

ATP Project Description Cover Page

“Plantersville Community Project”

**Mississippi State University
Mr. Michael J. McGrevey
Vice President for Finance and Administration
Mailstop 9721
614 Allen Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-3221**

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

May 31, 2010

**Dr. William M. Wiseman
Professor of Public Policy Administration and
Director of the Stennis Institute of Government
Mississippi State University
Drawer LV
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762
662-325-3328
Marty@sig.msstate.edu**

Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: Plantersville Community Center Project

Funding Period: July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

Grantee Name: Mississippi State University

Project Director: William M. (Marty) Wiseman PhD. PPA Faculty and Director of MSU's Stennis Institute of Government

Description of Project:

The project which began in the fall of 2008 focused on the Appalachian community of Plantersville, Mississippi that has a high percentage of Substandard Housing and is located in Lee County. This community was selected because it constitutes a “distressed” population within Lee County due to its high percentage of substandard housing. Lee County as a whole is formally labeled as an “ARC Transitional County.” The Town of Plantersville has several needs that the graduate students sought to address. First, the students assisted the leaders and stakeholders of Plantersville in developing a strategic plan for community development. Second, the Plantersville Community Center facility and grounds are in great need of renovation and development so the students offered assistance for this collective community effort working with the citizens of Plantersville to develop plans and embark on the renovation of the community center and grounds.

Graduate students enrolled in PPA 9613 Rural Government Administration under the leadership of faculty/instructor, Dr. William M. Wiseman offered support to the Town of Plantersville through community-based research and encouragement of civic entrepreneurship. The graduate students assisted Plantersville in developing a strategic plan for community development and with initial renovation efforts for the Plantersville Community Center and grounds.

The Goals of the Project were to strengthen the capacity of the citizens of Plantersville to compete in the global economy and develop and improve the town's infrastructure. The Objectives focused on engaging students in participatory/active research to assist Plantersville in developing a strategic plan for the future, and assisting the citizens of Plantersville in renovating the Plantersville Community Center and grounds.

Plantersville is creating the future toward accomplishing these goals and is poised for a bright future. The Mayor's Youth Council has received over \$650,000 in private and public grant funds and is moving forward. See the attached update for the source, project and funding amount.

Activities:

The class convened a community wide meeting with the mayor of Plantersville and citizens to formulate a strategic plan for Plantersville's future. Graduate students served as facilitators along with Mr. Phil Hardwick to assist the community stakeholders in developing their strategic plan for the future. Graduate students worked with a team of community volunteers (more than 100) to initiate renovation efforts for the Plantersville Community Center and assist them in applying for external resources to support the future renovation efforts for the Plantersville Community Center (e.g., They drafted a grant proposal, solicited donations of books for a future library in the center, and helped community leaders in establishing networks to support their future efforts. Graduate students provided "sweat equity" to the renovation project, assisting community volunteers in carrying out initial renovations to the building and grounds.

Continued Project Outcomes:

- The Town of Plantersville developed a viable Strategic Plan to guide their future community development efforts.
- The renovations to the Plantersville Community Center and grounds made the center more safe and viable and it is being utilized by young and old alike and serving as a place for civic engagement.
- The "citizen sparkplugs" are working to sustain the efforts. The spring semester class is continuing to support their sustainability efforts by developing additional draft grant proposals to support the goal outlined in the strategic plan to develop a beautiful and sustainable community. Even after the class project ends, the many networks established during the ATP will help to sustain the Plantersville community's efforts.
- The students prepared a final report (including a poster and playbook) and an eight minute video to describe their efforts in assisting the Town of Plantersville, their Strategic Plan for the future, and the networking and resource acquisition endeavors. The video portrayed the Plantersville Community Center renovation project before/after/and in-between. Twelve students attended the Washington D.C. ARC conference on December 3rd and 4th and presented at the national

conference, sharing the results of their research with other ATP students, the ARC administration and other ATP staff and students, and invited guests.

- The students presented the strategic plan that was a result of their research to Plantersville's elected officials, members of the Plantersville Civitan Club, and over 60 other Plantersville community members during the Plantersville Community Center renovation workday. The students gave the mayor and the town clerk 100 copies of the Plantersville Playbook (the strategic plan document that was a result of the research).
- The students invited the Mayor of Plantersville, Gloria Holland, and a community sparkplug, Barbara Anderson, to attend the Washington ATP conference where they presented the research.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Created of the Plantersville Youth Council.
- Employed a Code Enforcement Officer.
- Mayor was invited to serve with the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service
- Partnered with local community colleges and universities for networking and hardware support
- Developed a town website: www.plantersville.com.

Problems Encountered:

The needs of this small community are great. There are not adequate funds to carry out all that is needed. The students are seeking to help the community overcome this barrier by helping them develop draft proposals to seek additional revenues to support the desired changes.

A major problem encountered was scheduling conflicts. The graduate level class meets for three weekends during the semester. Additional class meetings had to be scheduled to allow for students to participate in the strategic planning session and the work day. Since other graduate classes in the doctorate program are also scheduled on weekends, this creates a very tight schedule for students and faculty participating in the project.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

The graduate students in the spring semester class of 9623 Rural Government Administration II continue to work with the Plantersville community. Students are meeting with the community team on March 14th, 2009 to help them develop action plans to carry out one of the goals of the strategic plan. They will also assist the community in applying for grants to support the action plans.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The students were enlightened through the application of theories learned in class via this hands-on opportunity where they worked with local government officials and community volunteers in developing a community wide strategic plan and in renovating the Town of Plantersville's Community Center. The community leaders and stakeholders are better prepared to sustain the efforts due to the strategic community development planning and as a resulting of the networks established through the ATP project.

Attachments:

Plantersville Community Center Playbook (PDF file attached to email)

Plantersville Progress: Fall 2009 Update

Poster for Plantersville Appalachian Teach Project