
Public Hearing

before

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

AND

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

"Testimony on the role of volunteerism and citizen service"

LOCATION: Room 319
State House
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: December 15, 1997
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES PRESENT:

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman
Assemblywoman Marion Crecco
Assemblyman Carmine DeSopo
Assemblyman Craig A. Stanley

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger
District 22

Darby Cannon III
Kathleen Fazzari
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides



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The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey





New Jersey State Legislature
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE ANNEX
PO BOX 068
TRENTON NJ 08625-0068

JOHN H. EWING
Chairman

JOSEPH A. PALLA
Vice-Chairman

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REVISED
NOTICE OF JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: SENATOR JOHN H. EWING, CHAIRMAN
ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN A. ROCCO, ED. D, CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

The Senate and Assembly Education Committees will hold a joint public hearing to receive testimony on the role of volunteerism and citizen service.

The hearing will be held on Monday, December 15, 1997 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 319, State House, Trenton, New Jersey.

Persons wishing to testify should call Mary Lutz or Bernadette Kmetz at (609)984-6843. The committees request that the oral presentation be limited to 5 minutes. All persons who are testifying should submit 15 written copies of their testimony. Persons who are not presenting oral testimony may submit 15 copies of written testimony for consideration by the committees and inclusion in the record.

Issued 12/5/97

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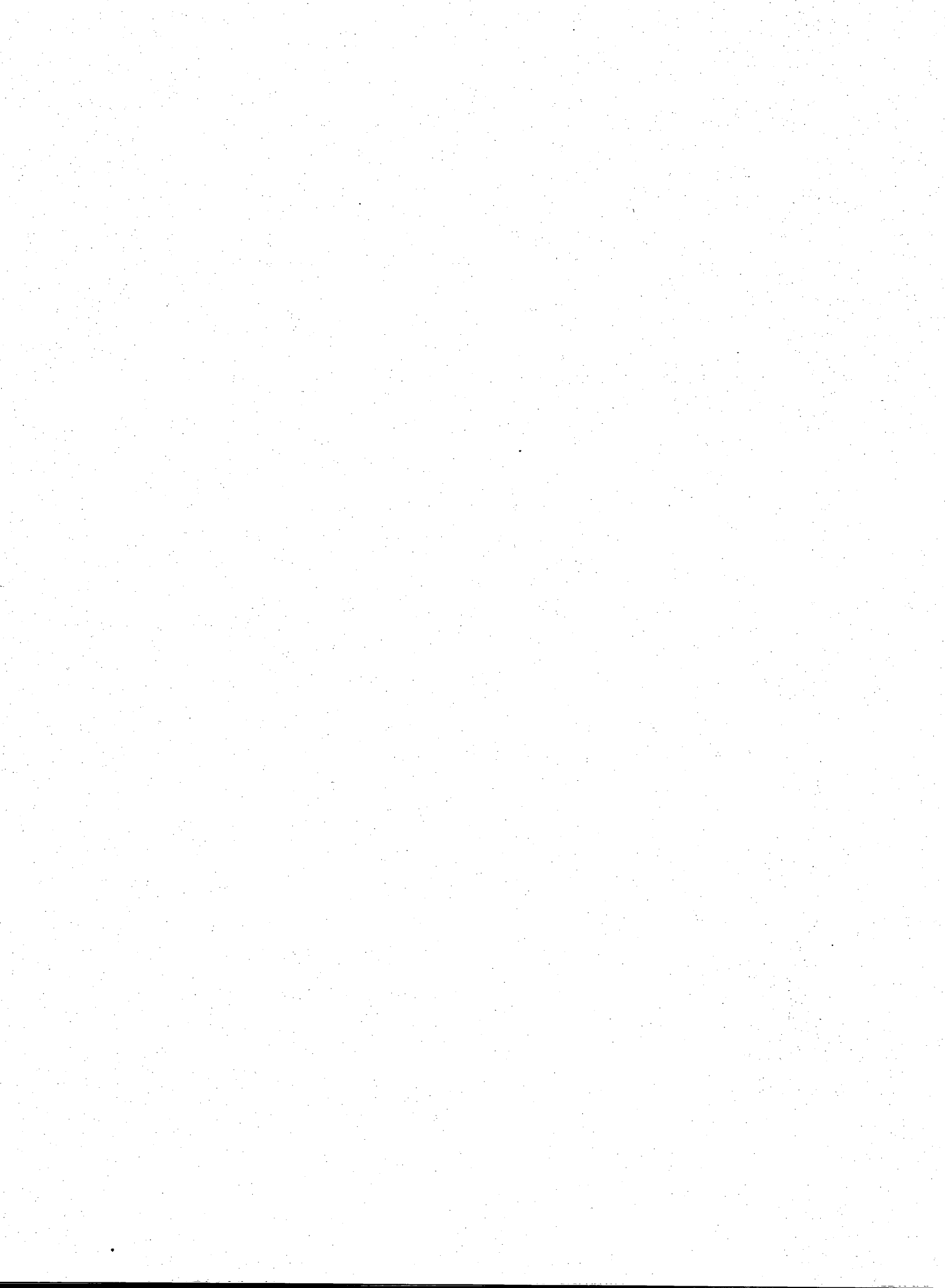


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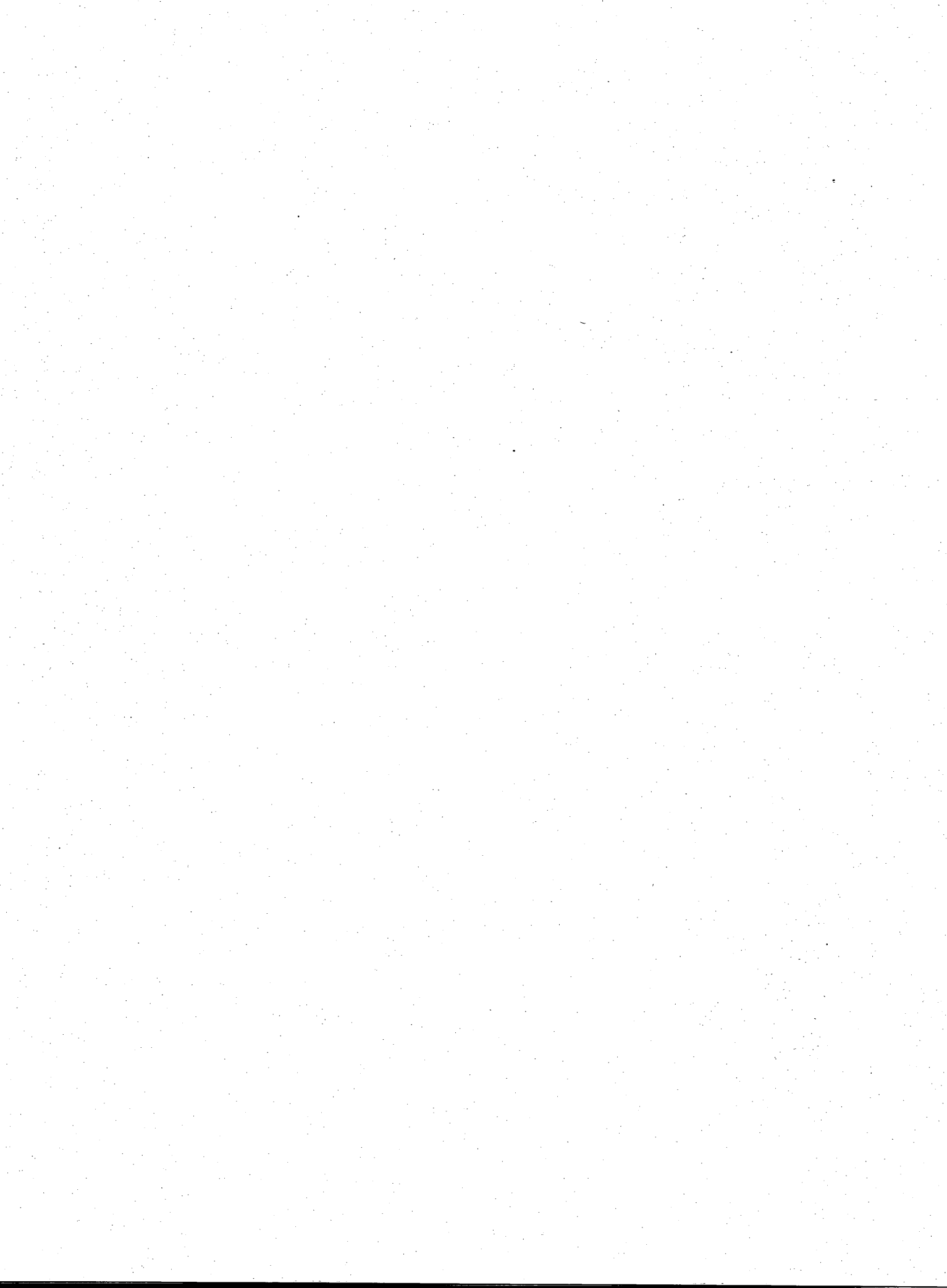


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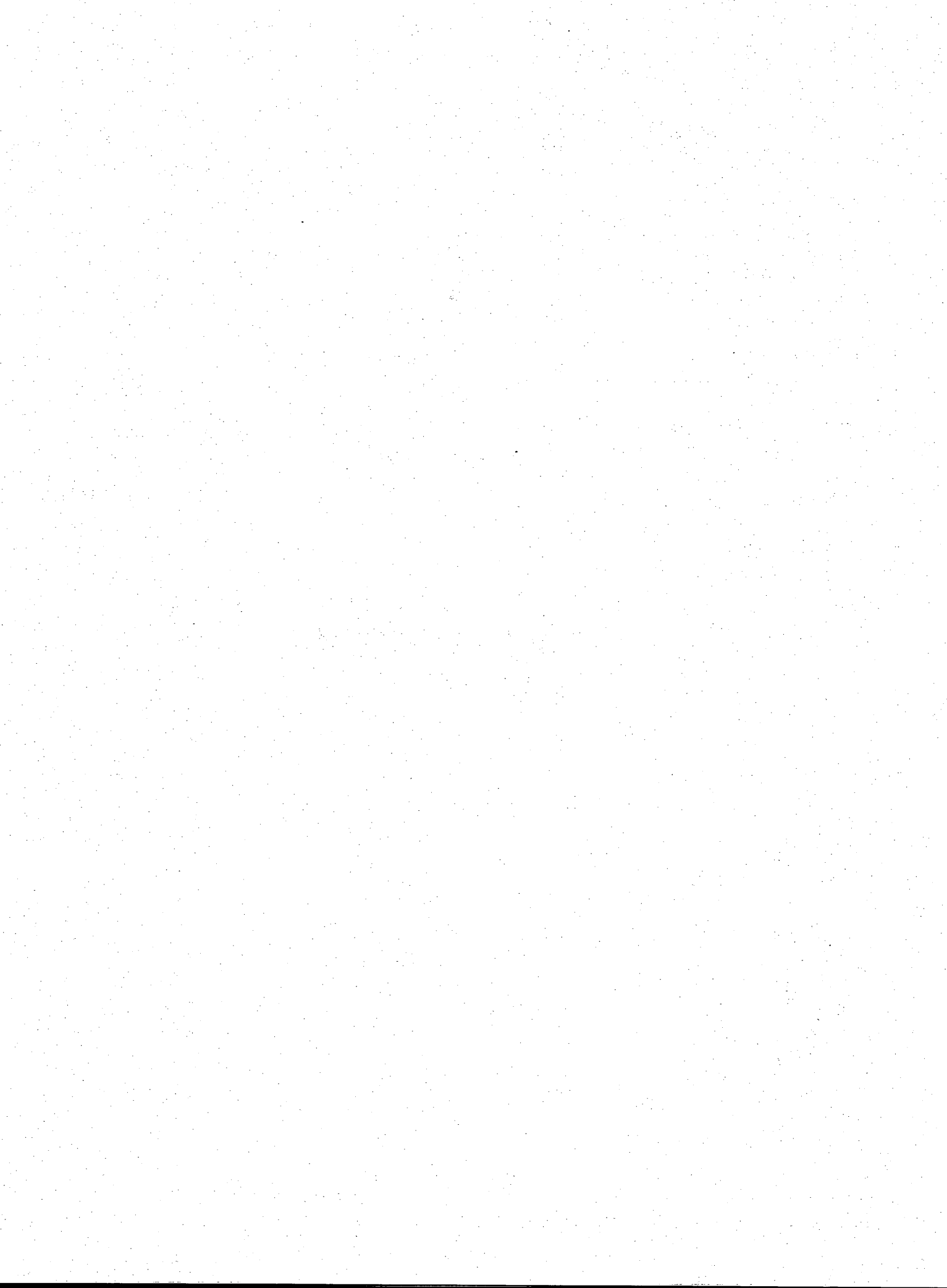


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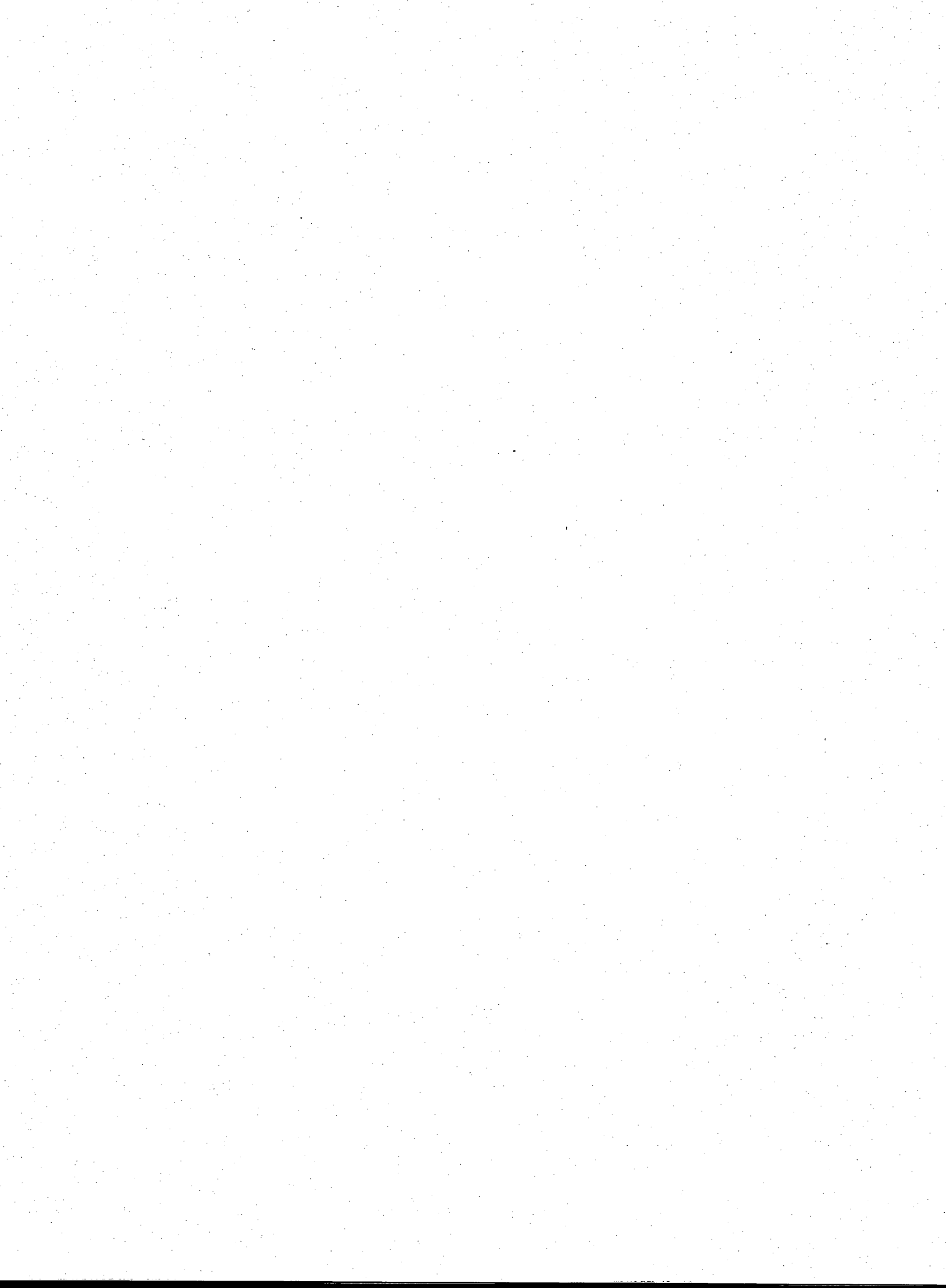


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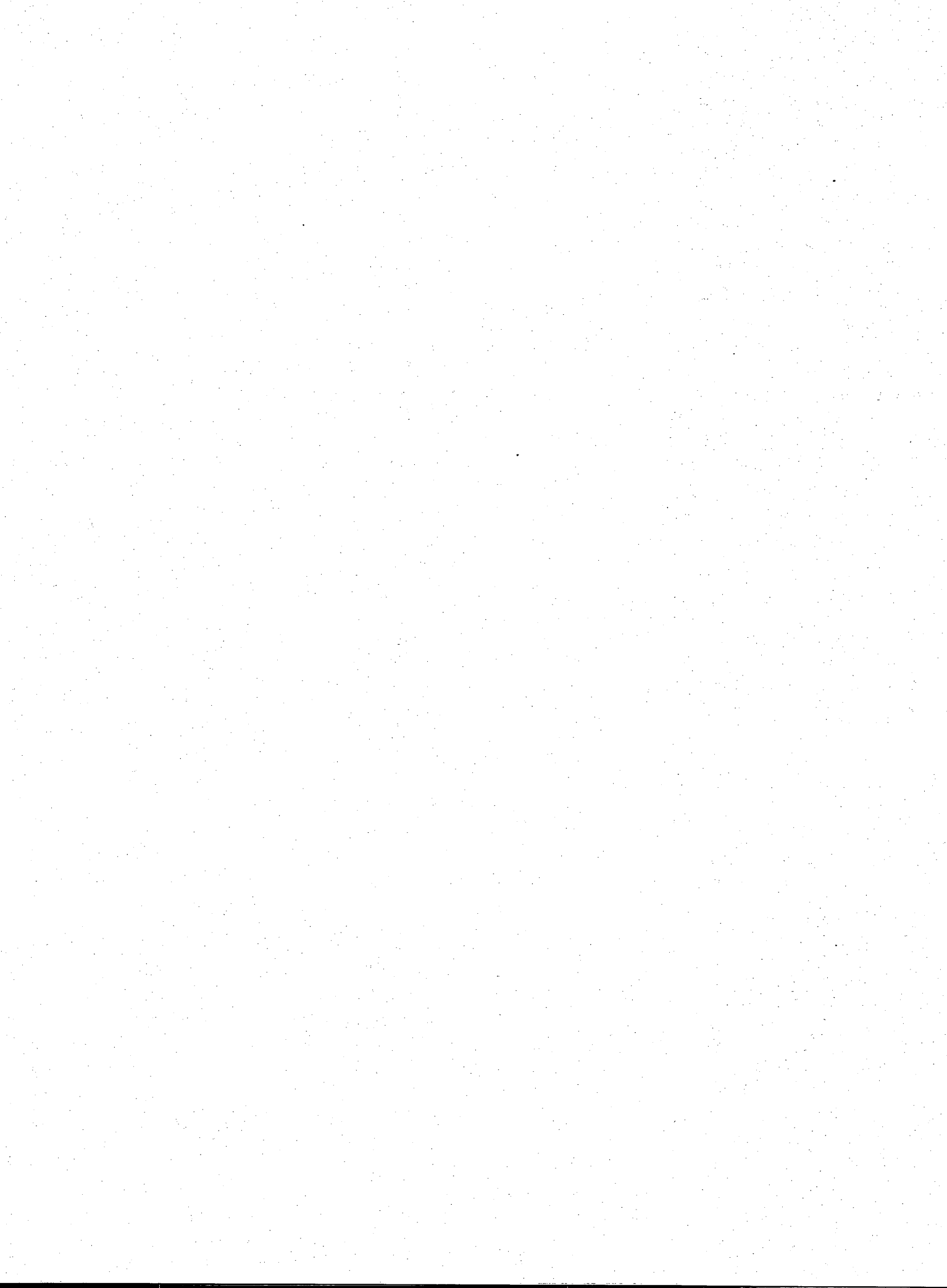


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SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Senate Chairman): Good morning, everybody, and thank you all for coming to give us your thoughts and ideas of a very important area, I think, for all citizens, because I feel very strongly about volunteerism. I am delighted to see so many here. I would also like to advise you, though-- I can't believe that everybody is going to have a different idea out here on volunteers, and I don't think there is anybody against it. I hope not, anyway, but we will listen to them anyway.

Because the Senate -- we start at 1:00. I don't have to be there for the conference -- I can be a little bit late for it -- so we'll keep everything moving along.

The first will be Ellen Mushinski.

ELLEN EDWARDS MUSHINSKI: Can I ask to come up with--

SENATOR EWING: All three of you? Fine. John Sherry and Mark Valli.

MS. MUSHINSKI: I'm not used to sitting on this side of the table. Can you hear me?

SENATOR EWING: The other is for the recording. The tall one is for the recording. (referring to microphones)

Assemblyman Stanley, thank you for joining us.

Yes, please.

MS. MUSHINSKI: Good morning, Senator. I am Ellen Mushinski, I'm Chair of the Commission on National Community Service. (sic) I am here today with Dr. John Sherry, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Education, and Mark Valli, the Deputy Director of the

Commission on National Community Service. Mark is standing in for our Executive Director, Rowena Madden, who unfortunately had a death in the family and is not able to be here today.

Can you hear me?

SENATOR EWING: Pull it closer to you. (referring to PA microphone)

MS. MUSHINSKI: I'm not used to being on this side of the table.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, distinguished guests: Thank you for providing the opportunity for the New Jersey Commission on National Community Service to appear before you today to discuss the role of volunteerism and community service. The New Jersey Commission on National Community Service is funded through the Federal Corporation for National Service, which requires us, every three years, to prepare a Unified State Plan on Volunteer Service.

We are engaged in the process now, examining priority areas of need and areas of education, public health and safety, and the environment. Collaborating with the Governor's Office on Volunteerism, we are also looking at opportunities to provide quality service opportunities to help at-risk youth. The goal of the Unified State Plan will be for the Commission to develop a vision for citizens service and to link with the volunteer entities that have a shared goal to strengthen the volunteer and community service infrastructure.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: John.

JOHN SHERRY, Ed.D.: Good morning. I'm John Sherry, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Field Services within the New Jersey State Department of Education.

Commissioner Leo Klagholz has asked me to express his support for this important joint meeting of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees. This hearing provides an opportunity for all of us to share information and learn more about current efforts to enhance volunteerism and community service in New Jersey.

I am very pleased that the Department of Education was designated by Governor Whitman to host the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service (*sic*) and to serve as the programmatic and administrative agency for AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America Initiatives. Under the Department's recent reorganization, the Office of Community Service, which administers these programs, has been placed within the Division of Field Services, reporting to me. This gives us a great opportunity to bring these programs directly to the attention of school districts and to, in turn, support many of the exciting initiatives that take place every day in schools throughout New Jersey. Later you will hear directly from students who are engaged in these programs.

During the past four years, the Department has given increasing recognition to the role that community service can play in developing a sense of citizenship and responsibility among students. Last year, the State Board of Education added community service and service learning to the strategic plan for systemic improvement of education in New Jersey. Within goal No. 1, which focuses on enhancement of high student academic achievement, one

of the strategies encourages community service and service-learning opportunities for all students as a means of enriching their academic learning, applying learning to real-life and work situations, and developing skills for productive citizenship.

Our Learn and Serve America Initiative provides Federal funds for 13 programs to develop community service and encourage the infusion of service learning into the curriculum. For example, students in Linden Public Schools provide assistance to and work with students from the Cerebral Palsy League on service projects. The program in Cape May works with local environmental protection programs to ensure the survival of osprey and other wildlife. The Camden School District Program is working to reduce teen violence through peer-to-peer conflict resolution.

What a great way for young people to become more aware of their communities and their environment. They meet fellow citizens who are less fortunate than they, and they recognize that they have many skills to improve their society. These are lifelong lessons.

At the Department of Education, we are very proud of the 500 AmeriCorps members of all ages and backgrounds who are working in communities throughout the state. We are proud of the students in kindergarten through grade 12 who are making their own contributions to their communities through Learn and Serve America. And we are proud of the partnership between our Office of Community Service and the Governor's Office on Volunteerism. Through this partnership, we are all able to enhance the quality of life of our communities and our citizens.

Once again, I thank the Senate and the Assembly Education Committees for giving us the opportunity to highlight these efforts and to hear directly from citizens throughout New Jersey who give so much to our state.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: John, question. What is Serve America? Is that an organization now? The other question I want-- Do any of these schools give credit to the students?

DR. SHERRY: Not at this time, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Well, is the Department working towards that?

DR. SHERRY: It's possible. If the Board of Education approves it as part of the curriculum, they could, but I don't believe, at this time, I can point to any programs where credit is given.

SENATOR EWING: What do the students get that do the jobs? You mention three communities or four communities.

DR. SHERRY: I think they--

SENATOR EWING: Just self-fulfillment of -- what? -- helping others.

DR. SHERRY: Yes, I think they get a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, and I think they pick up lifelong skills.

SENATOR EWING: I just think it's too bad that before we had State mandate-State pay, we didn't get Codey's bill through requiring it.

Any questions? (negative response)

Mark Valli.

MARK VALLI: Thank you. I want to thank the Senate and Assembly Education Committees for allowing the State Commission--

SENATOR EWING: State who you are, unless everybody knows you. Do they all know you?

MR. VALLI: No, my name is Mark Valli, and I'm from the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service. I, again, want to thank everybody for letting us talk here about citizen service, volunteerism, and federally funded national service programs.

First of all, I want to say that the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service has four primary roles. They are to select, supervise, and support New Jersey's federally funded National Service Programs. I want to underline the federally funded part. Beyond that, the New Jersey Commission also has a responsibility for supporting a statewide ethic of service, so that's beyond the federally funded portion of-- Our mission is to support a statewide ethic of service.

So that's our official role. Essentially we make the grants that run AmeriCorps Programs, and we help coordinate different federally funded service programs. In regards to your question about Learn and Serve America, there are actually three major federally funded national service programs funded by the Corporation for National Service.

The first one, in terms of age, is for the youngest folks. It's called Learn and Serve America. That provides grant funds for school districts and, in some cases, community-based organizations to run community service programs through the school, but to do more than that, to make sure that community service is a learning tool for the children. So, in addition to

learning their sense of citizenship in an ethic of service that Dr. Sherry talked about, there is the added benefit that for teachers community service can be an active learning tool, where children learn science through environmental protection projects or children learn about civics through programs with senior citizens or helping the homeless. So that's what Learn and Serve America does. It tries to infuse community service into New Jersey school curriculum, or all over the country.

The second program, in terms of age, is AmeriCorps. That is what I am most familiar with. The AmeriCorps Program provides Americans, 17 and older, from all backgrounds, the opportunity to provide a year or two years of full-time community service. In exchange for that service, they can earn money for education or student debt. So they get a small living allowance while they work, and then they get an educational voucher when they complete their term or service. That's what AmeriCorps does. That engages people in four major issue areas: environment, education, public safety, and human needs.

The next and the third and final federally funded national service program -- it's actually a group of programs -- is called the Senior Service Corps. Senior Service Corps is actually a collection of programs that have existed for quite some time, including Retired Senior Volunteer Program, the Senior Companion Program, and Foster Grandparents. We have some representatives from those programs here today.

Those three large federally funded national service programs all have a large presence here in New Jersey. Learn and Serve America engages about 3000 New Jersey students in 13 different school districts right now. AmeriCorps engages over 500 AmeriCorps members this current operating

year. The Senior Volunteer Program engages between 11,000 and 12,000 New Jersey senior citizens in community service projects.

So the official role of the State Commission is to fund AmeriCorps Programs, but it has the broader role of coordinating the activities of those Programs. This hearing is part of that coordination. Some very respectable people have said very wonderful things about the AmeriCorps Program. In fact, retired General Powell -- one of my favorite quotes is that retired General Powell said, "AmeriCorps is doing a lot of good things around this country. They are leveraging up other volunteers who come in to work with AmeriCorps."

So one thing that is important to point out is that AmeriCorps is not just 500 people doing wonderful community service in the agencies, but they are also leveraging volunteers, and that's what that quote points to. Nationally, the average AmeriCorps member leverages 12 volunteers per AmeriCorps member. So, in addition to the service that they are giving to their community, they are also leveraging other volunteers and providing an infrastructure to help deploy volunteers in communities around the country.

Business Week did an article once, entitled "A Social Program CEOs Want to Save Because it's Cost-effective." Ninety-one percent of Americans surveyed in an independent survey think that AmeriCorps makes a positive difference, and 85 percent of Americans support the use of tax dollars for AmeriCorps. So there is a lot of support and people who are behind it.

Some of our accomplishments include: This year we will surpass over a million hours of structured, supervised community service provided by AmeriCorps members themselves. That distinction-- The reason I say

structured and supervised is because the AmeriCorps members don't just volunteer or come in for an hour here or an hour there, they are asked to report on a regular basis. They have a specific set of outcomes that they have to achieve as part of their program's grant. So that makes it a very effective and efficient way to deploy volunteer resources.

For example, one of our Programs in New Jersey has helped remove over 250 tons of trash from New Jersey water waste. That's just one Program of 20 members, and for most people this is their first experience right out of college. That's the kind of power AmeriCorps Programs can have.

I will mention that in addition to getting the good things done that AmeriCorps members do, they also help build communities by, again, recruiting volunteers, by partnering up with other agencies and organizations, but they also encourage responsibility, and that's the third great part of AmeriCorps. It's not a something-for-nothing program. There is a reciprocal obligation. You have to actually finish your term of service as an AmeriCorps member before you are entitled to your education award. That's an exciting piece of this Program.

The fourth wonderful thing is that this Program expands opportunities for lots of people, not just the AmeriCorps members giving the enhanced educational opportunity, but for the people that they are serving: the parents that are getting parenting skills through our Program, the children of those parents who are getting parenting skills, the children that we tutor -- and we tutor thousands of children in New Jersey. So all of those things make AmeriCorps a wonderful program.

I'll say that the Program cost is actually mostly under the Federal tab. If you combine Learn and Serve America programs with AmeriCorps programs, the State is receiving about \$5.5 million worth of dollars for these programs. That provides us with all the programs that I talked about, the 11,000 Senior programs, the 500 AmeriCorps members, and the 3000 Learn and Serve students.

The wonderful thing about New Jersey's AmeriCorps Program is that we keep the cost down so that no program in New Jersey costs more than \$11,700 per participant, per FTE. On average it's actually much closer to about \$10,000 per participant here in New Jersey. Independent studies have shown that the return on each dollar invested in AmeriCorps actually produces about \$1.60 to \$2.60 of benefits.

I don't want to go on too much further. I just want to say that AmeriCorps is one piece of a large national service network that can really make a difference in New Jersey communities. It can change children's lives. It can be a teaching opportunity for teachers. There are many different aspects of volunteerism and community service, and I look forward to all the people who will be talking about those pieces today.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I would like to welcome Assemblywoman Crecco.

Are there any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

DR. SHERRY: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Linda Golden, Executive Director of the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism.

L I N D A F. G O L D E N: Mr. Chairman and members of the Committees, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss volunteerism in New Jersey.

The Governor's Office of Volunteerism was created by former Governor Tom Kean in 1986 as a liaison to the many volunteer and nonprofit organizations throughout the state. Since its inception, the Office has evolved into the primary vehicle for statewide promotion and recognition of volunteerism. A primary responsibility is to establish and strengthen relationships between local, State, and Federal governments, the private sector, and community-based organizations, as well as create linkages within the volunteer community.

The Office is responsible for several award programs that honor volunteers in a variety of categories. The annual Governor's Volunteer Awards honors 10 individuals or groups in specific categories including: the arts, benefiting seniors, benefiting youth, education, environment, health, human needs, long-term service, mobilization of volunteers, and public safety. In addition, we present two Volunteer Administrator of the Year Awards, two Business Recognition Awards, the Governor's Mayoral Volunteerism Award, and the Community Volunteerism Award. The staff of the Governor's Office of Volunteerism also serve as workshop trainers and facilitators, as well as guest speakers and keynote speakers at events throughout the state.

As Director of the Office, I am also Executive Director of the two advisory councils that we administer. One is the Governor's Advisory Council

on Volunteerism and Community Service. This is a 42-member body which advises the Governor on matters that impact the volunteer community. The second and newest council in our Office is the Governor's Youth Advisory Council on Volunteerism and Community Service. It is comprised of 25 members, ages 12 to 22. They develop youth-sponsored service projects and study legislation that directly impacts youth.

The Youth Council has had a very ambitious first year. It created subcommittees for health, public safety, environment, and education. In those committees, the members studied legislation related to those specific subjects. In addition to attending three weekend retreats where they received leadership training, they also wrote their first annual report, which was mailed to the full Legislature several months ago. They held two service projects and committed to the creation of youth councils in all 21 counties.

The Governor's Office of Volunteerism is also responsible for holding an Annual Conference on Volunteerism. This opportunity provides volunteers, administrators, and board members with workshops, panel, and network opportunities which strengthen knowledge on issues integral to volunteer programs. This year, in response to President Clinton's call to action through the President's Summit on America's Future, in April, Governor Whitman directed me and my office to hold a New Jersey Summit on Volunteerism.

This two-day event took place on December 4 and 5 and was a resounding success. I have been asked by former U.S. Senator Harris Wofford, who is now the Chairman and CEO of the Corporation for National Service, to share nationally the resource material that I wrote for this Summit.

Moreover, he asked that my plan for statewide resource councils be used as models for other states to study.

New Jersey has always led the way with creative and innovative programs, and I assure you that we are well on the way to leading the nation on a volunteer movement as well. We hosted 1000 delegates at our Summit, and we expect to produce a comprehensive plan for the future of New Jersey's youth. I am also pleased to note that the Youth Advisory Council, as well as the delegation of almost 100 other young New Jerseyans, were an integral part of the Summit. The Youth Advisory Council recruited young delegates from their counties, were cofacilitators in the planning sessions, and organized their own youth reception.

I am confident that the plans developed at the New Jersey Summit on Volunteerism will compliment the Unified State Plan, and I am looking forward to working very closely with Rowena Madden and her staff to develop a plan which will best serve our young people, as well as the rest of the volunteer population. Together, I am certain that we will devise a plan which will place New Jersey at the forefront of the national volunteer movement.

There are many other initiatives that our Office administers, and I could, if given a chance, discuss them for several hours, but I know you have another appointment.

I hope that my presentation has been informative and helpful, and I thank the Committee, once again, for it's time.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Any questions? (no response)

I would also like to welcome Assemblyman Bagger, who will be with us for a short time. And also I failed to tell everybody that Assemblyman Wolfe, unfortunately, could not be here today. He is taking his wife down to Bethesda Hospital for some special consultation regarding a heart problem. So that's why he could not be here. The only time they could get the appointment with this very fine doctor was today. That's why he is not here.

Donald Bowling. (no response)

Ivette Del Rio, Administrator, Urban School Service Corporation, New Jersey Department of Education.

If any of you wish to testify, make sure you fill out one of these forms that are up here in that corner and give it to us, please.

I V E T T E D E L R I O: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Ivette Del Rio, and I am the Administrator of Urban School Service Corps. I am here on behalf of all the urban school programs, and I am here to testify. With me today is one of our Corps members, who works in our program in Pleasantville. His name is Kenneth Nesbitt, and he will also be testifying along with me.

Urban School Service Corps is an AmeriCorps Program, which is administered in the Department of Education. Urban School Service Corps' 75 AmeriCorps members serve students in school communities in 10 schools located in the five school districts of Paterson, Roselle, Trenton, Camden, and Pleasantville.

We are an educational program that assists children learn and develop within the context of their home and their community life. It is a model program that is designed after the community-school context, and

therefore, it takes into account the parents and the environment and the community surrounding the schools.

The mission of Urban School Service Corps is to prepare students to achieve academic success by providing educational activities and social support services for the students and parents through after-school, weekend, and summer tutoring, homework assistance, mentoring, literacy in reading, math, and science. In addition to these direct services, Urban School Service Corps works to integrate parents and community volunteers into the school culture, fostering a spirit of community and civic pride through school and community service events.

As an AmeriCorps Program that is focused on education, Urban School Service Corps makes a tremendous difference in the communities that it serves. As we know, for children who are living in urban communities, education remains the most viable way out of a life of poverty. In today's society, children who cannot read, write, perform basic mathematical calculations, and think logically and creatively will never be able to lead a full life. Urban School Service Corps brings energy, human resources, creativity, and academic assistance to the lives of students in grades *K* to eight.

Last year we tutored 700 students. We mentored and counseled 650 students. We assisted about 500 students with their homework, and worked with 478 parents on their parenting skills and as volunteers. Our program is about tutoring and it's about homework assistance, and so on. It is also about helping those children to get to that point in their life where they actually understand the concepts they are being taught in school. It makes a difference for them when they have somebody that can sit with them and work

with them to help them to understand and to get over the frustrations sometimes that learning or not understanding something can bring.

This year we have developed a literacy in reading, math, and science initiative for children in grades *K* to four. With approaches such as paired reading, storytelling, and math games for children, we are getting closer each day to making it possible for each child to read independently by the third grade and have higher functioning abilities.

Additionally this year, we are placing greater emphasis on measuring our successes by developing evaluation instruments, which are collecting data on the actual number of decreased tardiness, unexcused absences, and incidents of disruptive behaviors. The ultimate impact on the children is being assessed through input from teachers, principals, the Corps members, parents and the students themselves.

Finally, nothing can illustrate more poignantly the importance of this program, not only to the children and schools, but also to the Corps members themselves, than by sharing with you the personal goals that I have gone around and spoke to with some of the Corps members and who have written these in their own words.

From a Corps member who is in School 28 in Paterson, they said, "A lot of children have the feeling that they don't count. They are looking for someone who cares, and I want to be there for them."

Another Corps member from Trenton at the Gregory School said, "One thing I wish to accomplish is to bring up my third- and fourth-grade students' reading and math skills. I know I can't bring up all of their skills, but if I can at least get to five or seven of them I will be happy. I am going to see

that they also get along better. Last, I would like my students to take their school work to the next level, not to settle for that D or C, but to get the A or the B.”

Finally, another Corps member from Camden Molina School said, “If more people, including me, could come together in our community, I want to be one of them to make a difference. I mean, when our children can walk the streets safe and when everybody knows everybody. I know it’s hard, but I still believe we can do something to make a difference.” That’s from a Corps member in Molina School.

Here today is Kenneth Nesbitt who is also going to speak to you a little bit about his experiences as a Corps member in Urban School Service Corps.

SENATOR EWING: I’ve got a question.

MS. DEL RIO: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: First off, the people who are helping the students, are they paid?

MS. DEL RIO: These are paid volunteers. They get a living stipend. It’s not really what we would call a salary, it’s like a living expense. It’s not a salary, it’s a lot less.

SENATOR EWING: What do they get? Is it the same for everybody, or is it different?

MS. DEL RIO: No, it’s about the same for everybody. Those who are working full-time get about \$8400 per year in living expenses. They also, at the end of their service term, get an educational award that they can use to

help pay off the cost of loans for college or to attend a college. That comes out to about \$4725.

SENATOR EWING: How do you know whether they work with a student every day or not?

MS. DEL RIO: They are closely supervised by a site manager. We have site managers in each of our schools as well, and they work on a day-to-day basis with our Corps members providing that structure, meeting with them on a weekly basis and on a daily basis. They also give them their assignments. They work with the teachers, and they make sure the Corps members have a lot of direction in the work that they do with the students.

SENATOR EWING: What background do the individuals doing the instruction have?

MS. DEL RIO: Well, it varies. Our Corps members--

SENATOR EWING: Are they high school graduates?

MS. DEL RIO: Yes, they have to be high school graduates. If they aren't a high school graduate, then one of the things that we do is to make sure that they are going through their GED at the same time that they're also working in this program. We ensure it to help them with their GED while they are going through this program, if they have not. That is the minority. The majority would have actually gone through their high school.

Some of them have a college degree already. Some of the other people really care about working with the children and just want to be there for them, as well. In addition to that, we also provide ongoing training for them so that they don't go in there cold without knowing what they are doing.

We bring them together about four times a year -- actually about five times year -- and provide training and tutoring in working with children, working with parents, the legalities of working with children. We provide the necessary training so that they have a better idea of what they are doing when they are there.

SENATOR EWING: Where are the parents of these children?

MS. DEL RIO: Well, the parents-- One of the goals of Urban School Service Corps is to integrate the parents as volunteers to work in the schools. A lot of times many parents also work in the after-school programs. It is one of the goals of our Program to increase the number of parents, and that is one of the things that we have been successful in doing, but it's also an area where we wish to do even better than that. It is something -- an area that is a challenge, I think, for all programs that are working in communities with schools and with parents. That is an area of challenge.

SENATOR EWING: Do you have a list of the schools where the volunteers are working?

MS. DEL RIO: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Would you send that to the education staff?

MS. DEL RIO: Absolutely.

SENATOR EWING: I'd like to see that.

MS. DEL RIO: Okay, certainly we can provide that.

SENATOR EWING: I'd like to welcome Assemblyman DeSopo.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: A couple of quick questions.

SENATOR EWING: Certainly, I was going to see if you had any questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: What is the extent of the training before they actually enter the Program? What is the average pay that you give them?

MS. DEL RIO: They get \$8340 in a year. That is prorated. I think it's 26 payments throughout the year. I don't know, at this moment, what that breaks down to every week, but it's less than a minimal salary, minimum wage. It's not considered a salary. It's considered a living expense. That's just to help them to make ends meet.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: So, actually, it comes under expenses and not payroll.

MS. DEL RIO: Yes. They are on a payroll, and they do have to pay taxes on this money, also.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Okay.

MS. DEL RIO: What was your other question, I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: The extent--

MS. DEL RIO: The extent of the training.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: --of training before--

MS. DEL RIO: They've brought together, first of all, for what we call a Corps member orientation, where we go through all the processes and procedures of this program and all of the parameters. In addition to that, we do a lot of team building with them so that they work together as a group and that they understand that they are each others' resources.

We bring them also together, again, for another full day of training in actual -- specific training, and that's going to be taking place throughout the year. One of our other goals is to also develop the Corps members themselves,

so we focus another full day of training to helping them to understand where they are going to go from this program beyond their own life. Are they going to go back to school, or are they going to go into a job, or so on. It's a program that not only assists the children, but it also assists in developing the Corps members as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Mr. Speaker.

SENATOR EWING: Yes. Assemblywoman Crecco.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Have you monitored-- Do you monitor these results?

MS. DEL RIO: Yes. We conduct site visits. I am currently conducting site visits, initially, just to go to the programs and to see and make sure that all of the program components are working well and all of the Corps members have been recruited and that things are going well with the program. Then we do a formal evaluation -- monitoring evaluation. Starting in February we will be doing that, and that is a much more vigorous monitoring process.

In addition to that, I have also met with evaluators from the National Corporation, who have helped me put together a really good evaluation plan, and we're implementing evaluation instruments to actually get input from the teachers, from the principals in the schools, from the Corps members themselves, and from the students -- most importantly, from the children.

That has been really important to us because we want to make sure that it is a successful program. We want to make sure that we look at that data and that we make it even better.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: And the results are reported so that we can read them?

MS. DEL RIO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: And when does that come out, usually?

MS. DEL RIO: Well, probably at the end of the program year we will have all of that data. We also get quarterly reports from the program site managers and that will be available-- Our first quarterly report will be available January 10 -- that's when that's due.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Who is going to do the evaluations?

MS. DEL RIO: We have somebody who is a loaned executive that has a Ph.D. in education that will be doing the evaluation -- that will be administering the evaluation instruments for us. The actual instruments are being developed by myself in conjunction with someone from the National Corporation who is an evaluator, and she has actually developed those instruments in the plan with me. But they will be administered by someone independently.

SENATOR EWING: How many school districts are you in?

MS. DEL RIO: How many school districts? We are in five school districts right now, in 10 schools.

SENATOR EWING: Where?

MS. DEL RIO: Those five districts are Paterson, Trenton, Camden, Pleasantville, and Roselle. Those are primarily urban areas.

SENATOR EWING: Not Newark, and not Jersey City?

MS. DEL RIO: We had a program in Newark last year, and they, for whatever reason, decided not to apply for the program this year.

SENATOR EWING: A school district applies for it?

MS. DEL RIO: Yes, school districts apply for it.

SENATOR EWING: Any other questions? (negative responses)

Thank you.

KENNETH NESBITT: I'd like to say good morning to everyone. It is my privilege to be here this morning to testify before you.

I'd also like to say thank you to my Program Directors, Ivette Del Rio and Dan Napoleon (phonetic spelling). Your confidence in me means a lot. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Will you pull the microphone closer and give us your name and your title?

MR. NESBITT: My name is Kenneth Nesbitt, and I am here as part of the AmeriCorps Urban School Service Corps Program, which affords me the opportunity to be in a classroom setting where I am needed, and I will be part of the AmeriCorps Program for one year.

The way in which I became involved in the AmeriCorps Program was by answering an ad in one of our community-based newspapers. I went to the interesting meeting. I liked what I heard. They liked me and they chose me, and my life has not been the same ever since.

I would also like to say teachers have a very difficult, demanding, but also a very rewarding, job. I didn't realize it until I was introduced to the first grade and I thought to myself, "Man, was I like this in first grade?"

(laughter) But I loved every bit of it. I love every bit of it; so far I've had a wonderful time.

I really didn't know what to expect, but after the first day, I knew I was a part of something very special. My job is to support the teacher with their daily routine, which includes reading, spelling, math, social science, and I'm in charge of art. The great joy I receive is when I take a small group of children and help them one-on-one. There is no feeling in the world like it when I help the child do something that they thought they previously could not. The look that they give me is priceless, and they are so happy when they have someone to help them, because a lot of them don't have anyone at home to help them. For me to be that one to help them is a great feeling. It seems like a little thing, but I realize that it means the world to these children.

Besides the above-mentioned task, I also perform lunch duty, hall monitor, and all-around peacemaker. I am also privileged about being the only male in the program in my area. I didn't realize how important that was until I noticed that the children respond to me very well. I found myself watching what I did and what I said, because I wanted to leave a positive impression on how to act on them.

I also see a lot of the children outside of the classroom. Some of them, I found out, live in my area and are very happy to see me, as I am very happy to see them. I also have a strong bond with a lot of the children's parents, because we were in school together when we were small. They always ask me how their child is doing, and I am very happy that I am there with their child.

The impact that the AmeriCorps Program has had on my life is so great, in fact, that I am returning to college to pursue a degree in education. I've really enjoyed the feeling of satisfaction that I have at the end of a day, knowing that I have helped someone learn something that they didn't know before. I believe anyone who becomes involved in the AmeriCorps Program will be greatly benefited by the experience, because by serving others we serve ourselves.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Any questions? (negative responses)

I think that's great what you're doing.

MR. NESBITT: I enjoy it very much. As a matter of fact, I miss them now.

SENATOR EWING: Did you pay attention in first, second, or third grade?

MR. NESBITT: I went to Catholic school. There was no question. (laughter) I had no choice.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MR. NESBITT: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Jennifer Rehbein, AmeriCorps member.

JENNIFER REHBEIN: Good morning.

SENATOR EWING: Good morning.

MS. REHBEIN: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jennifer Rehbein, and I am an

AmeriCorps member with the project called New Jersey Community Water Watch.

New Jersey Community Water Watch places 20 full-time AmeriCorps members in 10 urban areas in New Jersey to focus attention on the condition of New Jersey's rivers and streams and to empower communities to take ownership over their waterways. The Program was created because 85 percent of New Jersey's rivers and streams are still too polluted for fishing or swimming. That comes from the DEP.

The toxic pollution and urban runoff that have been the legacy of New Jersey's formerly thriving industrial cities have become a danger to our children's health and a threat to the economic vitality of those same communities.

Here in Trenton, I work with Linda Dunn, another AmeriCorps member, to organize community cleanups, oversee a volunteer water quality monitoring program, and educate children and adults about urban environmental issues, and also perform citizen Water Watch organizations that will take guardianship over local water resources.

Other AmeriCorps members are doing similar work in Paterson, Newark, New Brunswick-- Let's see if I can remember them all. Paterson, Newark, New Brunswick, Asbury Park, Long Branch, Camden, Toms River, and -- I'm forgetting one -- Elizabeth. They work in cooperation with organizations like Clean Ocean Action, Ironbound Community Corporation, Montclair State University's Earth Environmental Studies Department, Uptown School of Atlantic City, the Ocean County Vocational and Technical

School -- I worked with Isles Incorporated, a community development corporation, and also the New Jersey PIRG Student Chapters.

The goal of New Jersey Community Water Watch is to give communities the resources and information they need to have a clear and measurable impact on the condition of their rivers and streams. Every week I speak to community groups and civic organizations in Trenton, and what I say to them is a lot like this. I say, "These rivers could be a really excellent resource for our communities. They could be places for people to come together, resources for economic development. We have a right to clean water, but nobody's going to get it if everybody sits back and says, 'Okay, it's the job of somebody else, this is not my responsibility.'"

The way that something is going to change is if each and every one of the people in these communities that cares gets up and does something about it. So I get up, and I don't just tell communities about the problems, I give them what they need, practically, to do something about it. I reconnect them with the natural world they have forgotten.

I say, "See that river over there? Your grandchildren should be able to swim in that river. Do you remember that you used to be able to? They should be able to, also." Then I teach them how to organize a press conference, how to test the water for contaminants, how to recruit their neighbors to volunteer to pick up trash. I involve senior citizens, most of whom have given up, and I also involve youth, who might otherwise be on the streets, in really exciting, empowering projects that are going to give them leadership skills and maybe the excitement to empower them to want to achieve further things.

In just three months I've held, in the City of Trenton, four community cleanups. We've removed 16 tons of trash from the waterways in the city. I've involved over 200 volunteers and 65 local organizations in businesses. I've also given 50 presentations to children in Trenton's public elementary and middle schools. I recently founded a Citizen Watershed Association here in Trenton, and tomorrow I am going to be beginning a six-part workshop for public school teachers who want to learn how to integrate hands-on environmental activities into their curriculum. I'll be teaching that workshop.

New Jersey Community Water Watch, as a whole in the first three years of the Program, organized 60 cleanups -- contrary to what Mark Valli -- so we actually removed 500 tons of trash from waterways in New Jersey, and involved over 4000 New Jersey citizens and reached over 30,000 schoolchildren through our educational program.

Eight months ago I just graduated from Trenton State College, and I was working at the mall. In just three months, I've taken on responsibilities that no other job I could have found right out of college could possibly have given. I've learned how to express myself. I've learned how to speak to people in a way that motivates them to act. I've learned how to take an idea and build a project out of it out of nowhere, take it from the ground up and generate real results, all through my own efforts.

The thing about AmeriCorps is AmeriCorps doesn't tell you that your idealism is silly, it's naive. AmeriCorps says, "Okay, you have a vision of how the world should look. We, as a nation, value that, and we are going to give you what you need to really make that vision a reality. We care about

young people who work hard and don't want to settle for the way things are, and we are going to invest in the future of those young people."

Right now I'm about three and a half months into the most unbelievably exciting year of my life, and I really thank you for letting me share that with you.

Does anybody have any questions about Water Watch?

SENATOR EWING: You ought to go into politics. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: We love your enthusiasm.

What was your major in college?

MS. REHBEIN: I actually was an English major, which ought to destine me to work at the mall forever, but apparently it didn't. (laughter)

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much, Jennifer.

Kristin Ehrgood, Executive Director, Teach for America.

K R I S T I N E H R G O O D: First of all, good morning to all of you. Thank you very much for allowing me to be here with you. My name is Kristin Ehrgood, and I am the Executive Director of Teach for America here in New Jersey.

I was a former Corps member of Teach for America. I taught sixth grade here in Trenton at King Middle School. I taught language arts and social studies, and so I can speak firsthand, as a Corps member and now as an administrator, of the quality work that Teach for America Corps members are providing for the students in urban communities here in New Jersey.

As many of you may know, Teach for America is a national teachers corps. What we do is recruit recent college graduates who primarily

did not major in education. They majored in math. They've majored in science. They've majored in engineering, Spanish, English. They majored in a variety of different backgrounds. They commit two years to become full-time teachers in urban schools across the country. Specifically, here in New Jersey, we have Corps members teaching in East Orange, Jersey City, Newark, and Paterson this year. Right now I have 38 Corps members in these districts, teaching all subjects ranging from bilingual first grade right through to high school science and high school math.

Each year our Program receives approximately 3000 applications from recent college graduates for 500 positions within the Corps. We train all of our teachers at a five-week summer institute in Houston, Texas, and then they go on to one of thirteen locations to become teachers. Here in New Jersey, as I said, we have 38 Corps members. They are all primarily middle school teachers.

I'd like to just share with you some specifics about the impact that our Corps members are having in the schools. Last year, and every year, we have an independent firm Kane, Parsons, and Associates that conducts a survey of our principals, the parents, and of the students to determine their satisfaction with Teach for AmeriCorps members in the classroom. Last year over 80 percent of the principals with whom we worked responded that Corps members impact on students is better than other beginning teachers with whom they have worked, and that Corps members have demonstrated a greater commitment to continually improve as a teacher than other beginning teachers with whom they have worked.

Further, more than 90 percent of New Jersey's principals that we are working with rated Corps members higher than other beginning teachers in their motivation and dedication to teaching and their ability to work well with other teachers and with administrators in the schools. So clearly, the principals are quite pleased with the work that the Corps members are doing. You will find similar statistics with the parents, as well, on a national level.

I do need to make that clear. Nationally more than three out of four parents rated Corps members higher than other teachers in the extent to which they improved their child's reading and math skills and challenged their child to do better and learn more and kept them informed of how their children were doing in school.

Specifically, I can give you stories about what Corps members are doing. Charity Shouse is a seventh-grade teacher at Bragaw Avenue School in Newark. Charity, last year, was named a Dodge Teaching Fellow through the Alternate Route. She also received a \$3000 grant from the district to start a publishing company in her classroom. Her students are creating newsletters. They are creating self-written books. They are creating all different kinds of things that are providing them with a real-life reason for why they should write, learning all of their editing skills, writing skills, through that program.

Additionally, I have Nakia Tomlinson and Alan Conquero, both are teachers in the Hillside School District. Nakia is a second-grade teacher, Alan is a high school teacher. Together they have created the STAR Program, which is Share The Art of Reading. Essentially what happens is, Alan's high school students come down to Nakia's classroom once a week to create an

after-school program where the high school students are helping the second-graders with their reading skills.

We also have Jessica Mitchell, Wally Baird, Allison Thompson, and Quinton Vance who are all teaching at Dr. Horton School in Newark. These four Corps members are running a significant number of the after-school programs, Saturday programs, as well as providing outstanding teaching for the students in these schools.

I could go on with stories, clearly I will not. I would invite all of you to come and visit a Corps member's classroom with me. I would love to take you to see the good work that our teachers are doing. Essentially, that is what Teach for America is, that is what we are doing. We are very committed to ensuring the day that all children have the opportunity to attain an excellent education, and that is what we are working towards.

If you have any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer them.

SENATOR EWING: I thought there was Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps, and Senior Service Corps. Are you a separate division?

MS. EHRGOOD: No, we are part of AmeriCorps. Essentially we are a national program. We're a national direct, which is somewhat different than the State direct programs.

SENATOR EWING: How do you coordinate with the State program?

MS. EHRGOOD: We coordinate through a variety of ways. We always have-- Our program director goes to all the State functions. We encourage our Corps members to participate in as many State functions as they are able to. Since they are full-time teaching in the schools, oftentimes they

don't have the opportunity to attend some of the functions here in New Jersey. Although, we have worked with Community Water Watch, where they have gone into our Corps members' classrooms to provide the exact kind of material that Jennifer spoke of just a few minutes ago. That has happened in both Elizabeth and it happened in Newark last year, as well.

We also work with New Jersey Community Development Corporation in terms of -- you'll hear from them later, I'm sure -- in terms of Paterson cleanups. We have encouraged our Corps members to get involved in a variety of different ways and to encourage them to bring their students to get involved in the kinds of initiatives that AmeriCorps is setting up throughout the state.

SENATOR EWING: Where does your funding come from?

MS. EHRGOOD: Our funding-- Teach for America's funding comes from a variety of sources. We receive corporate, foundation, individual funding, and then we also receive funding from AmeriCorps on a national level.

SENATOR EWING: How many people do you have?

MS. EHRGOOD: Here in New Jersey or nationally?

SENATOR EWING: No, New Jersey.

MS. EHRGOOD: In New Jersey I have 38 teachers currently teaching. I have alumni as well.

SENATOR EWING: Do they teach the regular courses?

MS. EHRGOOD: Yes, they are full-time teachers. They are full-salaried teachers. They are paid by the school district. They do not receive the living stipend that other AmeriCorps members receive.

SENATOR EWING: I don't quite understand. If they are regular teachers, they are members of the NJEA or the Newark Teachers Union, right?

MS. EHRGOOD: If they choose to be. It's not a requirement.

SENATOR EWING: Well then, how are you different from the other teachers?

MS. EHRGOOD: Because our Corps members did not necessarily major in education. Our Corps members majored in math. They have majored in science. They have majored in a particular subject area, and they all participate in New Jersey's Alternate Route to Teacher's Certification Program. They all participate in that program as well, so they will become fully certified teachers within one year of teaching.

SENATOR EWING: And the district asks you to send somebody in, or what?

MS. EHRGOOD: Absolutely. The Newark School District, the Jersey City School District, they have a need for highly qualified people. I believe, and it statistically has shown, that oftentimes people who have graduated from schools of education traditionally do not want to teach in an urban school district. They would prefer to teach in a suburban school district.

Our Corps members are absolutely, 100 percent committed. It's the only place that they want to be. They want to be teaching in New Jersey's urban schools.

SENATOR EWING: And they shift around. I mean, they might teach for three years and then leave or something.

MS. EHRGOOD: Yes, we have found that people have left. Right now I have three people at Harvard getting their master's degree in education,

two of whom would like to become principals in urban areas, and another woman is focusing on at-risk youth. We have had people who have left their schools and have gone on to start charter schools across the country.

SENATOR EWING: Where are they working?

MS. EHRGOOD: I have one in North Star and one at Soaring Heights in Jersey City.

SENATOR EWING: Do they get tenure when they are working in these other schools?

MS. EHRGOOD: In the charter schools?

SENATOR EWING: No, not the charter. You said that you have X number here in New Jersey and they are teaching.

MS. EHRGOOD: Right. If they stay, which many of them do, in fact. My 1995 Corps members who just completed their two-year commitment -- 89 percent stayed in their classrooms and stayed in teaching. The other 11 percent are in graduate schools to receive their master's in education.

The point of Teach for America, although I must point out, is not only to provide teachers in the here and now. It's also to create leaders who have had this experience in urban and rural education across the country, who will help to make all sectors of our society more responsive to the needs of urban and rural education.

For example, we have people who go on to science, people who go on to get master's in public health, and they will then go on, we believe -- our Program began in 1990, so we are fairly young still -- they will go on to help make our entire country more responsive to the needs of education.

SENATOR EWING: Do they get an extra stipend over and above the teachers salary?

MS. EHRGOOD: They do not get an extra stipend, no. Not above the regular teacher's salary. They do receive an education award as part of their AmeriCorps service, which can be attributed to past student loans or to future education.

SENATOR EWING: That's in the form of cash?

MS. EHRGOOD: It's in the form of a voucher that can only be turned in for educational purposes.

SENATOR EWING: Where do you get your money to operate then? It's really only for the administration of the program, right?

MS. EHRGOOD: We get our money, as I said, from corporations, foundations, and individuals.

SENATOR EWING: And it's really only for the administration of your group.

MS. EHRGOOD: It is for the recruitment, selection, and in the five-week summer training that we provide for all of our teachers in Houston, Texas. Then we run an ongoing support program through their two years that they are a part of Teach for America, which includes a monthly meeting. We have retreats. We have a nationwide conference on the East Coast that we run each year that we ask all of our Corps members for New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, D.C., and North Carolina to participate in. So it's a rather extensive support network that we create for them, which, I think, is one of the key things in the success for Teach for America is that our Corps members are not put into classrooms on their own. They are not teaching in isolation.

They are teaching in a collaborative manner with quite a few other Teach for America Corps members, and they are able to really exchange ideas, build on the needs of the students, and identify those needs very carefully and very critically.

SENATOR EWING: Any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: To follow up on what Chairman Ewing was saying. If I had my bachelor's degree in English or in science, and I wanted to work in the City of Paterson, but I do not have my teaching certificate, what is there to prevent me from going to Paterson and saying that I want to do the Alternate Route?

MS. EHRGOOD: You could do the Alternate Route.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: How does it differ?

MS. EHRGOOD: We select our Corps members, the Alternate Route does not select its Corps members. I mean, the Alternate Route is an outstanding program in the State of New Jersey. It's a wonderful resource for the State. What Teach for America does beyond that is that it provides an element of selectivity into Teach for America in that 3000 people are applying, and we are targeting specific types of people. We are targeting people who have demonstrated their leadership on their campuses. We are targeting people who have a sincere commitment to urban education, who have demonstrated good writing, thinking, and speaking skills in their efficiency.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: So part of your Program is to go to colleges and recruit.

MS. EHRGOOD: Yes. We go to 150 college campuses across the country that are known for their selectivity and also for their diversity. So we

are targeting math and science majors. We are targeting bilingual speakers. We are targeting people of color to become Corps members and to apply for the program.

In addition, what makes us stand out from the Alternate Route is this ongoing network of support that we provide for the Corps members. In the Alternate Route they do attend regular classes, but beyond that, Teach for America also does coordinate this entire network which facilitates quite a bit of sharing of best practices and that kind of thing. It's another layer of support that's absolutely essential for beginning teachers.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

MS. EHRGOOD: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: If anybody has testimony that they got printed up, please give it to us so we can distribute it.

Next is Hassan Johnson, Program Manager, New Jersey Youth Corps in Middlesex. (no response)

Brendon Belcher, AmeriCorps member, New Jersey Youth Corps in Middlesex. (no response)

Mary Patnosh, Codirector of New Jersey Youth Corps, Jersey City.
Yes, I'm sorry.

GARY PATNOSH: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Who do we have here?

MR. PATNOSH: I'm Gary. Rather than Mary, I'm Gary. Also Joy Lynch and Candra Baerga, all from New Jersey Youth Corps.

We would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to meet with you. My name is Gary Patnosh. I'm Codirector of AmeriCorps at Jersey

City State and of the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum in East Orange, which serves children from all of northern New Jersey.

I'd like to introduce two of our Corps members. Miss Joy Lynch, who is on our Children's Museum team, and Miss Candra Baerga, who is part of our emergency medical team. These young people and the others that you have seen today clearly represent the best of our nation and the best our state, and we are very, very proud of them. More important than proud, we are also deeply indebted to them. Without their hard work and the dedication of their fellow Corps members at other sites, both at the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum and our second site, the Plainfield Rescue Squad, neither of them would exist at this point.

The Jersey Explorer was the state's first nonprofit children's museum. It was completely built and is now totally staffed by Corps members from both New Jersey Youth Corps and AmeriCorps. It was built completely by young people for young people, and that's a unique fact that won the Corps the National Award for Exemplary Service Project of the Year.

Corps members are carpenters, artists, plasterers, painters, who built and maintained the museum and its exhibits. There are also the teachers, typists, actors, presenters, and musicians who bring the exhibits alive for the thousands of children who come through our doors.

Last month, in Dallas, Texas, our Corps members won an unprecedented second National Award for Exemplary Service Project of the Year for our newest exhibit, which is called *Vietnam Memories: Stories left at the Wall*. It's an exhibit of items that people left at the Memorial in Washington, D.C., and we bring it into high schools around the state.

Working with the staff of the National Park Service, our Corps members created this traveling exhibit, and it's got tremendous power, and we have information on it here, and a little on our museum, as well. We invite you to take a look at the comments from our guest books, and you'll get an idea on how this exhibit of national treasures is being received around the state. This year we have been in, so far, Bayonne, Demarest, Atlantic City, and Roxbury. By the end of the school year, our traveling museum will be in Mahwah, Ramsey, West Millford, Jersey City, Maplewood, Scotch Plains, Paramus, and Teaneck. Next year we are almost all booked as well.

Our second site is the Plainfield Rescue Squad. That was a struggling urban rescue squad with an insufficient number of volunteers. While many of the squads around the state are teetering on the brink of collapse, we are proud of the fact that the Plainfield Squad, one of the busiest in New Jersey, has survived and in no small part due to the help of New Jersey Youth Corps and AmeriCorps and people like Candra.

From Mondays through Thursdays, 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., if you dial 911 in Plainfield asking for emergency medical help, you get us. AmeriCorps staffs the Plainfield Rescue Squad during those hours when volunteers are not available. The Corps members there are ambulance drivers, first aiders, and EMTs. Motor vehicle accidents and falls, heart attacks and domestic violence, people near death and babies being born -- you name it and we've handled it.

We would like to invite you to ride our ambulances. We would like to invite you to visit our children's museum or the traveling exhibit, if and

when it comes to your district. We'd also like to then introduce Joy and Candra.

J O Y L Y N C H: Hello, my name is Joy Lynch. I've been an AmeriCorps member for two years. My work site is at the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum in East Orange. There we try to spark an interest in subjects not normally taught in a traditional classroom setting. Through a hands-on experience, we deal with subjects from the African-American and Spanish contributions, to the Wild West, to exploring an ancient tomb in Egypt, to a journey in space.

I have also had the privilege of working with our Vietnam exhibit, which has been very satisfying to hear that high school students say that they have learned more from this exhibit than any other history book that they have read. Also, to work with the different veterans' groups and to have them come to me with tears in their eyes and hug me and say thank you for this exhibit. I would also like to say that I am glad to be an AmeriCorps member, because it has given me an opportunity to touch people's lives in a very special way.

C A N D R A B A E R G A: Good morning, everyone. My name is Candra Baerga. I feel that today we have so much to do together to make our schools better, our streets safer, the environment cleaner, and our families healthier. I, for one, am on a mission, and every day I am getting things done.

For instance, I am an emergency medical technician, and there is no emergency I haven't responded to without AmeriCorps invaluable job training, specialized skills, and various other reasons which keeps me going every day to do the things that I do. As Gary said, we see everything from burns to amputated limbs.

I also recall one night, as I responded to a motor vehicle accident, a patient was a 24-year-old man and was on his way into shock. I will never forget the look upon his face as he stared into my eyes. I was his only hope. That really touched me, because for him to look at me like that and say help me-- It was like limited things for us to do. Without special medics and without AmeriCorps in just certain situations, I wouldn't be able to fulfill certain duties, as I am the leader of the Plainfield Rescue Squad and AmeriCorps EMS team.

Someone asked me one time if I ever wanted to make a career change. The answer was no, because nothing compares to the satisfaction gained of saving a human life. I will be more than happy, even privileged, to carry on my mission.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. Any questions?

(negative response)

Thank you all very much and thank you for what you do.

John Battaglia and students from Fort Lee High School.

JOHN BATTAGLIA: Good morning, Senator Ewing. Good morning Committee members. Thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is John Battaglia. I'm Vice-Chairman of the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, a great volunteer opportunity, which I enjoy thoroughly.

For the last 17 years, I coordinate and have coordinated Fort Lee High School's School and Community Service Program. This is an elective program within the curriculum, which allows students to volunteer in the

schools and in the nonprofit agencies in and around Fort Lee. On average, we have 225 students out of a school population of 900 who elect to volunteer and who receive academic credit for their service, as well. This has been going on for the last 17 years. I am also past president and executive board member of Youth Service New Jersey. For the last 10 years, this organization has attempted to promote and support school-based service and service learning throughout New Jersey.

Before I share with you my comments and thoughts about volunteerism, and in particular, youth service, I am very proud to introduce to you several volunteers from Fort Lee High School, who have a brief statement, each, to talk about their service. To my left, Oana Cuculesca. Next is Ali Weiselberg, and finally Eric Daleo.

Oana.

OANA CUCULESCA - BEGG: Good morning, my name is Oana Cuculesca, and I am a senior at Fort Lee High School. I began volunteering at the end of my eighth-grade year, and each subsequent year I have enjoyed more and more and have participated in more things. Over the years, I have become the leader of associations such as the Volunteer Action Cabinet and Interact to which I dedicate a lot of time.

I have organized one-day activities such as parties for abused children and clothes drives and have also helped with others such as food drives, senior citizens picnics. It is amazing how much planning and dedication these activities required, but the rewards are amazing.

Interact recently organized a Halloween party for abused children, and it was great just to bring some light into the lives of kids who had

experienced so much sadness. The food drive has played a pivotal role and is another great undertaking. This year the food drive was the most successful in back history, and I felt so happy and proud to share in this great endeavor. It is amazing to see a whole town pull together in order to help a hungry neighbor.

Out of all my volunteer endeavors, I had most enjoyed the time I spent at Englewood Hospital, where I volunteered for over four years working one to two days a week. For the past year and a half, I have worked in the operating room, which was never permitted before at the hospital. It has been a unique and wonderful experience. In the time that I spent volunteering, I have learned so much and I have met so many amazing people, from doctors, to patients, to children, to the elderly, to other volunteers. I love the time that I spend volunteering, and I can only hope that it will continue.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

ALI WEISELBERG: Good morning. My name is Ali Weiselberg, and I am a senior at Fort Lee High School. I would like to talk about an organization that I founded this summer, so it's very new. It's called SMILE. It stands for Students Making an Impact on the Lives of the Elderly.

What we do is once a week, so far, we go to two senior citizens centers and we interact with the senior citizen residents there. What we do is, at one residence center we host an art class and we also do one-on-one, which we do also at the other center. The one-on-ones -- we have a list a people who are especially lonely, who don't have family or do not get many visitors, and we go to them and we ask them if they need any help writing letters, reading

letters, or anything. Also, we talk to them. We start conversations, and it's really interesting, not only do we help them, but we get to have-- Obviously they have had many experiences of their own, so we learn from them also.

Lately, since we have been going since the beginning of the summer, although we are fairly new, we form relationships with these people and we almost take on the act of a grandchild, and to see the look on their faces when we arrive is priceless.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

ERIC R. DALEO: Mr. Chairman, members of this Committee, my name is Eric Daleo, and I am a sophomore at Fort Lee High School. Over this past summer I volunteered my time as an administrative intern to the Honorable Jack Alter, Mayor of Fort Lee. Mayor Alter allowed me to reach into the limitless bounties of municipal government and extract leadership skills and understanding of the process of municipal government and the opportunity to interact with intelligible and knowledgeable borough employees who possess expertise in various fields. I am proud to say, because of his definite and distinct influence, I have decided to pursue a career in government.

As a Fort Lee High School Class President, I currently utilize the skills that Mayor Alter exposed me to over the summer. I've taken on a more proactive leadership role and effectively organized our class fund-raisers as a plan for the future. The future of this great state relies on our youth, our future doctors, lawyers, and yes, even Assemblymen and State Senators.

From my experience, Mr. Chairman, I can confidently say that students who volunteer pull away invaluable knowledge and skills that can never be taught or replicated in a school.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

John, how many students in Fort Lee are in this voluntary--

MR. BATTAGLIA: Over the last 17 years, Senator, on average we have had 225 to 250 that elect to serve in the community, out of a school population of about 900. It has been very consistent, and they serve in anywhere between 30 and 35 schools and agencies in and around Fort Lee, and they do receive academic credits for their service.

SENATOR EWING: They do?

MR. BATTAGLIA: Yes, they do. Not as a reward, but a recognition of the validity of their service and the powerful learning opportunity that they are exposed to with their service.

I had five thoughts along those lines, if I could share those with you briefly. Don't be intimidated by the packet that I handed out. I'm not going to read all of those pages of illuminous materials, but I hope some of them will be helpful to you.

The one concept that I would like to talk about first is service learning. That is where the students go out and take the skills and experiences and talents from the classroom and utilize those in their volunteer service experience. From that service experience, to take those skills and talents that they learned and acquired back into the classroom to enrich that and have a wonderful synergy that exists and that occurs at that time, through reflection

the student has a better feeling of where he or she is in relationship to society and how important volunteerism is as well.

A second concept is the thought of participatory democracy. The only way to ensure democracy to be continued, as we know it as a form of lifestyle that we all benefit from, is to participate in it, to be active in it, to get involved, to make changes, to do things when things are needed to help people in general.

We hear a lot about value and character education. Well, this is also an opportunity to explore not whose values, but what values. The values are responsibility, dependability, the opportunity to meet people that are different from you, perhaps from race or nationality or culture or, certainly we've heard a little while ago, difference in age. That's a big barrier between youth and adults and senior citizens sometimes, to break down those stereotypes, break down those barriers through value and character education.

Also school to work is a very important initiative these days. What better way to know about a career, to learn about a vocation than to actually experience that through volunteer service. I feel there is no better learning experience than that.

Finally, the last point that I would like to make is I'd like to introduce a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King who said, "Each man writes with his own hand the script to his own emancipation proclamation." The freedom of choice through volunteer service is incredible. Students are free, they are liberated to make real-life decisions as to what they want to do, the role they see themselves in to make a decision to help other people. This is their emancipation proclamation, as it is with all of us who volunteer. It's a choice

that really liberates us, and we have a tremendous sense of satisfaction, self-esteem, and even fun through what we do.

In conclusion, there is an old Italian proverb -- I'm not really sure if it's an Italian proverb, but I like to think it is -- (laughter) and it states, "A vision without a task is a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. A vision with a task is the hope of the world." My vision is that every student in New Jersey has the opportunity in an institutionalized, supported way to experience volunteer service and service learning. My task is to do everything possible to achieve that vision. In that regard, I am very pleased and honored to speak to you this morning.

Thank you very much and happy holidays.

SENATOR EWING: Wait.

MR. BATTAGLIA: I've got some questions? I'm so worried about being over time.

SENATOR EWING: You run your class, I run this. (laughter)

MR. BATTAGLIA: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Since you give credits, is this done primarily during the daytime? Does the school provide transportation?

MR. BATTAGLIA: It's done before school, during school, after school, and on weekends. During schooltime we have, for example, one very wonderful opportunity for service right across the street from our high school, which is a youth center, and it has a preschool play group. Some of our volunteers go across the street to volunteer there. Otherwise they do not volunteer during the school day.

We do not provide transportation. Students either walk, take public transportation, car pool, or rely on mom and dad. Ours is not unique. There are other schools throughout New Jersey that do offer credit for their service. Sometimes their program is a little bit different than ours. Princeton is one. South Brunswick is one. Ridgefield Memorial High School mandates community service for graduation and offers credit, as well.

SENATOR EWING: That's wonderful. Thank you very much and thank the young people and also the young people from Plainfield. I think it's tremendous what you're doing.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: We are all proud of your young people. You're doing a great job.

MR. BATTAGLIA: Thank you. I am as well.

SENATOR EWING: Particularly those who do the volunteer work.

MR. BATTAGLIA: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Karen Booth, Service-Learning Director, Cahill Center for Experiential Learning.

KAREN BOOTH: Good morning, Senator Ewing, and members of the Committee. My name is Karen Booth. I am the Service-Learning Coordinator in the Governor William T. Cahill Center for Experiential Learning and Career Services at Ramapo College. I am also a member of the New Jersey Higher Education Service-Learning Consortium.

I want to talk for a couple of minutes about service learning, right now. Service learning at its best calls students and educators into the richness and complexity of well-rounded citizenship. In its seven-year history, the

Service-Learning Program at Ramapo College has worked with over 800 students to help them link their learning, their pursuit of higher education with meaningful community and public service.

Students have worked as literacy tutors, with children in Head Start, at nursing homes, in elementary and high schools, and so on. Some students have been able to examine, more critically, their multiple roles as students, citizens, professionals, workers, volunteers, children, and parents through the shining prism of service learning.

When community service and education are entwined, a mutually engaging and enriching relationship ensues and brings students and their professors alike into new levels of awareness. Awareness is about learning and teaching, about the manifold meanings and expressions of community, about cultural diversity and the nature of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

When done thoughtfully, responsibly, respectfully, and critically, service learning offers not only our students, but all of us the opportunity to become three-dimensional people, people like the folks we heard from the Jersey City State College Youth Corps not just consumers, job seekers, and busy suburban isolates, but actors in the life-enriching and intersecting arenas of education, community engagement, and private life.

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to say a few words about the merits of service learning.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Any questions? (negative response)

Who is with you?

MARGO SHEA: I'm next on the list.

SENATOR EWING: Oh.

MS. SHEA: We work together.

SENATOR EWING: How do you know you were next on the list?

(laughter)

MS. SHEA: I have my ways. (laughter)

SENATOR EWING: You're Margo?

MS. SHEA: Yes.

SENATOR EWING: Margo Shea, Manager of Higher Education--

MS. SHEA: New Jersey Higher Education Service-Learning Consortium.

SENATOR EWING: At Ramapo.

MS. SHEA: It's located at Ramapo. It's a rotating entity.

SENATOR EWING: You may proceed, thank you.

MS. SHEA: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you this morning about an ongoing effort at our colleges and universities in New Jersey to link academic inquiry, experiential learning, and public and community problem solving through education-centered service, or service learning.

I think that at this point in time, when we are discussing the streams of service learning, it merits some explanation, and it merits some defense. You heard from Mark Valli earlier, talking about the different ways in which different people in the State of New Jersey are coming together through service and civic involvement. Our effort at the higher ed level, I think, is a little bit different, but it plays in really significantly, and I think it

plays an important role in what's happening in the big pictures. That's what John talked about with the vision.

Our work is practical, it's educational, and it is visionary. Service learning is an emerging movement at colleges and universities that is changing the nature of higher education and at the same time reviving concepts of public life and civic commitment. It's also introducing experiential education as a significant, intellectually sound, and democratic approach to learning.

Educators and students are using service learning to challenge the idea that education is a stagnant transfer of knowledge by making the connections between theory and practice, by making the connections between community life and learning, by making the connections between oneself as an individual and oneself as a member of a social context. Service learning is breaking down the idea that we need only to read textbooks and takes tests in order to solve our important public problems.

Just as important, the combination of active engagement and distanced reflection enables students to probe the serious questions that confront us and to take steps toward finding those answers in a supportive, structured environment. In this way, service becomes not simply good works done by well-meaning individuals, it becomes a vehicle through which we as citizens deliberate and act on our common concerns. It also becomes a way through which we debate and contest what our common concerns are. It also debates the question of what is service and how is it provided.

Not only do service-learning courses that our institutions of higher education in New Jersey make explicit connections between the academic material that is covered through the course of the semester, by its very nature,

service learning opens doors to questions that desperately need to be asked. Some of them are about knowledge and the role of teaching and research institutions. Knowledge for what? Research on what? Research on whom? To what ends? How do we prepare people not only to be effective earners and producers in this global marketplace, but also to be active citizens of the state and the nation?

Some of the questions focus on our present and our future. What has given the rise to so much need for service? Is it new or has it always been this way? How can we, at a time of great possibility, great potential, great transformation and change start to address those social problems, societal problems, that have really long histories and have very contested histories. Who are we? Who have we been? How have we changed? Who might we become?

I think we all know that these answers are really contested. They are not simple and they are not predetermined. The work of sorting them out is beginning to take place through service-learning courses. Higher ed service-learning programs are developing and expanding across the nation, and I am proud to say that here in New Jersey we have developed model programs and we continue to make our mark on the overall national effort.

During the academic year 1996-1997, at over 15 institutions of higher education in the state, 300 service-learning courses were taught across the disciplines. Approximately 3000 college students linked their course work with service and problem solving at over 600 nonprofit and public institutions around the state.

Some examples of academically based service are students in an immigration or an immigrant's course developed a free ESL class for recent immigrants. They worked mainly with employees of hotels and casinos in Atlantic City.

Students in an intro to business class developed a coloring book designed to teach first- and second-graders basics about money, savings, banking. They developed the coloring books and brought them to elementary schools and worked with the young people to help understand them.

Our art history students have worked with professional artists to teach visual and performing arts in public schools in New Jersey, where the arts is underfunded. We all know that is an ongoing issue.

Finally, students in an African-American literature survey class went to a nearby nursing home. They performed oral histories with the nursing home residents. They also read stories that they were being taught in the class, and then they compared the oral histories with the themes that were raised in their course.

In these ways, and in many more, students are bringing new meaning to earning a college degree. They are turning a reflective critical eye to themselves, their studies, and their communities. We hope that we'll all be better for it and that they will help make our institutions of higher education here in New Jersey not only exemplary sites of learning, but models for the contemplation, deliberation, and action that benefits New Jersey and the nation.

Thank you for listening.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Thank you very much.

MS. SHEA: Does anybody want a copy of this?

SENATOR EWING: Yes.

MS. SHEA: I also brought brochures. I'll leave them up here.

SENATOR EWING: Dr. Ron Horowitz, Director of Student Service, Bound Brook School District.

RON HOROWITZ, Ed.D.: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. My name is Ron Horowitz, and from 1980 to 1997, I initiated and coordinated service-learning programs in the Princeton Regional Schools in New Jersey. Having retired and left that position in able hands, I am currently serving as a consultant to initiate service-learning programs in the Bound Brook Schools in New Jersey.

For nearly two decades I have been actively promoting service learning, both nationally and statewide in other ways, including consultant for Youth Service America, founder of Youth Service New Jersey, and as a Fellow in the Service-Learning Institute of the National Society for Experiential Education.

What is the difference between service learning and community service? Many schools have been providing community service for years. However, this has led to a myth that schools have been doing service learning for years. I propose that the school report card issued by the State of New Jersey be used to distinguish the schools that have service learning from those that just have community service.

In order to implement service learning, one must understand that there is a difference between service learning and community service and what

that difference is. My experience has been that too many would have us believe that they understand the distinction when they do not and, in so doing, prevent service learning from occurring in the schools. Carol Kinsley describes this phenomenon in her article, "Community Service as a Pedagogy," and I quote, "In order to increase the use of community service learning, teachers must understand the difference between extracurricular and integrated community service learning model. Currently, few teachers use service learning as an instructional strategy. Many resist because they view service learning as another thing to do. Teachers must understand the basic concept that service learning is a method of teaching involving ways in which students participate in experiences where they make a difference by helping others. Service learning is a way to teach basic skills, apply classroom learning and build, through direct experience, a sense of community."

One of the catches is, and she continues, "Since community service has long been an American tradition, society has a perception that community service is an important thing to do, but usually it is conducive as a club or group project with a certain required number of hours. Students have made decorations for the Red Cross for decades, and Key Clubs have existed since the 1920s. The value of these service contributions is widely recognized, and students have been encouraged to participate, usually gaining a greater sense of community as a result of their efforts." She ends by saying, "A new paradigm of community service -- referring to service learning -- encourages the integration of service into the schooling process so that it becomes integral to the school culture."

Service learning is more than community service. Service learning is directly connected to the curriculum to a service-learning center and increasingly to lessons and to the classrooms. Service learning is more than community service. In service learning, there is systematic reflection about what is learned; whereas, in community service once the service is provided, the act may be over. In service learning the student is additionally expected to demonstrate how that which has been learned can be used to build on and improve their service. So community service alone does not necessarily entail such a sustained effort.

In my role this year introducing service learning into the Bound Brook Schools, I am becoming painfully aware of how great the resistance can be and that the distinction between community service and service learning is subtle and conceptually difficult for many. Some get it immediately, others seem to need time, and some may never see the distinction. The resistance Kinsley refers to above in the article I cited on the part of staff is compounded by the fact that there are always other innovations being introduced in the schools, and teachers always have more than enough to do.

Since service learning is applicable to all disciplines and, of course, all grade levels, it is not someone else's problem. There is a tendency for teachers to say or to think, we'll let someone else do it. Some insist on holding on to the belief that service learning is the same as community service and therefore there is nothing new to be done. However, we have to particularly dispel this myth with those who are in school leadership positions, because as Kinsley has also stated, "The principal's vision and leadership affects the way the service experiences evolve."

Even within the field of service providers, many do not get it. We need to work immediately with those who do understand and are willing to bring it about. Many who do understand are within the schools, but many, of course, are within the public domain, and we need to reach them also, since they can help bring about the change.

What I started with was, one simple, cost-effective way that the State can promote service learning within local school districts and reach many people within the local community, is through required reporting on the school report card of the extent to which cocurricular community service programs are offered in each of the schools, as contrasted with the extent to which curricular service-learning programs are offered.

When the school report card distinguishes the schools that have servicelearning from those that have community service, the public will understand that this distinction is about serious educational reform.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Very quickly. I think we all know, you gave examples of what community service is all about. Can you give a couple of concrete examples of what service learning is all about and how it's integrated into the curriculum, as you were saying?

DR. HOROWITZ: There are intergenerational programs that exist in some schools. One example of an intergenerational program that -- as a matter of fact, a senior citizen suggested a few days ago in the Bound Brook Schools -- is that senior citizens don't seem to get help when they need it when they have some kind of ailment. For example, a relative of this particular

individual had a heart attack, and she wasn't given very much information. A service that this senior citizen suggested be provided to senior citizens is that high school students studying health issues might relay that information to senior citizens who have reported that they have particular health problems.

If that service is tied into a health class as part of a requirement in the school, that, in my opinion, would be an example where there is reflection and there is a demonstration of what is being learned in the process of conveying that kind of information to senior citizens. That would be a demonstration of service learning. Just providing the service where, perhaps, students would take the information to a senior citizen without, perhaps, even reading the information would still be an example of community service, but it wouldn't be an example of service learning.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MICHELLE KWATINETZ: (speaking from audience) Is it possible to add something to the answer to this question? Would that be appropriate at this time? I represent the Coalition for Service Learning, a nonprofit agent--

SENATOR EWING: You better come up here, because it won't be picked up.

MS. KWATINETZ: My name is Michelle Kwatinetz. I am a member of the New Jersey Commission for National Community Service and also the Executive Director of the Coalition for Service Learning, a nonprofit organization which promotes the participation of students in grades K through 12 in community projects as an enhancement to academic curriculum.

I'm on the list to testify, but what I was going to say didn't relate as closely to the question that was just asked, and I wanted to respond to that question directly.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MS. KWATINETZ: We have several examples of service learning being used in the classroom as part of the school day. One of these would be, for example, students who are involved in a water-testing project as part of their science curriculum. Students traditionally would learn about stream health and pollutants in their environmental unit through textbook materials, the usual lecture method of teaching.

These students are learning about that a little bit differently this year. They have been appointed as official water testers by the Monmouth County Planning Board, in a partnership between Ocean Township High School, working with the Coalition for Service Learning, the Monmouth County Planning Board, and the AmeriCorps Water Watch Program, which is in Asbury Park and Long Branch.

Students have been trained in testing a local waterway. The testing of the waterway becomes much more relevant to their learning, because they are testing the water that they are ultimately going to drink. This has engaged the students in a much more real way and has them responding very enthusiastically to learning about what is actually happening in the water. It has more meaning to them.

That's one example of how service learning is directly linked to the curriculum. The hands-on experience of testing the water is an enhancement to traditional teaching methods. We all know that we are not reaching all the

students in our schools today, and we need to have some additional methods of reaching students. Having possibilities for students to demonstrate what they have learned, other than by performing on a written test, is of paramount importance.

Service-learning opportunities give this chance to students. We have students in elementary schools who are doing food collections -- they have always done food collections. They come in and bring their box of macaroni and throw it in a big cart, and that's all they ever hear about it, and that's all they ever know about it. We've changed that in schools in New Jersey. We have combined the collection of food with research and understanding of hunger in local communities. We encourage representatives of local food banks, food pantries to come in and speak to the children about hunger, about the statistical figures in their own communities, and when students understand hunger, they become much more involved in what is going on.

When the food is brought into these schools, instead of just being dumped in some carton someplace, the food is actually dumped someplace else. It's dumped in the health teacher's room. The health teacher is responsible for teaching nutrition. The food that is collected as part of a community project is used to teach nutrition. All of the food is stacked in the middle of the room, and the teacher, instead of giving a written test on the four pyramid groups of nutrition, will say, "Here's all this food. There are four corners of the room. Show me that you know the four pyramid groups. Let's separate this food into the four corners."

As a follow-up to that, students may be given a brown paper shopping bag and told to pack a meal, or pack several meals, of nutritionally

balanced diet for a family of four in this bag, choosing from amongst the four pyramid groups. That packed bag of food is actually the demonstration of the student's understanding of nutrition and of balanced meals. It's a better demonstration, perhaps, than being able to answer a multiple-choice test. Those bags of food are then sent to the local food pantry, who had come in and spoke to students about their need.

These are just a couple of examples. We have home economics classes that, instead of preparing food for themselves to eat, they are preparing foods and delivering it and serving it at local soup kitchens. We have creative writing classes that are adopting Head Start students, bringing them into the classroom. The creative writing students do all kinds of verbal activities with the students, and they write a book for and about these youth. That helps them understand their curriculum in creative writing.

There is a clear and definite relationship between the activity and what the students are learning. The activity becomes a way of enhancing traditional teaching methods.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Thank you very much.

MS. KWATINETZ: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Linda Bennett. Is that Bob Brasco?

L I N D A B E N N E T T: This is Ned Archbald.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about one of the programs under the National Senior Service Corps. We are one of the arms under the Corporation. I am the President of the State Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors in New Jersey.

Nationally there are 750 projects of RSVPs. Our mission is to recruit, interview, and place persons 55 and over in volunteer positions in nonprofit agencies. In New Jersey, there are over 11,000 RSVP volunteers who give over 1,960,000 hours of service a year. RSVP is funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service. The funding level for the State of New Jersey for this Program is \$1.1 million.

Statewide our programs generate 815,000 non-Federal support dollars for our Programs. There are 18 RSVP projects in New Jersey covering 19 counties. Our volunteers are serving in a great diversity of volunteer positions. Some projects have direct service programs such as Mr. Fix-It projects, health insurance counseling, tax assistance, retired executive and professional programs, and bill-payer programs.

RSVPs across the state are becoming very involved with literacy programs. Counties such as Bergen, Burlington, Ocean, Monmouth, Warren, and Cape May are currently working with many of their school systems on mentoring programs. Several are joining forces with the America Reads Project. In Burlington County, we have an agreement with 14 school districts to have our senior volunteers in the schools.

Last month projects directors from all over this state and seven other states joined the America Reads Conference in Towson, Maryland, to learn how we could interface with the national effort.

In Burlington County, as with other New Jersey counties, we also work with Literacy Volunteers of America. In Burlington County, we currently have 30 LVA tutors in our projects. We also have developed a family literacy program in conjunction with LVA.

Under the Unified State Plan, many efforts have come to fruition in coordinating projects among the different streams of service under the Corporation. For example, many RSVP directors attend AmeriCorps training to learn about programs in their counties and how they can work together on projects. In Ocean, Monmouth, and Warren counties, AmeriCorps and RSVP are working together on school programs and environmental issues. RSVP projects also have recruited AmeriCorps members to serve on their advisory boards.

RSVP volunteers serve a vital function in our state by giving back to their communities through service. They are an important part of the call to service issued by the President.

SENATOR EWING: Do you do any literacy work in prisons?

MS. BENNETT: Yes, we do. In our county, we have two individuals who are trained tutors who go in and train inmates to then do peer tutoring within the institution.

SENATOR EWING: Which prison is that?

MS. BENNETT: In Trenton State.

SENATOR EWING: Are you going to try and expand it and do other prisons? Around 75 percent of our adult population are illiterate in the prisons.

MS. BENNETT: That's true and we are trying to, in our county, and I'm sure through LVA's efforts there are other counties that are working on this also. It is an excellent program to be able to work within the prisons and train people.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I hope you will expand it.

Mr. Ned Archbald.

CHARLES E. ARCHBALD II: Good afternoon, Senator Ewing and members of the Committee. I just changed the clock, so we are in the afternoon now. I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing. I submitted a written testimony, and I wanted to digress from that because it is lengthy, and I think I'd rather talk a little bit about one of the volunteers that we had in our Program.

First, I would like to say that this is a significant anniversary because this week, in 1967, we began with our first five volunteers, foster grandparents at Woodbridge Developmental Center. It was supposed to be a three-year demonstration project, and here we are 30 years later, and I signed on for the duration.

I'm not surprised that this Program lasted. The hundreds of people that have served in the Program here in New Jersey during my tenure have really inspired me and made my life a joy. I can't begin to throw enough accolades, but I do want to mention one special foster grandparent who served at Vineland Developmental Center.

Early in 1968 we had this very wonderful woman who joined the Program. Her name was Bertha Bailey. She had done many things throughout her life, but after graduating from Indiana State College, shortly after the turn of the century, she entered show business and was in the original cast of *Showboat*. She had a marvelous contralto voice.

After leaving show business, she joined the academic world and was a guidance counselor at Vineland schools for many years after she had married and migrated to Vineland, where her husband lived. After her

husband died and she was left a widow, she retired from the school system and joined our program. She said, in her many statements that she made, all the sugar was at the bottom of the cup, referring to the actual performance in her later years of life.

She appeared in the public broadcasting film which was supposed to be about retardation and ended up talking about her work as a foster grandparent. The film didn't intend that, but because of her charisma and presence she was just absolutely marvelous, and the film took a totally different direction. As I mentioned, her favorite expression came forward on that one as well.

On one occasion we brought her to testify before a United States Senate committee. The action agency, at that time, was up for its annual budget reauthorization, and they wanted an articulate, older person to attest to the vitality and viability of the Foster Grandparent Program. So after calling a few project directors, they decided that Bertha Bailey was what they needed, and, boy, was she ever.

She bowled them over, and, of course, the sugar statement was a big hit. She was really a genuine article and she came through that way. The word of her appearance kind of spread throughout the Senate office building there, and Senator Williams, who was chairing the Committee at that time, came down and met her and brought her to his office and had pictures taken. She went through the whole routine. It was really lovely for her.

On a crowded elevator on the way down to the Senate dining room, an action staffer asked how long she planned to be around, and tongue in cheek she replied, "I expect to be around a few more years, yet." In fact, she

stayed with us for about 12 years before she passed away. She was 73 when she started, so she really had a very decent tenure with us.

When she died, we memorialized her by naming our annual award in her honor, and in addition, she was memorialized in Nancy Reagan's book, which is called *To Love a Child*. She had a whole chapter devoted to her, and she was the only one honored posthumously.

This Program has provided opportunities for hundreds of senior citizens and children in the last 30 years, and I'd like to invite members of the Committee, at any time, to join us to come to one of our sites and meet the foster grandparents. In the past, there have been some legislators who took a very active role in our Program, but they retired also.

Again, on behalf of the grandparents and senior companions of the Program, I want to thank the Legislature for their generous support over the years.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: You do a great job.

MR. ARCHBALD: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Tanya -- I can't read your printing.

T A N Y A O Z N O W I C H: My last name is Oznovich. Good afternoon. My name is Tanya Oznovich. I'm the Environmental Education Specialist for DEP, Department of Environmental Protection. I represent DEP on the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, and I also am representing the Department on our Commission for Environmental

Education in this state, and I'm an active member of a nonprofit group called the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education.

I wanted everyone to try and imagine a property -- a piece of property -- adjacent to a school to be as an unused parking area, cracked glass, trash strewn around an area of asphalt, with weeds growing up through the cracks. If you can imagine a group of local businesses and organizations, faculty and students, parents, and municipal leaders working together to have the old asphalt ripped out, soil brought in by the tons, local saplings and seedlings planted, and gardens designed. Work like this was done and continues to be done by partnerships like this, which develop, maintain, and study this area on a year-round basis.

Such a place attracts local birds, insects, butterflies. In many cases, the students design an observation area, a weather station. In other instances, the students put in a trail. They design bird feeders and put them out into a bird-feeding area. In other schools, they design composting stations and have man-made ponds put in.

These local places afford students in any location in New Jersey with unlimited opportunities to observe and experiment, to research and write, to draw and design. A fine example of community service and partnerships that are alive already are in Newark, Trenton, and New Brunswick and provide teachers with a valuable resource for hands-on interdisciplinary learning and accomplishing some of the State's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

I want you to imagine the hundreds of volunteers who contribute personal time each year at New Jersey parks, nature centers, environmental facilities, zoos, and museums. Or imagine the AmeriCorps members that were

here earlier today in the Community Water Watch Program, who visit schools in New Jersey's urban districts. Our Department has worked in helping to train them, to teach teachers how to teach them in teaching younger students about water conservation, water supply in New Jersey, and watershed management.

Imagine the hundreds of community beaches and waterway cleanups conducted each year by community groups, church youths, Scouts, organized partnerships of business and government pulling out and sorting tons of litter and recyclables. The key is, if they are designed well, the participants also learn about waterflow and nonpoint source pollution.

Imagine thousands of seedlings and saplings planted each spring, statewide on school property, public waste lots, and parks, usually to celebrate Arbor Day each April. A wonderful opportunity that combines service-learning and volunteer efforts, because if it is designed well, it teaches all the participants about forest ecology, habitat management, and erosion control.

Imagine over 50 high school students from two high schools in Mercer County who are currently being adopted by environmental, science, and technology professionals through a unique partnership between schools, government, industry, and organizations. The mentors spend over four months, largely on their own time, helping students of color who have interest in science to develop projects, learn about career interests, and nurture their self-esteem.

This very effective and growing program is simply called Environmenteers. The environment is simply the place that surrounds us, it's the place that includes us. While the primary goal of environmental teaching is to have a public that understands the environment and people's relationships

with the natural world, we also strive to have a citizenry that can plan, manage, make decisions, and act in such a way that minimizes people's impact on the environment and our natural resources. This is not an easy task, and it is an ongoing challenge.

In striving to accomplish our goals in environmental education, environmental professionals have developed effective classroom, school, and community-based materials and programs that accomplish and support classroom objectives, while helping to develop a participant's self-esteem, local pride, group skills, community pride, and personal responsibility. A lot has been accomplished in this arena and a lot can still be done, and I've heard many new exciting things this morning already mentioned.

By using the environment as a staging area or as a foundation for such activities, exciting hands-on interactive learning can take place about people, about place, and about participation. The environment is a stimulus for applied research and study for creativity and design, for planning and restoration, for recreation, and for solitude. The link between service learning, volunteerism, and the environment is strong and necessary. It lends to community service the sheer magic of seeing results and knowing that people's actions are contributing to a greater whole for a long time.

As an active member of a unique partnership between DEP and the EE Commission, and the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education, we offer to the community service and volunteer interests a network of resources, organizations, professionals, and businesses that support environmental programming statewide. As DEP's representative to the New Jersey Commission on National Community Service, we compliment its continued

efforts in including the environment as one of its four priority areas of activity and on its accomplishments thus far.

Do you have any questions? (no response)

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MS. OZNOWICH: Thank you for this time.

SENATOR EWING: Do we have a copy of your testimony?

MS. OZNOWICH: I will supply it.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Bob Guarasci, is he here?

ROBERT GUARASCI: I'm here, yes.

SENATOR EWING: You didn't fill out a form though, did you?

MR. GUARASCI: I haven't done anything, but I will do anything that you need me to do, Senator.

SENATOR EWING: Well, when you're finished, you can give us one of those slips there. (indicating)

If anybody is going to testify, will you please fill out the slip that's up in the corner of the desk and then give it to us. Thank you.

MR. GUARASCI: Thank you. My name is Bob Guarasci. I am President of the New Jersey Community Development Corporation, which is a nonprofit community development and social service agency based in Paterson. I am here today to talk about two important ways in which our AmeriCorps Programs are intersecting with very important public policy initiatives that this Legislature is grappling with at present. I have with me Marc Martin, who is one of our AmeriCorps members at present, and Marc works on a project that illustrates the first of these issues.

As I'm sure you know, the State has a problem with not having enough resources to place people with developmental disabilities in group homes. Senator Ewing, I know you yourself have been in the forefront of efforts to try and ameliorate this perennial problem. Right now there are about 5000 people in New Jersey who are developmentally disabled -- and that waiting list keeps growing longer every day -- who need group homes, who are living with aging parents, whose parents have passed away. Unfortunately, the State does not have the money to enable each of them to live in a group home.

Here's what we do with our AmeriCorps Program. We started a group home using AmeriCorps members as a staff for that group home. They are fully trained. They are fully certified just as anybody else would be. Instead of charging the State \$50,000 per consumer, per resident, as many other agencies serving the developmentally disabled do, because we use AmeriCorps we are able to charge only \$10,000. That means that we run a group home for six people on a budget of \$60,000.

Now, what that means in actuality is, as you know, if you're developmentally disabled and your name doesn't come up on the list, you've got to wait for years and years and years. Because we are able to do this, we have been able to reach people on the list who probably would not have otherwise been served for years. This includes a mother and son who are living in a crack house in Paterson. This includes an individual who is living in a flop house or a boarding home, and these people would have otherwise languished on that list.

So I am very proud that we have been able to use AmeriCorps to help address one of the most pressing problems, I believe, in the state, which is to provide services for people with developmental disabilities.

Secondly, and it's been a hot issue for a long time and it is probably, as we speak, being debated in a courtroom, that has to do with the educational parity issue. An issue that, of course, Senator and members of both of these Committees have been dealing with for a long time. I personally believe that the single most important thing that anyone can do to solve an urban education crisis is to help students address problems that they face outside of the classroom. There is a lot that needs to be done in terms of books, teachers, and bricks and mortar -- all the money is important for that.

However, I think that everybody has been missing the boat on this, and I feel very strongly that students who do not achieve academically when they are in Paterson-- In Paterson, for instance -- we have checked this figure out three or four times, so it's accurate -- 75 percent of students in the Paterson public schools live at or below the poverty level. Now, it's impossible to ask a student to achieve academically when he or she is dealing with problems that are as terrible as abuse and neglect or hunger and everything else that comes with poverty.

What we've done at East Side High School in Paterson is we've put a few AmeriCorps members to help students deal with problems that they face that are not related to academics. The State has a wonderful program that you may have heard of called the School-Based Youth Services Program, out of the Department of Human Services. That's only in a handful of these school districts, but we're attempting to do with AmeriCorps members what that

Program does. It goes in the schools, it deals one-on-one with students who are grappling with terrible problems, and it helps them to overcome those problems. I believe, with our AmeriCorps Program, we are contributing to a much better school at East Side High School in Paterson.

Frankly, I wish somebody would hear what I think is a clear imperative. That students in urban districts will not reach their fullest potential until they have the resources and the staff in the schools, school-based service, that will help them deal with the horrific problems they face outside the classroom. That's a debate that is going on in a different forum. Senator, you're well aware, all the time that you put in on it over the years, I wish that some of the money that has been directed and may be directed in the future would go towards School-Based Youth Services, but that's probably for another hearing.

But I am here today to tell you that in two ways serving folks with developmental disabilities, helping students in urban districts face the problems that they have to face outside the classroom, and, frankly, a third area that we're about to get into with our AmeriCorps Programs, which is welfare to work, helping people in the inner city who have to move from welfare to work actually find jobs.

We're using AmeriCorps Programs to deal with the most difficult issues facing New Jerseyans today. We're proud of it. If you will indulge us for another minute or two, Marc Martin, who is our AmeriCorps member serving individuals with developmental disabilities, is going to tell you a little bit about his experience.

SENATOR EWING: How many group homes do you have?

MR. GUARASCI: We have one, and we are about to open a second.

SENATOR EWING: Where are you getting the funds to buy the house?

MR. GUARASCI: We are getting those from the State, through the bond issue that was passed a few years ago. So the State is giving us the money to buy the group homes.

SENATOR EWING: Right.

MR. GUARASCI: But as you know, they don't have the money to help people with the annual operating cost and so--

SENATOR EWING: Well, no, we have approved about 20 group homes in the last six or eight weeks. So it's gradually-- The list, I agree with you, keeps growing all the time.

MR. GUARASCI: Right. Well, what I would like to say--

SENATOR EWING: And where does the rest of the money come from to -- because the people that are volunteering running the group home--

MR. GUARASCI: Through the AmeriCorps Program. For instance, we charge the State, if you will, \$5000 for each full-time AmeriCorps member to run it. Again, this is probably a subject for another hearing, but there are very innovative ways in which people on that waiting list can be served and that list can be whittled down.

Unfortunately, the structure, as it now exists, does not want to look too much at the alternatives and its intent on the way things are currently set up, where the State pays about \$50,000 per year per person.

SENATOR EWING: Between \$50,000 to \$60,000.

MR. GUARASCI: Fifty thousand dollars to sixty thousand dollars. So all I'm doing is offering one example of a way in which that cost has been cut dramatically, and I'd like to do it more if we could, but there is some resistance.

MARC J. MARTIN: Good afternoon, Senator Ewing and every other member of this Committee. My name is Marc Martin, and I am an AmeriCorps member working in the Community Leaders Program. I also work with the NJCDC, and I'm really honored to have this opportunity to speak to you today. It's really a privilege to share some of my thoughts and experiences, and I hope I can add some perspective on the AmeriCorps Program.

There are many reasons why I decided to join AmeriCorps, but it always came back to the same reason. I really wanted to make a difference, a tangible impact in my community. What better way to do that than becoming a part of AmeriCorps, which is a national movement of service. Having just graduated from Boston College in May, I felt the time was right to do this, and if I was going to do it, it would have to be now. So far I couldn't be any happier with my decision.

I work as a residence counselor, as Bob was explaining, at a group home in Paterson. At this program, I teach developmentally disabled adults independent living skills. These are skills that many of us might take for granted, but these adults need assistance with such tasks. They include basic things like cooking, cleaning, and financial budgeting, and we also help them with self-advocacy and their interpersonal skills so they may exist more comfortably in their community.

I really must say that it has been a great experience so far. And I would have kicked myself every day if I hadn't joined this program. It's funny, even now, when I tell people what I do, they have blank expressions on their faces. Most of the time they are courteous, but I know what they are thinking because people have actually said these things to me. They say things like, "You know, Marc, you're an intelligent college graduate, quit being a slacker." They say, "Why don't you apply for graduate schools or business positions on Wall Street? Don't you think it's time for you to get a job in the real world?"

Ladies and gentlemen, my response to that is, "This is the real world." That's what I realize, and it's time for people to open their eyes. I'm certainly not downplaying what people in this so-called real world do, but it's really time to stop downplaying what I and other AmeriCorps members are doing. We are really helping people with the hope of making America and New Jersey a better place to live. I really can't think of a more important job than that.

Helping people, that's the main focus of what AmeriCorps is trying to accomplish. Whether the population is disadvantaged children, the developmentally disabled, or unemployed adults, there really is a need for services. When I think about it, it's funny because I realize I was really lucky. I had a solid family that provided me with everything I needed, and I thank them every day for that, after what I have seen.

What I have discovered is not everyone has had a solid background like I had, and these people in need really deserve our help, and we should be giving it to them. Even though I am there for the people I serve, they have been there for me, because what I have received from them is priceless, and

quite honestly, I am proud at how much I have grown as a person during this short three-month period that is going to lead into a year, and I really have AmeriCorps to thank for that.

I'd like to close by quoting President Bush. This is an often repeated line that he repeated again at New Jersey's recent Summit on Volunteerism that I attended in Atlantic City. The former President said, "Any definition of a successful life must include service to others." I really think that's an appropriate statement in this case.

It is my belief that AmeriCorps has bred this kind of success, because it is a success for the less fortunate who are provided with much needed assistance. It's a success for the AmeriCorps members who, by giving so much of their time and energy, can see the tremendous value of their service to others. I think it's a success for our nation and our state that can be inspired by the example being set by AmeriCorps and in turn also pitch in for the betterment of our society. Really, what more can you ask for from a program? I think it really is time for people to open their eyes. AmeriCorps accomplishes so much and does, in fact, succeed in getting things done. Hopefully that everyone that's here in this room will do whatever is in their power to ensure that AmeriCorps continues to get things done.

Thanks a lot for your time and the opportunity to speak today.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. Any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: I just want to say that, Marc, you're right on the target. You are doing a tremendous job. If you had to list some of those things -- some of those elements -- that are preventing youngsters in the urban areas to get a good education, what would be the top two or three?

MR. MARTIN: Well, I can answer that. I think the top thing is just really that they don't know or are aware of what's out there for them. They are stuck in underprivileged communities, and they don't know what hard work can get them. They just see--

When I grew up, I grew up in a suburb in Bergen County. I grew up in Englewood Cliffs, and I had role models all over the place. They have role models, too, but these aren't positive role models. I see it every day, because I work in Paterson. It's unbelievable what you see, people are on the streets. It's a Tuesday or Wednesday at 11:00 in the morning, and there is someone on the corner with a 40, drinking alcohol that early in the morning, and people are walking to school at that time and they really don't know what could happen. They just think this is a cycle. They don't know what's out there for them.

AmeriCorps can bring people in that can provide really good examples and really do a lot with these kids and with anyone for that matter.

MR. GUARASCI: Assemblyman, just to add to that. What the President and the former Presidents, who called this President Summit on America's Future, this past April, have identified as the single most important thing that can help young people in urban areas succeed is to have a caring adult in their lives. It's just really too often that young people in urban areas are from families that are dysfunctional and don't have a role model or a caring adult, so some of the work we are trying to do is link them with caring adults.

MR. MARTIN: Just being there provides a lot of sunshine for these people.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: Well, I was alluding to the statement that you made. Senator Ewing has been a champion of education-- Of course, you are limited as to how much you can do during the period when the kids are in school, from 8:00 to about 3:00 and then, everything that we try to do in the public schools, it's undone when the kids go back into their environment, and it's just very little time and they are faced with tremendous difficulties.

In your opinion, what you're saying is that one of the things that they probably need more than anything else is a good role model--

MR. GUARASCI: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: --and that AmeriCorps can provide that.

MR. GUARASCI: Absolutely, and they need services in the schools that are designed to help them deal with the terrible problems they are facing outside of the classroom. If we all want to see test scores start to rise in urban schools, the State ought to take \$20 million or \$25 million, because that's all it would take, and develop School-Based Youth Services Program. To me the answer is so clear, but nobody seemed to grasp it yet.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeSOPO: What school are you teaching in?

MR. MARTIN: I actually work at a group home, but I also assist with the other programs at the NJCDC, and they work at East Side in Paterson -- East Side High School.

MR. GUARASCI: That's where Joe Clark used to carry around a bat.

SENATOR EWING: Would you fill out one of those forms?

MR. GUARASCI: Yes, certainly. Both Marc and I will fill out a form.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

MR. GUARASCI: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Thanks.

SENATOR EWING: Next, Miss Andrea Dinan. (no response)

Not here.

Joseph Miele.

JOSEPH A. MIELE: Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Joe Miele. I teach laboratory science at Joseph F. Brandt Middle School in Hoboken. I am also on the Board of Directors for Youth Service in New Jersey, and I run the volunteer and community service programs at my school.

It's a little different than the other programs we've heard, because I'm starting with kids that are a little younger. Five years ago I was able to participate a little bit in a Serve America Grant, and that got us going. Another school had the grant and they needed a co-school to go with them, and that's how we started.

It was the beginning of the school year. I didn't know which way to go, and I knew I had to be motivated into the program before I get my students motivated into the program. So September and October going by and November coming up with Veteran's Day, we decided we would start our program by visiting a veteran's home out in Paramus.

I didn't know what to expect. My students didn't know what to expect. We had hooked up with the local Elks Club that goes out there

normally to play bingo with them. That's how we started the program. We went out there that night-- The students spread out and met with the different patients or residents that were out there. A nurse came to me and said, "Make sure the kids stay away from that person in the corner." It was a man with no legs in a wheelchair. She said he is very nasty. He throws stuff at the nurses all the time. He's always cursing. Just tell the kids to stay away.

Before I had an opportunity to tell my students, two of them were over there with him. He was laughing and joking with them. About 20 minutes later that same nurse came up to me and said, "I don't believe what's going on here tonight." I said, "What's wrong? What are my kids doing wrong?" She said, "No, these people are smiling, they're happy. We never see them smile."

That's when I knew that I had found something that was real. My kids knew it. When we came back on the bus that night, there was so many smiles, and these kids knew that they had achieved something that they never achieved before. They made a big part of a person's life much more productable and much more advantageous.

With that we started going out every month with the Elks Club playing bingo with them. We do that now for five years, including during the summer. When we started working with the Elks Club, we still didn't know exactly where our program was going on volunteerism. Well, other civic clubs came like the Lions and said, "Well, if you're helping them, why can't you help us?" We started serving their pancake breakfasts and doing the car washes for them. We started to work with all kinds of civic organizations including the local hospital where the kids are now doing volunteer work. We started a

Shopping for Seniors Program within the city where two students would go after school and shop for seniors. We started intergenerational dinner dance for the senior citizens in Hoboken, and we combined that with the residents of the veteran's home.

The first year we ran that senior citizen dinner dance we had a hard time getting any seniors to come. We had 60 people that finally came. The second year we had 200 people sign up the first day, and they couldn't believe that these kids were so nice and so real, that these kids in elementary school that we hear so much about and are so terrible that they could be so good. At that time the kids did everything. They did everything from make the corsages or flowers for the people coming in, we arranged the entertainment, we had table service serve them a dinner, and they did everything for the seniors. With that, the seniors also came to our school after that and put on some programs they called Sharing the Arts, and they would talk to the kids about the things they did.

My fifth- and sixth-graders, in the meantime-- The original club was seventh- and eighth-graders. My fifth- and sixth-graders said, "How about us? You're forgetting all about us. We want to do something, too." So I started an environmental club, and we changed over to a 4H Club and then we started working because of the 4H Club, and the only one in Hudson County, we were able to hook up with the 4H in Essex County. We started to do projects out there, working in the gardens. The kids would learn firsthand how to work with plants, and then coming back to my lab, we can evolve that into the regular curriculum.

Much of the stuff is taking place and it continues to go on. Once the grant ended, about three years ago, we had a problem of would we be able to continue this program. Luckily the Board of Education gave us buses when we needed it, The Elks Club and the Lions Club now turned around and started giving us donations to keep us going. So the program is still going full. I have never-- One of the things that I admire from the program is that I have never turned away a kid who wanted to do something, even the most dysfunctional student that was always in trouble. I told him before he came this is not like regular school. There are no babysitters, there are no teachers watching you, you're on your own, and you are going to have a job to do.

I have never had one problem with any of these kids, and when they come back, their whole attitude really changes because for the first time in some of their lives they know that they gave something back and they became somebody. When you walk out of the nursing home or veteran's home and these people in a wheelchair reach up and they thank the kids for coming -- they look at me and say thanks for bringing the kids out -- you know that you have something, and hopefully it will go on for a long time.

Thank you very much for hearing about my program.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much. Thank you for what you do.

Vincent McMahon. (no response)

John Prescott and students, DOVE. DOVE Program at Seton Hall.

JOHN W. PRESCOTT: That's correct.

As you can see there aren't any students with me, they're working on finals, so I apologize for that.

SENATOR EWING: Okay.

MR. PRESCOTT: First of all, I would like to take this occasion to thank the honorable members of both the Senate and Assembly Education Committees for this time to speak with you on the role of volunteerism and community service in education. This topic is very important for the many opportunities it provides for students, faculty, administrators, and the communities in which they serve.

My name is John Prescott, and I have worked in education for more than 10 years. One of the most rewarding positions I have held is the one I currently serve in now, and that is as Director of the Division of Volunteer Efforts office at Seton Hall University in South Orange. The Campus Ministry Division of Volunteer Efforts, DOVE, which is a subdivision of the Chancellor's Office, coordinates volunteer activities on and off campus and is only one way of Seton Hall's response to the ongoing call for social justice.

DOVE raises awareness of social injustice through direct involvement in serving others, and it seeks to aid the University community in its commitment to graduates who are not only well-educated professionals, but also compassionate individuals rooted in and guided by faith and its expression in firm moral convictions

The establishment of the office dates back to 1990, during the time when President Bush's suggestion of a thousand points of light, although

much of the similar work done prior to DOVE was coordinated by students and the Office of Campus Ministry.

The events and programs offered by the DOVE office are broad and varied which tends to maximize student participation. The average has been approximately 2000 students volunteer about 10,000 hours per year. DOVE volunteers participate in traditional projects such as soup kitchens and the community food bank. We conduct a variety of clothing, food, toy, eyeglass, book, blanket, and sports equipment drives throughout the year.

The office supports national programs such as Special Olympics, the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and Literacy Volunteers of America, LVA. DOVE provides the suburban office location for Essex County LVA. Mentoring, English as a Second Language tutoring, the Seniors' Prom, the Carnival of Fun for the mentally and physically disabled, and the Appalachian work camp are just a few more of the many other opportunities DOVE has to offer.

The University believes this beneficial involvement develops well-rounded Christian personalities, expands knowledge, reduces prejudice, and implements Catholic identity in practical terms. DOVE is about putting one's faith into action. At DOVE we try to instill in our students the idea of having concern for the welfare and well being of others. Some will call this altruism and they are correct.

There is, however, a very practical aspect of volunteering, and that is experience. All of these opportunities give our students hands-on experience that they might otherwise not have. It gives some of our students opportunities to explore career choices. An example that I like to use is the

CHEER Program. CHEER stands for Children's Hour of Education and Entertainment through Reading. We bring three- to five-year-old children on campus where they are read a story, work on an activity associated with the story, and then given a snack. This is a great opportunity for an elementary education major to find out if they truly like to work with children. The volunteer has to pick out the story, develop a project, and present it to the children. They could either find out that they love the work or that perhaps this is not what they expected it to be. This kind of experience is invaluable.

In addition to the DOVE office, the University has an ever expanding service-learning program which is being coordinated by the relatively newly formed Institute for Service Learning. Service learning, as I'm sure you know by now, can be defined as service within a community that incorporates an academic component. One such course being offered is Philanthropy, Volunteerism, and the Not-For-Profit Sector, from our Department of Political Science.

In conclusion, whether it be through service learning, community service, or volunteerism, the work that is being done through these different vehicles of education are giving students and young people a true sense of empowerment. They develop so many important leadership skills that help make them responsible citizens. They receive the understanding that they can be productive agents of change in their communities and that indeed they can and do make a difference.

I can't help to think, as I look around the room, how we are surrounded by volunteers, former heroes and heroines of the Revolution.

(referring to American Revolution artwork in room) They were all volunteers. I just want to say thank you for the opportunity again.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you.

Mr. Rudy Paiva. (no response)

Ms. Janet Sharma, Volunteer Center of Bergen County.

JANET SHARMA: My name is Janet Sharma, and I am the Executive Director of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. We have all heard a lot of very wonderful things about volunteers, so I am going to ignore just about everything that was in my statement, which I will leave with you.

There are four points that I wanted to bring out that are in my statement. No. 1, Bob mentioned the importance of a caring adult in the life of each child, and there are some statistics that I just wanted you to be aware of. This was a study done by public-private ventures of the Big Brothers, Big Sisters organization. They found that Littles, who are the younger people, who met regularly with their Bigs, were 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using drugs, 27 percent less likely to start drinking, and 52 percent less likely to skip school. They were more trusting of their parents, of guardians, less likely to lie, and likely to feel more supported and less criticized by their peers.

I also wanted to point out another study by the Gallop Organization, an independent sector, about the relationship between volunteering and philanthropy. People who volunteer give more to charitable causes. People who begin volunteering as students give more to charitable causes when they are adults than people who did not volunteer when they were students. So the corollary to that is if we can get people to start volunteering

when they are young, they will volunteer as adults and they will support private funding for charitable causes.

The third point that I wanted to make is that volunteerism is not free, regardless of whether it's AmeriCorps or a school-based program or a nonprofit agency such as I run in Bergen County. It costs money to manage the volunteers, to train them, to supervise them, to screen them, to provide them access to resources that they need to do their work. Whether it's books or computers or phones, it gets expensive.

The fourth point is that volunteers should never, never, never substitute for the safety net that must be provided by government.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you very much.

Carmela Raiti. Did I say it right? (affirmative response)

C A R M E L A R A I T I: Good morning members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present. My name is Carmela Raiti. I serve on senior staff of Bergen County's United Way in Oradell, New Jersey. My responsibilities include, in part, the raising of United Way resources and also the ultimate investment of those resources back into the community. I believe that the insight that this may bring to us today can be a value to you as one of the resources that United Way raises its volunteer commitment.

I would like to speak to the role of volunteerism for our youth and by our youth from the outside looking in. I would like to offer a practical look on how volunteerism is perceived by the outside public world, by the workplace primarily, what our youths should expect it to involve, and the expectations they may suggest for successful volunteerism going forward. It is my hope that

these four insights reflect what our youth should be experiencing with the volunteer and what our youth should be experiencing as a volunteer. My comments are based on what volunteers have told us about their experience and how the communities in which they serve can best use them.

Point one, organizational commitment: The role of a volunteer, young or old, can play in addressing a community's need is indisputable. I would argue that getting the youth to volunteer, or getting a volunteer for youth, is the easy part. Creating the enthusiasm to give the motivation to participate is the easy part. It's not a matter of wanting to help or even finding the time; it's a matter of application, the practical, thoughtful use of a volunteer as a way of doing business. If the utilization of volunteer skill and time is viewed as a way of doing our business, the business of helping that is, then the organizational commitment will follow. It becomes a value, a mindset, sustenance for the business of helping that we are all in. Our young volunteers and the volunteers who work with them need to know that the organization is committed to receiving them.

Point two, expectation for success: Success breeds success. My volunteering because it adds to my success on a personal, social, or even professional level is okay, and we need to be able to say that. Needing me to give you my time, my talent, my office, my goods, my services to make you successful is also okay, we need to be able to say that. If volunteerism is to be effective it means someone needs to expect it to be so. Someone needs to define the success of the youth volunteer's work as naturally as one would measure their own paid staff or their own personal development. Volunteers need to know that their results really do matter.

Point three, making the connection stick: Understanding the scope of the management needed to better connect volunteer commitments with the communities that they need to should not be understated. United Way companies often ask us for help in shaping an employee volunteer program or reshaping what may already exist. What's often missing from the workplace, or the corporate sector, is the connection -- the school with the active school-to-work ethics, the agency provider with the children who need mentors, or the community with the park that needs cleanup. It's making the connection in a way that is mutually beneficial to all. Volunteers can give our youth an accessible connection to persons, places, things that would otherwise be unfamiliar to them. Demystifying the maze of community service possibilities for our youth is vital not only to the children itself, but to the workplace.

My last point, point four, being real: The role of volunteerism and community service should be a complement to the work of our paid staff, but it is not the end-all solution to what needs to be done. Being clear about what we seek to change and the time it will take to accomplish the change is a healthy reminder for a volunteer's success. Clarity in what is expected and knowing how to change when we see it is vital.

In summary, organizational commitment, expectation for success, a connection that sticks, and a real plan become the backbone of what our youth should expect from us. What we do as volunteers for them now will be what we should expect from them later. I hope this viewpoint is instructive to you as you consider what volunteerism might look like in the future, and if I request upon you at least one insight, I would consider the trip successful.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you.

Melissa Petraccoro.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER FROM AUDIENCE: She's not here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Marc Martin. He was already here.

Hassan Keith.

H A S S A N K E I T H: Good afternoon. I would like to thank the Committee for allowing us to testify before you this morning. My name is Hassan Keith. I'm the Program Coordinator for the Juvenile Justice Commission of AmeriCorps Junior Mentor Program.

The Juvenile Justice Commission AmeriCorps Junior Mentor Program provides 20 youth in Juvenile Justice Commission Programs throughout the State of New Jersey to come on as Junior -- we would say -- Junior Mentors to assist JJC staff and helping Program participants adjust to the Program.

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, in collaboration with the Corporation for National Services, has developed a unique program to address the national service priorities of public safety. The Juvenile Justice Commission of AmeriCorps Junior Mentor Program, again, engage 20 youth who have graduated from the Juvenile Justice Commission Program and who have demonstrated leadership and above-average accomplishments to provide community service as Junior Mentors to assist JJC staff.

They have 1700 hours of service as full-time AmeriCorps members. The Junior Mentors' primary functions are to help JJC Program participants to

adjust to Program expectations; provide 250 hours of community services to victims as a means of restorative justice, providing restitution throughout the state; and address the human need by assisting community agencies in feeding the homeless, rebuilding neighborhoods, completing landscaping projects, assisting senior citizens, and providing tutorial services for youth. These activities are designed to improve citizenship by teaching them skills, responsibility, and community ownership.

Each Junior Mentor is assigned to a Juvenile Justice Commission residential or day program to assist staff and serve as role models for the youth in the programs. The Juvenile Justice Commission is very excited about this Program because it allows youth in our programs to work with young men who have overcome similar barriers and have proven that with perseverance and determination anything is possible and that their goals are reachable.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Are you with the Department of Human Services?

MR. KEITH: No.

BRENDA PERRY: The Juvenile Justice Commission.

SENATOR EWING: What?

MS. PERRY: The Juvenile Justice Commission, under the Department of Law and Public Safety.

SENATOR EWING: Okay.

MS. PERRY: Good afternoon. My name is Brenda Perry. I'm the Program Director for the Juvenile Justice Commission AmeriCorps Junior Mentor Program. I am here speaking on behalf of one of our Corps members

by the name of Jason Boyd. Jason was unable to be with us today. He is presently at his site performing his community service.

I was born and raised in Camden, New Jersey. All throughout my life I have benefited by having a tight family network and unyielding family support. However, I fell victim to the temptations of the streets and sold illegal drugs for three years of my life. As a result of my illegal activities, I was arrested and given probation on two separate occasions.

On the first occasion, I was sentenced to a day program, which I did not complete due to my negative attitude. I was then sent back to the detention center and court ordered to complete the Juvenile Justice Commission's Campus Program in Camden, New Jersey. The Campus Program helped me by teaching me qualities such as life skills, discipline, and conflict resolution. The Program also assists me in my educational development and helped me to obtain my GED.

My immediate goal is to attend Camden Community College with a major in social work in order to become a counselor for at-risk youth. Presently, I have been granted the opportunity to serve as a Junior Mentor in the Juvenile Justice Commission AmeriCorps Junior Mentor Program. I am excited about the opportunity because it will allow me to develop professional skills, assist my peers, and give back to the community.

I feel confident that I will be a great asset to the Juvenile Justice Commission, its Program, staff, and my peers because of my experiences and my desire to give back what I have learned. I look forward to the many challenges and opportunities that Program offers.

SENATOR EWING: Any questions? (negative response)

Congratulations to you, Brenda, for what you have done with your life.

MS. PERRY: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I hope you can go out there and help the others.

Thank you both very much.

Charles Archbald.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He's already been here.

SENATOR EWING: He's already been here.

Marvin Schlaffer.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: He's not here.

SENATOR EWING: Cheryl Weststein. (no response)

Janet Sharma.

MS. SHARMA: I already spoke.

SENATOR EWING: You already spoke?

MS. SHARMA: You were out of the room. Do you want me to talk again?

SENATOR EWING: No. We need some volunteers up here, I guess, to help me keep things straight. (laughter)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Mr. Chairman, as a member of the State Commission for National and Community Service I would like to personally thank you and the members of this Committee for doing an outstanding job of being patient and asking the right question and provide us with this forum. We really appreciate it.

Thank you so much to all of you.

SENATOR EWING: Is Michelle going to come up again?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: She had to leave.

SENATOR EWING: She talked before on something else.

Hassan Keith, he's been here.

Marvin Gibson. We finally got someone.

MARVIN W. GIBSON: Good afternoon to members of the Committee. I wanted to speak primarily about two elements as it relates to AmeriCorps.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, say where you're from, please.

MR. GIBSON: Yes, my name is Marvin Gibson. I'm representing the College Bound of New Jersey's Programs, which represents 13 colleges and 2300 youths throughout the State of New Jersey.

Primarily I am here to ask for two things: one is access and the second is funding. First of all, we feel that AmeriCorps needs to be expanded because of the many troubled problems that face urban America and, more importantly, they need to have access to specific types of committees. There were two meetings that I went to last week. One was with the Blue-Ribbon Task Force and one was on the evaluation process for the College Bound of New Jersey. There were no students present on the committees.

What we're suggesting is that for all the things that go on that students have no access to and people are making decisions about their lives, they at least need to be in the room to be heard of and to be heard from. Secondly, we wanted to speak to--

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me for interrupting you. Who organized the meeting?

MR. GIBSON: Excuse me, sir.

SENATOR EWING: Who organized the meeting that you are talking about that there were no students at?

MR. GIBSON: One was done by the Commission of Higher Education -- well, both of them were done by the Commission of Higher Education.

SENATOR EWING: Did they say why they didn't have any students?

MR. GIBSON: No, they did not speak directly to that other than that they had done a search, and our suggestion is that if that search may have started with AmeriCorps that would not have been the problem.

Secondly, we would like to speak to the issue of funding. The reason we are speaking to the issue of the funding is that AmeriCorps possess a core group of individuals that are highly motivated, which are needed in the communities that they are servicing. However, as we look at education and we look at our present system, we will find that in special education we are spending an average of \$20,000 to get less than an eighth-grade education, which is very troublesome. As we talk about our institutions of incarceration, we are spending \$31,000 per year for individuals to come away with less than a seventh-grade education.

As this relates to the funding possibilities that could exist and be expanded upon AmeriCorps, if we would just look at one-quarter of 1 percent, we could increase the amount of volunteers by almost 10,000 in the state of

New Jersey. What we are asking you to do is to have intrameetings between your judicial branches and look at the funding levels and to find out how you can help to prepare and save more lives as opposed to keeping those incarcerated that are not going to come out here to change lives.

I'd like to thank you so much for your time.

SENATOR EWING: On the prison education-- I have been working on that and I feel very strongly about it, but you say there's no question. It is tragic that the State, over the last eight or nine years, I think, has reduced the number of adult teachers in our prisons by about 100, and yet our prison population has gone up tremendously. There are individuals-- You are not going to get them all that want to take courses, but there are waiting lists for GED, welding, masonry, carpentry, and we've got to do something about it.

My feeling is that the Corrections administration is more custodial and not rehabilitation. These people are going down there for five, ten, fifteen, twenty years, and if they are illiterate -- I believe 75 percent are illiterate -- when they go in and come out, they have no hope. When they went in there, that's how they got in there because they had no hope when they were in school.

This thing is just increasing the size of our jails and more jails. You are so right that something has got to be done about that, at least giving a bigger percentage of those individuals a chance to do something for when they come out.

MR. GIBSON: We can't agree with you more, Senator. Our hope is that, through this Committee meeting, you will debate with your colleagues

and allow the issue of access. I am currently involved with 15 other individuals for the last two years that had been denied the opportunity to go into the prisons to help in rehabilitation and learning.

SENATOR EWING: Who denied them the opportunity?

MR. GIBSON: Well, we don't want to go into that debate right now.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me, I happen to disagree with you. I'm Chairman of this and I'm asking you.

MR. GIBSON: I can bring to you, at a later meeting, those individuals and the information about access being denied into the prison systems, just to do small things like have worship where you have to go through a laborious task of filling out information, and then you send a letter saying that we can't meet now because so-and-so is meeting, and nobody ever gets back to you. These 15 individuals that I'm talking about are all ministers.

I wouldn't like to debate on that now, but if you would like to arrange a meeting at a later date, I would certainly bring all those individuals into your office with the information and the letters that have been sent from various prisons that have denied them access to try to help other people.

SENATOR EWING: Do you live in Trenton?

MR. GIBSON: Yes, I do.

SENATOR EWING: What I'm going to do is-- I didn't run again for reelection. I believe in term limitations, and I have spent 30 years down here, so I think that's just the right term. (laughter)

I'm not going to be here anymore after January 12, but Mike Ballard (phonetic spelling) who is in charge of education with the prisons-- I'm

going to give him your name and there are a couple of other legislators that have an interest in prison education to see what they can do in working things out. I think it's reprehensible if there are individuals that wanted to go into the prisons and teach. Granted, they have to be checked out. There is no question of that.

MR. GIBSON: They have submitted all of the information that has been required. Most of them couldn't be here today, but I told them I would make sure that I made, at least, the Chairman aware.

SENATOR EWING: I'm going to get Mike Ballad to get a hold of you. Is this a day number or a night number?

MR. GIBSON: Let me also give you a number that I can be reached at in the evening.

SENATOR EWING: You can put it on here (indicating) so that these other people can't call you. (laughter)

MR. GIBSON: Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: And I plan to keep up my interest in prison education when I get out of here because something has got to be done.

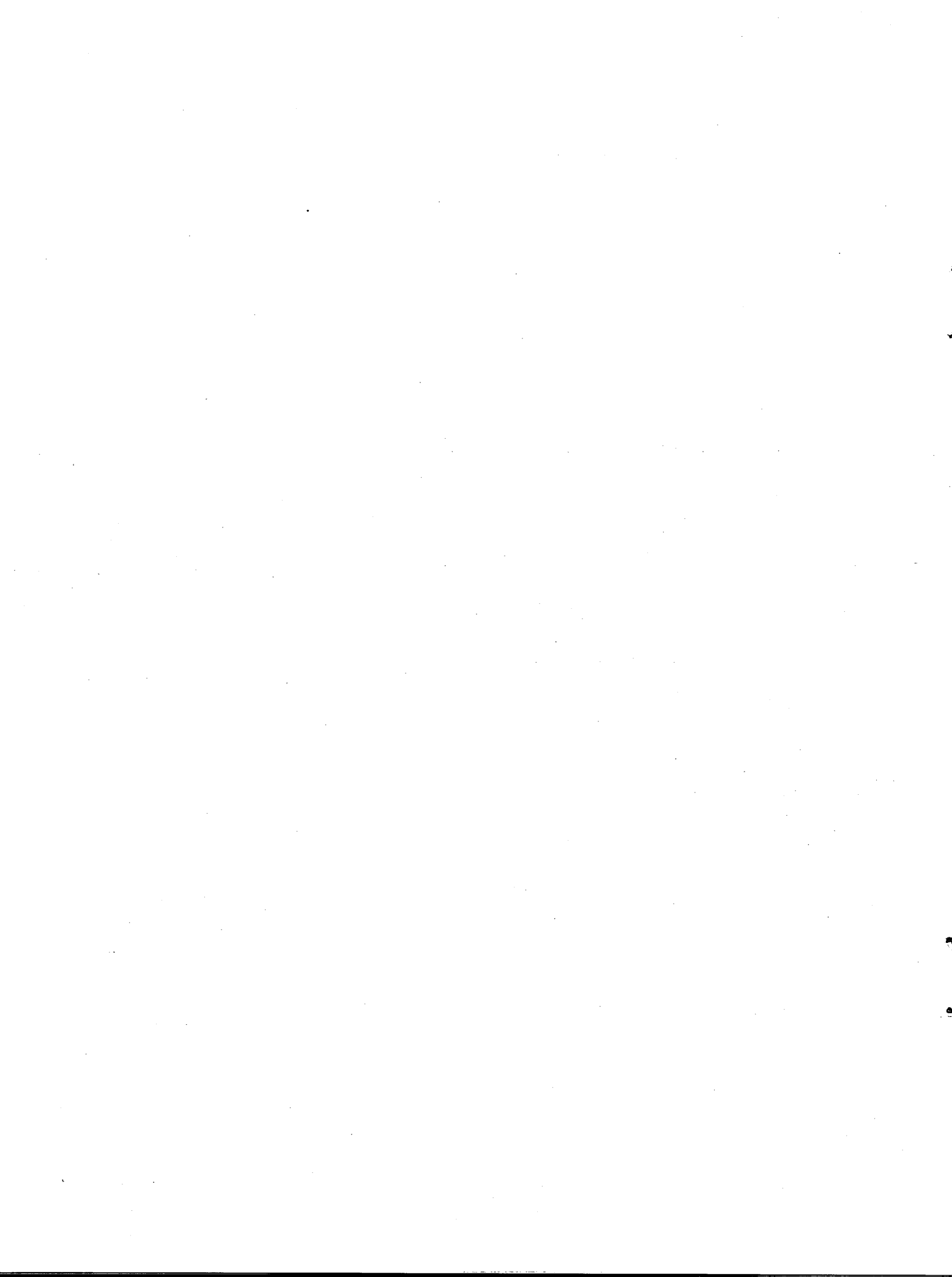
Is there anybody who didn't sign a slip? We'll let you come up and talk anyway. (no response)

Thank you all very much, and I appreciate the students staying as long as they have. I think it's wonderful what the young people do, and we've got to get more of them doing it.

Thank you.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX



Urban League of Hudson County, Inc.
Union City Day Care Program, Inc.



AmeriCorps Program

AMERICORPS
GETTING THINGS DONE

December 10, 1997

Dear Sen. John H. Ewing:

I am Aida Paredes, a former member of the AmeriCorps Program of the Urban League of Hudson County/Union City Day Care Program, Inc. I am now a non-member volunteer, volunteering my services on a weekly basis.

When I started the AmeriCorps Program, my only goal was to get my G.E.D. But after being in the program, I realized that the program provided more than just G.E.D. training. It gave me the opportunity to experience trainings and workshops that could lead to real employment.

I never thought that by joining the program I could really learn the skills needed to get a job. I learned to develop self-confidence, professionalism, and how to handle conflict. I became aware of employment interview techniques, how to write an effective resume and other valuable skills to get a job.

I also found out that other members in the program have the same or similar problems that I have and the same goal, that is, to improve our lives and our children's lives. We all shared our experiences and learned from them. We learned how to be a part of a team.

Thanks to the AmeriCorps Program it has taught me that it is possible to reach my goals and it has given that opportunity. As a member, I have learned to feel less fearful about facing the facts of life. I have learned to communicate with my children, family and friends. I have learned to become a strong person. Most of all, I am getting things done.

In my opinion, based on my experience with the program, AmeriCorps Program should continue to be funded because it gives hope to people whose outlook in life seem bleak.

I thank the Members of the Senate Education Committee and the Members of the Assembly Education Committee for this chance to share my fruitful experiences in the AmeriCorps Program.

Respectfully yours,

Aida Paredes
AmeriCorps Non-Member Volunteer

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

TEACHFORAMERICA

To: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman; and
Members of the Assembly Education Committee
Assembly John H. Rocco, ED. D, Chairman

From: Christy Dorman, 1997 Teach For America Corps Member

Re: December 15, 1997, Joint Public Hearing on Volunteerism and Citizen Service

I am a 1997 Teach For America corps member, and I am writing to tell you a little bit about my experience thus far as a teacher and a member of Teach For America and AmeriCorps. I joined Teach For America (TFA) this past June, just weeks after graduating from college with a B.S. in Mathematics and a B.A. in English. I joined TFA for what I can only call selfish reasons: I joined because I wanted to really challenge myself, I wanted to learn how to teach, I wanted to learn about the realities of inner city life in America today, and I wanted to live in a part of the country in which I had not yet lived. For me, joining TFA literally meant moving across the country, from the Los Angeles area where I went to school, to Newark, New Jersey, a city and state about which I had heretofore only cracked jokes. I was excited about the move, excited about starting my first "real job," excited about having a whole new life experience, and completely clueless about the challenges that lay ahead of me. All I knew coming in to this year was that it would be the most difficult experience I have had to this point in my life. It has not disappointed me.

For starters, as a mathematics major, I expected to be teaching math when I came to New Jersey. After all, the interviewers, TFA, everything I had ever read or heard said, "WE NEED MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHERS!!!" In this light, I spent my summer preparing myself to teach math. Then, a mere eight days before my first students stepped into my classroom, I found out that I would be the 6th grade Language Arts teacher! Surprise! Granted, I was also an English major and have always enjoyed Language Arts (something I think continues to work in my favor), but nonetheless, this required a major shift in my planning.

Since then, I have learned that this change, while it seemed major at the time, was really quite minor. Although I had spent more time thinking about and preparing to teach math than language arts, I realize now that I still had virtually no knowledge of what I would be doing. That's not to say that I feel like I was completely unprepared to go into teaching. I can honestly say that Teach For America did a wonderful job in preparing me for what I now face, but there are simply some things that must be learned on the job.

While it is difficult to choose the biggest or most important lesson so far, the one I am compelled to mention is that it's the little things that matter. I think back to all the things that teachers have said to me over the years, not necessarily brilliant things, and things I'm sure most of them do not remember saying, and I think of them as snippets of light that have given me direction. I listen now to parents asking me for advice on how to reach their child, and I think, "They're asking me? I'm 23 years old and just out of college and am not even sure how to teach a child to use a



semicolon correctly much less how to pull him out of his shell, and yet the parent is asking me for advice!" I listen to this, I remember the weight I gave my teachers' words, I listen to my students repeating things I have said to them purposefully or offhandedly, and I realize just how important and influential my position is. I realize that I am affecting the lives of my students and their families. It is an awesome responsibility.

As I sit here writing, there are so many stories of my trials and triumphs as a first year teacher running through my mind. I want to write about them all here, just like I want to tell them all to my roommate when I come home at night, my friends as we sit down for dinner, and my parents when I talk to them on the phone. I will tell you just one, the one I consider my "grand story of the day," and the one which I did, in fact, subject my roommate to upon returning home today.

It is the story of Kemi, a student who has had me tearing my hair out for weeks over her lack of work and disruptive behavior in my class. Yesterday in class, things went worse than ever before. She was talking...and talking...and talking...and ignoring absolutely everything I said or did. I lost my patience; I hollered; I sent her out of the class. I didn't handle the situation very well. Then, last night, as I had promised in class, I called home to discuss the problem with her parents...again. I couldn't tell whether that conversation went well or not as her father had little to say to me.

I came to school today not looking forward to "Kemi's class," the last class of the day. As I do every morning, I stood out in the hallway greeting the students as they came up the stairs. Kemi came by and I greeted her along with my other students. No response, not even a mean glare. Understandable, I thought. Then I thought, "Oh boy, I don't know what I'll do if we have another day like yesterday...Lord, give me patience!"

Eventually, the last class of the day rolled around and I was again in the hallway greeting that class and reminding them to take out their notebooks and get started on the problem on the board. Again, Kemi ignored me. I went into class, still reminding students to get on task, and I saw a remarkable thing happen. Kemi, after giving me her now notorious I-don't-have-to-do-anything-you-say look, opened her notebook, and did the problem on the board. What's more, she was the first to volunteer when I asked for student suggestions, and in spite of the fact that the first, second, AND third answers she gave me were wrong, when I pushed her, she didn't clam up but rather came up with an excellent response. In fact, she worked diligently all class period. I don't know what made her come around, nor do I know if she will do her work tomorrow, but I do know that when she left class today, she had learned something in Language Arts. If that isn't a small triumph, I don't know what is.

At the risk of going on too long, I do want to talk briefly of the on-going role Teach For America plays in my experience here. Most importantly, what TFA provides for me as a first-year teacher is support. It provides me with a network of teachers experiencing, or having recently experienced, the exact same tribulations and triumphs that I am experiencing. I cannot begin to say how helpful and how necessary that support is. Moving across the country and making the transition from college life to the "working world" are draining tasks in and of themselves; now, add to them learning how to lesson plan, how to teach, how to parent (so frequently a part of our job, I find), how to talk to and deal with parents and coworkers, how to manage children, and so on, and you have yourself one tiring and overwhelming job. As much as I'd like to think of myself as an independent and self-sufficient person, I know that I could not deal with all of this at once without the support of Teach For America.

Four months into teaching, I will tell anyone who will listen that I am exhausted, that I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of what is before me, that I am confused and even frightened by the problems faced by my students, their families, and me, as a teacher in their community (perhaps one day I will write, "our community"?). However, I will also say that I am very glad to be a 6th grade Language Arts Teach For America teacher in Newark, New Jersey.



CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES

1160 RAYMOND BOULEVARD, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102 201.596.4040 FAX: 201.596.4037

Thomas J. Catlaw, M.A.
Chief Operating Officer

Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio
Ph.D., D.D., L.S.W.
Executive Director

Regina M. Adesanya, Psy.D.
Essex County Division Director

To: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman; and

Members of the Assembly Education Committee
Assemblyman John H. Rocco, Ed.D, Chairman

Sub: December 15, 1997 Joint Public Hearing on Volunteerism
and Citizen Service

Date: December 12, 1997

Dear: Joint Education Committee:

Catholic Community Services is one of the largest non-profit Social Service Agency in New Jersey serving four counties and has a long history of service to the needy. CCS/ AmeriCorps program currently provides a full range of child care, education, homeless services as well as mental health services, throughout Essex, Hudson, and Union counties.

The CCS AmeriCorps program addresses the national goals of victim assistance, early childhood education and school success. By volunteering their time in the AmeriCorps program members grow in experience. But the reason I find they feel compelled to spend each day in contributed service extend far beyond financial gain.

Matching their skills and interest with our needs in the agency, these ambitious members have been placed in programs throughout the agency where they provide assistance to staff and additional attention to clients.

Whether it be taking the homeless children for a swim on a hot day or reading to them and nurturing the glistering hope in their eyes. The CCS AmeriCorps members are making a

5X

difference. These young adults have also helped clients get through the traumas of being dependent on others. Assignments have included transporting children to see parents who are incarcerated, accompanying people with HIV or drug addictions to meetings and linking clients to various community resources. But these physical manifestations are only the smallest fraction of good works the CCS AmeriCorps program produces. While these members are learning that job and life skills enable them to survive, they are providing a beacon of hope to others who need help.

The goals of our program is to expand the capacity of community social services while offering young adults community service work experience and a chance to make a difference in their communities. This is why we appreciate the opportunity for our organization to be part of a national movement. AmeriCorps keep giving and CCS AmeriCorps members continue to provide outstanding service.

"It's about helping people who can't help themselves so one day they can make it on their own."

As a result CCS AmeriCorps members have:

Mentored 20 students concerning school success or achievement. Provide out-of-class enrichment such as field trips to 42 students

Worked with 66 parents or families on parenting skills development

Provided child care to 48 children

Gave shelter and vouchers for shelter to 58 homeless people

Provided case management such as health appointments or follow-up scheduling to 505 people. Provided child care support of other human service activities to 62 families

Educated 320 immigrants regarding American Citizenship process.

Recruited 38 non-ameriCorps volunteers

6x

Assisted 2 members in obtaining their GED.

Employed 12 AmeriCorps members once service was completed.

Sincerely,

Mirna Larue
Program Manager

7X

To: Honorable John H. Ewing, Senator and Chairman; and
Members of the Senate Education Committee

Honorable John H. Rocco, ED.D., Assemblyman and Chairman; and
Members of the Assembly Education Committee

Subject: December 15, 1997 Joint Public Hearing on
Volunteerism and Citizen Service

What is AmeriCorps? It is a chance to make a positive difference in someone's life; a chance to make a difference in your own life. I joined the New Jersey Youth Corps/AmeriCorps of Hunterdon County in August of 1995 after graduating from Albright College with a Bachelor's degree in social work. It did not take me long to figure out that it was going to be difficult finding a job with my little experience. So when my brother's girlfriend told me about this wonderful new program that gives you money for college or to pay back student loans in exchange for one year of community service, I decided that this was exactly what I needed.

Two short months later, I was given the opportunity to apply for the assistant supervisor's job at AmeriCorps. I took the job in October of 1995 and kept until July of 1996 when I once again climbed the career ladder and was given the job of NJ Youth Corps Work Crew Supervisor. Since then I have had the opportunity to be involved with both programs in a very unique way (having been the only staff member to have worked their way up from the bottom), and experience from which I draw my strength and one that I will always treasure.

I may not have finished a year of AmeriCorps myself, but I have nevertheless been very involved in almost all of AmeriCorps' community service projects, each one giving me something that I did not have before: a new friend, a new skill, and few cuts and bruises, a possible job contact, and a sense of accomplishment. Though I could mention dozens of special memories from the past two and a half years of being a part of the NJ Youth Corps/AmeriCorps, the most heart-warming moment for me personally happened just last week.

Our program in Hunterdon County has experienced some rough waters over the last year and I was beginning to wonder if I was still making a difference or if it was time for me to think about moving on in my life. Then, out of the blue, I received a very special letter from a very special friend, a friend that I met when I joined AmeriCorps and continued to get acquainted with as a staff member. In his letter he confided to me that underneath his funny, seemingly happy exterior, he is a tormented soul, struggling with feelings of loneliness and depression. When he is confronted with bad times, he writes his thoughts down in a journal, just like a lot of troubled people do. The difference in this situation is that he addresses his journal entries to me, telling me about his feelings as if I were his big sister bringing him a sense of warmth and comfort that he has never had the fortune to know.

When I finished reading his letter my eyes welled with tears and my heart felt as if it were going to break. This is what it is all about, I thought to myself. All of this time I was making an important difference in someone's life and I did not even realize it. AmeriCorps can touch so many lives: the recipients of a service, the members of the program, and, as I have come to learn, the program staff as well. I thought that when I joined AmeriCorps I would be giving something back to my community, perhaps a nature trail or maybe a public garden. I never thought my biggest sense of accomplishment would have come from being a "big sister" to someone who really needed one. AmeriCorps truly touches lives in many ways!!

Respectfully submitted by
Thea M. Matthews

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To: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman; and

Members of the Assembly education Committee
Assemblyman John H. Rocco, Ed.D, Chairman

Sub: December 15, 1997 Joint Public Hearing on
Volunteerism and Citizen Service

Date: December 12, 1997

Dear: Joint Education Committee:

I am a case manager in an HIV program and a proud AmeriCorps member. This came about when I found out one of my cousins, Frankie, was diagnosed with the virus. Upon hearing the news, my stomach turned. I knew of the terrible things that were to come, and what made matters worse was that I also knew there was nothing I could do. The feeling of helplessness would carry on for some time to come, not only with myself, but the family. The feeling changed from one helplessness to empowerment only when Frankie's brother, Stevie, made it his fight to be there for his brother not only physically, but mentally and emotionally. This new feeling of empowerment helped Stevie, to recruit members for his team, the new members being my wife and myself.

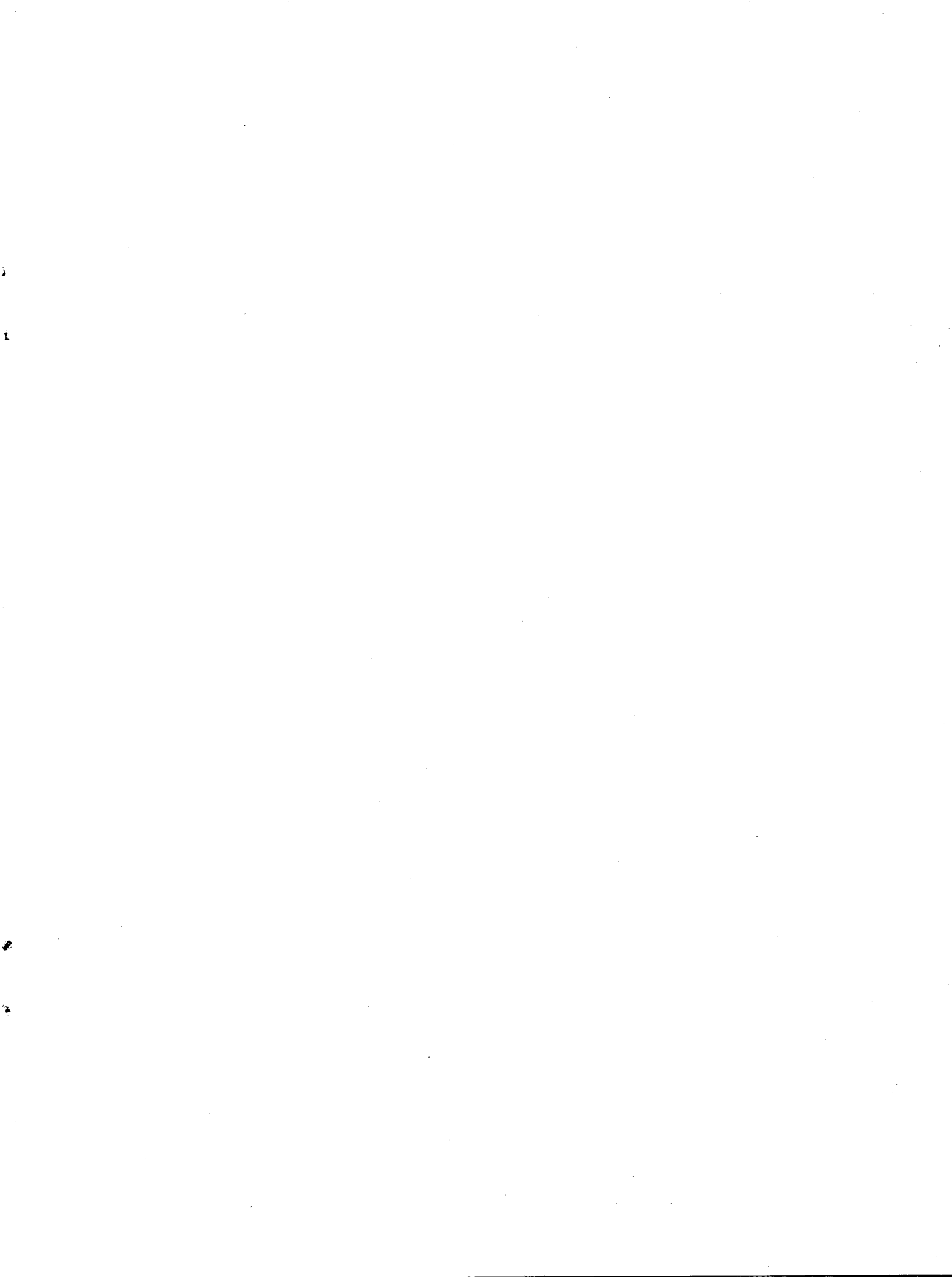
This new idea of attacking the disease instead of defending ourselves from it was exhausting. Though our feelings were changing the fight was becoming more and more difficult. That last year of Frankie's life was incredibly demanding on the three of us. In the process of all the cleaning, washing, and counseling, we learned that our partner and leader was also diagnosed with the virus some several years prior. This not only struck a

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blow to our morale, but also deep within our hearts. This later proved to be a winning situation for Stevie, he was given the extra strength and courage needed to cope with the disease. As Frankie lay dying in his brother's arms, Stevie promised himself to fight harder than ever to stay alive. This new promise helped bring vigor to the lives of my wife and myself. This once again was shattered upon learning that another uncle was diagnosed with the virus. Once again, we railed ourselves and did the things we knew. The last few months of my uncle Felix's life were particularly hard because we all had become closer since the death of his brother and nephew. To add to the continuing grief, another cousin had been diagnosed with the disease and three others refused to get tested because they feared they, too were infected.

In conclusion, I have shared a brief history of my induction into this dreadful disease. I tried for years to find a job in a field of HIV and AIDS, but nothing was available to me. When my wife went to Ms. Larue for a position as an AmeriCorps member, she asked if there was anything available in which I could use my experience and involvement with HIV and AIDS. The answer was yes. There was a position for a case manager in an HIV program. The reason behind my sharing my history in HIV and AIDS is do that individuals can appreciate the importance of AmeriCorps to me. It was a match made in heaven. I can not express how thankful I am to AmeriCorps without CCS AmeriCorps, I could not have the fulfillment I have in myself by helping those in needs. I am no longer the watching the television, but have become a voice speaking for those fallen on the front lines of this war with HIV.

Frank Musumici – CCS AmeriCorps



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