us in October. After nine months, we've seen more than enough.

The workers sat in a classroom and got paid for doing nothing in January. Now, when they could be working, the program is almost out of money and Wallace is ready to lay off most of them. Not that it matters. They've accomplished virtually nothing in the time in between. They never did get all the equipment they needed. (Wallace now admits he failed to plan for equipment when he wrote the application for the \$658,000 grant.) A few gardens,

most of them overgrown, are the corps' most visible legacy.

The Belleville project is better run, and it at least accomplished some worthwhile things, like tutoring students and renovating a building in the Franklin Neighborhood. But was it worth \$375,000? Not in our view. This work would have gotten done, with or without AmeriCorps.

The national picture is equally bleak. Overhead in some programs is as high as 50 percent. The cost of each worker, originally estimated at \$13,000 to \$15,000, is now set at \$27,000 in a report by the nonpartisan General Accounting Office.

At this point the best thing Congress can do is cut the losses and refuse to fund it next year. AmeriCorps is budgeted at \$376 million this year. President Clinton wants to throw away \$575 million on it next year. Let's not.

If by some chance AmeriCorps returns for another year, the federal government needs to promise it will not fund the East St. Louis program. Wallace plans to apply again, this time to plant trees instead of gardens. He wants to make East St. Louis a tree capital of America. After the waste and mismanagement this year, it would be a travesty to award him one more dime of the taxpayers' money.

AmeriCorps coverage unfair

By Joel Berg

The recent article by George Pawlaczyk — and accompanying editorial and cartoon — on the USDA-sponsored AmeriCorps projects in East St. Louis and Belleville contained many serious inaccuracies and omissions.

Last fall, your paper also ran a negative article on the project — also by Pawlaczyk — that inaccurately reported that the program started without the proper tools and that misquoted AmeriCorps members.

Subsequent to publication of that original story, my staff and I each made individual site visits to the project. We discovered firsthand that the project is "getting things done" while strengthening the communities, expanding educational opportunity and encouraging personal responsibility.

When I learned a number of weeks ago that Pawlaczyk was preparing another story on the project, I called him immediately. Upon my request, he called me at home that Sunday and we spoke for over an hour. In our conversation, he admitted the bias of both himself and his editor, saying that neither of them personally believe that East St. Louis needs either more gardens or more trees.

It seemed clear he had made up his mind that the whole idea was stupid and that his article would say so, regardless of the facts presented by myself or anyone else. Still, at a few points during our conversation, he admitted that he had misunderstood a few things about the program and that he would correct those issues; unfortunately, his final article included almost all of his original, mistaken ideas.

For example, during our conversation, Pawlaczyk admitted he knew that preliminary cost estimates leaked to the media by congressional opponents of AmeriCorps were false, yet he included these numbers in his article as if they were fact. The truth is that each USDA AmeriCorps member in Southern Illinois costs federal taxpayers a maximum of \$21,000 per year, including a \$4,725 educational award to be used to pay



for college or job training. This per-member figure is \$6,000 less per year than the figure reported by your newspaper.

In addition, the article and editorial both:

Exaggerated the cost of the project by at least \$48,000.

- Severely underreported the amount, the complexity, success, and the importance of the community service tasks performed.

- Failed to report that food grown in the community gardens has been used to help feed hundreds of low-income families.

- Incorrectly failed to describe the vital planning, outreach and education service provided by the AmeriCorps members throughout the winter.

- Fabricated untrue stories that AmeriCorps members were paid for quitting early on hot days.

- Claimed erroneously that the project did not have the required tools and equipment

- Confused the reality that the members are successfully completing the program and thus officially terminating their term of service during the summer with the false notion that they are somehow being laid off.

The truth is that the AmeriCorps members worked hard throughout the year providing vital services to the people of East St. Louis and Belleville. The project correctly spent the budget allotted to it. The truth is that the people of both Belleville and East St. Louis are benefiting greatly from AmeriCorps.

In our conversation, Pawlaczyk promised his article would include full coverage of the flood-relief work performed by the USDA AmeriCorps crew serving in Belleville. However, his lengthy article only included one sentence on flood relief. I believe his article did not seriously describe the flood relief work for two reasons: 1) describing such obviously worthwhile work would undermine his

assignment to prove AmeriCorps was a "boondoggle," and 2) focusing on Belleville — where your paper's readers live — would allow your readers to learn for themselves that the article was inaccurate.

Had the article been fair, it would have reported that the USDA AmeriCorps crew based in Belleville stabilized 4,000 feet of stream and land adjoining Bluff Road, which suffered from massive flooding in 1993. Among other things, the AmeriCorps members surveyed the area, drew engineering charts, removed trees that would interfere with the stabilization work, cut out ditches and removed silt, and placed "filter fabric" and "rip rap" in the stream to prevent future flooding and erosion. This service was performed far more cheaply by the AmeriCorps crew than if it had been performed by government employees or private contractors.

Pawlaczyk also failed to report a very moving story from my site visit to the project, which I related to him. In June, I traveled to a project site in Centreville, where the AmeriCorps members were working to create a park on land that had been donated by a mother in memory of her son, who had been recently shot.

On that day, a mostly white group of about 15 volunteers from the seventh and eighth grades from St. Phillips Church worked alongside the mostly African-American AmeriCorps members. Together, they constructed an entire playground for that new park. This day provided an inspiring testament not only to AmeriCorps' ability to bring people together across racial lines, but to AmeriCorps' success at boosting local volunteer efforts and empowering local communities.

The true facts are clear. AmeriCorps is cost-effective. AmeriCorps rewards work instead of welfare. AmeriCorps renews the spirit of community involvement that made this nation great.

I simply hope that when the News-Democrat covers this issue in the future, it reports the facts — and only the facts.

(Joel Berg is director of national service for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

Bashing AmeriCorps

At a meeting of the East St. Louis Area Ecosystems Council, I was handed a copy of the Aug. 9 guest viewpoint. It was by Joel Berg of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and he was correcting much of the misinformation of George Pawlaczyk's AmeriCorps-bashing front page story in a previous Sunday edition.

As a long-time metro-east resident, why was I not surprised? I expected the News-Democrat position in the anti-Clinton-AmeriCorps political cartoon and also in their editorial, but for them to take that "boondoggle" slant in the front-page news story on the East St. Louis AmeriCorps and then have the companion article on the Belleville AmeriCorps suggesting how much better Belleville does things, well, that may set well with the Rush Limbaugh crowd, but I don't see any Pulitzer in journalism forthcoming.

I had not read the original article, so after the council meeting, I went to the library to look it up. You see, I stopped subscribing to the News-

Democrat for the same reason that years ago my father dropped the Globe Democrat and turned to the Post-Dispatch for more objective news reporting.

Ray Hollman
Fairview Heights

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