



# The DeSoto Digest

A Monthly Publication of the DeSoto County School District

August 2007

## Homer Skelton and Skelton Foundation to Announce Significant Grant Support for DeSoto County Schools

The Skelton Foundation, created, managed and led by Homer and Cathy Skelton, announced \$100,000 in "back to school" grants for ten DeSoto County Schools. The announcement was made at the Hyundai Dealership in Olive Branch, located in the former Homer Skelton Ford Dealership location.

The winning schools were: Chickasaw Elementary, Lake Cormorant Elementary, Lake Cormorant Middle, Hernando Middle, Shadow Oaks Elementary, Southaven Middle, Southaven High, Olive Branch High, Oak Grove Central Elementary, and Walls Elementary.

The Skelton Foundation has graciously donated "back to school grants" for the DeSoto County School District for ten years, this year crossing the million-dollar mark. In addition, they sponsor the district's annual Christmas bicycle program for worthy children each Christmas.

A panel of judges reviewed the grants, twenty-eight in all, and scored the projects accordingly with the mission of awarding ten overall grants up to the amount of \$10,000.

"We are so grateful for the Skelton's generosity and their ongoing commitment to helping children and making a positive difference in their community," noted Superintendent Milton Kuykendall. "We are very fortunate to have their friendship and support."

## Upcoming Events

### Staff Development

August 9, 2007  
DeSoto Civic Center  
8:00 a.m.

Guest Speakers:  
**Hayley Barbour**  
*Governor of MS*  
**Dr. Hank Bounds**  
*State Superintendent of Education*  
**Fred Smith**  
*Fed-Ex CEO*

### Ribbon Cutting

Lake Cormorant  
Elementary School  
August 9, 2007 • 11:30 a.m.



## A Message from Superintendent Kuykendall

Welcome to a new school year. Teachers return August 7th.

On August 9th, 8 a.m., at the DeSoto Civic Center, we will have a Professional Development Day for our teachers and staff. We have an amazing lineup of speakers, including Mississippi Governor Hayley Barbour, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Hank Bounds, and Fed-Ex Chief Executive Officer Fred Smith. These three national leaders will discuss how they have survived and conquered "the ordeal of change" and will encourage and inspire our educators to make the '07-'08 school year a time when we embrace tougher requirements in our new, state-mandated curriculum.

On August 9th, 11:30 a.m., Dr. Bounds will cut the ribbon on Lake Cormorant Elementary School. This state-of-the-art facility will complete our aggressive building program of ten schools since I became superintendent.

In addition to being the fastest growing school district in the state of Mississippi, DeSoto County Schools has distinguished itself as being on the "cutting edge" instructionally and technologically. Besides building new schools, we have worked on facility upgrades and renovations to create environments that are both comfortable and welcoming to our staff and students. We enjoy a supportive community that passed a bond

issue to provide appropriate space in which our students can learn. We have aligned our curriculum to state and national standards. We have worked hard this summer to make sure our staff is trained in the latest content and methodologies.

I am ready for the school bell to ring on August 13th. If growth projections are correct, we may be the largest school system in Mississippi. Even if we are not the biggest, there is one thing that I am certain—DeSoto County Schools will be the greatest school system in the state because of the students and the teachers who teach them.

## Desoto County Schools Receives Project Fit America Outdoor Gyms Program Funded by Blue Cross & Blue Shield Foundation

Blue Cross & Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi awarded \$143,000 grant to DeSoto County Schools for six Project Fit America (PFA) Outdoor Gyms. They also awarded six of these gyms last year to the district.

The schools receiving the equipment and training are: Lake Cormorant Elementary, Olive Branch Intermediate, DeSoto Central Elementary, Overpark Elementary, Hope Sullivan Elementary and Lewisburg Elementary.

The Project Fit America program is a core curriculum, grades 1-12, consisting of indoor activities, outdoor activities,

physical games, lesson plans with a goal to get students more physically active. This program compliments the district's multi-million health initiatives.

"The district is very appreciative of Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi for their support and funding of this innovative program," noted Superintendent of Education Milton Kuykendall. "Since they gave us six Project Fit America systems last year, they have now invested more than a quarter of a million dollars in DeSoto County Schools."



Six schools will get Project Fit systems. Representatives from the schools are, from left to right, Emily Ballard, Courtney McClatchy, Lisa Love, Brenda Wilkinson, Gloria Hopkins and Stephanie Case.



Milton Kuykendall is interviewed by Channel 3 News regarding the six new Project Fit systems.



Zach Nowell exercises on a horizontal ladder. Project Fit helps develop upper body strength.

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# Feeling Great At the Top of the State

## “DeSoto County Gets Moving for Healthy Living”

DeSoto County got moving for the Mississippi in Motion program, a healthy lifestyle educational program sponsored by the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

While more than 150 people took part in the program, 71 participants completed the 12-week program—by officially weighing in and weighing out-- and shed 323.8 pounds.

Mike Ramage, an employee in plant maintenance of DeSoto County School District, lost 32.2 pounds, the most among the group that met on their lunch hour on Tuesdays at the Board of Education in Hernando. Hank Babin, residency coordinator, was the second individual winner, losing more than 24 pounds.

The first place team, dubbed “Pyramid For Life,” lost 39 pounds and included Veronica Threatt, Lena Bell, Jimmy Moore, Maxine Moody, Geraldine Logan, Quincy Woods and Anissa Woods.

Dr. Sandy Slocum, Mississippi State University’s DeSoto County Extension Director, said this program is successful because the emphasis is on lifestyle changes rather than just weight loss.

Slocum said another reason why the program is successful is that no one is in this alone. Teams are formed and team members hold each other accountable for doing the exercises and eating properly each day. Baptist Memorial Hospital—DeSoto provided the health screenings at the beginning and end of the program.



Mike Ramage, left, and Hank Babin were the top individual winners in the Mississippi In Motion program. Together they lost more than 56 pounds.



The first place team, from left to right, included Veronica Threatt, Lena Bell, Jimmy Moore, Maxine Moody, and Geraldine Logan. Not pictured team members include Quincy Woods and Anissa Woods.

## New PERKS Partner

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## Teachers Get SMART Boards Grant From the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi

An anonymous businessman in Memphis thinks DeSoto County School District is moving in the right direction and “believes that good public schools are essential for the future of a good community.”

Through the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, this businessman has provided funds for a \$90,620 grant for the purchase of 46 SMART Boards that will be distributed among 23 of the district’s 34 schools.

“When surveyed, 23 schools identified that their greatest technology need was SMART Boards,” said Tom Pittman, Community Foundation president. “Our Memphis businessman wanted the boards to go to those

schools.”

Schools receiving the SMART Boards and teacher training are: Walls Elementary, Lewisburg Elementary, Overpark Elementary, Horn Lake Intermediate, Lake Cormorant Middle, Hernando Hills Elementary, Hernando High, Hope Sullivan Elementary, Olive Branch Elementary, Center Hill Elementary, Lewisburg Middle/High, Olive Branch High, Hernando Middle, Southaven High, Chickasaw Elementary, Horn Lake High, Pleasant Hill Elementary, Southaven Elementary, DeSoto Central Elementary, Olive Branch Middle, Oak Grove Central Elementary, Shadow Oaks Elementary, and Center Hill Middle/High.



Tom Pittman, left, with the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, presents Milton Kuykendall a grant for SMART Boards.

## Thompson and Morse to Serve as Curriculum Specialists

Two key district positions have been filled to help teachers face tougher requirements with the new state mandated curriculum, according to Charlie Alexander, assistant superintendent of personnel.

The Board of Education named Dee Thompson as the reading/language arts specialist, and Lewanda Morse as the math specialist.

Thompson has been an educator for thirteen years. She holds both a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education and a Master’s degree in reading from Florida International University. She has worked as a first grade teacher at Pleasant Hill Elementary School, and a reading coach in a previous school district. Morse has taught at Lewisburg Elementary School for two years. Prior to her employment with DeSoto County Schools, she taught nine

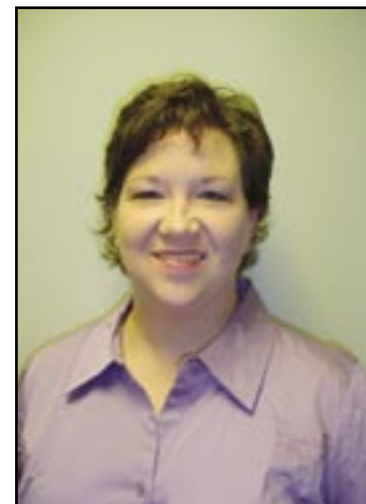
years in Houston, Mississippi.

She earned both her Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education and her Master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Mississippi. She holds a specialist degree in educational leadership from the University of Mississippi, and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program in educational leadership at Ole Miss.

“These two educators will help put the new curriculum in place,” said Dr. Edith Robinson, assistant superintendent of curriculum. “They will be a great resource as we push to require students to master a ‘greater depth of knowledge.’ Since our new state tests will be based on the new curriculum, we have to be ready for the tasks at hand.”



Dee Thompson



Lewanda Morse