

GTPDD SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

The GTPDD celebrates the anniversary of employees with at least 5 years of service.

JANUARY

Phylis Benson - 13 years
Tricia Black - 13 years
Jessie Evans - 8 years
Jean Jolly - 6 years
Wendy Williams - 8 years
Liz Wyatt - 7 years

FEBRUARY

George Crawford - 29 years

MARCH

Jimmy Cole - 13 years
Evelyn Dickerson - 11 years
Bobby Gann - 33 years

MICAP Mississippi Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program

Mississippi Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (MICAP), also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), is a counseling program designed to answer questions about all types of health insurance for senior citizens. Whether it is Medicare, Medicaid, Advantage Plans, Prescription Drug Plans, Supplemental Insurance or other types of coverage, MICAP counselors are trained to assist with your questions.

MICAP does not limit its assistance to information only. Hands on assistance with medical claims problems, applications for needed services, as well as appeals issues, are also handled by MICAP personnel.

If you know elderly persons needing assistance with any type of insurance issue be sure to have them call Sharon Duke at Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc. 662-324-7860.

Folks, April is National Volunteer Month.

I wish it were possible for me to shake the hand of each volunteer who has contributed time, talent, and travel to make our programs successful and our communities better and stronger. In particular, the nutrition program for senior citizens depends greatly upon volunteer services to insure meals for the homebound. Many of our volunteers are seniors themselves, assisting their peers in quality lives.

In future issues of this Newsletter, we plan to feature some of these noble citizens.

Volunteers, April is your month. And, we thank you for what you do for all of us. ---RLJ

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GOLDEN TRIANGLE Planning and Development District, Inc.

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Our Pioneers

I thought it would be fun to see what two GTPDD long time staffers had to say about THEN and NOW. Bobby Gann has been on board 33 years; George Crawford has 29 years of service.

Bobby said, "In three decades I have experienced a lot of changes. We are like the pioneers who saw the country evolve from the days of covered wagon and pony express to the telegraph and horseless carriage.

"Technological changes have been the most prominent from manual typewriters and stenciled copies to computers, faxes and emails. I didn't know what a computer was until I came to work here. Then, Rudy came aboard. His first order of business was to order 2 computers and instructed staff to 'dive in,' as none of us had any formal computer training. When we paid over \$11,000 for an accounting computer, we thought we were really uptown. Now there is a computer on almost every desk, and we feel handicapped if they are down.



Rupert L. "Rudy" Johnson
Executive Director

"The tremendous growth of the PDD in the number of programs and services offered, and the number of staff required to provide these services, has made the changes necessary," commented Bobby.

George said he could remember when the entire staff could travel in one car to attend meetings. Now, we have a fleet of 24 automobiles!

George added that the first copy machine he remembers made copies that faded after a while and large items used a steno duplicator. "We weren't sure about a fax machine's reliability for months. Now, they are standard, but being rapidly replaced by emails. With all the faxes and emails, imagine having to call an outside operator, like we did then, to get long distance service!

"We were initially housed at MSU. In the summer we brought tomato sandwiches for lunch; in the winter, for staff on the run, the 'Downstairs Cafeteria' was a blessing-coke and snack machines," George reminisces.

According to Bobby "While the changes have been challenging, they have also provided opportunities to be more efficient and productive." He added, "It's fun to discuss the 'olden days' with the younger staff, who listen skeptically because many of them weren't even born when George and I came to the PDD."

Bobby and George, I applaud your long time service. You two most assuredly have been able to change with the times.

Our warmest thoughts continue to be with the Larry Crowley Family during Larry's illness.



The GTPDD office is centrally located in Oktibbeha County in the Starkville Industrial Park

MEDICAID WAIVER

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District hosted training for the Pre-Admission Screening process pilot study January 31 - February 1, 2007.

The Division of Medicaid Long Term Care Bureau staff and consultants conducted this special training. The Medicaid Waiver teams chosen to participate included those from the Golden Triangle, Northeast and Southwest Planning and Development Districts.

Once implemented throughout the State, this assessment tool and screening process will be used to determine clinical eligibility for long term care and will ensure that all long term care program options have been explained to the individual. This process will help individuals make informed choices about placement.

The PAS study was completed on March 16. More training will be provided for all Medicaid Waiver case managers at the MAPDD Conference in April.

The Elderly & Disabled HCBS Medicaid Waiver Program is designed to help qualified Medicaid beneficiaries receive services that allow individuals to remain in their homes rather than enter nursing homes. If you know of anyone who may need this service, please call Vicki Clay, RN Supervisor or the appropriate Case Manager at 662-324-7860.



DOM Participants:
Mike Gallarno, Bureau Director, LTC
Rebecca Martin, Nurse Administrator, LTC
Andy Cohen, EP & P Consulting Firm
Yvonne Powell, Navigant Consulting Firm



Choctaw County

Lynn Hamdon, LSW
Jennifer Hopkins, RN

Clay County

Heather Corley, LSW
Mitzi Phelps, RN

Lowndes County # 1

Janice Miller, LSW
Libby Wansley, RN

Lowndes County # 2

Lesa Wilson, LSW
Angie Gregory, RN

Lowndes County # 3

Angelia Sansing, LSW
Michelle Harris, RN

Noxubee County # 1

Beverly Baker, LSW
Helen Smith, RN

Noxubee County # 2

Angela Nichols, LSW
Tammy Castla, RN

Oldhibeha County # 1

Stephanie Cannon, LSW
Tina Griffin, RN

Oldhibeha County # 2

Jenny Grantham, LSW
Charlotte Dowd, RN

Webster County

Chris Bingham, LSW
Jean Jolly, RN

Winston County

Lauren Smith, LSW
Kim Mills, RN

BUSINESS LOAN PROGRAMS

Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc. continues to promote economic development through the use of four low interest revolving loan programs designed to supplement, but not replace, other commercial financing sources such as banks.

To date, GTPDD has provided funding of \$13,146,993.85 to 141 businesses located within the seven counties. As a result of GTPDD funding, 1,580 new jobs were created and 1,244 existing employees have been retained.

Loan program funding may be provided in amounts ranging from \$2,000.00 up to \$250,000.00 depending on the eligibility of a project. As of March 1, 2007, the interest rate on GTPDD loan programs was as low as 5.00% fixed for the entire term of the loan.

Funding from these programs may be used to provide a portion of the borrowed funds for a project to start a new business or to expand an existing business. Most of the time, GTPDD will establish a partnership with a commercial bank that will provide the additional borrowed funds.

An eligibility requirement to receive funding through these revolving loan programs is that the project must create and/or retain jobs within the seven-county district.

For more information, contact Jimmy Cole, Loan Officer at (662) 324-7860 ext 133.

NEW BUSINESS IN EAST COLUMBUS

Mr. Steve Gao has purchased the commercial property located at 217 Alabama Street in Columbus, MS formerly operated as Potter's Restaurant. After improvements to the building and parking lot, Mr. Gao has opened Little Kitchen 4 Restaurant serving Chinese and American food.

For more information about the Little Kitchen, please call 662-327-5511 or 662-327-6165.



217 Alabama Street
Columbus, Mississippi



Mississippi Seniors and Caregivers



Free Online Tax Return Preparation & E-Filing

How do I qualify for this service?

- Qualify for the earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for tax year 2006, or
- Earned \$28,500 or less in adjusted gross income (AGI) or
- Were active Duty Military (including Reservist and National Guard) with a military W2 and your AGI is \$52,000 or less

How do I get more information on this offering?

Visit www.mstc.state.ms.us ; click on the “PC Online Filing” link; then click on the “Approved On-Line Service Providers” link

How do I access this free service?

www.taxfreedom.com

No computer or internet service in your home?

Check with your local library, most have computers with internet access and there’s no fee to use them.

WIA Workforce Investment Act

REMEMBER YOUR FIRST JOB?

Spring brings new growth, a fresh beginning, and the feeling of good times ahead. What better time to start a job, especially your first job? That is exactly what students in the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) Employability Skills classes are doing. Seniors in nine area high schools have begun the work experience component of their program through a partnering with businesses in all seven counties. Each eligible student is allowed to work a maximum of 100 hours before the end of the school year. Those businesses that participate gain the service of an employee whose salary is paid through the WIA program in exchange for providing the student with real work experience. Job sites are now being developed for the June summer work experience. GTPDD thanks all the businesses participating in this effort. If you know of a business that would like to participate, please call the WIA Department at 662-324-7860.

Scheduling is in progress for the Fall 2007 Employability Skills classes in most area high schools. The class is an elective, earns 1 Carnegie credit toward graduation, and provides a spring semester work experience as well as a June job placement. If you know of a senior student graduating in May 2008 who is interested in the Employability Skills class, please call the WIA department for more information.

HELP IS ON THE WAY

Rapid Response is an early intervention service offered to businesses and workers affected by layoffs and plant closings. These services are offered at no expense to the business or participating employees. The Rapid Response team is a collaborative effort by local and state agencies to provide employees, who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, an orientation to the many services and retraining opportunities available to them as a result of being laid off.

The Golden Triangle area experienced one business closure during the past quarter that utilized the Rapid Response team services. Sara Lee, in Clay County, laid off 1192 workers. The team provided information on many services available to help workers with transition into a new job or learn new skills to make them more marketable in today’s job market. East Mississippi Community College is providing numerous free short courses to the dislocated workers as well as assistance in developing or updating resumes to aid in job search. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) deployed a mobile unit to provide quick access to register for MDES services. If you are laid off and have not attended a Rapid Response orientation, or if your business should need this service for your employees, please call Mitzi Lawrence at 324-7860 for information.



Pictured is Instructor Gloria Turner with West Point Seniors receiving a first paycheck.



Pictured is West Lowndes Senior Jessica Rogers at Claire’s, a worksite in Starkville.



Pictured are congregate participants from the Mathiston Nutrition Center along with Lt. Governor Amy Tuck. Lt. Gov. Tuck guided the seniors on a tour of the Capitol Building in Jackson.

HOUSING

The GTPDD Housing Program is currently preparing 10 new grant applications to be submitted April 12, 2007 to the Mississippi Development Authority under the HOME program. The District has recently completed and closed out grants in Town of Macon, Noxubee County and Oktibbeha County. The first phase (3 houses) are at or near completion in Webster County, Clay County, Lowndes County and Town of Maben.



Lowndes County Supervisor Leroy Brooks with Ms. Jessie Williams in front of her new mobile home located on Ransom Road. This is one of the first three houses completed in the Lowndes County HOME project.



Lowndes County Supervisor Harry Sanders with Ms. Katie Shirley in her new house on Hobb Sheffield Road. Ms. Shirley's house is one of the first three completed in the Lowndes County HOME project.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2010 CENSUS

The U.S. Department of Commerce has begun conducting Promotional Workshops for the 2010 Census, Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program. The LUCA Program is designed to offer local governments an opportunity to have input into the Census Bureau's Address List prior to the next Census, which will take place in just three (3) years. In July, Mayors and County officials will receive additional correspondence from the Census Bureau regarding this endeavor. Local government participation in the LUCA Program is vital to the success of the 2010 Census by ensuring complete enumeration and an accurate decennial census!

CONFERENCE UPDATE

On January 31, 2007, staff attended the "Sustainable Community Conference: Blueprint for Keeping Mississippi Green" sponsored by the Natural Resources Initiative. The conference was held at the Center for Water and Wetlands Resources at the University of Mississippi, Field Station in Oxford. Participants got a chance to review other projects on environmental and conservation planning as they affect counties and communities in North Mississippi.



TALLEY DEFENSE SYSTEMS

The Talley Defense Systems is now in business in Lowndes County. Talley Defense supplies the U.S. military with hand and shoulder fired weapons. These products include extended range munitions, submunition dispensing systems and other weapon systems to equip military personnel. An access road and water extension to the project site in the southern part of Lowndes County was financed in part by the Mississippi Community Development Block Grant Program. The company is making an approximate \$3,000,000 investment in the area with the creation of 33 new jobs over a three-year period.



CHILD CARE

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development Child Care Staff is currently processing Six-Month Applications.

Pictured are Child Care Specialists Evelyn Dickerson and Tonia McLendon assisting Lowndes County client, Keisha Cheeks, in completing her Re-determination Forms.

Keisha states, "Child Care has been very good to me. I appreciate it very much; the money has helped my kids and me out a lot. I would encourage anyone who needs help with child care to take the time to get information about the program. It is a plus."



For more information on the CCDF Child Care Program, please call 662-324-7860 or 1-888-286-1193.

CCDF Child Care Program is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services-Office for Children and Youth.