The Youth Entrepreneurial Program (YEP I did it!) was first piloted in the summer of 2007. Ten junior and senior high school students were recruited into the program with 7 completing. The first YEP program was a partnership between the Center for Community and Economic Development/DSU, the College of Business/DSU, Beauty Queens, AmeriCorps*VISTA and Cleveland Youth Council. Kareem Silvani from Beauty Queen invested financial resources and his time into making sure the program was successful. Cleveland Youth Council provided a mini grant of $2,000.00 and students who participated in the program. The Center for Community and Economic Development implemented the program and the College of Business provided instructors for the program. The pilot project was a huge success. After 8 weeks of intensive classwork, training and job shadowing, seven students completed the program with future plans to open their own business. Last year’s winners received: 1st place $1,000.00 and a part time job; 2nd place A Dell laptop; and 3rd place $500.00.

The partners came together again this year to offer Class II of YEP. Many long hours were spent with the students teaching them how to develop their business plan, professional etiquette, communication skills, conflict resolution, budgeting, marketing, accounting, business financials, and customer service. The students were paired with business owners in Cleveland to get hands on experience in owning their own business. Thirteen students completed the program and now have a strong foundation for opening their own business. The students competed for cash scholarships of: 1st place $1,000.00; 2nd place $600.00; and 3rd place $400.00. This year first place was awarded to Kristen Hurns, second place to Ansley Scott, and third place to April Williams. Plans are underway for next year’s Youth Entrepreneurial Program. 
HEALTH FORUM OFFERED FOR WOMEN

The Living Your Life Like It's Golden forum was held on June 12, 2008 to discuss health care issues that are affecting women's lives. It was a day to make a commitment to change their daily health care, learn to eat right and take good care of themselves. Women were also encouraged to have regular examinations and health-care screenings. The guest speaker for the event was Louisa Denson, Director of Women's Health Division, Mississippi State Department of Health. The event was hosted by Delta State University Center for Community and Economic Development's Breast Education and Early-detection Project (B.E.E.P.).

Gender Studies Retreat Held at Delta State

On Friday, April 18, 2008, the Center for Community and Economic Development partnered with DSU’s Division of Social Sciences to sponsor a gender studies retreat. The purpose of the retreat was to:

• Network with people on campus and the wider community who have interests in gender related issues.
• Assess the resources and needs for gender studies in communities in the Mississippi Delta.
• Inform scholarly initiatives of practical value at DSU.
• Determine the gender interests of retreat participants.
• Affect the activities of the Gender Studies Group.
• Ascertain what lessons can be learned from others in academia and in the Mississippi Delta.

Participants who attended Gender Studies Retreat listen to Dr. Kate Green, guest speaker from the University of Southern Mississippi.

THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK VISITED DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis-Memphis Branch held its Exploring Innovation in Community Development Week, April 14-18, 2008. Staff members in the Community Affairs department at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis scheduled activities in the bank’s eighth district, which includes all of Arkansas and portions of Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, Indiana and Kentucky. Featured speakers, resource fairs and workshops highlighted innovations in community development issues, such as housing, finance, entrepreneurship, tourism and early childhood development.

Delta State University’s (DSU) Center for Community and Economic Development, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, Delta Regional Development and Congressman Bennie Thompson’s Office partnered with the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis-Memphis Branch to host a kick-off forum on April 14th. The event was held in the H.L. Nowell Student Union-State Room, from 5:00-8:30 p.m. The DSU event focused on Cultural/Heritage and Eco-Tourism, and Early Childhood Development. Over 100 individuals were in attendance.
Delta Health and Wellness Day (DHWD) made its return to the Bolivar County Expo Center, Thursday, January 24, 2008 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Delta Health and Wellness day is sponsored by Delta State University through its Center for Community and Economic Development and in cooperation with the Leaders of Delta Health and Wellness and DSU’s School of Nursing, and area healthcare providers.

DHWD is a large health fair offering free screenings, educational outreach, and access to healthcare for Mississippi Deltans. There are three primary components to DHWD: 1. an exhibitor and health screening area where exhibitors of health-related organizations, healthcare professionals, non-profits and others set up booths to display and offer information or services to the public; 2. a “Kids Korner” area, sponsored by the DSU’s School of Nursing, where 4th and 5th grade students have scoliosis checks, participate in various health activities and receive valuable information on healthy eating, nutrition, exercise and safety; and 3. a Center Stage Speaker. This year’s event brought in over 1,000 attendees and over 48 exhibitors to the Expo Center. Three hundred children participated in the Kids Korner activities and 200 high school students participated in the day’s activities. Over 30 different screenings and testing’s were offered to the public free of charge. The 5th annual Delta Health and Wellness day has been scheduled for January 29, 2009.

6th Annual Multiple Sclerosis Walk Brought In Over $11,000.00

Everyday over 400,000 Americans face the possible struggles of Multiple Sclerosis – reduced vision, loss of muscle control, numbness, and even possible immobility, among others. Someone new is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis every hour. In the state of Mississippi, over 5,000 individuals suffer from this unpredictable and devastating disease. The National MS Society is committed to building a movement by and for people with MS that will move us closer to a world free of this disease. Partnerships between the National MS Society and communities throughout the United States who help raise funds for MS are one way this movement takes place.

Delta State University, through its Center for Community and Economic Development, has partnered with the National MS Society for the past six years to coordinate the Multiple Sclerosis Walk in the Mississippi Delta. The successful walk was planned by a committee of over 15 volunteers who worked for several months to solicit community donations, recruit walkers and sponsors, secure entertainment, and organize the day’s events.

This year’s event was yet again a success as Cleveland and surrounding communities raised over $11,000 for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

For more information about Multiple Sclerosis or the Multiple Sclerosis Walk, you can visit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s Website at www.nationalmssociety.org.
Gang Awareness Conference For Youth Held

On May 6, 2008, the Mississippi Delta Leaders Empowering Youth (MDLEY) Program hosted a Youth Gang Awareness Conference. Over 500 students from various schools in Bolivar, Washington, West Tallahatchie, and Quitman Counties attended the event. Marc Fomby, nationally known gang awareness consultant, presented information to the youth about the history of gangs, the different types of gangs, examined the customs of traditional street gangs including colors, rituals, organization and practices and motivated students to not become involved in Mississippi Delta Gangs. Plans are under way for next years Youth Gang Awareness Conference.

Gang Awareness Summit For Adults Held

On June 17 – 18, 2008, the Mississippi Delta Leaders Empowering Youth (MDLEY) Program hosted an Adult Gang Conference to bring awareness to MDLEY’s cohort of faith based and community organizations, community leaders, law enforcement, and social workers in Delta counties. Over 50 adults were present to hear Marc Fomby, nationally known consultant, from Jackson, Mississippi speak on gang related issues. One of Fomby’s programs, entitled “Message in the Music”, was an informative, fun, educational and interactive course that introduced adults to the lyrics behind the music youth listen to today. This two day workshop also allowed adults in the community to ask questions and gather answers on how to combat the growing gang problem facing communities today.

Youth Offer Input On Their Future

On February 7, 2008 Delta State University, in cooperation with its Center for Community and Economic Development, Special Projects, Career Services and Delta Center for Culture and Learning, held a community forum on youth development and engagement. The forum’s topic: “How to strengthen and capture the vision, talents and passion of youth, the real future of the South” gave youth the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with other citizens to gain collective ideas and strategies about how to solve some of the greatest challenges facing the Delta today.

This forum was part of an initiative by the Southern Growth Policies Board to gain information about developing the potential of Southern youth, listening to their views, and inspiring them to take action that is critical to the region’s future success. The findings from all of the community forums around the South were compiled into Southern Growth’s annual report, and each participating community was recognized at the 2008 conference in June in Little Rock, Arkansas.
**Professionals Received Certification**

On January 30, 2008 Deborah Moore and Linda Stringfellow received certification as Economic Development Finance Professionals (EDFP) from the National Development Council (NDC). Certification is a designation given to individuals who successfully complete an intensive economic development finance training services that is conducted by NDC. The courses provide individuals working in the field of economic development with training in credit analysis, real estate financing, loan packaging, deal structuring and negotiating, and the creation and implementation of development programs.

Each of the four courses are five days in length and each end with a written review that must be passed before a certification candidate is allowed to continue in the EDFP program. When a candidate has completed the entire four-week series, a comprehensive examination is given.

The New York based National Development Council was established in 1972 and is a private non-profit corporation, which specializes, in economic/housing development training and technical assistance for economic/housing development. NDC has provided training to approximately 50,000 development people working in the field of economic and housing development. Participants come from many diverse groups, city and state governments, public agencies, community-based organizations, professional organizations, bankers, etc.

Moore is the Director of the Center for Community and Economic Development at Delta State University and Stringfellow is the Project Director of AmeriCorps*VISTA at the Center for Community and Economic Development. Both ladies are pursuing a PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi.

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**MoneySmart Training Program Launched With America Reads Mississippi Members**

MoneySmart is a training program created by the FDIC to help people with little or no banking experience enhance their money skills and create positive banking relationships. This financial education program fosters financial stability for individuals, families, and entire communities. The more people know about credit and banking services, the more likely they are to increase savings, buy homes, and improve their financial health and well-being. Survey results on MoneySmart’s performance are most impressive:

- 43 percent of those without a checking account had opened an account
- 37 percent of those without a savings account had opened a savings account
- 22 percent demonstrated the ability to comparison shop
- 95 percent of those who used a spending plan at the end of the course still used it when surveyed
- 12 percent increase in the number of participants who always paid bills on time

The MoneySmart Training Program was launched in November 2007 with 48 America Reads-Mississippi members. The members completed the training program in June and were awarded certificates of completion. Ninety-eight percent of the members reported through self-evaluation that their knowledge had increased in regard to managing their personal finances. Through the Center for Community and Economic Development the MoneySmart Training Program will be offered to organizations and communities in four counties (Bolivar, Sunflower, Washington and Coahoma).