

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance

Now that we have officially entered the new millennium, I am very proud to report that the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance {hereafter referred to as MDEZA} has accomplished a lot in 2000. Like most organizations, MDEZA has experienced its share of trials and tribulations. These events led the organization to establish a rapport with board members, community leaders, public officials, and their constituents in building a foundation to sustain social and economic success in the Mississippi delta.

In our annual report last year, we reported that MDEZA began 1999 by "bridging the gap that was lacking in the community". Commissioners, staff and I traveled the six counties that make up the zone, (Bolivar, Leflore, Sunflower, Humphreys, Holmes, and Washington) to conduct workshops based on MDEZA's strategic plan. The latest information on resources available to zone residents was discussed, with emphasis on tax incentives and starting a small business. During the tour, the Mid-Delta One Stop Capital Shop and Mississippi Valley State University's University Center for Economic and Community Development also made presentations. Consequently, each office capitalized on the opportunity to come together to educate the grassroots community.

MDEZA created a new partnership with the United States Department of Education. Dr. William L. Smith, Director, Department of Education, Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community, Program Office, visited MDEZA to present information on a web-based tutorial program. SkillsTutor.com publishes comprehensive educational products based on the popular SkillsBank® CD-ROM software. Dr. Smith secured funding from US Department of Education for 200 scholarships for students in the Zone. Dr. Garry L. McDaniels, SkillsTutor.com president, explained that the company's mission is to provide teachers and administrators with online testing and content-rich instruction to help students master core skills and prepare for state and national exams.

MDEZA elected new officers to govern its board on January 19, 2001, during its annual meeting. The change in the executive administration has not changed MDEZA's objectives and goals. As a result, the new officers are diligently working to move the agenda on pressing issues and evaluating the effectiveness of old policies.

I am ecstatic to report that the concept of a web page for MDEZA finally came to fruition this year with the help of a consultant. The web page has made it possible for MDEZA to spread the word on its programs as well as provide important information to viewers who may not be familiar with MDEZA's strategic plan. One may download grant applications, strategic plan, Benchmarks, and the 2000-2001 NOFA at www.mdeza.com.

In summary, you will see that we have made some changes in administering, tracking, and leveraging funds. Thanks to the hard work of my staff, a better check and balance system has been created. Consequently, I have been able to provide a monthly update to the board on the allocation of funds. I hope that you find this report informative as well as insightful.