

## A Message from the Executive Director

This month has been filled with opportunities to remember how important it is to hug a child, share memories and tell someone how much you care for them. We see families and children walk through our doors every day who see us as their last hope. The MDHS family has a history of stepping up every day and making a difference in the lives of those we seek to serve as well as those with whom we work. Excellence in this business is predicated on the idea that we all are service oriented and no matter the difficulties or challenges we face, we simply get the job done!!! The Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle stated "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit."

Have we achieved perfection in all program areas and met all of our stated goals this year? No, we have not. Have we made a positive difference in the lives of those we have come into contact so far this year? Absolutely, we have. Many times we get mired down in the things that we have not or cannot achieve. However, we cannot forget the great things we have and will accomplish when we remain consistent.

Mr. Berry has shared the following particularly moving story concerning a pickle jar which exemplifies how positive change, as well as excellence, comes through consistency.

*As far back as I can remember, the pickle jar sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom. When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar. As a small boy, I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar. They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then, the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled.*

*Continued on page 2*

## National Foster Care Month Celebrated in May



Each year across the United States, communities, organizations and agencies pause to recognize and promote efforts to enhance the lives of children and youth in foster care. Our Division of Family & Children's Services team work to protect children and youth from abuse, neglect and exploitation by providing services to promote safe and stable families. Last year there were almost 7,000 children in MDHS custody.

A Mississippi foster parent recently shared with Adams County Licensed Master Social Worker Katie Foster how becoming a foster family blessed their lives.

*"Gary and I are the parents of a 24-year-old daughter and a 23-year-old son. After becoming empty nesters in 2007, God gave me a vision to minister to children. This vision grew into a desire for us to become resource parents. While this started out as my vision, without my husband's total support none of this would be possible."*

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I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar and admire the copper and silver circles that glinted like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank. Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck.

Each and every time as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. "Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back." Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly "These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me."

We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show me the few coins nestled in his palm. "When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again." He always let me drop the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief happy jingle, we grinned at each other. "You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters," he said. "But you'll get there. I'll see to that."

The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting my parents, I used the phone in their bedroom and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed. A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad was a man of few words and never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance and faith.

The pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have done. When I married, I told my wife Susan about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me.

No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar. To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring ketchup over my beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. "When you finish college, Son," he told me, his eyes glistening, "You'll never have to eat beans again - unless you want to."

The first Christmas after our daughter Jessica was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. "She probably needs to be changed," she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her.

When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes. She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room. "Look," she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar.

I looked up and saw that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt. Neither one of us could speak.

John Davis

Deputy Administrator  
for Programs



# The Beacon



For information or to submit articles for the Beacon:

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*"Repeatedly, people will say, 'The children are blessed to be in your home.' However, it is just as much a blessing to us to have them in our home. Caring for these children has taken us to a new level of love, mercy, grace and patience. There are challenges that arise, but through God's grace we do what it takes to make it through trying times."*

*"Being a foster parent has really been a blessing in that we have not only been able to develop relationships and have a positive impact on the lives of the children, but in the lives of their mothers as well. The children's mothers often refer to us as "Mama" and "Papa."*

"In communities across the state, resource families are needed for children who have been abused and neglected," said Foster. "DFCS is urging those who can, to open their hearts and homes to children in need of a temporary or permanent home."

#### **What are Resource (Foster/Adoptive) Parents?**

Resource parents are single individuals or married couples who complete the steps to become licensed to serve as caretakers for foster children. They work with birth families and anticipate that positive changes can be made to allow children to return home safely. If the child becomes free for adoption, resource parents may opt for permanent placement.

These families provide a safe, stable environment for children who may be experiencing stress and trauma from recent life changes. Social workers visit the home on a regular basis to provide services and support. Resource parents also receive a monthly reimbursement to help offset the cost of caring for foster children.

#### **What should I know about Resource Parenting?**

The goal for most children in foster care is to be reunited with their parents. Resource parents work with birthparents to achieve this goal. The length of time a child will stay with in a resource home depends on many factors. It could be for a few days, a few months or much longer. Medical and dental costs are covered for children in foster care and teens may be eligible for programs to help them learn life skills. They may also be eligible for college financial assistance.

#### **Can I be a successful resource parent?**

- Do you have current or previous experience parenting or working with children?
- Do you have the time and willingness to be involved in the life of a child?
- Do you feel comfortable providing care for a child who may have been raised in an abusive or unstable environment and needs time to establish trust?
- Do you feel comfortable helping a child emotionally cope with life changes?
- Are you able to provide consistent, loving and stable parenting to children who may test boundaries?
- What could becoming a resource parent do for someone like you?

If you would like to find out more information about resource parenting, call Katie Foster at 601-442-2882 or the Adoption Resource Exchange at 800-821-9157.

## Grand Opening Celebration Highlights

At the State Office May 18, an event was held to celebrate the grand opening of the new training area. Many were on hand to witness the ribbon cutting for the new facility including past executive directors Don Thompson and Don Taylor. They were honored with a plaque commemorating past directors of the agency which will be displayed in the new facility.



*MDHS Emergency Management Coordinator Alynda Ponder was recognized with this year's Richard Harris Leadership Award for her tireless efforts to bring the agency forward and train employees for emergencies. Along with an award, a plaque listing awardees' names will be hung in the Training Room.*

*Mississippi Department of Rehabilitative Services Executive Director Butch McMillan, who retires at the end of June, was recognized at the celebration for his years of service to the state. He toured the newly opened fitness center and was "caught" enjoying one of the many pieces of fitness equipment.*



## Retirements

Included in this edition are several retirements from around the state. We appreciate these employees and their contribution to the agency and people of Mississippi.

### *Gladys Dunaway and Alvis Everett*



DFO 5W Program Specialist Gladys Dunaway (left) retired April 30 with 18 years of MDHS service. Lawrence County Director Alvis Everett retired May 31 with 25 years of service. DFO Regions 5W and 5E honored the retirees in April with a luncheon and certificates of appreciation.

### *Teresa Nester*



Teresa Nester, who retired April 30, was honored with a reception for her 25 years of service. Region 4S Director Jim Sims presented Teresa a service certificate and gift from MACRD members.

### *Bob Mulholland*



On April 30, Bob Mulholland, above left, retired from the Division of Budgets & Accounting with 37 years of state service. Bob began his employment with MDHS in 1977. At a reception in Bob's honor, MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry presented a service certificate. We thank Bob for his service.

### *Veronica Breaux*



Hancock County Director Veronica Breaux retired April 30 with 26 years of service. She started as an eligibility worker with Hancock County in 1989 and moved up the ranks to the county director. She has always shown great strength and leadership during her employment. She was very instrumental in the building of the new office after the devastation from Hurricane Katrina. The staff honored her with a luncheon and gifts of appreciation for her years of hard work and dedicated service.

## PEP Rally in Hinds County



Hinds County Child Support Enforcement and Legal Supervisory staff held a "PEP" (Paternity Establishment Percentage) rally to motivate everyone to press towards the goal of 90 percent by August 31, 2015. An additional 3.3 percent is needed to make this happen in Hinds County. A Paternity Day was held to help the county raise their participation level. **GO HINDS COUNTY!**

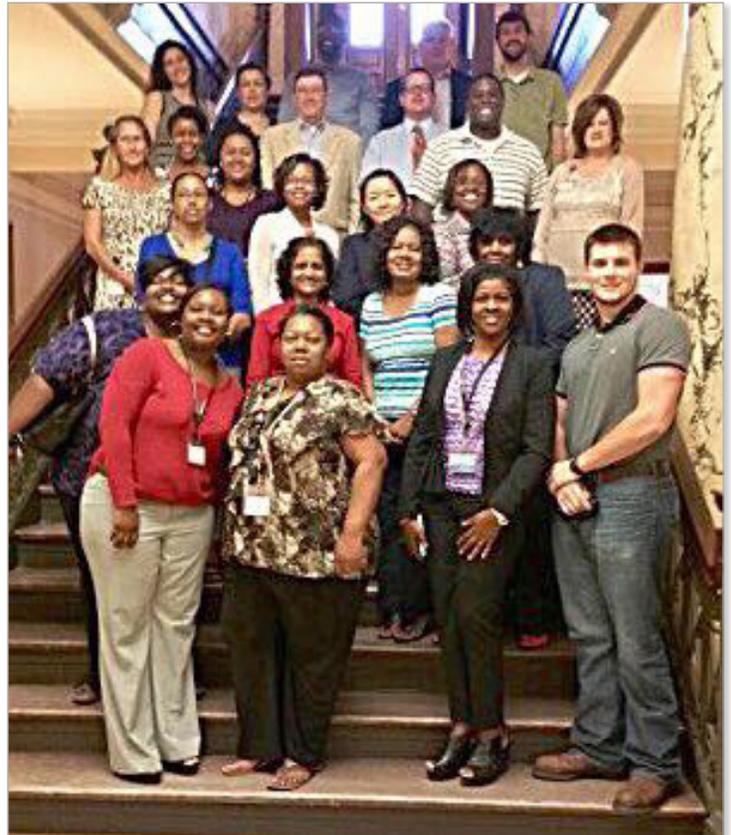
## DFO Attends ICS 300 at MEMA



*DFO employees who recently attended ICS 300 Training at MEMA included front row, from left: Aaron Rushing, Tina Berryhill, Betty Steen, Sharon Womack, Shirley Sykes and Courtney Bilbrew. Back row: Elton Pope, Fredrick Ward and Glen Lacey.*

Those who work disasters are encouraged, and many times required depending on their role, to take Incident Command System (ICS) classes to help in their understanding of the organizational structure of the ICS and its principles of operation. Effective emergency planning, communications and operations before, during and after a disaster greatly affect the recovery of a community. We appreciate our people for proactively participating in classes to help Mississippi "when the storms come."

## Monday Morning Training Building Leaders



Throughout the agency, leaders are training new leaders. In a recent session of "Monday Morning Leadership," Charlie Smith and Mike Thornton took the class on a tour of the State Capitol.

## Semi-Annual Firearms Training Held for PI Investigators



Program Integrity investigators were at the firing range in May for their semi-annual training which was held at the Jackson Police Department firing range. Instructors for the event were Mikel Hodges, Robert Jackson and Josh Koegel.

## NAC and the Big Bang Team Enhance Program Integrity



Mississippi's Big Bang Team, from left: Gordon Frederick, Lynn Newman, Suzanne Goodman, Angela Hampton and Jim Sims.

For purposes of enhancing program integrity, the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC) is being used to determine dual participation for applicants and recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and will be utilized when Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP) benefits are issued in response to a natural disaster. NAC also aids in the establishment of benefit claims for purposes of recovering incorrectly issued SNAP benefits.

The Division of Field Operations would like to thank members of the "Big Bang" team - Madison County Supervisor Gordon Frederick, Sharkey County Director Lynn Newman, former Adams County Supervisor Suzanne Goodman, Simpson County Supervisor Angela Hampton, and Region 4 South Director Jim Sims - for their valuable work with the NAC pilot project. With Mississippi serving as the project lead, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida have been participating in the NAC pilot that began June 2, 2014.

At the start of the pilot, team members evaluated initial collision, or "Big Bang" information obtained through the sharing of client data among the project states. This data was used to determine if persons applying for or receiving SNAP in Mississippi were also receiving SNAP in one or more of the other pilot states. Since initiation of the pilot, the Big Bang team has tested and evaluated system enhancements that allow caseworkers to view real-time results when determining possible dual participation.

Implementation of the NAC has resulted in a 95 percent success rate in preventing dual SNAP participation. During the 10-month period from June 2014 through March 2015, there were 3,138 instances of dual participation prevention within the five-state pilot, resulting in an estimated savings of \$2,259,360.

An ongoing evaluation of the project will continue through 2015 to determine the viability of the NAC being implemented nationwide. In the future, the NAC is expected to be applied to other programs such as

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid and Unemployment Compensation.

A NAC Face-to-Face Leadership Meeting was held in Alpharetta, Ga., including NAC team members from Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Mississippi, along with representatives from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food & Nutrition Service (USDA, FNS) and LexisNexis.

## DFCS Resource Unit Spreads the Word in Fondren



Staff from the DFCS Resource Development Unit recently participated in Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. Each year in May, a national day is set aside to bring awareness to mental health concerns for children. Julie Propst, Laura Rivera and Eric Burden set up a table at Fondren's First Thursday in Jackson and distributed children's mental health awareness coloring books, crayons and prevention materials. There were approximately 2,000 people in attendance.

## 5W Foster Parent Appreciation Day in Natchez



Working the registration table for the Foster Parent Appreciation Day were Meghan Wallace (daughter of Glenda), and DFCS staff Glenda Wallace, Kim Simpson and Katie Foster.

Region 5W held their Foster Parent Appreciation Event at Duncan Park in Natchez. The staff honored the families with certificates of appreciation for their unwavering love and dedication to our foster children. Throughout the event a few parents shared their stories about why they decided to open their hearts and homes to foster children. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity for fellowship, food and to share stories of how becoming a resource family changed their lives and the lives of children in care.

## 4N Celebrates Foster Parents



Region 4-North celebrated National Foster Care Month and their resource parents with a Foster Parent Appreciation Event at the Winston County Extension office in Louisville. Parents were treated to a luncheon and enjoyed sharing how becoming foster families has changed their lives. One employee read a poem of thanks to the families for their tireless efforts and dedication to our foster children. The group also engaged in a game called "15 Minutes of Fame" that included important information about foster care and some fun facts about famous celebrities who had either been in foster care at some point in their lives or who are currently foster parents. These include adoptive parents singer Sheryl Crow, baseball player Babe Ruth and actress Jamie Lee Curtis. Celebrity adopted children include Rapper Ice-T, actor Jamie Foxx, actress Marilyn Monroe and singer Faith Hill.

## Lana Johnson Honored by Lowndes County Staff



Lowndes staff bought and proudly wore Relay for Life shirts to honor local breast cancer survivor Lana Johnson (center front).

## SNAP Trafficking Investigation Results in Bust

In recent news from the Columbian Progress, shopkeeper Moad Mohamen-Nagi Algaham of Sandy Hook was charged with 17 counts of welfare fraud and multiple drug charges by the Marion County Sheriff's office. Assistance was provided by the Narcotics Task Force and MDHS Program Integrity investigators.



Sheriff Berkley Hall said there were complaints on the store for illegal activity.

Deputies obtained a search warrant for the store, and discovered a large amount of marijuana and what is believed to be spice, along with paraphernalia to bag, weigh and possibly sell the illegal substances.

Spice, also known as synthetic marijuana, has been in the news quite a bit lately nationwide and has been linked to numerous hospitalizations in the state.

SNAP trafficking investigations are aimed at preventing the illegal use, transfer or trafficking of SNAP benefits by retailers who are authorized to accept and redeem SNAP through EBT card purchases, but instead, exchange those benefits for cash and/or ineligible goods such as gas or non-food items. During SFY 2014, 47 retailers were arrested for SNAP trafficking.

SNAP is the nation's largest food security program and in Mississippi serves almost 22 percent of the population. Begun in 1936, the program provides food-purchasing assistance for millions of no-income, low-income, elderly and disabled residents across the U.S.

SNAP purchases can be made for eligible items at supermarkets, small grocery stores, convenience stores and participating farmers markets.

Call the SNAP Fraud Hotline at 800-299-6905 if you suspect a client or retailer of SNAP fraud or trafficking.

## What's Happening Mississippi?

### Events and Festivals

**June 13:** Horn Lake 3rd Annual Juneteenth Family Fun. Hosted by the Desoto County African-American History Symposium. Enjoy a bit of history, corvette car show and some family fun. Go to [VisitMississippi.org](http://VisitMississippi.org) for more information.

**June 20:** Bentonia Blues Festival. Annual event since 1972. Lots of Bentonia-style country blues. Call 662-528-1900 for information.

**June 26-27:** North Mississippi Hill Country Blues Picnic. A two-day event with guitar/harmonica workshops and lots of music. Located about 15 minutes south of Holly Springs on Highway 7. Go to [nmshillcountrypicnic.com](http://nmshillcountrypicnic.com) for info and directions.

**June 27:** Tomato Festival, Crystal Springs. A family fun event with everything from a 5k to a farmers market with locally grown foods, food and arts and crafts vendors. Go to [cityofcrystalsprings.com](http://cityofcrystalsprings.com) for more information.

**June 1-August 31:** Cedar Hill Farm Pick-Ur-Own, Hernando. Open Monday-Saturday. Fruits, vegetables and local honey. [www.gocedarhillfarm.com](http://www.gocedarhillfarm.com)

**Now through January 3, 2016:** Wolf to Woof, the Story of Dogs, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Jackson. [www.mdwfp.com/museum.aspx](http://www.mdwfp.com/museum.aspx)

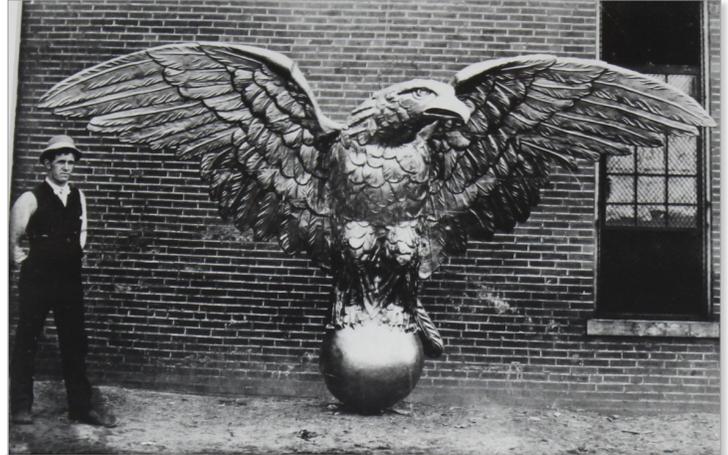
**Jackson State University** has more than 40 summer camps for K-12. Go to [www.jsums.edu/summercamps/camps/](http://www.jsums.edu/summercamps/camps/) for more information.

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

## A Bit of History...

If you've traveled to the Capitol City lately, you noticed that the 110-year-old Capitol building is undergoing major renovations. Included in the face lift, is the 8' 15", 2,800 pound copper eagle which will be repaired and regilded in gold leaf.

During a recent visit to the Capitol, I had an opportunity to view some of the historical photos on the first floor. This one caught my attention.



*A. R. Grieve stands next to the eagle he crafted for the Mississippi State Capitol in St. Louis, Missouri. 1903  
Theodore Link Collection*

## Walk, Don't Run, Your Way to a Healthy You

OK, so you're not much into running? Or maybe you've had an injury and can't run. Then just walk — every step you take is part of your journey to good overall health.

In fact, walking briskly can lower your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes as much as running, according to a new study conducted at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Life Science Division in Berkley, Calif. All three conditions are risk factors for heart disease and stroke — and you can do something about them.

Researchers analyzed 33,060 runners in the National Runners' Health Study and 15,045 walkers in the National Walkers' Health Study. They found that the same energy used for moderate-intensity walking and vigorous-intensity running resulted in similar reductions in risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and possibly coronary heart disease over the study's six years. [Read more about the study highlights.](#)

The more people walked or ran each week, the more their health benefits increased.

"The findings don't surprise me at all," said Russell Pate, Ph.D., a professor of exercise science in the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. "The findings are consistent with the American Heart Association's recommendations for physical activity in adults that we need 30 minutes of physical activity per day, at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week to derive benefits."

Maybe you've been sedentary for a while. No problem. "Just get started," Pate said, "even if it's a few additional minutes per day."

It's not all or nothing; it's step by step. So set a reachable goal just for today. Then you can work toward your overall goal of 30 minutes a day by increasing your time as you get in better shape.

From [Heart.org](http://www.heart.org); [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/Walking/Walk-Don't-Run-Your-Way-to-a-Healthy-Heart\\_UCM\\_452926\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/Walking/Walk-Don't-Run-Your-Way-to-a-Healthy-Heart_UCM_452926_Article.jsp)