

COFO'S Proposed

COMMUNITY CENTERS

"Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O! I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just".....

ONE MAN ONE VOTE

COFO PUBLICATION # 8

Labor Donated

THE COFO COMMUNITY CENTERS

That which follows is an outline of a plan to establish a number of community centers in the communities of small towns in the state of Mississippi. The plan represents an effort to encourage deprived Americans in their quest for human dignity and full citizenship. It represents an effort to break the vicious cycle of discrimination in the deep South.

Purposes of the Centers:

1. To supply the fundamental needs of the people in the communities where they are located if these needs are not being met.
2. To act as an institution providing supplementary educational assistance for children of low-income parents.
3. To impart to potential leaders leadership skills and leadership training so that local persons will be better able to diagnose and combat their community's problems.
4. To provide recreation for youth through films, reading clubs, drama clubs and etc.
5. To provide low-income people with political education in order to insure their effective participation in the democratic process.
6. To serve as training centers where people can come and receive training in various skills such as upholstery, mechanical training television and radio repair, clerical work, and any other skills that would be beneficial to them.

SUPPLYING FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS

The Need and the General Condition:

COFO has obtained affidavits from several persons throughout rural Mississippi about their general condition. All of these indicate an overwhelming need for outside assistance. What the affidavits reveal can be summed up and described. In general, however, summaries and general statements of poverty seem to no longer get the point across. Therefore, here included are a few of the several affidavits (in the original wording) thus far received by COFO:

John D. Wesley age 37(head of family)
 Mary M. Wesley age 33
 Mary Lee age 15
 Delois age 12
 John D. Jr. age 11
 Dorothy Mae age 9
 Sherely Ann age 7
 Florence age 5
 Jessie age 2

Fairly Wesley age 69
 M H. Wesley age 69

I gets \$40.00 a month.
 Most of it goes for family living. I needs help. We are not able to work.

Percy Jones age 50
 Rosie L. Jones 47
 Percy Jones Jr. age 6

I work by the day. No work now and no money I need some help.

Joe Nathan Caesar age 20
 Dorothy Lee Caesar age 17
 John Henry Caesar age 13
 James Henry Caesar age 15
 Larry age 3 months

Bessie Lee Ferguson age 41
 (head of the family)
 Eddie 16
 Royal 14
 Ned 12
 Mack E. 10
 Aron 9
 Dannie 6
 Dorothy Lee 3
 Bernice 1 1/2

I am a shearer copor. I made 6 bales cotton payed all out for debts. We need help.

I works by the day. No work now no money I really need help. in need of food.

Josephine Sutton age 38
 (head of the family)
 Izzer 19
 Nellie Mae 17
 Earl 14
 Ethel Mae 12
 Dorothy Mae 8(Grand Child)
 T.J. 8
 Rooshell 4
 Earon 3

P.K. Delany age 65
 Ida 63
 Samuel 18
 Gladys 16

I day work and gets help from the welfare but it isn't enough to live on.

I rented my place for \$800.00 I couldn't work because I had to take care for my wife she is sick. I needs help.

Griffin McLaurin age 23
Catherine 23
Lorella 7
Deal 6
Lonell 5
Henry Earl 4
Griffin, Jr. 7 mo.

I work on the public not working
now I make \$60.00 per week I
been out of work since Nov. I
need help.

Henry Friend Jr. age 31
Minnie 25

3 boys 2 girls I work by the
day No work and no money. I
needs help.

Robert W. Buchanan age 38
Velma L. 38

I work my own place borrow
money but pay out for bills I
need help.

Lucidde Carthan age 44
4 boys 3 girls
Fred Tate 91

I gets a little help from
the Welfare but it isn't
enough to live on. I am
a day worker No work now and
no money. I need help.

Joe J. Mitchell age 49
Lou Ollie Mitchell 41

We have 14 children income for
the last year was 3000 I am not
working now, need help.

Joe Willie Brown age 25
Emmerline 26
1 Girl 15

I day work no money and no job
now. I make 250.00 a year. I
need help.

Frank Donelson age 39
Lillie C. Donelson 37
We have 14 children
Minnie 20
Ora 18
Frank Jr. 15
Bernice 16
Eddie V. 18
Nick 12
Clothe 11
J.C. 7
Willie 3
Mary 8
Christen 1
Jerry 2
Jerrey Dean 2
Dial 6 mo.

I work by the day \$6.00 and
have work sence 7 November.
And I am railly in need for
some food and cloth.

Family in need. Mr. Jack Clark
75 Mrs. Jannie Clark 52 I
am not working I have ben sick
over a year and I railly need
help I gat on the Welfair they
give me food for five month
and the fift month they told
me not to come back and I am
still sick and cent work. No
one is working I want to the
hospitail in Jackson and I
owe them \$600 and I owe Lexing
hospitail \$51 dollars so I
railly need help.

Mr. Herman Ferguson age 35
Rebecca Ferguson 37

We have 5 children. We are
day Workers we live on a
plantation as you know it is
nothing much to be done be-
cause the machine get all the
work and the littes we get
it goes as fast as we make it
and we need some help

Council of Federated Organizations
1017 Lynch St. - P.O. Box 2896
Jackson, Mississippi

The Community Centers

That which follows is a brief exposition of the CORE-SNCC proposal for community centers. (It should also be mentioned at the outset that the National Council of Churches (NCC) has made a provisional commitment to supply some of the personnel and financial needs for some of the centers.)

Though the term "community center" is being used, it should not be thought that the concept Mississippi CORE and SNCC workers have in mind is the traditional community centers that were common throughout the country ten or fifteen years ago. What we have in mind is to establish a place in low-income areas where low-income persons can have access to a number of services that will enable them to live better.

The centers, it is hoped, will undertake the following programs:

DIETARY

Food distribution when possible, if food is donated from outside sources to the center--an attempt will be made to distribute it to those families most in need. Mississippi SNCC and CORE workers desire that most of the persons working with the food distribution program be local people. These local citizens would determine who the neediest families in their area are, and also be responsible for supplying the people to distribute the commodities. Thus there would have to be space in the community center for storage and distribution, but no permanent personnel requirements are foreseen.

Nutrition instruction from the center. It is planned to have a field worker who can tour the area of the community center giving instruction in proper and adequate nutrition. The worker will also inform housewives and recipients of surplus commodities how to prepare the food they receive for maximum nutritional efficiency. The field worker will conduct weekly workshops from the center on adequate dietary levels. Mississippi CORE and SNCC see the requirements for this phase of the dietary program to be one staff person with knowledge of minimum dietary requirements.

When there is no food available to distribute, vitamins will be distributed from the center. No cost is anticipated, because an attempt will be made to have the vitamins donated by large pharmaceutical concerns throughout the country.

SELF HELP PROGRAM

Tool-loan bank. The center will have a tool-loan bank where persons who want to borrow tools for house repair will be able to do so. Nails, screws and other minor supplies will be provided free. To carry out this program, the tools and a small continuing budget are needed.

Teen-age work corps. On Saturday mornings, a work corps of 17-19-year-olds will make needed improvements such as painting, roof repair, etc. on the dilapidated homes of low-income families.

Literacy. A basic course will be offered in the centers, available to all those who request it.

Federal programs. The U.S. Congress have devised and passed legislation specifically designed to help low-income rural people. The federal government has not, however, supplied the manpower necessary in order to insure that the programs are taken advantage of. The tendency has been to concede to the wishes of the Southern politicians and leave the implementation of any program up to local authorities in Mississippi. The local authorities are reluctant to act, and when they do act, the benefits from their actions are not usually to those whom the program was designed to help. Consequently, from the community center will operate a field worker who will: a. establish contact with all the low-income farmers in the area, b. explain to low-income families what the problems of their particular area are and what generates these problems, c. inform them of all the various federal programs for the rural poor, d. assist them by filling out applications and even taking the farmers to the local governmental agencies, e. attempt to secure representation for low-income farmers on the ASCS committees by informing farmers that they can vote in the election of ASCS committees, f. secure from unemployed farm workers and farm youth groups of participants for job training under the Manpower Development and Training Act.

Mississippi CORE and SNCC workers see the requirement for this phase of the "self help program" as being an individual who is willing to equip himself (or herself) with a knowledge of the various programs available for low-income rural families.

YOUTH PROGRAM

Library facilities. Each community center will have: 1. a library with "around the clock" hours, 2. reading clubs and book discussion hours. These programs will be initiated by the center staff, but it is hoped that their eventual operation will be handled by local volunteers.

There will also be a drama group, art classes, a pen pal group (writing letters to foreign students), speech contests, movies and a current events hour.

Remedial Instruction will be given in all phases of English grammar and basic math, including algebra and geometry. Any type of tutorial training that high school or younger-aged children request will be provided. In addition, an outgoing counselling service for school dropouts will be an essential part of the center.

POLITICAL PROGRAMS

Political education from the centers will be second-step political education classes in U.S. economic and political history and leadership laboratories and workshops training young Mississippians for future leadership.

Assembly Hall. The center will serve as a meeting place for all civil rights agencies, political clubs and ad hoc groups. It will also be a place where SCLC teachers can conduct their citizenship classes.

Shelter

Many deep south rural people live in housing unfit for human habitation. The 1960 census showed that in Mississippi over 50% of the rural occupied farm housing was classified as either deteriorating or dilapidated. Furthermore, more than 50% of the rural occupied homes have no piped water and more than 75% have no flush toilets, bathtubs or showers. For Negroes the housing situation is even more alarming. The 1960 census showed that in Mississippi, 66% of all Negro housing was "dilapidated or deteriorating"--71% in rural areas. More than 90% of rural Negro homes in Mississippi have neither flush toilets nor bathing or shower facilities. The statistics speak for themselves:

	Rural Occupied Farm	NEGRO		
		State total	Urban	Rural
All Housing Units	123,495	207,611	77,824	129,787
Owner-occupied (#)	72,076	79,059	32,913	46,146
Owner-occupied (%)	58.4	38.1	42.3	35.6
Renter-occupied (#)	51,418	128,552	44,911	83,641
Renter-occupied (%)	41.6	61.9	57.5	64.4
Condition				
Owner occupied	72,076	79,059	32,913	46,146
Sound	47,610	36,656	17,677	18,979
Deteriorating	18,513	27,545	10,005	17,540
Dilapidated	5,953	14,853	5,231	9,622
Renter occupied	51,418	128,552	44,911	83,641
Sound	13,552	33,168	15,294	17,874
Deteriorating	23,008	52,629	15,937	36,692
Dilapidated	14,858	42,755	13,680	29,075
Water Supply				
Hot & cold water, piped inside	38,576	40,870	33,181	7,689
Only cold water, piped inside	11,580	39,101	30,376	8,725
Piped water outside	6,494	27,502	10,229	17,273
No piped water	66,844	100,138	4,938	96,100
Toilet Facilities				
Flush toilet, exclusive use	38,039	62,100	52,481	9,619
Flush toilet, shared use	189	7,576	6,965	611
None	85,266	137,811	18,878	119,503
Bathing Facilities				
Bathtub or shower, exclusive use	38,021	44,991	36,333	8,658
Bathtub or shower, shared	206	2,207	1,807	400
No bathtub or shower	85,277	160,413	39,684	120,729

Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate for the Mississippi Negro is more than twice as high as that of the white Mississippian. Inadequate dietary levels contribute significantly to deaths in early infancy, stillbirths and premature births (often fatal in situations where adequate medical facilities are not provided for Negroes). This situation is directly traceable to general conditions of poverty and ignorance; it can be somewhat alleviated by community-wide programs of education and aid in prenatal and infant care. When social justice comes to Mississippi, the differential in available facilities and the death-creating poverty shall be eliminated.

Food

The adequacy of dietary levels are measured by two criteria: caloric intake (quantity) and nutritional content (quality). The caloric intake for some--not all--poor rural Mississippians is at some--not all--times sufficient. These times are for the most part: 1) When they are recipients of government commodities, 2) During the period when the tenant or low income farmer receives money from the sale of his cotton and other minor crops--this usually occurs in early and mid-fall, and 3) when credit is given to tenant-families by their landlords--usually from late March to July. During other periods the poor rural families, the under and un-employed fare as best they can--this in most instances means: tightening their belts, surviving off of one meal a day, adults going without so that children may eat--in short it simply means slow starvation.

Even when food is adequate it is composed largely of starches and fats. There is a shocking reliance on corn bread, sweet potatoes and fat or side pork. Even the government commodities have shortcomings and are not sufficient to insure the recipients adequate nutrition--despite what is claimed. Protein, calcium, essential vitamins and minerals are not taken in sufficient quantity to insure proper nutrition for the poor in Mississippi.

Clothing

Strange as it may seem, low income rural Mississippians are better dressed than their urban economic peers. This occurs because tenants receive their annual income for the most part in one lump sum in addition to the fact that many times they are paid in clothes and other necessities.

Consequently a farmer may have \$200 at one time--for the entire year--much more than \$1,000 per year urban workers will ever have at one time. The farmer is as a result in a much better position to buy a new suit or dress, etc.

Though the poor ruralite may be better dressed than the poor urbanite, the situation for both can best be described as drastic. Mothers don't go around the houses in dirty robes or ragged dresses or even their slips because they are basically unclean--but because they have absolutely nothing to change into. Fathers don't lounge around in the same filthy smelly overalls they work in during the day because they are too lazy to change their clothes, but because they have nothing else to put on. Children do not walk around barefooted because they want to put their feet in the Mississippi mud; but because their parents can not afford them shoes. And in the winter that Mississippi mud becomes hard frozen ground.

THE COFO ANSWER

COFO envisions a community center which will have the following:

1. A clothing distribution program.
2. A dietary program.
3. An infant-care program.
4. A housing improvement program.

Clothing Distribution:

COFO wants to have clothing drives started throughout the country, the clothing thus contributed to be distributed from the community centers according to individual needs. A special effort will be made to supply every youngster with a pair of shoes. COFO will attempt to have local people handle this program. Local volunteer people will decide which individuals are most in need and distribute the clothing to them. Local people will all be responsible for the unpacking, sorting and discarding unusable clothing. The needs for this program thus seem to be 1) space in the center from which clothing can be distributed, 2) recruitment of local people to administer the program.

Dietary Program:

COFO is going to attempt to have food donated to Mississippi for the purpose of distributing it to needy families. Where food is insufficient in quantity, an attempt will be made to undertake a massive vitamin-pil distributing program. Workshops will be held weekly in the community center on how to get maximal nutritional value from the food that is prepared in the home. The needs for this program are somewhat similar to those for the clothing distribution programs: space and local volunteers. In addition, COFO will need one person with a knowledge of dietary requirements and nutritional content of food to direct the workshops.

Infant-care Program:

COFO believes that the high infant-mortality rates that low-income persons have can be reduced if a field worker can travel from home to home visiting pregnant women and instructing them in proper eating habits during the months of pregnancy as well as other basic information that pregnant women should have in order to insure the life of their child through infancy. The field worker who is used for this program can be the same worker who operates the dietary program for the center.

Housing Repair Program:

The community center will have a tool-loan bank where persons who want to borrow tools for house repair can do so. Nails, screws and other minor supplies will be provided free. To carry out this endeavor tools and a small continuing budget are needed.

On Saturday, two work corps of 17-19 year olds will make needed improvements such as painting, roof repair, etc., on the dilapidated and deteriorating homes of low-income families.

The program requires a male worker to oversee the lending of tools and the organizing of the work corps.

General Information:

The U.S. Congress has devised and passed legislation specifically designed to help low-income rural people. The main tendency has been to concede to the wishes of the Southern politicians and leave the implementation of any program up to local authorities in Mississippi. Local authorities are reluctant to act, and when they do, the benefits from their actions are not usually to those for whom the programs were designed to help. Consequently, from the community center a field worker who will: 1) establish contact with all the low-income farmers in the area, 2) explain to low-income families what the problems of their particular area are and what generates these problems, 3) inform them of all the various federal programs for the rural poor, 4) assist them by filling out applications and even taking the farmers to the local governmental agencies, 5) attempt to secure representation for low-income farmers on the ABCS committees, 6) secure from unemployed farm workers and farm youth groups of participants for job training under the Manpower Development and Training Act.

SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL FACILITY

The Need

In the context of a modern technological society--such as ours--the education provided many rural Mississippians is all but worthless. Massive reform in the entire educational system is imperative; but such action is unlikely in the near future. In many schools in rural Mississippi and for Negroes in the urban areas the student is merely attending school. He learns little and picks up not even the basic tools that one is expected to obtain. He acquires no knowledge of the correct usage of the English language--this is manifested in his speech and writings. His knowledge of mathematics or even basic arithmetic is nil. This in twentieth century America! Unbelievable, but true!!

The following are quotes from the Biennial Report and Recommendations of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the Legislature of Mississippi:

"In many counties, particularly in rural areas, Negro children are forced to attend school in mere shacks or in church houses."

"There are 3345 Negro public schools in Mississippi. Nearly one half of these schools are housed in churches, tenant houses, or any other type of building available. In such schools the equipment is nil."

"...recommend sufficient funds be budgeted during next biennium to allow equal amounts to be allocated according to density formulas for Negro and white.. Our best estimates indicate that approximately 1.2 million annually would be needed to close the gap that now exists between white and Negro allocations."

"There was a serious shortage of textbooks in some Negro schools."

Of the total number of public high schools in Mississippi, only _____ are accredited by the _____. There are three reasons why so very few schools are accredited, however, the chief reason in almost all instances is that the library facilities in the high schools are inferior.

To top all of this off, despite the fact that the Supreme Court ruled in *Johnson v. Virginia*, 373 U.S. 61 (1963) that "it is no longer open to question that a state may not constitutionally require segregation of public facilities," Negroes are not permitted in over 90% of the public libraries in the state.

The COFO Answer:

CORE and SNCC book drives have brought over 50,000 books to Mississippi. The Northern book drives are going to continue and COFO intends to establish libraries primarily for teenagers and youngsters in all of its community centers. Hopefully, each center will have a minimum of 10,000 books.

Any type of tutorial training that high school or younger group children request will be provided.

An area of the center will serve in the after-school hours as a study hall in order that the youths of the area will have a place which is conducive to studying and to doing homework.

For school dropouts COFO is planning a work-study program which will employ 24 school dropouts who have potential but do need guidance and additional training. It is desired to have 12 boys and 12 girls. They will work in the center four hours a day as library aids, typist (they no doubt will have to learn how to type), file clerks, people who reply to correspondence, custodial assistants. They will also be required to study, primarily, those things which they need most (based on tests given to them) four hours a day with assistance from a center staff worker. They will be required to read one book a week (of their own choosing) and write a report on it.

Leadership Training

The Need:

Southern rural areas, particularly in Mississippi, are beset with a number of problems of all types: economic, health, social, housing, educational, etc. One of the reasons that more self-help programs are not developed locally is that those who are most capable of doing anything at all do not want to risk losing what little position that they have by an attempt to "disturb things." Those who have the greatest desire to see changes made and would work diligently at getting self-help programs started have very little knowledge of what needs to be done or how to do it.

The COFO Answer:

COFO wants to offer from the community centers to young adults who seem to be potential community leaders the required training in order to impart to them the necessary skills needed to become effective leaders.

COFO will thus offer from the center instruction on 1) the basic principles of community leadership, 2) how to call, organize and conduct effective community meetings, 3) how to use audio-visual aids, 5) duplicating techniques: use of mimeo, ditto, various photo-copy methods, hectograph, etc., 6) preparation of political leaflets and handbills, 7) remedial writing and speaking for effective leadership.

RECREATIONAL FACILITY

Recreational facilities for rural youth in Mississippi are practically non-existent. To meet this need CCFO wants to offer recreational programs that have an educational flavor and not strictly fun-type recreast. For example; 1) a world discussion hour where teenagers and adults can get together twice a week in order to discuss current events, 2) reading clubs: weekly meetings where teenagers can be told about a book for the purpose of stimulating them to read it. 3) art classes, 4) drama groups, 5) record hour: weekly meetings where classical and folk records will be played and interpreted for those who attend, 6) movies: weekly educational films will be shown with films shown for entertainment when available, 7) pen-pal hour: writing of letters to persons in foreign countries, 8) Others: depending on the ingenuity of the staff.

POLITICAL ACTION FUNCTIONS

Voter registration:

Attempts by SNCC and CORE workers will not cease despite the beatings, jailings and acts of violence that SNCC and CORE workers have sustained.

Needed now is to establish in the minds of the people in the community where SNCC and CORE field workers are located that the voter registration program is a permanent one and not a hit or miss affair wherein the canvasser is here today and gone tomorrow. The center will serve as a headquarters for voter registration programs.

Political education:

The masses of poor rural folk have absolutely no conception of how the governments (state, local and federal) function. They are neither aware of the economic factors that determine many of the political decisions made. In an attempt to overcome this enormous amount of political and economic ignorance the center will offer:

1. Second-step political education classes in U.S. economic and political history.
2. Citizenship classes, qualifying persons to be able to pass registration tests.

Assembling Facility:

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee began its work in Mississippi in an attempt to get people registered to vote. Since the end of reconstruction, any and all stirrings of Negro political organization have been deliberately and violently stifled. The State of Mississippi, through its white citizens council members, its State Sovereignty Commission, still attempts to follow the policy. Encouraging political action in Mississippi, to put it mildly, is a rather dangerous business, and it is often difficult to find a private building willing to allow political meetings on the premises.

The centers will thus:

- 1) Serve as a meeting place for all civil rights agencies, political clubs and ad hoc groups.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Many thousand farm workers, tenants and share croppers can no longer obtain employment in agriculture due to the increased mechanization of the farm. It is difficult for many of these folk to find employment elsewhere because they are not trained for anything -- as stated they are for the most part unskilled and training classes that have been designed are above their level -- again, as stated for the most part they are also uneducated.

What to do with these people thus is an ever looming problem increasing in degree daily because it is compounded by the racial problem. From the community centers it is desired to have:

- 1) Instructors who will be able to give instruction in fundamental subjects to prepare people so that they will be able to take advantage of training programs offered.
- 2) Training programs set up under the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA).
- 3) Re-training programs where local citizens can learn different trades (mechanics, upholstery, clerical work, cabinet making, etc.)

In making the center function. It is hoped that staff workers will provide guidance for the programs only until the volunteers are able to take over themselves.

WORK STUDY PROGRAM:

For the 24 teenagers on the work-study program a salary of \$100.00 per month for ten months is suggested. (\$24,000 total).

PHYSICAL PLANT STRUCTURE:

There will be a problem of getting the physical facility into shape. The cost of this will obviously vary in individual cases, depending largely on the condition of the bldg. that is chosen for the Center. It would seem that \$5,000.00 should be a maximum for getting any one place into shape.....

PLANT FUNCTIONING:

The centers will also have to be equiped with furniture and other items in order that the Center will be able to function (Off-hand it can be said that lounge type furniture, 3-6 easy chairs, 2-5 lamps three dozen folding chairs, 2 large study tables are basic, also a good record player).

Items for Programs

These we feel can best be supplied by getting three colleges to adopt the Centers as their "baby" and dividing among them the items we feel are needed for the programs. They (the schools) can then have "drives" or what-have-you in order to obtain the items. As there shouldn't be but 15-20 items in all, each school would only be respons for 5-7 items. Needless to say the implications from such an approach are encouraging, because once the schools get the ball rolling, labor unions, church groups and other organizations who don't have "friends for SNCC groups" might adopt a center and can be tapped in this manner

What follows is a listing of some of the things that will be needed immediately--some to be supplied by us and some to be supplied by the schools chosen to adopt a Center.....

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>STAFF MEMBERS</u>	<u>VOLUNTEERS</u>	<u>EQUIPMENT</u>
Library	A	1-5	tables-chairs-magazines and newspaper racks-book pockets and cards-book men tape-2 drawer filing cabin (letters)- 2 drawer filing cabinet (index cards)-book marking supplies (for cata-logging) date stamp and in pad.....
Tutorial	all staff	unlimited	no foreseeable ones at this time
Movies	A	1 - 3	Projector-screen-(films or movies can be obtained fro gov't sources or our "fric in Hollywood.)

School drop-outs	all staff	3-6	literature (I will specify later)
Art classes	C	1-2	tempera paint, all colors-pride of newsprint paper (all sizes useful particularly large 18"X 24")--brushes (mostly medium for blunt scissors (for children to use-heavy thread-needles (simple childrens type)-construction paper-finger paints and paper-DUCCO- If we could get a good sized set: 1. leather 2. gimp 3. shears 4. punch 5. pattern and mallet 6. patterns also, if gotten in abundance clay, plasticene.....
World events hour	B	1*	subscriptions to maybe three or four good newspapers.
Pen-pal hour	D	1-2	supply of adequate ball-point pens-paper and envelopes for foreign mailing.....
Record hour	C	1-2	folk and classical records.
Food and Clothing Distribution		2-4	food-clothing-vitamins
Voter Registration	D		existing personnel and present or projected budgets.
Housing Repair	C	unlimited	house paint-nails-hammers-saws-paint brushes-screws and carpentry tools.
Pre-Natal Care and Nutrition Program	B		Audio-visual aids

EXISTING CENTERS

COFO has started two community centers. One in Greenwood, Mississippi and the other in Meridian, Mississippi.

The following are reports by Jane Stenbridge and Rita Schwerner on these two centers:

THE GREENWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER

What is the Greenwood Community Center, how does it function, who does it serve and why is it necessary? These are questions that are constantly being asked by people who have heard of the Center in Greenwood and desire more than a vague understanding of what it is doing, what it intends to do- people who desire a knowledge of the long-run implications which the Center presents.

It might be best if I put this into the first person and offer a picture of the Center as I see it, thus giving you my impressions of what the Center is...and why it is so needed. First, I would tell you about our library...

I am writing this in the library...am sitting in the middle of thirty great children. Schools out. When school lets out, the children come here to our office...because it's warm here and because we have books for them.

This is 708 Avenue N, Greenwood, Mississippi-combination voter registration office, dining hall, food and clothing center, and library. When the Negroes of Greenwood are hungry or cold, which is most of the time these days, they come here. The children come too. For books.

Right now, we have four shelves of books just for them. They pretty well clear these shelves every day. We let them take as many as three books each and, of course, they all take three. First they will want books about rockets and jets...because they are American children. Then, they will want to read about other children and animals...because they are just children.

The Gordons and the Salters come in every single day...they're here now...Ruthie May Gordon, Evelyn Gordon, Dorothy Faye Gordon, Deborah Gordon...Jacqueline Salter, Jerry Salter, Loretta Salter. The Gordons live right around the corner - at 607 Broad Street, and the Salters at 608. Together, they cover first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Tiny Mildred Moore wants books about puppies. If you could see this child, you'd wish for a library full of books about puppies...and you'd wish for a real live puppy to give her.

Some afternoons, the arguments run hot - especially among the fifth and sixth grade boys. They all want a book about Cape Cod, the one with the sail boat on its cover. There's only one copy. This takes some management. These are kids, though, who never had nothing. They are accustomed to waiting. They are mostly just happy with "all those books..."

What we want to do is bring in, not thirty, but a hundred of this city's children. We want not four shelves, but a roomful of books for them. Most of all, we want to be able to respond in every possible way to their enthusiasm and their hunger for knowledge. We must offer a program creative enough to match their tremendous energies, answer their great needs.

At the present time, we can offer these children good books and guided use of them. We have, on Wednesday and Friday mornings, a story-time hour for pre-school children. On Saturdays, we have a story hour for the older children and, whenever possible, a children's movie. There is so much more to be done and we must do it. For example, we need a room for these children, at least part of a room. Children who eat and sleep, play and study in crowded shacks, should have a place of their own - sometimes. We need tables and chairs, desks and curtains. And we want some of the exciting materials that white children have - like aquariums and sand tables, science kits, good art materials. We want these children to be able to hear good music, to make music, to see films.

We want these things because these children are our children - children of the South, and of tomorrow. The Salters and Gordons and Moores... will inherit the South. Unless we let them learn, they will not learn - not enough. They must learn because, while we are breaking down the old ways, it is they who will create the new.

When you spend the long morning hours out in the dirt roads of this town, trying to explain the political process to poor and frightened people...when you have to tell at least one person a day that there is no more food...when you write pages and pages of police brutality and face it yourself...then, by three o'clock on any afternoon, you are tired and sometimes, a little bitter. But, at three, the children come...if you should happen in some afternoon around three, you would see thirty children waiting in line for books...especially about rocket and jets and other children. That is the Greenwood Community Center.

It is the library and these children. And it is the line of beautiful spatter paintings that the children did in art class. The paintings line the walls of our library...red, yellow, blue, happy. Richard Frey wants to start the art classes again and we need materials. It is something of joy to watch children stand before a shelf of good books...and something miraculous to see them work with color.

In an office like this, a lot of things go up on the walls - press releases, clippings, notices, posters, maps, charts, and children's paintings. We get tired of press releases and charts, but the paintings remain on the walls...because they are beautiful. Barbara Johnson, our librarian, doesn't want to take them down. None of us do...

The Community Center is the library - children asking for books about puppies, high school students looking for Camus, Negro teachers reading civil rights books. It is spatter paintings and it is leaving spatter paintings on the wall for a long time. Children and youth. And parents. It is the parents too...

Yesterday morning, three mothers from nearby Itta Bona were waiting when we arrived at the office. They came to see if we had any food or children's shoes. We did not have food...but what happiness it was to dump a barrel of good shoes out for their choosing. One of the ladies was named Mrs. Jones. In our records, it says that Mrs. Jones lost her job and house on a well-known plantation...because she went to the courthouse to try and register to vote. She lost her job and, with her eleven young children, was evicted from the plantation shack. The children are of school age, but they are not attending school. They do not have shoes to wear. Nor do they have enough food, nor heat to warm them against the winds that sweep this Delta in winter, nor a decent house, nor money to buy medicine for the flu.

What I could do for Mrs. Jones yesterday morning...was to help her find eleven pairs of shoes and, when she left, gave her a bottle of vitamins and a box of aspirin. She was deeply grateful...for very little. Mrs. Jones has no work now. Because of automation and because of our voter registration drive, she and thousands like her will not have work for a long time, if ever. They will come to this office and we will have to be ready to supply their needs. That is the reason, the function, and the goal of the Center.

Trying to feed and clothe the people is not a new responsibility. Many months ago, when SNCC first initiated voter registration here, people began losing their jobs and we began trying to help them survive these hard years. In that same sense, our office has always been a community center. But we have never received enough food nor enough warm clothes. Since the State of Mississippi has taken these people off welfare, we must undertake and organize welfare programs. Unless we are prepared to feed and clothe them, they will not be fed nor will they be kept warm.

Two weeks ago, we had Food and Clothing Day at 708 Avenue N. From our records, we had gotten names of all those families whose heads are unemployed because of attempting to vote. To these people we sent letter announcing Food and Clothing Day to begin on Friday at nine in the morning. By seven, the line began to form at our doors. It was a very cold morning...parents with babies came upstairs and sat huddled around a little gas heater waiting for their names to be called. Others stood in line outside...clutching the letters we had mailed them...waiting...silent. At six that night, people still waited. Some went away happy with warm coats and children's shoes, and a few cans of beans. Some went away with only two or three thin shirts, because nothing else was left.

Downstairs today, we have two boxes of shoes...one box of clothes, half a dozen cans of beans. It is not enough. The people will come. They came already. We are not caring for them as we must. Until we have a real Center receiving regular shipments of food, clothing, and medicine we will not have served this community and not for long will the community continue to exist, as community.

Mississippi has to be felt to be understood. To feel Mississippi is to watch a line of children waiting for books...a line of mothers and fathers waiting for food and clothes, especially on a very cold morning in the Mississippi Delta.

There is more, always there is more. Many children do not have the money to buy hot lunches at school...they eat two cookies from the corner store. We have to give them hot food. Many of our high school students are dropping out to get jobs...but there are no jobs and there never will be jobs for school dropouts. We have to help them learn. We have to help....

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER: SCHEDULE

LIBRARY

3:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M. Monday through Friday
 9:30 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. Saturday
 12:00 noon - 5:00 P.M. Sunday

Librarian - Miss Barbara Johnson

TUTORIAL

For those students who would like help in certain subjects, we have staff members to provide this help. We are concentrating right now on algebra, geometry, and English grammar and composition.

Geometry: Monday & Wednesday 4:00 - 5:30 P.M.
 Algebra: Thursday & Friday 4:00 - 5:30 P.M.
 English: Monday & Thursday 4:00 - 5:30 P.M.

CULTURAL

ART CLASSES (1st through 6th grade)

4:00 P.M. Wednesday
 10:00 A.M. Saturday

ART (for high school and young adults)

7:00 - 8:00 P.M. Monday and Wednesday

WORLD EVENTS (for high school and adults)

8:30 - 9:30 P.M. Monday and Wednesday

RECORD HOUR (For high school and adults)

7:00 - 8:00 P.M. Tuesday and Thursday

PEN PAL HOUR (for high school students)

8:30 - 9:30 P.M. Tuesday and Thursday
 (for high school and adults)

MOVIES (for high school and adults)

7:00 - 9:30 P.M. Friday

MOVIES (for children) 2:00 P.M. Saturday

Meridian Community Center--Later Report

I. Programs in operation

1. The library, from which children, teenagers, and adults have all drawn books. There are about 10,000 volumes now up, and additional shelving is being put up for more books not yet received. Shelves were built by local young men: Marshall and David Sims, and James Chaney. The books have been catalogued on a simple basis, and books are therefore checked out in a systematic way. No fines are charged for overdue books, yet books have been coming back on time. The reasons for not fining are that if children especially, have overdue books we do not want to discourage their coming to the center by having a fine due. Some people, too, have never owned a book, and if they want a book that badly (not many, of course), it is felt that it would help them more than it would hurt the library. All books but the reference works may be taken out.

2. Story hour, held every Saturday afternoon for children five-ten years old. At this time children have stories read to them, songs are sung, refreshments served, and time is given for them to wander around and pick out their own books to take out. Children are given transportation to and from the center where necessary. Growth of this program has been due to leaflet distribution and word of mouth.

3. For those people who need voter registration instruction, evening classes have been set up twice a week. The center will also serve as a training location for those who wish to teach others to fill out registration forms. Publicity due to posters, leaflet distribution and word of mouth.

4. Teen room: One of the rooms in the center has been set aside for teens and young adults. A ping-pong table has been constructed by the boys previously mentioned. A phonograph is in the room and records are being collected. Games and other activities for teens will be provided. We now have a movie projector and are in the process of obtaining films. Aside from the recreational and social activities, we hope to involve teens in educational and civil rights participation. Publicity through leaflets distributed at high school basketball game, and large word of mouth.

4. Reading and remedial help for all that want it. Although this is primarily aimed at the child still in school, anyone can use the service. After numbers of people become involved, regular classes will be set up on a more formal basis.

II. Projected Programs

1. Sewing classes for girls who would like to make their own clothes are now being set up. Material will be obtained through national CORE from the ILGWU, and a machine is being solicited from various sources. The need for this is apparent and can probably expand into a highly successful program. If patterns are needed, the girls will be asked to purchase that and everything else will be available free.

2. Because of high infant mortality rates, a prenatal class for expectant mothers and mothers of infants will be given by a trained nurse. General health problems will also be discussed.

3. Films will be shown once a week--discussed above.

4. Other programs which are projected for the future would include arts and crafts programs with good materials and trained instructors, work corps to assist people in repairing their homes, job retraining and training programs which might be handled by interested unions. Many of these ideas fall into the realm of summer programs, depending upon how much staff is assigned to us here in Meridian. We might also have use for someone trained in teaching foreign language, as none is taught at the local high school and we have had several requests; no one on the present staff can give such lessons.

Because of the utter lack of almost all social services within the city, one could go on and on. As for expansion into churches and other facilities, more research will have to be done.

IV. Publicity has been carried out by several means:

1. Ministers were contacted by letter, and attempts made to speak with as many as possible personally.
2. Church services have been attended.
3. NAACP youth council has been involved in door-to-door canvassing for voter registration.
4. Leaflets have been distributed on the street and at a local high school basketball game.
5. Posters have been placed in store windows.
6. Our greatest publicity has come from people who have come up to see the center and then told their friends about it.

Psychologically the center is filling a need among the people for recognition, for a place to come and talk, for something that is for them. At first there was some suspicion of us as whites, but we believe that most of this has passed. Before we came there had been other workers in and out of Meridian, and the people are anxious to know that we intend to stay. They feel important to have workers assigned to their city. We believe that the Negroes will accept more white workers in the summer program, though the white community is already jumpy--but this is to be expected, and does not bother us.

IV. Sketch of the physical layout of the center:

