

A Message from the Executive Director

As I write this article, we have entered July and a new state fiscal year. We received an increase of \$3.2 million in general funds which does not allow us to increase Foster Board payments as we had requested. The increase does help offset some of the costs associated with additional children being taken into custody.

We have now exceeded 5,000 children in MDHS custody for the first time. Nothing in the current data indicates that this trend is slowing down. We will be continuously challenged to continue to find more efficient and cost effective ways to deliver vital services to these children in need.

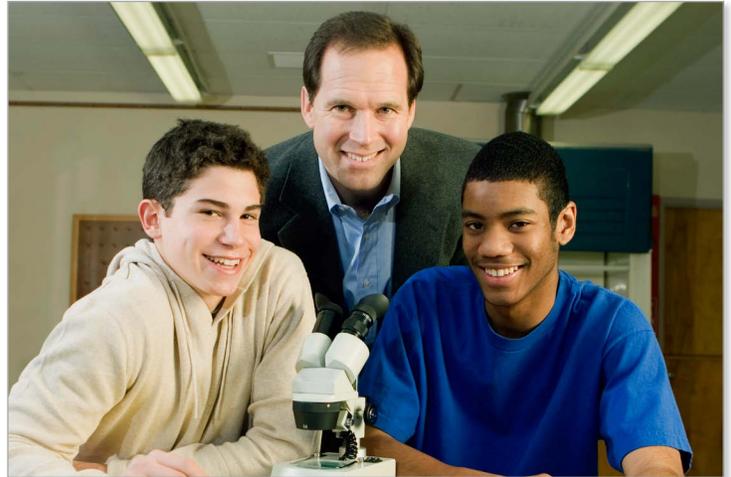
The 2016 budget included a net loss of 68 PINs. No filled positions were eliminated and no employees will be affected. Most of the positions eliminated were those that had remained unfilled for an extended period of time. Every year I am amazed at the stewardship that you display and feel that this year will be no exception.

This is an election year and Governor Bryant's first term will end in January 2016. Although nothing is certain in Mississippi politics, I anticipate no major changes in the upcoming months. My request to our employees and our vital community partners is to remain focused on our mission of service. Do not be distracted by political ads and rhetoric. Especially, do not get caught up in the "rumor mill." I promised you the day that I took this job, and have held to that pledge for the past three and one-half years, if changes were coming you will hear them from me.

There is much good news to report. Child Support collections are up 4 percent over this time last year. We need to remain focused on having a strong last quarter. The year 2015 will be remembered as one where we "turned the corner."

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DYS and DFCS Utilizing Positive Behavior Interventions for Youth



The Rankin County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) is being recognized around the nation for its innovative approach to respect and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for students and staff alike.

Judge Tom Broome and Michelle Rhodes at Rankin County have been working with the REACH MS PBIS program since 2012. Realizing Excellence for All Children in Mississippi (REACH MS) provides positive behavior interventions in school settings. Although the grant has primarily focused on public schools throughout the state, the program also benefits county juvenile detention centers and group homes.

DYS staff in Rankin County have been an integral part of implementing positive behavior programs that focus

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Mississippi has been recognized as a national leader in administration of SNAP. MDHS finished eighth in the nation with a Payment Accuracy Rate of 1.16 which is than half the national average of 3.66 percent. Our CAPER (negative error rate, noticing, timeliness and procedures) was second in the nation with a rate of 6.81 percent which is simply outstanding considering the national rate is 26.30 percent!

I would like to congratulate Cathy Sykes and the Field Operations team for an outstanding year. This is truly a team effort from the QA staff under the leadership of Margaret Culpepper, to the Regional and County Directors, to the best team of county supervisors, eligibility workers and clerks in the nation. I am extremely proud of you and how well you serve the citizens of Mississippi!

I hope that you enjoyed the heartwarming story of **The Pickle Jar** in the last edition. Tears come to my eyes every time I read it. Although it was set a generation or two ago, its message remains true today. Family is our most important gift from God.

I feel very strongly that most of the problems that we face every day, especially the continuous rise of children in custody, is caused by the breakdown of our families. Love and support your children in everything that they do. The lessons taught at an early age last a lifetime. Thanks to John Davis for his comments and for "pinch hitting" for me last month.

I would like to conclude by thanking everyone for the support and kindness that you extended to me during my recent illness. The posters, cards, emails, etc., were simply overwhelming. Simple words cannot express how much I appreciate each and every one of you and how honored and humbled that I am to serve as your leader. Spoken from the bottom of my heart, you guys are simply the best.

Have a great summer!

Rickey Berry
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Human Services

on behavior education. One of the key elements is clear articulation of rules and definitions for both staff and youth alike to ensure consistency. Other elements important to the program's success is thorough data collection and the flexibility and adaptability of the system to fit individual or group needs.

REACH MS training and technical assistance has changed the way the Rankin County JDC handles discipline referrals. Since implementation, reported incidents have been reduced by 65 percent and intakes by approximately 12 percent. With consistent data monitoring and appropriate training, staff have been able to improve overall facility operation for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Staff training, which is crucial to program improvement, is ongoing. REACH State Coordinator Selina Merrell previously worked with group homes and youth in juvenile detention in Maryland. Tier 1 PBIS training was recently completed by Education Liaisons Cynthia Moore Hardy and Jennifer Koegel in the central region, and DFCS Congregate Care Director Chan Turner. DFCS Education Liaison Julie Propst has been working with the REACH MS grant several years and will attend Tier 3 PBIS training this fall.

REACH MS will be conducting PBIS training for staff of Millcreek in Magee, Raleigh Group Home and other area schools.

Funding for REACH MS is through U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and the Mississippi State Personnel Development Grant. REACH MS supports PBIS at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Awarded to the Mississippi Department of Education, the grant is administered by the University of Southern Mississippi, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education.

Millcreek CEO Margaret Stept said, "I am very excited about the opportunity to implement the program and am looking forward to seeing a positive effect on both youth and staff."



The Beacon

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MDHS Braves the Heat for Health



June 18 more than 80 MDHS staff members braved the extreme heat to join the Governor and about 500 participants to Run for Health. This 5K event raised \$10,000 for Batson Children's Hospital. MDHS won the award for the largest team and had numerous runners who placed in top positions for their age groups.

- Bryan Grove, 1st Place, Male age 30-34, time 20:43.
- Rutledge McMillin, 2nd Place, Male age 30-34, time 21:00.
- Marissa Whitehouse, 3rd Place, Female 25-29, time 28:26.
- Aaron Rushing, 4th Place, Male age 19-24, time 30:15.
- Michelle Lowe, 4th Place, Female 60-64, time 53:47.
- Mary O'Neal, 5th Place, Female 50-54, time 42:59.

Congratulations to everyone who participated. It was great fun for a good cause despite the heat.



SNAP Trafficking and Fraud Busts in Noxubee and Marion Counties

Mississippians support administration of programs to help struggling families put food on the table, but they also want to know their taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Program Integrity investigates stores which accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure the integrity of the nation's first line of defense against hunger.

Thursday, June 11, state investigators from the Special Investigations Unit, and local law enforcement from Noxubee County served warrants on three individuals accused of SNAP fraud. Fraud generally is committed by store owners who exchange benefits for cash or other ineligible items.

Store owners were charged with exchanging welfare benefits for cash for more than \$39,000.

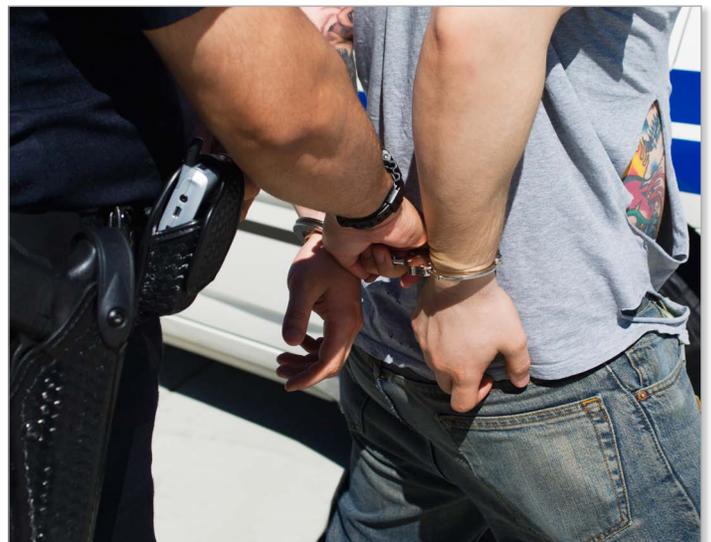
- Store Owner, Myrtle Ann Hagood, C & K Grocery, Shuqualak.
- Store Owners, Sammy and Lisa Lindsey, Sam's G&G, Shuqualak.

June 26, Fraud investigators and the Marion County Sheriff's Department served six individuals for SNAP fraud. Arrested include:

- Theresa Haddox, Foxworth.
- Tanya Upton, Kokomo.
- Laken Cox, Judith Priest, Joanna Thornhill and Joy Thornhill, Morgantown.

Small "mom and pop" grocers are usually the type of stores targeted by those trying to defraud a system in place to help those who are at risk of food insecurity, such as the elderly and children. Local residents can help spot fraud in their grocery stores.

If you suspect a store owner, clerk or client is misusing SNAP benefits, call the Fraud hotline at 1-800-299-6905. SNAP fraud is a crime.



Retirements

June 30 is a significant time in Mississippi State government with the sun setting on one fiscal year and the dawning of another. For many state employees, it's a time they choose for retirement. The following pages are just a few of the many MDHS employees who retired this month. For those of us who continue to work, it may be difficult to see our friends leave, but we are filled with excitement for them as they enter a new chapter of their lives. Some plan to pursue new work opportunities, while others will spend precious time with family and friends, and perhaps volunteer their services at local missions. To our retirees, we appreciate all your work, dedication and devotion to the agency, and the people we have been charged with serving through the years. Best wishes to you as you venture into the next chapter of your life.

Brenda Coe-Wess



Brenda Coe-Wess retired with more than 34 years of service. She began her career April 18, 1983, as a social worker for the agency. In 2000, she was promoted to the Jackson County ASWS and in 2007 to Regional ASWS. In 2009, Brenda was promoted to regional director for Region 7E. Her commitment to Mississippi families and children will be missed. From left, MDHS Deputy Administrator for Family & Children's Services Dr. Kim Shackelford, Brenda Coe-Wess and DFCS Field Operations Director Anna Lyn Whitt.

Derrick Crawford



The Division of Field Operations regional directors celebrated with Derrick Crawford (back row, center) for his more than 36 years of MDHS service. Derrick also enjoyed local celebrations, including a surprise luncheon at the Indianola office and a retirement reception at the State Office.

Cherri Hedglin

Cherri Hedglin retired with 37 years of service. Cherri says that she started working for DHS "in the middle of the cotton fields" at the old Hinds County Economic Assistance Office in Raymond as an eligibility worker. She then moved to the north Jackson office near the Jackson Mall and served as a Food Stamp supervisor. Cherri began work at the State Office in 1985 in the Food Stamp Claims Unit and worked there for 8-10 years. She spent her last 20 years of service in DFCS—first in the Eligibility Unit, then in Prevention, then to MACWIS Unit, and finally in the Prevention Unit.



Sandra Smith



Sandra Smith Director in Newton County retired with 35 years of service. Pictured with Sandra is Region 4S Director Jim Sims and DFO Field Operations Director Larry Strebeck.

Christine Naylor



EA Supervisor Christine Naylor (right) enjoyed a reception in honor of her 27 years of service with the agency. She retired June 15. She is shown with Lauderdale County Director Marilyn Williams.

Quasonette Jackson



Quasonette Jackson, 'Quay' as she was affectionately known, served 35 years with the agency. She began in DFCS and then worked the switchboard and the front desk. In 2003 she moved to DECCD, then known as the Office for Children and Youth (OCY). Her smile will be missed at the State Office.

Arrie Ward, Ann Marenko & Sharyn Allen



DFO Arrie Ward (left) retired with 22 years of service having worked with Economic Assistance in Hinds and Rankin counties and the State Office. Ann Marenko (center) also had 22 years of service, working at the Lauderdale County office, then DFO State Office. Sharyn Allen leaves with 8 years of service, having worked with child support services.

Inez Perkins



Inez Perkins retired with more than 30 years of service. This kind lady has worked in Budgets and Accounting all her time with MDHS and says she will miss her coworkers. Her plan is to enjoy retirement, travel, and spend time with her family.

Jean Davis



On June 10, 2015, a retirement reception was held to celebrate Tippah County Director Jean Davis' 36.5 years of service. DFO Director Cathy Sykes (right) her with a certificate of appreciation.

Barbara McLaurin



Barbara McLaurin, a Jones County case manager, retired with 26 years. From left, Larry Strebeck, Jim Sims, McLaurin and Jones County Director Margaret Moss

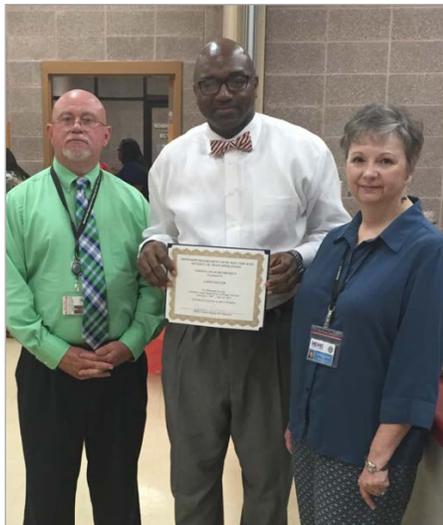
Terri Kelly



Terri Kelly, a Jones County eligibility worker, retired with 23 years of service. From left, Larry Strebeck, Kelly, Jim Sims and Margaret Moss.

James Miller

Grenada County Director James Miller (center) retired with 27 years of service. On hand for the certificate presentation was Larry Strebeck and Region 2E Director Jessie Gurner.

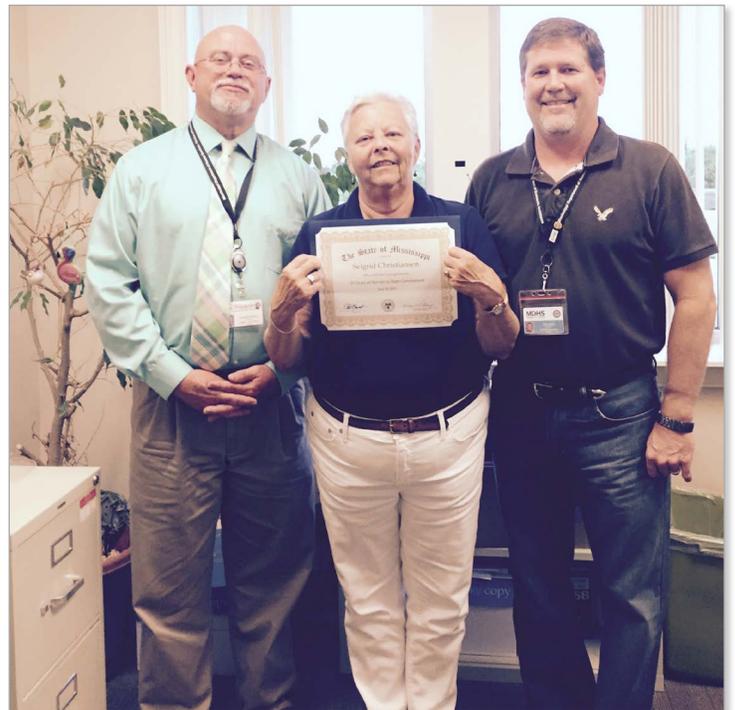


Linda Powell



Linda Powell (left) retired with 21 years of service and was honored with a reception. She was presented her certificate by Wayne County Director Latanya Vaughan.

Seigrid Christiansen



Seigrid Christiansen, center, case manager in Jones County retired with 20 years of service. She is pictured with Larry Strebeck and Jim Sims.

Biggest Loser Winners Announced



The 'Biggest Loser' challenge was held at the State Office with 49 participants. Weekly weigh-ins, body mass indices and measurements were monitored by ActiveHealth Management and the Health Council. Participants each paid \$15 to enter the challenge and were monitored over a six-week period. The overall winner was DFO Rachelle Crawford who won \$500. Second place (\$200) was awarded to DFCS Tosha McGill; third place (\$35 and a Fitbit), DBA Jeannette Price. Winner of the \$100 random drawing e-card was DBA Sheila Delpidio. In all, more than 146 pounds were lost by the participants.

The Health Council and ActiveHealth are planning another challenge soon. Watch your email for details on how you can lose weight and win.

30 Year Service Award



Neshoba County Director Kimberly Price was recognized for 30 years of service. She is pictured with Region 4N Director Ross Crawford.

Job Fair Held in Panola County



Panola county DFO staff were on hand at a job fair held at Northwest Mississippi Community College in Batesville. The office participates each year and assists with registration. Seated, from left, Patsy Kilpatrick, Lindsee Little and Suzie Vaughan. Standing, Shavonne Thigpen, Felicia Thomas, Adam Todd with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security Governor's Job Fair, and Panola County Director Arlene Wilson

DFO Training Highlights



DFO hosted two groups of clerical and eligibility workers in June for training. We always enjoy our county guests at the State Office. Thank you, ladies, for being 'boots on the ground' and the 'face of MDHS.'

Health News

Couch To 5K...Can You Do It?

We've all heard the term couch potato, but how many of us have heard of Couch to 5K? And what exactly is it?

This program, developed by Josh Clark in 1996, has been the source of inspiration for many to get on the road to fitness. Since its inception, C25K has been introduced in countries across the world to help beginner athletes make running/jogging part of their lives.

Josh's philosophy of the program, he says, is very similar to software design:

1. **Eliminate pain.** If it hurts to do it, people will give up.
2. **Welcome newcomers.** Friendly language and reasonable expectations are crucial in early experiences with a program.
3. **Deliver early victories.** If you feel like you're kicking butt from the start, you'll be eager to continue. Otherwise, you'll decide you suck, the program sucks or both. See #1.
4. **Make it easy and rewarding.** We are creatures of inertia. We need carrots to get moving.
5. **Not everyone wants to be a power user.** Some people will be content to master the basics and stop there. Others will want to continue to develop and explore. The program should accommodate both paths.

Josh said, "Anybody can do it [running]. That's one of the great things about running. It's accessible to everyone. It's inexpensive. You don't need lots of gear. All you need is a pair of shoes and a place to go."

"I wrote the program with my mom in mind. She was 50, didn't exercise, always hated it, but wanted to do something for her health," he said.

At the State Office, Program Integrity Investigator Robert Jackson has started a C25K team. Employees from a diverse age range, fitness level and multiple divisions have signed up for the challenge.

So don't let age stop you. C25K may be just what you need for a lean you in 2015. For more information on the program, call Robert at 601-966-1150.



Did you know....

Rewards of Exercise

- **Feeling blue?** Exercise makes you happy. It releases positive endorphins to your brain.
- **Too tired?** Actually, exercise gives you energy and helps with chronic fatigue.
- **Not sleeping?** Regular exercise helps you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly.
- **Low self-esteem?** When you run or walk a 5K or do other exercise, you feel good about yourself.
- **Stressed out?** Exercise helps to calm your brain and reduce levels of stress hormones so you feel better.
- **Sluggish at work?** Take a break and take a walk. Go up a couple flights of stairs. Stretch. You'll be surprised how much more productive you are.
- **Getting a little thick around the middle?** Exercise, combined with diet, is key to achieving a healthy weight.

The benefits of exercise are tremendous so let's move it and make this year a healthy year.

Beat the Heat with these Garden Tips

For those of us who garden, summertime is a time that our 'crops are laid by' and picking time has begun for the vegetables. With temperatures soaring into the 90s and triple digit heat indices, it's time for dragging water hoses around and protecting plants, shrubs and vegetables.

Tips to keep you safe and your plants happy:

- Watch for tomato, pepper or squash showing signs of blossom end rot. If you notice rot, get rid of the vegetable. It can spread to other ripening fruits.
- Top cut okra that's become too tall to pick. They are a hardy plant and will recover quickly from clipping.
- If your garden is producing, but it's time for a family get-a-way, ask your neighbors to come harvest while you're gone. Frequent picking helps to keep your vegetables productive.
- Before you leave, group your potted plants together under the shade. Not only will the soils retain moisture for longer periods, but the shade will provide some relief from the sun's rays.
- While you're out in the heat working in the gardens, don't forget to wear long sleeves to protect yourself from pesky mosquitos and other biting insects. A quick spray of repellent on your pants or socks will also keep the ticks and chiggers at bay.
- Staying hydrated is not only good for the garden, but important for the gardener as well. As you work, keep some cold water handy and take frequent breaks in the shade to avoid heat exhaustion.