

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

mississippi delta project

FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER

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Friends and Supporters:

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his is the second edition of our bi-annual newsletter, created to update you about all the great work being done in the Mississippi Delta by Harvard Law School students and faculty. In this newsletter, we have added information about projects operating in the Delta sponsored by other Harvard schools besides the Law School. Additionally, we have included contact information for those projects if you are interested in learning more.

Please note that this edition of the newsletter includes information from projects completed in spring 2010, and is not a list of our current projects. Every six months we will produce a newsletter with information about completed work from the previous semester.

HLS Mississippi Delta Project is excited to report that our website is finally up and running! Learn more about the Delta Project, our leaders and advisers, and our initiatives at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/delta/>. You can also get more current information on our blog <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/delta/>. Please visit the site for brief updates on all of our projects, as well as information about upcoming events.

The HLS Delta Project would like to welcome Alexis Chernak, HLS '10, who is serving as the new Delta Fellow, a joint fellowship funded by Harvard Law School, with the generosity of the Winokur Family Foundation, and Mississippi State University. The previous Delta Fellow, Emily Broad, HLS '08, is now serving as Senior Delta Clinical Fellow in the Health Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the HLS Delta Project, and if you have any questions, advice or suggestions, please contact us at harvarddeltaproject@gmail.com



Mississippi Kids Count Initiative

HARVARD *Law School*

During the spring semester, seven law students continued work for Mississippi Kids Count, a non-profit organization that produces an annual data book containing statistics and research on the health, safety, education and well-being of children in Mississippi. HLS students work to collect relevant and comprehensive information on topics of interest to MS Kids Count in order to translate statistics into policy recommendations to be considered by state legislators and advocates. The focus of the 2010 Kids Count data book is Education, and, accordingly students researched and wrote policy papers on the topics of early childhood education and literacy. In each paper, students looked at the current programs, funding, and support offered in Mississippi and then also presented alternative and successful models from other states. In the early education paper, students focused on the need for children to receive a strong educational foundation beginning as early as birth, looking at the science behind educational development. They also discussed the lack of publicly funded pre-kindergarten in Mississippi, a significant shortcoming in Mississippi's education system. The literacy paper examined the long-term and far-reaching negative effects that often stem from the lack of basic literacy skills, including academic failure, unemployment, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and low productivity. Students will continue work on the Education topic in the fall semester and will write papers about healthy schools and high school graduation rates. Previous work of the Mississippi Kids Count Initiative is available online at <http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/mskidscount/Resources/index.htm>

FINANCIAL SERVICES INITIATIVE

HARVARD *Law School*

Spring semester was an exciting one for the Financial Services Initiative! Students formed a partnership with Southern Bancorp, the largest rural community development bank in the country. Over the course of the semester, HLS students helped research and advise the bank on the financial and legal aspects of several of its economic development initiatives. In one project, students helped to research methods of rehabilitating historic neighborhoods. Many historic properties in the Delta have fallen into disrepair, but there is an opportunity to turn historic neighborhoods into vital community assets. Working with Southern Bancorp's Policy Director and the President of its nonprofit loan fund, students identified several legal and financial strategies that could be used to incentivize rehabilitation of historic properties. Students also helped the bank review legal issues associated with operating free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. During spring semester, students also completed a guide to Community Financing for the Institute for Community Based Research at Delta State University. The guide is available for download here: http://deltadirections.org/programs_initiatives/initiative.php?id=41



Yaw Asare, Victoria Smith, and Evan Lopez (all HLS '10) hear from Dr. John Green, Director of the Center for Community and Economic Development at Delta State University

Food Policy Initiative

HARVARD *Law School*

The Food Policy Initiative spent the spring semester researching and writing a report aimed at improving access to farmers markets in Mississippi for individuals and families receiving food assistance benefits. Many middle- and lower-income individuals rely on programs like the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, previously referred to as food stamps) in order to put food on the table each week. Unfortunately, these benefits cannot be used at Mississippi farmers markets because markets lack the necessary technology needed to accept SNAP benefits. Nationwide, governments and non-profits are working on solutions to this very solvable problem so that food assistance recipients can use their benefits for the purchase of healthy, fresh, local food. The Food Policy Initiative surveyed states throughout the U.S. in order to develop concrete policy recommendations for solutions to this problem. Students also researched and analyzed possible ways of improving access to farmers markets through another food benefits program, the federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The final report was released in June, just in time for the height of farmers market season. Our hope is that the report's broad survey and careful analysis can help influence state officials as they plan for a long-awaited program that would offer farmers markets the necessary technology so that fresh, healthy food from small, local growers is accessible to all, regardless of their income. The report, entitled "Mississippi Farmers Markets - Food Assistance Benefits FINAL" is available <http://deltadirections.org/files/download.php?file=19484047624c2cfd2965aca.pdf>.

This fall, the Food Policy Initiative will move north to work in the Memphis area with the Memphis Food Policy Council. Students will recommend changes to the outdated Memphis Food Ordinance Handbook, and will work with local stakeholders, government officials, and the Memphis/Shelby County Health Department to suggest and implement these changes.

PERINATAL CARE AND INFANT MORTALITY ASSESSMENT IN MEMPHIS

HARVARD *Law School*

In spring 2010, four Harvard Law School students conducted a perinatal care and infant mortality assessment of Memphis, TN, and the surrounding Shelby County area. The assessment was requested by the Tennessee Justice Center, located in Nashville, TN. Tennessee Justice Center emphasized that Memphis had the worst infant mortality rates in the state and sought a summary and explanation of factors contributing to the problem. The students modeled their assessment after a similar survey conducted by an HLS student in January of 2009. The students collected data from different healthcare providers and organizations in the Memphis community, identifying the types of perinatal services currently being offered. They focused their efforts on interviewing various hospitals, community health clinics, and nonprofit organizations in the area. The final report included a statement of the scope of the problem of infant mortality in Memphis, a summary of the current state of affairs concerning ob/gyn care and associated resources in the region, and recommendations to improve services offered to prenatal and parenting women. The Tennessee Justice Center hopes to use this report to further its own work in combating the region's high infant mortality rates.

Pro Bono Spring Break Trip

HARVARD *Law School*

In March 2010, a group of five HLS students spent their spring break in Clarksdale, Mississippi to participate in the work of the GrowDelta Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering economic development in the Delta. The students met with established local business owners as well as aspiring entrepreneurs to discuss the legal issues faced by small businesses in the region. Based on these interviews—and with input from Emily Broad and two local attorneys, Cindy Mitchell and Rob Tyner—the students researched and prepared a Legal Guide for Small Businesses in Mississippi that covers a broad range of topics, including entity structure, taxation, liability, permits and licensing, employment, and intellectual property. At the end of the week, the students conducted a training for entrepreneurs from across the Mississippi Delta and ran individual counseling sessions to address the attendees' legal questions. The business owners represented at the training included a range of different businesses from a soap-maker, to a night club proprietor, to a free-lance photographer, to a hamburger stand chef/owner, among a number of others. The full legal guide is available for download at <http://growdelta.com/knowledge.html>.

Thank you to the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs and to Lee Branson for making this trip possible!

Top Picture: *HLS students prepare to present a seminar on business law to entrepreneurs in the Delta*

Bottom Picture: *HLS students who traveled to the Delta for Spring Break 2010 met with members of the Emmett Till Commission at the courthouse in Summer.*



Project Antares *HARVARD Business School & School of Public Health*

Project Antares is a collaboration between Harvard School of Public Health and Harvard Business School that is dedicated to the development of self-sustaining approaches to healthcare for low-income populations. Antares is based on the premise that if high-impact health interventions can be delivered using commercial systems, they can extend coverage significantly beyond what has been possible to date. Through market mechanisms, Antares believes that high-impact interventions can be driven to the massive scale, permanence, continuous efficacy, and continuous efficiency necessary to generate lasting social impact.

During spring 2010, the Project Antares student team developed a business model for an enterprise aimed at increasing enrollment for social benefit programs among eligible Delta residents. This "Health Access Corporation" is designed to improve health care access for residents while reducing costs for health care providers. The Antares team convened a group of stakeholders in April 2010 at Harvard Business School (HBS) to present their proposal, and their ideas were well-received among the group of donors, health care managers, practitioners, and academics who participated. For more information on Project Antares, contact Professor David Bloom: dbloom@hsph.harvard.edu or Professor Michael Chu: mchu@hbs.edu.



NEGOTIATION & MEDIATION CLINICAL PROGRAM

HARVARD *Law School*

During spring 2010, two students from the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program (<http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/hnmcp/web/index.html>) (HNMCP) developed and presented a two-day consensus building training for community leaders in Coahoma County, Mississippi. To prepare a training



Stacylyn Dewey and Mike Doore, (both HLS '10), teach community leaders in Clarksdale about the basics of consensus-building

tailored to the specific needs of the community, the students interviewed Clarksdale/Coahoma County community leaders to find out whether they were already using any consensus building techniques and, if so, whether those techniques had been effective at bringing stakeholder groups with diverse interests to a consensus around community issues.

At their training in May, the students were able to use these concrete examples of how consensus building techniques had been used effectively in past local community initiatives. The students presented consensus building as a tool that community leaders can use to reach decisions that satisfy a variety of interests and that garner buy-in from a diverse set of stakeholders and constituencies. They also provided materials that current community leaders could use to train future leaders in consensus building. The HLS Delta Project thanks Bob Bordone and Matthew Smith from HNMCP for their ongoing support with this and other projects in the Delta. Slides and handouts from the training are available here:

http://deltadirections.org/programs_initiatives/initiative.php?id=37



Members of the Community Development Project in Baptist Town, Summer 2010

Community Development Project

HARVARD *Kennedy School*

The Community Development Project (CDP), a group of Harvard Kennedy School, Law School, Graduate School of Design, and MIT Business School students, continued its work in Baptist Town, Mississippi. Baptist Town, a neighborhood of Greenwood, faces the challenges of chronic unemployment, persistent poverty, and dilapidated housing. CDP conducted site visits in January, May, and October of 2010, assisting residents in the establishment of a community-based literacy program and the development of a Community Technology Center. CDP also completed an extensive report on housing conditions in Baptist Town and assisted the Foundation for the Mid-South and the Carl Small Town Center in engaging residents in the planning of a neighborhood revitalization effort. In April, two members of the Baptist Town Community Organization visited the Kennedy School for its 6th annual Black Policy Conference as part of CDP's continued effort to support the leadership development of Baptist Town residents. For more information on the Community Development Project, contact Mike Wolking: mwolking@gmail.com or Sorby Grant: sorbygrant@gmail.com.

BASIC NEGOTIATION TRAINING & SUNFLOWER COUNTY FREEDOM PROJECT

HARVARD *Law School*



Rachel Mehlsak, HLS '11, Robb Eastman, HLS '10, Ashley Nyquist, HLS '12, and Tom Ferriss, HLS '11 tour the town of Sumner, MS as part of the Pro Bono Spring Break Trip.

In April 2010 Harvard Law Negotiators (<http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/negotiators/>) presented a one-day negotiation basics workshop for the Mississippi Conference of the NAACP in Jackson, Mississippi. The workshop consisted of informative lectures, interactive negotiation exercises and group discussion. The training covered several topics, including a framework for thinking about and understanding negotiation, a systematic method for preparing for negotiations, ways to create more value in negotiation, and tools to deal with difficult tactics during a negotiation. In addition to the negotiation basics workshop, during the spring 2010 the Harvard Negotiators worked to create a negotiation curriculum for teens in the Sunflower County Freedom Project (SCFP), an after-school program in Sunflower County, Mississippi. SCFP is a non-profit that provides students 12-18 years old with academic mentoring and enrichment in a range of areas, including classes in everything from Swahili to martial arts to drama. The negotiation curriculum introduces the students to the

main components of successful negotiations, with a focus on the difficult conversation teens have with their friends, families, and teachers. In the upcoming fall semester, Negotiators will complete the final half of the curriculum, including intensive role-play activities for the students to practice their skills. For more information on the Sunflower County Freedom Project, visit their website here <http://www.sunflowerfreedom.org/>.

Harvard College Alternative Spring Break

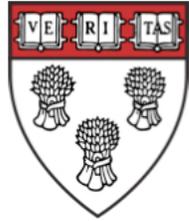
HARVARD *College*

Harvard College continued this year with its student spring break trip to Mississippi. This year the students spent the week working with the Sunflower County Freedom Project in Sunflower County, Mississippi. The Harvard students helped to run the program for the week including mentoring, teaching, and doing service activities with the students. The Sunflower County Freedom Project is a college preparatory program for students ages 12-18. For more information about the Harvard College Alternative Spring Break, contact Amanda Lu: alu@fas.harvard.edu, or Malin von Euler-Hogan: malin0504@gmail.com.



Harvard College students at Sunflower County Freedom Project over Spring Break 2010

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL mississippi delta project



Thank you again for your ongoing support of the Harvard Law School Mississippi Delta Project. Please visit our website to learn more about all of our current projects, the student leaders involved in the group, and our faculty and attorney advisers. In the meantime, please reach out to us if you have questions about any of the projects or if you have any advice, suggestions, or ideas!



ABOUT US

The Harvard Law School (HLS) Mississippi Delta Project is a student organization contributing to an innovative model of public service focused on public health and economic development in one of the poorest and most under-served parts of the United States. HLS students engage in transactional pro bono legal work, policy work, and research and writing in support of non-profit, for-profit, and governmental clients in the Delta. Projects are developed and supervised by Emily Broad, Esq. HLS '08, Senior Delta Fellow in the Harvard Law School Health Law and Policy Clinic and Alexis Chernak, HLS '10, Joint Fellow at Harvard Law School and Mississippi State University.

Visit www.deltadirections.org for more information about our program and our partners in the Delta.



Health Law and Policy Clinic of
Harvard Law School

The HLS Delta Project is supported in part by the Harvard Law School Health Law and Policy Clinic.

For more information about the HLS Delta Project, please visit our website:

<http://www.law.harvard.edu/academics/clinical/delta/> or email us at harvarddeltaproject@gmail.com.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Jared Policicchio and Eleanor Simon, Student Co-Chairs
Nikki McArthur and Abram Orlansky, Student Vice Chairs
Alexis Chernak, Delta Fellow
Emily Broad, Esq., Supervisor

