

The Beacon

MAY 2012

A Message from the Executive Director

It has been a busy month at the MDHS State Office.

A leadership training conference was held for division and regional directors. Feedback indicates that the conference was a success and will help to improve communication between the divisions and strengthen collaborative work within the agency.

Many of the directors have indicated that they will begin implementing the concepts that we learned and begin sharing the training with their mid-level managers. I feel very strongly that learning is a lifelong undertaking and that we can all benefit from new ideas regardless of our age, educational level or experience.

We all need to remember as we go our separate ways each day accompanied by our mounds of rules and regulations that we are all one organization and our mission is to support families. Although we administer different programs, we are working with the same customers (families). So the better that we work together and communicate with each other, the services that we provide to those in need will be greatly enhanced.

The Mississippi Legislature completed its first session under new leadership and was very supportive of MDHS's

mission. We received an increase in state general funds to address some of our year three projects related to Olivia Y. This funding will provide stability for all of our divisions in a tight budget year when most state agencies saw their funding decreased.

I am very happy to be a part of the Communities of Hope Initiative with Casey Family Programs. They have been extremely supportive of our initiatives and have provided funding for our Permanency Roundtables. This partnership will greatly improve our ability to serve foster children and their families.

I am also proud to announce the final two appointments to the senior management team within the Division of Youth Services. Melanie Gore and Mike Hobby are long-term, dedicated and highly competent employees who have worked hard and are very deserving of their new assignments. They and their staff make me proud every day for the guidance and support they provide to the youth in our state, many of whom have no one else to turn to!

Have a great month!

Richard A. Berry
Executive Director

Communities of Hope ask, "How Are the Children?"

Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Chair, Board of Trustees for Casey Family Programs asked the question, "How are the children? How are they in Mississippi?", noting that if we can't say our children here are great, then we need to do something different.

Today hope for children and families in Mississippi is growing. Recognizing the tremendous need in our state, Casey Family Programs has partnered with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice and the Foundation for the Mid South knowing that for children in Mississippi, the time for change is now.

The group is seeking to create a Community of Hope where all children are safe and have the support they need from the adults in their lives. Children should have the opportunity to grow up in a permanent home, free from harm with hope for a positive outcome in their life.

The impact of a child in care is far-reaching and the need to create a positive environment for them is great.

In Mississippi, during State Fiscal Year 2011, over 3,800 children received foster care services. For a child to grow up in a safe environment and have an opportunity for a healthy, successful future is everyone's responsibility.

MDHS has made great strides through

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innovative ideas and reforms to help children who come into care but there is so much more to be done. To ensure these children have the opportunities needed to be successful will take the engagement of the entire community so that every child can dream big and fulfill their potential. MDHS recognizes a holistic approach must be taken.

Community of Hope will create a shared vision to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families and will engage the community—public, private and faith-based—to make it a reality.

Casey Family Programs, a national operating foundation, believes every child deserves to be raised in safe, supportive communities. Community of Hope is a direct outcome of the foundation's efforts to improve the lives of children and families with a primary goal of safely reducing the foster care population in the U.S. by 50 percent by the end of the decade. When communities work together with child welfare agencies, positive outcomes for children are achieved. Community of Hope seeks to empower Mississippians to create the change that is needed to strengthen families and help vulnerable children.

MDHS Executive Director Richard A. Berry said, "Our goal at DHS is to give vulnerable families access to the tools necessary to strengthen and preserve the family unit. We are honored to partner with the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice and Casey Family Programs to move Mississippi forward and create safe, healthy communities for families in the state."

William C. Bell, president and CEO of Casey Family Programs and a native of Mississippi, summed it up this way, "I believe that every child deserves to be raised in a strong, healthy community; a community that encourages and nurtures the hopes and dreams for that child about what is possible in their lifetime. Every child deserves to be born and raised in an environment that seeks to create and support the opportunities necessary for that child not only to participate in developing and achieving his or her own potential, but to prepare the way for the next generation. Every child deserves a community of hope."

Mississippi is building a Community of Hope. To help make that vision a reality for the children and families of Mississippi, go to: www.Casey.org/Hope/MS.

We Have a Fit 4 Change WINNER!!

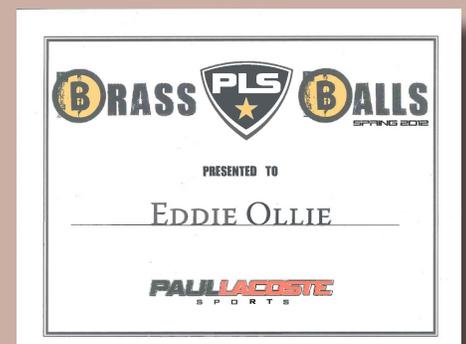


Eddie Ollie (right) and Barbara Johnson, both of Management Information Systems, recently participated in the Paul Lacoste Fit 4 Change challenge. And after a grueling 12 week program, Eddie lost over 30 pounds in 12 weeks, reduced 10 inches around the waist and ran/walked two 5ks. She was also awarded the Bronze Balls Award!! Both were very encouraged by the program and the results.

Joe Broger, DHS Training Director, sponsored a "Biggest Loser" contest last year that sparked their interest. He encouraged them to participate and take charge of their health.

There's lots of other programs out there. All you have to do is MOVE IT MISSISSIPPI! Don't wait until tomorrow to make the rest of your life the healthiest and best of your life. Walk. Run. Play sports. Find a challenge and sign up.

For more information on the Paul Lacoste Fit 4 Change, go to: <http://www.paullacoste.com/index.html>.



Mississippi Department of Human Services - **The BEACON**

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Older Americans Month—Celebrate Seniors



May is Older Americans Month and provides a perfect opportunity to show our appreciation for the older adults in our community. Since 1963, communities across the nation have joined in the annual commemoration of Older Americans Month—a proud tradition that shows our nation's commitment to celebrating the contributions and achievements of older Americans.

The theme for Older Americans Month 2012—Never Too Old to Play!—puts a spotlight on the important role older adults play in sharing their experience, wisdom and understanding and passing on that knowledge to other generations in a variety of significant ways. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, **Division of Aging and Adult Services** and the **Area Agencies on Aging** which serve counties across the state, recognize the value that older adults continue to bring to our communities.

Mississippi has an aging population that continues to increase. In 1995, the number of elderly was approximately 12.3 percent of the population which is expected to grow to about 19.6 percent by 2025. The 2010 U.S. Census noted approximately 380,400 seniors in the state 65 and older.

As large numbers of baby boomers reach retirement age, many communities in Mississippi and across the U.S. have increased their efforts to provide meaningful opportunities for older adults—many of whom remain physically and socially active through their 80s and

beyond. Current trends show that people over age 60 account for an ever-growing percentage of participants in community service positions, faith-based organizations, online social networking, as well as, arts and recreational groups.

Lifelong participation in social, creative and physical activities has proven health benefits, including retaining mobility, muscle mass and cognitive abilities. But older adults are not the only ones who benefit from their engagement in community life. Studies show their interactions with family, friends and neighbors across generations enrich the lives of everyone involved. Young people who have significant relationships with a grandparent or elder report that these relationships helped shape their values, goals and life choices and gave them a sense of identity and roots.

While MDHS funds many services, support and resources for older Americans year-round, Older Americans Month is a great opportunity to show special appreciation for some of our most beloved citizens. We have many reasons to celebrate them!

MDHS has joined the national celebration of Older Americans Month 2012 with activities and events to promote our seniors. To find out how you can support Older Americans Month, contact MDHS or your Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-948-3090 or go to: www.mdhs.state.ms.us/aas_agcy.html or eldercare.gov.

Ivory Sims Chosen as Distinguished Older Mississippian

Each year the Division of Aging and Adult Services recognizes an older Mississippian who continues to contribute to society through their passion and energy.

This year, Mr. Ivory Sims of Marks was chosen as Mississippi's Distinguished Older Mississippian because of his tremendous contributions and service to his community.

Mr. Sims was born on May 11, 1952 and went to school in Marks. In 1973, he married Velma and their 38-year-marriage blessed them with four sons.

At age 17, Mr. Sims joined the United States Army followed by a Navy commitment in 1981. The Sims returned to Marks once his military service was complete and founded the New Life Church of God in Christ.

During Mr. Sims' life, he faced challenges but he never stopped serving in his community, assisting seniors and sharing his love for God. One of his greatest joys is to prepare and deliver meals to seniors and volunteer at local senior care facilities.

Mr. Sims enthusiasm for his community and particularly

seniors has motivated others to get involved, serve others and work with the elderly population. He ministers to inmates in prison and he and members of his congregation have traveled to Africa to educate, serve and feed people there.

Mr. Sims plays an active role on North Delta Planning and Development District, Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council where he serves as an advocate for the elderly. The 2012 By U Magazine named Pastor Sims "Hero of the Year."

DAAS and the AAAs which serve counties across the state, recognize the value that older adults continue to bring to our communities and are working to help older Mississippians remain vibrant in their communities.



Employment Works!

In Harrison County, Ms. Rosa Turner answers the switchboard, runs the front desk and performs many other clerical duties. She came to Harrison County DHS as a senior aid but quickly became a valuable part of the team. In January a position with the agency came open and she is now a full-time state employee. Congratulations Ms. Turner and welcome to MDHS!



Clay County DHS Hosts Multiple Blue Ribbon Events



The Division of Family and Children's Services in Clay County held a balloon release with the community on April 20 to raise awareness about child abuse reporting and prevention. The first event was held at the Sally Kate Winters Park with a second balloon release at Clay County School with over 250 children who took part in the event.

Administrative Assistants Day



The Grenada County Division of Economic Assistance honored their administrative staff with a brunch, balloons and a gift certificate to their favorite restaurant. The clerks, Tina Gafford and Monika Harper are integral to the office and their administrative skills support the agency in many ways. Both are tremendous assets, not only to the local office, but to the MDHS family as well. Administrative assistants are the

cornerstone of an office. Across the state, many of our assistants were honored on this special day with flowers, lunches and gifts. We extend a big "Thank you!" to all our assistants who take care of us each and every day.

Jackson County Recognizes their Social Workers



Jackson County DFCS recently honored their team of social workers with a fabulous breakfast. Our social workers are the "boots on the ground" for child abuse and neglect cases. Thank you all for your hard work and commitment to the children and families of Mississippi.

To report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, call:
Mississippi Centralized Intake

1-800-222-8000

www.msabusehotline.mdhs.ms.gov

*You can remain
 anonymous.
 Just don't remain quiet.*

May 2, 2012 Observed as National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

State Leaders Focused to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and reduce state's teen pregnancy rate by one-third.

Despite impressive declines in teen pregnancy since the early 1990s, about one-third of girls in the U.S. get pregnant by age 20. Governor Phil Bryant in his State of the State address challenged Mississippians to reduce teen pregnancy rates by one-third by 2017 and signed a proclamation to recognize May as Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. The Mississippi State Department of Health, the Mississippi Department of Human Services, community leaders and organizations through the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi campaign are working together to meet this goal, educate teens and provide strategies to prevent teen pregnancies in the state.

Teen pregnancies are a special problem because of increased health risks and negative social consequences to both the mother and baby. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school, more likely to be single parents and more likely to live in poverty than other teens. Statistics show that teenage sexual activity, teen pregnancy and teen child-bearing continues to be a very significant problem in Mississippi. When teens give birth, their future prospects decline.

Both nationally and here in Mississippi, there have been significant declines in teen pregnancy. The U.S. teen pregnancy rate has declined 42% from its peak in 1990

and is now at a nearly 40-year low according to recent data from the Guttmacher Institute. Here in Mississippi, although births to teens dropped from 7,078 in 2009 to 6,185 in 2010, the state has significant work ahead to ensure these trends continue downward.

Through the campaign, MDHS sponsored Southern Remedy: Premature Parenthood on Mississippi Public Broadcasting, a series which started May 14. The program is exploring teen pregnancy in the state and features interviews with teen mothers, legislators, educators, physicians, community leaders and government officials.

The Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi campaign is calling on all Mississippians to actively participate with local community and faith-based organizations to help our teens make healthy choices for their future and the future of our state.

For additional information on the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, go online to: <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/national/>, <http://stayteen.org> or call 1-800-590-0818.

For information on Southern Remedy or any other Public Broadcasting program, go to: <http://mpbonline.org/Programs>.

Recent Promotions Announced for the Division of Youth Services



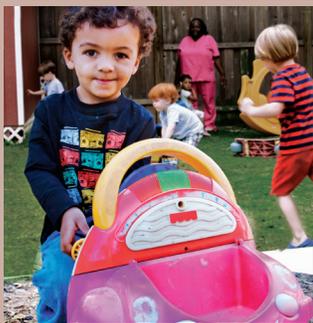
Newly appointed to the post of School Administrator for Oakley Youth Development Center, Mike Hobby has been with the Division of Youth Services for over six years. He previously served at the training school as the Superintendent of Education. Mike has over 33 years experience in education with 24 of those years being in

administration. Prior to joining the agency, Mike served for ten years at the Mississippi Department of Education as a division director in the Office of Educator Licensure. Mike and his wife, Ginny, live in Brandon with their grandson, Michael Aiden.

Melonie Taylor Gore is no stranger to MDHS. She worked her way up the ranks, starting as a youth services counselor in Jackson County 32 years ago (!!!). Before her recent promotion to Community Services Administrator, she served as the Region III Director. Melonie is a longtime resident of Ridgeland where she lives with her newly wedded husband, Donald. They have two children and six grandchildren between them. When she is not at the office, she enjoys time with her family, surfing the internet, reading and spending time with her church family. She is retired from the U.S. Army Reserve after 28 years of service.



Quality Child Care Creates Mississippi Stars



Quality child care is of great concern to Mississippi parents. This is why the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development has been working with other organizations, agencies and educators to develop a Parent Education Campaign

which will help parents make informed decisions about their choice of a child care center.

The campaign, which will include billboards, TV and radio spots, will provide information on quality child care and how the Quality Rating Improvement System works in Mississippi child care centers. Ratings for child care centers are based on: Program Administration, Professional Development, Learning Environments, Parent Information and Program Evaluation.

The Mississippi Quality Star Rating program is designed to improve the level of quality in child care centers across the state. Information about the program will be distributed to county health departments, WIC distribution centers, pediatrician offices and primary health care clinics statewide.

The *Week of the Young Child*, observed April 23-27, 2012, is an appropriate time to bring awareness to the need for quality child care in Mississippi. Quality care that provides age appropriate learning environments is key to moving Mississippi's children to the top of the class.

Additional information including a list of providers with star ratings is posted online at: www.childcareinfo.ms. Click the **Parent** link to access the provider list and other materials. For additional information, email DECCD at: DECCD@mdhs.ms.gov. DECCD - Celebrating our youngest by promoting quality in child care.

Picnic for Prevention *Child Abuse is Everyone's Business*

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Division of Family and Children's Services hosted events statewide to promote National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

In Jackson, Saturday, April 28, there was a "Picnic for Prevention" at Lefleur's Bluff State Park. The public was invited to pack a lunch and join the agency in promoting awareness. Discounted admission to the park, the Mississippi Children's Museum and Natural Science Museum was available for the event along with food, entertainment, resource booths and great family fun for all. About 300 people attended the event.

"MDHS is committed to protecting and serving Mississippi's children. I urge anyone who may suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, to call our 24 hour Hotline at 1-800-222-8000," MDHS, Executive Director Rickey Berry said "Child abuse is everyone's business."

Child Abuse Prevention Month and the Blue Ribbon Campaign are promoted nationally each year. The Blue Ribbon Campaign was launched in 1989 by a grandmother in Virginia who tied a blue ribbon to her car as a tribute to her three-year-old grandson who died from abuse.

Join MDHS and help prevent child abuse and neglect. If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, call Mississippi Centralized Intake at 1-800-222-8000, Mississippi's 24 hour child abuse hotline or go online to: www.msabusehotline.ms.gov.

Remember, you can remain anonymous, just don't remain quiet.



Stone County DHS Teams with Locals to Benefit Foster Children

As citizens enjoyed the Pine Hill Festival in Wiggins, a local woman took advantage of the crowds hoping to rally some support for a new mission.

Doctor Marie Heim said since she saw just how great of a need there was, she's been committed making the lives of local foster children a little easier, one backpack at a time.

When you think of things like toothpaste, wash cloths, t-shirts, even soap, those are all items accessible to most people.

But for a particular group of children, sometimes these bare necessities are out of their reach.

"When [*the children*] are picked up by MDHS, they may be relocated to different areas and sometimes cannot take any of their belongings. These kids may leave with basically the clothes on their backs. Sometimes, because of contamination, they may lose those," Heim said.

Heim felt compelled to make the transition a little bit easier for the kids in state custody. That's why she partnered with Stone County's Department of Human Services to create "The Survival Packs for Kids Project."

"They're hurting. They don't understand. I've seen them cry. I've seen them beg because they don't have necessary items. These backpacks are donations from people. People who I have gone out and asked for monetary donations, backpacks new or used. I just wanted to let them know that it's okay, and that people in South Mississippi are willing to reach out," Heim said.

"Sometimes just getting a stuffed animal or just a bag to call their own, makes them feel like they have something. When children are taken out of a home with nothing, it's like what do they have to cling to?" Volunteer, Teresa Phillips asked. "So when we are able to provide them a backpack with stuffed animals, hygiene products, brushes, sometimes even just a change of clothing, it means that they have something they can call their own."

"We will make the difference. We all can make a difference, and these children are in need. They didn't ask for this, so therefore, we need to help," Heim said.

If you'd like any information about how you could help this cause you can reach the Stone County DHS office at 601-928-2510. *Reprint of story by Terrance Friday, WLOX*

THOUGHTS FROM A FOSTER CHILD

FAMILY MEANS THE WORLD TO ME AND TO THINK

OTHERS MAY TAKE THIS FOR GRANTED

SEEMS SO HARD TO BELIEVE. I AM

THANKFUL FOR MY SOCIAL WORKER WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME. MY SOCIAL WORKER'S

EXPECTATIONS OF ME ARE

REMARKABLE. I REALIZE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CONNECTED. A SPIRITUAL GIFT IS GIVEN TO EACH OF US AS A MEANS OF HELPING ONE ANOTHER TO BE ALL THAT WE CAN BE IN REACHING OUR FULLEST POTENTIAL.

COULD YOU TELL BY LOOKING AT ME THAT I AM SO DIFFERENT FROM YOU?

HELP ME LIVE FOR YOU TODAY. THIS IS MY GIFT TO YOU.

I AM NOT AFRAID OF FAILURE BECAUSE I AM DESTINED TO WIN. BECAUSE I KNOW THAT THE WORST IS OVER. THIS IS A BRAND NEW DAY AND I WILL REJOICE IN IT. AS I HAVE BEEN TOLD BEFORE

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED. PLEASE KNOW THAT I AM THANKFUL FOR HAVING A SOCIAL WORKER WHO HAS ALWAYS ALLOWED ME TO HAVE A VOICE. I AM TRULY CONVINCED THAT EVERYONE SHOULD CHERISH EACH

DAY AND ADD A SMILE ON THE WAY BECAUSE LIFE IS SO PRECIOUS. THANK GOD FOR MY SOCIAL WORKER AS SHE WAS THE ONE PERSON THAT HELPED PUT ME BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.

Author anonymous. Submitted in appreciation to all the social workers who help vulnerable children and families in Mississippi.



Across the U.S., over 400,000 children are in foster care. May is National Foster Care Month. If you have a heart for children, opt to adopt and be the change in a child's life. You can change a lifetime for them. For additional information, contact your local DHS office. You can also go to: <http://www.fostercaremonth.org/Pages/default.aspx> or to: http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/statistics/childwelfare_foster.cfm. Change a child's dream into a reality. Give them a home for life.



A Round-up of Spring SNAP Busts

This spring, investigators from the Mississippi Department of Human Services have been on the move across the state to stop trafficking and fraud of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

SNAP Trafficking:

Lawrence County: Store owner Richard Allen McGuffee and clerk Sherry Elaine McGuffee, both of Monticello, were arrested and charged with trafficking benefits at the Center Grocery located on 218 E. Lincoln Road in Monticello. The pair fraudulently exchanged \$7,219.24 in SNAP benefits for ineligible food items or cash.

SNAP Fraud:

Tate County: Felicia McGhee of Coldwater was indicted by the Tate County Grand Jury and found guilty. She was ordered to pay \$5,781 in restitution and fines with three years of supervised probation. McGhee will be permanently disqualified from receiving SNAP benefits as this was her third program violation.

Hinds County: Martha A. Dulaney of Jackson was indicted by the Hinds County Grand Jury. She entered a guilty plea and was ordered to pay \$11,000 in restitution with three years of probation subject to successful completion of the non-adjudication program. Dulaney is ineligible to receive SNAP benefits for a 12 month period.

Wayne County: Jamanelle J. McQueen of Waynesboro was indicted by the Wayne County Grand Jury for SNAP fraud. She entered a guilty plea and was ordered to pay \$10,781 in restitution, fines and fees with three years of probation subject to successful completion of the non-adjudication program. McQueen is also disqualified from receiving benefits for a 12 month period.

SNAP trafficking investigations are aimed at preventing the illegal use, transfer or trafficking of SNAP benefits, with the focus of investigations on retailers who are authorized to accept benefits through EBT purchases but instead exchange benefits for cash and/or ineligible

goods such as non-food items. Retailers arrested for trafficking are not only charged but lose eligibility to accept any future EBT benefits at that store location. Further, clients who participate in trafficking are charged and potentially lose their benefits. All can face fines and jail time.

SNAP fraud is usually the result of the client withholding income or household information that would deem them ineligible to receive welfare benefits. Disqualification periods are determined by state and federal mandates and/or can be ordered by the court. Disqualification periods are normally 12 months for the first violation, 24 months for the second violation and permanent disqualification from the program for a subsequent violation.

SNAP FACTS FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2011:

Lawrence County-19.3% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$3.5 million in benefits.

Tate County-19.6% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$7.7 million in benefits.

Hinds County-26.1% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$98.8 million in benefits.

Wayne County-25.3% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$7.1 million in benefits.

Statewide-21.4% of state residents received SNAP representing over \$902.2 million in benefits.

Local residents can help spot possible fraud in their grocery stores. The 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.

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

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) works aggressively with State and Federal partners to crack down on fraud and hold crooks accountable for misusing taxpayer dollars.

Americans support helping struggling families put food on the table, but they also want to know taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. FNS' proactive strategies protect the federal investment

in SNAP and ensure that the program is targeted towards individuals and families who need it the most.

While the vast majority of SNAP retailers and recipients play by the rules, any fraud weakens public confidence in government and the program. This hurts the ability of SNAP to serve over 46 million people who rely on the

program to obtain healthy food.

As part of the Administration's new Campaign to Cut Waste, FNS is aggressively working to Fight SNAP Fraud and prevent any abuse of the program.

For more information on the battle against SNAP fraud, go to: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fraud.htm>.

County Corner - Spotlight on Hancock and Harrison Counties



We travel this month to the southern tip of the state on the beautiful Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Hancock County is the southernmost county of the state. Its population in 2010 was 43,929, up from the 2000 Census at 42,967. Hancock County has the ninth highest per capita income in the state at \$17,748; 14.4 percent of the population fell below the poverty line.

- The area is home to the **John C. Stennis Space Center**, NASA's largest rocket engine test facility.



- Hancock County is named for John Hancock, one of the nation's founding fathers.
- The county seat for Hancock is Bay St. Louis. Bay Saint Louis overlooks the Bay of Saint Louis, the Mississippi Sound and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico from the highest water-front elevation on the Gulf of Mexico.
- One of the earliest settlements in the state, the brothers Iberville and Bienville claimed it for France in 1699.

As was the case across the southern part of our state, the morning of August 28, 2005, changed the coast forever. Hancock County was the scene of the final landfall of the eye of Hurricane Katrina and its

communities and infrastructure suffered some of the most intense damage inflicted by that storm.

Over the entire seven mile beach front, not one building or home was left intact. Homes as far inland as ten miles were flooded by the historic storm surge. Highway 603 south from Interstate 10 was completely submerged and the Highway 90 - Bay St. Louis Bridge was left looking like a stack of dominoes.



Rebuilding, however began almost immediately. The destroyed bridge was replaced by a new St. Louis Bay Bridge, which was awarded America's Transportation Award. The new bridge features a pedestrian bridge with an art walk featuring the works of local artists.

Businesses became operational as quickly as possible. MDHS lost three county offices: Pearl River, Hancock and Harrison offices. Hancock County continues to work out of temporary buildings until the new space is completed.



Just to the east of Hancock County is Harrison County. As of 2010, its population was 187,105, down from the 2000 Census number of 189,601.

- The county has a total area of 976.15 square miles of which 580.98 square miles or 59.52% is land and 395.17 square miles or 40.48% is water.
- Its county seats are Biloxi and Gulfport. (As a side note: There are 34 counties with multiple county seats in nine states. Arkansas and Mississippi have the most with ten counties each that have multiple county seats. This dates from the days when travel was difficult and sometimes dangerous.)
- The county is named for U.S. President William Henry Harrison.
- The county was severely damaged from both Hurricane Camille in August 1969 and Katrina.
- The per capita income for the county was \$18,024. Of the Harrison County residents, 14.60% of the population and 11.60% of families were below the poverty level. Harrison County has the sixth highest per capita income in the state.

In Biloxi is Keesler Air Force Base which is home to the 81st Training Wing and 403d Wing of the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

Next month we'll look at Hinds and Holmes Counties.



Several DHS Offices Get a Facelift or New Spaces

There's just something about fresh paint. Several offices across the state have gotten either a new look or a whole new space.

Simpson County DHS is going through a remodeling process that is expected to last through mid-summer. Improvements will include a new roof, repairs to the outer bricking, a new sidewalk complete with a handicap accessible front door, new flooring for the lobby, new ceiling tiles and windows.

Pearl River County office moved into a new building located at 153 Savannah Millard Road, Suite C in Poplarville.

As soon as I get some photos of the new offices, I'll post or add to the next Beacon.

CONSIDER A CAREER WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

To apply for a job, go to the
State Personnel Board website at:
<http://www.mspb.ms.gov/>

Staff Development Workshops

Staff Development is an important tool that agencies and organizations use to enhance the skills of their employees or give necessary guidance and direction. MDHS leads the way with a myriad of classes every month to enhance our staff's ability to serve Mississippians. To register for a class, go to: <https://www.ms.gov/dfa/ace/W2EFTDispatcher> and enter your ACE ID and password, then click on the Mississippi Enterprise Learning Management System (MELMS) tab.

County Offices Promote Child Abuse Prevention and Foster Home Recruitment



The Tate County Department of Human Services celebrated Child Abuse Awareness Month and included staff from the Divisions of Child Support Enforcement, Economic Assistance and Family and Children's Services.

In Itawamba County, they worked to get the word out on the tremendous need for foster families for children in care. Said MDHS Community Partnership Coordinator Sheila Nabors, "You just have to have a heart for kids. These children are just like other children, but they've been bruised; they've been hurt."



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.