

A SELFLESS LEADER

The marvelous solace at death is the knowledge that at some level you have made a difference, and this certainly proved to be true in April with the passing of Margaret Marie McKenzie Staub.

Her mission in life was to use government resources to ensure good health, well-being, and happiness to all Americans as promised by the Declaration of Independence. She made good on that promise to those living in the Arkansas Delta, including the communities served by the Boys, Girls, Adults, Community Development Center (BGACDC).

Mrs. Staub was not a native of the Delta, or even of America. She was born in Scotland, married an American and in 1966 moved to Helena, where she discovered her passion and her mission — to help people who were banished by geography and economic circumstances and deprived of the American dream — most notably prosperity and a good life.



After the passage of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, which began the War on Poverty, Ms. Staub wrote the first grant to establish the Phillips County Community Action Agency. This agency led the war on poverty in the region. In 1970, she became the first female executive director of Mid Delta Community Services, which provided weatherization, transportation, Head Start for children, services for senior citizens, home-delivered meals, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs for Phillips and Monroe counties.

"She made a positive difference for people in the Delta, especially in the lives of young black mothers," said Beatrice Shelby, executive director of BGACDC. "She believed in education and civil rights and put it into practice. She put herself in harm's way to help people who were underserved in our community."

"She was a mentor to me personally," Mrs. Shelby said, "and one of my favorite people." Mrs. Shelby recalled that during her own tenure at the Office of Economic Opportunity, John Hamilton, an aging black man, disagreed with policies in the Marvell area and, as a result, could not get work anywhere. Mrs. Staub hired him and he worked hard for Mid Delta for many years.



Mrs. Staub also provided free space for BGACDC when it began its operations in the building that now houses the center and its activities. She provided encouragement, support, and advice to Mrs. Shelby and others. "She was a fearless champion of low-income people and she made a difference in the lives of countless families and individuals in our communities," Mrs. Shelby said. "She is an example for all of us."