

KIPP Receives Grant Money

January 30, 2006

LITTLE ROCK - Southern Financial Partners announced two grants to the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School (DCPS) today. The first grant, a \$250,000 planning grant will enable the KIPP DCPS to plan for a KIPP high school. The second grant for \$40,000 will assist the KIPP DCPS to initiate a development program, ensuring that the KIPP DCPS will have the financial resources available to promote its growth.

The \$250,000 grant will result in preliminary architectural plans, curriculum development, and the purchase or options on property for the new KIPP DCPS high school campus to be located in the recently merged city of Helena-West Helena. "KIPP Delta College Preparatory School (DCPS) is changing the way parents, students, and educators think about education" stated Scott Shirey, school director. "In order to fulfill the promise we made to each fifth grade class, we must continue the KIPP experience beyond the eighth grade."

Plans are for the high school to open in the fall of 2007. The creation of a KIPP DCPS development office will help secure funding both for KIPP DCPS operations and to provide the capital necessary for the construction of a first-rate high school.

KIPP DCPS eighth grade students who entered KIPP at the 20th percentile three years ago are now, on the average, scoring in the 82nd percentile in math. In language, the original fifth grade class from the 22nd percentile to the 76th percentile. In reading, the students went from the 19th to the 61st percentile on the Stanford 10.

"Improvement in education systems, processes, and most importantly student achievement is a critical foundational activity impacting the success or failure of all other community development programs," stated Ben Steinberg, president of Southern Financial Partners. "We will reward success and academic achievement."

Abbey Leachman, DCPS development director stated, "As we make progress with our students, we also impact other classrooms, schools, and the community. Educators from throughout the state and region visit our school almost weekly to observe academic and behavior expectations and then incorporate them in their own classrooms."

The announcement is taking place at the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus Annual Conference where innovative ideas and best practices

in rural development from the region are being shared and disseminated.

"Southern Financial Partners plans to provide support to the traditional public schools as part of the realization of the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan," said Steinberg, "We at Southern are committed to Phillips County and to further educational opportunity all youth in the community."

Southern Financial Partners is a 501(c) 3 organization engaged in a comprehensive community development initiative in Phillips County as well as other targeted rural communities in Arkansas and Mississippi. Southern Financial Partners, Southern Good Faith Fund, and Southern Property Corporation are affiliates of Southern Bancorp, a \$500 million rural development bank with banking operations in Arkansas and Mississippi.