



HAPPENINGS!

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SUMMER 2006

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President's Report by Jason Brookins



MEDC is truly "Navigating into a New Era" as we prepare to sail into Tunica for our summer conference. For years, the summer conference was held on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and just like so many other things that have changed, we are excited, but we wish we could have made this choice without ever having experienced Hurricane Katrina. The Board and staff of MEDC want to give a great big heartfelt thanks to Lyn Arnold for her role in setting up the events for this conference. We expect to have a wonderful time.

We also expect to get reports to help us in our daily activities. Results will be given on the Wage and Hour Survey that each of you have helped us to compile. MEDC members are indebted to Judy Shurden, Joe Geddie and the rest of the team that played a role in conducting and accomplishing the Wage and Hour Survey. I am certain that all communities will use this information.

Another effort that MEDC is focusing on is the use of e-synchronist. A panel will be presenting information on this retention tool. Addressing the needs of our existing businesses helps us as we try to bring in more business and industry and focus on target industry groups.

MEDC will sponsor a presentation by Del Boyette at the upcoming MML conference. Del will be presenting "Creating a Competitive Edge-The City Official's Vital Role in the Economic Development Process". This sponsorship is part of our 2005-2006 program of work as we strive to cultivate relationships and collaborate with elected officials. The board and staff are constantly aware of the goals put in place from our strategic planning session. Your participation and input will continue to make MEDC the best association it can be. As we meet your needs, you become better as a professional and Mississippi becomes a more dynamic state in our recruiting, retaining and creation of business and industry. Thank you for making my year as President of MEDC a rewarding and exciting time.



Economic Developers will be "Navigating Into a New Era"

By Lyn Arnold, Summer Conference Chairman

If there is one thing that economic developers need more of, it's information; and the 2006 Summer Conference is packed with information on topics that are near and dear to our hearts.

Starting out with finance on Wednesday, Dave Dennis, Chairman of the New Orleans Federal Reserve Board and President of Specialty Contractors in Gulfport will provide us with an update about the region's economy and will predict what will happen with interest rates (just kidding on the interest rates). Jim Apple with Morgan Keegan in Memphis and former Vice President of Economic Development with the Memphis Chamber of Commerce will talk about equity investing and job creation or how we bring Wall Street to Main Street.

Immediately after the ice cream break tune in to hear a panel talk about "eSynchronist - How it works and why we need it." Many of us are in the middle of completing these forms and this discussion will offer more details to take with us as we meet with companies, and help us understand why this process can be important to our success as economic developers.

Thursday morning provides an opportunity to sharpen your sales skills -more important than ever these days - and closing the deal with confidence and integrity. Carol Johnson will present these sessions. In the middle of a thousand details for an RFI, we sometimes forget that really we are salesmen, and any tips for selling our communities and closing the deal will be very helpful.

Blake Wilson, Mr. Relationship, is going to offer his thoughts on building a relationship with your legislator. This is an early morning session and Blake's enthusiasm and energy is sure to get everyone up and stirring and provide some valuable insights from this very successful leader of the Mississippi Economic Council.

With the ever changing world around us, all of us are concerned about how we brand our communities, spotting those items that make us different from everyone else and Dr. Bill Smith, Department of Marketing from the University of Southern Mississippi will provide the latest marketing trends.

All of the current uncertainty surrounding petroleum products and the record high prices for these products which impact so many different facets of the economy will be discussed by experts from federal and state government. This discussion may offer glimpses of competitive opportunities for you and your communities.

Closing out the Friday morning activities will be an MDA update from Becky Thompson and John Helms. MDA has developed new targets for marketing and will also present tabulations from the State Wage, Hour and Benefit Survey.

So, there will plenty of opportunities to learn something while you play a little and visit with friends and fellow economic developers. We look forward to hosting you in Tunica.

The MEDC 2006 Summer Conference - To Enhance Professional Skills

by Marie Shoemake, Vice President, Chamber Development

Hopefully you have already registered for this year's MEDC Summer Conference. If not, contact Carol or Amy at the MEDC office or go to www.medic.ms.

Realizing knowledge is power, we are fortunate to have an organization such as MEDC that provides training to assist chambers executives in sharpening their skills and fostering a network with other professionals across the state.

Mississippi has been overwhelmed with many new challenges during the past year, but the strong spirit of our people is bringing development to the state. This year's conference program, Navigating into a New Era, provides an array of outstanding speakers to help guide us as we address the challenges of change.

Community volunteers are the key to an active chamber. Theresa Syer, President of Hospitality Solutions, will address "10 Networking Tips to Build Relationships You Want" and "After Networking, Now What? – Follow-up and Communications Techniques" on how to keep those new relationships and volunteers happy. Theresa's motivational and entertaining.

With the retirement of dynamic chamber executives like Willa Sanders, I understand some new folks will be attending the conference. Congratulations Willa, we'll miss you! Whether you are new in chamber work or have been there for years, we all face new challenges. Jim Cherry, retired chamber executive, will share "Surviving the Chamber Profession – Reflections and Confessions of a Retired Chamber Executive" and "Keys to a Successful Chamber – 2006 and Beyond" as we navigate to into a new era. This may be a good time to share your own success stories.

The program on Friday is equally relevant to economic developers and chamber of commerce executives – especially Dr. Bill Smith's presentation on "Marketing Trends / Branding Your Community" and Blake Wilson's "Building a Relationship with Your Legislator."

A great conference has been planned, so don't miss this opportunity to learn, network and have fun. Lyn Arnold and the Tunica Chamber of Commerce are ready to showcase the development in Tunica. We hope to see you there!



It's a Safe Bet Tunica is the Place to Have Fun!!!

by Claire Pittman, Tunica Convention & Visitors Bureau

Get ready for the excitement of Tunica at the MEDC Summer Conference July 19-21. Conference attendees will have time off from seminars on Thursday afternoon, and there will be something for everyone to enjoy. You can choose from planned activities, or you can create your own itinerary since there is so much to see and do in and around Tunica.

A Southeast Travel Attraction award winner, Tunica RiverPark, located on the picturesque banks of the Mississippi River, is one planned activity for fun. There will be an excursion on the Tunica Queen, a 400-passenger riverboat that will allow MEDC members to have lunch onboard at 12:30 and from 1:00 to 2:00 kick back on a leisurely float down the mighty Mississippi River. Upon returning to shore you can then learn all about the river at the unique \$26 million RiverPark Museum.



MEDC members who are feeling more energetic may choose to spend their afternoon at the first-class Tunica National Golf and Tennis Club. Golfers will enjoy the tournament-level, 18-hole Mark McCumber designed championship golf course with a 360-degree practice range. Lunch is at 12:00 with a shotgun start at 12:30. Tennis players will be cool (and stay cool) playing in Tunica National's premier tennis facility which features four indoor clay courts with the South's only Hydro-Grid Har-Tru surface. Lunch will be served at the club at 12:00 with tennis beginning promptly at 1:00.

An out-of-the-ordinary opportunity planned for MEDC members is "golf with a shotgun," or sporting clays at The Willows Sporting Clays Center, one of the finest clay shooting clubs in the nation. Guns and ammunition will be provided.



In between excitement on the casino floor, museums and outdoor activities, save time for shopping. There are more than 20 outlet stores located in the Casino Factory Shoppes, including Gap, Kay-Bee Toys, Zales Jewelers, and Wilson's Leather. You can take a short drive south on Highway 61 to downtown Tunica to the antique and specialty shops and unique restaurants awaiting you there.

Tunica-area casinos have more than 40 restaurants offering fine dining, sumptuous buffets and regional cuisine.

Be sure to sign up through the MEDC office for golf, tennis, skeet shooting or the Mississippi River Cruise and Museum. Tunica is looking forward to hosting MEDC in July. Take advantage of all Tunica has to offer during the MEDC Summer Conference.



We'll see you in Tunica!

2005 Volunteers of the Year Honorees

By Vickie DuPree, Chairman, MEDC Volunteers of the Year Committee

The nominees for Volunteer of the Year for 2006 presents 10 community-minded and dedicated individuals with outstanding records of participation in a variety of volunteer activities. We salute these individuals who have contributed to their individual communities with their time, effort, and dedication.

The following will be honored on July 19 as Volunteers of the Year at the MEDC Summer Conference at the Volunteers of the Year and Governor's Cup Banquet:

John D. Burt, Manager, Philadelphia Utilities

Nominated by: David Vowell, Neshoba County Community Development Partnership

Harvey Clements, Board member, Itawamba County Development Council

Owner of Mr. C's Pro Shine

Nominated by: Carol Farris Upton, Itawamba County Development Council

Frank Corder, Branch Manager, Hancock Bank

Nominated by: Kay Johnson Kell, City of Pascagoula

Crayton V. Coleman, County Director, 4-H, Mississippi State University Extension Service, Noxubee County

Nominated by: Coleen Stottlemire, Noxubee County Economic Development Office and Board of Supervisors

David M. Howell, CPA, Partner, Watkins Ward and Stafford

Nominated by: Linda Shepherd, Leake County Development Association

Thomas Lee, Sr., President, Lowndes County Industrial Development Authority and the Lowndes County Economic Development District

Nominated by: Joe Max Higgins, Jr., Columbus-Lowndes Development Link

Dolly Marascalco, Owner of Dolly's Boutique

Nominated by: Phillip Heard, Grenada County Chamber of Commerce

Jack Raymond Reed, Sr., Chairman of the Board, R. W. Reed Company (Reed's)

Nominated by: David P. Rumbarger, Community Development Foundation

Stephanie Stewart, Chairman, Webster County Development Council, Community Development Committee

Nominated by: Cynthia Wilson, Webster County Development Council

Timothy W. Thomas, Administrator, Newton Regional Hospital

Nominated by: Angie Burks, Newton Chamber of Commerce

Our gratitude and congratulations to each and every one of these community volunteers.



Hot off the Press

Status of the Manufacturing Wage, Salary and Benefit Survey

By Chandler Russ, TVA

On behalf of the Manufacturing Wage, Salary and Benefit Survey Committee of MEDC, please join me in thanking the staff at North Mississippi Industrial Development Association (NMIDA) for their willingness to devote time and financial resources to bring important wage information to the entire state. In addition, special thanks are also warranted to the financial sponsors of the survey that include MEDC, MDA, MMA, Entergy, Mississippi Power Company, NMIDA and TVA.

The Manufacturing Wage, Salary and Benefit Survey will address four different subjects: current base wage rates for hourly paid manufacturing/distribution employees; fringe benefits provided for hourly employees; the number of salaried personnel in selected positions; and high/low salary range for each position.

The survey was mailed to industries with 10 or more employees in all 82 counties in Mississippi. The data obtained is strictly confidential. Individual company names are not divulged and the data submitted is used to compile averages. Out of the nearly 1700 surveys that were mailed, 319 industries have participated to date, making the response rate close to 20%. NMIDA will take returned surveys until the end of June. If you want more participation by your industries, I encourage you to make one last push.

Finally, we get to the point of this survey - statewide importance to developers, MDA, manufacturers and utility partners. The survey is valuable to our membership for multiple reasons, including that it:

- Gauges the rise and fall of certain and specific manufacturing wages and benefits,
- Allows the state to gauge the areas of manufacturing growth in specific job categories,
- Helps recruit business and industry by providing the needed and necessary data to site consultants and industries interested in understanding the costs of labor in Mississippi
- Provides valuable information to manufactures to understand their pay scales for certain jobs and their competitiveness in the labor force.

A special thanks to all who helped promote the survey and to the industries that took the time to complete it. If you should have any questions or comments please feel free to give me a call or email rcruss@tva.com. Thank you.

MEDC Legislative Report

by Phil Hardwick

There were 1,697 bills introduced in the House and 1,101 in the Senate. That does not count resolutions, reports and other items.

Generally, economic development issues were treated favorably and there were no big surprises. House Bill 100, which dealt with eminent domain, died in the final conference committee. The Mississippi Development Authority received what could best be described as "level funding." Of special interest to MEDC members in the Delta, House Bill 1034, which creates a Mississippi Delta Commission, passed both houses and was approved by the Governor. You can see a list of all bills that did not die at: http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2006/html/all_measures/notdead.html.

*Legislative report
continued on next page*

We now shift our focus to becoming more of "The Voice for Economic Development in Mississippi." We will do that by getting to know our legislators better and having them getting to know us better via legislative meetings at the district level. The meetings will be hosted by the MEDC Board member who represents each MEDC district. Each meeting will last about an hour and a half and provide an opportunity for brief presentations and one-on-one contact. More details will be forthcoming as the year goes on.

Finally, be sure to check the MEDC legislative committee web page for resources and updates on legislative issues. It's on the web at: <http://www.medic.ms/legislative.html>

MEDC Hosts New Awards to Recognize Mississippi's Outstanding Communities

By: Christy Knapp; MEDC Vice President, Community Development

Next year, MEDC will join with SEDC in recognizing outstanding communities throughout our state for their efforts to advance their economic viability through economic and community development programs. The Community and Economic Development Awards (CEDA) program will take the place of the traditional Volunteer of the Year awards program and will focus instead on entire communities who contribute to the economic viability of their region rather than individual contributions.

Nominations will be taken by MEDC for communities who demonstrate exceptional contributions in four categories: Business Retention and Expansion, Business Recruitment, Community Development and Community Involvement. All nominees are grouped according to population and evaluated among other similarly-sized communities. Up to five winners from the different population categories in Mississippi will be eligible to participate in SEDC's regional CEDA awards program.

All nominees will be judged based on the following criteria:

1. **Innovativeness:** The program or project in a community demonstrates innovative approaches to institutional, financial, technical or legal aspects of economic and community development.
2. **Transferability:** The community's program or project shows potential use by other economic or community development agencies or practitioners for similar opportunities.
3. **Community Commitment and Leverage:** The program or project makes it possible for others to achieve a greater impact by joining public/private participation or by intergovernmental or state/local involvement to leverage resources. Support from volunteers should be demonstrated and not just successes from paid staff or consultants.
4. **Measured Objectives:** Results demonstrate a specific objective that the program or project was able to achieve, i.e. jobs created, jobs retained or improved, additional monetary investment in the community, increase in tax base, etc.
5. **Secondary Benefits:** A community's project or program produces demonstrable ancillary benefits to the community or region.

MEDC will distribute the CEDA nomination forms to its membership in early 2007 to allow time for judging and announcement of the winners at MEDC's 2007 Summer Conference. Five selected winners from the various population categories will then go on to SEDC's regional competition with winners to be announced at their annual conference in the fall of 2007. Watch for additional information and updates to follow.