

## A. Executive Summary

**Provide a brief narrative of your proposed AmeriCorps\*VISTA project, including population to be served, issue areas, history of your organization's activities in these issue areas, and the type of service activities you expect the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member to accomplish.**

Founded in 1979, The Ink People Center for the Arts is a collaborative public benefit arts and culture organization that connects the community with resources for cultural sensitivity and development. The Ink People regularly acts as a job training and community service site for youth and senior citizens through the Humboldt County Juvenile Justice System, County Health & Human Services Department, and AARP Senior Employment Program. Over 5,000 low-income and homeless people use our free Internet access annually. Our DreamMaker Program began in 1988 to foster self-directing projects inspired by individuals or groups who have a vision of making the community a better place through art. The Ink People provides administrative support and technical assistance to DreamMakers to ensure the best chance of success. Many of our current 43 DreamMakers respond to needs of disadvantaged youth in the community (see H e below for examples of current DreamMakers projects).

The Ink People recently adopted The Coffee Opp as its newest youth-led DreamMaker Program for teens of high school ages 14-19. A small group of six Eureka teens responded to a homicide committed by a former Eureka High student in late February by identifying the need for a place that offered a new alternative to drinking, using drugs, or spending time on the street. They chose to pursue the creation of a youth-run coffee shop that would provide a space free from drugs, alcohol, violence, and discrimination and offer hands-on training in the initial planning and management of a small business. In mid-May the student leaders surveyed over 600 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students at Eureka High. The results overwhelming indicated support for the creation of the coffee shop, though many respondents expressed doubt about the leaders' follow-through. Next, the teens approached the Northcoast Small Business Development Center for business assistance and local youth-centers for community partnerships. The Coffee Opp's vision built momentum as the Humboldt County Probation Department, in conjunction with Child Welfare Services, expressed the need for positive role models, transitional living, and employment opportunities for older youth aging out of foster care.

The Coffee Opp's mission is to offer teens in the Eureka area a space free from drugs, alcohol, violence and discrimination and to provide leadership skills for their self-sufficiency. Our VISTA will help build the infrastructure necessary for project sustainability by developing and implementing a business plan, securing volunteers and training support, and obtaining funding to insure both launch and prolongation of The Coffee Opp. The VISTA member will conduct monthly planning meetings with youth and adult partners to establish partnerships within the community in addition to generating local and outside resources.

## B. Summary of Accomplishments

Please refer to the Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section B.

## C. Needs and Activities

**State in measurable and quantifiable terms the specific poverty-related need(s) identified by the community(ies) that the AmeriCorps\*VISTA project will address, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the problem(s).**

Humboldt County lies on the far northern coast of California in an area experiencing high unemployment and rising housing costs. According to *Children Now, California County Data Book* (2002), 20.4% of children in Humboldt County are living in poverty, with a median family income of \$31,546. The same report indicates that 18.7% of young people ages 16-19 in our county are not in school, and over one-third of these teens are unemployed. Eureka City Schools reported in October, 2005, that 44.92% of students received free meals with another 11.67% eligible for reduced meals, for a district total of

56.59%. In 2002, figures indicated that over 35% of the 9,100 county youth between the ages of 11-17 were identified as “at risk”; that is, they possessed two or more “at-risk” indicators such as low or declining school attendance, poor living conditions, living in a high-risk neighborhood, or maintaining relations with high-risk peers (*The Humboldt County Families, Children, and Youth Services Community Development Study*, funded by Humboldt Area Foundation). In one study the Humboldt County Alcohol and Other Drug Programs for the 2003-2004 school year revealed the following facts relative to youth having had at least one drink in the 30 days prior to the survey, 33% of females and 25% of males in 9<sup>th</sup> grade; 43% females and 46% males in 11<sup>th</sup> grade; 54% females and 53% males in non-traditional schooling.

When a group of Eureka High students were surveyed regarding attendance at existing after-school youth programs, over 600 students responded. Results indicated that currently available programs tend to draw a younger crowd; that parents do not feel safe sending their kids to local dances where fights occur; and that the two local tertiary institutions draw mostly twenty-somethings. As a result, high school students are left out and often resort to weekend parties involving alcohol and drugs. The data revealed that over 80% of those surveyed favored the creation of an establishment like The Coffee Opp in Eureka, and many of the respondents included suggestions for a variety of ethnic foods, drinks, and musical interests to be included in the plans, reflecting the diverse nature of the student population.

#### **D. Strengthening Communities**

##### **1. Describe how the new infrastructure or organizational capacity created by your project will bring individuals and, ultimately, the community out of poverty.**

The VISTA member will address poverty in our community by securing resources for the development of The Coffee Opp, a project which will engage youth to take on leadership roles in creating and running a small business to employ youth, enable youth and adults to work in equal partnerships and recognize each other's assets, and allow teens to provide a safe space for their peers to grow. Throughout the planning and implementation process, young people will develop empowerment skills to work together toward independence and self-sufficiency as individuals and as a united community. The Coffee Opp will specifically aim its efforts at reducing the impacts of youth living in high-risk neighborhoods and relating to high-risk peer groups. For the students to see their ideas come to fruition and have their needs acknowledged and met by the community offers validation and the opportunity to empower a frequently silent population. As Eureka youth gain confidence and practical skills, they serve as models to other disadvantaged peers and contribute to the economic and social development of our community.

##### **2. How will you involve the community to ensure sustainability of the proposal project?**

Directed by youth, The Coffee Opp project will connect a number of different youth serving individuals and agencies from the outset to establish community buy-in. Since the project was initiated by a youth forum training facilitated by 4-H, the students will continue to maintain close relations with our local UC Cooperative Extension representative through the 4-H Youth In Governance program. Two of the student leaders are electing to work on The Coffee Opp for their senior projects connecting the school to the community, and classroom learning to its application. The VISTA member will work in conjunction with two local foundations, The Mel & Grace McLean Foundation and Humboldt Area Foundation, for start-up funding. Already committed to work with The Coffee Opp are our local United Way Executive, the Northcoast Small Business Development Center, Humboldt County Probation, Humboldt County Alcohol and Other Drug Programs, the County Board of Supervisors, and the Eureka Mayor's office. Support from the Parks and Recreation John Ryan Youth Center, Teen Court, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Rotary has also been offered. The VISTA member will maintain and expand these current connections within the community, as well as explore collaborating with students and faculty from College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University. Students working with The Coffee Opp will also benefit from DreamMaker projects, such as The Placebo and Empire Squared, which have offered workshops in running music shows and designing promotional materials. The Youth Services Bureau of Redwood Community Action Agency will contribute youth volunteers and flyering services.

**3. How, if at all, will you collaborate with other national service programs (AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, RSVP, NCC) in order to support the proposed project?**

Our community continues its rich history of engaging national service members. We will collaborate with AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, and RSVP members for their local expertise, offering training in youth leadership development.

**E. Recruitment and Development**

**1. Describe in specific terms how your organization will recruit qualified AmeriCorps\*VISTA members to serve on this project. What challenges do you anticipate in recruiting qualified members?**

Please refer to Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-1.

**2. Describe the service-related transportation needs of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA members and your plans for meeting those needs.**

Please refer to Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-2.

**3. Briefly describe plans for orienting members to your organization and the community. Describe any training opportunities and technical assistance that will be available to members throughout their service.**

Please refer to Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-3.

**F. VISTA Assignment Description**

- 1. List the tasks and activities AmeriCorps\*VISTA member(s) and Leader(s) must perform to implement the strategies described in the project plan(s). These tasks and activities should logically relate to the overall project goals and activities you propose in Part III, Project plan for AmeriCorps\*VISTA Project Applicants. This section will include more detail on the actual service activities, and should not include direct service activities. Create as many different assignment descriptions as needed for the project.**

In Year One, the VISTA member will:

1. Develop and implement a business plan.
  2. Develop and maintain youth-adult advisory board.
  3. Recruit youth and adult volunteers.
  4. Secure start-up and long-term funding.
  5. Organize and participate in presentations to community agencies, high schools and older groups/clubs.
  6. Utilize youth participants in all phases of The Coffee Opp development/implementation.
  7. Develop policies and procedures for The Coffee Opp.
- 2. List the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps\*VISTA member or Leader should have to successfully complete the project plan.**

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. Experience with and passion for working with youth;
2. Fundraising experience, including grantwriting;
3. Experience writing a business plan, previous knowledge of business operations;

4. Experience in public speaking;
5. Excellent relational skills;
6. Ability to work independently as well as part of a team;
7. Ability to create fliers, brochures and other media materials;
8. Basic internet and computer skills;
9. Excellent writing skills;
10. Flexibility;
11. Work ethic and professional attitude;
12. Reliable transportation helpful;
13. Education and/or background in business administration.

## **G. Project Management**

### **1. Describe plans for daily supervision of AmeriCorps\*VISTA members. Specify if supervision will be a full-time or part-time responsibility.**

The VISTA member will share adjoining office space with The Ink People's Executive Director from whom he or she will receive daily contact and support on a part-time basis. The E.D. will assist the member with developing community partners, grantwriting, and research. In addition to the regular Redwood Community Action Agency VISTA program trainings, our VISTA member will work with The North Coast Small Business Development Center in the development of The Coffee Opp's business plan. Also, a local community foundation, Humboldt Area Foundation, provides training to nonprofits and individuals for low or no cost, and we will seek out local training opportunities such as these for our VISTA member.

### **2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of directors' members of the low-income community? If not, please describe how your agency has developed, or will develop, an advisory council for the AmeriCorps\*VISTA project that consists of members or representatives of the low-income community served by the proposed project.**

Sixty-three percent of The Ink People Board of Directors' members are low income. It will be the task of the VISTA member to assemble an advisory board that accurately represents those served by the project. At least 50% of the members will be aged 14-19 and from low-income and/or "at risk" situations. Parents, neighbors, and school affiliates will be encouraged to join, in addition to business owners, youth workers, and local government officials.

### **3. Describe your plans for evaluating progress towards achieving your project's anticipated outcomes and accomplishments. What information and data will you use to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project?**

The long-term anticipated outcome will be for a sustainable funding base to exist for The Coffee Opp with the flexibility to maintain and expand Coffee Opp services as needed. Because youth are to be involved throughout the development of The Coffee Opp, attention must be given to their learning processes. The VISTA member will create reflection tools for the student leaders and student population served, while The Ink People will assess the overall progress of The Coffee Opp. The Ink People will assist the VISTA member with grantwriting and research as well as facilitating connections within the community. Success will be measured quantitatively by tabulating total funds raised, total participants, and total community partnerships. Qualitative data will be collected from student leaders' presentations, evaluations and surveys of local youth organizations, program participants, local government officials, and local businesses.

## H. Organizational Capacity

### 1. Is your organization able to contribute financially for all or some of costs related to AmeriCorps\*VISTA members? Please explain.

No, The Ink People is not able to contribute to the cost of our AmeriCorps\*VISTA member.

### 2. What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?

As a non-profit, The Ink People will manage The Coffee Opp's finances, legal and reporting obligations. We will provide a mailing address, meeting space, community connections, free server space for a website, and technical assistance with fundraising and outreach. For the VISTA member we will provide office space, necessary office supplies, computer with internet access, phone, mileage reimbursement for job-related travel, printer and copier use.

### 3. Describe current activities your organization and other organizations are undertaking to address the problems identified in your need statement. Describe how the proposed project will complement this work.

4.

Many of our current 43 DreamMakers respond to needs of disadvantaged youth in the community:

- ? *Hmong Community of the Northcoast* holding traditional cultural classes and New Year celebrations
- ? *Institute of Native Knowledge* teaching Indian youth to apply traditional knowledge to contemporary challenges
- ? *Comité de Madres* bringing community awareness to traditional Mexican holidays celebrating children
- ? *Rural Burl Mural Bureau* serving at-risk youth referred by probation officers or social workers
- ? *Humboldt County Youth Arts / Placebo* hosting all-ages music and art shows that remain drug and violence free
- ? *KKDS (Blue Ox Youth Radio for Humboldt Bay)* operating from Blue Ox Community School a collaboration between Blue Ox Millworks, the court system, Humboldt County Office of Education and the Workability Program
- ? *Magic Action Reface Zone (MARZ)* enabling youth who are fulfilling probation requirements, serving in juvenile detention, living in foster care or receiving home-schooling to creatively express themselves through analog arts & digital storytelling
- ? *Vagabond Players* working with charter schools to offer students theater performance opportunities
- ? *United Future* performing graffiti removal, murals and breakdancing
- ? *Empire Squared* youth arts space offering free and sliding-scale art classes and field-trips for low-income participants.

Commonly, our DreamMakers work collaboratively to support and strengthen each other's efforts, and The Coffee Opp will benefit from being a member of this "family."

### 5. Describe the accessibility of services provided to members of the community with disabilities. Is your organization able to accommodate AmeriCorps\*VISTA members with disabilities?

The Ink People Center for the Arts is not wheelchair accessible. Its main facility is an historic building which has been deemed too costly and difficult to upgrade to meet ADA requirements. As a result, we often hold programs at accessible sites in order to make reasonable accommodations.

## I. Other

Please leave blank unless otherwise instructed.