

A Message from the Executive Director

The legislative session is over, spring is upon us and another school year is rapidly coming to an end. Spring is always a time of renewal and although our challenges are many, this year should be no different. We did not get all that we had requested from the Legislature for the new fiscal year but we did get a small increase over the current year. At the rate that children are coming into custody, it will be a challenge to meet our obligations but we will remain diligent. As I stressed to you last month, folks in the field and the support staff here in state office, need to remain focused on the mission of serving families and children and not be discouraged.

One thing that we can count on here at MDHS is our ability to take lemons and make lemonade! We are looking at new areas of technology and other cost saving measures to ensure that we continue on our mission to deliver the high level of service that our citizens deserve. Some of the best ideas that we have received through the years come from the field. I encourage each and every one of you to share any ideas that you have as to how we can make your jobs less labor intensive and how to get synergy from our efforts by continuing to work smarter and to strengthen ourselves as a team.

Our mission is too critical for us to do anything but look forward. I have seen many retirements come across my desk and expect that there will be more before the end of the fiscal year.

Continued on page 2

Celebrate our Social Workers

March is Social Work Month



Recently a group of DFCS social workers were at the State Office for Pre-Training.

Each year in March, many across the nation take time to show their appreciation for those who have chosen social work as their mission. This time commemorates their valuable contributions and the major positive social changes they have made for families across the U.S.

In Mississippi we honor our social workers for their professional work and tremendous value to families and children. Social workers add greatly to service delivery throughout the Mississippi Department of Human Services, serving in varied program areas including the Divisions of Family and Children's Services and Aging and Adult Services. MDHS is committed to having licensed professional social work staff. Social workers have very demanding jobs. No social work job is easy, and the challenges taken on by each staff member are noted and appreciated.

*Positive social change is never complete.
It's a work in progress.*

Continued on page 2

In this issue:

- Gov. Bryant, USDA announce \$20.5M Workforce Training Grant
- Field Operations Training Spotlight
- Read Across America in Pike County
- Service Certificates
- And much more!

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Many of these are people I have known for years and we “grew up together” in the agency.

How should I react to this? I could be sad or remorseful worrying about the future and fearful of change. As your leader I know that is not what you expect of me. I have chosen the path to help them embrace the new phase of their life and to celebrate our accomplishments together over the years. I am truly excited to see new leaders emerge as the older generation moves on providing opportunities for others to move up the ladder.

Yes, it is springtime. I will see my oldest grandchild graduate from high school next month and enter a new phase of her life. Her parents are sad that she will be leaving for college but they should be happy. They have done a wonderful job raising a remarkable young lady who will now have an opportunity to make her own way and begin to develop her own legacy. Change is not to be feared. We should be proud of her and for her. I know many of the folks retiring are looking back at you feeling an immense sense of pride knowing that they are leaving their county or department in good hands.

Our mission is much too important for us to be anything except positive, hopeful and anticipating the best for the future. Each and every person that darkens our doors is a child of God and if there was not a challenge in their life they would not be seeking our help. We need to continue to give nothing but our best effort.

Yes, it is spring. The weather is changing. The landscape is changing. There is hope in the air.

Isn't it a wonderful time to be part of something greater than ourselves and make a difference in someone's life!

Richard Berry
Executive Director

Social Work Month 2015, nationally, kicked off its 60th celebration with activities to honor social workers and the profession as essential agents of positive social change.

Here in Mississippi, we thank you all for the work that you do. Whether you work directly with children, adults and/or families, or support that work through related efforts, you are appreciated.



Adult Protective Services hosted training for some of their frontline staff at the State Office.



To celebrate Social Work Month, Claiborne County staff donned matching tshirts. From left, ASWS Martha Dotson; FPS Johnalynn Brinkley; FPW Tomeka Goings; and RLS Linda Lockhart.



The Beacon



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Gov. Bryant, USDA Announce \$20.5M Workforce Training Grant

Gov. Phil Bryant and United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Southeast Regional Administrator Robin Bailey Jr. announced Mississippi has received a \$20.5 million grant from USDA to conduct a three-year pilot program to match SNAP recipients with workforce training and job opportunities.

MDHS will administer the pilot program and work in conjunction with Mississippi's community and junior colleges, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, the State Workforce Investment Board and other partners to match about 3,300 able-bodied adult SNAP recipients ages 18-50 who do not have dependents with workforce training and job opportunities.

Combined with Gov. Bryant's "Workforce #1" proposal (Senate Bill 2457), the USDA grant will position Mississippi to invest more than \$70 million into workforce training over the next three years.

"As I said in my Inaugural Address, my first job is to make sure every Mississippian who wants a job can find a job," Gov. Phil Bryant said. "This workforce pilot program will allow us to coordinate with our outstanding network of community and junior colleges and use our Mississippi Works job system to connect even more Mississippians with work opportunities and help them on the path to self-sufficiency."

Five community and junior colleges will participate in the pilot program and provide training to participants:

- East Mississippi Community College
- Itawamba Community College
- Jones County Junior College
- Mississippi Delta Community College
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Mississippi is one of 38 states to apply for the grant program and one of 10 states to receive an award. California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Virginia, Vermont and Washington also received grants.

Region 4N at 100%



Region 4N Field Operations staff were recently recognized for achieving 100% timeliness in both TANF and SNAP applications. From left: Region 4N Director Ross Crawford; County Directors Deanna Pearson, Choctaw; Shebra Cunningham, Oktibbeha; Kimberly Price, Neshoba; Regina Higginbotham, Winston; Janet Key, Kemper; Freda Jones, Webster; Janet Turman, Clay; Sharon Papas, Noxubee; and Jim Sutherland, Lowndes.

AARP Foundation Awarded \$3 Million Grant to Support Affordable Access to Healthy Food for SNAP Clients

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program, awarded AARP Foundation a grant of \$3.3 million, with an additional \$1 million coming from UnitedHealthcare, to implement a multi-year \$6.6 million incentive program in Mississippi and Tennessee to increase the purchase and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The goal of this program is to increase the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables and to improve nutrition and health outcomes for low-income consumers.

"The Mississippi Department of Human Services is pleased to work with the AARP Foundation in support of the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program. The FINI Project, through select farmers markets and Kroger, will encourage an increase in the purchase and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables for SNAP recipients. In addition the program will leverage state efforts to reduce obesity and improve nutrition in low-income and underserved communities," said MDHS Executive Director Richard Berry.

"We are very pleased to receive this generous grant from USDA that underscores AARP Foundation's important work to ensure all Americans can afford nutritious food and lead productive, healthier lives," said AARP Mississippi Interim State Director Kelly Cress. "I would also like to thank our friends at UnitedHealthcare, Kroger Co., the Tennessee and Mississippi Departments of Human Services and Departments of Agriculture for their support, because collaboration of this magnitude is crucial in finding a solution to end senior hunger."

In the report, "Food Insecurity Among Older Adults," Mississippi ranked highest - 12.99 percent - of people between the ages of 50 and 59 who face food insecurity. Encouraging more nutritious diets is a focus in the health care industry, which recognizes better nutrition as a disease prevention and health promotion measure. AARP Foundation agrees with this view and believes making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible is particularly important for older adults and individuals living with limited or fixed incomes.

Beginning in September 2015, SNAP recipients will be able to take advantage of this incentive program at select Kroger's stores and farmers markets. AARP Foundation is contracting with Wholesome Wave, a non-profit organization with a track record of establishing incentive programs, to provide training and technical assistance to farmers markets and to assist with implementation of the outreach plan.

Field Operations Training Spotlight



We enjoy the opportunity to see our county staff at the State Office. March classes included training for case managers (top photo), eligibility workers (middle photo) and clerical staff. Thank you for all you ALL do for the people of Mississippi!

Caring - Serving: MDHS Employees are the Best



MIS tech David Roberts, was seen during his lunch break helping an elderly couple who pulled into the MDHS State Office front parking with a flat tire. David changed the tire for them. Thank you David for being of service to a couple in need of assistance.

The Sky's the Limit for Youth

One of our teens in foster care who participates in the Youth Villages transitional program is representing the YV Transitional Living Program for Mississippi In Washington, DC this weekend. She, along with other state representatives, met President and Mrs. Obama and toured the Capitol city. Expenses were paid for by Youth Villages. Congratulations to this young lady for achieving this honor.



EW, CM & CSEO Appreciation Day at MDHS

Eligibility workers, case managers and child support enforcement officers were honored March 4th with an Appreciation Day. Many offices took time to recognize and show staff how much their hard work and dedication means to not only MDHS but for clients in need of services. We've included some of the photos from offices around the state.



Marcella McGee, Itawamba County case manager who received her 20-year service award, gifts and dinner for Case Worker Day.



In Lincoln County the CSEO and clerk were honored with gifts and donuts. From left Debbie Carter, Penny Allen, Gwenda Bournes and Martha Jennings.



Hinds County Field Operations celebrated Eligibility Worker/Case Managers and CSEO Day. Workers were given certificates expressing appreciation for all they do and will be treated to lunch.



Pike County treated their eligibility workers and case managers to lunch at "Sweet Tooth."



Alcorn County honored their EWs and CSEOs with a pizza lunch. Along with lunch, small gift of appreciation was presented to each worker. Alcorn county is blessed with these great workers, and their hard work and dedication is tremendously appreciated.

EW, CM & CSEO Appreciation Day at MDHS continued



Forrest County Division of Field Operations management treated the EWs, CMs and CSEO's to a luncheon complete with chili, hot dogs, cake and drinks. Staff also received a gift bag. It was great to honor and show our appreciation for the hardworking folks in our county.



The DeSoto County Field Operations staff were each presented a basket of candy for Worker Appreciation Day. From left: Case Manager Lucila Vallin, EW I Mary G. Jackson, EW I Carla DeLeon, EW I Crystal Nunley, EW II Sylvia Smith, Case Manager Jo Pitts and EW II Denise Riley. Back row: Supervisor II Bettie Jones, EW I Anne Berryman, EW I Sherry Jones, EW II Bernice Morgan, EW II Maxine Watson, EW I Reccie Grainger, EW I Helen Cutright and Supervisor II Mary Vick.

Service Certificates Awarded



Above, Helen Cutright (seated) was recognized in DeSoto County recognized for her 25 years of service. The award was presented by DeSoto County Director Tammi Crawford, left and Supervisor Bettie Jones.



Photo above: At a Region 5W meeting held in late February, two employees were recognized by Regional Director Sarah Bridge (left) for a combined 48 years of service. Simpson County Director Darrell Welch (center) has 25 years and Pike County Director Phyllis Freeman has 23 years of service.

Photo left: In Hinds County, three are retiring with a combined 55 years of service: Associate Director Debra Evans, County Director Theresa Phillips, Carolyn Gee with 27 years, Regional Director Linda Slaughter, Lionel Cooper with 25 years, and Pearlean Davis with 13 years.

Thank you all for serving Mississippi!



Legal Summit Power Up for Child Support Enforcement



Attorney of the Year Awards were presented at the Summit. Winners were Jacob Black, Rookie of the Year; Sasha Payne, Region 4; Merritt Mercier, Region 1; Rutledge McMillin, Region 2; and Jennifer Coleman, Region 3.

The Legal Summit, "Power Up", was held March 31-April 2 at the Inn at Ole Miss in Oxford. This event provides an opportunity for all of the Child Support Enforcement attorneys to come together for annual training and to qualify for their CLE hours.

The agenda included guest speaker Honorable William Waller, Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court; Honorable Randy Pierce, Mississippi Supreme Court Justice; Ole Miss School of Law Interim Dean Deborah Bell; and Yevette Riddick and Susan Paikin from the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. In addition Judge Jane Weathersby, Judge Ronald Doleac and Judge H. David Clark presented a round table discussion. Other presentations were given by Charlie Smith, Paul Nelson, Lyndsy Landry and Senior Attorneys Josh Eure, Jeff Skinner, Julianne Bailey, David Love and Rebecca Thornhill.

Special thanks to Andrea Patrick, Rachelle Crawford, Aaron Rushing, Paul Nelson, Jennifer Lea and Gail Smith for assistance with coordinating registration and details for the Summit.



MDHS Deputy Administrator John Davis, Chief Justice William Waller, DFO Martha Benjamin, Judge Ronald Doleac and Assistant Attorney General Earl Scales.

Retirements



Lauderdale County Child Support Supervisor Gladys Troup retired with 28 years. The staff honored her with a reception and gifts. She will truly be missed. Shown with Gladys is Region 4S Director Jim Sims.

During the Child Support Legal Summit, a cake was presented to Martha Benjamin, director of Legal Program Operations for DFO who retired April 15 after a long career in Child Support Enforcement. Thank you for your service.



In April, Eunistine Parsi retired with 28 years of state service. She began employment in 1988 in Lowndes County as an Intake Screener for Economic Assistance and later as a Hinds County Eligibility Worker. She was moved to the State Office and was promoted to a Program Specialist. Eunistine assisted in reconstructing the DFCS Personnel Unit and later transferred to the Adoption Unit. She felt this was her greatest challenge—to make a difference in a child's life. It was during this time, she received a Bachelor's degree from Belhaven University. We appreciate your service and best wishes on your future endeavors.

Showing Appreciation for our Admin Assistants



DeSoto EA showed their appreciation to the clerical staff with lunch from Zaxby's. EW staff volunteered to cover the reception desk so that all the clerks could have lunch together. Back row from left, County Director Tammi Crawford, Supervisor II DeLise Cotton, Supervisor II Mary Vick, Clerk Typist Senior Deborah Benson and Supervisor II Bettie Jones. Seated, Clerical Support Mary E. Phillips, and Client Service Reps Monica L. Jackson and Sherry Marshall.



The clerks in Alcorn county do a great job in serving residents and were honored with a luncheon. These clerks are the "face of MDHS" and we appreciate all you do for the agency and the people of Mississippi.



THANKS

Child Support Doing a Great Job!



A team of "experts" are at the State Office and in the process of manually matching child support funds with their intended location. The agency often receives child support monies that can't be distributed for various reasons, such as the employer fails to put the identifying information on the check or we are unable to locate the person who the child support is paid for. This team of MDHS staff is reviewing cases, locating people and calling employers to determine who the money should be dispersed to. In other words, they're doing **WHATEVER IT TAKES!** In two weeks, they distributed over \$200,000 and the numbers continue to grow!

Valley In Motion

Region 2E in Itta Bena (Leflore County), participated in Mississippi Valley State's Health Fair "Valley In Motion." The goal of the health and wellness fair was to provide cognitive information to the families, public schools and local communities while connecting with them to provide awareness of available services. Thank you, Rhonda Dye and Latishar Davis, for doing such an amazing job!



What's Happening Mississippi?

Events and Festivals

APRIL: [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#)

April 26: 2015 Spring Mid-South Wedding Show, Olive Branch. Meet the Mid-South's leading wedding experts and learn everything a bride and groom need to know to plan the perfect wedding. Visit midsouthweddingshow.com for more information.

MAY: [Older Americans Month](#)

May 1-2: [Market Street Festival](#), Columbus. The event encompasses 12 city blocks and the Riverwalk in historic downtown Columbus.

May 1-3: [Tara Wildlife Birding Weekend](#), Eagle Lake Shore Road. Come view the spring migration of many song birds and more in the Mississippi Flyway.

May 1: Jimmie Rodgers Music Festival, Meridian. 62nd Annual family event. Call 601-292-7121.

May 2: Natchez Trace Century Ride, Ridgeland. Jumpstart cycling season with a 25-100 mile ride along the beautiful Natchez Trace. Go to <http://natchezcenturyride.racesonline.com/> for info.

May 7: Midsouth USSSA Super NIT, Southaven. Watch youth compete in baseball and softball. Go to www.snowdengrovebaseball.com for more information.

May 8: Pepsi Pops, Old Trace Park, Ross Barnett Reservoir. A concert under the stars with the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra. Go to www.msorchestra.com.

May 9: Amtrak Train Day, McComb. Free, fun event for the family with entertainment, train rides and tours. Like the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MCRRM>

May 10: Mothers Day

May 14: 7th Annual Taste of Ocean Springs Food & Wine Festival. Featuring chef Robert St. John, artist Wyatt Waters. Call 228-875-4424.

May 14: [Canton Flea Market](#). Hailed as one of the largest outdoor craft markets in the South. Go to

May 16: 41st Annual A'Fair, Hernando. Presented by the Hernando Optimist Club and includes arts, crafts, food, music and children's activities. Go to hernandooptimist.org for more info.

May 16: Dragon Boat Regatta, Old Trace Park, Ridgeland. 7th annual event, free festival with music, children's village and local food favorites. Go to [Madison County Chamber](#) for information.

May 22: Down from the Hills: The Mississippi Bluegrass Championship, New Albany. Quilt show, arts, crafts, bluegrass musicians all come together on the banks of the Tallahatchie River. Call 662-534-1047 for more information.

May 25: Memorial Day

Hope you can get out and enjoy some local Mississippi-grown events.



Ten Pike County Economic Assistance employees visited Kennedy Early Childhood Center on March 4 as a part of [Read Across America](#) Week and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Campaign. They read Dr. Seuss books to the students.

Many studies have shown the multiple benefits of reading aloud to young children. According to the [Family Literacy Foundation](#), benefits include:

- Children's self-esteem grows as they experience the security of having an adult read aloud with them.
- Children experience increased communication with parents and others who read to them.
- Children are introduced to new concepts such as colors, shapes, numbers and alphabet in a fun, age appropriate way.
- Children build listening skills, vocabulary, memory and language skills.
- Children develop imagination and creativity.
- Children learn information about the world around them.
- Children develop individual interests in special subjects like dinosaurs, cats or cars.
- Children learn positive behavior patterns and social values.
- Children learn positive attitudes towards themselves and others.
- CHILDREN LEARN THE JOY OF READING!

Thanks to Pike County DFO for taking time to read to students. Your participation will make a difference in the life of a child.



Health News from the Web

Regular, vigorous exercise may lengthen your life

Findings published online April 6 in JAMA Internal Medicine suggests that rigorous physical activity may be key to boosting longevity.

The study involved more than 204,000 people aged 45 or older who were followed more than six years. Participants were divided into three groups based on their activity level. Those who said 30 percent of their physical activity was vigorous had a 9 percent lower death rate than the other two participant groups.

Mary Elizabeth Dallas, HealthDay News

Green Tea linked to lower Risk for Dementia

A new Japanese study has shown that drinking green tea is tied to a lower risk for dementia and mild declines in thinking and memory among older people.

In the study, they looked at the tea and coffee drinking habits of people older than 60. Participants were grouped by how often they drank green tea.

Daniel M. Keller, PhD, Medscape Medical News

Find your Best Weight and BMI

Have you wondered what is your target weight for your age and height? Do you know what your BMI is? We've included a link to a Body and BMI Calculator to help you get the facts on what your target numbers should be. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Surprising reasons you're gaining weight

Are you dieting but watching the scale continue to climb? There are many reasons this can occur. [CLICK HERE](#) to see what may be the culprit in your diet or lifestyle.

Lose weight without dieting

WebMD pulled together 24 ways to slim down without starving or following a complicated diet. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Apple Cider Vinegar? Miracle Tonic?

I'm sure most of us have a bottle of apple cider vinegar in our pantry. Most use it in various salad dressings or marinades. But folk remedies have credited this kitchen staple with cures that range from control of blood sugar to weight loss.

Carol Johnston, PhD, directs Arizona State University's nutrition program. She has been studying apple cider vinegar for more than 10 years and believes its effects on blood sugar are similar to certain medications. The vinegar, she explains, seems to block some of the digestion of starch which may prevent a rise in blood sugar. Of course, if you have diabetes, consult your doctor prior to any change in

diet.

For weight loss, studies have shown that ingesting small amounts of vinegar may help with weight loss. Dilute 1-2 tablespoons in a glass of water and sip along with meals a couple times a day.

Joe Manning, WebMD Health News

Good protein sources

We've heard through the years that protein-heavy diets that limit carbohydrates can help to shed those excess pounds. Some of the most well-known include the Paleo Diet and the Atkins Diet. But while protein is essential to helping you to feel full and lose weight, it's equally important to know how to choose wisely.

Seafood is a great source of protein that's usually low in fat. Though some, like salmon, may contain higher amounts of fat, it's considered a "heart-healthy" fat because it has omega-3 fatty acids.

Poultry, specifically, white meat portions are another good choice of lean protein. The skin is loaded with saturated fat, so be sure to remove before cooking. Other meat choices include pork and lean beef.

Dairy, such as milk, cheese and yogurt provide protein and calcium. Choose skim or low-fat varieties.

Eggs, nuts and beans can also add variety and provide additional sources of protein to your diet.

Fifty grams of soy protein can help lower cholesterol by about 3 percent. Sources of soy protein include tofu which can be found in most grocery stores and added to smoothies, breakfast shakes, salads and stir fries.

Kathleen M. Zelman, MPH, RD, LD

WebMD Health News

Should you buy Organic?

Most grocery stores offer a selection of organic produce. Have you wondered if it's worth the extra price for your health? [CLICK HERE](#) to see what the experts say.

Go Nuts for Nuts

I confess. I love nuts. All kinds. From peanuts to walnuts, I can munch them down. The love extends to nut butters such as peanut butter and almond butter. Nuts are high in fat so it's important to note that portion control is key to enjoying the health benefits associated with nuts.

In a recent study published in the JAMA Internal Medicine, researchers at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine looked at more than 200,000 men and women in the Southern U.S. and Shanghai and found that the more nuts consumed, the lower their death rates from all causes and especially from heart disease and stroke.

So for those of us who love to crunch on nuts or yum up some peanut butter, this is good news. [Click here for more information on the studies.](#)

Jane E. Brody, New York Times