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March 2010

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Updated MSU sports schedules!

County poverty rate is higher than state average

Sunday, 28 February 2010
By GWEN SISSON
sdnlife@bellsouth.net

In 2008, about 21 percent of all Mississippians, in all age groups, live in poverty. In Oktibbeha County, the poverty rate is between 31.4 percent, with 30 percent of those under the age of 18, according to the 2008 Mississippi Kids Count Data Book 2008.

And according to the Mississippi Economic Policy Center's "Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Mississippi" report, Oktibbeha County is one of four in the Golden Triangle area plus two in the Delta, with over two-fifths of household lacking adequate income to meet their basic needs.

In addition to Oktibbeha County, the remaining counties include Chickasaw, Clay, Winston, Washington and Bolivar counties. In these counties, more than two thirds of households below the self-sufficiency standard are also below the federal poverty level.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard in the Mississippi Economic Policy Center's report is defined as a realistic, geographically specific and family composition-specific measure of income adequacy devised as a more accurate alternative to the federal poverty measure.

According the U.S. census Bureau in 2006, the federal poverty level was considered an annual income of \$20,44 for a family of four—two adults and two children. But many disagree with that number.

According to a recent report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, many Americans polled felt an annual income of \$30,000 met the poverty criteria, while 70 percent of those polled said that an annual income of \$40,000 was needed to make ends meet.

Extreme poverty is defined as families living with incomes at half of the federal poverty level, and in Mississippi, eight percent of families live in extreme poverty, according to the Mississippi Kids Count Data Book 2008. That figure represents two times the national average.

Assistance requests rise

Charitable organizations throughout the county have reported increases in the number of families requesting assistance this year, particularly over the holiday season.

Liz Collier, director of the Oktibbeha County Department of Human Services, said they have seen an increase in the number of individuals in Oktibbeha County in need of assistance over the past few years. Collier said the Department of Human Services is dedicated to being accessible to the residents of Oktibbeha County. Collier said an interactive sample application is available at www.mdhs.state.ms.us which provides interested individuals with information regarding possible eligibility for the SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamp) program to help families in need.

The Web site also contains an application which can be printed and submitted to the office via fax, mail or in person. If preferred, an individual can visit the Department of Human Services office located at 213 Yeates St. to receive an application form or have one mailed to their residence.

Once a signed application is on file with DHS, a confidential appointment is scheduled with one of the staff to assist the applicant with processing their request for assistance.

For more information, contact DHS at 323-1566.

Last Updated (Monday, 01 March 2010)

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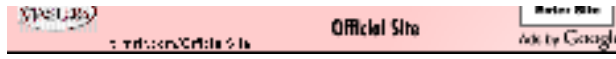
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