

COPPER COUNTRY AMERICORPS



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Strengthening our community for youth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, July 16, 2003

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Copper Country AmeriCorps to operate at reduced level in 2003

HOUGHTON – A reduced number of AmeriCorps members will continue to serve Copper Country children, seniors and community residents in 2003-04, thanks to a supplemental funding bill recently approved by Congress.

Copper Country AmeriCorps Director Michelle LaCourt anticipates that 15 members will continue to serve at schools, day cares and other human-service agencies this year. In 2002-03, 32 members served at these locations.

“We’re disappointed that we’re losing members, but at the same time we’re thrilled that Copper Country AmeriCorps will continue to operate this year,” LaCourt said, adding that recruitment efforts for new members have begun.

In June, the Copper Country AmeriCorps program and hundreds of other programs nationwide faced elimination in the wake of accounting problems at the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees the national service program.

CNCS had allowed the enrollment of more members than funding could cover. As a result, the program anticipated an 85 percent cut in funding nationwide for 2003-04. In Michigan, officials estimated a funding reduction from \$6.2 million to \$832,000, which would have pared the state’s 24 programs and 522 members to two or three programs and 65 members.

Earlier this month, however, Congress approved \$100 million in supplemental funding to allow enrollment of an additional 20,000 new members nationwide. The extra funding will allow many Michigan programs, including Copper Country AmeriCorps, to

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operate at a reduced capacity.

B-H-K Child Development Board is the sponsor and fiscal agent for Copper Country AmeriCorps. B-H-K Executive Director Rod Liimatainen said the supplemental funding is a step in the right direction.

“It’s great that some funding has been provided, but we’re still hoping that additional funding is allocated to help Copper Country AmeriCorps operate a viable program,” he said.

Anyone interested in serving in the program this year should call LaCourt at 482-3663 or 800-236-5657. Members commit to a year of service in local schools, daycare centers and other social-service agencies such as Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Members focus primarily on education by tutoring and mentoring students, conducting or assisting with after-school programs, and providing remedial homework help. Another key role has been helping agencies to generate, train and manage volunteers for various projects.

In return for their service, members receive a modest living allowance, loan forbearance, and health and child care benefits. After completing a year of service, they qualify for a \$4,725 award to go to college.

The program had been recognized several times in its short history. In 2001, Gov. John Engler selected Copper Country AmeriCorps as the Governor’s Service Award recipient for Outstanding National Service Program in Michigan. The program also placed three members as finalists in the Governor’s Service Award for Outstanding National Service Program Member.

For more information, contact LaCourt at 482-3663 or visit www.coppercountryamericorps.org