

A Message from the Executive Director

After an unusually hot, dry summer, autumn weather is finally here which is a welcome break for everybody. The cool air brings with it anticipation of the upcoming holiday season and a new year. I look back over 2015 with a sense of pride.

As I mentioned last month, Mississippi is the first state in the history of the Food Stamp Program/SNAP to ever be recognized as a high performer in all four program areas in the same year. And final child support numbers are in, revealing collections of \$341,019,812, an increase of \$6 million over the previous year.

Many great things are going on every day here at MDHS due to your commitment and resourcefulness.

I truly enjoyed the time I spent at the annual Division of Field Operations Fall Management Conference in Starkville. I was able to interact with the county and regional directors, the senior attorneys and the child support supervisors. The DFO State Office staff was well-represented and all are to be commended for a conference that was well-planned. The overall content of the conference and the information presented by the guest speakers included information we can use in our lives as well as our jobs.

November will be an exciting month. We will have the election behind us and can begin to plan ahead after the people of Mississippi have selected who they want to lead the state for the next four years.

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Oh the Places You'll Go!



Private Daniel Bordelon, with County of Service Worker Stacie Gilner and Adoption Specialist Deborah Lacy at Bordelon's military graduation ceremony in Charlotte, SC.

In the Dr. Seuss classic, "Oh the Places You'll Go," a boy is encouraged to "fly high" and "soar to high heights."

Such is the case with Daniel Bordelon who was in foster care in Gulfport, and placed with resource parents Nelson and Rebecca Sylvester.

Bordelon stole the hearts of Harrison County DFCS, particularly COS Worker Stacie Gilner and Adoption Specialist Deborah Lacy, who encouraged him all along the way to be strong and know that he could "move mountains."

Now, graduating as a private in the U.S. Army out of Fort Jackson in Charlotte, South Carolina, Bordelon has a world of opportunities before him.

Gilner, Lacy and Bordelon's foster family, the Sylvesters, journeyed to South Carolina for the momentous occasion in Bordelon's life. We wish him the best as he pursues his military career.

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Also, the Public Catalyst draft report will be submitted to the MDHS, DFCS leadership team November 11. We will make our comments, and the final report will be presented to the Governor by November 21.

I will hopefully be able to give you some concrete information in the November BEACON about some of the ongoing issues that could materially affect the future of the agency.

I have spoken to you great deal in the past few months about remaining focused on our mission and embracing our vision. We have talked a lot about coping with and embracing change even to a point that change leads to transformation. These are all wonderful concepts and have their place both in our lives and in the workplace.

What I ask you today is, what is the underlying principle that we each must share to accomplish our goals? To me, the answer is simple – **COMMITMENT**.

Webster defines commitment three different ways but they are all interrelated. The definitions are, "A promise to do or give something; a promise to be loyal to someone or something; and the attitude of someone who works very hard to do or support something."

What commitment means to me, based on these definitions, is first, make a promise to yourself that you are going to give of yourself the best that you have to give.

Second, you take action and share this commitment with your family and your coworkers by being fiercely loyal to them.

Finally, you then put your commitment into action to support a mission or goal. Your hard work will impel you into the actions needed to carry your mission based on your commitment.

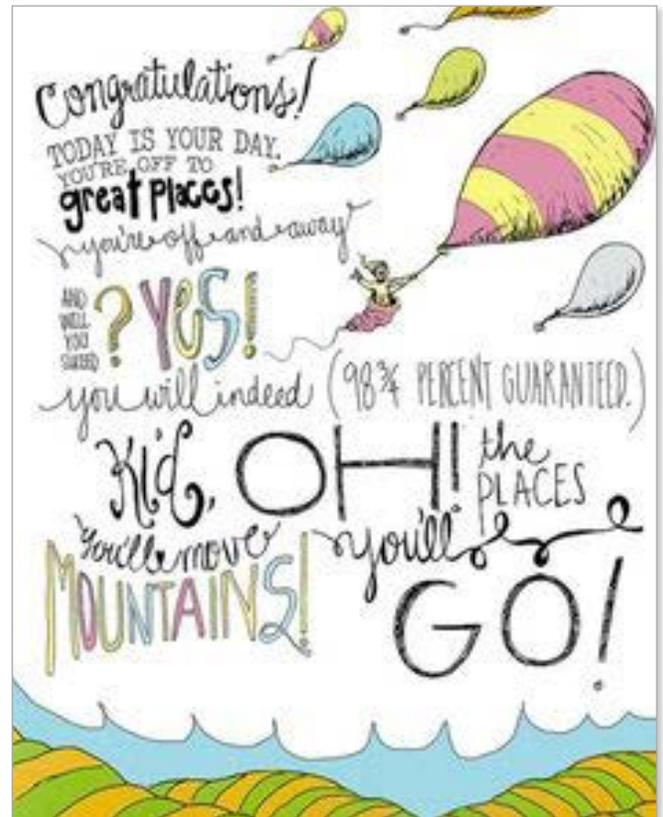
Since our mission is to address human suffering and affect positive change in people's lives, you have a cause by which to live each and every day!

Rickey Berry
MDHS Executive Director



From left Seth Sylvester, Bordelon and foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Sylvester.

"And will you succeed? Yes! You will indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)"



The Beacon

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Heads Up! It's Medicare Open Enrollment Time!

Medicare Open Enrollment runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. And for the many questions you or your family members may have, State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) counselors stand ready to provide information and assistance about Medicare and its many options. Open Enrollment provides a window of time for those with Medicare to change, drop or join Medicare health plans and prescription drug plans with no penalty.

What is Medicare?

Medicare is the health insurance program for people age 65 or older; people less than age 65 with certain disabilities; and people of all ages with End-Stage Renal Disease.

Medicare: Make Sense of the Alphabet

Part A (Hospital Insurance) – Most people don't pay a premium for Part A because they or a spouse already paid for it through payroll taxes while working. Part A helps cover inpatient care in hospitals, including critical access hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities (not custodial or long-term care). It also helps cover hospice care and some home health care.

Part B (Medical Insurance) – Most people pay a monthly premium for Part B which helps cover doctor services and outpatient care, some physical and occupational therapists, and some home health care. If a beneficiary decides not to enroll in a Part B plan when eligible or during a Special Enrollment Period (e.g. loss of employer's insurance or move out of a plan's network), they may pay a penalty for as long as they have Part B.

Part C (Medicare Advantage Plans) – These plans provide Part A (Hospital), Part B (Medical), and usually Part D (Drug Coverage) all in one policy. Part C (Medicare Advantage) plans are contracted between Medicare and a private insurance company (such as Humana, WellCare, SilverScript, etc). Beneficiaries must go to a doctor or hospital within the plan's network or pay additional out-of-network costs. Beneficiaries should take time to research which services

are covered and if the doctor or hospital of their choice is in the plan's network. SHIP counselors can help with these decisions.

Part D (Prescription Drug Coverage) – Most people will pay a monthly premium for Part D which is available to everyone with Medicare to help lower prescription drug costs. Private insurance companies offer prescription drug coverage designed to meet most people's needs. Like other insurance, if a beneficiary decides not to enroll in a drug plan when they are first eligible, they may pay a penalty for late enrollment which is why the open enrollment period is so critical.

Plans for Medicare Part B and D and the changes that come with the program can be confusing. SHIP counselors can provide guidance to the many questions that can arise when making health plan decisions.

During the last fiscal year, SHIP counselors in Mississippi provided information to more than 35,000 persons through personalized sessions, presentations, workshops and health fairs.

SHIP provides free, unbiased, one-on-one counseling so beneficiaries can make informed decisions about Medicare and available drug plans.

SHIP counselors can:

- Answer questions about Medicare rights and protections.
- Assist with information about buying a Medigap (supplement) policy or long-term care insurance.
- Help with payment denials and appeals.
- Aid in selecting a Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage Plan.
- Answer questions about Medicare bills.

In Mississippi, call your SHIP counselor at 1-800-948-3090. Remember, Medicare Open Enrollment is Oct. 15-Dec. 7.

Don't wait. Call today for help navigating Medicare health plans.



It's flu season again and we encourage everyone to take precautions to prevent getting or spreading the virus.

To help curb the spread of influenza, Administrative Services arranged for MEA to administer flu shots at the State Office Sept. 30. Administrative Services

Office Director Renfred Tate provided "moral" support to DFCS Resource Development Interpreter Supervisor Laura Rivera while she received her shot. Of approximately 425 employees at the State Office, 96 rolled up their sleeves for a vaccination.



Recognitions



Clay County Supervisor III Dianne Ramsey was recognized for 30 years of service in state government. She was presented a certificate of appreciation for working special assignments and having a wonderful attitude by Region 4N Director Ross Crawford. Congratulations Dianne.



Jasper County Eligibility Worker and new Case Manager Cennie Croff received a certificate for 30 years of service! Congratulations and thank you for serving Mississippi!

Boss's Day 2015



MDHS employees took time Oct. 16 to celebrate their bosses on National Boss Day. This recognition is dedicated to all employers and helps to improve employer-staff relationships while recognizing the work of those in supervisory positions. Above, Desoto, Forrest and Scott county supervisors.

DFO Fall Conference Awards the Best of the Best



This year's Division of Field Operations, Fall Management Conference was truly a celebration and combined managers from the DFO's Economic Assistance and Child Support staff. Senior management attended policy and leadership workshops and gathered for an evening spent dining together and sharing in the accomplishments of their counties and others around the state. As always, staff look forward to the award presentations.

The **SNAP/TANF ACE Award** winners were grouped by number of supervisors and scored on rate categories of: SNAP Active, SNAP CAPER, TWP Participation, TANF Application Timeliness, SNAP Application Timeliness, SNAP Expedited Timeliness and Claims Timeliness Completion. Counties with top scores were: Adams, Amite, Carroll, Choctaw, Clarke, Franklin, Greene, Hancock, Holmes, Humphreys, Lawrence, Leflore, Monroe, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Sunflower and Washington.

Fall Management Conference Award Winners continued.

For the **Child Support ACE Award** winners, counties were scored on an average percentages of INCT totals from PEP, CWO, cases with support paid and arrears paid with no more than 10 customer service complaint calls for small to medium counties and 25 calls for large counties. Top scores in these categories were Montgomery, Grenada and Lee counties.

DFO also recognized counties with the **Most Improved** composite PEP percentage and number of court orders for the previous fiscal year. Top scores went to Itawamba, Hancock and Jones counties.

Counties with a **FY2015 100% PEP Rate**: Attala, Benton, Carroll, Choctaw, Clay, Grenada, Hancock, Itawamba, Kemper, Lamar, Lawrence, Pontotoc, Stone, Tate, Tippah, Union and Webster.

Counties with a **SNAP Accuracy Rate Goal** maintained from 2010-2014 (maintained SNAP Error Rate of one percent or less for the five-year period): Alcorn, Amite, Calhoun, Carroll, Choctaw, Clarke, Franklin, Holmes, Issaquena, Itawamba, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Kemper, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Perry, Prentiss, Quitman, Sharkey, Stone, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Walthall, Washington, Wayne and Webster.

Counties with **TWP Participation Rate Goals** achieved FY2012-2014. These counties maintained a TWP participation rate of 65 percent or higher for the three-year period: Attala, Bolivar, Choctaw, Clay, Coahoma, Copiah, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Jackson, Jones, Leflore, Monroe, Noxubee, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Stone, Sunflower, Tate, Wayne, Winston and Yazoo.



It's a Drill! It's a Drill! It's a Drill! It's a Drill!



Warren County Director Terri Cosey participated in the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Grand Gulf Nuclear Station Disaster Drill in September and October. Cosey and other area designees were stationed at the Warren Central High School in Vicksburg during the mock simulation of an incident at the nuclear power plant in Port Gibson. During a real-life disaster, Warren County could potentially be one that assists with evacuees. Above, Barbara Davis, Brad Campbell, Kim Black, Patti Montague, Terri Cosey, Debra Davis and not pictured is John Elfer, Warren County Emergency Management Director.

Preparedness is key to surviving and rebuilding lives when a disaster happens. The State Office and county offices participated in the statewide tornado drill Oct. 28.

For information on preparedness and how to build a disaster supply kit, go to MSEMA.org/be-prepared and ensure you, your family and your office is ready when disaster strikes.

MDHS Folks are the Best!



Certificates of Recognition were presented to Panola County Director Arlene Wilson for the character trait of **Dependability** and to Quitman County Director Luvenia Mamon for the character trait of **Enthusiasm**.

MDHS Supports Breast Cancer Awareness across the State



In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness day, Oct. 16, MDHS county offices and the State Office decorated offices, donned shades of pink and filled the sky with pink balloons in honor of those diagnosed, in treatment, in remission and those lost their battle with the disease. In Lowndes County, staff and clients covered balloons with names, prayers and special messages for cancer patients, past and present. In Panola County, in the sea of pink balloons was a blue one in honor of Case Manager Angie Ellis who passed away last year from colon cancer. Chickasaw County created a t-shirt in honor of a coworker currently battling the disease and will participate in this year's Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. Scott County hosted a breakfast and included a fun activity, "Bra for a Cause."

Every 74 seconds, someone in the world dies of breast cancer. Together we can change this and help save lives.

NSPARC to assist State with SNAP Administration

A major research unit at Mississippi State University is playing a critical role in how the State of Mississippi delivers nutrition assistance.

The National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (NSPARC) and MDHS were recently awarded a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop an algorithm to facilitate data usage that improves the quality of the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

SNAP offers nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and families, and provides economic benefits to communities.

"The use of data has become a big factor in the way government agencies function and operate. This project will put MDHS on the cutting edge of developing methods to improve the quality of program implementation," said Domenico "Mimmo" Parisi, executive director of NSPARC.

According to Parisi, the project's main objective is to make sure SNAP funds are used to their fullest potential for the benefit of those in need.

"This project is an example of the innovative partnerships that a university can develop with state government," he said.

"NSPARC, as a university research center, acts as an innovation branch in Mississippi, reaching out to partners with policymakers and stakeholders by conducting research to improve systems that can lead to better program results."

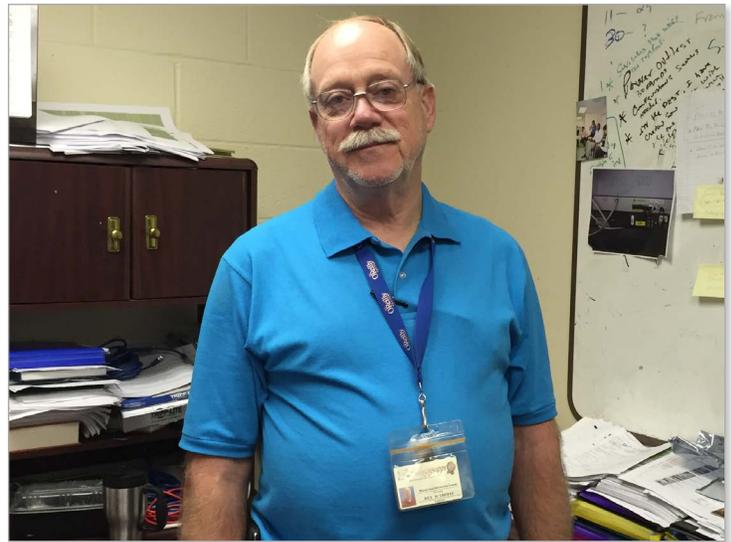
The three-year project will continue through 2018.

For more about NSPARC, visit www.nsparc.msstate.edu. Parisi may be reached at 662-325-9242.

[News from MSU](#)



Retiring and On the Move



For most of us, computers have become a part of our everyday life through work, smart phones and tablets. And we count on those devices to work. Here at MDHS, one of the key staff members who made that happen for us was Bill Suthoff. Bill has worked on MDHS computers for years, from mainframe systems to desktops to Wyse Terminals and smart phones. He has retired and plans to spend time "on the road" in his RV with his wife traveling throughout the U.S. Bill will be missed for his quick response to IT troubles and his generous and helpful attitude that helped so many of us when our devices failed. Thanks so much for all you did for us at MDHS!

MDHS Credit Union - Come Join US!



MDHS Federal Credit Union President Jennifer Lovett was on hand in October to share information and updates about our Credit Union. In business since 1952, the Credit Union offers a full array of banking services. Visit their website at msdhsfcu.com for information on available products, loans, rates and accounts or 601-354-6544.