

## **2002 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Mississippi County Enterprise Community**

The Mississippi County Enterprise Community has had a successful year. We have continued all our programs, expanded several, as well started new programs during calendar year 2002. We have maintained and expanded our linkages in the business and civic community, while keeping strong ties with the grass-roots/faith-based community. We have placed special emphasis on integrating the faith base community into the Chamber of Commerce to have the views of the total community at the stakeholder table. The faith base community is an excellent vehicle to keep information and ideas flowing between the civic/business and grass-roots/faith base community. We have provided an opportunity for 11 faith base groups to become members of the Chamber of Commerce. Representatives of these entities are strategically placed on various Chamber committees to maximize their involvement. The Committees appointed will include Business, Education, Membership, Lights of the Delta, Infrastructure, etc. Our partners continue to utilize the Enterprise Community designation and strategic plan for additional development.

The Great River Economic Development Committee established during our last reporting period has become a formalized structure and incorporated under the name of Great River Economic Development Foundation. The Great River Economic Development Foundation has maintained all of its initial partners consisting of Municipalities, County Judge Office, Mississippi County Arkansas EOC, Inc., Mississippi County Enterprise Community, Mississippi County Electric Cooperative, and members of private industry. Mississippi Community College, two local banks, and the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority have also become members of the Foundation. The Great River Economic Development Foundation has completed a strategic economic development program for Mississippi County, as well as identified and mapped all sites available for economic development.

While, the Foundation is relatively new, it has had 62 queries from companies interested in Mississippi County and 12 site visits during the past year. They are working on six active projects. The Foundation is working with the County to develop a long term source of funding that can be used to cover administrative cost, as well as funds that can be used as incentives to attract business and industry. This fund will be used to offer incentives for economic development in addition to those offered by the State Economic Development Program. The plan proposed is a one-half cent sales tax increase that will be dedicated to economic development. Monies from this funds will not be spent unless it results in creation of jobs. The plan will be submitted to the administrative body of the County, and we project it will be voted on during Spring 2003. If the tax increase passes, it will generate approximately \$2.5 million per year. Since the County has an unemployment rate that runs more than five percentage points above the State unemployment rate of 5.5 %, it is felt that this job creation tax may have a chance to pass. The Southern Financial Partners formally the Arkansas Enterprise Group continues to use funds set aside through the Intermediary Relending Program, as well as our loan fund to enhance business development in the Enterprise Community. We have made two loans. The event of September 11, 2001 and a down turn in the economy has caused us to spend a tremendous amount of time trying to assist and preserve our existing clients while continuing our efforts to make new loans.

The Tech Prep Mississippi County Tech Prep Consortium serves public high schools and allows the students an opportunity to earn college credit while in school. In conjunction with the consortium's efforts to encourage students to continue their education and obtain skills for the workforce, the consortium provides job shadowing experiences, career days, and other career related activities. The Tech Prep Consortium works with the area chambers of commerce, municipalities and business and industry in providing career and work-based learning activities in order to bridge the gap between education and workplace. The objectives of the work-based learning activities include: 1. To provide realistic information and experiences that will help educators and students of diverse backgrounds and ability levels to relate their aptitude, interests and academic abilities to career planning and exploration. 2. To address the economic and employment needs of the area, to assist in the development of qualified workers for the emerging job market and changing economic structure of the community. 3. To motivate, inspire and develop effective individuals and businesses while developing organizational and leadership skills among administrators, faculty and students. 4. To develop opportunities for continuing relationships between business and industry and educators and students in an effort to increase business and education. 5. To assist in the implementation of workforce development programs and strengthen the company's commitment to education.

The Mississippi County Tech Prep Consortium has provided the following work-based learning activities during

the 2002 year: 1. Educational speaking event with nationally know speaker for area parents, students and educators. 2. Coordinating the Tech Prep Associate Degree (TPAD) program by working with secondary and post secondary members of the consortium. 3. Recognize student achievement in the TPAD program by awarding articulated credit to students that have the criteria. 4. Faculty to Industry in-service for participating internship teachers. 5. Faculty to Industry Internships for nine teacher interns at ten participating businesses. 6. Internship Tabloid describing internship assignments and school-based project learning associated with the internship. 7. National Tech Prep "Employer to Employer" conference for business and industry representatives. 8. Open House events at area high schools in an effort to discuss and promote the consortium's efforts. 9. Career planning and college preparation sessions at consortium schools during the school year. 10. College Fair held in cooperation with MCCC, Student Services, and Educational Talent Search for 700 high school students. 11. Technology training for area teachers and educators. 12. Counselor in-service for area secondary school counselors to address financial aid and college admissions. 13. Job Shadowing Day for 135 eleventh grade students placed in 65 businesses in Mississippi County 14. Career Fair held in conjunction with the Blytheville-Gosnell Area Chamber of Commerce Sunbelt Business for 300 twelfth grade students in Mississippi County. 15. Facilitation of National Career Assessment Services to area secondary schools that will provide career search, skills assessment and work values inventories.

Our Parent Centers in Blytheville and Osceola are fully operational, and are opened from 8:00 a.m. til 7:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday. They are open later evening hours during the week as well as Saturday and Sunday for special events. Both centers continue to serve as a vital part of parent involvement in Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant Head Start, and as host sites for the Community Services Block Grant, Home Energy Assistance Program, Healthy Start, Mississippi County Community College and the Cotton Boll Technical Institute's GED Program, Each One Reach One, the Mississippi County Fatherhood Initiative and the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc. These centers along with faith based centers, schools, and the Mississippi County Library also serve as educational and distribution centers for the Blytheville-Armorel-Gosnell Tobacco Coalition (BAG). The BAG Coalition is an area wide Anti-Tobacco Coalition that serves the Enterprise Community. BAG members consist of local units of City and County Governments, First Baptist Church, Mississippi County Enterprise Community, Mississippi County Arkansas EOC, Inc. (MCAEOC), Blytheville Community Samaritan Outreach Ministry, Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi County Library System, St. Luke Outreach Ministry and public schools. BAG recently received a \$60,000 grant from smoke-free Arkansas, and is currently conducting programs in Blytheville, Gosnell, and Armorel School Systems. BAG has been able to reach 1100 youths through the schools and Teen Summit.

Our Transportation Program continues to provide transportation service throughout the Enterprise Community for individuals who are employed, seeking employment, attending educational institutions or seeking transportation to medical facilities. We currently provide transportation for TEA recipients through an agreement with the Mississippi County Department of Human Services, and we are attempting to negotiate a contract with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

The Mississippi County Youth Consortium continues to expand. Membership in the Boys and Girls Club has increased to more than 300. The Club has been able to add 18 new computers to its lab, this year. The after-school Tutoring Program operated by the Blytheville Community Samaritan Outreach Ministry also continues to expand. The Blytheville Samaritan group continues to operate its Family Life Center in the central part of the Enterprise Community which serves as the focal point for various youth activities including basketball and an exercise program. A new family life center has been developed in Osceola which serves Osceola and the southern part of the Enterprise Community area. This center is operated by the Promiseland Outreach Ministry. We have provided computers for this site to use in their Math and Science Tutoring Program. The Charles S. Strong Center in Luxora continues to serve the EC youth and conduct basketball and exercise programs for both youth and adults.

The MCAEOC Golf Program has expanded its In-school and After-School Program and has reached approximately 1,500 youths. The in-school program operates in Blytheville, Osceola and South Mississippi County School Systems. We also have a program at the local YMCA. The program continues to enjoy broad base support and has received more than 6,200 donated golf clubs, balls, shoes, and gloves. The project has received a \$60,000 grant from the United States Golf Association. The program has received \$20,000 in cash donations from the local community. The site of the Golf Program has moved to a 60-acre 9-hole Golf Course/Club House. The Golf Program applied for and received its First Tee designation during this year and it became the 105 First Tee Chapter in the Country. The First Tee designation carries with it a \$100 ,000 grant. The funds from this grant will be used to teach the game of golf and a Life Skills Curriculum.

We have completed six additional unit of Self-Help Housing that were financed by USDA Rural Development. We have continued our relations with the Group WorkCamp Foundation of Colorado and rehabbed 62 houses in 2002. We have also rehabbed an additional 29 units some were a joint venture between Mississippi County Enterprise Community and USDA Rural Development 504 Housing Program. We have provided housing counseling to 120 families. Two new housing developments have been completed in the EC consisting of ten-one bedroom units, eight-two bedroom units in Blytheville, also eight-one bedroom units and 16-two bedroom units have been completed in Osceola.

We have continued our Work Place Basic Skills Program through our Each-one-Reach One Project. We have continued our partnership faith based entities. During the year, we were able to reach 231 individuals. We are also continuing our efforts with the Sectoral Program which is a collaborative effort with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Foundation for the Mid South, the Industry Relations Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi County Workforce Alliance and the Mississippi County Community College. The Workforce development component continues to serve as a one-stop computerized career advancement center. We have assisted 292 individuals seeking employment. We have been successful in our effort to get one AmeriCorp VISTA volunteer assigned to this project.

Our Kids Store and Career Center both located Osceola are doing well. We currently have 28 under-privileged or culturally disadvantaged students in the program. We have provided three additional computers for this project and students are exposed to marketing, planning, finance and cultural development activities. Health, Healthy Start and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Our Healthy Start Program continues to have centers in Blytheville, Osceola, and Luxora. We currently have 92 expectant moms, had 60 deliveries, 69 post partum, and provided services for 71 infants under the age of one year. Through our Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, we were able to serve 73 individuals. We collaborated on a Health Fair that was directed toward health despairities that exist in the Enterprise Community with emphasis on Diabetes, Prostrate Cancer, Immunization and Obesity. We were able to reach over 400 individuals and had participation from local sororities and faith base groups, as well as, regional and state medical providers.

Our Fatherhood Initiative continues to experience growth, and we are involved in sports and reading as a mean of fathers developing a relationship with their children. We have a book check out system and "That Book Store" in Blytheville has donated over 600 books to the Program. The main thrust of the Fatherhood Initiative is to help father become more involved in their children lives. We also refer fathers for educational opportunities, substance abuse programs, if needed and GED classes.

We have collaborated with both Blytheville and Osceola Public Schools Systems, and private industry to introduce the new "I Can Learn" Math Enhancement Program. This is a computerized, self-paced instructional system. Two Math Labs have been established in Blytheville and one Math Lab has been established in Osceola. The Blytheville Lab can accommodate 360 students and the Osceola Lab can accommodate 180 students. This was an investment of \$50,000 in the Blytheville School System and \$25,000 in the Osceola School System, which resulted in a cost of \$600,000 for the two labs established for Blytheville and \$300,000 for the Osceola lab. \$300,000 of the cost for the Blytheville labs came from the Department of Education and the rest came from local sources. \$150,000 of the cost for the Osceola lab came from the Department of Education and the rest came from local sources.

Our Childcare Program continues to expand. We have created an additional 32 slots. Ground breaking has taken place for a new childcare center on the grounds of the Mississippi County Community College campus. This center will house a total of 80 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The center is being developed from a grant from the Rex and Alice Martin Foundation of Indiana that operates a plant in the Mississippi County Enterprise Community. Other partners in this venture are Mississippi County Community Foundation and Mississippi County Arkansas EOC, Inc. The cost of the center is \$360,000 plus the cost of the land.

The Small Town Assistance Program worked with the City of Etowah on obtaining a police car, and a handicap ramp for city hall. We worked with the City of Keiser in their effort to obtain a police car. We also worked with the City of Keiser on a grant and loan from Rural Development for a water project. The total amount for the project was \$199,300.