

## **1999 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance EZ**

Last year was a significant year for the advancement of the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone Alliance (MDEZA). In 1999, MDEZA with its \$40 million received as a Social Service Block Grant in 1996, began to bridge the gap that was lacking in the community as well as entering into new partnerships with alliances that share the concept of MDEZA's strategic plan.

MDEZA's full Board of Commissioners elected officers to the governing Board in January, 1999. The newly organized governing body then began to develop, establish, adopt and implement policies and procedures that would govern the organization

MDEZA's Board of Commissioners were successful in establishing and implementing policies and procedures that could measure their organization's administrative effectiveness and efficiency. A Grant Solicitation Manual was established and implemented which set guidelines for submitting proposals. The process for submitting proposals has been made less cumbersome. Additionally, the MDEZA Subgrantee Manual was developed to provide uniform procedures and administrative guidance to Federal Agencies and MDEZA's contractors and sub-grantees. The manual establishes policies and outlines procedures to ensure that MDEZA protects the funds they disburse, takes necessary measures to ensure the maximum return of services from those funds and are in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations governing contracts and grants for services. A Personnel Manual was also developed and adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 1999

The Mississippi Delta prospered in the areas of economic and housing development. MDEZA approved the procedures for allocating sub-zone funds to each county in the EZ in April, 1999. The counties included are Bolivar, Leflore, Sunflower, Washington, Holmes and Humphreys. All counties in the EZ were allocated \$1 million, with the exception of Bolivar County that received \$1.5 million because it had more than a proportionate share of zone residents. Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), being the only institution in the footprint of the EZ also received \$1 million. MVSU's service population is composed of minorities with 98% of the students receiving financial aid. MDEZA awarded approximately \$6.5 million in sub-zone funds. The funds have been used to attract and provide services for industries in economic development creating nearly 600 new jobs in the Mississippi Delta for economically disadvantaged citizens of rural communities, to provide citizens of rural communities with safe, affordable housing and a decent water supply, and to extend internet services to Bolivar County Library system for EZ residents.

The Economic Development Application was also adopted at the April, 1999 Board of Commissioners meeting. In September, 1999, the Board of Commissioners approved approximately \$2.7 million for economic development projects.

A revised General Application was adopted in May, 1999. Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) Round 5 closed with two projects meeting the qualifications outlined in the Grant Solicitation Manual. They were a beautification grant for \$21,850 and an after school program grant for \$39,450.

MDEZA is proud of the progress made during the year of 1999 and the initiative that its staff and management has shown in developing a new grass-roots-oriented approach to community revitalization,

special challenges for monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. Although MDEZA has not achieved maximum efficiency relative to its Grant Solicitation process and other administrative initial program implementation, it has achieved a great deal of success with providing good paying job opportunities for EZ residents and leveraging of MDEZA's funds.