



# Child Care Mississippi

Volume 2, Issue 1

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## IMPORTANT DATES:

- NAEYC Professional Development Conference: June 6-9, Phoenix, AZ
- Voices for Mississippi's Children Mini-Conference: July 25-26, Pearl River Resort, Choctaw, MS
- NAFCC 20th Annual Conference: July 15-17, Nashville, TN

## Gulf Coast Resource & Referral Site on WLOX TV

By Meggan Gray of WLOX. *Used with permission.*

Mississippi State University's Extension Service has twelve Child Care Resource and Referral Centers across the state. One of those is in Harrison County, tucked away at the Jefferson Davis campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

"We have a wealth of resources: books, toys games," said Jocelyn Bass, the site coordinator for the center. "Creative play, costumes, all free of charge. Just come in, fill out an application just like a library, and children can have these resources and learn and play all at the same time."

Loretta Guthrie is a student at MGCCC. She admits the resource library is a hidden treasure for parents in Harrison County. She just happened to stumble upon it on her way to class about two years ago. Now, she's constantly coming in to check things out for her two sons. "It's a well-kept secret," says Guthrie. "I try to spread the word with all my friends. I even have friends that don't go to school here that I tell them, 'Go check it out; I'm telling you, you'll be shocked by what's in there.'"

Guthrie uses the library as a way to reward her boys, ages four and five, for a job well done. "If they do good at school all week, then on

Thursday and Friday we'll come in and let them pick out [things]. They run around, check out everything, and I let them pick out what they want to play with until the next week."

Audrey Kasalis lives in Biloxi and is also a regular. "It's just so useful for every age," Kasalis said. "I have an eight-month-old, a four-year-old and a six-year-old, and I come and use it for all of them." Before becoming a mom, Kasalis used to work with children, so she has a deep appreciation for what the center has to offer. "It gives parents an extra tool," explained Kasalis. "We're always looking for things to help our children enhance their learning, their different learning styles. Every child is different, and you need different things for every child. And it can get so expensive to buy all those things."

So it may be well worth the trip to see if the center has what you're looking for before going out and buying a new toy.

Bass said they see about fifteen people a week, but she'd love to see more. "It's free of charge to anybody, child care providers, parents, grandparents. Anybody that has any link to children is welcome to come out."

If you'd like more information, just call (228) 897-3851.

## Mobile Resource & Referral Takes Message Across the State

From January to March 2010, the Mobile Resource & Referral traversed the state, offering resources and information about the services provided by the MSCCR&R Network. Regional Technical Assistance Supervisor Yvonne Shumpert spoke to a group of parents and some afterschoolers at the Mid-Jackson Family Resources Center in February, and in March took the RV to several locations as part of the Mississippi Economic Council's "Early Childhood Education Next Steps Tour." To schedule the Mobile R&R or for more information, call Jimmy Miles at (662) 325-4749 or email JMiles@humansci.msstate.edu.



Mobile Resource & Referral at the Biloxi Coliseum.

## A Message from Melissa Tenhet, MSCCR&R Network Project Manager

The first quarter of 2010 brings with it many delightful developments in early childhood education in the state of Mississippi.

The Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office released the brand-new *Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers*. This important document complements the existing ELGs for preschool by establishing competencies and objectives for children in care from birth to 36 months. By using the checklists, activities, and information about the learning environment, providers

can build quality programs for our youngest learners. To access the PDF file, go to [www.childcaremississippi.com](http://www.childcaremississippi.com).

Have you heard the rumors about free materials? For a limited time, the Mississippi Department of Human Services is sponsoring an Early Learning Guidelines Extravaganza: a three-kit give-away to support math, science, and language centers in preschool classrooms. The kits will be available only to directors who attend the related training, one set of kits per center, on a first-come, first-served basis. The MSCCR&R

Network will begin offering the director trainings (at which the kits will be distributed) beginning in the late summer. Trainings for teachers on using the kit materials will be held later. Before kits are released, center directors will be required to complete their Market Rate Survey/NACCRRRA Intake Update Form. Registration will open after training dates are set. Only registered participants will be allowed to attend and receive these educational resources. A detailed letter will be sent to all centers by MDHS explaining the registration process and contact information.



*Project Manager Melissa Tenhet*

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## Snapshots of Super Saturday Seminar in Harrison County

For nine years, Harrison County Extension Director Nancy Freeman has organized the day-long “Super Seminar” for early care and education providers on Mississippi’s Gulf Coast. With the help of the Harrison County Homemaker Volunteers Club, over 200 people gathered at the Coastal Research and Extension Center to engage in a full day of professional development workshops. The staff of the Nurturing Homes Initiative and MSCCR&R Network provided the training on a wide range of subjects,

from non-competitive games, physical development, and math to “Dramarama: Making Dramatic Play Fun.” Training Coordinator Adrienne Mercer said, “My goal was to provide a hands-on experience with dramatic play props to stimulate their imaginations and get them to think outside the box. Dramatic play is more than housekeeping items such as dishes. It’s using a spoon as a microphone or a box as a cradle, finding ways to use common items as something else.”



*Participants join in the fun of the Alphabet Limbo for preschoolers.*



*Adrienne Mercer (center) coaches volunteers in a role play activity.*

## Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale Author Provides Insight and Experience



*Kim Stuart, Sonia Brown-Johnson, Dr. Thelma Harms, and Julie Sims team up for practice evaluations at local child care centers.*

When Dr. Thelma Harms first began work on what would become the Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS), she had no idea it would become the most widely used instrument of its kind in the world. The scales have been translated into Japanese, French, and Mandarin Chinese, and an Arabic translation in the works. “The scale measures what children need, not, ‘Is this program successful?’ but ‘Does this program meet the needs of all children?’” she said while at MSU. “That’s why these scales can be used with any group of children, anywhere in the world.”

Dr. Harms spent a week with MSCCR&R Network personnel and Child and Family Development Area Agents to provide intensive training on the ITERS-R, to accompany them as they applied the Scale in local classrooms, to compare assessments, and to discuss ideas.

## Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center Houses Many Services Under One Big Roof

The Good Samaritan Midtown in Jackson had its hands full, operating the only Montessori child care center for infants and toddlers (Little Samaritan Montessori Center), delivering Meals on Wheels to homebound individuals in the community, and working to become Mississippi’s first Excel by 5 certified neighborhood as part of the Mid-Jackson Early Learning Initiative.

Yet this non-profit community organization knew that they could really make an impact on their local families if they did more.

When the large distribution warehouse for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program near her office became vacant, Kristi Hendrix, Executive Director of Good Samaritan Midtown, knew exactly what she could use it for. In February 2010, she opened an after school program, “Project Innovation,” which has the capacity to serve forty students from third to eighth grade.

LaTanya Dixon, the new After School Director, will assume responsibility for this program in June. Hendrix says of Project Innovation: “We begin with respect and responsibility and then move into group work,” she said. “School is so structured, so geared toward testing. Our

program is designed to encourage creativity and to be more relaxed.” With plenty of space to spread out in, the kids have room to do group projects, finish homework, use computers, or even dream of being pilots by using flight simulators.



A new MSCCR&R Network site will open in the resource center in June to provide educational resources to local families and early care and education providers. A Resource Technician, a Training Coordinator, and an After School Program Coordinator will be housed in the Resource Center, along with field staff from the Good Samaritan’s community programs.

The space at the Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center will facilitate professional development workshops for large groups, which is ideal given the number of child care centers in that locale. “It will be wonderful to be able to more easily serve the early care and education providers in the Hinds County area,” said Project Manager Melissa Tenhet. “We appreciate everyone at the Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center for their warm welcome.”



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[www.childcaremississippi.org](http://www.childcaremississippi.org)

## New Publication Targets Tips for Cognitive Development

Here is a sneak peak at a publication under development at the MSCCR&R Network, "Increasing Cognitive Development in Your Child."

Cognitive development means thinking skills, reasoning skills, and the ability to communicate – language skills. Because children develop along a relatively standard path of stages, parents can – through observation – learn when to introduce new ideas and activities to stimulate their child without frustrating her.

What many parents want, however, in this age of stress and full schedules, is not a crash course in child development, but some quick tips for setting their children on the path to success.

**1. Read, read, and read some more.** Reading every day not only provides a comforting routine and time for bonding, but increases your child's vocabulary.

**2. Turn off the TV.** Television screen time been shown to

increase sleep problems, contribute to obesity and aggression in children, reduce their ability to concentrate, and expose children to commercial messages for a variety of products.

**3. Get outside.** The natural world is full of wonder and "loose parts" to explore. Time outside also fosters an appreciation for nature.

**4. Play.** Children of all ages, but young children especially need large blocks of unstructured time and open-ended materials to engage in creative play and practice.

**5. Provide a safe and healthy environment.** In order for optimal learning to occur, children must have a foundation of physical and emotional health and safety upon which to build.

**6. Communicate.** As you talk with your young child, you nurture not only vocabulary and comprehension of the world around you, but also your relationship.

## New "Beyond the Bell" Project Targets Programs for School-Age Students

In response to requests from the field, the Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network is launching a new pilot project geared toward directors and teachers who care for school-age children during out-of-school hours, whether after school, during the summer, or during holidays when schools are closed.

Training Coordinator Jan Pettus (pictured at right) directed a Montessori program for children ages birth to 17 in Vicksburg for 7 years. She is organizing a workshop titled Beyond the Bell, the first in a series that will help those currently responsible for school-age children or those interested in starting a new program. The workshops rely on current research as well as time-tested information on child development.



practitioners are familiar with," Pettus said. "Other topics include creating an appropriate learning environment, developing a good daily schedule, guiding and managing behavior, and designing appropriate activities for the wide range of ages in out-of-school programs," she added.

As the pilot training gets underway, Pettus is working with Regional Technical Assistance Supervisor Amy Stokes and Project Manager Melissa Tenhet to develop a Technical Assistance program for those working with school-age populations. A Quality Rating System will be developed so that out-of-school programs can achieve recognition for the high-quality services they provide.

"The first workshop, which is a four-hour training, includes information on the developmental differences between school-age students and the preschoolers most child care

The first "Beyond the Bell: An Introduction to Quality School-Age Care" training will be held May 11, 2010 at the Oktibbeha County Extension Office. To register, or for more information, please call (662) 325-5122.

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