

# THE BEACON



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SELF-DEVELOPMENT

OUTSTANDING  
PROGRAM DELIVERY

EXCELLENT  
CUSTOMER SERVICE

March 2014

## A Message from the Executive Director

The 2014 Legislative Session is complete. Once again, this year the legislature addressed the needs of the agency. The appropriation for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2015 which begins July 1, 2014, will be a little more than \$4 million above SFY 2014.

Two critical issues were addressed. There is money in the budget to hire six new workers for Adult Protective Services. This group within the Division of Aging and Adult Services has been underfunded and understaffed for years. All six positions will be assigned to the field to lower caseloads and reduce response time to the ever increasing reports of physical, sexual, financial abuse and general neglect of vulnerable adults, primarily the elderly.

The remainder of the funds are for the first stages of development of the new child welfare computer system. MAXIMUS has been selected as the Quality Assurance vendor and is currently on-site working with MDHS staff from Family and Children's Services and Management Information Services along support staff from the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services to develop the Request for Proposal and system specifications for the new system. As I mentioned last month, the new Child Welfare system will be built in a modern platform that will eventually become the overall operation platform for all MDHS systems.

There is no general pay raise in this year's appropriation. However, there are funds set aside for a \$1,000 annual raise for employees

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## MDHS Hosts Child Support Legal Unit Summit



*From left: Division of Field Operations, Program Operations Director Martha Benjamin; Child Support Legal Unit Director Craig Brasfield; MDHS Executive Director Richard Berry; DFO Director Cathy Sykes; MDHS Deputy Administrator of Programs John Davis; and DFO Director of State Operations David Noble.*

The Division of Field Operations, Child Support Legal Unit held its annual conference at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Jackson in March. A welcome and opening remarks were presented by MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry and Deputy Administrator of Programs John Davis. Cathy Sykes, director of Field Operations and Craig Brasfield, Legal Unit director also spoke. Greetings and information were brought by Jacqueline Mull and Tasha Brown from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Atlanta Regional Office.

Adrienne Noti from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement

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- Johnny Hoover Retires from State Service
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earning less than \$20,000 per year that have not had a pay raise for any reason in the past five years. Any raise, benchmark, reallocation, reclassification promotion etc., would make someone ineligible for this increase. There is also language regarding salaries those making more than \$20,000 but no funding is provided and no guidance has been received from the State Personnel Board (SPB) regarding legislative intent for this language. I will address these issues with you once clear guidance has been received from SPB.

House Bill 49 provides for drug testing of TANF Recipients. The bill passed both houses and was signed into law by Governor Phil Bryant. Policy will be implemented very soon since the new procedure becomes effective July 1. All in all it was a productive session and I would like to thank Governor Bryant and his staff along with Lt. Governor Reeves and the House and Senate leadership for their support. I would like to thank especially Representative Sam Mims and Senator Terry Burton for their extra effort in ensuring the passage of our bills.

One change that is coming soon is the outsourcing of the Child Support Central Receipting and Disbursement Unit. The bid was won by a company named Informatix. This is a function much better suited to the private sector in that it is strictly a financial operation. The tentative go live date is May 1, 2014, and I strongly believe that an immediate increase in collections will be realized through better tacking due to improved technology and the use of electronic payment receipt from employers. No state employees will lose their jobs due to this outsourcing. They have either transferred to other positions within MDHS or will be offered positions with the new company.

Once again I thank you for all of your hard work and the success that MDHS has experienced in SFY 2014. I look forward to an even better 2015!

Richard A. Berry  
Executive Director



From left: federal partners Tasha Brown, OCSE, Atlanta, Georgia; Adrienne Noti, HHS, OCSE, Washington D.C.; and Jacqueline Mull, OCSE, Atlanta, Georgia.

in Washington, D.C. presented workshops on "The Role of the Attorney in Right-Sizing Orders," and "Ability to Pay and Civil Contempt Actions."

The meeting offered attorneys the opportunity to earn CLE credits for the year through presentations by speakers including: Chief Judge Joe Lee, Mississippi Court of Appeals; Patti Gandy, director of Mission First Legal Aid; Representative Kimberly L. Campbell serving Hinds and Madison counties; Honorable John McLaurin, Jr., Rankin County family master; Mississippi Center for Justice Director Beth Orlansky; and Honorable Steve Ratcliff, Madison County judge.

Special thanks to Cathy Sykes, David Noble, Jennifer Taylor, Karen Powell, Andrea Patrick and Craig Brasfield for coordinating the conference.



DFO staff Karen Powell and Andrea Patrick were on hand to handle registration for the meeting. They also coordinated the logistics for the event and participants. Great job, ladies!

# THE BEACON

For information or to submit articles for the Beacon:

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# Employee Appreciation Day 2014 Thank you for Serving Mississippi!

 *Faces from our County Offices*



Jackson County



Marion County



Lincoln County



Harrison County



Panola County



Coahoma County



Forrest County



Covington County



[Click here to find out more about Pinwheels for Prevention.](#)

## April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



*From left: MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry; Olympic Swimmer Margaret Hoelzer; DFCS Deputy Administrator Dr. Kim Shackelford; and CACM Executive Director Karla Steckler-Tye.*

The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services works with many community partners to strengthen and protect the families and children of Mississippi.

Recently, in recognition of Child Abuse Awareness Month, the division joined with the Children's Advocacy Center of Mississippi which hosted a conference titled, "One Loud Voice: A Multidisciplinary Team Response." The vision is for this to be an annual gathering of those whose mission is advocating for and the protection of children. The conference was host to approximately 200 participants ranging from, not only MDHS, DFCS and CAC staff, but to mental health, law enforcement, attorneys and prosecutors, medical staff, school counselors and forensic interviewers as well.

MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry was on hand to greet participants and read the proclamation for Child Abuse Prevention Month issued by Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant.

Dr. Kim Shackelford introduced the keynote speaker, Margaret Hoelzer, an Olympic three-time medal winner in several swimming events. Hoelzer is living proof that anything is possible when you put your mind to it. Overcoming a childhood of sexual abuse, Hoelzer has risen to the top in her sport and continues to excel out of the pool as well. She won the 2005 silver medal in the World Championships and three medals in the 2008 Olympic Games. She continues to be a current World and U.S. Open record holder in the sport. Margaret is a national spokesperson for the National Children's Advocacy Center.

Margaret enjoys sharing her Olympic spirit and experiences with young Olympic swimmer hopefuls all over the country through swim clinics and community engagements.

Conference participants enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas and come together for Mississippi families.

[Click here to order Blue Ribbon supplies.](#)

## Crime Prevention Program Pairs At-Risk Youth with Law Enforcement Mentors



The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation (CRSF) announced they have partnered with the Office of the Attorney General and MDHS for the sixth consecutive year to bring Badges for Baseball to at-risk youth in Mississippi. The 2014 initiative included a training program for mentors and law enforcement participants April 3 at the Boys & Girls Club of Northwest Mississippi. Participants shared their experiences, challenges, accomplishments and best practices in youth development.

"We are pleased to continue our partnership with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, the Attorney General's office and local law enforcement," said MDHS Executive Director Richard Berry. "Badges or Baseball has positively impacted the lives of thousands of at-risk youth in Mississippi, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with the foundation to bring their message to even more local youth."

Badges for Baseball is a juvenile crime prevention program created by the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice. It's a simple concept: pair police and children together to play and learn. The program reshapes the relationship between law enforcement and children in communities across the country. Since 2008, more than 15,750 youth in Mississippi have benefited from the program.

"The ongoing support from the Mississippi Department of Human Services and Attorney General Jim Hood has helped spread the message of the 'Ripken Way' to deserving youth throughout the state," said Steve Salem, president of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation. "Their dedication is second to none and has allowed the important life-lessons of respect, work ethic, leadership, and perseverance to reach hundreds of underserved youth across Mississippi."

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, in partnership with the Office of the Attorney General and the Mississippi Department of Human Services, continues to provide financial support, equipment, special events, overnight camp opportunities and curriculum to community-based partners in 15 communities across the state, including Jackson, Tunica, Attala County, Batesville and Grenada. The program incorporates partnerships with several community partners, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi; Oprah Boys & Girls Club; and Tunica County Parks & Recreation. In 2013, the Ripken Foundation impacted more than 612,000 youth in 45 states around the country, including more than 250 law enforcement agents and mentors, and 1,650 at-risk youth across the state.

# County Corner - Simpson and Smith Counties

This month we take a look at Simpson and Smith counties.

## Simpson County

**Simpson County** is located in central Mississippi and is named for **Judge Josiah Simpson**. As of the 2010 census, the population was 27,503. The county seat is **Mendenhall** with a population of 2,504.

Back in 1938, the **Star Theatre** was built in Mendenhall by Edgar French, Ben Slay and Lonnie Burnham. Located on Main Street, the building boasted a one screen auditorium complete with a balcony. It also featured a pool hall and three offices upstairs, one of which housed the city's Chamber of Commerce.

The Star Theatre opened for business Nov. 9, 1938 with the western, "**Born to the West**" starring John Wayne, Marsha Hunt and John Mack Brown. The black and white film was based on one of Zane Grey's many novels. The price of admission was 11 cents and a box of popcorn was a dime. After changing owners several times through the years, the building now sits empty. However, in the late '90s, it was repainted for use as a location shot in the **Willie Morris** film, "My Dog Skip." Heavy rains caused the roof to collapse in April 2008 and its current condition is unstable.

Outside of Mendenhall is the **Simpson Legion Lake** which has opportunities for boating, fishing, swimming and picnicking. Simpson Legion is one of 18 state fishing lakes. The 76-acre lake is known for producing large shellcrackers and an abundance of large-mouth bass.

**Magee** is just down Highway 49 from Mendenhall. The population of Magee was 4,408 at the 2010 census. Early settlers in the area were Arthur Mangum and Phil Magee, both of whom entered the area around 1820. Pioneers from Virginia and the Carolinas followed. In 1840, Willis Magee built a grist mill in Magee on Little Goodwater Creek inside the present city limits. Feb. 25, 1900, the community was incorporated as a village.

Each year, locals come together in downtown Magee to enjoy what's known as "Crazy Day." It usually comes the third Saturday in September and provides an opportunity for residents to offer homemade goods while enjoying each other and having a good time.

Of note, **March 26, 2009, the city was struck by an EF3 tornado** which destroyed 60 homes and injured 28 residents.

**D'Lo** boasts a scenic waterpark on the Strong River that throngs of people flock to and enjoy canoeing, kayaking and tubing. Interestingly, the name of the town brings much discussion. With at least three stories of how the name became such, one story relates back to a French interpretation, "De Leau" that is linked to a 16th century map that notes the area "De l'eau sans potable," which translates to bad drinking water. The name, **Strong River** which flows through the area, is translated from the Choctaw words "boke or boge homi" meaning creek bitter or creek strong tasting. So, though there's no definite information for the origin of the name, it's likely that the stories regarding the translations are somewhat credible.

### Notable people

**Joe L. Allbritton** (1924-2012), banker, publisher, philanthropist.

**Dr. Sylvanus Powell Weathersby, Sr.** (1887-1969), first African-American veterinarian in Mississippi.

**Justin Montrel Griffith** (born July 21, 1980) Oakland Raiders offensive coach.

## Smith County

**Smith County** is located in central Mississippi just east of Simpson County. As of the 2010 census, the population was 16,491. Its county seat is Raleigh. Smith County is dry county, which prohibits the sale of alcohol.

Smith County was named for **Major David Smith** who served as a private in the Revolutionary War at Kings Mountain, Cowpens and Euthaw Springs. Historians agree that Highway 531 in Smith County runs along the location of Andrew Jackson's Military Road. This road ran from Nashville to New Orleans.

**Raleigh**, named for English explorer **Sir Walter Raleigh**, had a population of 1,462 at the 2010 census, making it the largest town in Smith County.

Raleigh was home to Governor Robert Lowry, Governor/U.S. Senator Anselm McLaurin, and pioneer **William H. Hardy**.

Raleigh is home to the former **Harrison Hotel**, renowned for the many famous guest and politicians who stayed there.

The county is well-known for its Smith County watermelons which are much sought after by all who've tasted this remarkable sweet summer treat.

The small town of Mize has a population of 340, but each year their local fire department hosts the annual **Mississippi Watermelon Festival** which brings in droves of people. The all-volunteer led event gives all proceeds to the Town of Mize Volunteer Fire Department. Their website says, "If you are a regular, we'll see you there, if you've never been, well, there's plenty of shade and fun for the entire family. Bring your lawn chairs, sit a spell, sample some delicious, ripe, world famous Smith County melons and enjoy some down home southern hospitality. Ya'll come see us!"

Mize is located in the southwest corner of Smith County along state highways 28 and 35, amid the pines, oaks, dogwoods and magnolias (not to mention **kudzu**), typical of south central Mississippi.

Taylorville has a population of was 1,353 at the 2010 census. **The Grillin' N Chillin' BBQ Festival** is held each year in Taylorville and features a concert, 5K, car and motorcycle show, and a BBQ competition.

### Notable people

**Jason Campbell** (Cincinnati Bengals backup quarterback).

Eric Clark (former Secretary of State).

**Tim Duckworth** (UFL, Las Vegas Locomotives).

**Billy Hamilton** (Cincinnati Reds, center fielder; [Aug. 21, 2012 Hamilton stole a record 146th base in his 120th game of the season, finishing the 2012 season with 155 stolen bases and hit .311/.410.420]; current batting average of .368).

Next month we look at Stone and Sunflower counties. Until then, take some time and enjoy a day trip through scenic, historic Mississippi.

## DFCS Awards Service Pin



Janet Johnston, at left, presented a 10-year service certificate and pin to Linda Owens-Simpson. Linda is a program manager in the DFCS Licensure Unit at the State Office. Congratulations, Linda, on this milestone in your MDHS career!

## March is Social Worker Appreciation Month



March is Social Worker Appreciation Month and at MDHS, we want you all to know we appreciate the work you do for the children and families of Mississippi. Photo at top, from left, Tate County Social Workers: Concetta Wells, Pat Anosike, Vatnisha Newson and Maria Jones. Bottom, Claiborne County social workers Johnalynn Brinkley, Tomeka Goings and ASWS Martha Dotson.

## Region 4 North Hosts a Jail & Bail Fundraiser to Raise Awareness



Oktibbeha County kicked off their Child Abuse Awareness and Foster & Adoption Fundraiser February 26. ASWS Angela Nichols and Resource ASWS Leah Hill participated in a Jail & Bail fundraiser to bring awareness to their community about child abuse and becoming a foster and/or adoptive parent. Chancellor Kenneth Burns, who was the presiding judge, was later also "arrested.". This was an exciting and productive event for the community.



## MDHS Investigators SNAP Fraud in Lauderdale County

Mississippians support helping struggling families put food on the table, but they also want to know their taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Fraud Unit investigates those enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure the integrity of the nation's first line of defense against hunger.

In March, state investigators from the Fraud Unit and the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Department led a sweep across the county to serve warrants on eight individuals accused of SNAP fraud.

SNAP and TANF fraud are usually the result of a client withholding income or household information that could deem them ineligible to receive benefits. Disqualification periods for SNAP fraud can range from 12 months for the first violation to permanent disqualification. Ineligibility is determined by state and federal mandates and can be ordered by the courts as part of sentencing.

MDHS Director of Fraud Investigations Kenneth Palmer said, "SNAP is designed to help low-income people make food purchases for their families. SNAP fraud, however, hurts everyone. Local stores where purchases would have been made suffer a loss of revenue and, of course, the family suffers because they are disqualified from a program which would have allowed for appropriate food purchases."

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

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

### SNAP FACTS FOR SFY 2013

- 22.5 percent of Mississippians enrolled in SNAP.
- More than \$996 million in benefits issued.
- Almost 30 percent of Lauderdale County residents enrolled in SNAP.
- More than \$28 million in benefits issued.



## CHECK OUT THE NEW MDHS WEBSITE!

After months of preparation and anticipation, the new MDHS website is up.

The focus in developing the site was our clients. We wanted to ensure that, whether a client visits the site through a desktop computer or via a mobile device, the site would be accessible, easy to navigate and user-friendly.

**NOTE: We are aware there is a viewing problem for those on Wyse Thin Client terminals. We hope eventually this problem will be resolved.**

The site has eight functional areas:

1. For Adults	2. For Families
3. For Providers	4. About MDHS
5. Contact MDHS	6. How Do I...
7. Agency Hotlines	8. Search

The first three areas are for clients to help them quickly find programs of interest.

Area 4, About MDHS, is very similar to the prior site's front page and lists the programmatic divisions along with other items in depth.

Areas 6-8 gives visitors to the site a quick way to jump to important information such as the Child Abuse Hotline or specific program information.

Of note, we've recently posted county office closures due to inclement weather or other issues on our agency Facebook page along with alerting local media. In the future, as soon as the information becomes available to us, we will post this information in a scrolling alert bar on the front page of the website. ***Of course, your immediate supervisor is your first source for this type this information.***

Take some time to get familiar with the new site. If you have any questions or concerns, send an email to [mdhs.communications@mdhs.ms.gov](mailto:mdhs.communications@mdhs.ms.gov).

The website's new address is: [www.mdhs.ms.gov](http://www.mdhs.ms.gov).



## Johnny Hoover Retires

*Johnny Hoover worked in the Division of Management Information Systems (MIS) for more than 26 years. During that time, he worked diligently with numerous MDHS employees at various locations throughout the state to resolve mainframe and network issues. Johnny was well-known for his unique approach in working with end users to troubleshoot issues and resolve them utilizing various problem-solving techniques. He will always be remembered for his purple and gold attire to support his alma mater, Alcorn State University, and his lifelong support of the Dallas Cowboys. Johnny will be truly missed by his coworkers and other MDHS staff. Congratulations on your retirement and best wishes in the next chapter of your life!*

# Choose a Healthy You for 2014

News and Tips from ActiveHealth



## DID YOU KNOW:

When you register on MyActiveHealth you can track your wellness goals, get online wellness coaching, complete your health assessment and track your health management?

Go to [myactivehealth.com/mississippi](http://myactivehealth.com/mississippi) to sign up now.

## Top 5 Exercise Myths **BUSTED!**

When it comes to exercise, it can be tough to tell the difference between fact and fiction. Here are some of the five most common exercise myths.

- 1. No pain. No gain.** This is just plain wrong. If it hurts, STOP because it probably means you're overdoing it or doing it wrong.
- 2. I need to work out 1-2 hours a day to see results.** WRONG! In fact, you only need to exercise 30-45 minutes four to five times a week for real results.
- 3. I need to join a gym.** Not true. You can get great results working out at home.
- 4. If I use weights, I'll bulk up.** Think again. Weights help shape, contour and tone your body—not make it bigger.
- 5. Exercise is the key to a flat stomach.** While exercise certainly helps, you must make dietary changes to get the results you want. Learn to eat to feed muscles and starve fat for that six-pack.

Monthly Wellness webinars are available to help you stay informed about health issues.

**Click here to access a webinar.**

Meeting Password: wellness

Call-in Information: 1-866-469-3239

Access Code: 652 167 619

Webinar times: 9:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. CST

## Aaaachooooo! It's Allergy Season in the South

For many of us, we don't need a calendar to know what time of the year it is... aaaachhooo! Yes, it's allergy season for those of us sensitive to pollen. **And Mississippi is one of the top states in the U.S. for allergy sufferers.**

An allergy is a heightened sensitivity to a foreign substance (allergen) that causes the body's defense system (the immune system) to overreact when defending itself.

**Allergic rhinitis** causes symptoms that include sneezing, coughing, runny nose and watery eyes. Most of these can be controlled with over the counter antihistamines and avoidance of the allergens.

Here are some tips to help you feel better during high-pollen times.

- Stay inside when pollen levels are high. You can use apps on a smartphone or watch your local weather for information. In general, pollen counts are lowest just after sunrise and increase to a peak at midday.
- Keep windows and doors closed. Use the AC to lower the amount of pollen indoors.
- Mow your grass often and use a pollen or dust mask to help decrease your exposure.
- Do not dry clothes outside. Use a clothes dryer in the house.

April 15: Tips to Fit in Fitness

May 13: Tobacco Free

June 10: Pumping Up Your Metabolism

July 8: Turn the Pressure Down-Blood Pressure

Aug. 12: Know Your Numbers

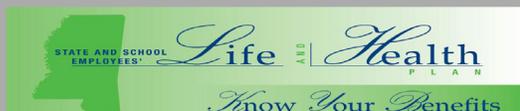
Sept. 9: ABC's of Diabetes

Oct. 14: Sweet Slumber

Nov. 11: Healthy Holidays

Dec. 9: Calm Waters-Relieve Stress

**\*We recommend prior consent from your physician before starting any exercise program.**



Brett Watkins,  
your onsite health coach

Speak with a health coach toll-free:

**1-866-939-4721**, Monday–Friday, 7:30 am to 10:00 pm, CST, and Saturday, 8:00 am to 1:00 pm, CST, or visit [MyActiveHealth.com/Mississippi](http://MyActiveHealth.com/Mississippi).



Scan the QR code into your mobile device to get a healthy start.