

2003 Annual Report Executive Summary

Allendale County ALIVE Enterprise Community

For Allendale County ALIVE, 2003 could best be characterized as “The Year of Change.” The year started with a new board chairperson, Lee E. Harley-Fitts, and a commitment to move aggressively toward the sustainability of Allendale County ALIVE. The Board understood that the principal goal of the Community Empowerment Initiative, in addition to bringing about the economic improvements and general community revitalization of low-income areas, is to build capacity during the ten year designation period to sustain into the future the community development process. The commitment to sustainability was reflected in staff additions/changes, new office space, addition of a public relations component, increased number of grants submitted, housing initiative, and agreement with Allendale County.

Prior to January 2003, ALIVE had an executive director, assistant executive director, and administrative assistant. The executive director and the administrative assistant resigned in late 2003. The following additions/changes were made in order to pursue sustainability:

- Wilbur Cave was hired as the Executive Director in March 2003
- Chrissy Edgemon was hired as Grant Writer/Director of Public Relations in June 2003
- Treyonde Allen was hired as Administrative Assistant from in June 2003
- Murlene Ennis, Assistant Executive Director, duties were changed from Housing to Special Projects and Finance
- Jamie White was contracted with as a Housing Consultant to focus full-time on housing Initiatives

Prior to this time, ALIVE shared office space with a county magistrate, which was not the ideal location for conducting business. The space was already too small to adequately accomodate existing staff as well as additional staff. ALIVE established a partnership with the University of South Carolina-Salkehatchie that provided office space in exchange for public relations services. The new office space allowed ALIVE to have stand-alone office space and adequate space for additional staff. The new office space also made it possible for ALIVE to enter into a partnership with the South Carolina Centers for Equal Justice to provide their Allendale County clients with video conferencing capability.

Although ALIVE was involved and active in Allendale County in other years, many residents were not aware of ALIVE, did not understand its purpose, or, worse, believed ALIVE favored one area of the county over another. To tell ALIVE’s story and to make sure the story was heard, a director of public relations was hired. As part of the public relations plan approved by the board, a contest was held to come up with a new logo. Since June, ALIVE has had an article in almost every weekly addition of the local newspaper highlighting and event, activity, or program.

Given some of the negative statistics from Allendale County, it was obvious that ALIVE was not maximizing the pursuit of grants that would help to address problems while leveraging USDA funds. A grant writer was hired to focus on writing grant for ALIVE and its partners.

Grants applied for during 2003 include:

Rural Development Housing Preservation Grant - \$394,000 – Did not receive
HUD Youth Build Grant - \$400,000 - Did not receive
HUD Capacity Building Grant - \$117,690 - Did not receive
SCHF&DA HOME Grant - \$60,000 - Received plus \$50,000 for capacity building
Sisters of Charity Grant - \$10,000 - Did not receive
Verizon Grant - \$5,000 - Did not receive
Fannie Mae - \$1,000 - Received
South Carolina Association of CDC - \$6,000 - Received
Partnering for Progress - \$19,484 - Received

ALIVE realized one of the ways to generate income that would lead to sustainability was to aggressively pursue housing opportunities. A housing consultant was hired in August to focus immediately on a partnership with the local Rural Development office to make 504 loan/grant funds available for housing rehabilitation in Allendale County. Historically, few residents of Allendale County took advantage of the program. Since August, approximately 50 applications have been submitted, with 15 homeowners approved. In addition, ALIVE was approved to participate in the South Carolina Housing Finance and Development Authority's Housing Trust Fund. The ED and Housing Consultant were approved by the South Carolina Housing and Finance Development Authority to attend certification training from the North Carolina Association of Housing Counselors.

ALIVE was able to get Allendale County Council to agree to administer payroll and benefit programs for ALIVE's employees. Prior to this agreement, the Lower Savannah Council of Governments provided this service. However, it caused some inconvenience and lost work time, because the office was in Aiken, South Carolina, some fifty miles away. It was a win-win for ALIVE and the County in that ALIVE got almost the exact services within the County, and it allowed the County to generate additional income. ALIVE also saved \$6,000 with the new arrangement, because the recent staff changes allowed some of the bookkeeping services provided by LSCOG to be done in house.