



Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

Foundation Matters

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

JULY 2005

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Foundation picked up 20 new members. The new membership drive will begin in September.
- The Foundation has updated the website, adding new information and services.
- The year-to-date percentage of employment growth for Choctaw County is 8.4%.
- The high school graduation rate in Choctaw County is 82.73%.
- Pap's Place serves approximately 1,000 lbs. of catfish per weekend or 26 tons per year.

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Dawg Days Receives \$3,700 Advertising Grant

With the cancellation of the Fireworks Over the Water event this year, the Foundation was able to devote more time to assist with the Dawg Days of Summer festival to be held on Saturday, August 13th. One immediate benefit to the festival was realized via assistance in obtaining a grant of \$3,700 from the Tribal / State Compact Fund for promotion.

The market for the event in the past has primarily been within a 100 mile radius of Ackerman. The goal this year and for future events is to expand that market area by at least a 50 mile radius through additional advertising and promotion.

The Dawg Days of Summer Festival was created to provide an entertainment venue for the com-

munity and surrounding area and an opportunity for charitable groups to hold fundraisers. One significant change this year is that the festival will be comprised of one full day of activities rather than spread out over two days. All events, except the antique car show, will be held at the courthouse and library area. A new activity added is the "Fall Football Kickoff," a community-wide pep rally to begin the football season. In addition, Butch Luke and performers will arrive Saturday night to provide musical entertainment.

Planning of Dawg Days is coordinated primarily by Patty Draper and Juli Hughes of the MSU Extension Office and a group of dedicated volunteers. Call 662-285-6337 for more information.

2005 Annual Foundation Banquet Well Attended

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation held its annual banquet on Tuesday, April 12th at the Community Center with a large crowd in attendance. While the audience had dinner, the Foundation provided a PowerPoint slide show entitled "Choctaw County at a Glance," which featured over 90 slides of local business, industry, attractions, and events. The presentation also included a look at the individual communities, the schools, and slides pertaining to the proposed lake project.

The banquet included a special presentation by Glen Barlow to Penny Lucas in honor of Anthony Lucas, a summary of the regular legislative session by Rep. Dannie Reed, and a few words by Alan Bates of Foundation activities during the past year. David Forster, President of Hardwire, Inc., spoke about his business of manufacturing wiring harnesses and how he likes to run a "low key" operation. The keynote speaker, Leland

Speed, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, energized the crowd with the presentation of his vision for growth in Mississippi. He

encouraged communities to take advantage of their assets rather than worrying about things they do not have. Speed gave specific examples of the growth in recreational real estate, particularly lake and waterfront properties.

The Foundation wishes to thank the audience for attending, the Foundation Board of Directors, the participants in the program, and those who helped plan and organize the event.



Ecoplex Nearing Completion

With the paving of the access road in June, the installation of infrastructure in the Red Hills Ecoplex is nearing completion. As the contractor finishes the items in the contract, the District plans to use unspent contingency funds on signs, landscaping, and other items to help the Ecoplex make a better first impression on prospects.

To successfully recruit industries to the Ecoplex, it is necessary to have the property prepared for development. Infrastructure is the foundation on which the whole Ecoplex will be built. Everything depends on it. To that end, with \$1.4 million in assistance from the state of Mississippi, the District employed Engineering Associates to design the infrastructure for the Ecoplex and contracted with Jay Beardon for construction. The primary components of the infrastructure installed include:

- 3,200 linear feet of roadway
- 6,150 linear feet of water main
- 2,400 linear feet of sewer lines, a pump station and force main
- 2 cleared sites of about 2.5 acres each

A task force has been formed to assist in targeting businesses with the highest probability of being tenants for the Ecoplex, given the by-products currently available for exchange. This task force includes representatives from the Mississippi Development Authority, TVA, 4-County, Red Hills Power Plant, Red Hills Mine, and Headwaters.

Strategic Plan to be Updated

The Foundation is leading an effort to update the Strategic Plan for Choctaw County. The current plan was published in 2001. The planning process will be partly funded through a Flex-E-Grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and matched through in-kind contributions by the Foundation. Gerald Mills, certified in the strategic planning methods by ARC, will be the facilitator of the process.

A steering committee was formed and met to select a widely diversified group of citizens to participate in a one-day retreat and a multi-month process to produce a community generated strategic plan. The plan will consist of four primary areas of focus, with Chairpersons selected as follow:

- Business Development Ommie Ashford
- Physical Infrastructure Kenneth Carmichael
- Social Infrastructure Sheila Miller
- Workforce/Education Dev. Mike Thomas

“...The citizenry will have a vested interest in seeing their own plan materialize.”

An emphasis will be placed on these basic building blocks necessary as a foundation for sound economic development.

To formally kick off this important process, a one-day retreat was held on Monday, July 18th at the Community Center in Ackerman, during which the participants formed committees and began the planning process. 4-County

EPA sponsored lunch for the retreat.

Anyone interested in providing input in formulation of this vital planning document is invited to contact the Foundation for more information. A plan written by the community itself will be more likely to be successfully implemented with positive results because the citizenry will have a vested interest in seeing their own plan materialize.

Foundation Works With Community Service Organizations

The Foundation often works with community organizations to better the quality of life in the county. Cyrena Shows, Administrative Assistant, coordinated the Choctaw County Children's Health Fair, which was held by Project Homestead on April 8, 2005 at the Choctaw County Community Center. Sponsors were Choctaw County Medical Center and the Choctaw County Public School District. Fifth and sixth grade students from the Ackerman, Weir and French Camp public schools were in attendance. Project Homestead raised over \$75 through a bake sale and donated the money to the local military support group to use for buying phone cards for the troops of the Ackerman and Eupora National Guard units. Project Homestead also allowed

the Dixie Pan Homemakers Club to sell sandwiches, popcorn, and drinks as a fundraiser at the event.

There were about 20 exhibits at the health fair, including three outside the building, which were Emergystat's ambulance, the Reform Fire Department's new fire truck, and 4-County's Live Wire demonstration. Other exhibits included Preserve Sight Mississippi's free vision screening, CCMC's blood pressure testing, and several exhibits provided by the MSU Extension Service. Local businesses which donated door prizes for the students were Tizzy Lizzy, Pap's Place, La De Da, Main Street Fabrics, Spud's Deli, Tudi's Sno Cones, Sonny's BBQ, and Taps Video.

New Business in Ackerman—La De Da

Recently, La De Da, owned by Terri Ming, has taken the place of Lila’s Distinctive Apparel, formerly owned by Lila Chandler. La De Da is an upscale clothing boutique situated right in the middle of Main Street. Prices range from moderate to high-end, and sizes range from 2 to 24, with plus sized clothing to be added soon. La De Da has created one full-time and three part-time positions. With the slogan, “Fashion for the Young and Young at Heart,” Terri Ming hopes to appeal to all age groups. In addition, she hopes to soon incorporate children and teen sections into her store. La De Da is unique in that it maintains current customer profiles so customers can be contacted as merchandise arrives in their size and style preference. Also, these clothes won’t be found in the nearby department store. Terri Ming says that La De Da is like Lila’s Distinctive Apparel in that it has the same warm, inviting atmosphere and above-standard customer service. Store hours are Tuesday-Friday 9:30am-5pm and Saturday 9:30am-3pm., and the telephone

number is 285-6510. The Foundation wishes La De Da much success.



**Lisa Stephenson,
store manager of
La De Da**

Congressman Wicker Visits Choctaw County

Congressman Roger Wicker visited Choctaw County on March 29th during a recess in Congress for a briefing on the lake project. Several attended the meeting held in the Foundation conference room including the Choctaw County Supervisors, representatives of Engineering Associates, Wicker’s Press Secretary Kyle Steward, and Foundation Board president John Tennant.

Congressman Wicker, along with Senator Thad Cochran, has been instrumental in financial assistance received by Choctaw County for studies pertaining to the lake project. The briefing provided an opportunity for Choctaw County to express gratitude to Congressman Wicker for his support, and to present ideas for development of the lake to its fullest economic potential.



(Pictured left to right: Archie Collins, Chris McIntire, Larry McClain, Roger Wicker, Kay Bowie, and Thomas Higgins)

Foundation Delivers New Services to Members

During the membership drive this past year, the Foundation proposed several new or expanded services available for members. It is therefore pleasing to report that most of these services are already in place. With in-house publication of new promotional material, Newcomer and County Information Packets are now readily available. Please let us know if you are a member and have coupons or brochures for the Newcomer Packets. The Foundation Matters newsletter is a new service to provide reports on activities and upcoming events.

The website (www.choctawcountymys.com) was recently redone, enabling office staff to maintain the site, including the business membership directory, for more timely updates. When informa-

tion requests are received, the Foundation makes referrals to member businesses a priority. A Buyer’s Guide of member businesses is now available, sorted by category or type of business.

The Foundation continues to assist with grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremonies, and offers a 50% discount on memberships for new businesses. If you know someone interested in starting their own business, please refer them to the Foundation office for technical assistance. Entrepreneurial Tool Kits are available, as is advice on resources that might be available.

Finally, the Foundation is currently planning to host a coffee for members to visit with local legislators. If the schedule permits, this event will be held in mid-August. Members will receive a notice by mail.

Lake Committee Meets With Barnett Reservoir Manager

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation's Lake Committee continues to meet to provide input and assistance to the Board of Supervisors concerning the proposed lake project. The highlight of the meetings occurred on May 19th when Ken Griffin, Executive Director of the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District (PRVWSD) at Barnett Reservoir was the guest speaker. Griffin was invited to share his experience in lake development with the group.

There are 50 neighborhoods at Barnett Reservoir now, with the property development split almost evenly between residential and parks. Griffin is currently overseeing two major developments at Barnett Reservoir: Lost Rabbit and HarborWalk. He described Lost Rabbit as a "new urbanist community" similar to Seaside in Florida. Lost Rabbit is a traditional neighborhood development embodying the most advanced traditional town planning and ecological principles. It will have a town center surrounded by housing and mixed-use buildings, and will serve as the social center of the neighborhood. The neighborhood streets are designed to lead residents directly to the water. Neighborhood streets of varying types are detailed to equally accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles; design details include wide sidewalks, street trees and on-street parking.

These features slow the automobile and increase pedestrian activity, encouraging casual meetings that form the bonds of community.

HarborWalk will be a community that will be comprised of over one million square feet of retail, restaurant, office, hotel and condominium space in just phase 1 and ultimately over three and one half million square feet covering over 100 acres of prime waterfront property.

The lake committee asked numerous questions of Griffin, with issues ranging from regulatory oversight to funding of projects and ongoing operation and maintenance. Griffin commended the group for its effort to learn about lake development and its vision to consider a project with such great potential for the community.

Another issue the lake committee is considering is the conduct of pertinent economic studies necessary to assess the market for the lake and associated developments, and an economic impact quantification of the same. In addition, principles of smart growth such as those being employed as Lost Rabbit are being explored to ensure that developments are environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing

Fly Ash Presentation Made to MAS

The Choctaw County Economic Development Office teamed with Dr. Al Myles of MSU to prepare and present a PowerPoint seminar on the beneficial uses of fly ash in road construction to the Mississippi Association of Supervisors (MAS) at their summer convention in Biloxi. The purpose of the presentation was to educate the MAS of the availability and beneficial uses of a material produced in Choctaw County, Mississippi, and encourage its use in County road construction.

The PowerPoint included slides that highlighted:

- Choctaw County, the Red Hills Power Plant, Red Hills Mine, and Headwaters
- Benefits of using fly ash in road construction

- Results of engineering tests on the Red Hills fly ash
- Factors affecting the decision to use fly ash
- Specific projects where the fly ash has been used, including a County road constructed by Archie Collins and the Ecoplex access road demonstration project
- Contact information for those interested in purchasing fly ash

The presentation was well received and many supervisors asked questions and expressed interest in using the fly ash in their counties.



Ecoplex access road



County road

Main Street Gets a Facelift

Recently, many positive changes have taken place on Main Street. Mitchell Dental Clinic, as reported in the last issue, spruced up his building and updated the computer system. Tizzy Lizzy added details to the sidewalk of the outside eating area. Skinner Shoe Store is in the process of revamping the whole exterior of the building. The Corilla Crawford Education Building is open for business and has been beautifully decorated. The new Town Hall project has recently been completed on Main Street and will open soon. Crowder Engineering is currently in the process of renovating its office and has recently dressed up the exterior. Marty Crowder was featured in *Mississippi Business Journal* in June. Bob Chambers, of Western Auto, keeps his business looking neat with nicely maintained plants outside the front door. Congratulations and keep up the good work!



Shows to Begin New Career at French Camp Elementary

Cyrena Shows, Administrative Assistant for the Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation, will begin a new career as a 7th and 8th grade teacher at French Camp Elementary beginning in August. Shows, who has a Bachelor's degree in secondary education from Mississippi State University, has contributed significantly to the community and the economic development office during the past year. She was instrumental in the production of promotional material for the economic development

office including the *Foundation Matters* newsletter, coordination of Project Homestead's Children's Health Fair, and the revision of the Foundation website. In addition, she completed the Leadership82 program, which has further prepared her as a community leader. The Foundation is grateful to Cyrena for all her hard work and dedication and wishes Cyrena the best in her new career.

**Choctaw County Economic
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.choctawcountymms.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.

The Foundation Board members are:

Everett Adams, Ray Atkinson, Katherine Black, Kenneth Carmichael, Lila Chandler, Charlotte Cornish, Marty Crowder, Gradie Ervin, Wesley Gammill, Ted Lewis, Dannie Reed, John Tennant, Mike Thomas, C. Sade Turnipseed, Lorrie Vowell, Jody Webb, and Lewis Wright.

A special thanks to Kenny Clark for his many years of service to the Foundation.



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