

2003 Annual Report Executive Summary

Mississippi County Enterprise Community

The Mississippi County Enterprise Community has had another successful year. We have continued all our programs and expanded several, as well as started new programs during calendar 2003. We have been able to maintain and expand our linkages in the business and civic communities, while keeping strong ties with the grass-roots/faith-based communities.

This is our second year of integrating the faith-based community into the Chamber of Commerce. This effort is beginning to have a significant impact, as the faith-based communities become more comfortable with operating within the Chamber environment. As projected faith-based communities have proven to be an effective way to keep information and ideas flowing between the civic/business and the grass root/faith-based communities. We have been able to expand the faith-based groups in the Chamber from 11 members to 15 members. Members have been active in the business and education membership and the Lights of the Delta Community. The involvement of the faith-based group in the Chamber has resulted in a huge increase in participation in the Spring Time on the Mall events by faith-based/grass root communities.

Our partners continue to utilize the Enterprise Community designation and Strategic Plan for additional community development. The Great River Economic Development Foundation that was formed during our last reporting period has become more active and was successful in its effort of supporting a one-half cent sales tax devoted exclusively to economic development. With the passage of the sales tax approximately \$2.5 million annually will be available for economic development, the tax itself should generate approximately \$25 million prior to its sunset in 10 years. The Great River Economic Development Foundation has maintained all of its initial partners: Municipalities, County Judge's Office, Mississippi County Enterprise Community, Mississippi County Arkansas EOC, Inc., Mississippi County Electric Corporation, Arkansas Northeastern Community College, two local banks, and the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority. The Baptist Hospital System, Inc., and the local Real Estate Association were added during this reporting period. The Great River Economic Development Foundation has been retained by the Mississippi County Quorum Court to be the economic development entity for Mississippi County. The Great River Economic Development Foundation has received 78 queries from companies interested in locating in the County, and 16 site visits have been made. Two local industries are seeking to expand, with assistance from Great River Economic Development Foundation. They recently assisted the City of Osceola in receiving a \$100,000 grant from the sales tax to purchase 10 acres to house a manufacturing plant that will employ 200 people. It will also support a larger manufacturing company moving into the area.

Our relationship with the Southern Financial Group continues to provide funds received from the Intermediary Relending Program to continue to operate.

The upsurge in the economy is bringing new requests for assistance. We expect for the requests to increase during the current year.

Tech Prep The College Now Program-Mississippi County Tech Prep Consortium serves all public high schools in Mississippi County and allows the students an opportunity to earn college credit while in high 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 the workplace. The objectives of the work-based learning activities include: 1. To provide realistic information and experience 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 organization 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 partnerships. 5. To assist in the implementation of workforce development programs to strengthen the company's commitment to education. Mississippi County Tech Prep Consortium has provided the following work-based learning activities during the 2003 year: 1. Coordinating the Tech Prep Associate Degree (TPAD) program by working with secondary and post secondary members of the consortium. 2. Recognize student achievement in the TPAD program by awarding articulated credit to the students that have met the criteria. 3. Faculty to Industry in-service for participating internship teachers. 4. Faculty to Industry Internships for seventeen teacher interns at sixteen participating businesses. 5. Publication of internship and school-based project learning associated with the internship in local papers. 6. National Tech Prep Network conference for business and industry representatives to network with colleagues and learn about successful partnerships with schools. 7. National Tech Prep Network conference for area educators to learn from fellow educators and hear updates on Perkins reauthorization. 8. Open House and "First Day of School" 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 ANC, Student Support 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 eighty eleventh grade students placed in seventy-five businesses in Mississippi County. 14. Career Fair held in conjunction with the Blytheville -Gosnell Area Chamber of Commerce Sunbelt Business Expo for 400 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 value inventories.

Our Parent Centers in Blytheville and Osceola continue to operate. They are our open from 8:00 a.m. til 8:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday. They will remain open longer hours, if there is a need. They are also open on Saturday and Sunday for special events. Both centers continue to serve as a vital part of parent education in our Early Childhood Education Program. The Centers also serve as host sites for: Community Block Grant Program, Home Energy Assistance Program, Healthy Start, and the Arkansas Northeastern College's GED Program, Each One Reach One Program, Mississippi County Fatherhood/Healthy Marriages Initiative, and the National Caucus & Center on Black Aged , Inc. . These centers along with faith-based centers, schools, the Mississippi County Library, and five small area businesses serve as distribution centers for the Blytheville- Armored-Gosnell Tobacco Coalition (BAG). The BAG Coalition is an anti-tobacco coalition that services the Enterprise Community that was started in part with EC funds. It has been successful in providing materials to residents, as well as getting five local businesses to agree to be smoke-free with the largest being our local McDonald's. BAG has been able to reach 1400 plus children through the schools and teen summits held at First Baptist Church.

Our Transportation Program continues to provide transportation services throughout the EC for employees, and individuals seeking employment or attending educational institutions. We currently provide transportation for TEA customers through and agreement with Mississippi County Department of Human Services.

We have also been successful in negotiating a contract with Arkansas Rehabilitation. We have expanded our services to a 24 hr.-seven days a week on a demand for service basis.

The Mississippi County Youth Consortium continues to operate. The Consortium membership consist of the following: Blytheville Community Samaritan Ministry, Mississippi County Boys and Girls Clubs, Promiseland Outreach Ministry, Shalom Community, Blytheville Social Art Club, and Charles S. Strong Center. The most recent member is the First Tee of Northeast Arkansas (Jr. Golf Program). The consortium has provided services for more than 2,100 youths. The First Tee Program began actively planning its largest fundraiser of the coming year, the Cadillac Classic Golf Tournament. The \$25,000 cost of underwriting the tournament will be provided by local businesses with all the proceeds from the tournament going to the First Tee Program. There will be 132 players coming to our community along with their families and friends, and we project the tournament will bring over \$400,000 to the local economy.

Housing- We have strengthened our relationship with the Local Initiative Service Corporation (LISC) and have begun a program to purchase and rehabilitate houses before they are sold to low \$35,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank for a Down Payment Assistance Program. Our participating lending institution for this project is The First National Bank of Blytheville. We are continuing our Workforce Alliance basic Skills Program through the Each-One -Reach-One Program, and have ten faith-based partners that have been successful in reaching 248 individuals.

We are also continuing our collaborative effort with the Stewart Mott Foundation, Foundation for the Mid South, Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi County Workforce Alliance, and the Arkansas Northeastern College. Our Kids Store has gone through a name change which is more reflective of the activities that take place. The new name is "The Life Skills and Career Adventure Center. The Life Skills and Adventure Center currently serve 37 children in grades 4-12 in entrepreneurship training, inter/intra personal skills and career development.

Health/Healthy Start and Teen Pregnancy Prevention-We held our annual Health & Cancer Prevention Fair in May 2003. More than 350 individuals attended the health fair. Our key partners in this effort were the University of Arkansas Medical Services and St. Bernard Regional Hospital. Community residents were able to receive diabetes screening, prostate cancer testing on site. Blood Pressure checks, healthy menu planning, and life style change education were also available. From the Health Fair planning effort, the Mississippi County Cancer Council was formed which consist of representatives from grassroot, faith-based, community based, health care providers, consumer education, industry and local elected officials. This group's primary function is to provide educational and preventive information on a year-round basis. The Mississippi County Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention Consortium/Coalition members have been able to take an active role for the implementation and promotion of the project goals at both the community, as well as state level. A classic example of this is : a) Discussion of strategies of intervention and activities to be carried out in the project components. b) Addressing the media and c) Participating in public presentation in the schools or other community events. The local administrator of Arkansas Department of Health (Blytheville/Osceola) continues to serve as an active chair of the Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention while assuming her new position as the county's Hometown Health Improvement Project leader for Mississippi County. The Mississippi County Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention initiated a sustained partnership with the Arkansas Hometown Health Improvement Project. Also, the Program Director is an active board member of Hometown Health Project. The Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention's Director also helps with her computer skills to develop posters, flyers, as well as printed materials to be used by the Hometown Health coordinators during meetings. The Mississippi County Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention also serves actively in a community-based initiative created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in Arkansas. This initiative known as Together We Can (TWC), serves as a resource to help keep the family unit together. The Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention Program's Directors serves as a participant in the decision-making process due to the fact that the program supports the child or adolescent and his/her family in developing their capacity for what the individual identifies as a quality of life within their home and community. The project based on a continuation of care philosophy, provides short term services to consumers at high risk. One of the consortium/coalition goals during the Fiscal Year 2003 was the implementation of a curriculum within a school district to address adolescent's health beliefs and practices that contribute to adolescent pregnancies, STDs and other adverse outcomes. The project has faced this task with difficulty due to concerns about public reactions from parents.

The Blytheville Community Samaritan Ministry which is a community faith-based organization/after school program has agreed to participate with one of the programs selected. We reached 100 youths through this program in 2003. The curriculums selected are: Reducing the Risk and Making a Difference. The Boys and Girls Club (after-school program) has agreed to participate with one of the programs selected. We are planning to reach 90 youths through this program during the fiscal year 2004. The curriculums selected are: Reducing the Risk and Making A Difference. Partnerships have been initiated with the Mississippi County Juvenile Probation Officers along with the Juvenile Court to implement "Reducing the Risk" as one of the Programs that will work for all youths seen by the Juvenile Court. A new partnership will begin with the Sheriff Department/Correctional Facility to teach all youth inmates "Reducing the Risk". The plans were finalized during the month of August. We reached 50 youths during fiscal year 2003. Consortium/ Coalition Participation - The Single Teen Parent Crisis Intervention Consortium has maintained consistent attendance by its members.

Core Services - During FY 2003, the program provided services to 46 pregnant youths by transporting them to various health care providers. Families received transportation to family planning clinics, prenatal care visits, and well child visits. Other services provided for our participants' families based on their needs assessments are: Parenting Skills, Nutritional Habits, Family Planning, Teen Abstinence Information and Care Coordination.

General Project Implementation - The Mississippi County Healthy Start Initiative has provided case management services to 163 families during calendar year 2003. Approximately one-half of the 82 families were new enrollees identified and recruited into the program through the project's outreach activities. One hundred thirteen families have received transportation services for prenatal care, well-child and post partum visits, immunizations and social services appointments during calendar year 2003. 107 participants are receiving family planning services, while 106 adolescent participants have been recruited and received services as well. Thirty-three participants have been referred to and assisted with Medicaid enrollment during this calendar year. In terms of demographics, 79% of the project's participants have been African American, while the remaining 21% have been white. The project has become visible in the school districts and neighborhoods due to a much more active effort to provide public information and education about the project throughout the project area. This has resulted in an increased number of consumers coming forth and seeking enrollment in the program. Other agencies that have come into contact with the case workers, project director or consortium members have also begun to refer consumers to the project for future services. Many of these agencies have not been reached in previous program periods and have not been a part of previous partnership collaboration agreements. Thus, community health agencies, community and faith-based organizations, businesses and institutions have accepted the project. One of the major accomplishments of Mississippi County Healthy Start Initiative has been the emergence of a stronger Healthy Start and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Consortium.

The consortium has become a valued arena for information exchange and a way to offer guidance to the project. The consortium is comprised of seven consumers of childbearing age and nine representatives from community agencies. There has been an average of 80% attendance of the members.

Patient transportation services have been an additional strong point for the project this past year. This year the project has provided transportation services to 113 families. By transportation services, the project has gained more public recognition among private physicians as well as the general public. The transportation services have been utilized as a recruiting tool by the caseworkers to reach out to families who live within the project area and are in need of services. An emerging issue that may complicate perinatal health care in Mississippi is the Baptist Hospital System's recent announcement that it is closing Baptist Hospital in Osceola. While this hospital did not do deliveries, it was a key to recruiting and retaining physicians in the community. Indeed, the announced closing has already caused several physicians to announce that they were also leaving the area. This tightening physician supply will increase the area's problem with access to health care, which was already increasing because of severe layoffs and closings at several of the major employers in the area. We anticipate that there will be increased needs for case management services.

Fatherhood/Healthy Marriages Initiative - Our Fatherhood Initiative continues to experience growth, and we are expanding this initiative to encompass issues related to healthy marriages and stable families. Our Fatherhood Initiative continued its Books for Kids Program and received a small grant from our local Wal Mart to purchase books. The Healthy Marriage Initiative is in its early stage, but has already made contact with all local faith-based groups and local mental health groups. They have begun the process of recruiting couples willing to serve as mentors for those contemplating marriage as well as those in troubled marriages. The curriculum for the mentor program is being developed.

Education/Childcare - We collaborated with Arkansas Northeastern College and the Rick & Alice Martin Foundation of Indiana to develop a new child care center on the site of the college. The Childcare Center has opened, and can accommodate 80 children ages 0-5. The Center is located in what we commonly refer to as the heart of the Enterprise Community on the campus of Northeastern College. The Rick & Alice Martin Foundation is supported by NIBCO, one of our local manufacturers. The " I Can Learn Computer Labs in Blytheville and Osceola continue to expand. The Blytheville Lab served all 8th graders or 229 students. The Osceola Lab served all 8th grader for a total of 152 students. The initial grant was used to purchase the I Can Learn system. The annual cost for maintaining the labs will be paid by the local school districts.

Small Town Assistance - Our Small Town Assistance Program continues to work with limited income communities to obtain necessary services. We have worked with the City of Joiner in obtaining a police car and fire department improvements. We worked with the City of Etowah to obtain a Road Grader and water improvements. Helped the Cities of Etowah, Keiser and Wilson in developing a Mosquito Eradication Program to fight the West Nile Virus.