

Statement from Job Corps National Director Edna Primrose on the passing of Sargent Shriver

January 19, 2011

It was with great regret that our Job Corps family learned the news yesterday that the founder of Job Corps and one of our biggest champions, Robert Sargent Shriver, passed away. As many of you know, Sargent Shriver spearheaded President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, and in that role, he was instrumental in the founding of Job Corps in 1964.

Sargent Shriver's commitment to our country predated his work with Job Corps. He was the first director of the Peace Corps under President John F. Kennedy. Under President Johnson, he led the Office of Economic Opportunity, the agency responsible for the creation and success of many social programs that are still thriving today, including Job Corps.

His contributions and belief in our program have helped more than 2.6 million young people throughout Job Corps' 46-year history. In 1999 when Job Corps dedicated the Shriver Job Corps Center in Devens, Massachusetts, Sargent Shriver spoke of his faith in the program to help at-risk young people, saying, "Our Job Corps graduates are proof that our original dream, our vision, was realistic. We proved that all of us could work together, successfully, to provide the necessary skills to thousands of young Americans who had neither jobs nor skills ... Our combined efforts succeeded! The Job Corps has survived and prospered. It has served our nation well."

He later went on to serve in many roles, including ambassador to France. He was active in the Special Olympics, serving as that organization's president and eventually being named chairman emeritus. In 1994, President Bill Clinton awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's top civilian honor.

Sargent Shriver never shied away from serving his country, and I hope that at Job Corps, we are imparting the sense of honor and gratitude that led him to found our program. He believed that every young person in this country deserves the chance to see a brighter future. He believed that our society must teach young people the skills they need to succeed, both in life and at work. And he believed that the public and the private sectors can work together to accomplish this.

These beliefs drive what we do every day at Job Corps, from the National Office in Washington, D.C., to Job Corps centers from coast to coast. As Shriver himself said, "I believe in the Job Corps and its future ... The Job Corps will tell as much about ourselves, our courage, our vision, our sense of equality, our trust in God and His providence, our future as one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. I repeat the words 'for all' ... because those words include all young Americans!"

In tribute to Sargent Shriver, I am requesting that all Job Corps centers fly their Job Corps flags at half-mast this week. Through this small but powerful gesture, we will honor Sargent Shriver's memory and his sense of duty to our young people, and his legacy.