



THE CSLC COMMUNITY VOICE

"In relentless pursuit of perfection in education and knowledge"

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www.communitystudentlearning.org



From the Executive Director's Desk

Bringing you the leading "EDGE"

Greetings! Since we have last communicated, the Community Students Learning Center (CSLC) and its staff have been "as busy as bees." In this newsletter, you will be updated on some of our achievements. While our main focus will always be on a "relentless pursuit of perfection in education and knowledge," we are also grateful to report some economic and housing opportunities for our community as well:

- In August 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded a \$1.9M grant to the CSLC to address distressed housing conditions in the 39095 zip code of Holmes County. The grant is from HUD's new Rural Innovation Fund (RIF) program. The three-year CSLC project is called EDGE (Empowering the Delta with a Growing Economy), and it focuses on business incubation, job preparedness (training), housing rehabilitation and new home construction.
- During the Summer 2011, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas and BankPlus announced a \$308,000 Affordable Housing Program (AHP) grant to CSLC for its home rehabilitation program for low-income and special needs homeowners. That project is nearing completion. In addition, the Holmes County Board of Supervisors entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) desiring to enter a collaborative agreement with CSLC to add \$120,000.00 of USDA Rural Prevention funds to this project.
- The Community Students Learning Center's S.T.O.R.Y. (Strategic Tactics of Obesity Reduction in Youth) program was excited to be chosen as a recipient of the General Mills' Champions for Healthy Kids Grant in the amount of \$10,000.
- On August 6, 2012, the CSLC Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngster (HIPPY) program received a Certificate of Accreditation for the next two years by HIPPY USA, meeting all the quality assurance standards stipulated.
- Our Annual Community Health Awareness Day events have been extremely successful in stressing to the citizens the importance of developing healthier lifestyles and eating habits.

The list goes on. In addition to highlighting the above-mentioned opportunities, we, the administration and staff of the CSLC, are extremely grateful to God, our partners, parents, supporters and everyone involved in helping us to make a positive impact in Holmes County and in the state of Mississippi. Our success is your success, because we are all working effectively together.

Beulah Greer

CSLC Co-founder & Executive Director

CSLC-EDGE Homebuyer Education, a Plus



Above are participants from the October 13, 2012 CSLC-EDGE Homebuyer Education Training with Instructor Willie McGriggs in the back. **PHOTO BY PAM GAINES**

Thanks to the Community Students Learning Center (CSLC) - Empowering the Delta with a Growing Economy (EDGE) grant, more than 30 Holmes County residents have received certificates of completion in Homebuyer Education Training.

Certified Homebuyer Educator/Trainer Willie McGriggs is the instructor. He also serves as construction manager for the CSLC/EDGE project. McGriggs has more than 20 years of experience in housing. The CSLC-EDGE homebuyer workshop is free and is generally held the second Saturday of



Above are participants from the September 14, 2012 CSLC-EDGE Homebuyer Education Training along with Instructor Willie McGriggs (left, rear), Founder and Co-founders Leslie and Beulah Greer (right rear; second row, right) and Housing Advocate Lula Friar (right, front). **PHOTO BY MARTEZ GREER**

each month. It provides participants valuable information regarding the home buying process. Participants learn the following information:

- **How to Prequalify for Buying a Home**
- **The Importance of Being Credit Worthy**
- **How to Finance a Home**
- **Some Homebuying Warnings**
- **Basic Need-to-Know Information & More!**

Business Incubator to Grow Holmes County Economy

Business incubation and job creation are essential aspects when looking at empowering any community to grow its economy and ultimately help its citizens to improve their credit worthiness and quality of life.

The CSLC-EDGE Business Incubator is slated to serve nine businesses. The incubator, along with its graduating businesses, will create jobs, commercialize technology, restore neighborhoods, and promote entrepreneurial development.

One CSLC-EDGE Business Incubator client, Dewery Montgomery, CEO of Quality Care Staffing, has already formed and is operating out of the CSLC headquarters. His business has employed roughly eight individuals. Other potential business incubator clients are waiting for the opening of the business incubator building, a modular unit which will be located at 45 Arenia C. Mallory Road, Lexington, MS 39095.

The site's environmental reviews, including the Phase 1 evaluation and other HUD requirements have been approved. "We are pleased to be instrumental in growing entrepreneurship in Holmes County," said CSLC Founder/CEO Leslie Greer. "It's good business."



The Greers, CSLC founders, show environmental professional, Monica Gilmore-Love (second, from right), of Terracon Consultants, LLC, the Business Incubator site. **PHOTO BY GAIL M. BROWN**

In this Issue >>>

Coming Soon - New CSLC/EDGE Homes

- **CSLC-EDGE's Homebuyer Education, a Plus**
- **Business Incubator to Grow Holmes County Economy**
- **Job Seekers get Ahead with EDGE**
- **CSLC Appreciates its Key Partners**
- **STARS Shine in CSLC After-School/Summer Program**
- **Little HIPPYs Rising to "Accredited" Success; the Program Needs Your Help!**



The Job Seekers get Ahead with EDGE; Others Welcome to Sign up

Job seekers who are looking for help with their job-seeking skills need to look no farther than the Community Students Learning Center's (CSLC) free EDGE (Empowering the Delta with a Growing Economy) Job Training Program.

Four participants have completed the first eight-week training session of the program. A number of other participants either were accepted into college and/or secured employment before finishing the session.

According to CSLC-EDGE Job Training Specialist Kendra Smith, the program helps participants to accomplish the following goals:

- Learn the keys to getting and keeping a job;
- Obtain "free" access to CSLC state-of-the-art computer lab and one-on-one assistance in conducting online job searches;
- Compose and submit resumes;
- Set up an email account;
- Learn how to check and send e-mails; and more!

"In essence, we are providing employability skills," said Smith. "Our participants are also learning how to maintain a high standard of workmanship as well." CSLC Executive Director Beulah Greer said, "We are extremely grateful to HUD for funding us to give citizens a leading 'edge' in improving their quality of life."

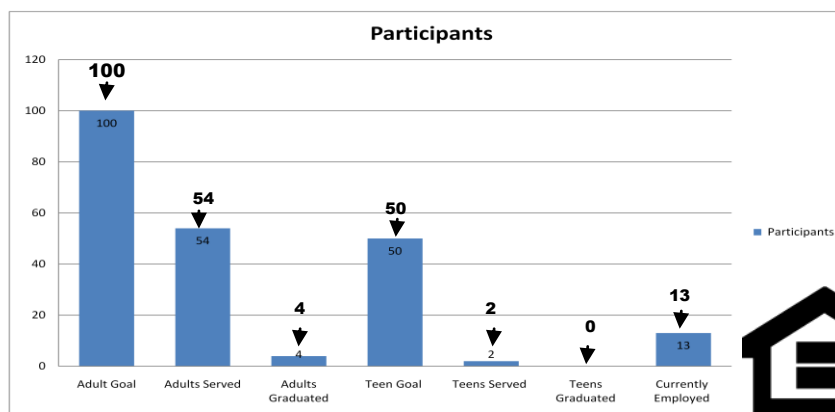
The program also partners with the WIN Job Center and others in providing this service to the community. The CSLC-EDGE Job Training component has served more than 50 adults since it began. Thirteen are currently employed.

For more information or to enroll, call (662) 834-0905.



CSLC-EDGE Job Training graduates (from left) are Michelle Haymon, Dorothy Simpson, Shannon Gibson and Derrick Bailey. They are joined by Job Training Specialist Kendra Smith (center). PHOTO BY LORI WILLIAMSON

EDGE Job Training Charted Progress



CSLC Appreciates its Partners for Helping to Make a Difference



The Community Students Learning Center is proud of all of its partners and supporters. Key partners in its EDGE project are no exception as they join forces to help breakdown economic barriers in Holmes County. EDGE partners include: seated in front row left to right: Jerrie Magruder of HUD; Claudine Ervin of HUD; Mark Oulette of BankPlus; and Beulah Greer, CSLC Executive Director; second row, from left: Jeanette Friar, CSLC; Barbara Gordwin, CSLC; Lori Williamson, CSLC; Porche Frizell, CSLC; Marilyn Moore-Lemons of HUD; Lula Friar, CSLC; and Leslie Greer, CSLC Board President and Founder; third row, from left: Atty. Robert G. Clark III of Clark & Clark, PLLC; Pamela Gaines, CSLC; Lubertha Banks, CSLC; McKinley Young, CSLC; Kendra Smith, CSLC; Sydney Brown of the JSU Small Business Development Center; Daphne Wade of Mid-Delta, CDC; and Allen Crosswhite of Rural Development. Not pictured are Charlie Mae Joiner, Holmes County administrator; James "Kent" Cobbins, owner of KCBS Transportation; Leslie "Martez" Greer, CSLC; Antwan D. Clark, CSLC; and Toris Williams, Branch Director-WIN Job Center. PHOTO BY MARTEZ GREER.

Coming Soon! ... CSLC-EDGE New Low-to-Moderate Income Homes



CSLC Founder/CEO Leslie Greer converses with Holmes County Foreman Cleotha Dixon of Beat 1 as the county prepares to open the easement to the site where the new housing project will be located. **PHOTO BY MARTEZ GREER**



Above are two of the surveyors surveying the property to draw off the 15 acres designated as the site for the construction of the new homes. **PHOTO BY MARTEZ GREER**

Soon there will be some new single family homes available for purchase by low-to-moderate qualifying homebuyers, thanks to the CSLC-EDGE grant.

The proposed site for the CSLC-EDGE new single family homes is located 5.5 miles north of Lexington on Mississippi Highway 17. This site consists of 15 acres of land that is in the process of being developed for five new homes as a part of the HUD RIF (Rural Innovation Fund) grant awarded under the CSLC-EDGE project. As of this writing, the following progress has been made toward the implementation of this CSLC-EDGE RIF component:

- A/E contract issued;
- The McClain siblings - Dr. Powhatan (P.L.) Fluker, Sam Anderson, and Barbara Coyte have donated the property for the right-of-way. (CSLC is grateful to them for their generosity and concern for community development);
- Holmes County Supervisors have completed clearing the right-of-way to the new development site;
- Survey of the 15-acre tract has been completed;
- Environmental compliance approval has been received from HUD; and
- The notice of coming new construction sign has been secured.

"We are pleased that this project will make a difference in improving the depressed housing situation in our county," said Leslie Greer, CSLC founder/CEO. Co-founder Beulah F. Greer echoes her husband's sentiments. "While this project may not be as large as some housing developments, we are excited and hopeful that this initial phase will lead to an expansion of more homes in the future." CSLC is in the process of planning groundbreaking ceremonies for the new homes and for its business incubator building.

The CSLC-EDGE grant also calls for the rehabilitation of five homes in the 39095 zip code. More than 85 homeowners have applied.



Standing on the road to a new beginning for many families of Holmes are CSLC-EDGE leaders (from left) Project Director Gail M. Brown, Housing Advocate Lula Friar, Housing Specialist Lori Williamson, Executive Director and Business Incubator Coordinator Beulah Greer and Founder and CEO Leslie Greer. **PHOTO BY MARTEZ GREER**

27 of the 44 Rehabs Completed Under FHLB Dallas and BankPlus AHP

CSLC is pleased to report that it has completed rehabilitating 27 of 44 selected homes under its Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas (FHLB Dallas) and BankPlus grant received Summer 2011. The \$308,000 Affordable Housing Program (AHP) grant is a rehabilitation program for low-income and special needs homeowners. It assists 35 families in Holmes County and nine families in North Carroll County with emergency home rehabilitation, such as handicap modifications, roof repairs, window and door replacement, plumbing and electrical repair. CSLC's goal for the project is to improve the daily lives of the homeowners, and restore the dilapidated homes to a livable condition. "We are nearing completion of the project," said CSLC Housing Specialist Lori Williamson who coordinates the program. "It is so wonderful to see those who live in our community to live more viably as a result of this grant," Williamson added. Affordable Housing Program Developer Martez Greer said, "You should see the happy expressions people have on their faces after we have repaired their homes." He said many children have to live in these homes. Therefore, the program improves the lives of the homeowner and the children's environment as well. (See the adjacent before and after picture.)



Before



After

More STARS are Shining Brightly in CSLC's After-School/Summer Program

Community Students Learning Center After-School Tutorial Coordinator Williestine Lark said the center has experienced roughly a 40 percent increase in enrollment over the past two years in its after-school tutorial/summer program. "Oh, we had a large group this summer," Lark said, "Our after-school tutorial has also grown in the diversity of students." The program frequently gets positive comments from parents and teachers in the school district.

The program is called, *Striving Toward Academic Research Standards (STARS)*. "And that is exactly what we do," said Lark. The program, which serves Grades K-12, also included a teen pregnancy awareness component this summer. For more information, visit www.cslcstars.org (See adjacent STARS highlights and other programs.)



CSLC STARS students recite their CSLC Creed during a recent after-school tutorial. The students recite the creed each day they arrive at the center. PHOTO GAIL M. BROWN

CSLC Creed

I am somebody
I am special
I am unique
I have purpose, goals, gifts,
talents, and skills.
I can do all things by
setting goals,
working hard, and
believing in myself.
I am wealthy.
I am successful.
I am worth more than my weight in gold.
I am somebody!



Summer STARS students visit Supreme Court building in Jackson, Mississippi.



Community youth enjoy recreation on CSLC's Versa Court.



STARS after-schoolers use computers. PHOTOS BY MARTEZ

HIPPY gets Accredited; Partners with Holmes County School District

Thanks to a helping hand from the Holmes County School District, the Community Students Learning Center's (CSLC) Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program has its curriculum materials for this year.

CSLC has the only HIPPY program in the state of Mississippi. The program has met all the accreditation standards of HIPPY USA, its national body. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of CSLC HIPPY graduates are performing in the top five of their classes.

"We are extremely grateful and elated that the Holmes County School District promotes the importance of parental involvement in preparing their children to start school ready to learn," said Lula Friar, CSLC HIPPY Coordinator. The district's donation of our learning materials was a God send." CSLC is also grateful to a private donor who has

contributed to sponsoring a HIPPY child.

Friar said the program is still faced with not having enough funds to sponsor all of the participating youngsters. To sponsor a HIPPY child for the year is \$1,200.

"The travel to and from the parents' home to provide them with the instruction they need for preparing their child for school-readiness can be costly for our Home Visitors," said Friar. "We applaud our Home Visitors' dedication, but they need adequate compensation."

Anyone who wishes to make a tax-deductible donation toward the continued success of the CSLC HIPPY program may make their check payable to: "Community Students Learning Center," earmarked "HIPPY," and mail it to: 333 Yazoo Street, Lexington, MS 39095 or call 662-834-0905 for more information.



The HIPPY Graduating Class of 2012 pictured with their HIPPY Coordinator Lula Friar (left) and CSLC Executive Director Beulah Greer (right). PHOTO BY LEROY RILEY



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