

THE BEACON

WINTER 2012

IT'S A NEW DAY AT MDHS

I am humbled and honored that Governor Phil Bryant has selected me as Executive Director to lead the Mississippi Department of Human Services. MDHS is a wonderful organization that currently touches the lives of one-in-four Mississippians. It has been a big part of my life for twenty-two years. I have been blessed to have been a part of many initiatives especially the welfare reform movement in the mid nineties and the technology upgrades over the past eight years. Our ability to provide services with timeliness and accuracy in spite of increased demand and reduced resources speaks volumes to the quality and integrity of the MDHS workforce.

There are several important initiatives underway for the current year. As you are aware, MDHS Division of Early Childhood Care and Development brought the administration of the child care certificate program in-house effective February 1, 2012. To further develop a more unified system of early childhood services, Governor Bryant is backing legislation to move the licensure of childcare centers from the Mississippi Department of Health to MDHS. If enacted, this change would be effective July 1, 2013.

The Division of Youth Services is making tremendous progress toward full compliance with the United States Department of Justice Consent Decree for improvements at Oakley Youth Development Center.

The Division of Family and Children's Services is actively pursuing accreditation for the Child Welfare Program through the Council on Accreditation. We are currently

in negotiations to outline years three through six to ensure full compliance with the Olivia Y. lawsuit.

The Divisions of Budget and Accounting, Human Resources and Management Information Systems are working with the Department of Finance and Administration on the implementation of the MAGIC system that will replace the statewide accounting and human resources systems.

In his state of the state address, Governor Bryant tasked MDHS, with the cooperation with the State Health Department, to come up with a plan to address the issue of teen pregnancy. This has been an "all hands on deck" effort and the plan has been submitted for his approval. This will be a vital mission for our agency since it affects everything that we do.

We are in a state of constant change at MDHS and as you can see 2012 will be no different. Our goal as managers is to present and implement the changes in a manner that enhances both county and state office operations to increase productivity and cost effectiveness. The taxpayers and the customers we serve deserve our best. I am committed to serving you and the people of our great state. There is so much need, there is so much to do but I know that with your support and dedication not only will we get it done but it will be accomplished with excellence!

Rickey Berry, Executive Director

Mississippi is Moving Forward with New Governor and Agency Director



The new year brought with it a number of changes, not only in Mississippi government, but with the Mississippi Department of Human Services as well.

[Phil Bryant](#) was elected as the 64th Governor for the State of Mississippi. Governor Bryant is a Delta native born in Moorhead and a University of Southern Mississippi alumni with a master's degree from Mississippi College.

After serving as the Rankin County State Representative, Phil Bryant was appointed to the State Auditor's Office in 1996. He was elected to the office of Lt. Governor in 2007 where he has worked to ensure accountability

Continued on next page.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Winston County DCSE is Making a Difference for Corner Stone Clinic
- Administrative Change Gives Additional Access to Child Care for Families
- Adams County Drug Court is Saving Families and Restoring Lives
- First Baby of the New Year at Baptist Memorial Hospital, DeSoto County

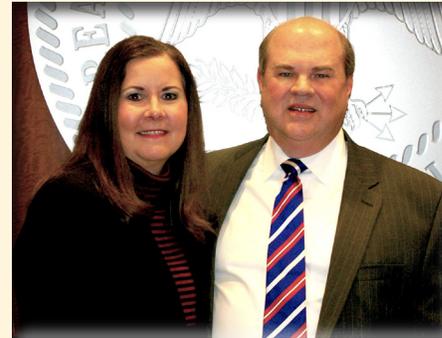
Continued from page 1.

in state government through key legislative initiatives. In his first term as lieutenant governor, he proposed a live webcasting of the Senate so that taxpayers could see their government in action and hold them accountable. He also led the fight to pass the most comprehensive ethics reform in nearly 25 years which, among other things, requires all elected officials to file their ethics reports online. In 2009, he proposed the Smart Budget Act, which was a comprehensive overhaul of Mississippi's budget process driven by a strategic plan with measured results. Governor Bryant and his wife Deborah have two children and are active members of St. Marks United Methodist Church in Brandon.



Governor Bryant tapped Rickey Berry as the new executive director for the agency. Mr. Berry is no stranger to MDHS. He has served as the Deputy Administrator for Programs since 2004 and previously served as the MDHS Director of Resource Development from 1992-2000 and as a Personnel Officer from 1985-1990. Rickey has a vast knowledge of welfare reform and programs and comes to the helm of the agency

experienced and ready to hit the ground running. His 30 plus years of management and human resource experience made him an excellent choice to lead the agency who's mission is to help the state's low-income and most vulnerable citizens. The agency is poised with this new leadership to move forward as we help to move



Mississippians from poverty to prosperity. Joining Rickey for his announcement January 9th was his wife Donnie and their two children, Jason and Brandi.

Winston County DCSE is Making a Difference for Cornerstone Clinic



November 19th, Division of Child Support Enforcement Senior Attorney Tracy Bowen, DCSE training coordinator Margaret Woodward and DCSE temp Monica York ran a 5k to benefit the Cornerstone Clinic. This Louisville medical clinic is a non-profit, faith-based clinic that provides free quality health care and medications to Winston County citizens who do not have insurance and are not Medicare/Medicaid eligible. The clinic, funded solely by donations, is open Tuesday nights from 6pm-10pm. The 5k Walk/Run raised much needed funds to help support the ministry. For information on how you can help with this local mission, contact the clinic at 662-773-5599. All donations are tax-deductible.

MDHS - The BEACON

Julia Bryan, Editor

MDHS Office of Communications

To submit materials for publication:

Email: julia.bryan@mdhs.ms.gov

Phone: 601-359-4517

Fax: 601-359-4477

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 352

Jackson, MS 39205-0352

© 2011 Mississippi Department of Human Services

All rights reserved.

MDHS employees are the salt of the earth. Whether county staff or State Office folks, you'll find them engaged in their communities, churches, organizations, international and local missions, fund raisers and blood drives helping people in need. MDHS staff ROCK! 😊

Mass Adoptions Help Raise Awareness for Permanent Placement



Region 1-North celebrated Christmas in a truly wonderful way with adoption hearings held throughout the month. A total of 25 children in the region received a “forever home” for Christmas during the month. Region 1-North encompasses Alcorn, Benton, Desoto, Marshall, Prentiss, Tippah and Tishomingo Counties. For information on adoption, go to: http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/fcs_adoptall.html. Let your gift be a forever home for a child with none.



Program Integrity Hosts 16th Annual Christmas Party at OYDC



The Division of Program Integrity works hard every year to make Christmas a little better for the students at Oakley Youth Development Center. This year's 16th annual celebration was no exception. PI staff were Santa's elves and came bearing gifts that included games, movies and personal gift bags for over 60 male and female students. This celebration is made possible by generous donations from the community and MDHS staff members. On hand to help with the festivities were: Front row, from left: PI Monitors Jim Bryan and Mara Reeves, Executive Secretary Kristina Rodgers and PI Director Laura Griffin. Back row: Office of Monitoring Director Win Girod and PI Bureau Director Geeta Foreman.

The Division of Family and Children's Services, Adoption Unit finalized 297 placements during State Fiscal Year 2011. Become an adoptive parent. Open your heart and home to a child. Contact DFCS at 1-800-821-9157 or go online to http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/fcs_adoptall.html.

Administrative Change Gives Additional Access to Child Care for Families

Child care is expensive. To help alleviate the cost to low-income families, each state receives federal funds to help families with young children get appropriate day care so they can go to work.

In the past, MDHS subcontracted with local organizations to issue the vouchers, called child care certificates. But starting in February, the agency took this program in-house and cut out the extra layer of administrative costs. "This move will save approximately \$8 million dollars," says newly-appointed MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry. "The cost savings is real and can immediately be transferred into more available certificates which means more folks working."

Prior to the change, there were as many as 13,000 children in the state on the waiting list for child care certificates. Jill Dent, director for the Division of Early Childhood Care and Development, which is the division within the agency charged with implementation of the federal program said, "Once ARRA funds were depleted, we were forced to go back to only serving a small percentage of the families in the state who qualified for assistance. With this change, we'll be able to not only serve more kids, but it will help Mississippi families go to work." By bringing the program in-house, ECCD can start to serve families on the waiting list for child care and use the funds for vouchers rather than unnecessary administrative costs.

Additional changes that have made a difference for families is now the child care vouchers are issued for a year term rather than parents having to reapply every six months. This will eliminate additional paperwork for the agency, child care centers and alleviate possible disruptions in care for children within the centers.

The certificate program gives parents the flexibility to choose the child care center they want their child to attend as long as the provider participates in the voucher program.

For more information on the certificate program, go online to: <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eccd.html>.

OYDC Awarded Walmart Grant



Oakley Youth Development Center has rehabilitated at-risk youth involved with the juvenile justice system since 1942. In the midst of a national recession, our center continues to operate continuously year-round and successfully train and rehabilitate the youth which it serves.

Recently, Oakley gained recognition in the form of a grant for its work from the top discount retailer in the United States—Walmart.

Annually, the Walmart Foundation awards grants to local organizations and non-profits for good works in the communities which they serve. Through the Facility Level Giving-Local Community Contribution (LCC) program, Walmart is able to distribute grant funds from any local area Walmart store, Sam's Club, or Walmart Logistics Facility in recognition for organizations, agencies and individuals efforts within communities.

On November 16, 2011, Sam's Club #4790 in Pearl awarded OYDC a grant to be used to support Oakley's Behavioral Incentive Program for youth. This program rewards youth for their display of good citizenship, active participation in scheduled activities and appropriate behaviors.

OYDC would like to thank Sam's Club and the Walmart Foundation for their generous financial support of the center's programming and rehabilitation of youth in Mississippi. Additional support is always welcome. If your church or civic organization would like to help support Oakley, contact the Oakley Volunteer Services at 601-857-7703.

Having consistent, quality child care is essential for the growth and development of Mississippi's children - our future leaders. ECCD is working with providers all over the state to ensure that our children have access to quality care within centers and in-home providers. For information on how to choose a provider for your child, go to: http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eccd_parents1.html.

Newton County Celebrates New Senior Center



Photos and story by Bill Graham, *The Newton Appeal*

DAAS Director Melinda Bertucci and Tamika Forkner, DAAS director of the Older Adult Nutrition Program were on hand for the grand opening of the Newton County Senior Activity Center. Numerous residents, county and state officials attended the festivities. The building was funded by a community service block grant through the East Central Planning and Development District.



Local Businesses Support State Training Facility for Youth Offenders



Displays of employee appreciation are important to grow and encourage staff. At Oakley Youth Development Center, the Employee Appreciation Program plays an important role in bolstering the morale of those who devote their time and talents to help rehabilitate youth remanded to state custody. Each month, fellow employees nominate a "Distinguished Employee of the Month" who has, through their hard work and determination, gone the extra mile to make a difference in the lives of youth.

A program of this magnitude cannot exist without the generosity of local businesses who donate items, special offers and certificates to support our staff.

A special "THANKS" goes out to Chick-Fil-A. This locally-owned business has graciously and consistently provided contributions such as gifts or coupons for free menu items in support of OYDC. We truly appreciate their generosity.

OYDC is thankful to all of the businesses that have made contributions in order for it to continue this program of appreciation for its hardworking employees.

Ugly Christmas Sweater Brings Cheer to DAAS



They say Christmas sweaters are like fruitcakes. You either love them or you hate them. The Division of Aging and Adult Services decided to bring those sweaters out of the closet and enjoy them as a group. Because we all have them, the division hosted an "Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest" on the last day before the Christmas break with Tamika Forkner (back row, right) winning the prize. She was "crowned" and honored by the group. Tamika went over and above by even sporting light-up Christmas socks. Her Christmas bonnet was supplied by her mom who made Tamika promise to return it in time for her own Christmas party. Great job ladies for letting us all enjoy this holiday tradition and spreading a little Christmas cheer.

Christmas may just be once a year, but we have children year-around that need mentors and assistance. If you'd like to lend a helping hand or donate clothing, books or toys, call your local Department of Human Services offices. Make a difference today in the life of a child.

Retirements

Richard Harris, Deputy Administrator for Administration



Richard Harris, deputy administrator, retired on February 29th after serving the state since 1994. Mr. Harris's previous service was to the nation with over 26 years in the U.S. Army. Known for his smile and loving personality, Mr. Harris was quick to meet and greet all he came in contact with. One to never meet a stranger, he used his generous nature unselfishly as a Salvation Army bell ringer when the holidays rolled around each year. He also serves as a Sunday School teacher at his church. Mr. Harris has been with the agency since 1994 and deputy administrator since 2004 over the Divisions of Community Services, Social Services Block Grant and Youth Services. Upon retirement, the State House of Representatives issued a proclamation declaring February 29, 2012 as Richard Harris Day in the state. He may have retired from State Service, but you can bet he'll still be an active community leader.

Dan George, Director, Division of Aging & Adult Services

Dan George, director for the Division of Aging and Adult Services retired on October 31, 2011 with over 17 years of state service. He was honored with a retirement celebration at the State Office that was attended by his extended "work" family.

Dan was known for his whimsical smile and laugh and his ability to speak to anyone. He was always there to dole out fatherly advice, a quote of the day or his analogies and abstracts of life. Dan was a man who was led by his faith and enjoyed volunteer service. He was a retired Army officer whose military background was often seen in his leadership style. Dan retired to spend more time with his "natural" family and will be sorely missed by all of his MDHS family. Thank you so for your years of service to us and the State of Mississippi.



Kathy Pittman, Director, Division of Youth Services



Kathy Pittman was honored on December 16, 2011 with a retirement celebration held at Oakley Youth Development Center (OYDC). Marsha Barbour, former First Lady, was on hand to make a presentation of a signed proclamation announcing that the day of December 16 would be "Kathy Hannan Pittman Day in the State of Mississippi." Further, the road leading to the school was renamed in her honor.

Kathy served the state 27 years beginning in 1983 and retired from service January 31, 2012. She and her husband, Charles, are relocating to the hills of Tennessee to be closer to family and enjoy the scenic beauty of the mountains.

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.

County Corner - Spotlight on DeSoto, Forrest and Franklin Counties



DeSoto County is located in the northwest corner of Mississippi and is known by many as a suburb of Memphis, Tennessee. Anyone who's been in Mississippi awhile can tell you that things are definitely changing in DeSoto County. This county is now among the forty fastest growing counties in the United States. This fast-paced growth is attributed to the tremendous influx of families that are moving out of Shelby County which encompasses Memphis. This is most noticeable in the cities of Southaven, Olive Branch and Hernando. Also fueling growth in the county is the casino/resort developments in neighboring Tunica County which is noted as the third largest gambling district in the U.S.

Fast Facts on DeSoto County:

- Organized on February 9, 1836.
- DeSoto County has a total area of 496.77 square miles and is bordered by neighboring Tennessee and Arkansas.
- The county seat is Hernando. In the 2000 census, the population was 107,199. By 2010, the county had grown to over 161,000.
- The county and county seat are named in honor of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto. The explorer allegedly died in DeSoto County in May 1542.
- DeSoto County had the second highest per capita income in the State of Mississippi according to 2005 data.
- Hernando became known as the "Marrying Capital" of the nation in the 1950's as couples came to the town from all over the U.S. to say their vows. Two women from Las Vegas rented space and opened a "Marriage Chapel" and Life Magazine sent reporters to cover the story. This claim to fame ended on June 29, 1958, after the state legislature passed a blood test and three day waiting period law.

Forrest County is located in the southern portion of the state and encompasses the city of Hattiesburg. It is also home to the University of Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles, William Carey University and Pearl River Community College.

Fast Facts on Forrest County:

- In 1908, the legislature carved Forrest County out of the western portion of Perry County.
- The county has a total area of 470.17 square miles.
- The county seat is Hattiesburg.
- The county is named in honor of Nathan B. Forrest, a Confederate general in the American Civil War and the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.
- Home to Camp Shelby, which was established in 1917, it is the largest state owned military training site in the nation. During wartime, the camp's mission is to serve as a major, independent mobilization station of the United States Army Forces Command. Camp Shelby U.S. Joint Forces Training Center is the largest reserve component training site, covering 136,000 acres.

Franklin County is located in the southern portion of the state and was established December 21, 1809, 11 years following organization of the Mississippi Territory and eight years before admission to the Union. However, it was not until 1798 that the Spanish actually relinquished control to the U.S. of the Natchez District which included what is now Franklin County.

Fast Facts on Franklin County:

- The county was named for publisher-statesman-philosopher, Benjamin Franklin.
- Franklin County was formed from a part of Adams County. Later the eastern boundaries were changed to form Lincoln and Lawrence Counties.
- Meadville became the county seat about 1819.
- The population as of the 2010 Census was 8,118.
- The total area of Franklin County is 566.74 square miles.
- The Homochitto National Forest with a portion of its 186,000 acres in Franklin County, was named for the Homochitto River, a Native American name for the "Big Red River."



Adams County Family Drug Court is Saving Families and Restoring Lives

It's not often one sees dancing in the Adams County Circuit courtroom, but when she heard her name called out Monday evening, Ruby Carman danced a little jig. Carman — along with local resident Kenneth Carver Sr. — was one of the Adams County's Family Drug Court inaugural graduates. Turning to the laughing audience, Carman wasn't bashful.

"That felt good y'all," she said.

Adams County has only one of two family drug court programs in the State of Mississippi. Youth Justice Judge John Hudson said the program was designed so that when the court determined that an instance of youth abuse or neglect was the result of alcohol abuse, families would be able to stay together or be reunited.

"When we identify that a family is falling apart because of drugs or alcohol, that is when they are placed in this program," Hudson said.

The family drug court program is a three-tiered system and lasts approximately a year. Participants are taught both drug or alcohol and family coping skills. Monday's ceremony included not only recognition of the graduates but phase promotions for four other participants.

Hudson said the state drug court advisory council funds the program, and that as only the second county in Mississippi to have one like it, he's proud to be — in his words — "a guinea pig."

"(Because of family drug court). You can have a functional family, you can be a contributing parent and you can go forth and be a contributing family in the world," Hudson said.

"(Drug court) helps give everyone in our system the tools they need to defeat those drugs on a daily basis and mentor (their) children on how to avoid them."

Carver said he thanked everyone, from the Department of Human Services to Hudson, for believing in him and giving him a second chance. He also said he was thankful to the court for something else — the electronic ankle bracelet that was able to monitor if he had consumed alcohol.

"Sometimes it takes a push to get people in their right mind," he said.

Mississippi State Supreme Court Justice Randy G. "Bubba" Pierce spoke to the graduates. Family drug court was a second chance for them, he said, and the graduates have drawn a line in the sand that says they are going to break the cycle of addiction.

Pierce said drug court is important because it saves money, but it is also important because it saves lives. "Family is worth breaking addiction," he said. "We only get one life this side of eternity, and no matter what age you are, you have to decide, 'I am going to make a positive difference.'"

The lessons of drug court are for anyone who is struggling with addiction, Carman said. "If somebody wants to quit, whatever they are doing, they can do it," she said.

Reprinted from The Natchez Democrat; article by Vershal Hogan

Countdown On: Switch Now to Electronic Benefit Payments

Do you get your federal benefit payments by paper checks? If so, you are required by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to switch to an electronic payment method. By making the switch, **you will help save taxpayers \$1 billion over 10 years**. The deadline to make the change is March 1, 2013. Switch now to one of the two electronic payment options recommended by the Treasury Department:

- Direct deposit-If you have a checking or savings account, sign up to get your money deposited directly into your checking or savings account.
- Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card-If you don't have a bank account or prefer a prepaid debit card, switch to the Direct Express® card.

It's fast, easy and free to make the switch. You can switch at your local federal benefit agency office, online at www.GoDirect.org or by calling the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at (800) 333-1795.



UPCOMING EVENT: Join the Mississippi Department of Human Services on Saturday, April 28th from 10am-2pm for the Annual Picnic for Prevention at LeFleur's Bluff State Park in Jackson. So pack a picnic lunch and come enjoy the fun, entertainment and learn what you can do to help prevent child abuse and neglect. Join us as we seek to make a difference in the lives of Mississippi children.

Program Integrity Investigators Take a Bite Out of Crime

In the last several months, the Special Investigations Unit has assisted in the arrests of several store owners who were charged with SNAP trafficking. Holly Springs grocer Abdi Mohammed Umar and Sunflower store owner Perry Parker were both arrested for the illegal practice.

Trafficking affects everyone. For example, in Sunflower County, 37% of the county's residents are SNAP clients, representing over \$16.6 million in benefits that are issued each year or an average of over \$1.4 million every month. "Greed by a few has cost the honest low-income families and elderly a local grocery store that can accept their EBT cards. This crime penalizes all who may have used this local shop for eligible EBT food purchases. The trickle down effect of SNAP trafficking is huge, particularly in rural small-town Mississippi. The crime affects the whole area," said MDHS investigator Frank Saddler. "We want store owners to know that we are watching them and if they choose to scam the system, they will be caught."

Investigations focus on retailers who are authorized to accept and redeem SNAP through EBT card purchases but instead exchange their benefits for cash and/or ineligible goods such as non-food items.

Staff Development Workshops Available for MDHS Employees

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.

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

First Baby of the New Year at Baptist Memorial Hospital, Desoto County

Isaac Morgan Linger, a healthy 9 pound, 2 ounce baby boy, was born to Morgan and Kate Linger early evening January 1, 2012. This was the hospital's first baby to be born at the facility for



the new year. Kate is a case manager for MDHS in Desoto County and Morgan works for the Tennessee Air National Guard. This is Morgan and Kate's first child. Congratulations!

CONSIDER A CAREER WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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.

If you suspect SNAP trafficking by a store owner or believe a client is misusing their SNAP benefits, call the Program Integrity Hotline at 1-800-299-6905. Take a bite out of SNAP fraud. It's a crime.