



# Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

## Foundation Matters

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### DID YOU KNOW?

- Choctaw County was originally 1,080 acres and contained Webster Co. and parts of Montgomery, Calhoun, and Grenada Counties
- March 1913- Choctaw County Agriculture School established in Weir
- 1946-First roads paved in Ackerman
- 1953-First Harvest Fest in French Camp was held

### DAWG DAYS OF SUMMER 2006

The 2006 Dawg Days of Summer festival will be held in Ackerman on August 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The Foundation assumed the responsibility for coordinating the event this year and determined that the festival should return to a two-day format.

The festival will commence on Friday night at 7:30 p.m. with a street concert featuring Kyote Wylde. Kyote Wylde is a Mississippi based band that has performed in front of over 100,000 people in the past year playing the college and club scene. Kyote Wylde features local entertainer Jason Miller on lead vocals. Bingo, a popular activity offered by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Club, will be held at Pap's Place on Friday evening as well.

Days of Summer is the Homemade Ice Cream Contest which will include the opportunity for festival goers to purchase a ticket to sample the tasty offerings of contestants and participate in the judging of a "People's Choice" winner.

The festival will offer new activities for youngsters including a way to cool down with WaterWars, the ultimate water balloon game. Dawg Days will be visited by the Fire Safety House and Pluggie the Fire Hydrant, which are interactive safety programs for children designed to educate children about fire prevention and life-saving skills while entertaining them at the same time.

Saturday the food vendors and arts & crafts booths will open at 9:00 a.m. and the events will commence at 9:30 a.m., lasting until about 4:00 p.m. A new addition to Dawg

For further information about the festival contact the Foundation at 662-285-3778.



Dawg Days Logo Designed by Andrea Lund Graphic Design

### WELCOME ACKERMAN FORGE

The Foundation is pleased to welcome Ackerman Forge to the local business community. After many months of hard work, results are finally forthcoming from the efforts of the owner of the steel mill, H.B. "Bubba" Hudspeth, and others. The re-opening of the steel mill will mean the immediate creation of 20-25 jobs, and with growth of the business projections are to employ around 90 within two years of operation.

Ackerman Forge will manufacture flanges in sizes ranging from ½ inch to 12 inches. The company will purchase steel billets directly from steel mills to produce carbon steel flanges. The process requires the billets be cut, heated and forged into the immediate shape of the flange to be made. The units are

then machined into the desired dimensions of the specific order or inventory needs.

Ackerman Forge will re-open the steel mill previously operated from the mid 1960's by Trinity Industries until closing in 2001. The success of bringing these jobs back is due to the perseverance of Mr. Hudspeth and support from Choctaw County and Ackerman officials, the Mississippi Development Authority, the Governor's office, TVA, 4-County EPA, local and statewide elected officials, and the Golden Triangle Planning & Development District. The Foundation is proud to have been involved in helping to facilitate this project.

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## 2006 Banquet Well-Received

The Foundation has received many positive comments about the 2006 Annual Banquet held at the Community Center. From the opening invocation by Rev. John Bardwell and the performance of the National Anthem by Chelsea James and Emily Moncrief to the keynote address, the banquet was entertaining while holding the interest of the audience.

While the audience enjoyed a tasty buffet dinner, entertainment was provided by Mark Wood on the piano and bluegrass by the Back Porch Pickers. The program included a special presentation by Joe Gant in honor of Weir resident, Roy Oswalt. Billy Jo Oswalt, Roy's father, accepted the award from the Foundation on his behalf as Roy was pitching for the Astros the evening of the banquet.

Doug Gruber of Headwaters Resources updated the audience on the marketing of flyash produced at the Red Hills Power Plant, including the use of the ash in New Orleans in hurricane reconstruction work.

Blake Wilson, the keynote speaker, energized the audience with his unique style of blending humor with the inspirational message of the success of Mississippi and of several prominent Mississippians. Wilson emphasized that while many Mississippians have made a difference at a national and international level, we should recognize that local accomplishments are also important. Wilson cited the lake project as an example of one local project with potential to lead to great things for Choctaw County.

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



Blake Wilson,  
MS Economic Council President

## New Strategic Plan Complete

The new strategic plan for Choctaw County is complete and printed copies are available at the Foundation office. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funded 80% of the cost to develop the plan, with the remainder contributed by the Foundation.

Using an asset-based approach recommended by ARC, each of the four committees worked diligently on their portion of the plan. The primary assets of Choctaw County were listed and

categorized to be used by the four committee groups: human assets, development and expansion of business assets, economic and structural assets, and cultural and community assets.

The Foundation extends gratitude to Gerald Mills, the facilitator of the process, Sharon Chalk of the Mississippi Development Authority, the members of the steering committee, the four committee chairpersons, and the volunteer members of each committee.

## Choctaw County Included in GO Zone

In December President Bush signed into law the Gulf Opportunity Act of 2005 (the Act) which established the Gulf Opportunity Zone or GO Zone comprised of 49 counties in Mississippi hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina, including Choctaw County. This act provides unprecedented economic and tax benefits to the GO Zone counties.

One such benefit of the Act is the allowance of new construction and improvements to property within the GO Zone to be financed on a tax-exempt basis. By combining GO Zone tax exempt financing with other state incentives, investors can avoid sales and use tax on purchases for construction projects, and in some cases receive state income tax credits.

The Act also allows bonus depreciation within the GO Zone that allows businesses to claim an additional first-year depreciation deduction equal to 50% of the cost of new property investments made in the Zone. This depreciation allowance applies to

software, leasehold improvements, and certain equipment and real estate expenditures.

There are other incentives offered, and the full text of the Gulf Opportunity Act is extensive and complicated. If you or someone you know would like additional general information about the Act, contact the Foundation. Those seriously considering an investment in a new project within the GO Zone should seek counsel from a legal or accounting firm to realize the full value of what is offered.

With the inclusion of Choctaw County in the GO Zone, and its designation as a Growth and Prosperity County and a TVA Special Opportunities County, there has never been a better time to invest in Choctaw County.

## Sand Creek Selected as Preferred Lake Site

With a revised Statement of Purpose and Need for a lake in Choctaw County placing greater emphasis on economic development, the Choctaw County Board of Supervisors reassessed all the potential lake sites in the County and selected the Sand Creek watershed as the preferred location. This decision was made after careful consideration of all the known scientific and economic data concerning the sites, but did not disqualify any of the sites that were not chosen in the event that a fatal flaw is found with the selected site.

A team of economists from Mississippi State University was authorized to conduct a county-wide evaluation of the economic impact and marketability of the project. The results of the interim report from the team indicate the project will be a financially sustainable venture for the county. With the selection of a preferred site, the study team is redefining portions of their study to be site specific and therefore provide more precise data. The final report is due in late August.

The lake committee held a meeting with Demery Grubbs of Government Consultants, Inc., a consulting and advisory firm involved in public finance. Mr. Grubbs provided valuable insight to those present, and the committee plans to schedule a follow-up meeting with him in late August or early September.

John Tennant, Lake Committee Chairman, and Alan Bates of the Foundation attended a meeting of the Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District (YMD) to learn more about joint water management districts. A joint water management district can be created by any two or more county or municipal governments and is governed by a board of commissioners appointed by the local governments. The authorities allowed through joint water management districts make them a viable option for managing the lake project. This meeting was particularly helpful as Dr. Dean Pennington, the Executive Director of the YMD, presented the budget for the YMD organization.

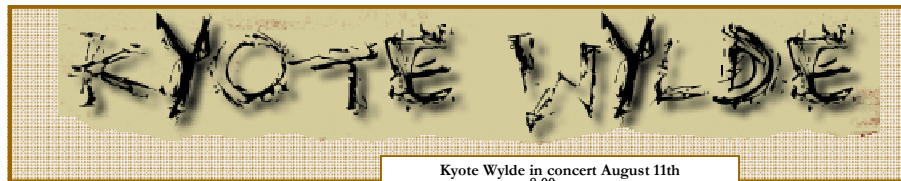
## Dawg Days Receives Advertising Grant

The Foundation submitted a successful application for financial assistance of \$1,888 from the Tribal / State Compact Fund for promotion of Dawg Days of Summer 2006. This will be the final year that this grant will be offered, but during the last four years the Foundation has been awarded about \$30,000 for marketing local events.

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 grant will enable the festival to be more heavily promoted on television and through other media than in past years.

The Dawg Days of Summer Festival was created to provide an entertainment venue for the community and surrounding area and an opportunity for charitable groups to hold fund raisers.



Kyote Wylde in concert August 11th  
8:00 p.m.  
Main Street Ackerman, MS

## Local Businesses Participate in Synchronist Program

Several local businesses are participating in a statewide existing business program called Synchronist which is administered by the Mississippi Development Authority in partnership with local utilities – TVA in Choctaw County. Synchronist Business Information System is a software package for community assessment that utilizes information gathered in surveys to build a database to help define, organize data, analyze trends, and report existing company information giving economic development organizations valuable insight into the dynamics of the local economy. Unlike the traditional approach to business retention, Synchronist is opportunity driven, not problem focused.

Using the data gathered, Synchronist evaluates each company's value to the community, growth potential, risk of relocation or downsizing, emerging problems in the community, untapped marketing opportunities, and employment trends. The system is built to bridge the critical business information gap in economic development organizations. Surveys with local businesses were conducted by Sharon Chalk of the Mississippi Development Authority, Aaron Akers of the North Mississippi Industrial Development Association, and Alan Bates of the Foundation.

**Choctaw County Economic  
Development Foundation**

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**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**  
**[www.choctawcountymms.com](http://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, Aubrey Ashford, Ray Atkinson, Katherine Black, Kenneth Carmichael, Lila Chandler, Charlotte Cornish, Gradie Ervin, Wesley Gammill, Ted Lewis, Dannie Reed, John Tennant, Mike Thomas, C. Sade Turnipseed, Lorrie Vowell, Jody Webb, and Lewis Wright.**

Compete for ***Bragging Rights*** in the **First Annual Dawg Days Homemade Ice Cream Contest!**



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