

# THE INSIDER

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## Success Story: Johnny Townsel



Our Pascagoula MDRS office has weathered a lot of storms recently, but that has not prevented the dedicated staff from helping our consumers in need. One such consumer is Johnny Townsel of Lucedale, who is served through the Office of Special Disability Programs. Mr. Townsel's home was not fully accessible and therefore he could not function independently. Our agency learned of his problem and made the necessary modifications allowing Mr. Townsel to be more independent and maintain his personal safety and hygiene. By making his home accessible, it gave him much more freedom of movement and enabled him to function independently in his home.

A special thank you is extended to Heather Inabinette, MDRS Counselor in Pascagoula, and the OSDP staff for their dedicated efforts in this case.

If you have a story or event to share for next month's issue, please contact us at:

Dean Morganti  
dmorganti@mdrs.state.ms.us  
601.853.5176



## DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES OF THE YEAR



Pictured above are award winners Dr. Angela Herzog, DDS Director Jo Ann Summers, Genny Henderson (receiving on behalf of Mary Frances Ponder), and Allen Lieberman.

We are proud to announce that our Mississippi DDS received the DDS of the Year Award for 2007 as a result of the overall quality of its public service. Mississippi's performance in the Fiscal Year 2007 was not only outstanding, but balanced, with excellent performance in virtually every area, including accuracy, processing time, productivity, and cost.

Mississippi's performance was #1 in the Region in the following areas: Production, Net Accuracy, Performance Accuracy, Total Cost Per Case, and Reduction in Initial Claims Pending (despite a 4.2% increase in initial claims receipts). We were #2 in the following areas: Title II Processing Time, Title XVI Processing Time, and Increase in Initial Claims Dispositions.

In addition, Mississippi was ranked first in the nation in net accuracy and percentage of medical records received electronically. Their high presumptive disability rate of 78.4% (more than 3 times the national average) is reflective of their focus on public service. Finally, Mississippi was a team player, providing

4,280 medical ratings for other states (the highest number of any state). Mississippi also provided substantial assistance to the other Versa states in the Region, hosting them for a detailed briefing and workshop on implementing new Versa releases.

As shown in the picture above, MDRS was the recipient of several individual awards in addition to the recognition given to the overall department. Dr. Angela Herzog was the recipient the PRIDE Humanitarian award, Mary Frances Ponder (who was unable to attend and was represented by Genny Henderson) won the PRIDE Special Act of Service award, and Allen Lieberman was given the PRIDE Creative Achievement award.

You can certainly see the quality of our DDS staff when you check out the eagles, signifying the number of years DDS has won this award, in Jo Ann's office. DDS received awards for the years 1995, 1999, 2003, and 2007--an awesome achievement!

# Every Second Counts with Gustav

MDRS, the Department of Health, and UAB South Central Center for Public Health Preparedness joined forces to host "Every Second Counts"-Responding to People with Disabilities in Times of Disaster Conference in Biloxi, MS on July 29-30, 2008.



Pictured above are Adam Diehl and Laquita Brown who assisted the Wahl family to evacuate and return home in safety after Hurricane Gustav.

The objective of the conference was to discuss best emergency preparation and disaster response practices for people with disabilities and encourage the involvement of persons with disabilities in planning at the local level. MDRS staff provided informative training sessions such as "Techniques for Working with Persons with Blindness or Visual Impairments", "Techniques

for Working with Persons with Mobility Impairments", and "Survival Sign Language". Dr. Norman Miller, MDRS Deputy of Administration, took a lead role in coordinating the conference with our partners. As he stated, "The staff took on a great responsibility in training first responders and emergency coordinators."

The audience included professionals who work with people with disabilities, including family caregivers, advocates, case workers, EMA officials, and others. Exactly a month later, these professionals had the opportunity to practice the techniques and planning addressed in the conference when Hurricane Gustav

threatened the Mississippi Gulf Coast and an evacuation took effect. Staff of MDRS and the Department of Health worked closely with state and local agencies and emergency planners in evacuating and sheltering individuals with disabilities. Luckily, our Coast escaped major damages and evacuees with special medical needs were able to return home shortly after the storm passed. More information regarding MDRS response to Hurricane Gustav will be included in next month's newsletter.



Pictured above are members of the MDRS Special Response Team (L to R): Keith King, Laquita Brown, Toni Borst, Adam Diehl, Robert Lyle, and Kerion Grant.

## MDRS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPEAKS AT SWIB

As mandated by federal and state legislation, the Executive Director for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) is an official member of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). The SWIB was established to assist in the development of the State's workforce investment system, referred to as WIN in Mississippi, and assist the Governor in fulfilling his responsibilities in this area. Governor Haley Barbour charged the SWIB with this vision: 1) Centralize and streamline workforce training functions; 2) Maximize and leverage all workforce training funds; 3) Raise the skill level of all Mississippi workers; and, 4) Create job opportunities for everyone, (including people with disabilities).

Based on the Governor's vision and  
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recognition of MDRS as an exemplary workforce partner, members of the SWIB asked MDRS Executive Director Butch McMillan what type of influence the SWIB could possibly have upon the agency's goals. At the last SWIB meeting held on July 23, 2008, Mr. McMillan and Bob McDonald, Job Development and Placement Services / WIA Director, talked in-depth with the SWIB members about their potential influence in the following areas.

- Influence local workforce investment board policy to improve access to people with barriers.
- Businesses --- What do they need?
- Success --- How can we measure success beyond the numbers?
- Employer Job Leads --- What

efficiencies can we gain between agencies?

- Host a webinar with Mississippi Economic Council on hiring people with barriers (disabilities, ex-offenders, etc.)
- Educate through associations, such as Mississippi Manufacturing Association, and employer forums.

As a result of this discussion, the SWIB established a team to implement some of these ideas. Team members will include representatives from MDRS.



Bob McDonald makes a presentation to the SWIB members.

# DEAR MDRS FRIENDS,

As many of you are aware I was diagnosed with colon cancer in January. Fourteen inches of my colon was removed and for six months I have been taking chemo. Trying to maintain a sense of humor and positive attitude I now tell people that I am special because I have a semi-colon. :-)

I have never been one to ask why something happened to me but rather what is the lesson learned from the experience and where are the blessings. As I was recovering from surgery in February I realized that as the current President of the Mississippi Public Health Association, but more importantly, to have the honor to be part of the MDRS training team I have been given an opportunity to get the word out.



America is making steady progress in the war against colon cancer. It's largely because of early detection and improved treatment. However, colon cancer remains the third leading cause of cancer deaths in both men and women in the United States, with about 50,000 deaths expected this year. The good news is that colon cancer is one of the two cancers (the other is cervical cancer) that can be prevented through regular screening.

Colon cancer tests allow the doctors to find and remove growths (called polyps) before they become cancerous, thereby preventing cancer.

Furthermore, these screening tests can also detect cancer at an earlier, more curable stage. Unfortunately, many Americans still aren't getting life-saving tests for colon cancer. Only four out of ten Americans get the recommended screening. Therefore, only 39 percent of the new cases are found at an early state, when a cure is most possible. A substantial number of the 50,000 deaths expected from colon cancer this year could have been avoided with wider use of proven screening tests. We all know that testing saves lives. It is my hope, that getting the word out will alert people to the importance of getting tested for colon cancer and in talking to their doctor about having the tests done beginning at age 50.

Remember, cancer not only hurts the victim, but also that individual's family and friends. Ignore the messenger but heed the message. Please check with your doctor. For more information about this important subject, call 1-800-227-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) anytime, day or night, and let the American Cancer Society help you stop colon cancer before it starts.

Sincerely,  
Jim Johnson  
Colon Cancer Survivor

## WELCOME TO MDRS!

Batesville--	Valerie Madkins
Cleveland--	Denzal Lovett
Forest--	Ronald Burnham
Grenada--	April Hammond
Gulfport--	Sara Fleming
Hattiesburg--	Quitman Lockley
Madison--	Carolyn Sampson
Meridian--	Melissa Moulds
Tupelo--	Jeffery McCoy

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



**KARREN  
CRESAP**

**Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Counselor**

**OVR, EUPORA**

Karren Cresap came to MDRS in 2004 as a VR Counselor in Eupora. She is a proven asset to MDRS. She is one of those counselors who is always willing to accept any assignment that is given to her with a positive attitude. She has the talent and ability to work with the consumers where they are comfortable and want to achieve their goals. "As we work to fill our Counselor vacancies," VR Director Tarea Stout comments, "I wish we could find more applicants like Karren Cresap."

Recently she has been selected to serve on a Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification committee that will determine what are the minimum competencies required to pass the CRC exam. We are very honored to have a MDRS Counselor selected for this committee.

If there is someone in your office you would like to suggest for our Employee Spotlight, send your suggestion with a brief paragraph explaining how he/she makes your office a better place for you and your co-workers. Submit by email to Dean Morganti at [dmorganti@mdrs.state.ms.us](mailto:dmorganti@mdrs.state.ms.us)

WALL OF FAME