

A Message from the Executive Director

There is an adage that as we get older time passes more quickly. This year, 2013, has proven I am definitely getting older. As we busily rush through the holiday season with all of the expectations and trappings, it is very easy to forget why we should celebrate. A time of joy, peace and hope can sometimes be replaced with anxiety, turmoil and despair.

So, take a moment and think about, what if we wake up tomorrow with only the things we give thanks for today. That certainly puts things in the proper perspective, doesn't it.

As we established in the November Beacon, MDHS seeks to promote four basic core values: integrity, self-development, outstanding program delivery and excellent customer service. Our focus last month was on the importance of building the foundation through integrity. So, this month we will concentrate on self-development.

There are some of us who believe learning occurs only within the confines of a formal school or educational setting. We then fail to see learning as an ongoing process that can happen anywhere, anytime and to anyone. Living in this fast-paced society, it is more important than ever to remain knowledgeable and competitive. Therefore, we must "invest" in ourselves to constantly grow skills we have already acquired or learn completely new skills. Mississippi writer William Faulkner stated: "Do not bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."

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Annual Snowflake Ball a Great Success



In 1983, Governor Bill Allain, a small group of interested people, and the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services met to discuss ways to make a difference in the lives of residents living in the state's long term care facilities. Armed with the knowledge that holidays can result in depression for many residents, a festive event was planned. Rallying to the cause, the Snowflake Ball was born with a mission to provide a holiday outing for those living in these facilities.

This year, the 30th Snowflake Ball was held Dec. 7 at the Northwest Rankin High School Performing Arts Center in Flowood. More than 250 elderly and disabled residents attended. The Northshore Elementary Honor Choir serenaded guests with Christmas carols as they

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Why is self-development important for MDHS employees? I live in Mississippi and am employed at MDHS. This is my choice. As individuals we have the right to choose who we work for, where we live and how we will react when confronted with a choice. Choices are things we do based upon our knowledge, as well as understanding, and may be influenced by some outside force. Some would say if we want to have great success in our life, we must create a master plan with specific goals. Self-development goals are simply a way to improve our quality of life and service at the agency. As goals dictate our life's path, so it is important that we define the right goals as an agency.

What can be said is that we need to know ourselves well enough before we start choosing our goals or creating a self-development plan. We must be true to ourselves and build our own identity which will define our purpose in this life including our work habits. Next we identify any barriers that create resistance and prevent us from successfully reaching our goals. Specifically, we must recognize that there are habits and thought patterns that we must minimize or eliminate before we can achieve true success. Equally important is developing relationships with individuals who will hold us accountable to ensure that we do not create excuses for ourselves to sabotage our plan.

Self-development is an attitude that keeps our mind open when challenged with difficult situations or new ideas. It sharpens our thought processes and actions so that we may achieve our goals and expectations. Self-development changes our mind so we can be happy and content and is important tool to help regain lost self-esteem, boost determination, manage anger and better equip one to control fear.

Oprah Winfrey states: "It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. The ability to triumph begins with you. Always."

As with our integrity, no one is responsible or accountable for our self-development except us!

Richard A. Berry
Executive Director



entered the ballroom which was transformed into a winter wonderland filled with trees, white twinkling lights and a Snowman ice sculpture.

The Hunter Gibson Trio provided live music for dancing and honored guests by playing their favorite holiday songs. Volunteers of all ages attended and danced with the guests. Two volunteers delighted guests when they appeared as Cinderella and Prince Charming. The happiness and joy of our guests was pure Christmas magic.



THE BEACON

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Region 6 Hosts Mass Adoption



Region 6 held a mass adoption in November in the courtroom of Judge Dawn Beam at Forrest County Chancery Court. Six children were adopted at this joyous celebration. The city of Hattiesburg and surrounding counties wrapped their arms around this event to make it a success. The Hattiesburg American and WDAM both covered the adoptions which made the front page of the paper and raised awareness in the community. Adoption Specialists Shonda Kirksey, Tamarla Walters, Monika Howard, Stephanie Mott; student intern Nykengie Allen and Adoption ASWS Tosha Satcher worked hard to make this day a success.

14 Children Placed in Forever Homes in Jackson County



Jackson County DHS staff held its annual mass adoption Nov. 8 at the Jackson County Chancery Court. Ten families and 14 children from 18 months to 12 years found forever families. The event was highlighted with refreshments, family portraits by local Chevron refinery and donated balloons and stuffed animals for each child.

Choctaw County CSEO Honored for 25 Years of Service



Choctaw County Child Support Enforcement Officer Sarah Woods was presented a silver tray November 15 for 25 years of service with the agency. Standing with her is Supervisor David Burton and County Director Deanna Pearson.

Region 4-S Car Show Stresses Need for Resource Homes



At the Laurel Walmart, Region 4-South DFCS Resource staff were on hand to educate the community about the need for resource homes in the area. Thanks to Mayor Johnny Magee for providing refreshments!

Region 4-N Celebrates 29 Adoptions



In November, Region 4-North held a Permanency Celebration at Harvey's in Starkville. Special thanks to Don Lee, Second Baptist Church Starkville; Emerson Family Resource Center; Harvey's of Starkville; Southern Christian Services for Children & Youth staff Teresa Williams, Marlon Thomas and Omini Parks; Region 4-N staff. And a special thanks to the children and families who helped to make this celebration a success. The Region 4-N Adoption Unit finalized 29 adoptions this year. Congratulations and thank you for serving Mississippi children.

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Eligibility Workers are the Boots on the Ground for MDHS



Eligibility workers are, many times the face of MDHS. The agency values their work and understands how important their job is for those seeking assistance. Their training begins with weeks of intense training via conference calls and video conferencing and concludes with a week of classroom instruction at the State Office. Class participants return home prepared to begin working in their new caseloads. We truly appreciate the work they do to serve those in need. The top photo is the group from the November training, followed by the December group.

Groundbreaking for New Sunflower County Office



November 18, Sunflower County Director Anita Hayes, Region 2-West Regional Director Viedale Washington, Regional ASWS Annie Gee, ASWS Dorothy Manuel and the Sunflower County Board of Supervisors attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Family and Children Services building in Sunflower County. The tentative completion date of the new facility is April 18, 2014.

Region 3-N Chooses Harper as PMW of the Month



From left: Scott County ASWS Janice Fortune, Scott County FPS Candace Harper and 3-North Practice Model Coach April Edwards.

Candace Harper, a Mississippi State University graduate and a Region 3-North Family Protection Specialist, has been selected as this month's Practice Model Worker of the month for 3-N.

Recently, when Candace was asked by her PMC April Edwards why she became a social worker, Candace replied, "When I needed help with my baby and had no one to turn to, I went to an agency and the social worker was so nice. This helped me decide what I wanted to do as a career."

Candace utilizes the components of the Practice Model during her daily practice. She embraces the model and promotes the main goal of family centered practice every day. Candace utilizes Family Team Meetings to complete service plans to ensure each family actively participates in the case planning process. This work discipline helps Candace build strong connections with her families.

Said April, "I have witnessed Candace utilize PM components of full disclosure with her families as well as compassion and empathy."

Recently, Candace placed a sibling group of five with relatives. She remained in contact with the caretakers and children, purchased needed school uniforms and assisted the caretakers with withdrawal papers to place the children in the appropriate school district. When assistance with transportation needs arose, Candace stepped up to ensure the children had access to regular supervised visits with their biological parents.

Candace has continued to visit the children on a regular basis to ensure their safety and well-being and has received tremendous support from her ASWS Janice Fortune.

Candace always makes herself available for the needs of her families and is very supportive. She has even created colorful, individual "life books" for the children she supervises. Her patience speaks volumes.

FPS Harper is a hard worker. She is supportive of her team and leads by example on a daily basis. Region 3-N is pleased to recognize her as Practice Model Worker of the Month.

Budgets and Accounting Celebrates Service to the Agency



The Division of Budgets and Accounting recently recognized their employees that have greater than 10 years of service to the state with a service pin and service certificate signed by Governor Phil Bryant and presented by the Division Director Earl D. Walker (back row, left). Top photo are those with 30 or more years of service. Front row: Bea Sarrett, 35 years; Dorothy Smith, 35 years; Janice Simmons, 33 years; Helen Barnes 35 years; Bobby Mulholland, 36 years; Denise Williams, 32 years. Back row: Carolyn Mosley, 30 years; Tommy Brumfield, 32 years; Inez Perkins, 31 years; Kathy McKnight, 31 years. Not pictured: Herbert Scott, 37 years of service.



With 20 years of service, front row: Sharon Monahan, 23 years; Lucinda Wade-Robinson, 25 years; Martha Johnson, 29 years. Back row: Debra Dixon, 20 years; Rosie Levy, 26 years; Jennifer Rosell, 28 years; Richard Ferrell, 29 year; Barolyn Amos, 25 years. Not pictured: Lisa Wolfe, 29 years; Emmanuel Madiebo, 27 years.



Ten year awards go to: Front row: Willie Crook, 18 years; Tamara Jones, 12 years; Tonya Stuckey, 13 years; Simeca Rockingham, 12 years; Janice Magee, 16 years. Back row: Helen Jackson, 11 years; James Hull, 19 years; Phyllis Teague, 17 years; Jerri Dean, 16 years. Thank you all for your years of service.

County Corner - Pontotoc and Prentiss Counties

This month, our travels take us to Pontotoc and Prentiss counties.

Pontotoc County lies in northeast Mississippi. According to the 2010 census, the population was 29,957 with the county encompassing approximately 501 square miles. The county seat is **Pontotoc**.

Pontotoc is a Chickasaw word meaning "Land of Hanging Grapes." The famous outlaws **Jesse and Frank James** and their gang once hid at an old house which was formerly used as a Union Army hospital during the Battle of Harrisburg or Battle of Tupelo. The house was located at a crossroad in east Pontotoc County, near the Lee County line.

The Town Square Museum is located in the U.S. post office near the county courthouse. This historic building houses Pontotoc memorabilia and continues to operate as a full-service post office. A mural in the museum's lobby titled, "**The Wedding of Ortez and Saowana** - Christmas 1540," depicts the first recorded Christian marriage on the North American continent. It was said to have occurred between Juan Ortez and Princess Saowana, daughter of Chief Uceta, of the Florida Seminole tribe. The wedding took place, as the story goes, in Pontotoc County during a visit by explorer Hernando de Soto. The mural was painted by **Joseph Pollet** in 1939 under the arts program of the **Works Progress Administration** (WPA).

Lochinvar, an antebellum home in Pontotoc County, was built by **Robert Gordon, a Scottish adventurer**, in the late 1830s as a gift for his wife. After moving into the grand mansion, the Gordons bore one child, a son named James, who later served as an officer in the Confederate Army and briefly was suspected of conspiring with **John Wilkes Booth** in the assassination of **President Abraham Lincoln**.

James Gordon represented Chickasaw County in the Mississippi legislature in 1857, 1878, 1886 and 1904-1908; and in December 1909, **Governor Edmond F. Noel** appointed him to fill the unexpired term of **U.S. Senator Anselm J. McLaurin** until the state Legislature could elect a new senator in February 1910.

James Gordon inherited the family mansion, Lochinvar, when his father died in 1867. Lochinvar is said to be haunted by James Gordon's personal servant and friend, Ebenezer, who was left to care for the home while Gordon was away at war. There is rumor that an oil lantern carried by Ebenezer is still seen roaming the grounds of the estate.

Notable People:

Soprano **Ruby Elzy**, a pioneer black opera singer.

Singer, songwriter and musician **Delaney Bramlett**.

Negro League baseball player **Cowan F. "Bubba" Hyde**, who played for the Birmingham Black Barons.

American novelist and short story writer **Borden Deal**.

U.S. Senators **Thad Cochran** and **Roger Wicker**.

Actor, preacher, professional wrestler, **Max Palmer**.

American guitarist **Cordell Jackson**.

Singer, songwriter and musician **Jim Weatherly**.

Prentiss County is located northeast of Pontotoc

County, has a population of 25,275 and covers about 418 square miles. The county seat is **Booneville** with a population of 8,625.

Prentiss County is named for **Sergeant Smith Prentiss**, a famous speaker and debater from Natchez. Note: Sergeant was Prentiss' first name, not a military title.

Prentiss County offers many recreational opportunities for visitors and residents alike with a wealth of sports and outdoor activities that appeal to people of all ages and interests. Because of the terrain and climate, the area abounds with unspoiled natural lands and unparalleled hunting and fishing opportunities.

Visitors may prefer to spend time at one of Prentiss' city and community parks with features like ball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic areas and walking trails. Golfers will also find numerous opportunities to perfect their skills on many courses available in and around Prentiss County.

Some of the popular tourist areas include **Bay Springs Lake, Brice's Crossroads National Battlefield** and Visitors Center, **Kidstown Park, John Bell Williams Game Management Area** and **Ross Pharr Park**.

Booneville was named for R.H. Boone, a relative of **Daniel Boone**, the early American pioneer. Booneville is home to **Northeast Mississippi Community College**, which has an annual enrollment in excess of 6,000 students.

Baldwyn is an outgrowth of the village of Carrollville. During the mid 1800s, when the Mobile Ohio Railroad was built, it missed Carrollville by a mere mile and a half. This "slight" caused many of Carrollville's residents to move to the new town of Baldwyn.

Tishomingo, chief of the Chickasaw, lived at old Carrollville but later died in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1839 of smallpox while being moved west with his tribe.

On **March 16, 1942, two tornadoes** striking twenty-five minutes apart, struck Baldwyn and killed 65 persons.

Notable People:

Former congressman **Travis W. Childers** was born in Booneville.

Laura Pendergest-Holt, white collar criminal, part of Stanford Financial scandal.

James M. Davis, white collar criminal, part of Stanford Financial scandal.

George E. Allen, American political figure and head football coach for one game at Cumberland University.

Harold Bishop, Jr., professional football player.

Stephanie McAfee, New York Times and USA Today bestselling author.

Next month we look at Quitman and Rankin counties.

Until then, take some time and enjoy a day trip through scenic, historic Mississippi and have a happy holiday season.

Hinds County Director Retires with 30 Years of Service



Retiring Hinds County Director Michael Miller received a certificate for 30 years of service to the Department of Human Services from Region 3-South Director Linda Slaughter. Michael was honored with a reception by at the MDHS Hinds County office November 20 which was attended by coworkers, family and friends. Thank you, Michael, for your years of service to the agency.

Region 2-W Salutes Breast Cancer Survivors



Region 2-W held a Breast Cancer Awareness celebration at the Washington County Family & Children Services. Regional ASWS Annie Gee (left) and Acting ASWS Mary King (right) are both Breast Cancer survivors. They were recognized by Region 2-W Director Viedale Washington.

Region 2-West Presents Service Awards



Region 2-West held a Pinning Ceremony in November to recognize staff for five, 10 and 20 years of service. Stakeholders Jeannie Verell, Reginald Starks and Sergio Trejo were in attendance at the ceremony held at the Washington County Office in Greenville.

Region 2-W Director Viedale Washington presented recipients a certificate for five years of service; a certificate and pin for 10 and 20 years of service; and a certificate, pin and gift for 30 years of service. Refreshments were served compliments of the community stakeholders. Congratulations and thank you all for your service to the state.

Local Judge Treats Foster Children to Pelicans Game



Harrison and Hancock County foster children and families enjoyed a great time at the New Orleans Pelicans and Atlanta Hawks basketball game in October. Judge Deano donated 56 tickets for these families and children to have a special outing. Thank you, Judge Deano, for remembering our special families and children.

Know Your Benefits! ActiveHealth Management is Here for You

Did you know that beginning January 2, 2014, everyone enrolled in **AHS State Health insurance** will have access to a 24/7 registered nurse to help with information and guidance in making critical healthcare decisions?

And did you know that if you need help losing those holiday pounds that seemed to creep up on you and make your waistbands a bit too tight, that **MyActiveHealth** has a Weight Management program to help you take control of your fitness and nutrition for long-term weight management.

They will even offer support for long-term health conditions such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, coronary heart disease and asthma.

MDHS and MyActiveHealth are committed to helping our employees get healthy and stay healthy.

So whether you're expecting a baby or need help quitting that nicotine habit, log in after January 1 and get personalized help so that 2014 will be a healthy year for you and your family.

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.



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

It's Time for your Flu Vaccine



It's that time of year again that when someone sneezes, everyone runs. No one wants a cold, much less the flu. But each year, as the season changes, the coughing and sniffing begins.

The flu vaccine is your best defense against seasonal flu. Everyone, six months of age and older, should get the flu vaccine. So protect yourself, your loved ones and your coworkers. Get the flu shot. And if you have the flu, stay home.

OYDC Honors Program Salutes DYS Veterans

The Oakley Youth Development Center Honors Program held its first Veterans Day program and luncheon November 12 to show appreciation to veterans working at OYDC and within the Division of Youth Services. The youth shared a history of Veteran's Day and honored vets with a lunch, a certificate of appreciation, music, poems and a special tribute.

Veterans honored were: Sam Burns, Maintenance, U.S. Navy; Andrew Friday, director of Finance and Administration, U.S. Army; Melonie Taylor-Gore, director of Community Services, U.S. Army; Wade Jackson, teacher, U.S. Army; Franklin Hood, teacher, U.S. Navy; Steven Joiner, Security, U.S. Army; Gregory Thompson, juvenile care worker, Officer, U.S. Navy. Others who were recognized for their service to our country were James MacCarone, DYS director, U.S. Marine Corps; Michael Shoto, Food Services director, U.S. Coast Guard; Willie Nalls, U.S. Air Force; and Ray Williamson, Albert Ingram, Kevin Reid, Harvey Nelson, and Julius Jimerson, U.S. Army.

All of Oakley would like to show our great appreciation for these brave men and women for their dedication and service to keep us safe and free.

United Way of Southeast MS Receives Forrest County Contribution



In December, Forrest County DHS presented their United Way campaign contributions of more than \$538 to the United Way of Southeast MS Executive Director Dan Kibodeaux. Contributions help the 21 member agencies in the community with numerous projects to support low income residents. From left: DAAS Victoria Johnson-Lewis; DFO/EA Danielle Montgomery; DFCS Brenda Booth; Forrest County Director Wanda Simpson making the presentation to Kibodeaux; and DFO/CS Deborah Hanson. Refreshments for the event were provided by United Way.

CHARACTER FIRST DEFINITION OF THE MONTH GRATEFULNESS



Letting others know
by my words and
actions how they have
benefited my life.



EXCITING NEWS FROM MDHS

THE MUCH ANTICIPATED NEW MDHS WEBSITE IS EXPECTED SOON. LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION IN THE UPCOMING EDITION OF THE BEACON.