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1985 Annual Report

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# ACTION

THE NATIONAL  
VOLUNTEER AGENCY

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VISTA is completing its 20th year, helping low-income people become self-sufficient. VISTA creates working relationships among the VISTA sponsor, the community and the private sector to secure the long-term effect of VISTA's efforts. VISTA volunteers assist the poor in establishing methods for meeting basic human needs — methods which can be replicated by others facing similar problems.

VISTA's programming focuses on hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and child abuse, and the needs of low-income youth, seniors and the handicapped.

VISTA volunteers are assigned to a variety of public and private non-profit organizations throughout the nation. Today, nearly all VISTA volunteers are recruited by their local project sponsor. Many are residents of the low-income community being served. All volunteers are recruited for the commitment, skills, or experience they bring to the project.

Twenty percent of all volunteers are 55 and older. The median age of the volunteers is 37. In FY 1985, VISTA produced 2,200 volunteer service years in nearly 500 projects. More than half of the program's resources focused upon illiteracy, unemployment, hunger and homelessness. All VISTA projects are encouraged to generate private sector support and to recruit part-time local volunteers to continue the activities of the VISTA's after VISTA resources are withdrawn.

#### Sample Projects:

Literacy Volunteers of Chicago, a current VISTA project, raised approximately \$150,000 from corporations and foundations such as: the Joyce Foundation, the Albert Pick, Jr. Foundation, the Kemper Education Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago Tribune, B. Dalton Booksellers, Borg-Warner, and the Northern Trust. Thousands of dollars were raised at an annual art auction where rare comic books and cartoons donated by collectors were sold.

For many years, Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) in Syracuse, New York attempted to form an LVA chapter in Chicago, but was unsuccessful until 1981, when the LVA executive director approached ACTION for VISTA volunteer assistance. Since 1982, Literacy Volunteers of Chicago has received VISTA volunteers, some of whom are extremely effective fund-raisers. Today, Literacy Volunteers of Chicago is a separately incorporated entity, has a strong board of directors and extensive community support. The project has been so successful that it is attempting to expand its efforts statewide through the formation of Literacy Volunteers of Illinois.

The Food Bank of Iowa, a current VISTA project, raised more than \$78,000 during the last two years. This includes corporate contributions from: Bankers Life Insurance, Northwest Bell Telephone, American Republic Insurance, Equitable Insurance of Iowa, Ernest and Whinney Equitable Food, Northwest Bank and Trust, Des Moines Home Builders Association and Meredith Corporation. The project also received a \$10,000 personal contribution from singer Bruce Springsteen.

Grants were received from foundations such as: the Hawley Foundation, the Pioneer Hybrid Foundation, and the Greater Des Moines Chamber Foundation. Local churches and civic groups, including the Independent Order of Foresters and the United Way of Des Moines, also donated funds. The project raised several thousand dollars from this year's Hunger Hike and over \$1,000 from the Governor's Food Drive.

The Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM), a Birmingham, Alabama, VISTA project, helped establish an emergency shelter for the homeless and provided housing counseling for the newly unemployed. Coordination among agencies that provide housing counseling, health care, utility assistance, and other services for the unemployed is made possible through a referral system established by VISTA. The project plans to create a job bank for the unemployed through churches which support GMB.

Support for the emergency shelter was secured from Meidinger, Inc., local churches, and individual contributors. The city provided \$50,000 and the Housing Authority \$20,000 for renovation of a city-donated firehouse. The Housing Authority provided a restaurant-store for a soup kitchen, and the Red Cross provided blankets. The GMB VISTA project oversaw all communications, designed a scheduling system, coordinated efforts with the City and Housing Authority and trained Shelter Work Group members in leadership tasks, recruitment and training of volunteers.

**FY 1985 Volunteer and Project statistics:**

Emphasis Area	Number of Projects	Number of Volunteers
Homelessness	73	346
Hunger	133	572
Illiteracy	117	591
Youth	193	870
Unemployment	120	606
Substance Abuse	85	431



**VISTA**

