

# Mississippi Department of Human Services

## BEACON JUNE 2013



### *A Message from the Executive Director*

"Why do you do what you do?" This is a question that I am asked many times. As we end one state fiscal year and move into another, this is a good time to ponder this compelling subject.

What makes us choose MDHS as our life's work? It is certainly not the money or that the work is easy. Sometimes it seems that we are like the offensive linemen on the football team in that the only time we get our name called out is when we do something wrong. We are constantly under pressure from clients to provide more while at the same time being criticized by others for giving away too much.

I think that the answer lies deep within each of us. First there must be a desire to serve others. Next we must possess the ability to see good in all people and be committed to helping them achieve their full potential in life. We must constantly remain focused on our outcomes which are to provide the services needed to help families through rough times and to help them achieve their long-term goal of self-sufficiency.

The issues we face daily are simply distractions. President Kennedy once said, "Here on Earth, God's work must truly be our own." We must remain focused on our mission of

fighting hunger, neglect and abuse and remain vigilant. MDHS should be no more than a bridge that a family crosses on their way to prosperity.

Recent activities brought to my attention include:

An APS worker, following her sixth sense, went to the backyard of an elderly client who had not answered the door. She found the client unconscious and freezing in the yard. The worker's quick action alerting medical authorities no doubt saved the lady's life.

Several adoptions have been reported for children that have been in foster care for many years and were once thought to be un-placeable.

A former TANF client visited her case manager and informed her that she is now a registered nurse and has recently purchased her first home. She is free from any government assistance and her children are thriving.

Stories like these are why we choose this business. A company CEO may make a million dollars, but because of what each of you do each and every day, I am rich in ways that he can never imagine.

Richard A. Berry  
Executive Director

### Take a Stand in Mississippi: **Stop Elder** Abuse and Neglect



Every year an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation and that's only part of the picture. Experts believe that for every case of elder abuse or neglect reported, as many as 14 cases go unreported.

Even though it is difficult to accurately compile abuse numbers, cases of reported abuse are on the rise across the country. In Mississippi, during State Fiscal Year 2012, the Mississippi Department of Aging and Adult Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Adult Protective Services (APS) received more than 4,000 calls of suspected

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abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults. Of those numbers, most resulted in victim findings or substantiated cases. This is up from 2,830 cases with findings in 2011.

Many attribute the rise in reports to heightened awareness. In June, APS joined with national and international partners in support of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and encouraged everyone to wear purple ribbons.

#### **WHAT DOES APS INVESTIGATE?**

APS in Mississippi investigates reports of vulnerable persons 18 and older who reside in private home settings and who may be abused, neglected or exploited by family or caregivers or are victims of self-neglect. Other APS investigations include abuse in smaller unlicensed personal care homes where three or fewer persons reside; financial exploitation of care facility residents when perpetrated by a family member; or abuse by a caretaker or family member that occurred prior to a vulnerable person's admission to a care facility.

#### **WHAT IS THE STATE STATUTE?**

Mississippi's statute is a 'vulnerable persons' law and does not include all elders. However the majority of abuse and neglect cases do involve the elderly. Vulnerable persons are those who are impaired mentally or physically and unable to care for or protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

With the rise of aging baby boomers and longer life expectancies, abuse cases will increase. How can you help?

#### **THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STOP ABUSE**

- Learn the signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable person.
- Offer assistance to a caregiver by filling in for a few hours or more.
- Share information about vulnerable adult abuse with churches and community groups.
- Support stronger legislation and expansion of services for the protection of vulnerable persons.
- Speak up for vulnerable adults who may be unable to speak up for themselves.
- Become a volunteer at a nursing home or long-term care facility.

#### **IT'S EVERYONE'S DUTY TO REPORT.**

To make a report, call the MDHS Centralized Intake Abuse Hotline at 1-800-222-8000. If an emergency exists, call 911 or local law enforcement.

To report abuse or neglect of residents in a facility (i.e., nursing home, personal care home), call the Mississippi State Department of Health at 1-800-227-7308 or the Office of the Attorney General at 1-800-852-8341 or 601-359-4220.

## **MDHS County Offices Provide Computers for Job Seekers**



In a tough economic climate and tight job market, many turn to local resources to help them secure new employment. One of the main resources to be utilized is a local WIN Job Center.

It was recently announced that 13 WIN Job Centers across the state would close. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security spokesman Les Range alluded to technological improvements designed to offset difficulties of those seeking employment affected by these closures. One of these initiatives is a Memorandum of Agreement between the Mississippi Department of Human Services and MDES, which placed dedicated computers to access MDES job openings in each MDHS county office.

MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry said, "MDHS stands ready to assist those who are searching for employment by providing access to this vital information in all 82 counties. We encourage those seeking employment to visit any of our local offices to take advantage of this free service."

We appreciate the opportunity to partner with MDES and provide this valuable service to those in need of a job. For information on county office locations, go to: <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eirectory1.htm>

# RETIREMENTS

## *Frances Bailey, Wilkinson County*



June 20, Region 5 West congratulated Wilkinson County Director Frances Bailey on her retirement with a celebratory breakfast. After 34 years with the state, Frances plans to enjoy her retirement by spending more time reading, journaling, walking and exercising. At left, Bailey with Region 5W Director Sarah Bridge.



## *Sherry Sandifer, Noxubee County*



Sherry Sandifer retired May 31 after 31 years of service. She saw many changes during her career that began in 1982 as an eligibility worker, including the excitement of moving in to a new building in 1988, new computer systems and the transition of moving from a 20-plus page SNAP application to two pages! She spent the last five years serving as a case manager with the TANF Work Program. Sherry's excitement now includes three grandchildren. She was honored with a retirement reception at the DHS office in Macon that was attended by family, friends and other retirees. She received an engraved watch, certificate of appreciation, a dozen roses and other gifts. From left, Noxubee County Director Sharon Kay Papas and Sandifer.

## Highlights from Hinds County Administrative Professionals Day



Hinds County DHS celebrated Administrative Professional Day April 24 with a luncheon of local fare including grilled hamburgers and bratwurst with all the fixings. They also enjoyed chips, sodas and chocolate chip cookies prepared and served by their supervisors. Administrative staff were presented certificates of appreciation by Hinds County Director Michael Miller for their dedication and hard work.

## Region 7 Meeting



Region 7 West recently met in Gulfport. Pictured are: Standing: Harrison County Director Harold Netto and Harrison County Child Support Supervisors Michelle Maxwell, Belinda Parker and Patty Moore. Front seated: Hancock County Child Support Supervisor Earnest Simpson; Hancock County Director Veronica Breaux; Harrison County Associate Director Pam Baggett and Region 7W Program Manager Camile Johnston.

## Purposeful Pony Hosts Region 6 Foster Family Appreciation Picnic

To celebrate Resource and Adoptive Parents Appreciation Month, the Purposeful Pony of Purvis hosted a regional Foster Family Appreciation Picnic. Over 100 people from the area joined together for games, fun jumps, horseback riding, a petting zoo and a special visit from Dora the Explorer and Diego. Awards and certificates were also presented to show appreciation to all the families who open their hearts and homes to children in need of placement. A resource parent of the year was also chosen from each county in the region.



## Lee County DHS Helps to Stamp Out Hunger



Every second Saturday each year in May, letter carriers in more than 10,000 cities and towns across America deliver much more than mail when they walk and drive along their postal routes. They also collect the goodness and compassion of their postal customers who participate in the **National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger National Food Drive** – the largest one-day food drive in the nation and probably the world. This year over 74 million pounds of food was collected to restock food pantries and shelters.

Lee County DHS participated by gathering bags of food and arranging pick up at the county office.

Led by letter carriers represented by the NALC, with the help of rural letter carriers, other postal employees and numerous other volunteers, the drive has resulted in delivery of more than one billion pounds of donations to community food banks and pantries over the past 20 years.

Carriers collect non-perishable food donations left by mailboxes and in post offices and deliver them to local community food banks, pantries and shelters. Nearly 1,500 local NALC branches in all 50 states.

To participate, residents are asked to place a box or can of non-perishable food next to their mailbox and the postal carrier will do the rest. The food is taken back to a postal station, sorted and then delivered to an area food bank or pantry. There it is available for needy families.

With more than 50 million people facing hunger every day in America, including nearly 17 million children, this drive is one way people can help those right in their own city or town who need help.

## Hinds County Angels Make it Happen



To watch the local news, you'd think there may not be a lot of good stuff going on in the world. The following, however, is guaranteed to warm your heart.

Recently, a young mother came to the Hinds County Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services office looking for help and a little hope. The woman was down on her luck, unemployed and homeless. She didn't have family to lean on and was depressed and lonely. To add to her concerns, she was struggling to care for her 4-year-old son, Jayden.

During the interview with DFCS staff, it became apparent that this active, adorable child had no idea of his mother's hardships. He did know, however that his fifth birthday was coming up at the end of the week. His mother was understandably upset because she knew she had no money to celebrate "his big day."

It didn't take long for several DFCS staff members to come up with a plan. They contacted some local "angels" in the community who donated toys, clothes, a backpack, food and a birthday cake complete with the child's name on it.

One of the "angels" was so excited to help with the project. When the social worker sent a letter to follow up, the lady learned the child's name. She contacted the social worker later that day to tell her "the rest of the story."

The lady said, "I lost my grandson in 2010. He was only 3 and half months old and died in his sleep. His name was Jayden, the same as the little boy you're seeking donations for. I never got to tell my grandbaby goodbye. It is strange that you'd call and ask for a donation for a child with the same name. I just feel like angels sent you to me to help this child."

She went on to tell the worker that she would do whatever it takes to help the family. She told the worker, "I feel a connection to this child."

Through this partnership with the local DHS office, this woman who had lost a grandson was able to have some closure to that loss while positively impacting the life of another struggling mother. The lady has since expressed an interest in becoming a licensed DHS foster parent.

We truly appreciate our "angels" in the community who step up for our families in need.

For information on how you can help a family in crisis or to get information to become a foster parent, contact your local DHS office.

## County Corner - Monroe and Montgomery Counties

This month, our travels take us to **Monroe** and **Montgomery** counties.

**Monroe County** is located on the northeastern border of the state and is one of the larger counties in the state with an area of over 772 square miles. In 2010, the population was 36,989, a drop of about 2.7 percent since the 2000 Census. Its county seat is Aberdeen. The county is named in honor of U.S. President James Monroe.

**Aberdeen** has a population 5,612, down 12.5 percent from the 2000 Census. Located on the banks of the **Tombigbee River**, Aberdeen was one of the busiest Mississippi ports of the 19th century. Cotton was heavily traded in town and for a time Aberdeen was Mississippi's second largest city. Today Aberdeen retains many historic structures from this period, with over 200 buildings on the **National Register of Historic Places**.

In the spring of each year, Aberdeen hosts **pilgrimages** paying tribute to its history and the many antebellum homes in the area. The most prominent of these antebellum homes is **The Magnolias**, which was built in 1850.

Located just outside the city, **Aberdeen Lock and Dam**, part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee waterway system, forms Aberdeen Lake, a popular recreational area.

In 1540, **Hernando DeSoto** was the first European to travel through Aberdeen. It was later settled in 1834 and chartered as a town in 1837. In 1849, Aberdeen became the county seat when Monroe County was formed.

**Hiram Revels**, the first African-American United States Senator, died January 16, 1901, while attending a church conference in Aberdeen.

### Notable People:

**John Carroll Dye** (January 31, 1963 – January 10, 2011) was an American film and television actor known for his role as Andrew in the television series *Touched by an Angel*.

**Mitchell Austin Moreland** is a professional baseball first baseman who plays for the Texas Rangers.

**Stephen Adams**, member of the United States House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

**Moses Hardy**, former oldest living American man, one of the oldest veterans of World War I.

**Steve Baylark**, American football running back for the Sacramento Mountain Lions of the United Football League.

**Montgomery County** is located in the central portion of the state and is one of the smaller counties with a total area of about 408 square miles.

As of 2010, the population was 10,925, down from 12,189 in 2000.

There is some debate on the origins of the county name. Some say it was named in honor of **Richard Montgomery, an American Revolutionary War general** killed in 1775 while attempting to capture Quebec City, Canada. Others point to **John Montgomery, an early settler from Montgomery County, Tennessee who founded the city of Clarksville, TN** and migrated to Mississippi.

The county seat, **Winona**, has a population of 5,043, down from 5,482 in 2000. Winona is known as "The Crossroads of North Mississippi" due to its central location at the intersections of U.S. Interstate 55 and U.S. Highways 51 and 82.

In 1871, Montgomery County was formed from portions of Carroll and other counties, and Winona became the county seat of the newly formed county. A yellow fever epidemic struck the area in 1878 and caused many of the towns citizens to die or flee to escape the plague.

In April 1888, a great fire destroyed almost the entire business section of the town. Forty of the 50 businesses burned.

Born as a result of the railroad being built here instead of at Middleton to the west in 1860, Winona was originally a part of Carroll County and was incorporated as a town May 2, 1861. The first settler of the town was **Colonel O.J. Moore**, who arrived from Virginia in 1848. What is now the business part of town was then a cultivated field on Colonel Moore's property. The railroad passed through his property and the railway station was placed near his plantation home. An influx of settlers started after the location of the railroad and Winona became a busy town.

Also in Montgomery County is the small town of **Duck Hill**. The town name is supposed to have originated from an Indian named Sitting Duck, who lived on top of the big hill just as one enters the town coming from Grenada. Chief Duck, a member of the Choctaw tribe, was a medicine man who treated not only the Indians, but other area residents.

Another town in the county, **Kilmichael**, was where Blues guitar legend B.B. King was raised by his maternal grandmother. His own mother was unable to care for him after his father abandoned the family when B.B. was four-years-old.

**Fannie Lou Hamer**, civil rights leader.

**Donald H. Peterson**, astronaut.

**William Billingsley**, Naval pilot.

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

## The Practice Model Corner - It's a New Day



The Division of Family and Children's Services social workers are busy training and improving their techniques as it relates to services provided to families.

Region 2 West Practice Model Coach Regina Hardiman is pleased to see the improvement in the quality of the service. Said Regina, "We have a dream that one day this model will no longer be seen as the 'Practice Model,' but as Mississippi's gold standard of service which trains our staff to make a difference in the lives of Mississippi families."

Earnestine Perryman, a family protection specialist in Humphreys County said, "The practice model coaches you in the appropriate way to administer social work. It emphasizes ethics, which is a big part of this profession. It strengthens your skills in establishing rapport with clients. It keeps you updated with new policy and procedures because we all have room for improvement. The practice model keeps you sharp so you don't get complacent."

Earnestine exemplifies a worker who adheres to the practice model's principles and guidelines. As

Regina observed Earnestine's work, she noted that Earnestine quickly mobilized appropriate services for those in custody. She was very knowledgeable about her cases and worked to ensure that youth were informed so they could participate in decisions regarding their care.

When one youth was questioned about the level of services provided to her, the youth stated, "I love my social worker because she motivates me to do something. Before, I wasn't doing anything. Now I'm going to Job Corps and have plans to sign up later for the military. Before, I wasn't even thinking about doing anything. My social worker keeps me on my toes by telling me and reinforcing things. She always tells me what is going on and lets me make decisions."

As Regina and Earnestine further discussed this particular case, Earnestine consistently asked questions regarding tasks that could possibly be included to better assist the youth. Earnestine exhibited key components of the strengths and needs assessment and mastered three of the six key components of the practice model in one coaching session.

For her hard work and diligence, Earnestine was presented with the "Keys to Practice," and is being recognized as the Practice Model Social Worker of the month.

Other recent coaching activities in 2W included mock trials to help workers prepare for court.



### And a Shout Out To....

Lakeisha Coleman, DFCS Region 5E, graduated from Jackson State University with a Masters in Business Administration in May.





## Washington County Youth Court Volunteers ROCK!



Washington County Youth Court volunteers hosted a Meet and Greet/Recruitment Luncheon in June to show appreciation for their current volunteers. The event also reached out to recruit new youth court volunteers in the local community including local civic, educational, law enforcement, court and faith based organizations that provide outreach strategies. The members of this coalition are devoting a lot of time and energy to ensure the success of youth who come into the juvenile court system. The volunteers strive to nurture respect for the rules of law, help develop positive citizenship attitudes, encourage civic engagement and promote educational success through a diversity of service learning opportunities, strategies and activities. These hardworking volunteers work closely with the Youth Court and are comprised of individuals dedicated to providing at risk youth with educational and developmental services designed to enhance the lives of youth. They stress success by helping juveniles change undesirable behaviors, enhance social skills and gain a detailed understanding of how their behaviors have affected their families, themselves and their communities.

## MDHS Employees Demonstrate CHARACTER FIRST

### Definitions of the Month

## DILIGENCE

Investing all my energy to complete the tasks assigned to me.

## AVAILABILITY

Making my schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I serve.



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. Region 3 North recognized four individuals in June for displaying the Character First traits. Region 3N Child Support Supervisor Terri O'Reilly-Diligence (left) and Rankin County Eligibility Worker Janie Crapps-Availability. Not pictured: Rankin County Child Support Supervisor Kina Swift-Faith; and Issaquena County Director Marquetta Brown-Endurance.

## 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](http://twitter.com/MS_DHS) to stay up on the latest happenings at MDHS.

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