
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: TELL
FROM: RILEY
BENTLEY
SUBJECT: NORWOOD KIDS FOUNDATION: BACKGROUND AND MISSISSIPPI OPPORTUNITIES
DATE: 4/19/02
CC: FILE

Brandy and her brother Ray J, along with their parents, created the Norwood Kids Foundation in July 1997 to increase the resources available to disadvantaged and at-risk youth, subsequently obliterating the many ill effects that are often associated with being raised in a community plagued by social poverty. The Foundation strives to promote professional, civic, creative and social development amongst participants and to serve as a catalyst for ongoing exposure to various aspects of the arts. The Foundation does so through its four program communities:

- **The NK Performing Arts Community** offers performing arts programs after school, on weekends and during the summer in the form of dance, drill team, choir and drama courses. Youth meet twice a week to work on music theory, vocal training and dramatic arts. Participants must have a 2.0 GPA to audition for the program, and must maintain a 2.5 GPA.
- **The NK Digital Community** provides multimedia exposure and computer instruction to program participants, school-aged youth, their families and the community at large. Designed to provide all children with technological access, the program provides homework assistance, structured enrichment classes, job readiness, economic literacy and life skills training.
- **The NK Academic Community** provides tutoring to ensure that recruited students comprehend academic material, make satisfactory academic progress, and are in a home environment where learning is reinforced.
- **The NK Explore Community** provides seminars to program participants and the community at large. Experts, socially empowered celebrities, and political decision-makers are invited to speak on various topics and issues to raise community awareness. The program also organizes college tours and site seeing trips with the goal of raising cultural appreciation.

I see two means of maximizing the Foundation's work in Mississippi:

1. Establish one or two Foundation pilot sites in each Congressional District (McComb already has a site) to implement all four programs listed above. We

- could assist the Foundation in establishing partnerships with existing non-profits (such as Operation Shoestring); OR
2. Encourage the Foundation to focus its efforts statewide on one of its four programs, such as the Digital Community. The Foundation could adopt a certain number of schools or non-profits in each Congressional District and provide a computer lab (a lab v. an individual classroom computer would be necessary for an after school program) in each. This initiative would compliment the goals of the Governor's Computers in the Classroom initiative.

We could help the Foundation establish Partnerships with Community Action Agencies to implement the NK Explore Communities throughout the state. This would reach teens as well as parents and older citizens. We could offer to assist in providing speakers and information on current topics (such as Medicaid, healthcare, etc...)