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A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF JOURNAL PUBLISHING AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

MARCH 2009

WHERE YA GOIN'?



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'Hard times do not mean end times'

■ **Tourism will be tough in 2009, but an industry veteran says there are ways to succeed.**

By **Carlie Kollath**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

The state's tourism and hospitality industry will have its share of challenges in 2009.

First, the state should expect at least 5.9 percent fewer tourists this fiscal year than last year, according to the Mississippi Development Authority's tourism division. And depending on the economy, the drop-off could be almost 11 percent.

Visitor spending is expected to drop in line with the decreased tourists for the state's fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30.

Second, the MDA is forecasting a net loss of at least 6,900 direct and indirect tourism jobs across the state. Total tourism-related jobs are forecasted to dip at least 6 percent from fiscal year 2008.

And third, state tourism taxes are expected to fall by at least \$26 million from last year's \$436 million collected, according to the MDA report issued in

"There is no way to sugarcoat the current financial situation. All the national reports reveal that we are experiencing hard times"

February. With the drop, MDA expects tourism will contribute at least 5.9 percent less than last year to the state's general fund.

But MDA couched the predictions, saying they are based on short-term factors.

Yet, the economic troubles already are hitting home in Tupelo.

Early this month, the Tupelo Convention & Visitors Bureau reported tourism tax revenues fell 0.4 percent in December. The drop comes a month after the CVB posted a 0.56 percent increase, which followed consecutive growth for the previous three months (7.57 percent, 14.55 percent and 8.28 percent).

Sales growth this fiscal year averages 6 percent. The CVB based its budget on a forecasted increase of 3

percent for the year.

With the economic troubles, CVB Executive Director Linda Butler Johnson said she views the slight dip in December as "pretty well holding our own."

"For the year, we're still up 6 percent," she said at the CVB's monthly board meeting this week.

"There is no way to sugarcoat the current financial situation," Johnson wrote in her 2009 letter to Tupelo's hospitality industry. "All the national reports reveal that we are experiencing hard times - but hard times do not mean end times ... We are an industry that is resilient and skillful."

According to the MDA report, tourists spent more than \$227 million

Historical growth in sales tax

FISCAL YEAR	COLLECTION AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2009	1,327,649	6.00*
2008	3,110,430	7.05
2007	2,905,522	7.33
2006	2,707,174	3.16
2005	2,624,261	5.06
2004	2,497,767	7.13
2003	2,331,461	1.95
2002	2,286,964	2.09
2001	2,240,236	1.86
2000	2,199,386	7.27
1999	2,050,287	6.30
1998	1,928,776	6.15
1997	1,816,975	3.03
1996	1,763,533	2.90
1995	1,713,903	9.97
1994	1,558,479	13.81
1993	1,369,408	9.55
1992	1,250,070	10.23
1991	1,134,082	190.17
1990	390,828	178.11
1989	140,532	0.33
1988	140,076	4.25
1987	134,370	20.64
1986	111,384	(Hotel tax started in FY 1985)

*as of March 2

The CVB's fiscal year runs from October to September.

Turn to **TIMES** on **Page 18**

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Tishomingo, Oxford win state tourism awards

■ **The Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau won the top CVB award in the \$750,000-plus category.**

By **Carlie Kollath**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Tishomingo County and Oxford took home state tourism awards from the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism for the second year in a row.

The Oxford Convention & Visitors Bureau won the large festival/event of the year for the 2008 Double Decker Arts Festival.

The 13th annual Oxford Double Decker Arts Festival was in April 2008. The festival is held on the Oxford Square every spring as a day-long celebration of music, food and the arts.

Last year, the Oxford CVB won best small festival for its Town BBQ Throwdown.

"It's nice to be recognized statewide ... because we attract people from all over the state," said Hugh Stump, executive director of Oxford's CVB.

Tishomingo County Development Foundation's Tourism Council was given the tourism achievement award for its Trash & Treasures Along the Tenn-Tom. The two-day event in October 2008 was billed as the state's longest yard sale and lined 234 miles of highways through five Mississippi counties from the Tennessee State line and south through Lowndes County, then crossed into Alabama and included another three counties.

Last year, Iuka resident Martha Segars was honored at the Governor's Conference as the community volun-

This year's Governor's Conference on Tourism award winners were:

- Travel Media Award for Travel Writer: Kelly South, Jackson (Tenn.) Sun
- Travel Media Award for Newspaper: Phil Stukenborg, sports writer, Commercial Appeal (Memphis)
- Travel Media Award for Broadcast: Tom "Doc" Clifton & Mark Boehler/WOWL-FM "Fun 91.9" (Iuka)
- Community Volunteer of the Year: Dorothy Moore
- Governmental Friend of Tourism: Public Works Department in Bay St. Louis
- Tourism Achievement Award: Tishomingo County Tourism Council's "Trash & Treasures along the Tenn-Tom"
- Tourism Promotion of the Year Award: Greenwood Convention & Visitors Bureau
- MTA Member of the Year: Wanda Collier-Wilson, executive director & CEO of the Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Travel Attraction of the Year: Mississippi Museum of Natural Science
- Festival/Event of the Year (Small): Mississippi Blues Marathon & Half-Marathon
- Festival/Event of the Year (Large): Oxford CVB's Double Decker Arts Festival
- CVB of the Year (\$0-\$100,000): Kosciusko-Attala Development Corp.
- CVB of the Year (\$100,000-\$300,000): Mississippi's West Coast Hancock County Tourism Development Authority
- CVB of the Year (\$300,000-\$500,000): Greenwood Convention & Visitors Bureau
- CVB of the Year (\$500,000-\$750,000): Meridian/Lauderdale County Tourism
- CVB of the Year (\$750,000 and up): Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau

Turn to **AWARDS** on Page 17

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'08 Top Attractions

Elvis Presley Birthplace	47,853
Tombigbee State Park	45,684
Natchez Trace Visitors Center	45,101
National Fish Hatchery	32,500
Tupelo Buffalo Park	31,048
Tupelo Automobile Museum	15,677
Gumtree Museum of Art	13,075
Elvis Lake & Campground	11,000
Oren Dunn City Museum	7,701
Tupelo Veterans Museum	5,839
Brice's Cross Roads	2,040
TOTAL:	257,518

Tupelo sees fewer tourists in 2008

The Tupelo Convention & Visitors says attendance at local attractions fell 6 percent in the last fiscal year.

Tourism officials cited high gas prices during the summer and big crowds in 2007 at the birthplace for the 30th anniversary of Presley's death.

Total economic impact from conventions, trade shows, special events, weddings, sports and entertainment was \$51.8 million, up 1.7 percent from fiscal year 2007.

Tourism tax revenues increased 7 percent in FY 2008, which ended in September.

Business Journal



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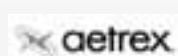
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'Lean' diet ensures success for manufacturers

BY MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

For nearly 17 years, John Moore of the Mississippi State University Industrial Outreach Service has helped develop and train operations managers, engineers and their support staff with the skills needed to reduce waste and improve the "flow" of their products through their businesses.

Among the ways Moore has done that is by teaching the "lean" process management philosophy, which is derived from the study of the highly successful Toyota Production System.

Norman Schacht of Pontotoc-based Genesis Furniture Industries is a recent graduate of the lean training program offered by the MSU Industrial Outreach Service.

"The training helped me understand and know the lean process," he said. "I received good ideas from John's examples through his work experience and not just through teaching the theory. I received hands-on training that I could not

Classes

Spring classes for the lean certification trainings at MSU will begin in April. For more information, contact Lydia Allison at (662) 325-0513 or lallison@ios.msstate.edu.

have received from books."

Through the program, Marty Harrelson of Fibre Craft plans to improve workflow processes by using visual aids – diagrams and pictures – to communicate to plant workers. To get a leg up on the competition he also wants to reduce inventory and reduce waste material and labor waste.

Both graduates say lean training has been a good investment for survival in the global marketplace.

"You will eventually have to change anyway or go out of business," Schacht said. "Not only do you have to compete in the U.S. but also China and other countries in the future."

In addition to the training, Moore requires that each participant complete a project that improves a process in their own company to demonstrate that they can

apply the skills they have learned in the classroom.

"I assist each participant in their project development, and follow up with a review on site at completion," Moore said. "I follow up again, in six to 12 months, to determine the overall economic success of the business. The results to date are very good. The businesses involved are reporting significant improvements in cost, quality and customer service. Lean is a great management philosophy. Our business environment is highly competitive and always has been. Only the strongest businesses survive."

The MSU Industrial Outreach Service is a partner with the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a national network of service providers created by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

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Chamber Connection

A publication of Journal Publishing and the CDF Chamber Division – March 6, 2009

Mississippi Scholars presentations made throughout Lee County



For the fourth consecutive year, the Community Development Foundation has participated in the Mississippi Scholars program, urging eighth grade students to pursue rigorous courses in high school to prepare them for college, work, and life. The mission of Mississippi Scholars is to encourage and motivate all high school students to complete a defined, rigorous academic course of study that prepares them for successful transition to college or university coursework or vocational and technical training necessary to enter today's competitive job market. Presentations were made in all Lee County High Schools, as well as Nettleton High School.

A national initiative, Mississippi Scholars is a straightforward, effective strategy to motivate students to enroll in high school courses that will prepare them for college and careers. Mississippi joined the State Scholars Initiative in 2003 and since that time, more than 5,000 Mississippi high school students have graduated with the Mississippi Scholars distinction.

The course of study for Mississippi Scholars includes four credits of English/Language Arts, four credits of Mathematics, four credits of Science, four credits of Social Studies, an art credit, and two credits of a Foreign Language. Additional expectations of Mississippi Scholars graduates include community service, 95% school attendance, a letter of recommendation from a principal or guidance counselor, and a 2.5 cumulative high school grade point average. By increasing their

academic rigor, students are more prepared to face the challenges that await them outside of high school.

Members of the CDF staff utilized a PowerPoint program that walked students through a simulated annual salary based on a full-time job right out of high school, paying \$13 an hour. By the time the presenters subtracted all of the necessities that one needs to survive and took away a small amount of funds for luxuries, students were shocked to see that there was nothing left for them to enjoy at the end of the month.

"Workforce Development is a very broad subject and begins at the K-12 level. First and foremost, it is vital we are stressing the importance of a high school diploma. At the same time, we need to encourage rigor in course selection and make students aware of the many opportunities available if they will apply themselves and work hard," said Todd Beadles, Director of Workforce Development for the Community Development Foundation.

The presentation goes on to ensure that students understand that nothing has more impact on their future income than the amount of education that they pursue. It also underscores the need to be a lifelong learner and that the choices they make today may have a profound impact on their life.

For more information on the Mississippi Scholars program, please contact Todd Beadles, Director of Workforce Development, in the CDF office at 662.842.4521.



Pictured are CDF staff members, Gina Black and Orlando Pannell, making Mississippi Scholars presentations in schools throughout Lee County.



Chamber focus

Dear Friends:

Congratulations to Beverly Bedford and Amanda Phillips on their recognition as CDF Ambassadors of the Quarter. Beverly serves as vice mayor for the City of Saltillo and Amanda Phillips is an account representative for Key Staff Source, Inc. Our ambassadors continue to help enhance communication with our membership, as well as promote their respective businesses.

We are continuing with our membership recruitment efforts. There are many benefits to investing in CDF and areas to market and promote your business without spending a lot of money. Membership with CDF is an investment, and by taking advantage of the many resources we offer, a return on your investment is inevitable. If you are a member of CDF, THANK YOU for your investment. If you are not a member, Emily Addison, membership director, will be glad to meet with you and outline the benefits.

The Tupelo Young Professionals is the newest networking event that CDF offers. This group targets up and coming professionals between the ages of 21 and 40. Their meetings have received good reviews and the membership roster continues to grow. To join this group of young professionals, go to www.typs.biz.

With the uncertainties in the job market, a



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special thanks to The PACE Group for offering The PACEx-am, free of charge, for a limited time. The test is designed to determine the personality conducive to different areas in the business world. What better way to determine how prospective employees match up with job opportunities. Or better yet, to determine if the job you are seeking best suits your personality.

Don't forget to register for the March 31 Customer Service Seminar. Deborah Tierce will be presenting the latest methods in raising the bar on customer service. Often times the customer service you provide dictates whether or not you have a repeat customer. The seating is limited, so register early.

Please mark your calendar for the CDF Annual Membership Meeting on April 30. "60 Years of Success" will be the featured theme, as we recognize and pay tribute to the 60 years of CDF.

Vice President of Chamber Services

Community Development Foundation's Board of Directors for 2008-2009

CDF is governed by a 57-member Board of Directors. The Executive Committee is composed of the CDF Officers and ten additional members of the Board. CDF's goals and objectives are accomplished through the efforts of members appointed to committees operating under one of CDF's three divisions: Chamber Division, Economic Development Division, and Planning and Property Management Division.

2008-2009 Executive Committee

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Dates to remember

Ambassador's Quarterly Meeting

Thursday, April 2, 2009
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First Friday

7:00 a.m.
Friday, April 3, 2009
Mall at Barnes Crossing Food Court

Business Roundtable

Wednesday, March 25, 2009
4:00 p.m.
CDF Boardroom



Pictured are Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Jennie Bradford Curlee, CDF; and Beverly Bedford, City of Saultillo.

Bedford and Phillips named ambassadors of the quarter

Beverly Bedford and Amanda Phillips have been named CDF Ambassadors of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2008-2009. The CDF Ambassadors serve as official representatives of the Community Development Foundation and assist the staff by attending ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings, recruiting new CDF members, and participating in a member retention program.

Last year's Ambassador of the Year, Bedford serves as Vice Mayor of the City of Saultillo. She has been an Alderman there for the past 22 years. During that time Bedford has obtained Certified Municipal Official status, Advanced Municipal Certification, and Professional Municipal Certification through the Mississippi Municipal League. Bedford was inducted into the Mississippi Municipal League Hall of Fame during the June Conference in Biloxi, MS, for her many years of service.

Along with her husband Bill, Bedford owns Honda of Tupelo, a business they have run together for 30 years. Through the dealership Bedford sells Honda motorcycles, ATVs, scooters, generators, lawn mowers, motorcycle trailers, and weed eaters. She also carries all types of Honda parts and accessories, as well as leather ware, helmets, rain suits, and boots. Bedford also serves as an accountant, and runs her accounting business from Honda of Tupelo. She and her husband have two children and six grandchildren. While she does not appear to have much spare time, she enjoys spending it working as a CDF Ambassador.

"I really enjoy being a CDF Ambassador because I get to meet so many new people and learn about the new businesses in this area," said Bedford. "I have made many new friends in the Ambassador group that I cherish and look forward to working with. I always enjoy my time with the CDF staff, as well as the Ambassadors."

Amanda Phillips is serving her first year as a CDF Ambassador. An Account Representative for Key Staff Source, Inc. for the past eight years, Phillips strives to make Key the leading staffing service in Tupelo/Lee County. Key Staff Source is available to help any business with their Human Resource needs and offers temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct hire placements. Key Staff Source can assist in staffing light and heavy industrial, clerical, and professional placements. Phillips has proven to be an asset to the CDF Ambassador's Club because of her experience dealing with people through Key Staff Source.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed being a CDF Ambassador," said Phillips. "Being an Ambassador has provided me the opportunity to build business relationships in the Tupelo/Lee County area, as well as ideas to help serve the community. It has opened many doors for me and my position at Key Staff Source."

Married to Jason Phillips of Amory, Phillips is the mother of two children, Laine and Ella Grace.

For more information on the CDF Ambassador's Club or to find out how your business can have an Ambassador, please call 662.842.4521 or e-mail jcurlee@cdfms.org.

Local contractor recognized by Governor Barbour

The Mississippi Development Authority's Minority and Small Business Development Division recently conducted a presentation on the Model Contractor Development Program (MCDP) for Governor Haley Barbour to highlight the success of the program and introduce contractors whose businesses have thrived since graduating the program. Tim Prewitt, vice president of Red Hills Construction in Tupelo, was among those honored by Governor Barbour for his participation in the program.

The MCDP, a nine-session training course, teaches small construction contractors the business practices required to improve their company's operations and increase their bonding capacity. To date, the program has graduated 237 participants, statewide. While Prewitt is not new to the construction business, he participated in the course to garner valuable business contacts and learn about new resources available to his business.

"I have been working in construction for many years and I never have a day that I do not learn from a person that I am associated," said Prewitt. "My association with CDF and the MCDP has brought me into contact with a few classmates that I now talk with on a bi-weekly basis. I try to help the startup contractors not make the same mistakes I made. I believe that when a contractor fails, it hurts our entire industry,



Tim Prewitt is pictured with Governor Haley Barbour.

not just that single contractor."

During the presentation, representatives from companies that have benefited from the program and instructors shared their insights and success stories with Governor Barbour. MDA Executive Director Gray Swoope also commented on the remarkable results the program has achieved since its inception, and he spoke enthusiastically about the program's future.

To learn more about the MCDP, please visit www.msccpc.com. For more information on the MCDP or future training opportunities, please contact Wayne Averett at the Renasant Center for IDEAs, Tupelo/Lee County's Regional Business Incubator, at 662.823.4332.

LAND BANK OF NORTH MISSISSIPPI



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the grand opening of Land Bank of North Mississippi's new office. Pictured on the front row at the event are: Emily Addison, CDF; Michael Addison, Go Box/Southern Home Solutions; Beverly Bedford, City of Saultillo; Waurene Hefflin, Crye-Leike Realtors; Ben Beavers, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Matthew Kimbrough, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Craig Shideler, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Jim Kloac, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Councilman Smith Heavner; Reba Bailey, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Joe Mallard, Land Bank of North Mississippi; James Gordon Robison, Land Bank of North Mississippi; and Gary Gaines, Land Bank of North Mississippi. Pictured on the back row are: Ellen Kennedy, CDF; Carey Snyder, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter; Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Michelle Crowe, Regions Bank; Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing; Barbara Smith, Tupelo Airport Authority; Calvin Ozier, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Jan Hill, Land Bank of North Mississippi; Keith Morton, Land Bank of North Mississippi; and Tina Franks, Land Bank of North Mississippi. Land Bank of North Mississippi is located at 3517 Tom Watson Drive in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.842.1202.

MG Landscape Group brings landscape dreams to life

An old Proverb truthfully states that "no matter how long the winter, spring is sure to follow." And since spring is just around the corner, Michelle Guyton, owner of MG Landscape Group in Tupelo, says that now is the time to start planning your spring and summer landscapes.

A Landscape Designer and Landscape Contractor, Guyton founded MG Landscape Group in August of 2007. The company is a full-service landscape design firm, specializing in creating and installing new landscape designs, landscape renovations, and landscape irrigation and drainage. The company engages in everything from planting design and installation for new landscapes, to stone terraces, retaining walls, and master plans for subdivision entrances. MG Landscape Group also specializes in outdoor lighting, swimming pool design, out-

door fireplaces, and water features. Because Guyton personally oversees each project from start to finish, customers receive individualized treatment throughout the process.

"We give each client an innovative and unique design by listening to their wishes and needs therefore creating the finished product they have envisioned," said Guyton. "MG Landscape can help make the landscape of your

dreams possible."

The MG Landscape Group staff is fully trained and experienced, guaranteeing successful and efficient installation of each client's landscape project. Guyton holds a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Mississippi State University and is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Guyton has worked on a myriad of projects including residential and commer-



Pictured is the entrance to Lake Circle in Belden, by MG Landscape Group.

cial development master planning and recreational facility master planning.

"Having a background in Landscape Architecture and Design, I think more like a designer, enabling me to see how each element of a project works with another and how these relationships are important," said Guyton. "With this knowledge I can guarantee that my clients get the product that they envisioned."

As the blustering, frigid days of winter dissipate and the bright days of

spring commence, MG Landscape Group is available to design an outdoor living space that will enable you to enjoy every season, surrounded by the beauty of the earth.

To make your landscape dreams become a reality, please contact Michelle Guyton with MG Landscape Group at 662.844.2323 or msmmorgan18@yahoo.com. To see an array of projects designed by MG Landscape Group, please visit www.mglandscapegroup.blogspot.com.

Earth Hour 2009: See the difference you can make

The Community Development Foundation, in partnership with the City of Tupelo and other local businesses, is sponsoring Earth Hour 2009, on Saturday, March 28. The purpose of Earth Hour is for homes and businesses throughout Tupelo to commit to turn off their lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. that night, thus reducing energy use in our area.

Earth Hour began in Sydney, Australia in 2007, with 2.2 million homes and businesses turning off their electricity for one full hour. By 2008, the event grew to global proportions with 50 million participants in 35 countries across the world. The goal of Earth Hour is to reach one billion people in over 1,000 cities across the globe, drastically reducing energy use throughout the world.

"This event is about positively changing the mindset of the community in regards to energy use and sensitivity to conservation issues," said Travis Hunsicker, Director of Sustainability for the City of Tupelo. "I believe that over time the City of Tupelo can have a positive influence for other cities in the region by having a progressive approach to the overall well-being of our community. Hopefully, this event will show homeowners and businesses alike that together we can make a difference in our community, together we can create positive change."

For more information on Earth Hour 2009 or to commit to participate, please contact Travis Hunsicker at travis_j@comcast.net. To learn more about Earth Hour, please visit www.earthhour.org.

Are You Interested in Starting a Restaurant or Other Food Service Business? If so, please join us:

Tuesday, March 17: **Financing Your Restaurant**—by Grady Griffin, Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association

Tuesday, March 24: **Marketing and Customer Service**—by John Brandon, Mississippi Development Authority

6 - 8 p.m. at the

RENASANT CENTER for IDEAs
Tupelo/Lee County Regional Business Incubator

398 East Main Street, Tupelo, MS 38804

To register, call 1(800) 725-7232

Sponsors:



and the **Tupelo Restaurant Association**



MSBDC is a member of the Mississippi Small Business Development Centers (MSBDC) network. MSBDC has assisted Mississippi businesses since 1982. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact: Jo Ann Harris, 662-913-1291 or 1(800) 725-7232 (in MS) e-mail jaharris@msbdc.org or www.msbbdc.org



Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.



Chef Joshua Simpson is pictured in the Great American Grill with one of his sweet creations.

HILTON GARDEN INN: More than just a great night's stay

The Hilton Garden Inn in Tupelo's Downtown Fairpark District recently completed a 48 room, \$4.2 million expansion. The hotel is known for its vast array of features designed to make each guest feel right at home, but what many people may not know is that the Hilton Garden Inn employs an exceptional food and beverage staff who literally serve as "the icing on the cake" of this exceptional hotel.

The Hilton Garden Inn boasts a full-service restaurant in the Great American Grill. The restaurant is open to the public and serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. They offer a scrumptious Sunday brunch and serve special weekend dinner items through their Great American Friday promotion including prime rib, roasted quail, and cedar wrapped salmon. Likewise, the BancorpSouth Conference Center can customize menus for specific events and always offers something extra special to their guests. The conference center has both Easter and Mother's Day brunches planned that include everything from roses for each mother to bunnies to pet.

Perhaps what makes the food and beverage service so outstanding at the Hilton Garden Inn and BancorpSouth Conference Center are the masterminds behind the entire process. Chef Joshua Simpson serves as head chef for the hotel. Culinary institute trained, he was born and raised in Pontotoc. His culinary creations are extremely creative and surprising, as he was recently selected to participate in the CHAINE ROTISSEURS young chef's culinary competition, held this month. Also, Charles Samples serves as the Food and Beverage Manager. A master of "finishing touches," Samples appeared on the original show "Whose Wedding Is It Anyway." Emily Snipes, an Ole Miss graduate and Catering Sales Manager, offers a soothing style as she guides first time event planners from start to finish.

"I am constantly amazed at what they (Simpson and Samples) can do to make things look both beautiful and appetizing," said Shari Long Neely, Director of Sales for the Hilton Garden Inn.

With brides calling a year in advance to book the BancorpSouth Conference Center, their goal is to be a one-stop-shop for brides planning their wedding day. The food and beverage staff can help with the flowers, cake, food, linens, centerpieces, ice carvings, and room set-up, while the staff of the conference center can assist with photography, adjustable lighting, LCD projectors, technology, a state-of-the-art sound system, and even carriage rides for the happy couple. The food and beverage staff enjoy participating in bridal fairs to learn more about the latest trends in the wedding industry to serve the couples who choose the conference center for their special day.

Overall, the goal of the Hilton Garden Inn is to replicate the comforts of home by providing a great meal, a living room with a double fireplace, and comfortable rooms for all of their guests. Neely takes this to heart, as recipient of the 2008 Inn the Zone Champion of the Year. The only recipient of the award among more than 400 hotels, Neely garnered this honor for her leadership in coordinating a joint sales effort among all Hilton Garden Inns in Mississippi and for her commitment to participate in both April and October 2009 Inn the Zone blitzes.

"Travel is not as glamorous as it used to be, so we try to make the experience as personal as possible," said Neely.

The Hilton Garden Inn and BancorpSouth Conference Center are located at 363 East Main Street and can be reached at 662.718.5500. For more information on the Hilton Garden Inn and BancorpSouth Conference Center visit www.tupelo.stayhgi.com.

SAVE THE DATE

2008-2009 CDF ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, April 30, 2009 6:30 p.m.

MISSISSIPPI FURNITURE

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Tuesday, March 31, 2009
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For more information call (662) 842-4521

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Deborah Tierce has motivated thousands to become better leaders, more effective communicators, and more productive workers through her courses and speaking engagements. She is a Leadership Skills Specialist and speaks nationwide on the topics of motivation and self-management. She has trained scores of Fortune 500 employees, managers, and executives on how to motivate themselves and others to get more out of life by serving with the best they have to offer.



Test Yourself: What Your Personality Says About You

Would you like to better understand your personality and personalities of your peers and co-workers? Are you interested in learning how prospective employees match up with job opportunities within your company? If so, The PACExam is available to you.

The PACExam (The Personality, Ambition, and Character Exam), a new endeavor offered by The PACE Group, was developed by John Lovorn, President and CEO, and Daniel Logan, Chief Operating Officer of The PACE Group, as an alternative means for personality profiling. This test was designed with the concept that every individual has a unique personality conducive to a different area of the business world.

"Other products on the market are philosophical in nature. We wanted something that focused more on the business world," Logan explains.

The PACExam evaluates an individual's person-



ality in relation to four business-focused categories: sales, marketing/advertising, operations, and research. The PACExam can also be used as a

self-assessment to recognize areas for improvement.

From now through March 31, 2009, The PACExam is being offered free of charge. Simply visit the website www.pacetest.com, choose "Take the PACExam," and enter the requested log-in information, including the free password GOPACE and the promo code CDF. The test takes approximately five to ten minutes to complete, and results appear immediately.

The PACE Group, a Tupelo-based company, provides executive search services for economic development, chambers of commerce, health care, and private sector positions to a network of professionals in 41 states and over 400 communities.

For more information or to provide feedback on The PACExam, please direct all questions and comments to pace@pacetest.com.

**Mark Your Calendar
First Friday**

Friday, April 3, 2009

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Redmagnet – 10 years and counting

When Redmagnet, Inc. was founded 10 years ago, technology and the internet as we know it today, was vastly different. Those were the days of high-tech stocks, global tech investments, IPO's, and, in our area, dial-up internet access. Over the years, businesses have adapted to become more agile and quick to accept new technologies. This has led to the expansion of Information Technology needs in small and mid-size businesses. This growth, coupled with expanded technology needs in North Mississippi has been Redmagnet's focus: providing PC support to Web design to network management.

"Technology solutions are constantly evolving. Implementation of new technology must be balanced with cost benefit. Assisting our clients in achieving that balance has been, and will continue to be our objective," said Eric Gibens, owner, Redmagnet and Gibens Creative Group.

As broadband Internet access became available in the area, Redmagnet discontinued dial-up service and expanded its web and email hosting services. As their client's needs change, Redmagnet adapts to support new client focus.

Current economic conditions have brought outsourcing IT to the forefront as decision makers are looking to protect their investment while continuing on a competitive path.

In 2007 Redmagnet formed Gibens Creative Group, an integrated design and advertising firm. This division has realized tremendous growth as businesses become more focused on specific marketing efforts in the new economy. As Redmagnet's web and email hosting grew, the need to strengthen the client tools became an opportunity. In mid-2008, Redmagnet, working with Rackspace, a national leader in managed dedicated server hosting, began expanding hosting services available to its clients. Redmagnet is now a Rackspace Network Partner. This partnership provides Redmagnet's small and mid-size business clients access to the same level of infrastructure and competitive advantage that large corporations enjoy at prices that have been relatively unchanged over the past few years.

In addition to Redmagnet's web and email hosting services, they offer full technology solutions including: Desktop Technical Support, Server / Network Support and Management, Custom Programming, Apple® Software and Hardware Support, Advertising and Integrated Design Concepts through Gibens Creative Group.

For more information on the services offered by Redmagnet, please call 662.840.2992. Gibens Creative Group may be reached at 662.844.9007.

FIRST FRIDAY



The February First Friday networking meeting featured guest speaker Dr. Mark Keenum, President, Mississippi State University. The program was sponsored by Cellular South.

TUPELO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



The February TYP event was held at Old Venice Pizza Company in Tupelo. Participants were treated to food, door prizes, and a wine tasting, courtesy of Old Venice Pizza Company. With over 85 TYPs in attendance, the group participated in a networking activity to meet other young professionals. Pictured are TYP members networking during the event.

CDF to Publish Annual Community Magazine in Print and Online

imagestupelo.com

The 2009-10 edition of *Images Tupelo*, a community magazine sponsored by the Community Development Foundation, will publish in August.

Images Tupelo showcases the best of Tupelo through its people, places and progressive business climate. With original photography and editorial features, the 2009-10 publication will focus on specific areas of education, the arts, sports and recreation, health care, commerce and quality of life. It will be used all year for the purpose of promoting the community to prospective residents, new businesses and visitors.

Members will have the opportunity to reserve advertising space soon. More than 10,000 copies of the magazine will be distributed through the CDF and key local businesses, as well as at trade shows, conferences and events throughout the year.

To create a quality guide like *Images Tupelo*, the CDF partners with Journal Communications (jnlcom.com), an award-winning custom publisher of community and specialty magazines with clients in more than 30 states.

To learn how to be included in *Images Tupelo*, contact Andrea Joiner (662) 842-4521 or by e-mail at ajoiner@jnlcom.com.

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■ The Ambassadors are a prestigious group of individuals, from the CDF member investors, who volunteer to enhance communication between the CDF and its membership. More importantly, the Ambassadors are a vital link in helping the CDF understand the needs of its membership.

■ Ambassadors are required to attend events such as First Friday, groundbreakings, ribbon cuttings, and any other functions in support of the CDF. Ambassadors should be a professional in a position which allows flexibility to meet the requirements of participation in the Ambassadors Club. He/She should be interested in community involvement and be knowledgeable about CDF services and programs regarding the business community.

■ To request participation in the 2009-2010 CDF Ambassador's Club or for more information, please contact Jennie Bradford Curlee at 662.842.4521 or jcurlee@cdfms.org.



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Application for Membership

Please tell us about your organization

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City, State, Zip Code

Physical Address (if different)

City, State, Zip Code

Website

Number of Employees

Category (list located on the back of this application)

Keywords (choose up to 10 words that describe your business)

Main Contact (will receive all chamber correspondence)

Contact Name

Title

Phone

Toll-free phone

Fax

E-mail address

Additional Contact

Name

Title

E-mail

Areas of Interest (please circle your selections)

Ambassadors

Business Roundtable

Leadership Program

Tupelo Young Professionals

Do we have your permission to use your photos in our chamber publication(s)?

__Yes __No

Signature and title of authorized person with your company

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Awards

Continued from Page 3

teer of the year for her work with the tourism council, which included helping to launch Trash & Treasures in 2007.

The Governor's Conference, co-sponsored by the Mississippi Tourism Association and the tourism division of the Mississippi Development Authority, was held in Hattiesburg from Feb. 15-17 and attended by innkeepers, restaurateurs, community tourism officials, tourism attraction operators, state agency officials, tourism educators and other representatives of the hospitality industry.

This year's conference was centered around the theme of "a cultural masterpiece" and featured sessions on eco-friendly tourism, destination weddings, culinary tourism and agritourism, among others.

Tupelo will host the 2010 Governor's Conference on Tourism. It will be the first time in 18 years that the city has hosted the event.

"It's nice to be recognized statewide ... because we attract people from all over the state."

Hugh Stump

Executive director of Oxford's CVB.

STATE TO HELP PONTOTOC, ABERDEEN WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM EFFORTS

BUSINESS JOURNAL REPORTS

JACKSON - The Mississippi Development Authority's tourism division in February added five communities, including Pontotoc and Aberdeen, to its Certified Cultural Corners program.

The designation is awarded to towns with a population of less than 20,000 to preserve and promote their cultural heritage significance. It includes a \$10,000 grant.

Along with the two Northeast Mississippi communities, Rolling Fork, Port Gibson and Bay St. Louis were added this year to the program.

The MDA Tourism Bureau of Film and Culture established the Certified Cultural Corners program in 2008 to identify communities in Mississippi that have cultural heritage assets of

national significance in at least two of the following areas: American Indian heritage, art and architecture, Civil War history, Civil Rights history, culinary culture, literary heritage and musical heritage.

Pontotoc and Aberdeen were both recognized for their significant assets relating to the Civil War and art and architecture.

The communities join the 2008 inductees of Cleveland, Holly Springs, Ocean Springs, Philadelphia and Woodville.

The next step is to conduct meetings where community leaders will participate in their initial cultural heritage assessment and begin making plans to enhance their areas of cultural heritage significance.



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Times

Continued from Page 2

in Lee County in fiscal year 2008. The MDA's research department estimates that 86.5 percent of the county expenditures were in Tupelo.

In addition, during the time period, 3,655 people were directly employed by the tourism industry in Lee County.

Johnson said the key to keeping the hospitality industry successful this year will be customer service that will retain customers and lure new ones.

She said any time a ticket is purchased, a meal is served or a lodging is booked, tourism professionals have the "opportunity to gain a customer for a lifetime of experiences."

"As we stress at the CVB, excellent customer service creates repeat business while poor customer service drives people away, never to return," she wrote in the letter.

"Repeat business" is part of why the MDA considers

tourism "one of Mississippi's largest export industries." When tourists visit the state and return home, MDA officials say they are likely to become brand ambassadors for Mississippi if they had a good visit with good customer service. The results could mean a second visit, new tourists or new business ventures.

Along with customer service, Johnson said the tourism and travel industry this year must market more strategically and rely more heavily on partnerships. In Tupelo, she cited partnerships with the state's Blues trail, in addition to the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the Natchez Trace Compact and the Tupelo Film Commission.

"Although we may be bombarded with news about financial turbulence, let's make plans to move forward, by working together to provide meaningful and memorable experiences for the citizens of Tupelo, the State of Mississippi, the nation and the world," she wrote.

Contact **Carlie Kollath** at (662) 678-1598 or carlie.kollath@djjournal.com.

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