

GOLDEN TRIANGLE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year from the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District!

As we move forward into 2026, we are looking forward to strengthening our programs for the local community.

This year marks my 36th anniversary at the GTPDD. It's been a blessing to watch the growth and impact of this organization over the years.

Our Area Agency on Aging, utility billing, GIS, project analysis, technical support, and pharmacy teams are putting in the effort everyday to provide quality services for each and every person in the community.

This organization and community mean so much to me. I'm incredibly grateful to continue being a part of the work we do.



DIRECTOR RUPERT L. "RUDY" JOHNSON

Moving into 2026, we plan to keep the momentum going and keep making a difference.

Thank you for your continued support of the GTPDD. We couldn't do this important work without it.

May God bless you and your family this year.

HAPPY
New Year

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

On April 11, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which was meant as a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The 1968 act expanded on previous acts and prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status. Title VIII of the Act is also known as the Fair Housing Act (1968).

The enactment of the federal Fair Housing Act on April 11, 1968, came only after a long and difficult journey. From 1966-1967, Congress regularly considered the fair housing bill, but failed to garner a strong enough majority for its passage. However, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson utilized this national tragedy to urge for the bill's speedy Congressional approval. Since the 1966 open housing marches in Chicago, Dr. King's name had been closely associated with the fair housing legislation. President Johnson viewed the Act as a fitting memorial to the man's life work and wished to have the Act passed prior to Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta.

Another significant issue during this time period was the growing casualty list from Vietnam.

The deaths in Vietnam fell heaviest upon young, poor African American and Hispanic infantrymen.

However, on the home front, these men's families could not purchase or rent homes in certain residential developments on account of their race or national origin. Specialized organizations like the NAACP, the GI Forum and the National Committee Against Discrimination In Housing lobbied hard for the Senate to pass the Fair Housing Act and remedy this inequity. Senators Edward Brooke and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts argued deeply for the passage of this legislation. In particular, Senator Brooke, the first African American ever to be elected to the Senate by popular vote, spoke personally of his return from World War II and inability to provide a home of his choice for his new family because of his race.

With the cities rioting after Dr. King's assassination, and destruction mounting in every part of the United States, the words of President Johnson and Congressional leaders rang the Bell of Reason for the House of Representatives, who subsequently passed the Fair Housing Act. Without debate, the Senate followed the House in its passage of the Act, which President Johnson then signed into law.

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

The power to appoint the first officials administering the Act fell upon President Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon. President Nixon tapped then Governor of Michigan, George Romney, for the post of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. While serving as Governor, Secretary Romney had successfully campaigned for ratification of a state constitutional provision that prohibited discrimination in housing. President Nixon also appointed Samuel Simmons as the first Assistant Secretary for Equal Housing Opportunity.

When April 1969 arrived, HUD could not wait to celebrate the Act's 1st Anniversary. Within that inaugural year, HUD completed the Title VIII Field Operations Handbook, and instituted a formalized complaint process. In truly festive fashion, HUD hosted a gala event in the Grand Ballroom of New York's Plaza Hotel. From across the nation, advocates and politicians shared in this marvelous evening, including one of the organizations that started it all -- the National Committee Against Discrimination In Housing.

In subsequent years, the tradition of celebrating Fair Housing Month grew larger and larger.

Governors began to issue proclamations that designated April as "Fair Housing Month," and schools across the country sponsored poster and essay contests that focused upon fair housing issues. Regional winners from these contests often enjoyed trips to Washington, DC for events with HUD and their Congressional representatives.

Under former Secretaries James T. Lynn and Carla Hills, with the cooperation of the National Association of Homebuilders, National Association of Realtors, and the American Advertising Council these groups adopted fair housing as their theme and provided "free" billboard space throughout the nation. These large 20-foot by 14-foot billboards placed the fair housing message in neighborhoods, industrial centers, agrarian regions and urban cores. Every region also had its own celebrations, meetings, dinners, contests and radio-television shows that featured HUD, state and private fair housing experts and officials. These celebrations continue the spirit behind the original passage of the Act, and are remembered fondly by those who were there from the beginning. (Source: HUD)

"Fair housing for all - all human beings who live in this country - is now a part of the American way of life."

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson

WIOA GATEWAY PROGRAM: A SUCCESS STORY

Jalik Lawrence



Jalik Lawrence is a senior at Choctaw County High School, where he is highly esteemed by his teachers as well as his classmates.

Through participation in the Gateway program and more specifically through his internship, he has also gained admiration and respect from another group of individuals.

He has had a part-time job in a fast food establishment for some time now. However, his life-long goal has always been to be a lawyer.

His career counselor desperately wanted to find a setting where he could acquire more knowledge about law and begin achieving his dream.

Luckily, Judge Kasey Young, attorney at law, agreed to accept Lawrence as an intern, in which he would gain so much more than knowledge.

His hands-on experiences have been unforgettable. He has had the opportunity to not only work in the office, but he has also been allowed to accompany Judge Young on several occasions to observe in the courtroom as cases were being presented.

He has had the privilege of meeting various lawyers, judges, and other professionals in the field of law, and he has become highly regarded among these professionals.

Judge Young and her administrative assistant describe him using the 3 C's from the Harvard Career Advisor Model: competent, committed, and compatible.

Competent: He is good at his job and can be trusted with responsibilities.

Committed: He displays enthusiasm and eagerness to learn.

Compatible: He works well and gets along well with others. His congeniality is greatly valued.

This program has helped so many students like Lawrence earn money while becoming established in the workforce.

If you know a dependable young person who is interested in this program, contact program director Mitzi Lawrence at **662-324-5007**.



Senior Enrichment Centers

The Columbus Senior Center was fortunate to have two Ph.D. students from Mississippi State University come and speak to a couple of their groups recently.

Leo Chen, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Kinesiology, spoke about his research on cognitive function, body composition and physical fitness in adults over 60 years old.

Testing for Chen's study is completed at MSU's brand new Jim and Thomas Duff Center, which houses the kinesiology department. Participants will receive a full DEXA body scan at no charge to you or your insurance.

Brandon Schaff, a doctoral candidate in the MSU Department of Psychology, also introduced the group to his study. His research focuses on how adults over the age of 55 understand everyday changes in memory and attention.

Compensation includes a \$25 Walmart gift card. Participants must be over the age of 55 and live independently within a 45-minute radius of Starkville. They will test on location, and they will also travel to participants for this study.

Both candidates need many volunteers in order to amass the data and comparisons to complete their studies. Your participation would help them get that information. Please read the flyers and contact them if you are willing to participate. Phone numbers are provided on each flyer.



Approved as Exempt (IRB-26-073)

RESEARCH STUDY ON MEMORY AND THINKING IN OLDER ADULTS

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

This study examines how older adults understand everyday changes in memory and attention.

Compensation includes a \$20 Walmart gift card for participation, please call if you might be interested in contributing to research at Mississippi State University and investigating your perceptions about brain health.

Basic eligibility criteria: 55 years of age or older, English speaking, and living independently in the community, within a 45-minute radius of Starkville.

Time commitment: A single study visit lasting approximately 45 minutes, in-person. We can drive to you.

Study Contact: 662-325-0550

RECRUITING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

CONTACT US

Leo Chen Ph.D.(c.)
 662-338-6800
 pc918@msstate.edu

John Lamberth Ph.D.
 jgl5@msstate.edu

WE'RE LOOKING FOR 60+ years old

PICKLEBALL GROUP Having participated in at least 150 minutes/week for 3 months of only Pickleball

GARDENING GROUP Having participated in at least 150 minutes/week for 3 months of only Gardening

ACTIVE CONTROL GROUP May or may not have regular physical activity, but can do so independently

WE'RE MEASURING

- Free DEXA, Body Composition, Physical Fitness and Cognitive Function in the Lab One Time (~60 mins.)
- One-Week Physical Activity Level (Wearing a Monitor for SEVEN Days)

NSU HR/IRB Approved: 2/6/2026 Expires: 4/13/2030 IRB # 25-038

SIGN UP!

Staff Anniversaries: 5+ Years

January

Megan Aucoin	7
Phylis Benson	32
Jennifer Bridges	14
Jessie Evans	27
Nevata Johnson	5
Trish Jones	32
Jamie Lang	13
Debra McKee	30
Sam Sample	22

February

Shelby Beam	12
Lisa Coleman	16
George Crawford	48
Carolyn Ebenthal	9
Ishekee Edwards	10
Christina Free	11
Jennifer Grantham	22
Michelle Harris	23
Sarah Harkins	15

March

Bobby Gann	52
Ethel Goss	23
Carla Guyton	17
Kelsey McMinn	8

GTPDD Closed-Door Pharmacy

What does our pharmacy offer?

- Daily prescription medications and vitamins delivered right to your home
- Prepackaged and labeled with contents by date and time to take
- Delivered every 28 days

What insurances are accepted?

- We accept most forms of prescription insurances

How do I sign up?

- Call **662-320-2011**
- Schedule a home visit with our health information technician
- A list of your medications, doctors and other providers will be created
- A pill planner will be made while the rest of your medications are packaged to begin services

Payment:

- Cash, personal check, money order, credit/debit card with a 2.75% processing fee
- Payment is due at time of delivery
- No extra fees on packaging/delivery

Elderly and Disabled Waiver

The Division of Medicaid is authorized by state legislation and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to administer the Elderly and Disabled waiver program.

The program provides home and community-based services that assist Medicaid beneficiaries to remain in their homes and avoid institutionalization. Eligibility is determined through a comprehensive preadmission screening process, which encompasses activities of daily living, sensory deficits, cognitive deficits, behaviors and medical conditions.

Qualifications:

- Beneficiaries must be 21 years of age or older;
- Medicaid eligible;
- Require the same level of care as someone applying for admission to a nursing facility.

662-320-2003

Medicaid Waiver Services

- **Case Management:** Everyone who participates in the waiver is assigned to a local case management team. This team consists of a Registered Nurse and Licensed Social Worker. They are responsible for managing and coordinating the services for each participant.
- **Medication Management:** This service is for participants with chronic health conditions who are prescribed a daily regimen of at least five prescription medications to receive consultations and follow up visits with a licensed pharmacist.
- **Personal Care Services (PCS):** These are supportive services provided in the home of the participant. They include assistance with light housekeeping, laundry, meal preparation, bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, and activities of daily living.
- **Adult Day Services:** This is a structured program that focuses on the strengths and abilities of the participant. This service allows participants to contact connections with their community and/or use all of their retained skills. Depending on the specific facility, the following services are provided: supervision and/or assistance with ADLs, group activities, nutritious meals and medication monitoring.
- **Home Delivered Meals:** A well-balanced meal is delivered to the home of the person who is unable to leave their home without assistance and/or is unable to prepare their own meals.
- **Institutional Respite and/or In-Home Respite:** This service is provided to participants who are unable to care for themselves; furnished on a short-term basis because of the absence or need for relief of those person's normally providing the care.

Medicaid Waiver RNs and LSWs:

Michelle Harris, RN Supervisor

Oktibbeha

#1: Tina McWhorter, RN
Andrea Wright, LSW

#2: Jennifer Grantham, LSW
Jennifer Bridges, LSW

#3: Paige Winfield, RN
Christina Free, LSW

#4: Megan Aucoin, LSW

Choctaw:

Tina Gill, RN
Kaylee Tisdale, LSW

Lowndes

#1: Angela Whitaker, RN
Penny Harrison, RN

#2: Cindy Reese, RN
Tennie Simpson, LSW

#3: Lindsey Livingston, RN
Angelia Sansing, LSW

Webster:

Sydney Thompson, RN
Lisa Woods, LSW

Winston:

Kim Mills, RN

Noxubee

#1: Rachael Unruh,
RN

Lauren Smith, LSW
#2: Tammy Castle,
RN

Kallie Hubbard,
LSW

Clay:

Mitzi Phelps, RN
Lesa Wilson, LSW

CONTACTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA



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Pharmacy: 662-320-2011
Aging: 662-320-2001
Solid Waste: 1-800-217-6909



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Pharmacy:
PharmHIT@gtpdd.com



@GTrianglePDD



Main Office: 662-324-7328
Pharmacy: 662-320-2004

The GTPDD is online at www.gtpdd.com.



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