

Mississippi Pay It Forward Program



– 2016 Annual Report –





Mississippi, our nation, and the world need a new generation of leaders to solve our most pressing problems.

The Mississippi Pay It Forward program partners with the national non-profit organization Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF) to reveal leadership through service, relationships, and action.

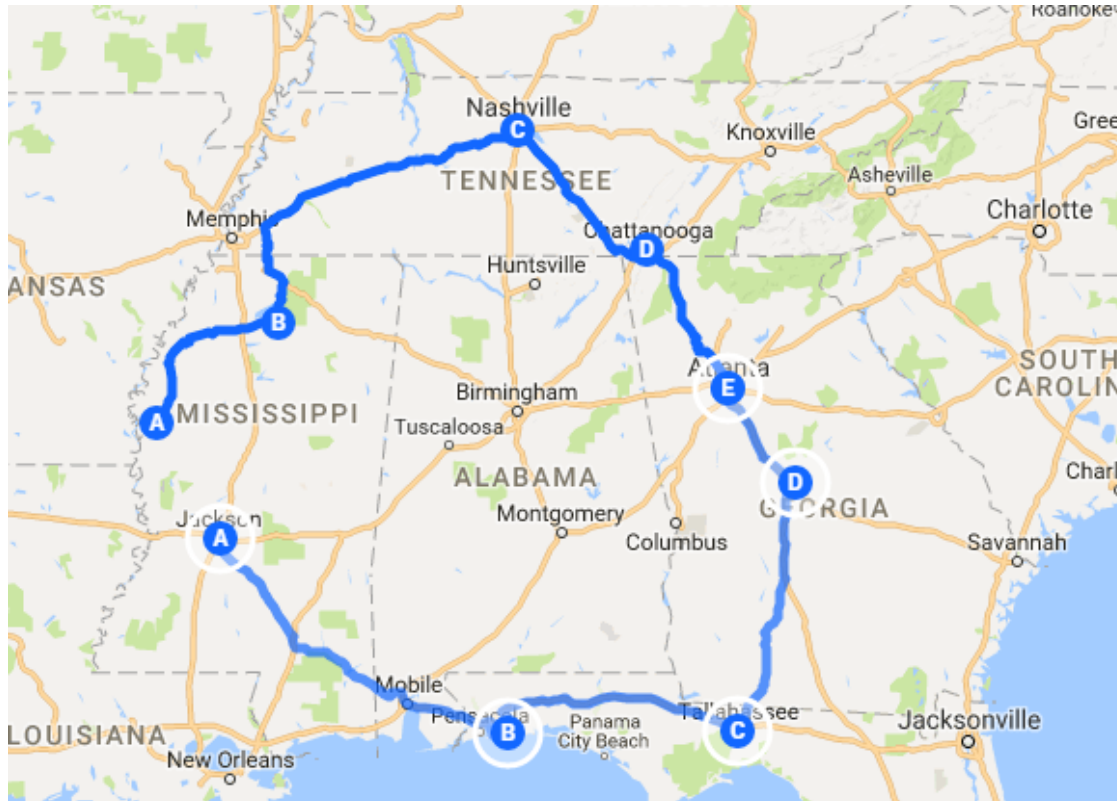
STLF hosts Pay It Forward Tours, trips for 30-40 students each that combine community service, leadership development, teambuilding, college visits, tourism, and reflection—all while traveling to four cities in five days, led by college student mentors.

The trip is designed to connect students with service opportunities, strengthen student leadership capacity, and build a cohesive team of supporters so that students return to their home communities ready to creating lasting change in their own hometowns!

Students in Mississippi who have participated in the Pay It Forward Tour join a national movement of servant-leaders. To date, over 27,500 students have participated in over 700 total STLF Pay It Forward Tours.

Across the country, students typically pay hundreds of dollars to participate on the Pay It Forward Tour. This sort of fee makes the Tour inaccessible to many students of Mississippi, so the Mississippi Pay It Forward program spearheads an aggressive fundraising campaign to ensure students do not have to pay a single cent in registration fees. Students are only asked to pay for one meal per day.

Having just completed the eleventh Mississippi Pay It Forward Tour in seven years, the program has become an enduring institution that students look forward to annually.



66 students

7 cities

5 days

1 transformative experience

Leland, MS

Oxford, MS

Nashville, TN

Chattanooga, TN

Atlanta, GA

Jackson, MS

Navarre, FL

Tallahassee, FL

Macon, GA

Atlanta, GA

Service

With the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center, students removed nearly 20 pounds of trash from Florida beaches in order to help preserve the local marine life.



With the Alfred B. Maclay Garden State Park, students helped to clear pathways to allow visitors to better connect with nature and history, and removed invasive crop species from the park.



With the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, students helped to organize clothing and food that would be donated to area homeless men and women.



With the Arts Council in Oxford, students planted trees, repainted items, and cleaned up the area.

With the Second Harvest Food Bank, students boxed food items.



With Hickory Valley Retirement, students performed songs for center residents.

With the Atlanta 3x3 Project, students collaborated to establish school gardens that would provide nutritious alternatives to traditional school lunches, and teach elementary students about horticulture.



Leadership

In the evening, at rest stops, even while on the bus, a team of trained facilitators led students in a series of carefully sequenced activities – everything from lighthearted icebreakers to in-depth discussions on equity and justice. Some activities were done as a full group, and others were done in small cohorts led by a college student mentor.



College

This year, students had the opportunity to visit the University of Mississippi, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, Spelman College, and Morehouse College. Students also heard from a panel of college students who provided advice on navigating the college experience.



Tourism

Students were able to visit a beach and explore a turtle conservatory. They were able to shop and explore downtown Atlanta, and the Square in Oxford. They played football and basketball.



Impact in their own words

“This week has been the best week to me. I decided to do community service for the summer to help others. It felt really good to work with people you hardly hang around just to help others. I was very happy to see everybody work together to get the job done for the day. I really learned a lot this week during the Pay It Forward Tour. I look forward to doing this again next year.”

“This trip taught me the value and meaning of giving back. It warms my heart to see I am helping people in need who really need help physically, and mentally. It really helped me open up more when we did the group activities. I am going to keep my commitment when I said I’m only going to have positive vibes, open up more, and better myself.”

“I’ve learned a lot on this Pay It Forward Tour and I must say it was a wonderful experience that I enjoyed. On this tour, we played a lot of games and helped a lot of people, and being able to help others was a big opportunity for me. Some nights it was hard not being at home with my mom, but I knew it was worth it because we helped out and I learned a lot.”

“I really enjoyed meeting new people and helping the people in different communities. Making other people happy makes me happy. I plan to continue with the Pay It Forward Tour once I get in college so that I could help somebody else.”

“Every year I attend a Pay It Forward Tour. Each year it touches my heart in so many ways. I learned to be patient, kind, and have a positive mindset. To touch people’s hearts means so much. To see the love on their face as we help and give back. My goals are to keep this up and never forget where I came from.”

“This tour and the past other tours I’ve been on have made a big impact on my life. The last few days I really learned how to talk to others more and open up. Helping others will never be a problem for me because this tour has made me realize that everyone sometimes needs a helping hand, even myself at times. Every year is a different feeling for me and it excites me more and more to return on this tour.”

Thank you

to all our donors



\$3,000	AT&T Mississippi Pioneers	\$75+	Abe Lopez and Isaac Bowen ♥ Becky McAuley Marion McBride Nut-Tritious Foods Tanya Schmitt Janee' Tisby Jenna Untiedt ♥	\$25+	Carrie and Joe Abrassart Michelle Burke ♥ Kelly Butler Nancy Condliff Ellen Fernandez Andrea Fisher Hardie Frankel Katana & Maleena Frazier Ann and Jack Hamilton Michelle Hulbert ♥ Lucy Joya ♥ Cara Marsicano Ashley Parker Karen and Ed Platt Catherine Sinclair Kate Wilhelmi
\$2,500	City of Leland, MS ♥				
\$1,500	Kevin and Stephanie Parkinson ♥ Joseph Spallina and family ♥	\$50+	Anonymous Amy Berg Carol and Aimee Berg Jenna Boller Pat Brown Allen and Laura Clark ♥ Barb Dallinger Andrew Donnelly Deborah Elmore ♥ Nicole Espersen Ali Fadlallah ♥ Katie Fenerty Katie Friend Erin Hoskins Joellen Kralik Paula Mitchell Taryn Moraga ♥ Rachel and Chris Myers Paige Pennigar Christine Peters Shawn and Lisa Pompelia Anthony Sawyer ♥ Eric Theisen Jameson Toole Courtney Van Cleve Jake Vivier Danny Walter Steve Yates	\$10+	Anonymous Devin Bates Matthew Braich Jenn Chang ♥ Jon Delperdang Alicia Ferraris ♥ Sarah Fox Matt and Nita Holm Ray Mays Diane Morris Kristina Parkinson Sloane Winters ♥
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Generous in-kind donations provided by the Thompson House of Leland, MS and Dr. Alphonso Sanders.

♥ Indicates donor who has contributed to the Mississippi Pay It Forward program at least three years.

Additional acknowledgements

In addition to our amazing donors, there is a long list of people who have made these Tours possible. There is simply no way we can thank everyone, but we wish to offer this list in recognition of the countless hours, insight, trust, and support that our friends and family have contributed.

To the STLF national office, especially Lindsay Pluger, Josh Hansen, and Josh Reimnitz: For your nonstop service, much-appreciated flexibility, and excellent problem solving.

The Superintendent, Board of Trustees, and all employees (teachers, administrators, and support staff) of our partnering districts and schools – Callaway High School, Forest Hill High School, Leland High School, Murrah High School, Natchez High School, Ridgeland High School, and St. Andrew's Episcopal School: For leadership and dedication to this extracurricular endeavor.

The Mayor and Board of Alderman of Leland, MS – Kenny Thomas, Lisa Bush, Mala Brooks, Nancy Jo King, Andy Petro, and Carl Williams: For your continued commitments and embrace.

The organizations we partnered with while on the Tour, including the community groups that organized our service projects, the housing partners that provided us free places to sleep, the universities who provided us tours, restaurants that provided us free or deeply discounted meals, and more; namely: Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, Atlanta 3x3 Project, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, Hickory Valley Retirement, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Morehouse College, Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center, Navarre Presbyterian Church, New Covenant Christian Church, Oxford Arts Council, Second Harvest Food Bank, Spelman College, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, University of Mississippi

For Cline Tours (especially Bobby and Byron): For going above and beyond, for being adaptable, and for safe transport.

The talented and inspirational group of college leaders who helped coordinate all the logistics and programming, and served as valued mentors; and to adults who coordinated planning throughout the year and chaperoned the trip: Scotty Berg, Angelica Chairez, Tarra Head, Paula Mitchell, George Mumford, Nick Wages, Katie Wiseman, Hannah Winge, and Ashley Yorks.

And, most importantly – the students who used their summer vacations to sleep on gym floors and serve others; and their guardians for their constant and continued support.