

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

BEACON



July 2013

A Message from the Executive Director

I hope that everyone is enjoying their summer and is taking some family time before the kids and grandkids return to school. July is the beginning of a new fiscal year. Although we continue to face many challenges, I feel that SFY 2013 was a very successful year where we initiated many new innovative projects that will allow us to operate more efficiently and provide better services to the people that we assist.

The Division of Field Operations has received notification of the TANF Participation Rate for FFY 2010. Once again Mississippi did an outstanding job, achieving a 66.3 percent rate, ranking third in the nation. This is a tribute to the dedicated, hardworking folks all over the state who provide services and encouragement during these difficult economic times to help young families realize their dreams of self-sufficiency.

Mississippi was also a high performer in the SNAP program ranking 10th in the nation in Payment Accuracy with a 1.84 percent error rate and sixth in the nation in the new measure of Quality Control Case and Procedural Error Rate. This measure is made up of four components including negative error rate and timeliness and clearly indicates the level of service that a customer receives in a state. Our benefits are issued accurately, timely and to people that meet the eligibility requirements. Also of note, child support collections are up over last year.

We talk a lot about our agency values and the Field Offices clearly demonstrate Outstanding Program Delivery and Excellent Customer Service each and every day.

The Division of Family and Children's Services continues to make progress as we enter Year Four of the Modified Settlement Agreement delivering services to protect our children from harm and to help them reach their goal of reunification with their families, or when that is not possible, finding a loving adoptive family.

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Threads for Teens: Giving the Gift of Hope to Girls in Need



Hello! I'm Allyson Ahlstrom (left), founder of Threads for Teens. I founded **Threads for Teens** January 17, 2010, when I was 14 years old. Today, I'm a Senior in high school at Cardinal Newman High, located in Santa Rosa, California.

Threads for Teens was founded one morning after I had finished the book **Generation Change**, by Zach Hunter. The book detailed different service projects that teenagers had done across the country, with some kids as young as twelve. Immediately, I became inspired to do something to help out within my own community.

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- ***Happy Start Learning Achieves Star Step 5***
- ***And much, much more***

Executive Message continued from page 1

The Division of Aging and Adult Services continues to protect our vulnerable adults and provide resources which enables seniors to live independently in their homes. The Division of Youth Services has successfully complied with 72 of the original 74 areas of noncompliance in the Oakley Consent Decree and serves more than 98 percent of adjudicated youth in community-based programs deterring them from assignment to institutions.

The Division of Early Childhood Care and Development has received national acclaim for their innovative programs that are working to ensure a quality experience for children in both licensed center care or in their homes. The Division of Family Foundation and Support is busy "ramping up" the Fatherhood Initiative and providing support for the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Initiative. The Division of Community Services continues to help the elderly and disabled with their energy needs and support local community action agencies in their efforts to provide case management services to needy families.

SSBG, Budgets and Accounting, MIS, Human Resources, Program Integrity and the Executive staff work quietly behind the scenes to provide the resources and support needed for the "front line" to carry out our mission: "To provide services for people in need by optimizing all available resources to sustain the family unit and to encourage traditional family values thereby promoting self-sufficiency and personal responsibility for all Mississippians."

This is a lofty but worthy goal. I feel that 2013 has been a good year and that 2014 holds even more promise.

Richard A. Berry
Executive Director

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.

Mississippi Department of Human Services monthly newsletter, The BEACON.

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Threads for Teens continued from page 1

That Sunday evening, I got together a letter, a logo and a name. The original idea was to outfit 10 deserving girls (i.e., foster care, extreme situations of poverty) in two brand-new head-to-toe outfits. Within a week of founding Threads for Teens, I sent out over three hundred letters, soliciting clothing donations.

For several months, I worked diligently collecting donations from different clothing companies. I was personally so shocked at the number of companies willing to help. The generosity displayed was (and still is) incredible.

Finally, in August 2010, the boutique was set to be open. The kick-off event for Threads for Teens was a great success, catering to 13 teenage girls, which was three more than the goal! All were very ecstatic to receive the brand-new clothing.

In September 2011, Threads for Teens officially became a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Since then, Threads for Teens has served 185 girls.

May 2013, Threads for Teens began a 48-city tour across the U.S., and by June it had made it to Hinds County where 17 girls in foster care received new clothes through this incredible charitable organization.

The goal for the tour is to touch the lives of 1,000 underprivileged girls and help build their self-esteem, gain confidence and find hope. Each teen was awarded three items of clothing along with matching accessories and a \$20 gift card to Payless Shoes.

"For it is in giving that we receive" -St. Francis of Assisi



Above right, MDHS Hinds County Angela Johnson assists a child in custody with her clothing choices at the Threads for Teens event in Jackson. Photo, page 1, Ahlstrom and Tahneesha Harris, MDHS Hinds County at right.

Retirements

Carla McMinn, Franklin County Director



Carla McMinn began her MDHS career as a clerk in Holmes County in May 1988. She was promoted to an eligibility worker in 1989 and EW II in 1991. Carla transferred to Franklin County in 1994 and was promoted to a case manager in 1998. She was appointed as the Franklin County Director in 2004. Carla moved to the State Office in 2011 as a program administrator senior. Carla says she is thankful for having the opportunity to work for "the best Agency in the State," adding "it is a blessing and honor to consider such a great group of people my friends."

Leflore County DFCS Retirees Daisy Holt and Elnora Oliver



A joint retirement celebration was held June 28 for ASWS Daisy Holt and Clerk Typist Senior Elnora Oliver. Daisy served 36 years and Elnora 22.5. They enjoyed the company of family, friends and coworkers from all over the state. Their service to the state is truly remarkable and each will be missed.

Lorraine Eden, Program Administrator Senior



Lorraine Eden with Field Operations retired June 30, 2013. A reception was given honoring her 25 years of service on June 28. Lorraine began her career at MDHS in Economic Assistance as an eligibility worker in Pearl River County. She moved to the State Office in 1992 and served under seven division directors. Most recently, Lorraine, as a Program Administrator Sr., was instrumental in merging two big divisions, Child Support and Economic Assistance, into the Division of Field Operations. She will be missed and is wished the best of everything by many in the State Office and the field.

Mark Couey, Bolivar County Director



Mark Couey retired from Bolivar County Department of Human Services as county director with 25 years of service June 30th. During his tenure he served as eligibility worker, child support fiscal officer and associate director. Mark says he finally found the Escape Key. He plans to enjoy his retirement fishing, gardening, cooking, traveling, camping in various state parks and attending Mississippi State football, basketball and baseball games.

**RETIREMENTS CONTINUED
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Family and Children's Services Coaches Corner



The implementation of Practice Model has spread rapidly throughout the state and continues to have a huge impact on the families served by the Division of Family and Children's Services. The Practice Model is framed on a family-centered approach and allows the workers and the families to recognize their strengths and build off of those areas.

The Practice Model worker for the month of July is FPS Tareka Carney-Robinson from West Chickasaw County. It has been noted that Tareka mobilized appropriate services in a timely manner for a family with an open prevention case and helped the family locate affordable housing, move into the home and obtain utilities. She also made contact with providers in the community that could help the family get furniture and other necessary household items.

Tareka recognized the family's transportation needs and provided the mother with transportation to medical appointments and therapy sessions. She also recognized that, after having conversations with the mother, the mother was having difficulty getting the child to her scheduled therapy sessions due the sessions being located in a neighboring county. Tareka helped to transfer the therapy sessions to the county where the family resided to ensure regular attendance.

Tareka noted during home visits that the mother needed additional training to properly care for her special needs child. She considered the family's strengths, began to model appropriate ways to care for the child and provided educational materials to the mother for a special needs child.

When the family's situation didn't improve, Tareka began to explore other permanency options including relative placement.

Tareka has been recognized for her exemplary service to this family. DFCS and the families served by Tareka appreciate her dedication and service.

From left: ASWS June Linley and at right, Practice Model Coach Cristina Boone.



Sandra Howse was chosen as the Southern Practice Model worker of the month in June. Sandra demonstrated excellence in following the guidelines for setting up Family Team Meetings including meeting with her clients in advance, developing meeting agendas and asking families what goals they would like accomplished.

FTMs are successful when families participate and are engaged, helping families feel successful and empowered.

Also noted was Sandra's recording and reporting methods which have improved significantly. It was noted that she is identifying the strengths and needs of her families and demonstrating an interest in preserving and maintaining connections for children and families in her care. Her documentation notes her addressing safety, well-being and permanency for her families.

For example, Sandra talked with the children and youth and asked them who was important to them in their lives. She then followed up by arranging visits with those identified as important by the children.

This month, Sandra scheduled meetings with all parents on her caseload who are incarcerated where reunification is part of the plan for the family.

Congratulations, Sandra, for your dedication to the children in your care.

Above from left: Practice Model Coach Sandra Brown, PM Worker Sandra Howse, Acting Regional Director Romona Locket and Forrest County ASWS Alleeta McBride.



Fatherhood Conference Lights the Way for the Future

The Division of Family Foundation and Support and the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Initiative recently held a Fatherhood Conference that featured Governor Phil Bryant as the guest speaker.

The event was open to fathers, mothers, community and faith-based organizations and/or individuals interested in starting fatherhood programs, youth leaders and business leaders.

Topics included:

- Obstacles regarding visitation between fathers and their children.
- Benefits and importance of co-parenting.
- Effects of children growing up without a father in their life versus children with fathers.

The goal of the event, held at the Mississippi E-Center, was to develop a positive relationship between young fathers and their children.

Watch for more information on community events sponsored by the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Initiative.



719 Project: Respect and Reconnect with the Elderly

719 Project, a national initiative, was recently held to encourage faith communities to remember, respect and reconnect with those who are aging and infirmed.

The purpose for the 719 Project was to encourage, call and equip people of faith to look at ways to serve people who no longer can serve themselves or the church.

July 19 at 7:19 p.m., people in churches across the U.S. were called to pray for the elders of the community and challenge themselves to develop groups that will help our older populations reconnect with their church families.

For many who are elderly, it becomes a challenge to stay connected with their church families because of illness, lack of transportation or depression. The 719 Project seeks to get the church involved, particularly the younger generations, to insure that our seniors don't become isolated in their homes or suffer from loneliness or depression.

It has been found that there is tremendous reward in this ministry because while serving elders, servants reap the rewards of gaining wisdom shared by those older in years, learning about history from one who has lived it and gaining a sense of fulfillment by ministering to others.

For more information on how to get involved and bring this project to your church family, go to: 719project.com.

Coahoma County Child Support Blitz is a Success for Children



A Child Support Blitz was held in Clarksdale June 27 which combined the efforts of Judge Catherine Ferris-Carter, the Chancery Court Clerk, deputies, the sheriff and members of his staff, the Family Master, the MDHS Field Operations staff and legal staff.

Organized by Senior Attorney Diala Chaney and Staff Attorney Michael McCauley, the team effort resulted more than 250 cases being worked. That day 88 orders were settled, 12 arrest warrants were issued and the sheriff picked up two non-custodial parents who refused to comply. The project also resulted in the dismissal of 160 outdated cases.

Attorneys Julie Jimenez and Julianne Bailey worked with Michael McCauley nonstop to settle the cases. MDHS staff included Quitman County Supervisor Ginny Mitchell and Coahoma County Child Support staff including Neurida Johnson, Vanessa Cohen, Jerome Smith and Marietta Brown.

The coordinated effort brought funds to needy children in Coahoma County who were awaiting financial support from their noncustodial parents.

\$2 Million Grant Awarded to MSU for Juvenile Justice Project

Mississippi State University is among six other universities across the U.S. receiving a research grant of more than \$2 million from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The Juvenile Justice-Transitional Research on Interventions for Adolescents in the Legal System or JJ-TRIALS, is a five-year cooperative agreement to determine how juvenile justice programs may effectively adopt science-based prevention and treatment services for drug abuse and HIV.

The project will help Mississippi determine the current state of substance use, HIV prevention and treatment services delivered through the juvenile justice system and provide improved delivery of evidence-based practices addressing the prevention and treatment of the same in community-based juvenile justice settings. By addressing the issues in juvenile drug court, practices can be developed and implemented to keep youth from moving into the adult system thereby saving the state significant money in correctional costs, health services, and mental health delivery to adults and at the same time reducing the use of abused substances and HIV in youth. MDHS, Division of Youth Services Director Jim Maccarone said, "By encouraging treatment of substance abuse in the community the commitments to Oakley Youth Development Center will be reserved for more serious offenders."

County Corner - Neshoba and Newton Counties

This month, our travels take us to Neshoba and Newton counties.

Neshoba County was established by the Mississippi Legislature Dec. 23, 1833. The word "Neshoba" is believed to be derived from an Indian word for "wolf." The county is comprised of more than 571 square miles with 29,676 residents counted during the 2010 Census.

Philadelphia became the county seat of Neshoba County August 15, 1837. The Pearl River, which flows east to west through the county, was an important waterway for early settlers, especially between 1830 and 1860. It reportedly took 15 days to travel by keel boat from Philadelphia to Jackson and about 30 days of vigorous labor to bring a keel boat upstream from Jackson to Philadelphia.

Share-cropping and other forms of hard-scrabble farming characterized the post-Civil War years in Neshoba County. The "**one-mule farm**" became a standard operation. By 1880 the county's natural timber resources were becoming an important economic factor, and by 1910 Neshoba County sawmills were too numerous to count.

Also within Neshoba County is the **Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians**, the only federally-recognized American Indian tribe living within the state. The nearly 10,000 MBI members live in the eight reservation communities of Bogue Chitto, Bogue Homa, Conehatta, Crystal Ridge, Pearl River (the site of tribal headquarters), the industrial park, **Pearl River Resort**, the Choctaw Health Department, Red Water, Standing Pine and Tucker.

When the **1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek** was signed, there were more than 19,000 Choctaws in Mississippi. From 1831 to 1833, approximately 13,000 Choctaws were removed to the west. More followed over the years. Members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are descendants of the proud Choctaw individuals who refused to be removed to Oklahoma in the 1830s.

Their lands encompass more than 35,000 acres in 10 different counties throughout the state. Providing permanent, full-time jobs for more than 5,000 Tribal-member and non-Indian employees, the tribe is a major contributor to the state's economy.

In the mid-twentieth century, Mississippi was a battleground of the **civil rights movement**. In June 1964, Philadelphia was the scene of the murders of activists James Chaney, a 21-year-old black man from Meridian, Mississippi; Andrew Goodman, a 20-year-old Jewish anthropology student from New York and Michael Schwerner, a 24-year-old Jewish CORE organizer and former social worker, also from New York. The national outrage over their deaths helped procure support for Congressional passage of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**.

Today, Neshoba County is home to many annual festivals including the annual **Neshoba County Fair** and **Choctaw Indian Fair**, **Ham Jam Arts Festival**, **Neshoba County Walking and Racking Horse Show** and **OctoberFest**.

Notable Residents:

Billy Cannon, 1959 Heisman Trophy winner.

Bob Ferguson, RCA Record Producer and Songwriter.

Stan Frazier, professional wrestler better known as Uncle Elmer.

Marcus Dupree, NFL and USFL football player.

Fred McAfee, former member of the New Orleans Saints, Arizona Cardinals, Pittsburgh Steelers and Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Otis Rush, blues artist.

Members of the **country music band Pearl River**.

Marty Stuart, country music entertainer and **Grand Ole Opry** star.

In 1836 the territory comprising the southern half of Neshoba County was set apart for **Newton County**. Newton County is comprised of approximately 579 square miles. The county and the town of Newton are named for **Newton Doolittle** whose father, Roger Doolittle, gave part of the land for incorporation. The 2010 Census noted 21,720 people in the county.

Decatur is the county seat and at the 2010 Census had 1,841 people. Decatur is named after war hero Stephen Decatur, Jr. The small town of Chunky is also in the county. It was named for a Choctaw Indian Village called Chanki Chitto, meaning "Big Chunky." The name comes from an old Native-American game of Chunka, derived from the word Tuchungkee, which was a ballgame played with Chunka Stones. An area nearby called Chunky Shoals on the Chunky River was where the games were believed to be played. Chunky was the southernmost town of the Choctaws which was visited by **Tecumseh** in 1811.

Newton was one of the later towns in the county to be settled, with trading settlement first at Garlandville on the stage coach route which was later moved to Newton. Each year, Newton hosts the Loose Caboose Festival which features a 5k, arts and crafts vendors and a classic car and truck show. The festival also promotes tours of model train displays at the town depot.

Included in **Bienville National Forest** is Newton County. It is named for **Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville**. In descending order of land area it lies in parts of Scott, Smith, Jasper, and Newton counties. It has an area of 178,541 acres.

Notable Residents:

Medgar Evers, Civil Rights Activist.

Marcus Thames, professional baseball player.

Charles Evers, first post-Reconstruction African American mayor in Mississippi.

Next month, we visit **Noxubee** and **Oktibbeha** counties. Until then, take some time and enjoy a day trip through scenic, historic Mississippi.

MEMA Urges Community Preparedness

Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is urging the public to prepare for the next storm particularly individual and family preparedness that expands to neighborhoods and communities. The outcome of a disaster as it relates to injuries and deaths is often determined before the first responders ever arrive on the scene. If individuals, families and communities are better prepared, lives can be saved and injuries reduced.

If severe weather or an emergency strikes, it could be hours or even days before emergency officials and other assistance can get to you. But the connections and plans formed by a Community Preparedness Group could potentially save lives.

A Community Preparedness Group can serve several functions, from keeping a community informed on safety and preparedness issues, to looking out for neighbors with special needs during times of crisis, to keeping contact information for the neighborhood in case of emergency.

Visit www.msema.org and click on the **BE PREPARED** section at the top of the page for more information.

APS Queen Blue is Determined

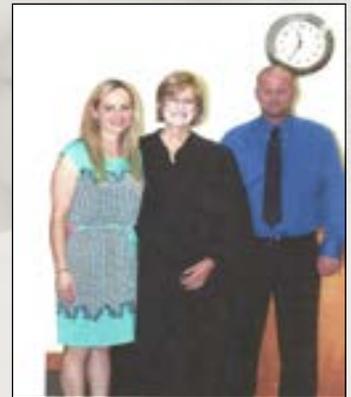


Character First training was recently held for the Division of Aging and Adult Services, Adult Protective Services staff. APS worker Queen Blue (left) was recognized for Determination. Determination is noted as the opposite of faintheartedness and is defined as purposing to accomplish right goals at the right time, regardless of the opposition. For an APS worker, timely responses are of the utmost importance and may mean the difference between life and death. We applaud our APS staff, especially Queen Blue, for their determination and hard work for the elderly and vulnerable in Mississippi. Congratulations, Queen, on this recognition. *From left: Queen Blue, ASWS Alfreda Moody and APS Director Edna Clark.*

Youth Court Hosts Special Ceremony

Beth Fontan and Steve Cuevas were united in marriage on June 28, 2013, at the Harrison County Youth Court in Gulfport with Youth Court Judge Margaret Alfonso presiding. Beth is a Family Protection Specialist for the Harrison County Department of Human Services and Steve is a Service Advisor for Allen Toyota. The joyous event was witnessed by numerous family members as well as Beth's coworkers from the agency and staff members of the Harrison County Youth Court. The new couple who have known each other for four years now join together five beautiful children!

Contributing to the happy occasion was Resource Unit ASWS Lana Hoda who prepared delicious wedding cupcakes, Youth Court Reporter Jill Eades who provided additional refreshments and flowers, and Harrison County Family Protection Worker II Cristi Ogletree who provided decorations and served as official photographer. A wonderful time was had by all.



And a Shout Out To....



Congratulations to Happy Start Learning Center who recently achieved Star Step 5 of the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System. Thank you for serving the children and families of Mississippi!



DFCS Resource Development Unit Kathy Shipp was recently honored with a certificate for 10 years of service with the division where she is an essential part of the DFCS administrative staff. Back row from left: Allison Bowie, Justin Terry, Aubrey Farmer and Ashley Falgout. Front row: Julie Propst, Sandra McClendon (Bureau Director II), Kathy Shipp and Temcula Robinson.

Retirements continued from page 3

Emma Levi, State Office Human Resources



Division of Human Resources, Administrative Services Director Emma Levi retired June 30 after 34 years of state employment. She began her career in state government in September of 1979 working for the Mississippi Employment Security Commission. She also worked at Mississippi Rehabilitation Services before she came to work for MDHS in June of 1990. She started at MDHS in Human Resources and climbed the ladder of responsibility until she became the director of Administrative Services in June of 2004. She will be missed by her many friends and coworkers. We wish Emma a very happy and rewarding retirement. *From left: Emma Levi, Rose Banks, Lorisia Wilbert, Eunistine Parsi and Shirley Wright.*

Mary Cooke, Tate County Eligibility Worker



Mary Cooke started with the agency in 1978 in Leflore County as a clerk through the WIN program. She was promoted to EW and later transferred to Tate County in April 1991. She retired with 35 years service. She has two sons and three grandchildren. Mary plans to travel, spend time with her family and help her father in the garden.

Sandra Kirkland, East Bolivar County Child Support



Sandra Kirkland worked 24 years with the agency, starting as a clerical worker and retired as a child support enforcement officer. *From left: East Bolivar County Field Operations: Marilyn Steele, Jennifer Hamilton, Sandra Kirkland, Kimberly McLeod, Charvetta Buck and Sharlet Lewis.*

CHARACTER FIRST AT MDHS

Definition of the Month

JUSTICE

Taking personal
responsibility
to uphold what
is pure, right,
and true.

Character touches everything we do. It takes character to live with integrity, build healthy relationships and improve your work and world. Character First focuses on character-based leadership development at work, school and in the community.

**MDHS HAS A FRESH LOOK
COMING SOON!**

**A NEW WEBSITE AND
LOGO FOR THE AGENCY
COMING THIS FALL.**