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National Community Service Trust Act-Hearing Report, May 18, 1993

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF LEGISLATION AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

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May 20, 1993

TO : The Secretary
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FROM : Office of Legislation and
Congressional Affairs

SUBJECT : Hearing Report

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Attached is a hearing report on The National Community Service Trust Act of 1993, entitled "Making a Difference: Domestic Volunteer Service Programs." The hearing was held on May 18, 1993, by the Senate Subcommittee on Children, Family, Drugs and Alcoholism.

If you have any questions or comments, please let us know.

Attachments

cc: Senior Officers

30521004

Prepared by: K. Kae Rairdin
Testimony available: Yes

HEARING REPORT

SUBJECT: Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Making a Difference: Domestic Volunteer Service Programs

COMMITTEE: Senate Subcommittee on Children, Families, Drug and Alcoholism

DATE: May 18, 1993

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Dodd (D-CT), Senators Durenberger (R-MN), Wellstone (D-MN), and Wofford (D-PA)

WITNESSES: See attached list

Summary

This hearing was held following the full committee hearing on the Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Chairman Dodd tried to focus on individuals, their organizations and personal commitment to individuals with serious needs. Witnesses from various volunteer programs shared their accomplishments, personal satisfaction, and the benefits received by the recipients.

Peter Edelman, Counselor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and Senior Advisor, White House Office of National Service, spoke about President Clinton's call for a new ethic of service. Edelman said "The American people are ready and eager to give something back to our country, and they are prepared to take individual responsibility to play a role in solving our national problems. The Act will not create a big bureaucracy-- instead relying on local initiatives, and giving programs and people the flexibility to meet the program's goals. The Act builds the same spirit into a new Federal Corporation for National Service. It will combine two existing independent agencies, the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION."

Margaret Goolsby, a VISTA volunteer talked of her experiences and the work she was doing in her local community through the Central Brooklyn Partnership. The Partnership is a coalition of 20 local development corporations, churches and neighborhood institutions

serving central Brooklyn. Central Brooklyn is comprised mostly of low to moderate income wage earners, and home to the largest African American/Caribbean community in North America. For years it has been undeserved by the banking industry because of redlining and disinvestment. Check cashing businesses, which charge high fees for their services, are becoming the new financial institutions serving low and moderate income people. Working with the partners and the community, the Partnership established a local credit union for that particular community.

W. William Cegelka, a VISTA volunteer in Windham, Connecticut represents an impoverished region. The unemployment rate is 9.3% and the average weekly earnings rate ranks among the lowest in the state. He was charged with establishing a primary health care clinic. His project is lowering the barriers to access by conducting outreach programs that reach people at the front lines, making services available to those most in need. The clinic is based on a sliding scale fee, linked to a person's income and ability to pay so that no one is denied necessary primary care. He views the program not as one of entitlement, but of empowerment. It benefits the community and changes lives. He said he knew that it had changed his. He concluded his remarks by saying "[A]fter all, what good is government, if we cannot use government to do good."

Kathleen Wilken, a VISTA worker in Minneapolis spoke of the Way To Grow Program in her community and the type of services it provides to low and moderate income families by using collaboration and utilization of existing services and not the implementation of new ones. Through the home visitors program they are able to assist families in advocacy issues, obtaining services for immunizations, insuring good prenatal care including transportation and helping families network in the neighborhood. Kathleen summed up her testimony by stating, "I have been able to show my daughter the value of service and volunteerism. Imparting values is one of the most important jobs any parent has, and to me the idea of giving, with the expectation of receiving nothing in return is a value I wanted to pass on to my child."

Colonel Francis Fox Parry, USMC (Ret), and President of the Board, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) stated he had been a volunteer for several years; however, an ad in a local newspaper about Volunteer Executive Consultants brought him into volunteerism in a big way. His organization provides senior citizens to assist in the community serving the elderly, at-risk students of all ages, and the infirmed. Colonel Parry summed up his remarks by saying, "I am an enthusiastic supporter of RSVP and an advocate for senior volunteers everywhere. We are a valuable national resource which should be utilized to the extent possible."

Wilhelmenia Mayden, a Foster Grandparent at the Emily Price Jones Head Start Program in Baltimore stated she has been with the program for seven years, including being a Foster Grandparent in a mental institution. Her role is to reinforce basic educational and social skills and provide love and nurturing to those children in the program who have special or exceptional needs. She stated that she believes that an Intergenerational network of support is essential to the success of Head Start and the Foster Grandparent Program can provide the foundation for any Head Start Program.

Edith Courville serves as a senior companion in Central Massachusetts. She visits elderly citizens each week, making them lunch and providing various activities, including friendly conversation. She states "Isolation, loneliness and despair is an illness in itself. Medication is no cure. A visitor, a Senior Companion is a welcome change in a daily routine." The Senior Companion Program lets her help other people which makes her feel good.

Helen Fiske is a Caregiver and the daughter of one of Ms. Courville's clients. She talked about how much the program means to her mother who is 89 years old and how much it has meant to the family. She stated "My mother is a proud woman who wants to remain independent. She wants to live in her own home....I do not need to worry about my mother because Edie is there to visit and she is not alone."

Chairman Dodd opened a discussion about the problems with volunteering in general and VISTA in particular. What role should the federal government play and how can we improve the process?

Several of the witnesses indicated that most people were not aware that the VISTA program was "still around" and many had never heard of it. All witnesses indicated that once it was explained, it had a very favorable reaction. Chairman Dodd said the program had suffered from benign neglect over the years and efforts should be made to heighten the awareness of the program. He offered that employers should ask the prospective employees about their past history of community involvement, and recruiters for VISTA should go to the high schools to recruit volunteers. Colleges should place consideration on admissions for those who took time out to serve.

William Cegelka was asked what motivated him to join when he didn't know about VISTA. He said his parents instilled a sense of responsibility to others in him. He saw things that needed changing and inquired about a domestic peace corp program. He also said some recognition should be given to those who serve, as they don't do it for the pay.

Colonel Parry said that the federal government should provide the seed money for the programs and the stability for continuation. Government alone cannot do it; and it must be a coordinated effort from the local government, businesses, churches, civic organizations, and the community.

Chairman Dodd asked what made some programs so successful. Kathleen Wilken told the committee that volunteers must come to the program willing to listen to community needs, with no preconceived ideas and the program must be developed from the ground up utilizing the resources in the community.

Hearing of the Subcommittee on Children, Family, Drugs and Alcoholism

**Making a Difference:
Domestic Volunteer Service Programs**

May 18, 1993

Peter Edelman
Counselor to the Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services

Panel I -- Volunteers in Service to America

Margaret Goolsby, Brooklyn, New York
Former VISTA, Central Brooklyn Federal Credit Union

W. William Cegelka, Windham, Connecticut
VISTA, Windham Area Community Action Program

Kathleen Wilken, Minneapolis, Minnesota
VISTA, Way to Grow

Panel II -- Older American Volunteer Programs

Colonel Frank Parry, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
Retired Senior Volunteer Program and Chairman of the Board of
Directors for RSVP of Montgomery County

Wilhelmenia Mayden, Baltimore, Maryland
Foster Grandparent at the Emily Price Jones Head Start Center

Edith Courville, Worcester, Massachusetts
Senior Companion to Hilda Corbin

Helen Fiske, Worcester, Massachusetts
Daughter of Hilda Corbin