



# Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

## Foundation Matters

FOUNDATION MATTERS

FEBRUARY 2008

The date of the CCEDF Annual Banquet will be announced soon. Tickets will be available at the CCEDF Office or from any CCEDF Board Member. For more information call 662-285-3778.

### Choctaw County JuneFest—June 6-7

The Dawg Days of Summer festival is moving to the first weekend in June and will now be known as JuneFest. After enduring the sweltering temperatures of this past year's Dawg Days of Summer Festival, the festival planning committee was unanimous in the opinion that a Choctaw County festival will be more enjoyable, better attended and more profitable for the vendors if held at a time of the year with more comfortable temperatures. Changing to the first weekend in June will provide the opportunity to grow the festival by increasing attendance, attracting a greater diversity of vendors, and offering more activities.

Although the date is changing, many of the traditional favorites such as bingo, the pet show, classic car show, and the street concert will remain. The arts & crafts vendors, food vendors, and kid activities will be open Friday night and

until close of the festival on Saturday. The kid activities will feature "wet and wild" fun with water based inflatables. Other activities will be announced in the coming weeks. The Foundation invites everyone to join the fun and help make the first JuneFest a tremendous success.



In Memory....  
Bruce Burney  
9/23/60 - 12/09/07

### Ackerman Ranked 20<sup>th</sup> Nationally by *Business Week*

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Ackerman was recently ranked as the 20<sup>th</sup> best place nationally to raise kids – for less by *Business Week*. The designation was published in the November 2007 edition as a result of a study done by a national real estate researcher to identify a list of 50 places that offer families the best combination of safety, community, education and affordability.

Ackerman earned its No. 20 ranking based on its low cost of living index, high educational standards, and minimal risk of crime. Upon learning of the award, Senator Roger Wicker said "This designation from *Business Week* reflects the strong community spirit and neighbor-helping-neighbor setting that exists in Ackerman and Choctaw County. It is nice to see the community receiving national recognition for the opportunity it affords families to raise their children and enjoy a great quality of life."

The Foundation applauds the town of Ackerman, the school administration, law enforcement personnel, and all the others who make Ackerman such a wonderful place to live and raise a family.

"Ackerman is a wonderful town. A keen sense of community is felt as virtually the entire population mobilizes to support the local schools in both sports and academics and to participate in other community-wide events such as the Christmas parade and local festivals. There is an incredibly special sense of place in Ackerman - a sense of home." -Allegra Brigham, CEO, 4-County EPA

"When our company moved to Mississippi to open the state's first coal mine, the people of Ackerman and surrounding communities were very helpful and supportive in getting our business started. Moreover, as a former resident, I have experienced first hand the wonderful 'Quality of Life' Ackerman provides its' citizens." -Robert Benson, President & CEO, North American Coal Corporation

## Bluegrass Christmas Raises Money for Broken Wings

The second annual Bluegrass Christmas was held on December 1<sup>st</sup> with all proceeds going to the Broken Wings Faith-Build project. About 225 people enjoyed the performances of newcomers Skyline West, local favorite the Larry Wallace Band, and up-and-coming Nash Street. Nash Street is one of five regional winners from across the country competing for \$100,000 and the coveted national title of Best New Act in Country Music.

Christian Way United and the Foundation worked together to make the event a success and raised \$2,625 from the concert alone for Broken Wings building fund. Additional funds were raised

through a raffle of several items, concession sales at the concert and the Christmas parade, and from donations.



## Choctaw County Group Travels to Washington, DC

A group of representatives from Choctaw County recently traveled to Washington, DC to meet with the Mississippi Congressional delegation and officials from federal agencies to discuss projects and issues important to Choctaw County. This group included Thomas Higgins, Chris McIntire, Eric Chambers, Marty Crowder, and Alan Bates. Also traveling to DC and participating on behalf of Choctaw County were Tom Bryant, Carl Ray Furr, and Jeff Ballweber of Pickering Engineering, and Nick Walters, former Director of USDA Rural Development in Mississippi, and currently associated with the Foundation to assist with the lake project.

While in Washington, the Choctaw County delegation met with officials from the Appalachian Region Commission (ARC), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Economic Development Administration (EDA), Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The full group listed above also met with Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker, and members of their staff. Topics discussed

included the lake project, local rail service, a potential economic development project for the County, the road link from the Tombigbee National Forest to the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge, and four-lane improvements to the state highways in Choctaw County.

Choctaw County joined with Winston and Attala Counties to host a reception in appreciation of the support of the Mississippi delegation. The reception was well attended by staff members of each delegation and Senators Cochran and Wicker spent several minutes at the reception as well. The reception provided an excellent opportunity to network with the delegation and their staff members, and personally thank them for their hard work. It was made possible through the sponsorships of local businesses and organizations supporting the counties involved. Sponsoring on behalf of Choctaw County were North American Coal, Pickering Engineering, and 4-County Electric Power Association.



Alan Bates, Thomas Higgins,  
Chris McIntire, Roger Wicker,  
Eric Chambers,  
and Marty Crowder



Chris McIntire,  
Thad Cochran,  
Eric Chambers, and  
Thomas Higgins

## Foundation Awards Grant for Local Project

The Foundation awarded a grant of \$161.07 to Millers-Colemans-Satterfields Foundation, Inc. for creating a display center at the MCS community library. The Foundation sets aside a fixed amount of funds to assist organizations that seek to enhance individual and community improvement. The Foundation's Community Development Grant Program was created to encourage community service oriented organizations to undertake projects which could be considered for assistance from the Foundation.

This grant program is designed for qualified applicants that clearly demonstrate a community development mission or goal. Applications submitted are reviewed by the Grant Review Committee and then presented to the full Board of Directors with recommendations. The maximum grant award that will be made is \$300, but due to limited funding, the Foundation encourages applicants to limit the amount of their requests in order to allow for more participants in the program. Greater

consideration and higher priority will be given to projects that demonstrate the highest potential for stimulating individual and community improvement.

The next funding cycle will be announced after the beginning of the Foundation's 2008 fiscal year in April. Grant guidelines and application forms are available at the Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation office.



## Foundation Website Redesign Complete

The Foundation recently completed a redesign of its website, [www.choctawcountymys.com](http://www.choctawcountymys.com). This was done following a review and evaluation of the previous website by economic development professionals with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Most of the recommendations by TVA were incorporated into the newly designed website. The new website is intended to serve a multitude of purposes ranging from economic development to "chamber of commerce" type functions.

Special attention was given to making the site user-friendly for site selection consultants. It has been estimated that up to 80% of initial site selection screening begins with the website. The redesign was timely as the new Location One Information System (LOIS) data now used by the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) was incorporated into the Sites and Buildings sections.

The website was divided into three main components: Economic Development, Community Development, and the Foundation. The Economic Development section contains information that would be of interest to companies and consultants researching Choctaw County as a potential location. The Community Development section focuses on aspects that pertain more to visitors, tourists, newcomers and current residents. Finally, the Foundation component has information about the Foundation, memberships, newsletters, etc.

The website will always be changing from time to time. Please visit our site and let us know what you think. We appreciate any input.

## Gillon Attends Workshop

Tricia Gillon joined with colleagues from throughout the states of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida for the eighth annual Community Festivals Best Practices Workshop held January 25 at Auburn University.

The day-long event, hosted by the Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC), featured a panel of nationally recognized festival and event-planning experts. Sessions included strategies and tactics for attracting attendance and promoting an event; obtaining no-cost event publicity; working with limited budgets and resources; adequate liability protection; securing support and volunteerism; and financial management strategies; as well as other topics.

Speakers for the Auburn event included: Rick Lott, executive director of the Savannah Waterfront Association; Sylvia Allen, president of Allen Consulting Inc., a premier event marketing firm; and Tom Shipp, vice president of Kaliff Insurance, an established insurance agency that specializes in all coverage of fair and festival insurance.

ATAC also is hosting a second event February 29 at Birmingham's Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum.

**Choctaw County Junefest**  
June 6-7

## Bates Participates on Strategic Unconventional Fuels Task Force

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 created a Task Force on Strategic Unconventional Fuels to complete an integrated strategy and program plan to coordinate and accelerate the commercial development of strategic unconventional fuels within the United States, including oil shale and tar sands, heavy oil, enhanced oil recovery, and coal-derived liquids. It was initiated in March 2006 and is comprised of the Secretaries of Energy, the Interior, and Defense, five governors (CO, WY, UT, KY, MS) and three representatives from potentially impacted communities. Foundation Director Alan Bates is one of the three representatives. Joining Bates on the Task Force is Monty Montgomery as a representative for Governor Barbour.

Current U.S. proven coal reserves exceed 267 billion short tons - approximately 250 years of supply at current production ratio.

After several meetings, the Task Force recently completed its integrated strategy and program plan, published in three volumes:

**Volume I: Preparation Strategy, Plan and Recommendations**

**Volume II: Resource-Specific and Crosscutting Plans**

**Volume III: Resource and Technology Profiles**

Significant opportunities exist for producing fuels from the nation's vast unconventional resources. Domestic production of fuels from unconventional resources could reduce import dependence and the potential impacts and strategic risks posed by global oil supply and demand trends. The three-volume report can be downloaded in .pdf format from the website of the Task Force on Strategic Unconventional Fuels: <http://www.unconventionalfuels.org>.

## 2007 Ackerman Christmas Parade



## Lake Project Building Momentum

The past few months have seen a flurry of activity on the lake project. The county is on the verge of selecting a specific location and height for the dam. It now appears that the lake, to be located in the Sand Creek watershed on the eastern side of Choctaw County, will have about 1,750 surface area acres of water and nearly 200,000 feet of shoreline at an elevation of 410 feet above sea level. A lake of this size will be able to meet the purposes originally set forth of providing economic development opportunities, serving as a source of water for the County, and providing a recreational outlet for the surrounding area. The current drought conditions in the Southeast have heightened the awareness of the need to ensure that Choctaw County will be able to meet the water requirements of its citizens and businesses.

Another important step taken was the decision to employ a Jackson law firm to assist in the creation of a Joint Water Management District for general management of the project, including its long term operation and maintenance. It is anticipated that the next immediate steps will be to conduct additional engineering tests in the vicinity of the selected headwall location, further activities pertaining to the completion an Environmental Impact Statement, development of a master plan for development, and creation of the Joint Water Management District.

With the recent activity, it is expected that the Foundation's Lake Committee will again become more active in order to keep everyone informed of the progress to date. An announcement of the next meeting will be made in the upcoming weeks.

## Choctaw County and Smart Growth

What is Smart Growth? More and more people are realizing that current development patterns dominated by “sprawl” are no longer in the long-term interest of our communities. Smart growth recognizes the critical connection between development and quality of life. Smart growth principles can ensure economic vitality, provide greater housing opportunities, preserve our natural environment and build better communities.

Homeownership is the cornerstone of the American dream. Real estate of all types flourishes best in livable communities that offer a high quality of life at a reasonable cost. Choctaw County is a beautiful setting, almost completely rural and dominated by pristine streams and green areas. It is a proven fact that people desire to live and/or vacation around water and preserved areas.

Development of around the lake proposed for the County should be managed to preserve and enhance the environment that currently exists. This should be done because it is the right thing to do from an environmental standpoint, and the smart thing to do from an economic standpoint. Smart growth design principles offer economic, social, health and environmental benefits through resource-efficient building and community designs, green building practices, low-impact development, and walkable neighborhoods. Smart growth makes sense for Choctaw County.

## Foundation Receives Grant from TVA

The Foundation recently was awarded a grant of \$1,900 to perform a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment of a parcel of property proposed for industrial development. The Foundation will match the grant for a total cost of \$3,800. The parcel will be assessed to identify any potential environmental conditions, meaning the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products on the property under conditions that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of a release of any hazardous substances or petroleum products

into structures on the property or into the ground, ground water, or surface water of the property.

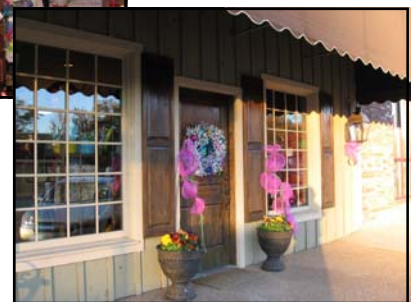
An option to purchase was recently acquired on the 110 acre parcel with rail and highway access and assigned to a company interested in developing the property. Conducting the Phase 1 Environmental Assessment will allow the Foundation to be better prepared to more quickly accommodate the current prospect in their evaluation of Choctaw County as a potential location.

## Featured Business: The Tizzy Lizzy

The Tizzy Lizzy, a Foundation member, is a gift shop with more. Owner, Lacey Bruce, offers trendy accessories, candles, and baby gifts and has recently added Vera Bradley merchandise to the inventory. Lacey, a life long resident of Choctaw County, said that the Vera Bradley line is doing quite well. Additionally Tizzy Lizzy offers a bridal registry and custom floral arrangements. Brides-to-be can register for Fine China, home accessories, and flatware. Employees of The Tizzy Lizzy custom wrap gifts so that the wrapping is as special as the gift itself.

The Tizzy Lizzy opened in August, 2004 and offers a wide selection of home décor for every taste. The store is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 until 5:00 and Saturday from 10:00 until 3:00.

The Foundation would like to congratulate Lacey on her success and hopes that the store has continuing success.



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**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

**[www.choctawcountymiss.com](http://www.choctawcountymiss.com)**

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The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote business and community development through coordinated effort of its membership.

The Foundation membership includes industry, small business, utility providers, local town governments, retail merchants, churches, and individuals.

The Foundation Board members are:

**Ray Atkinson, John Baswell, Katherine Black, Lila Chandler, Charlotte Cornish, Tim Cutts, Gradie Ervin, Randy Loper, Terri Ming, Dannie Reed, Betty Steiner, John Tennant, Ellen Turnipseed, Jody Webb, Sherry Woods, and Lewis Wright.**



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