

The Beacon

January 2013



A Message from the Executive Director

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since my appointment as executive director. During the past year, we here at MDHS, have implemented many changes, celebrated many accomplishments and experienced some disappointments. As we move forward into 2013 we are faced with some unfinished challenges and as we meet these challenges, we are also faced with many distractions that can cause us to lose our focus.

I cannot predict what will unfold on the Washington stage. The debate over sequestration, a long-term federal budget deal, reauthorization of TANF, a new farm bill and whether to make more cuts in military spending as opposed to social programs will rage on.

With 24-hour newscasts, the Internet and social media, there is no escaping the turmoil in our nation's capital or here in Mississippi where there is great concern over another tight budget year for our state government operations.

I have found that sometimes the best way to confront modern day problems is with old-fashioned remedies.

Many years ago, Reinhold Niebuhr prayed the Serenity Prayer. "God grant

me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change; courage to change the things that I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

As your executive director, I will do all that I can to keep you informed about issues, both on the national and state level, and how these issues affect our agency. Additionally, through our appropriation process, I will seek to ensure that your voices are heard and that the needs of the agency and the citizens that we serve are in front of the decision makers as they struggle to make some very difficult decisions.

In spite of these uncertainties, we must remain focused on the real task at hand which is to provide vital services to the one out of every four Mississippians that depend on us every day.

Concentrate on the things that you can control. Remain committed to your calling to serve others and take care of yourselves. Do not let the uncertainty of these present times overwhelm you. One thing is certain: Mississippi citizens need our help and we must not disappoint them!

Richard A. Berry
Executive Director

Bolivar County Blitz Cleans up Child Support Backlog



Judge Katherine Ferris-Carter (2nd from left) held a "Child Support Court Blitz" recently in Bolivar County to clear a backlog of child support cases. Pictured assisting with the Blitz are: MDHS Region 2-West Director Derrick Crawford, Judge Ferris-Carter, MDHS Director of Field Operations (DFO) Cathy Sykes, MDHS Region 2-East Director Cynthia Brewer and MDHS DFO, Director of Program Operations Barbara Hammer.

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Children of single parents have struggles that many of their peers don't such as alternating holidays and weekends or just an empty house at the end of the school day. These same children also struggle financially, along with their custodial parent (CP), because of a lack of child support being paid by the noncustodial parent (NCP).

In Bolivar County, Judge Catherine Farris Carter, Bolivar County Chancellor, initiated a plan to host a "blitz" to clear hundreds of child support cases that were on her docket and get those funds flowing to the hundreds of needy children in Bolivar County awaiting financial support.

In mid-December, Judge Farris-Carter held a "Child Support Court Blitz" at the Bolivar County Expo Center. She brought in two legal clerks, six child support attorneys and 12 child support staff from surrounding counties to handle approximately 200 child support cases that had backlogged the system.

As clients entered the arena, they provided their name and the name of the NCP. Cases had previously been color-coded by the Chancellor's office to indicate those needing paternity establishment, child support or other information. As parents proceeded through a maze of tables, they could see if orders had been served, if there was paperwork needing to be completed, or could verify addresses to help in serving outstanding orders. A notary from the Chancery Clerk's office was provided on site to expedite the process.

At the end of the day, 70 orders were established not counting the cases that were continued while awaiting the results of paternity tests. The Blitz was so successful that Judge Farris-Carter is planning to hold a Blitz in Coahoma County later this year.

MDHS offers services to help ensure that financial, medical and emotional support is received from both parents. Child support empowers families to become self-sufficient so that every child is able to develop into the most productive adult possible. Through the Divisions of Field Operations and Family Foundation and Support, child support services are available in all 82 counties in the state. Services include:

- Location of noncustodial parents.
- Establishment of paternity.
- Establishment of orders for child support and medical support.
- Collection and distribution of child support payments.
- Enforcement of child support orders.
- Review and adjustment of orders.

- Working in conjunction with other states to collect and disburse child support.
- Access and visitation services for NCPs.

Consistent receipting and distribution of child support to children and families builds the capacity of families to become self-sufficient and less dependent upon government benefits. During SFY 2012, child support collections totaled \$332,298,518.09 and paternity establishment percentages equaled 90% of cases where children were born out of wedlock.

The agency understands the hardships that separation or divorce causes families and we appreciate Judge Farris-Carter's interest in the children of her District.

<i>Bolivar County Statistics - Snapshot</i>	
Population	34,145
20-34 year olds	22%
Over 60 years of age	18%
Males	46.5%
Females	53.5%
Blacks	21,920
Whites	11,446
Native American/Alaskan	42
Asian	189
Hispanic	639
Number of Households	12,727
Females w/ children, no husband	1,729 (13.6%)
Households over age 65	3,174 (24.9%)
Child Support Collections Bolivar County [East/West] (MDHS SFY 2012)	\$3,860,912
Teen Births (MSDH 2011)	94
Illegitimate Teen Births (MSDH 2011)	91
SNAP-State Average (MDHS SFY 2012)	22%
SNAP-Bolivar County (MDHS SFY 2012)	37.4%
Unless otherwise noted, all data from 2010 U.S. Census Bureau.	

Retirements - You Will Be Missed!



December 14, 2012, Franklin County hosted a farewell celebration for Marvel Ann Carter (32 years of service) and Virginia Ann Priest (35 years of service). Coworkers, friends and family were all in attendance. Their dedication to the residents of Franklin County is greatly appreciated and they will be missed.



Dora Johnson retired from the Division of Field Operation, Child Support Enforcement on January 15, 2013 with over 30 years of service. Her plans are to continue to serve children in need. Also, Dora is looking forward to spending quantity and quality time with her precious grandchildren. From left: MDHS Field Operations, Director Program Operations Martha Benjamin, Regional Director Linda Slaughter, Dora Johnson, Family Foundation and Support Director Walley Naylor and Field Operations Director Cathy Sykes.



Mary Toney, Region 1-North, Division of Family and Children's Services Evaluation and Monitoring Liaison, retired on December 31, 2012. A retirement party was held for her on December 7th in Ashland. She is pictured above, center, with DFCS Region 1-South Director Tracy Malone and DFCS Evaluation and Monitoring Director Rob Hamrick. A long career with the agency, Mary started in 1993 working as a regional director's secretary. She also worked as an Adoption Specialist for Region 1-South. In 2003 she received her degree in Social Work and moved into a Family Protection Specialist position. Mary began working with the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit on September 1, 2011. Mary is a thorough case reviewer and has been a valuable asset to the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit. She is well respected among her peers and will be greatly missed.

Region 3-S Hosts First Meeting



Region 3-S hosted its first regional meeting in December. This region includes Warren and Hinds Counties. Back row, from left: Hinds County Child Support Supervisor Dora Johnson, Hinds County Director Michael Miller, Hinds County Child Support Supervisors Senora Hunter and Theresa Phillips. Front row, from left: Warren County Child Support Supervisor Mary O'Neal, Regional Director Linda Slaughter, Warren County Director Terri Cosey and Hinds County Child Support Supervisor Beverly Lawson.

In-Home Child Care Provider Achieves 5-Star Rating

Nine years after starting her own business, Dana Smith is living a dream. As a former kindergarten teacher and librarian, Smith wanted to combine her love of education with her business goals and began a small child care program in her then Tennessee home. After relocating to north Mississippi, she opened "Busy Bundles of Joy Learning Center," an in-home family child care program that was recently certified as one of the finest in the state.

"I strive to provide the best professional care to my parents and children," she said. "This certification challenged me to go higher, not only with the requirements of the 5-star, but also furthering my education in child care."

Smith earned the 5-star rating through the new in-home Quality Rating and Improvement System program administered by the Nurturing Homes Initiative of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. The Mississippi Department of Human Service, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development funds the program to assess and improve the quality of child care programs.

Achieving the rating took Smith months of working one-on-one and improving every aspect of her program to reach the nationally set standards on health, safety, nutrition, business practices, parental involvement, learning activities and the learning environment.

Through the Nurturing Homes Initiative and the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Smith received the support, training and materials she needed to meet the strict requirements.

"The Nurturing Homes Initiative provided excellent training, classes and child care-relative information to me. The material provided has helped me tremendously to teach my students and build their developmental skills," Smith said.

To meet her goals, Smith became a frequent visitor to her local Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network's lending library to check out children's books and toys. She also enrolled in the Mississippi Director's Credentialing program offered through the network's professional development program.

By seeking out educational opportunities, Smith keeps her practices current so she can best serve all of her clients, especially those with special needs.

"It is important for me to provide care for children with different needs," Smith said. "Some of these children have been mainstreamed into child care centers that did not function well. By providing them with care, it gives parents comfort that their child is in a safe and healthy

learning environment."

Parents like Kerri Reyes are glad to have found Smith.

"I met Mrs. Smith at a garage sale, and she was just what I was looking for," Reyes said. "After being home with my daughter Kayla for a year, I wasn't ready to take her to a big daycare."

Smith's small program size and activities attracted Reyes.

"She has a schedule of activities throughout the day," Reyes said. "They learn art and math skills, reading words and Spanish. I am so thankful for Mrs. Smith and the care that she provides for my children. I am glad that she is being recognized for her hard work."

Nurturing Homes Initiative project manager Tonya Pickens said Smith was an ideal candidate for the in-home Quality Rating and Improvement System program.

"Mrs. Smith is very dedicated to providing quality care in her child care setting. Teaching and fostering the lives of children is an important aspect of her program," Pickens said. "She strives to engage in additional learning opportunities to enhance her program by attending workshops, training and being involved in other educational programs. Mrs. Smith is very eager to have the children excel."

Quality Rating and Improvement System programs are available to all child care facilities in Mississippi including daycares, preschools, in-home programs, after school, and church- or school district-affiliated programs.

Currently less than 1.5 percent of all child care programs in the state are rated as 5-star centers. As a participant in the in-home Quality Rating and Improvement System pilot, Smith is the first in-home family provider to achieve 5-star status.

For Smith, it all comes back to offering the best care she can. "The 5-star rating challenges me to learn more and bring new ideas into my child care business," Smith said. "Every year, I like to change or add something new to the business. This also challenges me to stay on my toes and stay professional. I would recommend any provider to go through the process. It is so worth it."

Article by Alicia Barnes, MSU School of Human Sciences



County Corner - Lauderdale and Lawrence Counties

Lauderdale County is located on the eastern border of central Mississippi with a total area of 715.28 square miles. As of 2010, the population was 80,261.

Lauderdale County is named for **Colonel James Lauderdale**, a member of John Coffee's mounted brigade, who was wounded in the **Battle of Talladega** during the Creek Wars and killed in the **Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812**. The counties of Lauderdale in Alabama and Tennessee also were named for him.

The county seat is **Meridian** which is the sixth largest city in the state. Established in 1860 at the intersection of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad and Southern Railway of Mississippi, Meridian relied heavily on the rails and goods transported on them. During the American Civil War, much of the city was burned to the ground by **General William Tecumseh Sherman** in the Battle of Meridian.

The MSU **Riley Center**, which has been the site of several DHS meetings, is also known as the Grand Opera House and is a performing arts and conference center in Meridian. Added to the **National Register of Historic Places** in 1972 and renovated in September 2006, it is remarkable for being preserved to its original beauty while incorporating the latest in modern technology and amenities.

Highland Park houses the **Jimmie Rodgers** Museum which displays the original guitar of "**The Singing Brakeman**" and other memorabilia of his life and career, as well as railroad equipment from the steam-engine era.

Naming of the county seat, Meridian, began with a rivalry between two railroad men, whose respective choices for the name of the town were Ragsdale City and Sowashee. The name Meridian eventually emerged as a compromise.

Notable people include:

- Jimmie Rodgers, the "Father of Country Music."
- The guitarist-songwriter George Cummings, founding member of **Dr. Hook & the Medicine Show**.
- **David Ruffin**, former lead singer of **The Temptations**.
- **Big K.R.I.T.**, the Island Def Jam rapper.
- Novelist **Edwin Granberry**, who won the 1932 O. Henry Award for Best Short Short Story, was born in Meridian and for 30 years, Granberry wrote the **Buz Sawyer comic strip**.
- **Sela Ward**, actress.
- Dennis Ray "**Oil Can**" **Boyd**, former Major League Baseball pitcher.
- Negro league baseball catcher **Paul Hardy**.

- **James Chaney**, one of the victims of the Mississippi civil rights workers murders in 1964.
- **Hartley Peavey**, founder of Peavey Electronics which is headquartered in Meridian.

Lawrence County is located in south central Mississippi and has a total area of 435.73 square miles. As of 2010, the population was 12,929. Its county seat is **Monticello**.

Lawrence County is named for **James Lawrence** (October 1, 1781 – June 4, 1813), an American naval officer. During the War of 1812, he commanded the **USS Chesapeake** in a single-ship action against HMS Shannon (commanded by Philip Broke). He is probably best known today for his last words, "Don't give up the ship!", which is still a popular naval battle cry and was included on **Oliver Hazard Perry's** personal battle flag honor his friend.

Prominent in the area is the **Pearl River** which flows through the county and aided in its settlement.

The slogan for Monticello is, "It just feels like home." The small town is certainly indicative of yesteryears gone by.

Coopers Ferry Park is a downtown riverside park overlooking the river. The park features an overlook deck, nature trails, a walking track, picnicking, a Tree Top Trail, a waterfall and lots of birds and wildlife.

Atwood Water Park is also located on the river and offers many amenities including camp sites. It is home to the Atwood Music Festival held each year on Memorial Day Weekend and the Montipaloosa Music Festival held in August.

Also in the area is **Lake Mary Crawford**, a 135 acre lake operated by the State Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. It has two boat ramps, 20 camping sites with water and electrical hookups, pavilion, picnic areas and bathhouse.

Notable people include:

Earl W. Bascom (1906-1995), "Father of Modern Rodeo" and Hall of Fame cowboy who worked on the Hickman Ranch near Arm, Mississippi in the mid 1930s.

Kendra King, Miss Mississippi USA 2006.

Erick Dampier, NBA Center.

Rod Paige, former U.S. Secretary of Education.

Al Jefferson, Forward/Center for the Utah Jazz.

Major Everett, former NFL Running back.

J. B. Lenoir, Blues singer.



Congratulations to our 5-Star Centers

Recently the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), Center for Child Development and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Center for Child Development were awarded 5-star ratings. This is great accomplishment comes after much hard work and dedication by the directors, staff and parents.

Quality education, particularly early education, is a topic of frequent discussion among parents, educators and lawmakers across the U.S. Here in Mississippi, everyone wants our children to succeed and be well-prepared as they enter kindergarten, which by all accounts, translates to higher success rates later in life.

Mississippi Quality Stars Rating and Improvement System is a voluntary program for early care and education centers and in-home provider that measures services provided for children and families enrolled in the programs. Five areas subject to ratings are: Administrative Policy, Professional Development, Learning Environments, Parent Involvement and Evaluation.

Currently the state has 36% of the 1,463 licensed child care programs in the state participating in the Quality Star program.

Requirements for programs and directors once level five is achieved include:

- Mentoring and support for other child care programs so others can attain higher star ratings.
- Directors and all teachers must be trained in the Early Learning Guidelines.
- Complete on-going child assessments.
- Host two parent-teacher conferences annually.
- Directors must have a Bachelor's Degree or higher degree in Early Childhood Education.
- Centers will employ multiple staff with a CDA or higher degree.
- Staff will attend up to 25 hours of staff development annually.
- Centers will provide a transition plan for children entering kindergarten.
- Staff will provide parents with daily, weekly and monthly communications regarding their child's progress.
- Centers will host parent workshops.
- Centers will make available a resource lending library for parents to promote continued learning at home.

For more information on Quality Stars, go to: <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eccd.html> or <http://earlychildhood.msstate.edu/programs/qualitystars/>



DHS Participates in the Great American ShakeOut

On February 7, more than 2.5 million people across the central United States were expected to participate in the third annual Great ShakeOut. The ShakeOut is a regional earthquake drill involving communities all over the country. Locally, Mississippi was paired with Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee and Oklahoma. At 10:15 a.m., ShakeOut participants practiced "Drop, Cover and Hold On," the recommended safety procedure during an earthquake.

In Mississippi, many disregard the risks for earthquakes and few households have disaster plans in place for this type of event. In Mississippi, we are more prone to tornados, flooding or hurricanes. But we can't rule out the possibility of the ground shaking either.

Earthquakes typically occur along plate boundaries. Much like cracks in the broken shell of a hard-boiled egg, plate boundaries mark where the Earth's tectonic plates rub as they move past each other, generating earthquakes as they go. But earthquakes occur away from plate boundaries as well—in intraplate regions in the center of continents.

Although most Central U.S. earthquakes are too small to be felt, a handful have caused measurable or significant

The Great
Central U.S.
**Shake
Out**TM

damage. Damaging earthquakes in the Central U.S. of magnitude 5.0 and larger have occurred within well populated areas.

The current seismic activity and the history of earthquakes in the region tell us that there is the potential for very large earthquakes near heavily populated areas. But how significant is the threat? How likely are large earthquakes to occur, and what is the chance that the shaking they cause will be damaging?

Some Questions to Help you Prepare:

If an earthquake occurred right now, where would you go to be safe? If you are at work and your children are at school when the earthquake occurs, how and where will you meet?

Few households have disaster supply kits. Remember, you will likely be on your own without vital services in the hours and days following an earthquake. Are you prepared with water, food, first aid supplies and medications?

Few home owners have taken steps to retrofit their older homes. The Central U.S. has many houses that predate modern earthquake building codes. Is your home bolted to its foundation? If you live in an older building, has it been retrofitted? Is your water heater secure? Could unsecured furniture or objects fall and cause injury or damage? Do you have an old chimney that needs strengthening?

Remember, in Mississippi, we are not immune from a shake. So take some steps. Prepare. Plan. And practice, drop, cover and hold on. And don't forget to check with your home insurance provider to ensure you are covered in case of a quake.



We Made it to the "Big One!" - Superbowl Connection at MDHS



Parys Haralson has accomplished what most young boys and many men only dream of, making it to the Super Bowl. The San Francisco 49ers Veteran, and University of Tennessee and Madison Central graduate, through hard work, determination and dedication with his 49er family, accomplished a goal that most think unobtainable—a trip to the Super Bowl.

Parys, son of Jennifer Rosell in the Division of Budgets and Accounting, was drafted by the San Francisco 49ers as a defensive lineman in the 2006 NFL Draft. Parys has 68 starts with the 49ers, including 58 of the last 59 games going into the 2012 season. He's played 86 games overall.

A key performer as a outside linebacker for the 49ers, Haralson was placed on injured reserve in September 2012 because of an injury suffered during the preseason.

Although Parys was not able to physically play in the Super Bowl, he played a major role in encouraging and cheering his team mates on.

The 49ers came up short of a championship win against the Baltimore Ravens in Super Bowl XLVII. However, to his family, the young boys that aspire to be like him and the small town of Flora, Haralson is indeed a CHAMPION!!!



PI and DYS Celebrate Christmas at Oakley

The Divisions of Youth Services and Program Integrity hosted the Annual Oakley Youth Development Center Christmas Party Friday December 14, 2012.

Each year Program Integrity raises funds to purchase items for the youth at the center and help make their holiday a little brighter. Items provided this year included game controllers, movies and video games. PI also put together individual gift bags for each of students which included personal toiletries, socks, hats and gloves.

This annual event has become a real blessing to the staff and lets them share a little Christmas cheer with youth who are away from home for the holidays.

Do You Have a Facebook or Twitter Account?

Social networking is one of the many ways we stay connected with our friends and family. We also use it to find out what's going on in the world. "Like" the Mississippi Department of Human Services Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/msdhs> or follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/MS_DHS to stay up on the latest happenings at MDHS.

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