



Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

Foundation Matters

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2005

The *Foundation Matters* Newsletter

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Red Hills Mine sells 10 millionth ton of lignite!**
- **Foundation Banquet set for Tuesday, April 12, 2005.**
- **Businesses can advertise with Choctaw Lake—call 285-3264 for details.**
- **Choctaw Co. Medical Center treats 400 ER patients per month!**
- **New 911 System to take effect this Spring.**

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Welcome to the first edition of the *Foundation Matters* newsletter, a publication prepared and distributed by the Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation to its members. The *Foundation Matters* will be published bi-annually initially to update members on the activities of the Foundation, with a goal to publish more often as activities and interest increase.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and find it interesting and informative. If you have any comments or suggestions for the *Founda-*

tion Matters newsletter, you may contact the economic development office as follows:

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Foundation Membership Drive

The Foundation membership drive is near completion, but the Foundation always welcomes new members to join at any time. This year's drive was a success with an increase of 17 members, although the amount of investment by the members decreased from last year's total. With approval from the Board, membership dates were changed to run from October 1st through September 30th of each year. Membership cards have been mailed to individual members and certificates have been presented to businesses. If you have not received yours, please let us know.

This year marks the commencement of several new services offered by the Foundation, including the publication of this newsletter. Newcomer packets with county information, maps, and information about member businesses are available at the Foundation office, Courthouse, libraries, and Town Halls in Ackerman, Weir, and French Camp. Member

businesses are encouraged to bring coupons, brochures, and other promotional items to the Foundation office to be included in these packets.

Updated Membership Directories are available at the Foundation office, and the Foundation website - www.choctawcountymms.com - will be updated soon to include the new members. A coffee reception with our representatives in the Mississippi legislature will be scheduled sometime after the end of the regular session this Spring. Also in the planning stage is a membership luncheon for networking and firsthand progress reports on Foundation activities. You will be notified as soon as we can arrange to host these events.

If you know of someone who might be interested in becoming a member of the Foundation, please have them call our office or let us know how to contact them.

Community Center Parking Lot Paved



Choctaw County Community Center

Due to contingency funds not spent for facility construction or the purchase of furnishings, the Foundation was able to pave a large portion of the Choctaw County Community Center parking lot recently. Although the paving will not be the last project involving the community center, this completes the largest portion of the community center development. Other projects in the future may include upgrading the sound system and installing internet access.

Please call our office at 285-3778 if you would like to rent the community center or to obtain a rental agreement and/or brochure.

Community Members Visit Tellico Development

This past October, several people from Choctaw County visited the Tellico Reservoir and associated developments in Tennessee. The purpose of the trip was to get a firsthand look at developments that occurred primarily due to the presence of the lake and the impact on their community. Choctaw County has initiated and completed studies to determine the best site for a lake of about 1,200 acres in the community. Various criteria, such as geo-hydrologic factors, socioeconomic considerations, land use conflicts, and environmental concerns, were considered in the decision process.

If a lake is to be developed in Choctaw County, a strategy and a master plan should be formulated early in the process in order to maximize development opportunities to their fullest potential. The trip to Tellico was an eye-opener to many of that potential.

Besides the public use areas, the 16,000 acre Tellico Reser-

voir has been a catalyst for development of subdivisions of varying income levels, golf courses, a yacht club, a marina, an industrial park, a child care center, a hotel, and other service and commercial development. Although nearer to a large population center than Choctaw County, the community around Tellico had similar demographics and challenges prior to development of the reservoir. The higher quality of life and the lake itself enticed several businesses to locate in the industrial park.

The visit was coordinated by Mississippi State University through the GeoResources Institute. Participants from Choctaw County included John Tennant and Alan Bates representing the Foundation, several members of the Board of Supervisors, and Tom King. Representatives of Engineering Associates and a group developing a similar project in Smith County also attended the trip.

New Council of Governments Meet

A workshop for elected officials was held in February 2004 in the Foundation board room. At this workshop, Joel O'Briant gave a presentation of a Council of Governments program he initiated in Winston County. Those attending the workshop liked the idea, and Choctaw County's own Council of Governments has met twice since that time.

The Council of Governments is an informal meeting with representatives of each elected body of government from the county and each of the towns. The purpose of having the elected officials meet informally is to promote more dialogue and working together for common interests of the different communities and bodies of government. No deci-

sions involving official business of any kind are made.

This time of fellowship can help our leaders understand the challenges that each community faces, and hopefully facilitate cooperation for common interests. These informal gatherings are usually sponsored by a local business or the foundation, who makes arrangements for a meal or refreshments to be served. The sponsor is always invited to attend the meeting that they support.

Crowder Engineering sponsored the first gathering in French Camp and Menzner Lumber the second meeting held at Weir. The next meeting will rotate to Ackerman.

Local Business Renovates

Dr. David Mitchell, a Foundation business member, recently renovated Mitchell Dental Clinic. Among the improvements, he has added benches, columns, and decorative planters with topiaries outside the front door, implemented masonry repairs and painted the entire exterior tan, added an attractive back-lit sign with his newly adopted logo facing Main St., and planted crepe myrtles along the walk running parallel with Main St. Finally, to better serve his patients, he has updated his computer system and now has seven computer stations, with one in every treatment room. He plans to further renovate the waiting room and treatment rooms at a later date.

Dr. Mitchell said that his purpose for renovating his business was twofold. Not only did he want to update the outside of the building to complement the inside and give his business a new look, but the addition of the new computer system will improve office efficiency and keep patients better informed about their dental needs and services. His primary

goals are for his patients to be well educated concerning their dental health and for their waiting time to be minimized.

Often, potential new businesses look at the overall physical image of a town as a location consideration. Most people want to live and work in a place that is aesthetically appealing. Visual and technological renovations such as those completed by Dr. Mitchell will enhance Choctaw County's economic development efforts.



Menzner Lumber Expands in Weir

Menzner Lumber is completing the expansion of their operation in Weir and will create about 10 new jobs for the area. Menzner currently employs 12 people at their facility where red oak is dried and transported to the headquarters in Wisconsin for processing into high-end moulding. The expansion included the construction of two new T-sheds for air drying and the addition of 23,000 square feet in order to add a planer, a bag house, and a sorting line.

“Menzner Lumber... will create about 10 new jobs for the area.”

The new jobs will include inspectors, sorters, forklift drivers, a maintenance person, a stacker operator, a planer operator, and a line supervisor. These jobs will require specialized skills and training; therefore, it is anticipated that the wage rate will be higher than currently paid. Besides the jobs in Weir, the increased production will cause an increase in work load and possible employment in areas such as wood harvesting, hauling, etc.

The Weir operation is overseen by Carey Bunkelman, Plant Manager. Congratulations to the Bunkelmans and Menzner Lumber!

Foundation Annual Banquet Set for April 12th

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation will hold its annual banquet on Tuesday, April 12th at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. The featured speaker will be Leland Speed, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority. In addition, he is founder and chairman of Parkway Properties, Inc. and EastGroup Properties, Inc., both NYSE-listed companies located in Jackson.

In the private sector, Speed's strategy has been to maximize shareholder value and retain a strong customer base by focusing on the customer. At the Mississippi Development

Authority, that strategy translates into helping Mississippi's existing businesses grow and expand while attracting new companies to the state by showcasing how Mississippi can best help them improve their returns. From community involvement to the 4 F's (flags, flowers, fixtures, and fellowship), Speed's philosophy offers a unique vision for economic development in Mississippi.

Please make plans to attend the Banquet, and bring a friend along, as well. To purchase tickets, contact a Board member or come by the economic development office in Ackerman.

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.choctawcountymiss.com

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote business and community development through coordinated effort of its membership.

The Foundation membership includes industry, small business, utility providers, local town governments, retail merchants, churches, and individuals.

In 2002, Alan Bates was hired as the Executive Director of the Foundation. He has degrees in both business and biology from Ole Miss.

Recently, Cyrena Shows was hired as the Administrative Assistant. She has a degree in secondary education from MSU.

The Foundation Board members are: Everett Adams, Ray Atkinson, Katherine Black, Kenneth Carmichael, Lila Chandler, Kenny Clark, Charlotte Cornish, Marty Crowder, Gracie Ervin, Wesley Gammill, Ted Lewis, Dannie Reed, John Tennant, Mike Thomas, C. Sade Turnipseed, Jody Webb, and Lewis Wright.



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