

**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**PRELIMINARY PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE  
WEST VIRGINIA COMMISSION FOR NATIONAL  
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

---

**Commission for National and Community Service  
Provides a Necessary Ongoing Service which  
Produces Positive Outcomes for West Virginia**

**Commission for National and Community Service  
Has Developed and Implemented a Web Site  
to Assist in Providing Information on Its  
Self and AmeriCorps State Programs**

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR  
Performance Evaluation and Research Division  
Building 1, Room W-314  
State Capitol Complex**

**CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25305  
(304) 347-4890**

**May 2002**

**PE02-03-236**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	3
Review Objective, Scope and Methodology .....	5
<b>Issue 1:</b> The Commission for National and Community Service Provides a Necessary Ongoing Service Which Produces Positive Outcomes for West Virginia .....	7
<b>Issue 2:</b> The Commission for National and Community Service Has Developed and Implemented a Web Site to Assist in Providing Information on the Commission and AmeriCorps State Programs .....	19
<b>CHART 1</b> Growth in AmeriCorps Program Funding .....	8
<b>CHART 2</b> Total Funding for the State Commission .....	10
<b>CHART 3</b> 2002 AmeriCorps Members .....	13
<b>CHART 4</b> AmeriCorps Educational Awards Received by West Virginia's Institutions .....	15

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> AmeriCorps Per Capita Funding for Top 10 States .....	9
<b>Table 2:</b> AmeriCorps Funding for West Virginia and Surrounding States .....	9
<b>Table 3:</b> AmeriCorps Per Capita Membership for Top 10 States .....	12
<b>Table 4:</b> AmeriCorps Per Capita Membership for West Virginia and Surrounding States .....	12
<b>Appendix A:</b> Transmittal Letter to Agency .....	21
<b>Appendix B:</b> West Virginia's AmeriCorps Agency Response .....	25
<b>Appendix C:</b> AmeriCorps Volunteers .....	29
<b>Appendix D:</b> West Virginia AmeriCorps Per Capita Membership by County .....	33
<b>Appendix E:</b> Agency Response .....	37



## Executive Summary

### **Issue 1: The Commission for National and Community Service Provides a Necessary Ongoing Service which Produces Positive Outcomes for West Virginia.**

Since its inception, the Commission has been providing an ongoing service to the state and should be continued. It has increased the amount of Federal funding that it receives for the AmeriCorps program to over \$3.6 million a year. The state budgeted the Commission \$160,050 in 2001 as a line item under Education and the Arts. This indicates that the Commission **brought in over \$24 in federal money in 2001 for every state dollar spent.**

It has increased the growth of AmerCorps members to 735, which is the second highest per capita membership level in the nation, and the number of AmeriCorps volunteers to 20,207. These members and volunteers work for 14 different programs that cover 53 of West Virginia's 55 counties. These programs' activities range from teaching people to read, spreading health education information in rural areas, tutoring children, repairing and improving housing in the state's coalfields and helping move people from welfare to work.

The State's secondary educational institutions receive around \$500,000 a year in Federal funds in the form of educational awards for Americorps members who successfully complete their work requirements. These educational awards allow individuals, who don't have the financial means, to get a better education. If this agency were eliminated, West Virginia would lose all of the funding and benefits previously mentioned.

### **Recommendation 1**

*The agency should strive to get AmeriCorps program coverage in all counties in the state.*

### **Recommendation 2**

*The agency should strive to recruit AmeriCorps members in counties that have no members and counties that have a significantly lower membership.*

**Issue 2: The Commission for National and Community Service has Developed and Implemented a Web Site to Assist in Providing Information on the Commission and AmeriCorps State Programs**

The Commission has developed and implemented a web site called “Connect West Virginia”. It can be reached on the internet through its web address of [www.connectwv.org](http://www.connectwv.org). This site contains information on the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service and an AmeriCorps overview from the Commission. All this information is very helpful to individuals and organizations interested in becoming part of AmeriCorps in the state of West Virginia. Although there is no link to the state web site, this site can be easily found through the use of many internet search engines under the search of “West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service”.

**Recommendation 3**

*The agency should ensure that a link to the State’s homepage is established.*



## **Review Objective, Scope and Methodology**

This is a Preliminary Performance Review of the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service, as required by WVC §4-10-4. In accordance with WVC §5-26A, the Commission for National and Community Service was created for the purpose of “complying with the provisions of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993” and “meeting the social, environmental, educational and public safety needs of the state of West Virginia by and through promotion and coordination of community outreach initiatives.” After the completion of this preliminary review of the agency, it is deemed that a full performance evaluation is not necessary.

### **Objective**

The objective of this review is to examine the following issues:

- (1) How much federal funding has the Commission attracted to West Virginia through its AmeriCorps Programs?
- (2) Has the Commission increased the number of AmeriCorps programs in West Virginia?
- (3) Has the Commission increased the number of AmeriCorps members in West Virginia?
- (4) Has the Commission increased the number of AmeriCorps volunteers in West Virginia?
- (5) What additional benefits does West Virginia gain from having AmeriCorps programs and members located in the state?

### **Scope**

The scope of this review is from 1996 to 2002.

### **Methodology**

The Legislative Auditor’s Office obtained guidelines, policies and procedures from the Commission on the process of establishing a program from start to finish, resulting in federal funding. The Commission also provided reports and responses to questions on AmeriCorps programs, membership, and volunteers. The Commission provided financial information on the federal and state funds it receives and educational awards made to WV institutions by the Corporation. The Legislative Auditor’s Office obtained AmeriCorps state profile data for the United States from the Corporation for National and Community Service.



**Issue 1: The Commission for National and Community Service Provides a Necessary Ongoing Service Which Produces Positive Outcomes for West Virginia.**

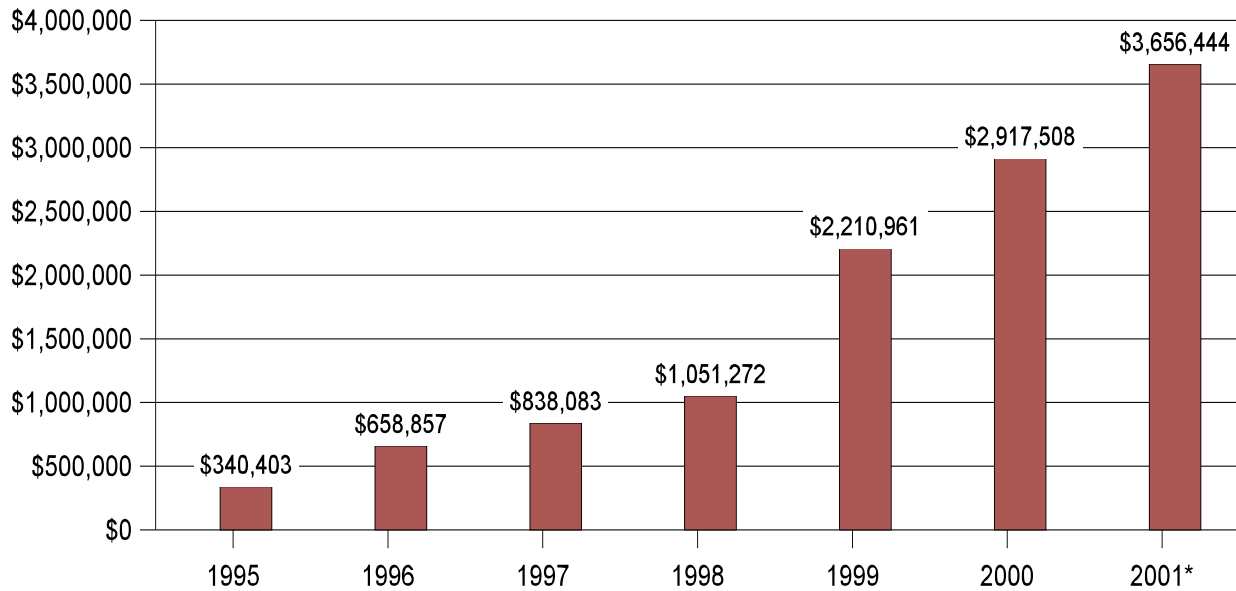
The West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service (Commission) was created by executive order on January 28, 1994 by the Governor of West Virginia. It was created with the purpose of complying with the provisions of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, P. L. 103-82. The United States Congress passed this legislation which became US Code Title 42, Chapter 129. Under Section 12638 of this law, the state is required to form a commission in order to be eligible to receive any federal funding for the AmeriCorps program.

Since its inception, the Commission has been providing an ongoing service to the state and should be continued. It has increased the amount of Federal funding that it receives for the AmeriCorps program to over \$3.6 million a year. In addition, it has increased the growth of AmeriCorps members to 735, which is the second highest per capita membership level in the nation, and the number of AmeriCorps volunteers to 20,207. These members and volunteers work for 14 different programs that cover 53 of West Virginia's 55 counties. These programs' activities range from teaching people to read, spreading health education information in rural areas, tutoring children, repairing and improving housing in the state's coalfields and helping move people from welfare to work. The State's secondary educational institutions receive around \$500,000 a year in federal funds in the form of educational awards for Americorps members who successfully complete their work requirements. These educational awards allow individuals who do not have the financial means to get a better education. If this agency were eliminated, West Virginia would lose all of the funding and benefits previously mentioned.

**The Commission has Increased Federal Funding for the State of West Virginia's AmeriCorps Programs since its Inception**

From its first year, the Commission has increased the amount of funding it has received from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Commission's funding in its initial year in 1995 was \$340,403 and has grown to \$ 3,656,444 in 2001 (See Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
**Growth in AmeriCorps Program Funding**



\* The Commission shows a different total of federal funding for 2001 than the Corporation for National and Community Service. This difference is a grant that the Commission received in 2001. This grant was a three year grant issued in its first year. This means that the money is received the first year and is to be spread over three. The uniqueness of this grant is it is only one of four that were issued across the United States. Most grants are issued for one year. The Commission, not accustomed to the three year grant, added the total amount given into its 2001 funding total. The Corporation shows 1/3 of the grant funding for 2001.

In review of the Corporation for National and Community Service's funding of the 50 states it showed that West Virginia was 24<sup>th</sup> in the total amount of federal funds received. When broken down on a per capita basis, West Virginia ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation, when comparing total funding to state population (See Table 1). This was even more evident when comparing West Virginia to its bordering states (See Table 2).

**Table 1**  
**AmeriCorps Per Capita Funding for Top 10 States**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>AmeriCorps State Funding</b>	<b>State Population</b>	<b>Per Capita Funding</b>
1	Mississippi	\$7,551,529	2,844,658	\$2.65
2	Alaska	\$1,646,705	626,932	\$2.63
3	Montana	\$2,125,399	902,195	\$2.36
4	Rhode Island	\$2,442,996	1,048,319	\$2.33
5	Vermont	\$1,381,390	608,827	\$2.27
6	Washington	\$12,955,615	5,894,121	\$2.20
<b>7</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>\$2,856,644</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>	<b>\$1.58</b>
8	New Hampshire	\$1,923,299	1,235,786	\$1.56
9	Maine	\$1,810,227	1,274,923	\$1.42
10	Maryland	\$6,580,089	5,296,486	\$1.24

**Table 2**  
**AmeriCorps Funding for West Virginia and Surrounding States**

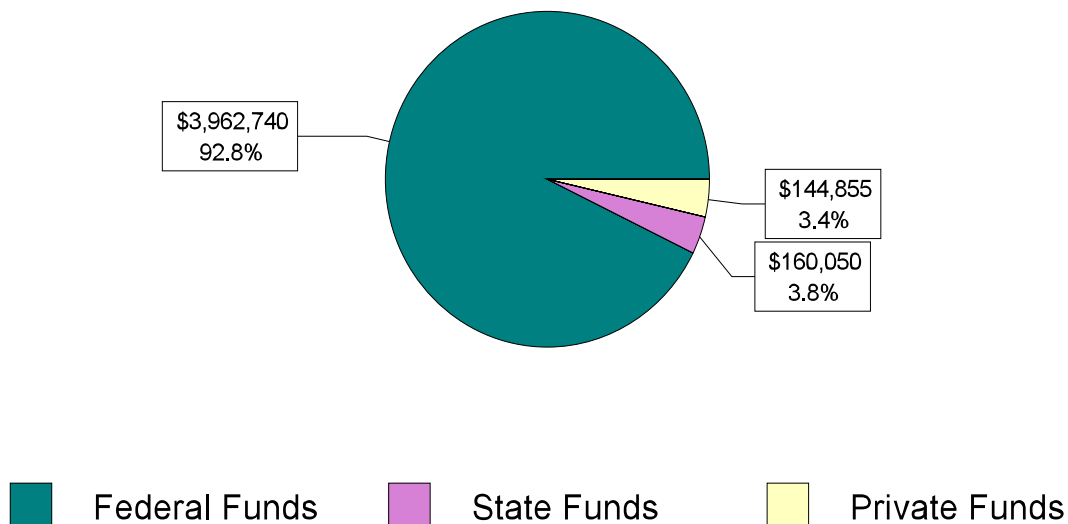
<b>State Ranking</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>AmeriCorps State Funding</b>	<b>State Population</b>	<b>Per Capita Funding</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>\$2,856,644</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>	<b>\$1.58</b>
10 <sup>th</sup>	Maryland	\$6,580,089	5,296,486	\$1.24
27 <sup>th</sup>	Ohio	\$8,813,851	11,353,140	\$0.78
31 <sup>st</sup>	Kentucky	\$2,799,449	4,041,769	\$0.69
42 <sup>nd</sup>	Pennsylvania	\$6,246,405	12,281,054	\$0.51
52 <sup>nd*</sup>	Virginia	\$1,680,836	7,078,515	\$0.24

\* Includes District of Columbia and Puerto Rico

## Commission Funding Sources

The Commission receives funds from federal, state and private sources. Federal funds come from the Corporation in the form of grants and represent the overwhelming majority of the Commission's funding. State funds were provided by the Governor's Office for the first five years of the Commission. The source of these funds came from the Governor's Contingency Fund. In 2000, the Legislature budgeted for the Commission as a line item under Education and the Arts. The State funds have grown from \$50,000 in 1995 to \$160,050 in 2001. The Commission's private funds come from three sources. These three sources are the C.W. Benedum Foundation, private contributions, and in-kind donations from non-profit organizations. Private funding for the Commission totaled \$144,855 in 2001. The federal funds, along with the state and private funds, totaled \$4,267,645 (See Chart 2).

**Chart 2**  
**Total Funding for the State Commission**



As seen in Chart 2, federal funding makes up 92.9% of total funding. The state contributed 3.8% and private contributions totaled 3.4% of the total contributions for the Commission. **The Commission brought in over \$24 in federal money in 2001 for every state dollar spent.**

**The Commission has increased the number of AmeriCorps members in the state of West Virginia, which has led to the increase in AmeriCorps volunteers in the state**

The Commission has increased the AmeriCorps membership since its inception in 1994. In 1998, there were 402 AmeriCorps members in West Virginia. Through the efforts of the Commission to increase the grants available, this number grew to 735 members by 2001, a gain of 333 members in four years (See Appendix B). During this same period, the number of AmeriCorps volunteers showed significant increases. In 1998 the number of AmeriCorps volunteers in the state was 6,594. This has increased to 20,207 in 2001, a gain of 13,613 volunteers in four years (See Appendix C). In comparison, for every AmeriCorps member gained the state has gained 41 AmeriCorps volunteers.

An AmeriCorps member receives a living allowance, education award, and other benefits, depending on the number of hours the member commits to serving. AmeriCorps members are not volunteers, nor are these members listed as employees. There is a special classification within the Department of Labor that has been established called "service participant." This permits employers to not pay into the unemployment compensation fund. AmeriCorps members cannot draw unemployment after their service because they are not classified as employees. Participants accepted into the program are called members. These members work on public service projects for a specific amount of time depending upon the individuals' work status. A member will work 1700 hours per year for full-time and 900 hours per year for part-time. Members receive a small stipend, which is roughly equivalent to minimum wage while they work. Once a member has completed the required number of service hours, the member receives a post-service education award. This award will amount to \$4,725 for full-time and \$2,363 for part-time. Post-service members can take up to seven years to use the award to pay for higher education or vocational training, or to pay off college loans. To be eligible to join AmeriCorps a person needs to be at least 17 years of age, and U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, and have a high school diploma or GED. Programs may recruit persons without diplomas only if they commit to assisting the member in obtaining his/her GED during the term of service. If the member does not have a diploma or GED he/she cannot receive the education award.

AmeriCorps volunteers are people who have been recruited as volunteers by AmeriCorps members during their term of service. They volunteer because they are asked and often have a natural tie with the program where the members are serving, such as parents and other family members, or people who live in the same community. They receive no benefits except the satisfaction of giving back to their community and the experience gained from working with others to make a difference.

The number of AmeriCorps members in West Virginia places second in the United States in terms of per capita membership. West Virginia AmeriCorps membership per capita is one member for every 2,460 citizens. Oklahoma is the only state that leads West Virginia with a per capita membership of one member for every 1,018 citizens (See Table 3).

<b>Table 3</b>				
<b>AmeriCorps Per Capita Membership for Top 10 States</b>				
<b>Rank</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>AmeriCorps State Membership</b>	<b>State Population</b>	<b>Per Capita Membership</b>
1	Oklahoma	3,388	3,450,654	1,018
<b>2</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>	<b>2,460</b>
3	Nebraska	688	1,711,263	2,562
4	Alaska	209	626,932	3,000
5	Montana	292	902,195	3,090
6	Vermont	195	608,827	3,122
7	Utah	639	2,233,169	3,495
8	Mississippi	791	2,844,658	3,596
9	Maine	343	1,274,923	3,717
10	Rhode Island	274	1,048,319	3,826

The national average is a per capita membership of one member for every 7,433 citizens. West Virginia also has a higher AmeriCorps per capita participation rate than all of the bordering states (See Table 4).

<b>Table 4</b>				
<b>AmeriCorps Per Capita Membership for West Virginia and Surrounding States</b>				
<b>State Ranking</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>AmeriCorps Membership</b>	<b>State Population</b>	<b>Per Capita Membership</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>	<b>2,460</b>
19 <sup>th</sup>	Maryland	890	5,296,486	5,951
27 <sup>th</sup>	Ohio	1,440	11,353,140	7,884
37 <sup>th</sup>	Pennsylvania	946	12,281,054	12,982
39 <sup>th</sup>	Kentucky	283	4,041,769	14,282
52 <sup>nd*</sup>	Virginia	202	7,078,515	35,042
* Includes District of Columbia and Puerto Rico				





better representation and two counties to get representation. The six counties have a per capita of greater than 10,000 residents to every AmeriCorps member. This list of counties includes Braxton with a per capita of 14,702; Cabell with a per capita of 19,357; Wayne with a per capita of 42,903; Brooke with a per capita of 50,894; Hancock with a per capita of 65,334; and Berkley with a per capita of 75,905. The two counties with no representation are Mason and Pendleton. The Commission has continuously built on the membership across the state, but needs to look into the eight counties to find ways to build the membership in each and reduce their per capita.

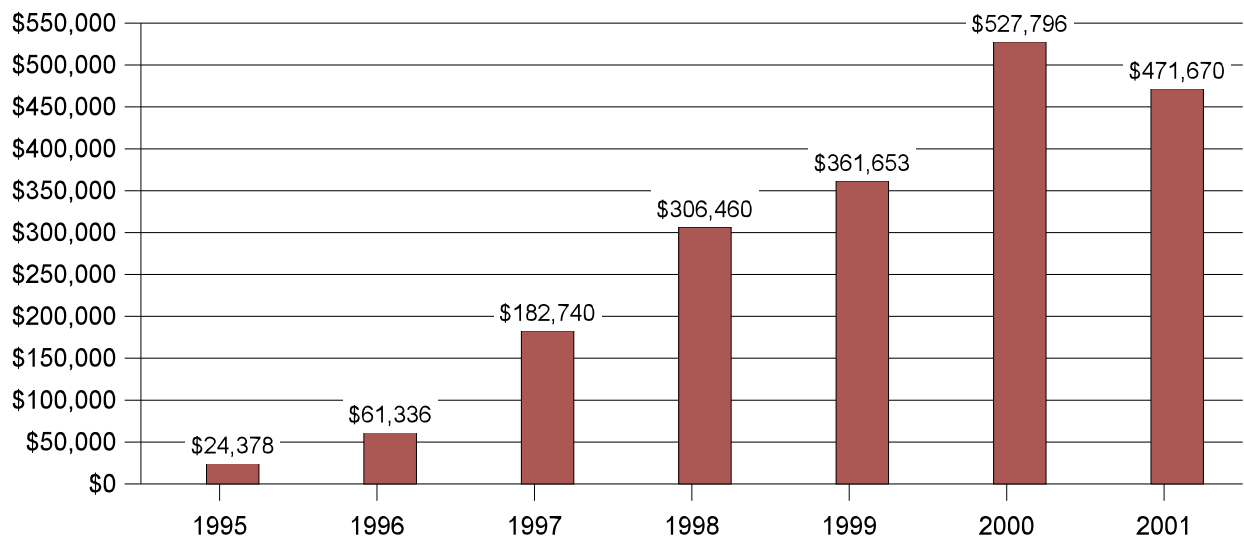
In the process of growth the Commission has looked at recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps members. The Commission has put together recruitment packets which it has distributed across West Virginia. The packet contains a welcome letter, programs available to join, AmeriCorps fact sheet, AmeriCorps member benefits, AmeriCorps national brochure, and a AmeriCorps application.

The Commission reviews every program's policies and procedures on recruitment and selection of members and requires an open competitive and fair process as part of the grant provisions. When Commission program officers make site visits to verify compliance, they specifically look for evidence that those policies have been followed, such as interview notes or completed rating forms from the selection process.

### **The State gains additional benefits from the Commission for National and Community Service in the form of educational awards for AmeriCorps members**

The Commission has brought in additional money in the form of educational awards going to the state's institutions of higher education. This money is handed down from the Corporation for National and Community Service to the institutions for individuals who have completed their service obligation to AmeriCorps. These funds are in addition to the federal funding provided by the Corporation to the Commission. All educational awards go directly to the institutions from the Corporation. In 1995, institutions in West Virginia received \$24,378. This amount has grown to \$471,670 in 2001 (See Chart 4).

**Chart 4**  
**AmeriCorps Educational Awards received by West Virginia's Institutions**



These federal funds have multiple benefits for the state of West Virginia. The state benefits in that its institutions receive federal money for the members' schooling. Another benefit is that West Virginians are receiving a post secondary education that they may not have received without this help.

**The Commission has increased the number of AmeriCorps State programs in the state of West Virginia, which has lead to programs in 53 of the 55 counties in the state**

The Commission started out with two programs located in 15 counties for the fiscal year of 1994-1995. This grew to 14 programs located in 53 counties for the fiscal year of 2000-2001. The current AmeriCorps programs located in West Virginia are:

- (1) **Lifebridge Collaborative** - Attends to the health and educational needs of children in Kanawha, Boone, Clay, and Putnam Counties. Twenty-two AmeriCorp members, working out of Family Resource Centers around the area, provided direct services to children and families in low-income communities and assisted in connecting those families to other support systems within the community. Members also provided health education and outreach by sponsoring or assisting with hearing and vision screenings, wellness clinics, dental care and fluoride clinics, tuberculosis testing, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) outreach and enrollment, blood drives, cancer awareness programs, immunizations, tobacco awareness programs, and nutrition education. Special service activities organized by members included Family Times Events and a variety of community-building service projects, including clothing distributions, food collection and distributions, Make-a-Difference Day projects, Read Aloud days, safe Halloween activities, assistance to libraries, literacy awareness projects, Christmas in April, Secret Santa, Read Across America Day and WV Read to Me Day.

- (2) **AmeriCorps Promise Fellows** - The foundation of America's Promise is the fulfillment of the five fundamental promises that help build the character and competence of the nation's youth. This program serves the state's children in from county or regional Family Resource Network offices.
- (3) **APPALREAD** - Its mission is to help children and families in southern West Virginia gain the literacy skills required in order to improve the social, cultural, and economic future of their region. APPALREAD strives: to provide children with sustained reading opportunities through direct service; to help parents and caregivers become the child's best teacher by modeling methods to encourage literacy; and to build community support for a love of reading.
- (4) **The Challenge Club** - Is a tutoring and mentoring program in two Randolph County schools, North Elementary and Beverly Elementary. AmeriCorps members work with Kindergarten through fifth grade students who may need extra help. The program's goal is that a minimum of 80 percent of the students served show significant improvement in their classroom work.
- (5) **Coalfield Housing** - A project of the Southern Appalachian Labor School, was conceived to improve dilapidated and/or energy inefficient housing in West Virginia's southern coal fields. When severe flooding hit the area in early July, the 12 full-time AmeriCorps members who comprise the project sprang into action, particularly in Fayette County, where they played key roles in flood recovery and rebuilding activities.
- (6) **Energy Express** - Seeks to reverse typical summertime losses in nutrition and academic skills among children living in 87 low income West Virginia communities. Coordinated by the West Virginia University Extension Service, Energy Express employs a combination of nutritious meals and the mentoring and tutoring efforts of AmeriCorps members and volunteers to promote school success for more than 3,400 children during the summer.
- (7) **Let's Read West Virginia** - Is an initiative — composed of APPALREAD, Community Council of the Kanawha Valley (now LifeBridge), and Energy Express — designed to lead West Virginia's at-risk children down the road to literacy. Through an extensive statewide network, Let's Read WV works to make literacy a priority in West Virginia communities. Members tutor preschool and school age children, provide literacy enrichment to children in summer programs, and teach parents how to be their child's first and best teacher.
- (8) **Melding Economy and the Environment** - Operating in Tucker and Randolph counties, AmeriCorps members provided the people-power needed to carry through on 20 community-identified projects. One of these projects was the development of the Davis Community Park, which included clearing two acres, constructing walkways and flowerbeds, and planting trees, shrubs, flowers and herbs. Another project completed by the AmeriCorps members was the recording of more than 40 interviews with older residents. This information was turned over to the new Historic Thomas group, who will archive and make available to the public. In Helvetia, an old log structure was completely renovated, weatherproofed and the interior finished as an addition to the library. The addition will house historical information gathered and catalogued by AmeriCorps members and volunteers. The last project involved the members in developing the 911 House Numbering Map for the city of Thomas to aid emergency services to locate all buildings in the city.
- (9) **YMCA Camp Horseshoe** - Staff members provided cabin life instruction and program leadership throughout the twenty-four-hour-a-day, six-day youth opportunity camp and leadership conference that is Camp Horseshoe. The YMCA Camp Horseshoe is a summertime program in which children come to learn from and enjoy the company of these AmeriCorps members. The members helped youth from throughout Ohio, West Virginia, and Virginia build social, learning and physical skills, positively relate to others, earn self-confidence, and work for a better future. The camp promotes healthy lifestyles, helping others, and success in school and life. The Free Enterprise Conference actively engaged young people in the learning process and provided intense

sessions on entrepreneurship and business.

- (10) **Parents as Teachers** - LifeBridge Parents As Teachers is a voluntary early-learning program for parents with children up to age five in Boone, Clay, Kanawha, and Putnam counties. Based on the belief that parents are children's first and most important teachers, Parents As Teachers is designed to help all parents give their children the best possible start in life. PAT AmeriCorps members provide personalized home visits to offer timely information on child development and ways to encourage learning.
- (11) **Project MOVE** - As the name implies, has as its mission the job of moving (both literally and figuratively) people from welfare rolls to role models, for their children and their communities. Sponsored by Community Resources, Inc. Project MOVE AmeriCorps members work to help welfare recipients move from poverty to self-sufficiency by eliminating some of the stumbling blocks to jobs, education, and health care. AmeriCorp members staff Resource Centers in Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Jackson, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Tyler, Wirt, Wood, and Wetzel Counties, providing accessible places where people can work at their own pace to develop skills, utilize phones, computers, videos, books, newspapers, and other resources. Lack of transportation is a major obstacle to self-sufficiency. Project MOVE also moves people physically by operating a unique rural bus service. The Little Kanawha Bus Company (LKBC), operating in Calhoun and Roane Counties, has provided transportation to 1,151 unduplicated riders since January 2001. AmeriCorps members drive people to medical appointments, shopping, recreational activities, WIC and DHHR appointments, and daily jobs.
- (12) **Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker project (MIHOW)** - Conception through infancy may be the most important years in human development. In Doddridge, Ritchie, and Tyler counties, pregnant women and families with young children get a boost through this program. Sponsored by Rural Options for Services and Education, Inc. Members visit families twice monthly and provide them with health education, development of parenting skills, respite care and family literacy training. The member's visits improve pregnancy outcomes and enhance early childhood development. AmeriCorps members also strengthen 10 out-lying communities by developing playgroups and story hours for parents and pre-schoolers.
- (13) **4-H Camping Assistants** - Sponsored by West Virginia University, provide AmeriCorp members to serve as camping assistants in counties across West Virginia in the summertime. Members served as counselors and mentors to campers at weeklong 4-H camps. AmeriCorp members and campers participated in folk dancing, outdoor cooking, horseback riding, and other activities.
- (14) **UC Service Learning Assistants** - Members provide logistical support for faculty members who implement service-learning as an instructional strategy in their classes. The AmeriCorps members' duties include finding service opportunities for students, tracking student involvement, and helping faculty and students reflect on their service efforts.

The number of programs in each county varies from one program in 13 counties to seven programs in Kanawha County. In 33% or 18 counties there were two programs. The two counties without programs were Mason and Pendleton.

## **Recommendation 1**

*The agency should strive to get AmeriCorps program coverage in all counties in the state.*

## **Recommendation 2**

*The agency should strive to recruit AmeriCorps members in counties that have no members and counties that have a significantly lower membership.*

**Issue 2: The Commission for National and Community Service Has Developed and Implemented a Web Site to Assist in Providing Information on the Commission and AmeriCorps State Programs.**

The Commission has developed and implemented a web site called “Connect West Virginia”. It can be reached on the internet through its web address of [www.connectwv.org](http://www.connectwv.org). This site contains information on the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service and an AmeriCorps overview from the Commission.

This web site serves to provide information to individuals and organizations who wish to become part of the AmeriCorps in West Virginia. The site explains the Commission and what is involved in AmeriCorps programs. Training & Technical Assistance Opportunity information is provided along with links to make contact with Commission personnel to get additional information. The site also provides outside links to other sites which include AmeriCorps, America's Promise, Association of Volunteer, Administration Corporation for National Service, and the Points of Light Foundation. These national organizations provide detailed information on programs at the national level.

All this information is very helpful to individuals and organizations interested in becoming part of AmeriCorps in the state of West Virginia. Although there is no link to the state web site, this site can be easily found through the use of many internet search engines under the search of “West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service”.

**Recommendation 3**

*The agency should ensure that a link to the State’s homepage is established.*