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M Partner

McLean Institute for Public Service and  
Community Engagement

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11-18-2019

## New Albany, MS - M Partner Pilot Phase

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*University of Mississippi*

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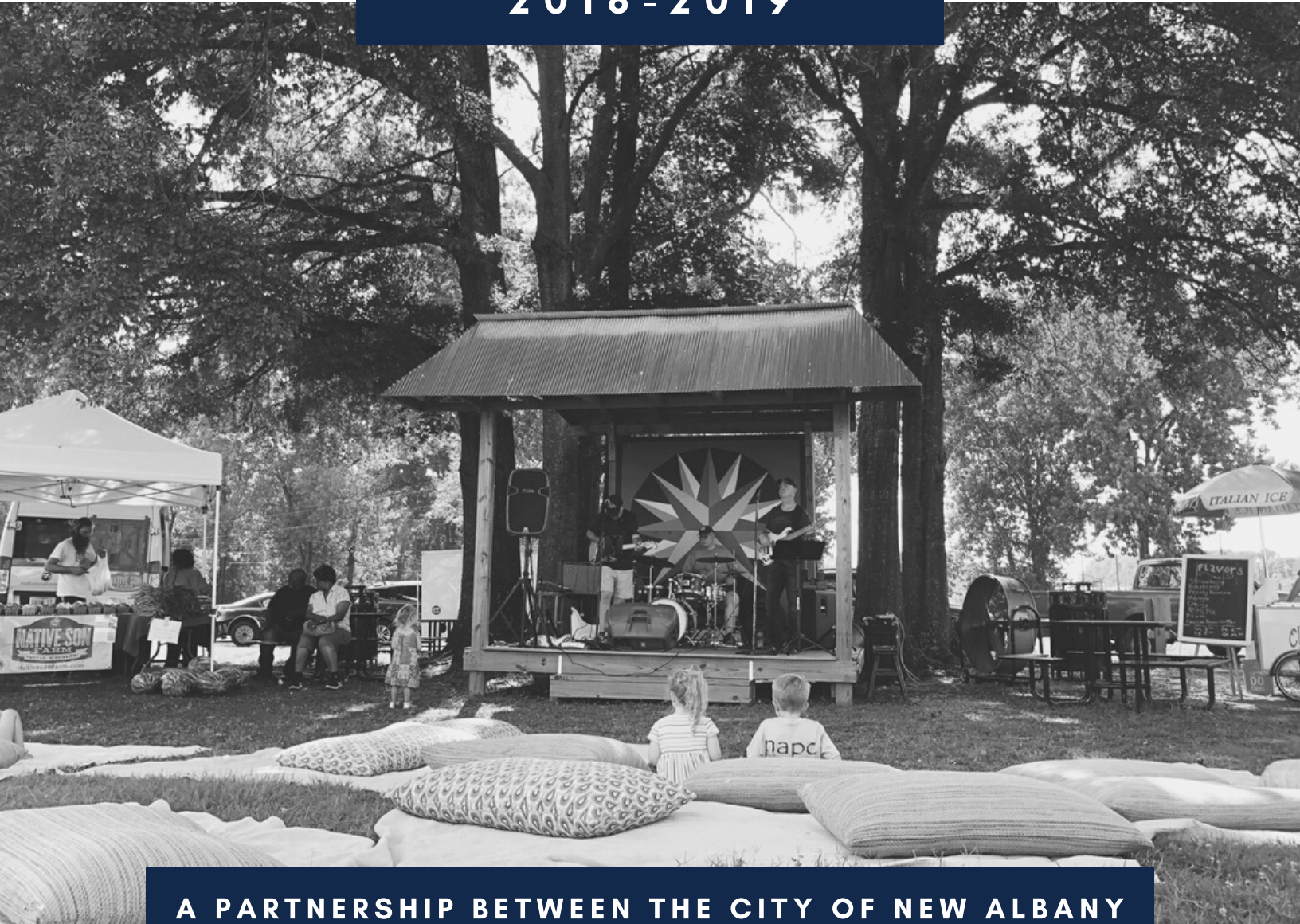
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# M Partner Pilot Phase

2018 - 2019



A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY OF NEW ALBANY  
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

*The Fair  
& Friendly City*

*In the  
Heart of the  
Mississippi Hills*





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## Acknowledgements

Community-campus partnerships involve individuals and organizations coming together to create something larger and more beautiful than they could accomplish by working separately. Thanks to the intentional involvement of students, faculty, and staff at the University of Mississippi, along with the vision and passion of our community partners, M Partner has taken on an impact that exceeded our wildest imagination.

The following individuals have been instrumental in nurturing M Partner from concept to reality. Please accept heartfelt thanks on behalf of M Partner and the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement.

Tim Kent, Mayor of the City of New Albany

Billye Jean Stroud, Director, New Albany Main Street Association

Tracy Vainisi, Assistant Director, New Albany Main Street Association

Dr. Glenn Boyce, Chancellor

Dr. Noel Wilkin, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Dr. Katrina Caldwell, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement

Dr. Lee Cohen, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Michaela Cooper, M Partner VISTA 2018-2019

Dr. Jeff Jackson, Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Denotee Martin, Director, Minority PUL Alliance

Taylor Robertson, M Partner VISTA 2019-2020

Jill Smith, Director, New Albany Heritage Museum

Dr. Jeffrey S. Vitter, Chancellor Emeritus

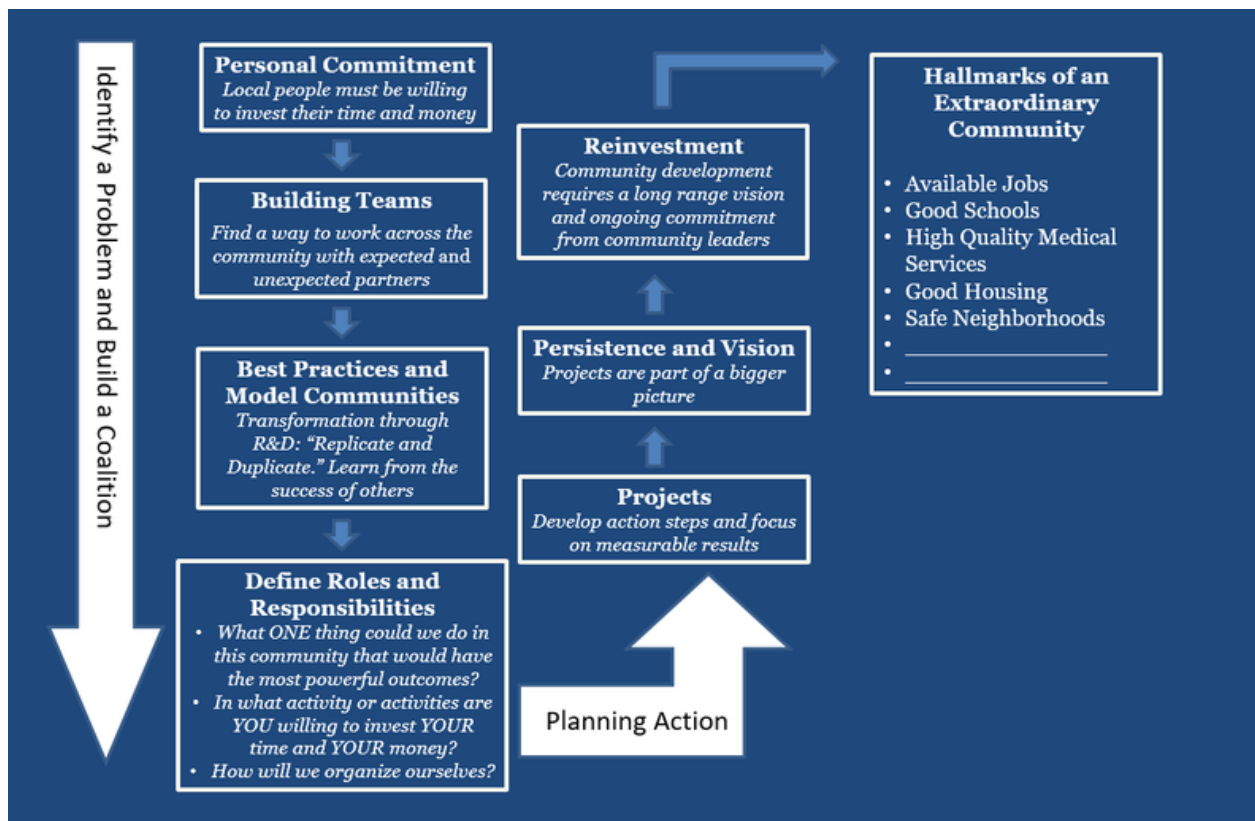


## About M Partner

The University of Mississippi is a force for community and economic development across the state. In 2018, the university launched M Partner, a community engagement effort that seeks to improve quality of life in Mississippi communities. M Partner offers a framework for community and university representatives to advance priority projects in partner cities across the state. M Partner is central to the university's mission of learning, discovery, and engagement.

The inaugural M Partner communities are Charleston (Tallahatchie County), Lexington (Holmes County), and New Albany (Union County). The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement is leading the pilot phase of M Partner, and aligning university resources and expertise with community-driven projects. M Partner affiliates with credit-bearing courses, offers community service opportunities, conducts research, and provides technical assistance to advance community priorities.

The guiding framework below is adapted from the work of Dr. Vaughn Grisham, founding director of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement and professor emeritus of sociology.





# LETTER FROM LAURA MARTIN

**M PARTNER DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATE  
DIRECTOR OF THE MCLEAN INSTITUTE**

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement has been part of M Partner since its inception. In the spring 2017 semester, I served on the task force that was asked to envision a framework for a community-university partnership inspired by the EPIC Network, which stands for Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities. The task force was comprised of faculty and staff from across the Oxford and UMMC campuses. While we debated how best to adapt this model to serve Mississippi communities, we shared the conviction that intentional and reciprocal community partnerships were central to the public purpose of the University of Mississippi.

M Partner was launched in March 2018 with three partner communities: Charleston in Tallahatchie County, Lexington in Holmes County, and New Albany in Union County. The McLean Institute then held a series of community meetings in each partner community to identify priority projects. These community conversations revealed a consistent set of themes in each partner community: educational initiatives, community health and wellbeing, business and economic development, and beautification. In all, community partners identified a set of 27 priority projects across all three communities.

The McLean Institute built momentum for M Partner during the summer and fall semesters of 2018 through placements with the North Mississippi VISTA Project, special events such as business forums in partnership with the Entrepreneur Center at the Mississippi Development Authority, and a large-scale day of service across all three communities. By the spring 2019 semester, faculty, staff, and students were engaged in 18 projects across the M Partner communities. In Summer 2019, 11 M Partner Interns worked on priority project areas across the three communities, and campus-wide engagement continues during the fall 2019 semester with the involvement of new faculty members and academic departments.

The pilot phase of M Partner has given me several insights about the University of Mississippi. I have learned that our students have a strong desire for hands-on involvement in communities, and actively seek out opportunities through their coursework, internships, and days of service. Thanks to M Partner, the McLean Institute has developed new partnerships with faculty members across campus, and strengthened a growing network of community-engaged scholars. I am enormously grateful to the students, faculty, staff, and administrators who believed in M Partner and shared their talents during this pilot phase.

I will remain forever grateful to our community partners. In community engagement work, we know that trust is so vital to developing authentic partnerships that advance a larger purpose. We were welcomed with open arms in Charleston, Lexington, and New Albany, and the trust that our community partners placed in us allowed us all to learn, grow, deepen connections, and create something larger than what we could have accomplished separately. Thank you.

This publication provides a snapshot of what M Partner has accomplished during the pilot phase – and we are not finished yet! I hope you enjoy reading.

Laura Martin,  
M Partner Director and  
Associate Director, McLean Institute

# About the McLean Institute

## Mission

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement advances transformative service throughout the University and fights poverty through education in Mississippi.

## Vision

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement will be recognized for expanding community engagement throughout the University of Mississippi and for its success in addressing poverty in Mississippi through mutually beneficial partnerships.

## Core Values

**Academic Excellence:** The McLean Institute believes that education should be a lifelong and empowering experience open to all.

**Transformation:** The McLean Institute recognizes the potential of the University of Mississippi to transform the inequitable structures of Mississippi that contribute to generational poverty.

**Respect:** The McLean Institute values the strengths and assets of all people and the organizations with whom we partner.

**Integrity:** The McLean Institute believes in listening honestly, processing information accurately, and following through on its commitments.

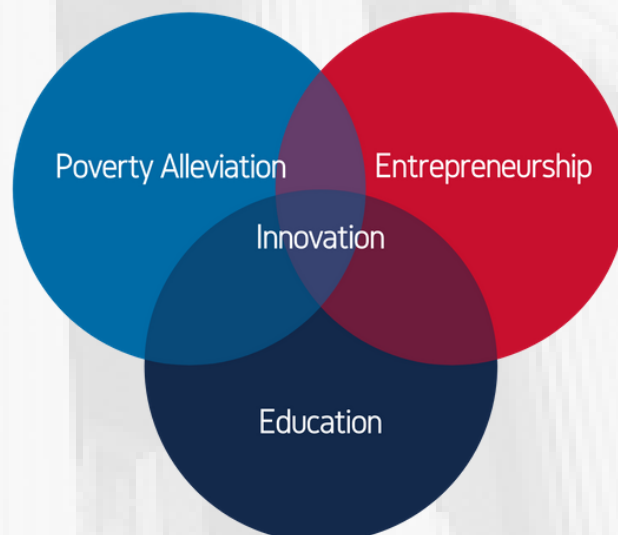
**Inclusion:** The McLean Institute fosters inclusivity and cultural humility in its work.

## Approach

Through a cohesive portfolio of programs, the McLean Institute partners with Mississippi communities to fight poverty through education, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

## ENGAGE UM

How will you engage UM?



# LETTER FROM DR. ALBERT NYLANDER

**DIRECTOR OF THE MCLEAN INSTITUTE & PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY**

The McLean Institute is grateful to everyone that has supported the pilot phase of M Partner. Since 2012, the McLean Institute has been called on to lead strategic priorities for the University of Mississippi, from the Transformation through Service priority of the UM 2020 Strategic Plan to M Partner in the current Flagship Forward strategic plan.

The McLean Institute has watched community engagement efforts take root at UM. Community-campus partnerships are now embedded in the culture of our institution. After years of promoting service-learning and community engagement on campus, it was heartening to see faculty members seek out engagement opportunities from the list of projects identified through M Partner.

The pilot phase of M Partner has recalled the work of George McLean, founder of the CREATE Foundation and the Community Development Foundation, publisher of the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal, and visionary leader for whom the McLean Institute is named. McLean believed in the power of people coming together to achieve ambitious goals that would improve quality of life for the entire community. This approach was synthesized by professor emeritus of sociology and founding director of the McLean Institute, Dr. Vaughn Grisham, as creating extraordinary results in ordinary communities. The lessons from George McLean and Dr. Vaughn Grisham teach us that when broad-based coalitions of community members join together, generate momentum through visible victories, and continue to build support for community and economic development, anything is possible.

George McLean saw local leadership as integral to community and economic development efforts. Based on those insights, Dr. Vaughn Grisham led a leadership development program in northeast Mississippi for many years, and we were excited to learn that several of our close collaborators in New Albany were graduates of Dr. Grisham's leadership program. George McLean also encouraged community leaders to partner with universities to harness the economic development potential of higher education. M Partner has provided a template for creating additional points of connection between the University of Mississippi and partner communities, and we see evidence of this in new placements through the North Mississippi VISTA Project and new faculty partnerships in Charleston, Lexington, and New Albany.

The projects and collaborations described on the following pages are a testament to the incredible efforts of our community partners, along with the dedication of faculty, staff, and students at UM. They have demonstrated – as George McLean knew – that by working together in service of common goal, anything is possible.

Albert Nylander, PhD  
Director, McLean Institute  
Professor of Sociology



THE UNIVERSITY of  
**MISSISSIPPI**  
MCLEAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE  
AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# Academic Courses and Internships

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

### Course

SRA 653: Graduate Directed Research

### Department

Health, Exercise Science, and Recreation Management

### Faculty Members

KoFan Lee and Kim Beason

### Community Liaisons

Johnny Epting, *Parks and Recreation Department*; Billye Jean Stroud and Tracy Vainisi, *New Albany Main Street Association*

### Semester

Spring 2019

### Project Description

The City of New Albany is committed to a quality parks and recreation system that delivers high-quality parks, trails, recreation programs, facilities, and events for all residents, while contributing to the economic well-being of the City. Faculty and students conducted research to provide a guide for future growth and development of New Albany's parks and recreation system.



### Final Deliverables

Survey on New Albany Community Recreation Needs and Satisfaction with over 200 responses.

Report with recommendations for considerations around fitness and leisure to guide program development as well as construction and renovation of facilities.

## MARKETING FOR THE BISCUITS AND JAM FARMERS' MARKET

### Course

HON 102: Freshman Honors II (two sections)

### Department

Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

### Faculty Member

Ashleen Williams

### Community Liaisons

Mary Jennifer Russell, *Sugaree's Bakery*; Lisa and Pat James, *Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market*; Billye Jean Stroud and Tracy Vainisi, *New Albany Main Street Association*

### Semester

Spring 2019

### Final Deliverables

6 reports reviewing best practices to promote attendance and engagement at the Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market.

1 summary report synthesizing recommendations around marketing, promotion, and engagement.



### Project Description

Explore best practices and make recommendations for expansion of the Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market in New Albany. Students conducted research and compiled reports consisting of introductory framing, stakeholder assessment, local context, literature review, and policy recommendations.

## ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AT THE UNION COUNTY LIBRARY

### Course

PPL 387: Education Policy

### Department

Public Policy Leadership

### Faculty Member

Melissa Bass

### Community Liaison

Sissy Bullock, *Union County Library*

### Semester

Spring 2019

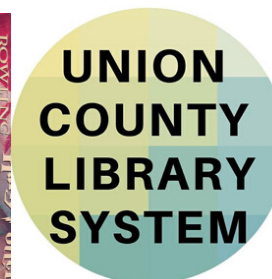
### Final Deliverables

Review of best practices around programming, public communication, branding and marketing, and funding sources.

Final report with recommendations for programming growth and expansion.

### Project Description

Libraries are important cornerstones of a healthy community, as they provide the opportunity to find jobs, explore medical research, experience new ideas, get lost in wonderful stories, and provide a sense of place for gathering. The Union County Library is often the only readily available source of comprehensive information needed by people for personal, family and job-related purposes, and a plan is needed to revitalize the public library to meet the changing dynamics of New Albany and Union County.



## FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP NEW ALBANY

### M Partner Summer Intern

Josh Baker, Economics Major

### Community Liaisons

Billye Jean Stroud and Tracy Vainisi, *New Albany Main Street Association*

### Semester

Summer 2019

### Project Description

Many community leaders in New Albany participated in leadership development programs through Dr. Vaughn Grisham, the founding director of the McLean Institute. There is interest in creating a similar leadership program for the next generation of diverse community leaders in New Albany and Union County. The M Partner Summer Intern researched best practices and prepared a model program for the City to implement.

### Final Deliverables

Review of model leadership development programs in North Mississippi.

Framework for Leadership New Albany, including program objectives, participant attributes, steering committee, participation agreement, suggested calendar and session structure, project goals, and alumni network.



## YOUTH FINANCIAL LITERACY AND COLLEGE PREPARATION

### M Partner Summer Intern

Breonna Grant, 2nd Year Law Student

### Community Liaison

Marquel Conner, *Boys and Girls Club of New Albany*

### Semester

Summer 2019

### Project Description

Offer enrichment and programming to inspire college-going aspirations and civic engagement among youth participating in summer programs at the Boys and Girls Club of New Albany. Youth also participated in an official community input session that is part of the Comprehensive Planning Process for the City of New Albany.

### Final Deliverables

Financial symposium in partnership with the Bank of New Albany, Bancorp South, and Renasant Bank.

ACT/SAT boot camp to prepare for college entrance exams.



## TEAM UP TO CLEAN UP BEAUTIFICATION INITIATIVE

### M Partner Summer Intern

Astha Kandel, Banking & Finance and Managerial Finance double major

### Community Liaisons

Billye Jean Stroud and Tracy Vainisi, *New Albany Main Street Association*

### Semester

Summer 2019

### Project Description

Support beautification and recycling efforts in New Albany, with a dual emphasis on reaching business owners and youth in order to create a culture of environmental stewardship and sustainability.

### Final Deliverables

Survey of local business owners on attitudes and behaviors around beautification and recycling.

Beautification and clean-up day with youth from the Boys and Girls Club.

Lesson plans about recycling and reducing waste materials for elementary and middle school students.



## EXPANSION OF THE BISCUITS AND JAM FARMERS' MARKET

### M Partner Summer Intern

Ysabella St. Amant, International Studies and Spanish double major

### Community Liaisons

Mary Jennifer Russell, *Sugaree's Bakery*; Lisa and Pat James, *Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market*; Billye Jean Stroud and Tracy Vainisi, *New Albany Main Street Association*

### Semester

Summer 2019

### Project Description

Explore best practices and make recommendations for expansion of the Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market in New Albany. Consider how the farmers' market aligns with larger efforts around community health and wellbeing.

### Final Deliverables

Interviews with vendors to gauge areas of strength and needs for improvement.

Surveys about produce purchasing, frequency, and awareness of the Biscuits and Jam Farmers' Market.

Final report with recommendations to support the culture of healthy eating and accessible local produce in New Albany and Union County.



## COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH THREE RIVERS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

### M Partner Summer Intern

Doug Weimer, Public Policy and Leadership major

### Community Liaison

John Byers, *Three Rivers Planning and Development District*

### Semester

Summer 2019

### Project Description

Support initiatives to attract new business to New Albany and Union County through site identifications, Request for Information applications, and presentations to communicate the value of doing business in the area.

### Final Deliverables

Research and data collection for reports to attract new business and industry to New Albany and Union County.





# Special Programs and Events

## START UP CAMP FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

### UM Partners

McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (CEED) Innovation Scholars Ashley Bowen, Management Information Science major; Dawn Boddie, Geological Engineering major; Jessica Clarke, Integrated Marketing Communications major; and Allison Floyd, Accountancy major

### Semester

Summer 2018

### Project Description

StartUp Camp for Young Entrepreneurs is designed to train middle school students in business development, marketing, and negotiation strategies. The camp is a weeklong, residential summer program on the campus of the University of Mississippi that challenges students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and create business ideas that will address unmet needs in their communities. Youth from M Partner communities were invited to participate at no cost.



## MCLEAN ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

### UM Partners

McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement; CEED Innovation Fellows Elena Bauer, 3rd year Law student and AK Burress, graduate student in Pharmacy; and CEED Innovation Scholars Brady Ruffin, Public Policy Leadership major, Dawn Boddie, Geological Engineering major, and Jessica Clarke, Integrated Marketing Communications major

### Semesters

Summer 2018 and 2019

### Program Description

The McLean Entrepreneurial Leadership Program is a weeklong, residential summer program on the campus of the University of Mississippi. The purpose of the McLean Entrepreneurial Leadership Program is to foster dialogue about how Mississippi can utilize resources through the University of Mississippi to address some of the state's most pressing needs. Outcomes of the program are designed to help stimulate business in local communities, improve educational systems, and strengthen the conversation between the university and community members. Youth from M Partner communities were invited to participate at no cost.



## SERVICE PROJECT WITH STUDENTS FROM EDHE 656: STUDENT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### UM Partners

Department of Higher Education, Division of Student Affairs, and Luckyday Residential College

### UM Faculty

Brandi Hephner LaBanc and Patrick Perry

### Semester

Fall 2018

### Project Description

Students participated in beautification efforts at the Park Along the River by painting a mural and picking up litter.



## M PARTNER BUSINESS FORUM

### UM Partners

McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement, Innovation Hub at Insight Park

### Statewide Partner

The Entrepreneur Center at the Mississippi Development Authority

### Featured Local Businesses

Brain Freeze, Cook's Healthcare, and High Point Roasters

### Semester

Fall 2018

### Program Description

Business development forum and webinar featuring lessons from local entrepreneurs. The webinar was broadcast from the Union County Heritage Museum and the interactive event allowed participants to explore the downtown area and support local businesses.



## SERVICE PROJECT WITH THE BLACK STUDENT UNION

### UM Partner

Black Student Union

### Semester

Spring 2019

### Project Description

Students completed a deep cleaning of indoor and outdoor exhibits at the Union County Heritage Museum in anticipation of a visit from an international delegation of visitors.



## M PARTNER COMMUNITY DAY 2018 & 2019

### UM Partner

McLean Institute for Public Service and  
Community Engagement

### Semester

Fall 2018 and Fall 2019

### Project Description

Beautification projects emerged as a priority in the community meetings that identified focus areas for M Partner. M Partner Community Day is a large-scale day of service across all three communities, designed to contribute to priority projects around beautification in downtown areas and around community landmarks.





# Partnerships through the North Mississippi VISTA Project

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT VISTA WITH THE UNION COUNTY HERITAGE MUSEUM (2018-2020)

### Community Partner

Union County Heritage Museum

### Terms of Service

2018-2019 and 2019-2020

### Objective

VISTA members make a full-time, yearlong commitment to uphold the program priorities of poverty alleviation, capacity building, sustainable solutions, and community empowerment. At the Union County Heritage Museum, VISTA Members Becky Rinehart (2018-2019) and Stephen Bennett (2019-2020) have conducted outreach to underserved schools and communities in North Mississippi, building sustainable partnerships to improve access to arts education and connecting children with resources that encourage college enrollment and career discovery. These partnerships are intended to empower educators to reach every student as they share child-centered educational activities that will strengthen academic performance and lead to improved rates of high school graduation and college attendance.



## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT VISTA WITH THE MINORITY PUL ALLIANCE (2018-2020)

### Community Partner

Minority PUL Alliance

### Terms of Service

2018-2019 and 2019-2020

### Objective

The Minority Pontotoc-Union-Lee (PUL) Alliance seeks to be a catalyst for improving economic opportunities for minorities throughout Mississippi by supporting diversity in business, empowering individuals, and fostering entrepreneurship. VISTA members Adriana Cooper (2018-2019) and Candice Williams (2019-2020) have built upon these efforts by cultivating community partnerships, advancing resource development, supporting the institutionalization of volunteer initiatives, and elevating public awareness efforts to support minority-owned businesses. The VISTA members will fight poverty by enhancing economic opportunities available to minority-owned businesses in the form of jobs, entrepreneurship, and financial resources.



## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT VISTA WITH THE TALLAHATCHIE ARTS COUNCIL (2018-2020)

### Community Partner

Tallahatchie Arts Council

### Terms of Service

2018-2019 and 2019-2020

### Objective

The Tallahatchie Arts Council takes a novel approach to offering arts education, with mentorship for underserved youth at the center of its theory of change. While enjoying access to the resources and supervision of the Union County Heritage Museum, VISTA members Karen Tuck (2018-2019) and Susie Brown (2019-2020) have built capacity for the Tallahatchie Arts Council by researching best practices for nonprofit arts organizations; recruiting, training, and coordinating volunteers; assisting with curriculum development; and supporting grant writing efforts. By building the systems and infrastructure to enhance the capacity of the Tallahatchie Arts Council, the VISTA members increase access to arts enrichment and mentorship opportunities for underserved youth. The programming and mentorship instills an appreciation for the arts, devoted practice of creative thinking, and persistence directed at educational attainment.



## VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES 2018 & 2019

### Community Partners

New Albany School District (2018 & 2019) and Union County School District (2018)

### Terms of Service

Summer 2018 and Summer 2019

### Objective

VISTA Summer Associates complete 300 hours of hands-on, direct service with community partner organizations, with an emphasis on summer learning and food security. VISTA Summer Associates Sydnie Bailey (2018), Jarvis Benson (2018) and Ashley McDaniel (2019) engaged PK-12 students to strengthen literacy and math skills during the summer months.



## MLK DAY SERVICE PROJECT

### Community Partner

Boys and Girls Club of New Albany

### Semester

Spring 2019

### Objective

MLK Day is a national day of service, observed as a “day on, not a day off.” MLK Day of Service is intended to empower individuals, strengthen communities, bridge barriers, create solutions to social problems, and move us closer to Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community." In observance of MLK Day 2019, members of the North Mississippi VISTA Project and UM volunteers traveled to New Albany to complete beautification projects on Bankhead Street, at the Park Along the River, and at the Union County Heritage Museum.







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