

## **2000 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Mississippi County Enterprise Community**

The Mississippi County Enterprise Community continued enjoying success during calendar Year 2000. We maintained and expanded our linkages in the business and civic communities, and continued strong linkages with the grassroots community. Many of our partners are continuing to utilize the Enterprise Community designation for additional expanded activities. Two such entities are the Westminster Retirement Community Group and the Arkansas Enterprise Group.

The Arkansas Development Finance Authority has also used Enterprise Community set aside funds through the Intermediary Relending Program to enhance business development in the Enterprise Community. A steel storage business was developed and funded by the Arkansas Development Finance Authority.

We have continued the benchmark related activities in the multi-agency truancy and school drop-out prevention program using Arkansas Division on Volunteerism funds and cash support from the Blytheville Public Schools. We currently have nine AmeriCorps volunteers placed throughout the Enterprise Community providing truancy and drop out prevention services to students and their families. The volunteers are placed at Robinson and Franklin Primary Schools, Burdette, Fairview and Central Elementary Schools, East and West Jr. Highs, Blytheville Alternative School and Blytheville High School.

We are also continuing our Tech-Prep activity with parent involvement through the Mississippi County Community College. Our Parent Resource Centers are fully operational and serving as a vital part of parental involvement in Early Head Start Education, as well as having the centers act as an informal linkage for the Community Service Block Grant Program, the Home Energy Assistance Program, Healthy Start, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Mississippi County Community College, Cotton Boll Technical Institute, the GED Program, and Each-One-Teach- One program.

Our Transportation Program continues to expand. We currently have two vans providing transportation to Fed Ex in Memphis, TN, an average of five days per week each. We also provide local transportation services for employment, education, job search and Head Start activities. A contract with the Mississippi County Department of Human Services TEA Program makes the Fed Ex runs possible. All riders are TEA eligible customers. Many were former recipients of TEA cash assistance (AFDC). Based on the response from the community and Federal Express, there is a need to expand this program. It also must be pointed out that Federal Express is located 70 miles East and is one of the world's leading distributing corporations with the hub located in Memphis. We have been told that the recent agreement reached between Federal Express and the Postal Service for air transportation of packages will create an additional 1500 jobs at the Memphis hub alone. This means additional job opportunities for Enterprise Community residents.

The Mississippi County Youth Consortium continues to grow and is currently reaching its goal by providing year round cultural and recreational programs for area youth. In our last report, we said a Boys and Girls Club was being planned for Enterprise Community youth. We are pleased to report that this program is now a reality. Mississippi County has received a charter to operate a Boys and Girls Club of America in Mississippi County. The program currently receives funds from the Boys and Girls Club of America through an U. S. Department of Justice grant and local funds. These funds allow the program to operate an average of 20 hrs. Per week during the school year and provide full day service during the summer months. Other Consortium members: the African American Men of Distinction, the Blytheville Community Samaritan Ministry and the Charles Strong Recreation Center continue to

operate various after-school tutoring and recreation programs for Enterprise Community youth.

Another youth project to provide additional recreation programs has been planned, funded, and is operational is the Mississippi County Arkansas EOC Youth Golf Program. The Program has been funded by the United States Golf Foundation of Florida. An application is currently being developed for the First Tee Program. This program should reach 1200 youth with a 10-week instructional program that will be offered throughout the Enterprise Community. The uniqueness of this program is in addition to providing golf instructions to low income youth through the U. S. Golf Association Program titled "For the Good of the Game." This is one of a few programs has 117- acre nine hole golf course devoted exclusively to junior golf. Mississippi County EOC obtained the golf course from the City of Blytheville for \$1 per year. The Mayor of Blytheville and the City Council approved this transaction in the Fall of 2000.

We are continuing our housing efforts. Currently, we have completed six homes and have four under construction with five applications approved for our Mutual self-help Housing Program. We have an application pending with the Arkansas Development Finance Authority for new construction funds. Housing Counseling was provided for 266 and 54 houses were rehabilitated.

We worked with Rural Development on the 504 Housing Program and used Housing Preservation and Lead Base Abatement funds from the Department of Energy to rehabilitate houses in the Enterprise Community. One highlight of the rehabilitation activity was the Group Workcamps Foundation selecting the Mississippi County Enterprise Community as a rehab site during 2000. More than 450 youths and adult teen leaders were assigned to the Enterprise Community where they approved and rehabbed 70 homes of elderly and low income people. We are in the planning stage for a return of this group.

#### Workforce Development

We are continuing our workplace basic skills program through our Workforce Alliance Each-One-Reach-One Program. The advanced skills program is being conducted by Mississippi County Community College and Cotton Boll Technical Institute, specifically, the Sectoral Employment Program.

In our Each-One-Reach-One Program, we have an average of 70 enrollees that are provided basic skills training and mentoring. This is done through a collaborative effort of faith based and community based groups.

Currently, our faith based groups are: Apostolic Temple of Jesus Christ, Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, New Salem Missionary Baptist Church, New St. Paul Missionary Church, Open Door House of Prayer, Promise Land Missionary Baptist Church, St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, and Tabernacle Missionary Church.

While our enrollment averages 70 enrollees, we have the capacity to handle up to 100 enrollees. Many enrollees have gone directly to employment, a few are moving toward the Advanced Skills Program.

We are continuing our efforts in assisting area schools in obtaining computers this year. The computers will be distributed to distressed schools.

#### Healthy Start

Our Healthy Start Initiative continues to enjoy great success throughout the Enterprise Community. We

have six para-natal case workers located throughout the Enterprise Community that provide services to our customers. During the current year, we have provided services 536 mothers and their children.

The Healthy Start Initiative is the highest profiled community based initiative in the Delta It is primarily concerned with the health disparities that exist and all efforts are directed toward reducing these disparities.

### Alternative School

In an earlier report, we stated there were problems associated with developing an area-wide alternative school. The two main problems were distance students would travel and the time spent traveling. We are pleased to report this problem has been solved by developing two alternative schools.

The money allocated by the Enterprise Community was not intended to be adequate for developing an alternative school. However, it was crucial for the planning that lead to the implementation of an alternative school being located on the campus of Cotton Boll Technical Institute. This school is a joint venture between the South Mississippi County School System and the Osceola School System that had industrial input in its curriculum development. This site is now fully operational.

A second alternative school will be located in the City of Blytheville to serve the northern Enterprise Community. This school will be operational for the 2001-2002 school year and will serve students grades 7 thru 12. It will be funded through the Charter School Legislation and can accommodate up to 120 students. The connecting points between the alternative schools will be the sharing of technical staff for basic skills training through Cotton Boll Technical Institute.

The uniqueness of the steel industry in our area and the input industry had in the curriculum development makes the sharing of the staff from Cotton Boll Technical Institute a natural. As a part of the advanced skill training program, we developed a Welding Sectoral Program at Cotton Boll Technical Institute with funding from the Foundation for the Mid South. Prior to development of this program, the Chamber of Commerce convened meetings with representative from private industry, community based groups, secondary education institutions, community colleges and technical institutions to discuss issues and opportunities and current needs. The Sectoral Program is able to accommodate 15 students at each session. One problem with the sectoral approach was the demand for their type of employment within industry sometimes made it difficult for a student to complete the training prior to accepting employment. We are currently seeking ways to continue the advanced training for individuals who must accept employment for economic reasons prior to completing the course.

### Childcare

We are continuing our childcare expansion efforts with special emphasis on increasing the number of infant and toddler slots. An additional 67 childcare slots for Enterprise Community residents have been created. The majority of these slots will be utilized by TEA Coalition customers (former AFDC recipients). The increased slots will enable low income parents in obtaining work or continuing their education.

### Revolving Loan Fund

Our goal at Mississippi County Enterprise Community Revolving Loan Program is to assist in the to economic development of small business within Mississippi County. During the past year we realize the

training and technical assistance we conducted in previous years has started to paid off for future entrepreneurs. Our clients are aware of their responsibility and are diligent in making their loan payments in a timely manner. We are also, working with all banks and other lending institutions within Mississippi County to further help individuals. The future of our program looks bright, as long as we continue in the direction we are headed.