



# Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

## Foundation Matters

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2006

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The Red Hills Power Plant generates enough electricity for 400,000 homes.
- 10% of the electricity produced by the Red Hills Power Plant is used by the power plant equipment.
- Forget~Me~Not Florist will sell over 850 red roses, make over 300 deliveries and will bring in approximately 40% of its annual income on Valentine's Day.
- A 600% increase in employment will be made Feb 14 at Forget~Me~Not Florist (just for the one day).

### Thank you

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation would like to offer a special

"Thank-You"

to Mark Wood and DigiColor for printing Membership Certificates.



### Inside This Issue:

Membership Drive	2
Entrepreneur Club	2
Strategic Plan	2
Lake Project	3
ECMEC Meeting	3
TVA Grant	3

### CCEDF Banquet 2006

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation will hold its annual banquet on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Center. The featured speaker will be Blake Wilson, President of the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC). Under the direction of Wilson, MEC has become the fastest growing state

chamber of commerce in the nation. MEC has been the voice of business in Mississippi since 1949, focusing on broad issues with a bottom line return to Mississippi businesses. To purchase a ticket, please call 662-285-3778 or contact a member of the Foundation Board of Directors.

### Choctaw County Medical Center Growing

Almost four years ago the local hospital closed and many wondered if the community could and would support a full-time hospital again. Then the Board of Supervisors contracted with Jeff Morse and Brandywine Health Services to operate the hospital, and the result has been quite a success story for Choctaw County. The Choctaw County Medical Center (CCMC) now employs about 150 full-time workers, and a total of approximately 180 if you include part-time employees. With the plans for expansion either already underway or being considered, the facility could add 30 - 40 additional employees.

The past year the hospital added 5 swing beds and opened a geriatric-psychiatric ward. The CCMC also administers the ambulance service and averages 60-70 runs per month. Last March the CCMC opened a clinic in Weir which operates 10 hours per day, four days per week with 3 full-time employees. The Weir clinic serves about 12-14 patients per day, and recently an automatic defibrillator was added to the clinic.

Expansion plans include additions to the facility of a 10-bed Geriatric-Psychiatric Unit and a 10-bed Alzheimer Patient Care Facility. Ground-breaking is tentatively slated for March. The CCMC is adding a CT scan machine, ultrasound, bone density testing and mammography services. Under consideration is a laundry which could also service other facilities and employ up to 8

people, and a clinic in Mathiston, but to be physically located in Choctaw County.

The CCMC also continues to renovate and remodel much of their facilities, making the medical complex a facility that both employees and the community can be proud of. While the facility and service improvements are important, the success of the CCMC is primarily due to the dedicated staff who provide quality health care that some associate primarily with larger communities. The plethora of services offered combined with the caring attitude of the employees has made the Choctaw County Medical Center a business definitely on the rise.



CCMC Rural Health Clinic in Weir

## Membership Drive Underway

The Foundation's annual membership drive is currently underway. The membership drive was originally scheduled for this past fall, but the effects of Hurricane Katrina are partly to blame for the drive not commencing until December. Though vitally important to the Foundation, we felt it was more important that resources and attention remain focused on helping those in need locally and even more so in south Mississippi.

During the past year the Foundation expanded the services it offers members, and will continue to strive to deliver greater returns to those that invest in a membership. The website at [www.choctawcountymiss.com](http://www.choctawcountymiss.com) is constantly being improved and updated, and is the best source for information about Choctaw County on the internet. The newsletter is available on our website, and businesses that join the Foundation will be listed on the website.

If you receive this newsletter, you are likely a member of the Foundation, and your support is appreciated. We en-

courage you to tell others about the Foundation, or direct them to our website or our office for further information about membership.



Jerry Gatti is presented a membership certificate by  
CCEDF Director Alan Bates.

## Entrepreneur's Club Formed

Under the leadership of Foundation Board member Sade Turnipseed, an Entrepreneur's Club formed this past summer in Choctaw County. The Entrepreneur's Club offers regular workshops that present valuable information about current economic and entrepreneurial opportunities in Choctaw and neighboring counties; and will introduce learning tools for individuals that ensure basic preparedness for responding to requests for proposals (RFPs). The Club also assists entrepreneurs in determining practical and creative ways to create and fill the business and cultural needs of our community.

The first meeting was held on August 16<sup>th</sup> at the Harriet Tubman Village for Writers and Artists (formerly the Candlewick Inn).

Guest speakers included Dannie Reed – District 35 Representative, Alan Bates – Economic Development Director, and Sade Turnipseed. Other meetings have featured Al Myles of the MSU Extension Office who spoke about how to prepare a business plan, and Derrick King, Choctaw County IT Director, spoke on technology concerns for small businesses.

The Entrepreneur's Club meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Choctaw County Library. The next scheduled meeting is March 7, 2006. For further information contact the Foundation office at 662-285-3778 or Sade Turnipseed at 662-285-9798 or 662-773-2048.

## New Strategic Plan Nearing Completion

The new strategic plan for Choctaw County is nearly complete as all four committees have prepared their goals, objectives and strategies using an asset-based approach recommended by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). ARC State Director Mike Armour attended the retreat held on July 18<sup>th</sup> which initiated the planning process. ARC is funding 80% of the cost to develop the plan, with the remainder contributed by the Foundation.

The overall mission statement developed during the retreat is "Our vision for Choctaw County is to develop an inviting community that will be a positive place to visit, live, work and learn." Although temporarily delayed somewhat by Hurricane Katrina,

each of the committees worked diligently to finish their portion of the plan. The Foundation extends gratitude to Gerald Mills, the facilitator of the process, the members of the steering committee, the four committee chairpersons, and the volunteer members of each committee. Once published, copies of the plan will be available at the Foundation office.

*"...to develop an inviting community that will be a positive place to visit, live, work and learn."*

## Economic Development Top Priority for Lake Project

The Choctaw County Board of Supervisors revised the statement of Purpose and Need for a lake in Choctaw County by placing greater emphasis on economic development. As approved, the revised statement asserts that “the primary purpose of the proposed multi-use/multi-purpose surface water impoundment is to be a self-sustaining economic development stimulus that will not impose a financial burden on the Board or the citizens of the County.”

The emphasis on economic development as the highest priority is a positive step, but necessitated that the site selection process begin anew. The site selection criteria were modified and all watersheds re-evaluated using the new factors. Recently the Supervisors eliminated several potential sites using the new criteria, and have narrowed the search to 3 sites in the McCurtain’s Creek watershed and 3 sites in the Sand Creek watershed.

A decision to select a single site could be forthcoming in February, 2006.

The Lake Committee met in August and again in October to discuss the progress to date.

At the October meeting Jeff Ballweber of the MSU GeoResources Institute presented an overview of the economic studies currently being conducted regarding the market assessment for the lake and associated developments, and the potential economic impact on Choctaw County. Ron Forsythe of Pickering Engineering discussed environmental, site screening and engineering activities pertinent to the project as well.

Anyone interested in learning more about the lake project should contact the Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation at (662) 285-3778.

## Foundation and Red Hills Mine Host ECMEC Meeting

The Foundation and the Red Hills Mine joined forces to host a regular meeting of the East Central Mississippi Economic Council (ECMEC) on August 9th. ECMEC is a conglomeration of 17 counties in the east central Mississippi area that work together to recruit business and industry to the region. By pooling the resources of several counties, the organization helps counties with few resources to participate in recruitment activities that they might not be able to afford individually.

The meeting was held at the Red Hills Mine training room.

Bob Benson and Mike Thomas spoke briefly to the group about mining in Mississippi. After a meal of sandwiches from the Council House provided by the Foundation, the group toured the lignite mine. Most of the economic developers had not seen a mining operation, and all left amazed at the magnitude of the operation and the size of the equipment involved with the mining. The Foundation extends our appreciation to those at the Red Hills Mine who kindly accommodated the ECMEC group.

## Foundation Receives Grant from TVA

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation recently received a grant from TVA for technology funding assistance for the purchase of updated equipment to enhance communications, presentations and proposal preparation. The grant is through TVA’s Community Development Program to help attract and retain businesses that are important to Choctaw County’s prosperity and future success.

The community development program offers resources to help local leaders understand the site location process, develop an effective sales team, handle potential prospects, have up-to-date technology and effectively market their community to prospective businesses and industries.

“A community must be ready to answer every question, provide information quickly and be prepared to market the assets that best meet the needs of the client,” said TVA Senior Vice President of Economic Development John Bradley. “Having updated technology and equipment assists communities in being more competitive in today’s economic development world.” The grant from TVA was \$4,867 or 80% of the total cost of \$6,084 to purchase a new laptop computer and projector for presentations, and a digital camera. These tools are vital to an economic development organization’s capabilities to compete

with other communities.

“TVA’s technology and equipment funding assistance will help us improve our capabilities to attract new industry and retain our existing businesses,” said Alan Bates, Executive Director of the Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation. “We appreciate all of TVA’s proactive efforts to promote economic development in our community.”

Board Members review documents using new equipment.



**Choctaw County Economic  
Development Foundation**

115 East Quinn Street  
P.O. Box 737  
Ackerman, MS 39735

Phone: 662-285-3778

Fax: 662-285-2440

Email: [ccedfoffice@yahoo.com](mailto:ccedfoffice@yahoo.com)



---

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

**[www.choctawcountymiss.com](http://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.

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.**

Contact a Board member or the Foundation Office to purchase a ticket to the 2006 CCEDF Banquet



**Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation**

115 East Quinn Street

P.O. Box 737

Ackerman, MS 39735