

## National Service and Philanthropy

Through the 1980s, America's sense of community and shared purpose began to disintegrate. Between 1989 and 1993, charitable giving as a portion of our economy declined and the number of people volunteering fell by more than 9 million. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have worked to create new opportunities for community service, and provided leadership to develop innovative partnerships between federal agencies and private nonprofits. They have also worked to involve the private sector, challenging business leaders to work with community groups, religious leaders and faith-based partnerships to tackle problems like putting welfare recipients to work, teaching children to read and closing the digital divide.

### Restoring Community Service: AmeriCorps

**THEN: No significant new investment in community service in a decade.**

Previous generations of Americans had answered the call to service of their country through programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Peace Corps and VISTA. However, it had been more than a decade since the federal government challenged the energy of Americans by putting significant resources behind a meaningful effort to expand community service opportunities. The Peace Corps and VISTA combined provided just 10,000 service opportunities in 1993.

**NOW: 200,000 Americans have served communities in AmeriCorps.**

President Clinton created the AmeriCorps National Service Program in 1993, his first year in office. Since then, AmeriCorps has brought together nearly 200,000 people of all ages, racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds to solve community problems and improve the lives of Americans. And after a year of full-time public service, AmeriCorps members receive education awards to help finance college or pay back student loans. The President defended AmeriCorps from numerous Congressional efforts to eliminate the initiative, and built it into a successful program supported by Democratic, Republican and Independent Governors across the country.

#### AmeriCorps Members Investing in their Community

*"When I started tutoring first graders, I was scared—scared of the responsibility, because it is so important for a child to get a good foundation in education. One of the first students I tutored didn't know the alphabet. He was so nervous about trying but he wanted desperately to learn. I worked with him for about 20 minutes every day in the classroom and twice a week after school. Within a month, he wrote beautiful sentences. Now he's reading above grade level. I am proud to say that my experience as an AmeriCorps member has given me the skills and confidence to enter the classroom as a first grade teacher. Mr. President — thank you for giving young adults*

*the opportunity to improve American communities through national service. I just want to let you know that thousands of AmeriCorps members are getting things done throughout the country but especially right here in Philadelphia."*

— **Ardelia Norwood-Ross, AmeriCorps Volunteer, Philadelphia.** In her first year as a corps member, Ardelia served at an elementary in South Philadelphia running three literacy programs for students in first through third grades, two of which she developed herself. Ardelia is currently enrolled in a Master's program in elementary education and uses her AmeriCorps awards from her two years of service to pay back her college loans and pay for her graduate school study.

## **Teaching Children to Read: America Reads**

### **THEN: Children's reading scores drop during 1980s**

Reading scores among young students dropped significantly during the 1980s. Despite research demonstrating that reading to young children was the best way to increase reading skills, in 1991, just 35 percent of young children were read to at home every day.

### **NOW: Thousands of volunteers tutor children in America Reads**

In 1997, President Clinton challenged Americans to unite to be sure that every child can read well and independently by the end of the third grade. So far, more than 1,400 colleges have committed more than 26,000 Work Study students to tutor children in reading, and nearly one million children have been taught, tutored or mentored through national service programs like AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Foster Grandparents. President Clinton's America Reads challenge also sought to involve businesses, communities, pediatricians and child care providers in helping recruit volunteers, organize book drives and tutor young children in reading. President Clinton launched America Reads as a volunteer partnership, then worked with Congress to pass the Reading Excellence Act in 1998 to provide \$260 million and serve 1.1 million children annually. This national effort to improve reading has made a great difference for children learning to read. Today, more families are spending time each day reading to their children. In 1999, 53 percent of children ages 3-5 were read to daily by a family member. Reading scores are also going up, especially in our highest poverty communities. From 1992 to 1996, reading scores of nine-year-olds in highest poverty schools improved by nearly one grade level, reversing a downward trend.

## **Increasing Charitable Giving**

**THEN: Charitable giving and volunteering declines.**

Charitable giving as a portion of Gross Domestic Product declined from 1989 to 1993. The number of people volunteering fell from 98.4 million in 1989 to 89.2 in 1993, and the total number of volunteer hours dropped by one billion over the same period.

**NOW: Administration encourages philanthropy and charitable giving soars.**

The Clinton-Gore Administration has worked to promote charitable giving and philanthropy, hosting the White House Conference on Philanthropy in October 1999, creating an Interagency Task Force on Nonprofits and Government and working to build partnerships between government, business and non-profit organizations. The strong economy has driven a large share of the increase in philanthropy — as individual wealth has increased, the value of the stock in foundations has soared. Charitable giving reached a record high in 1999, surging to more than \$190 billion, an increase of 43 percent since 1993; as a percentage of GDP, charitable giving soared to 2.1 percent, the highest level in almost three decades.

## **Drawing on the Private Sector:**

**THEN: America has more problems than federal resources.**

In 1992, America faced high poverty rates; record numbers of people unemployed or on welfare; serious environmental problems; and record-high deficits. Government alone could not solve all of these problems.

**NOW: Clinton-Gore Administration draws on private sector partnerships.**

President Clinton challenged corporate, religious and community leaders to join together to solve major problems facing the country. The Clinton-Gore Administration has provided important leadership to develop vital partnerships with the private sector, including:

- Through the President's New Markets and Digital Divide initiatives, corporations have pledged millions of dollars in assistance and development commitments to bring economic development and high-tech training to underserved urban, rural, and tribal communities.
- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, a private nonprofit organization, was launched in response to the President's 1995 State of the Union in which he challenged parents and leaders across the country to come

together in a national effort to reduce teen pregnancy. The Campaign has raised the visibility of this issue nationwide by enlisting the help of the media and private advertising experts. The Campaign has also created a more effective grassroots movement that brings together public, private, nonprofit partners in states and local communities. Both teen pregnancy and teen birth rates are now at record low levels.

- The Administration's efforts also resulted in the creation of the Fair Labor Association, which includes apparel makers who have adopted a code of conduct to eliminate child labor and sweatshop working conditions in manufacturing plants throughout the world.
- The President's work with the entertainment industry led to the voluntary adoption of a ratings system for television shows so parents can be informed about the content of the programs their children are watching.

### **Service and Volunteerism Producing Progress for Communities**

- **Almost 200,000 AmeriCorps volunteers:** Since 1993, nearly 200,000 AmeriCorps members have served our nation by building homes, responding to natural disasters, helping to make our streets safer, and tutoring in schools. More Americans have served in AmeriCorps in its first five years than have served in the Peace Corps throughout its history. In addition, nearly 500,000 senior citizens provide community service through Senior Corps.
- **America Reads volunteers teaching children to read:** National Service Participants have tutored nearly one million children, helping them learn to read. Independent studies found that children involved in the program improved their reading abilities more than the gain expected for children at their grade level. Additionally, many students closed the gap and were reading at or near the grade-level expectation.
- **Charitable giving and volunteering have rebounded:** Charitable giving reached a record \$190 billion in 1999, increasing 43 percent over 1993. As a percentage of GDP, charitable giving reached 2.1 percent in 1999, the highest level in nearly three decades. In addition, the number of Americans volunteering reached an all time high in 1998, as an estimated 20 million more Americans volunteered than in 1993.