

Georgia[®] Department of 
Community Affairs



Painting on canvas by AmeriCorps Member of Clayton State University.

**Georgia Commission for Service
and Volunteerism (GCSV)
2015-2016 Annual Report**

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LETTER FROM THE DCA COMMISSIONER

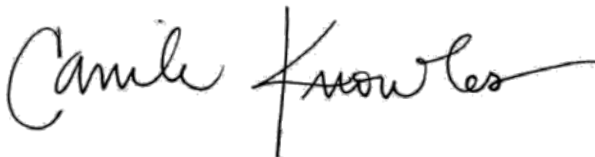
Dear Friends,

As Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), it gives me great pleasure to present to you this 2015-2016 Annual Report of the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV). I am proud to say that the GCSV is housed within DCA. While many of our other divisions provide the physical infrastructure for successful Georgia communities and neighborhoods in forms of housing, roads, and public systems, the GCSV, through its portfolio of AmeriCorps programs, continues to provide the infrastructure for job readiness, educational achievement, and support for a sustainable environment.

As you review this report, you will learn how AmeriCorps Members enhance student achievement. In return for their service, they may receive education awards to further their own education. During their term of service, they gain beneficial experience that helps them obtain full-time employment following their years of service. Whether AmeriCorps Members are tutoring, cleaning up communities, helping to sustain the environment or assisting our veterans and military families, they are touching the lives of thousands of Georgians to make our state a better place to live, work and play.

The GCSV, along with its panel of governor-appointed board members and the programs they award and oversee, is an important asset within DCA and is vital to the State of Georgia!

Sincerely,



Commissioner Camila Knowles

Georgia Department of Community Affairs



LETTER FROM THE GCSV

Dear Friends,

The mission of the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV) is to promote service and volunteerism in Georgia through AmeriCorps National Service grants, community volunteer recognition, and support of local volunteer organizations and efforts.

Since 1994 the GCSV has been instrumental in building a sense of community throughout the state of Georgia by promoting volunteerism and citizenship. Throughout this report, you will note that both volunteers and AmeriCorps Members are critical in building the infrastructures that support our state. Academic achievement, disaster response and relief, environmental stewardship, support for our veterans and military families, healthy futures, and economic opportunities are some areas where volunteers and Members have played critical roles in the lives of individuals and families.

This GCSV annual impact report highlights the return on taxpayer dollars that organizations and their AmeriCorps Members and volunteers have contributed to Georgia. In 2015-2016, the Corporation for National and Community Service invested \$3,452,514 in the State of Georgia. As a result of this federal investment, organizations leveraged an additional \$2,374,369.79. These organizations recruited a total of 519 AmeriCorps Members who recruited 10,317 non-AmeriCorps volunteers. These non-AmeriCorps volunteers served a total of 53,616 hours. The Independent Sector states the value of volunteer hours in the State of Georgia for 2015 was \$23.80 per hour. This equates to \$1,276,060.80. Combined, the value of volunteer time plus in-kind and cash leverage totaled \$3,650,430.59. This means that for every \$1.00 invested by the Corporation, the state of Georgia matched it with \$1.06, basically, dollar-for-dollar leverage.

As you read this report, you will discover how the impact of AmeriCorps reaches beyond dollars and cents by positively contributing to the long term quality of life of Georgians, thus making Georgia a great place to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,



Claire Bartlett
Chair



Linda Thompson
Executive Director

ABOUT US

The Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism is a part of the Department of Community Affairs. They promote and recognize service, volunteerism, and support quality service projects. They also serve as a pass-through agency for funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency located in Washington, DC.

The Georgia Legislature created the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV) in 1994 in response to the National and Community Service Act passed by Congress in 1993. Its board has up to twenty-five members appointed by the Governor. Currently there are four GCSV staff located within the Community Development Division of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Staff’s responsibilities are to provide oversight & compliance, technical assistance, and support to a current portfolio of nineteen programs.

PURPOSE

The Georgia Commission receives funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service located in Washington, DC. These funds are sub-granted to qualifying local organizations. These organizations recruit AmeriCorps Members to provide direct services in Georgia’s communities and neighborhoods. Through AmeriCorps, organizations are provided the opportunity to address the most pressing local civic needs in their communities and neighborhoods in areas of Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures and Veterans and Military Families.



EVENTS

2016 AmeriCorps Member Swearing-In Ceremony

On October 7, 2016, the Corporation for National and Community Service honored its one millionth AmeriCorps Member!



AmeriCorps Members across the Country made a pledge to “Get Things Done for America”. The Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism was honored to have over 250 AmeriCorps Members, supporters and friends present at this exciting event. The event took place in downtown Decatur.

Honored guests included Charndrea Leonard, Senior Program Officer for the Corporation for National and Community

Service, Ben Duda, President of the Georgia Chapter of AmeriCorps Alums; and Malika Berry, Points of Light Vice President of Programs who delivered the keynote address. The following individuals served on a discussion panel: Natalie Boyette, Development and Grants Manager for the Latin American Association; Eshe Collins, District 6 Representative on the Atlanta Board of Education and Field Program and Community Director for Jumpstart; Tray Deadwyler, civic engagement trainer, facilitator, and design consultant with Think For Good; Haylee Hammond, AmeriCorps VISTA Leader with Habitat for Humanity International in Atlanta; Summer Ladd, AmeriCorps Alum who served with AmeriCorps FoodCorps and Habersham County with the Northeast Georgia Farm to School Program; and, Matt Westmoreland, District 3 Representative on the Atlanta Board of Education and Board Member of the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism. The Honorable Judge Kimberly Esmond Adams provided Words of Inspiration and lead the Members in the AmeriCorps Pledge. AmeriCorps Members of Clayton State University lead the group in a song pledging that they are “Ready to Get Things Done” in Georgia.



The event was truly “One In A Million” and on behalf of the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV), “Thank You” to the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, all AmeriCorps Members and Alums, AmeriCorps VISTA and other National Service partners and friends, GCSV Board Members, friends and supporters of AmeriCorps for making this event a success and for helping us to make Georgia a better place for all people to live, work, and play!

**THANKS A MILLION
AMERICORPS**

Mayors and County Commissioners Day Service Project

On April 5, 2016, the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism, in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Corporation for National and Community Service State Office, and



Back Row: Lauren Boswell and Matthew Blackwell (The Franklin Project), Michael Thomas (DCA), Commissioner Joan Garner of Fulton County, Linda Thompson (DCA), Kimberly DuPree (DCA).
Front Row: Amieko Watson (CNCS State Director), and Zaneta Ivery (DCA).

the Franklin Project celebrated Mayors and County Commissioners Day by hosting a service project for homeless veterans at Action Ministries. Donations were collected from various sources including DCA. DCA placed a collection bin in the front lobby where employees deposited donations such as socks, soap, and other non-perishable items. 500 care packages were assembled for homeless veterans. 100

people were in attendance. Agencies present included Habitat for Humanity, the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps State and National, Senior Corps, Action Ministries, HOPE Atlanta and others. Fulton County Commissioner Joan Garner also attended and delivered an eloquent speech about National Service and how it is positively impacting Fulton County.

The nation’s mayors and county officials are increasingly turning to national service as a cost-effective strategy to address local challenges. By unleashing the power of citizens, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs have a positive and lasting impact – making our cities and counties better places to live. In 2016, 73 Georgia officials participated and 3,539 officials participated nationwide.

Thanks to all of you who were able to participate in the April 5, 2016 Mayors and County Commissioners Day of Celebration. We truly appreciate your generosity. The Service Project for Homeless Veterans was a huge success!

The 2016 Mayors and County Commissioners Day of Celebration – Service Project for Homeless Veterans was a collaborative effort of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs – Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism, The Corporation for National and Community Service’s State Office and The Franklin Project.



AMERICORPS STATE PROGRAMS

In 2015-2016, the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism funded fourteen AmeriCorps Programs. Of these fourteen programs, nine addressed various areas of education including early childhood intervention, homeless youths, college access, STEM, teaching, developmental learning, and public speaking. Some of these programs even provided nutritional meals for their students and taught them living skills and independence. Other programs addressed environmental stewardship and provided services in some of the States National Parks such as removing evasive species, promoting public trails and rescuing Georgia’s wildlife. One program provided resettlement services for refugees from other countries while another program provided services to Georgia’s Veterans and military families. This particular program helped to provide medical and dental care to people without income, people with low income, homeless individuals and families, and to our veterans. Regardless of economic or social status, they made sure their clients were able to receive medical and dental services.

Whether it is providing tutoring, promoting healthy futures, or assisting our veterans, all of these things serve to improve the quality of life for Georgia’s citizens. Just as in Maslow’s Theory of Hierarchy of Needs, it is difficult for children to learn if their basic needs aren’t being met. Some examples could be a child with an empty stomach, or a child without shelter or one who does not feel safe in their home or community.



You will read in this annual report about the leverage obtained as a result of federal dollars, but there are some things in life that just cannot be measured in dollars and cents. We can measure the improvement and success in terms of grades as a result of tutoring and homework assistance, but this is a gift that keeps on giving and the returns are endless. We can tell you how many low-income or no income citizens received medical attention, but we’ll never know how many lives were saved or how many illnesses were prevented. One can only imagine.

Following are descriptions and accomplishments of the Georgia Commission’s portfolio of programs for the 2015-2016 program year:

Communities in School’s (CIS) Reading Tutorial Program

The CIS AmeriCorps reading tutorial program is designed to help students from kindergarten to 8th grade who are not reading at the appropriate grade level. Members serve metro Atlanta and surrounding rural counties, providing small group and individualized tutoring on a daily basis.



Photo of AmeriCorps Member Leah Register and Program Director Erin Littles. Leah was a 4th year member who has served with the Dodge County affiliate. All 4th year members receive special recognition for their continued service. Leah is holding a frame of notes and cards from the children she has served, they are all thanking her for her love and service.

461 students received tutoring services from AmeriCorps Members. 280 students improved grades by moving from “C” level to “B” level. 442 of those students were promoted to the next grade level or graduated. 271 of those students were in elementary school, 136 were in middle school and 35 students were in high school.

72% of the students tutored by AmeriCorps Members maintained an average daily attendance of 95-100%. Of the 461 students tutored by AmeriCorps Members, 68 had behavioral disorders resulting in suspension from school. After working with AmeriCorps Members, 53 of the 68 students decreased their number of suspensions and 43 were suspension-free while participating in the AmeriCorps Tutorial Program.

Covenant House of Georgia



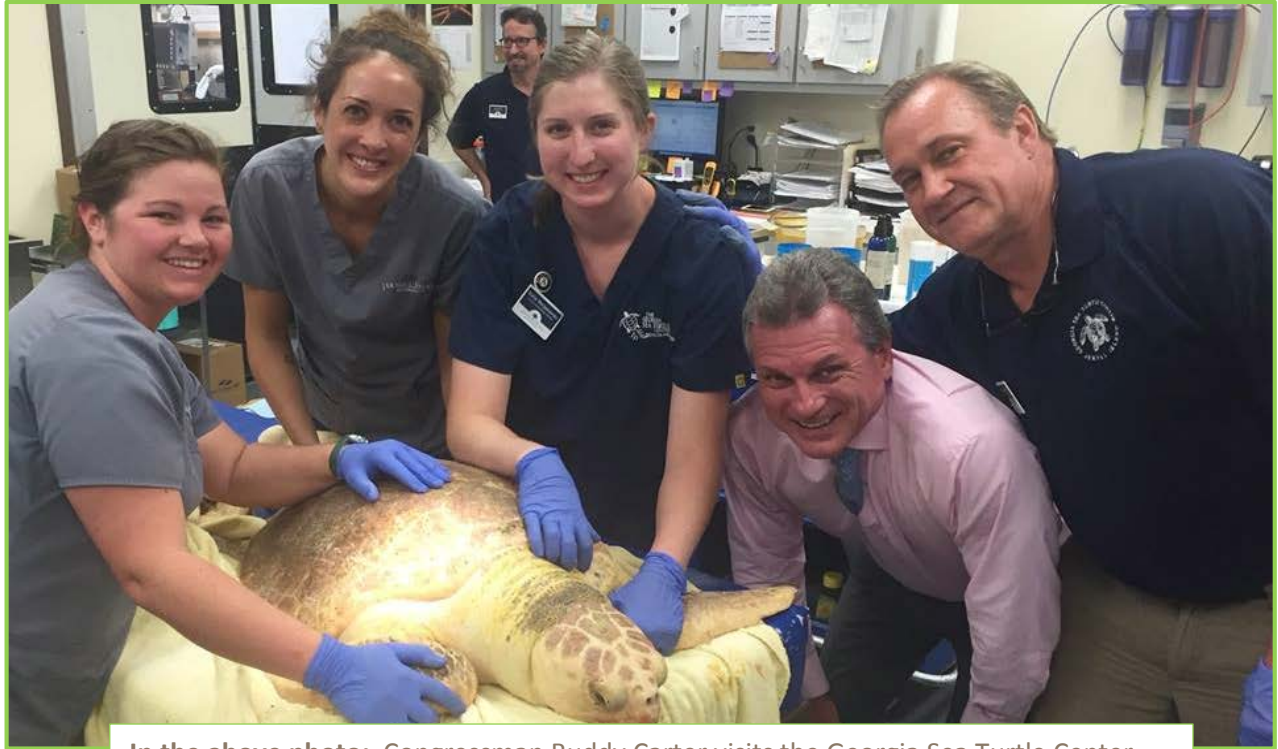
AmeriCorps members leverage volunteers to serve homeless youth in a mentoring capacity in Atlanta at the Covenant House. AmeriCorps members provide mentoring relationships for youth to move them toward their educational, vocational or employment goals.

AmeriCorps Members provided services to advance economic opportunities for youth enrolled in their program. These Members were instrumental in placing 95 individuals in full- or part-time jobs. Additionally, AmeriCorps Members and volunteers contributed to the personal growth and education of residential youth by bringing their own young adult experiences to the workshops. They conducted workshops on citizenship, financial literacy and budgeting,

time management, professional communication, goal-setting, communication strategies, engaging with law enforcement, and personal responsibilities. They also assisted 19 unique youth with Adult Basic Education and seven with TABE (GED) readiness testing.

Jekyll Island State Park Authority Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) AmeriCorps Program

AmeriCorps members serve in every aspect of the Center’s mission. Members are dedicated to educating the center’s guests and school outreach program participants in environmental stewardship, participating in sea turtle rehabilitation and diamondback terrapin monitoring, conducting night time sea turtle saturation tagging and nest management, and coordinating volunteers. Additionally, all members are trained and available to the Glynn County Emergency Management Agency for community disaster response.



In the above photo: Congressman Buddy Carter visits the Georgia Sea Turtle Center AmeriCorps Program.

During the 2015-2016, 5,767 guests participated in episodic one-time conservation-based programming and upon completion of the program, 2,709 participated in a GSTC post program evaluation and reported that they were more environmentally conscientious as a result of the training.

In 2015-2016, the Georgia Sea Turtle Center treated 479 turtles of many species and provided emergency triage to 87 birds. The veterinary care team and husbandry members trained 14 visiting vet students as well. The education department delivered programs to 3,187 children, teachers, and community members. The GSTC was visited by 88 school groups, reaching approximately 3,187 students and over 15,426 students through outreach programs. 14 Boy and Girl Scout troops totaling 248 scouts and 127 different tours attended GSTC programming. In addition, 138 children attended 7 weeks of Sea Turtle Day Camp, 1,537 guests participated in 92 Turtle Walks, and 149 guests participated in 15 Nest Walks. The research department encountered 241 sea turtle activities, tagged 38 new nesting sea turtles, and monitored 170 sea turtle nests of three different species. Since 2011, staff and members have documented 54 amphibian and reptile species and marked 295 individuals as part of population health studies and biodiversity sampling. Additionally, 146 individuals of 8 species received radio transmitters to study movements in developed areas and developed conflict reduction solutions.

New American Pathway’s AmeriCorps Project RISE

Project RISE (Refugee/Immigrant Success through Education) AmeriCorps members serve the needs of refugee children, youth, and adults from Sudan, Burma, Cuba, Bhutan, Iraq, Burundi, Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia through afterschool programs, adult client services, workshops, and trainings.

In 2015-2016, Project RISE was able to accomplish the following:

- A total of 863 adults received services from Project RISE AmeriCorps members this program year. These services included various educational and support services designed to increase self-sufficiency. They also provided workshops and one-on-one assistance around financial literacy, health services, building and creating resumes, and providing direct educational services to Cuban and Central American minor clients. AmeriCorps members were responsible for educating clients around pertinent issues allowing them to become self-sufficient. RISE’s model of safety, stability, self-sufficiency, success, and service stem from AmeriCorps members who make it possible for their organization to build capacity.
- 3,581 individual services were provided by Project RISE AmeriCorps members. For example, throughout the entire year, the Adult Education Member provided individual services to clients including MARTA orientation, financial literacy workshops, housing workshops and home management assistance. The Career Services Member assisted with job applications, certificate evaluation, follow-up, foreign credential evaluation and application, interview assistance, and new hire workshops. The Cuban Education Services Member provided a total of 646 individual services to their clients. This included DFCS initial benefits and benefits sign-up, DFCS renewal, Employment Authorization, benefits activation, walk-in orientation, and health screening referrals. AmeriCorps members treated clients with respect and dignity and all of these attributed to the organization meeting RISE’s goals of helping refugees and Georgians thrive.
- AmeriCorps members engaged and recruited a total of 853 volunteers and interns producing a total of 12,190 volunteers hours; building capacity for Project Rise. Volunteers included college groups, faith-based organizations, corporations, co-sponsorship partners and unaffiliated volunteers.
- Project RISE AmeriCorps members served in the afterschool programs of five area schools in the Clarkston, Georgia area in order to provide comprehensive tutoring, ESL support, summer, and recreation programs for refugee youth grades k-12 through pre-identified partner schools. At



Fugees Academy, 67 out of 73 students enrolled in afterschool programming achieved a class grade average of C or higher and was able to be promoted to the next grade level. A total of 239 students were enrolled in afterschool programs and 231 students completed the programming. AmeriCorps members assisted in helping students grasp the English language, conducted tutoring around homework and assigned tasks, and assisted them with additional social and emotional support throughout the school year. Attendance in the New AP afterschool program was high, with a 94% overall attendance rate for elementary school students and a 77% overall attendance rate for middle school students. At Fugees Academy the overall

attendance rate was 95%. Afterschool program participants with an attendance rate of 75% or higher achieved an average increase of 5.87 reading levels, as measured by the Reading A-Z Assessment tool. All AmeriCorps members were vital in making sure the students excelled and remained engaged.

United Way’s Project Health Access

AmeriCorps members help to build the capacity of community clinics to increase the health outcomes of the uninsured and underinsured in the metro area and in targeted communities. Corps Members also help to ensure access to SSDI/Medicaid for disabled and/or homeless individuals.



Through Project Health Access, Corps Members provided patient care coordination services, resources, and classes to 322 individual clients who reported increased knowledge in health education. United Way Corps Members provided assistance to 2,926 individuals who were uninsured or underinsured, enabling access to health care services. These Corps Members were also instrumental in enrolling 435 individuals in health benefits such as SSDI.

WINGS for kids AmeriCorps Georgia

The vision of WINGS is that all kids will develop social and emotional skills so they can be successful in life. Their mission is to teach these skills – how to behave well, make good decisions and build healthy



relationships - to elementary school age kids. AmeriCorps members help do this by weaving a comprehensive social and emotional learning curriculum into a fresh and fun after school program. Kids get the life lessons they need to succeed and be happy and they get a safe place to call home after school. In 2015-2016, 817 elementary school students participated in WINGS programming. WINGS also had the following outcomes:

Academics: 25% of WINGS kids reached the Proficient level in Reading on the Georgia Milestones exam, compared to 16% of their non-WINGS peers.

School Discipline: The average WINGS kid had only one disciplinary referral last year. Non-WINGS kids averaged four behavior disruptions.

Social-Emotional Skills: End of year assessments showed that 91% of kids with low social-emotional skills significantly increased their displayed positive behavior during the WINGS Program.

THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERS

During 2015-2016, 519 Georgia AmeriCorps Members served a total of 316,127 hours. These AmeriCorps Members recruited 10,317 non-AmeriCorps volunteers who served a total of 53,616 hours. Together, they served a total of 170,465 clients.



Based on the “Value of Volunteer Time” by the “Independent Sector” (http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time) the value of volunteer hours in the State of Georgia for 2015 was \$23.80 per hour. This equates to \$1,276,060.80.

LEVERAGE

In 2015-2016, the Corporation for National and Community Service invested \$3,452,514 in the State of Georgia. These dollars were sub-granted to qualifying agencies by the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism, located within the Department of Community Affairs. As a result of this federal investment, those organizations leveraged an additional \$2,374,369.79.



Combined, the value of volunteer time plus in-kind and cash leverage totaled \$3,650,430.59. This means that for every \$1.00 invested by the Corporation, the state of Georgia matched it with \$1.06, slightly greater than dollar-for-dollar leverage.



OTHER INITIATIVES

Georgia Student Service Award



In an effort to engage high school youth in service and high-quality service-learning, the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV) instituted the Georgia Student Service Award during the 2011-2012 school year as a pilot project to recognize teenagers who make significant contributions to their communities through volunteer service. The GCSV continues to promote this program to recognize students engaged in volunteerism. More than 65 schools have participated in the program since its inception.

The Georgia Commission awards certificates and service honor cords at graduation ceremonies to Georgia students who meet a predetermined threshold of service hours in their communities. To qualify for the Georgia Student Service Award, an average of 75 service hours per year or 300 hours by graduation is required. Graduating seniors who reach the milestone will receive a certificate and a red, white and blue service cord to be worn at graduation ceremonies. During the Spring of 2016, 207 Georgia students received awards and together, these students served a total 57,746 service hours.

A member of the school staff must act as sponsor/administrator and register their school by going to <https://www.dca.ga.gov/ServiceAwards/About.aspx>. The sponsor/administrator must certify and submit student information and service hours. This record of service may only include direct contact hours (hours on task).

Service can be performed through school sponsored activities and/or through outside organizations such as churches and other clubs. Both public and private schools are eligible to participate in the Georgia Student Service Award program. Home schooled students may also participate if hours can be certified by an adult.

GCSV is located within the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) whose mission is the promotion and support of service and volunteerism by Georgians in communities across the state.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Advisory Council

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Dr. King believed that people have the power and responsibility to change their community for the better. “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve,” Dr. King once wrote. The truth in these words has never faded. The legacy of his life and teachings live on not only through physical memorials and the echoes of his words, but also through the acts of dedicated men and women across the world.

On May 9th, 2011, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed the bill to create the Martin Luther King, Jr. Advisory Council, which consists of nine Georgians serving four-year terms.

“It will be the duty of this council to promote the principles of nonviolence, peace, social justice and the awareness and appreciation of the civil rights movement and the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” Governor Deal said during the signing of the bill.

Supported by the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Advisory Council will promote and plan statewide activities advocating Dr. King’s principles and teachings on MLK Day and beyond.



January 13, 2017 (Atlanta, GA) – During a ceremony at the State Capitol, the Martin Luther King Jr. Advisory Council today presented three awards recognizing individuals and groups whose actions honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Advisory Council is pleased to announce the creation of two new awards that will be given annually in the name of two Civil Rights Legends: Dr. Joseph E. Lowery and Ambassador Andrew Young. These awards will honor individuals.

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