Operation Shoestring: An Overview

By Teaching Children and Inspiring Families,
Operation Shoestring Ensures We All Rise Together

Our Story
Founded in 1968 in response to the social struggles of that era, Operation Shoestring was born out of a desire by faith-based leaders to put their faith into action by uplifting children and families in our central Jackson service community, especially in the areas of education, health and economic self-sufficiency. Since then, Operation Shoestring has been at the forefront of efforts to improve the lives of the children and families we serve through afterschool and summer programs for kids, services and support for their parents, and more. Our core service community consists of the Georgetown and Mid-City neighborhoods bordering the southern end of Bailey Avenue in central Jackson, Mississippi.

Our Focus
Operation Shoestring provides year-round academic, social and emotional support to children in central Jackson from pre-K – 12th grade, while supporting and providing resources to their families. The aim is to empower the children and families we serve to create their own success, and that of their community, so we all rise together.

Our Programs
All of our programs are centered on the children we serve. Through our work with our children’s families, their schools, and other community partners, we strive to ensure their academic and personal success. Families are inspired, individuals are empowered, and the community rises, all around the needs of the child.

Afterschool/Summer Programs
Our afterschool and summer programs for pre-K-5th graders help young people rise to their own best potential. Certified teachers, volunteers and community partners offer academic, social and emotional support to help our students find their way along the path of educational success and personal development. Our high school programs focus more on youth agency, civic engagement and leadership development.

Project Rise: Elementary
In partnership with Galloway and Walton Elementary Schools, our afterschool and summer program for pre-K - 5th graders provides academic enrichment using fun, hands-on activities and one-on-one tutoring. Shoestring’s certified teachers and staff work with students’ school day teachers and administrators to ensure we’re meeting each child’s specific needs in the most helpful way possible. Arts and cultural activities are woven throughout, with the ultimate goal of creating a solid foundation of caring and confidence that will support children as they grow.

The Ambassadors
In partnership with Jackson Public Schools and ChildFund International, we’re helping to cultivate young leaders through a civic engagement and leadership training program for a select group of middle and high school students from across the district. Through weekly meetings, intensive workshops, and field experiences such as participating in
and facilitating community events, students learn to identify, organize and create constructive responses to obstacles in their lives, schools and communities.

Parent Initiatives
It’s not enough to invest only in our children. To truly impact a child’s future you must invest in their schools, their families and their community as well. This is what makes our work stand out from many others in our field. We get to know the families of the children that we serve, and develop individualized plans of action for helping to meet their needs. Programming for our families includes financial counseling, educational forums, workshops, social services and more.

Community Outreach
Operation Shoestring depends on partnerships with people and organizations from across Jackson to offer resources and expertise we can’t provide on our own, especially in areas of healthcare, financial planning and social services. We’re also a founding partner in the MS Statewide Afterschool Network to support out-of-school time programming across our state, and strategic partner in support of the success of Jackson Public Schools, so that all of Jackson’s children can rise.

MS Statewide Afterschool Network
With the help of the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Phil Hardin Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation and others, Operation Shoestring is leading the development of a statewide afterschool network in order to establish quality standards, best practices, and foster collaboration on a level never before achieved in our state.

Our Impact
How do we know what we’re doing is working? It’s often a tough task for nonprofits like ours to show definitive proof that our programs are making a difference, but here at Shoestring we take this challenge seriously. That’s why we measure our results, whether that means using hard data like test scores, or personal feedback through surveys. We’re constantly working to expand and improve how we measure our outcomes.

- 96% of Operation Shoestring 3rd graders passed the 3rd Grade Gate Reading Test in academic year 2014-2015; 93% passed in 2015-2016 (we nearly doubled the number of students served that year over the previous year)(the total passing rate for Jackson Public Schools was 79%); 96% passed in 2016-2017 (the total passing rate for Jackson Public Schools was 82%); 100% passed in 2017-2018.
- 95% of Operation Shoestring elementary students were promoted to next grade in academic year 2014-2015; 98% were promoted to the next grade in 2015-2016. 100% were promoted to the next grade in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

Our Funding
Operation Shoestring relies 100% on the financial support of generous donors and partners. The majority of our donations are private dollars from individuals, businesses, foundations, and houses of worship. We also receive some public dollars from government grants.