



## MADISON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MCEDA) REPORT



*Tim Coursey*

We often hear folks talking about how “things have changed”. Usually these folks are not so much talking about positive change either, like when they complain how their cell phone now has them essentially on call 24 hours a day or that a gallon of gas cost more today than the minimum wage was in 1990. Ah the good ole days, no cell phones, cheap gas, no Facebook, no Twitter, no internet, no email. Wait...No Facebook, No Twitter! How in the world did we survive without the internet?

My first professional job out of graduate school was with the Lamar County Economic Development District where I held the newly created position of Executive Director. I actually wore two hats since I was also the County's first Planner. Our first economic development office was in a back storage room at the Tax Collectors office in a renovated old bank building. I had a desk and a phone...that's it. No computer, no internet, no cell phone. We made progress nonetheless because that's the way it was. But let me tell you, from a technology perspective, those were not the good ole days.

Imagine all the time we could have saved and spent on our primary tasks if we had today's technology rather than having to spend so much time with snail mail, developing hard copy proposals and in my case drawing maps by hand. Thank goodness for the cartography classes I took in undergraduate school.

I say all this because I guess when it comes to technology in the office I look at the glass as being half full. Think about it, in just about 10 seconds or so, you can pull up a digital high resolution satellite image on Google Earth and by using the historical imagery slider you can look back in time at the area I was mapping back in the early nineties. Pretty cool technology. This would have been impossible even ten years ago. So, having come from humble beginnings in the economic development business I appreciate technology now more than ever because of the time saving leverage it affords us. Let me give you some examples relative to our work at MCEDA.

Panther Creek Commerce Center – Our 2000 acre Mega Site with 1000 “Qualified” acres. Several efforts are in process that will allow us to reduce the time needed to secure critical development

permits in advance and in order to fast track any high economic impact project and break ground within the shortest timeframe. Geographic Information Systems and modern Civil Engineering technologies make this possible. By today's standards, qualifying a mega site would have been impossible twenty years ago and even ten years ago it would have been cost prohibitive.

We are developing several new videos as part of an enhanced marketing strategy for Panther Creek and in an effort to help our existing businesses by creating several “talent” attraction/recruitment videos. These high quality digital documentary style video products and the targeted social media and email campaigns that will coincide with their release would be impossible and too expensive for MCEDA to even consider just five years ago.

So the next time your PC locks up at 4:45 PM when your proposal is due by close of business, be thankful you can just reboot (or get a Mac like I did).

## MADISON COUNTY SCHOOLS REPORT



*Dr. Ronnie McGehee*

Throughout the country, many erroneously believe that Mississippi ranks last in everything. Nothing could be further from the truth, especially in Madison County, Mississippi. The name “Madison” is synonymous with “excellence”, and nowhere is excellence more evident than in our schools.

Madison County Schools is large and diverse with 12, 587 students, 23 schools and 1500 employees. Madison County is one of the top-performing, fastest growing districts in the state.

### On average, our District boasts:

- Level “A” accreditation, the highest scoring county district in the state
- 28 National Merit Scholars, the highest number of any public, private, or parochial high school in the state
- 126 National Board certified teachers
- Average ACT score of 21.7 which is above the national average of 21
- 187 course offerings including 17 advanced placement and 14 accelerated courses
- Graduation rate of 86.2%
- Over \$35 million in scholarship money awarded to graduating seniors
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) course offerings in all middle schools, with 107 students placing in national competitions
- 1:M Digital Initiative which places an Apple laptop in the hands of every teacher in the district, and all students in grades 9-12 districtwide

- A gifted program which begins in elementary school, along with a full range of programs for students with special needs
- The largest high school mentoring program in the state, which serves as a national model
- 24 athletic program offerings with state championships in soccer, football, baseball, basketball, softball, swimming, track, power lifting, and volleyball
- Superior ratings in band and choral music programs, an elementary strings program, and state-of-the-art Performing Arts Complexes

Madison County Schools has completed \$241 million dollars of school construction in the past 12 years. Thirteen new schools in twelve years is as remarkable as the unprecedented growth that the District has seen during the same time period. Census figures indicate that Madison County has grown roughly 27.5% in the past 10 years, with even greater growth in the Madison County School District.

While the Madison County School District is the fifth largest school district in the state, it has maintained the one of the lowest operating millage rates in the metro area. School taxes have not gone up in ten years and the last \$61 million school bond referendum, which passed with a 91% approval rating, required no tax increase. Administrative costs in the District are the second lowest in the entire state and the per pupil expenditure is lower than the state average. But, Madison County, along with every other district in the state, has been seriously impacted by six straight years of inadequate funding

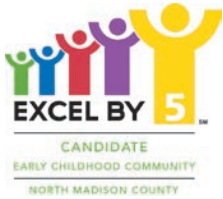
of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program. For this reason, we have joined a petition drive asking the Legislature to pass an amendment requiring provision for the support of an adequate and efficient system of free public education, by fully funding the Mississippi Adequate Education Program. We will be offering opportunities for you to sign this petition, and we encourage you to support this initiative.

On behalf of Madison County Schools, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to you – the communities of Madison County. We know that you have educational options, and we deeply appreciate that you have chosen Madison County Schools. Thank you for your enthusiastic support, pride in our accomplishments, and confidence in our ability to provide your children with the best education possible. We pledge to continue our tradition of educational excellence, while remaining vigilant and responsible when it comes to spending your money. We know you agree that a sound public education system is the key to a progressive, flourishing community; and that educational excellence is a top priority that benefits all of us.

Looking forward to seeing you during the 2014-15 school year,

*Dr. Ronnie McGehee, Superintendent,  
Madison County Schools are a SCHOOL/  
GOVERNMENT Member of the MCBL.*

## THE NORTH MADISON COUNTY EXCEL BY 5 COALITION PARTNERED WITH THE MADISON COUNTY BUSINESS LEAGUE



The North Madison County Excel By 5 Coalition partnered with the Madison County Business League, MCEDA, United Way of the Capital Area and the Canton Chamber Main Street Association

to host a ribbon cutting for the Central MS Child Care Resource & Referral Center on Wednesday, April 9, 2014, at the historic old Madison County Courthouse in Canton, MS. Special guest was Mississippi's First Lady Deborah Bryant. A group of 100 members, elected and appointed officials and guests attended the event.

The Mississippi State University Extension Service Central Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Center, located in the historic old Madison County Courthouse in Canton, offers parents, early care and education providers, students,



and community members the opportunity to check out educational books and materials free of charge. They also maintain a database of information about licensed child care centers and family child care providers to help families locate child care based on each family's needs and interests. For more information and hours of operation, please call 601-859-9730 or [www.madisoncountybusinessleague.com/excel-by-5](http://www.madisoncountybusinessleague.com/excel-by-5)

## NORTH MADISON COUNTY EXCEL BY 5 AWARDED GRANT!

The Community Foundation of Greater Jackson announced that a grant totaling \$1,108.62 was awarded to United Way of the Capitol Area, Inc. for North Madison County Excel By 5 from the ChemFirst/First Mississippi Corporation Charitable Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson.

## THE MADISON COUNTY CREATIVE ECONOMY COUNCIL



The Madison County Creative Economy Council (MCCEC) was formed in the fall of 2011. Members include the Canton Chamber Main Street Association, Flora Area Chamber of Commerce, Madison County Chamber of Commerce, Madison the City Chamber of Commerce, Ridgeland Chamber of Commerce, Canton Convention & Visitors Bureau & Film Studio, Ridgeland Tourism, Madison County Foundation, MCEDA, MS Crafts Museum, Susan Marquez Consulting, and the MCBL. Its mission is to bring awareness to the creative economy in Madison County and to promote Madison County as a whole through the collaboration of its membership. The MCCEC has hosted (2) county wide Business after Hours events, a Holiday Open House, and created the MCCEC website featuring creative businesses/individuals, attractions, events, and a community calendar.

Our vision is to make this website a comprehensive "go to" portal for all Madison County attractions, events, and meetings. This quality of life website can be utilized by the community and site selectors. The MCCEC wants to share all the wonderful things we have happening in Madison County! WE NEED YOUR HELP in building content. For more information on how you can post information about a company/church/city/county/club event on the community calendar, please contact [collins.jan01@gmail.com](mailto:collins.jan01@gmail.com).

The MCCEC wants to thank the Madison County Board of Supervisors for their support of this project.

[www.madisoncountycreativeeconomy.com](http://www.madisoncountycreativeeconomy.com)

## 2014-15 YOUTH LEADERSHIP SELECTION



2014-15 YL Committee



2013-14 YL Class

school administration in Madison County plus New Summit School and Jackson Academy is asked to select (2) of the best and brightest juniors to represent their respective school. These students should be not only academic but well rounded participating in either sports, music, extra-curricular activities, community service or leadership. The Youth Leadership Committee has added another requirement for the 2014-15 class – the student must reside in Madison County! Letters to the high school administration will be mailed in late July or early August asking for representatives for this fall's program.



As the YL program has grown in respect, many parents and MCBL members have contacted me to find out the criteria for a student's selection into the 2014-15

Madison County Youth Leadership Class. Each public, private and parochial high

## SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE PHILIP GUNN WAS GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE 2014 LEAGUE & LEGISLATURE LUNCHEON



Gunn was the keynote speaker. Pinelake Church - Madison Campus Pastor Ken Murphy opened the meeting with prayer. Senator John Horhn lead the guests in the pledge of allegiance to the American flag followed by the Madison Central High School Mixed Ensemble singing the national anthem.

MCBL Chairman Sherry Chance introduced the 2013-14 Madison County Youth Leadership Class and presented gifts to the local college and university students who participated as mentors for the program. Government Relations Chairman Philip Buffington recognized the Madison County legislators for their dedication, service and support. Representative Rita Martinson introduced the keynote speaker. In addition to Speaker Gunn, Senator Horhn and Representative Martinson, Senator Will Longwitz, Senator Josh Harkins, Senator Buck Clarke, Senator Kenny Wayne Jones, and Rep. Bill Denny were also in attendance. The Raphael Semmes Ensemble provided music. Fresh Cut Catering and Floral catered the event.

*View photos of the event at [www.madisoncountymbusinessleague.com](http://www.madisoncountymbusinessleague.com)*

The Madison County Business League hosted the 2014 “LEAGUE & LEGISLATURE” luncheon at the Mississippi State Capitol on Wednesday, February 26th. 225 members, guests, local and state elected officials and legislators attended the event. Speaker of the House Philip

## THINK ANEW: 2014 BEST SMALL BUSINESS TO WORK IN MISSISSIPPI



Think Anew is more than proud to announce that we have taken 1st Place Overall for the Small Business Category (1 – 50 employees) in Mississippi Business Journal’s 2014 “Best Places to Work in Mississippi.” This is a huge accomplishment to accompany a record year of growth and announcements for future business. With this award, it’s another show of how Think Anew is changing the landscape in unprecedented ways in a growing industry. Think Anew’s employees show that they are engaged, empowered, and ever ready to ride this wave of success pushed along with hard work and unique dedication. We are proud to be recognized as a company that is raising the bar of excellence in our state’s business climate.

commitment to our clients, unrivaled customer support, custom solutions, and state of the art technologies are all reasons for this growth. Even with such a rapid clientele expansion, Think Anew maintains a 100 percent customer-retention rate.

While our client’s business specialties continue to evolve, our corporate focus has been in the Long Term Care segment. Our experience and expertise affords us the firsthand knowledge of the unique needs of LTC Management Companies and Facilities. Think Anew follows and understands the evolving Governmental requirements and regulations. We work on all sides of the IT Solutions field, and we treat all of our customers in a unique way, custom to their specific needs.



Think Anew is an IT Infrastructure and Management Services company founded in 2007. We are a debt free, Mississippi based company with operations spanning over thirteen states. Our corporate office is located in Madison, Mississippi, with 3 satellite offices spanning south and into Alabama. In the last 4 years our company has grown over 230 percent, with zero advertising or marketing other than word of mouth from clients and partners. Our

ThinkANEW is a PLATINUM Sponsor of the MCBL.

## NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Madison County Business League is proud to announce the results of the recent Board of Directors Election. Newly elected directors are Phil Buffington, Adams & Reese; Brad Maley, BancorpSouth; and Brad McMullan, [bfac.com](http://bfac.com). They will each serve (4) year terms beginning May 2014.

These gentlemen join Directors Dean Sherry Chance, Tulane University; Bob Williams, Office of Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney & MCEDA BOD; Tina Lakey, CenterPoint Energy; Sidney Allen, Butler Snow; Sam Kelly, Brunini; Nicole Kemp, Levi Strauss & Company; Dr. Don Burnham, Holmes CC; Calvin Harris, Warnock & Associates & MCEDA BOD; Bill Guion, BankPlus & MCEDA BOD; Dick Hutchinson, MCEDA BOD; Terrell Knight, C Spire Wireless; and Glen Silverman, Crossgates River Oaks Hospital. Former Chairman Todd Burwell is an advisor to the board.

The Madison County Business League is very proud and grateful for the service of retiring Directors Jennifer Sinclair, St. Dominic Hospital; and James Pettis, Wyatt Tarrant & Combs, PLLC.



*Phil Buffington*

Phil Buffington joined Adams and Reese in 2011 in the Transactions Practice Group, practicing in the firm's Jackson office. He has been practicing law since 1984 in transactions, and has extensive experience in representing financial institutions. Phil currently serves as the Partner-in-Charge of the Jackson office of Adams and Reese LLP and also serves as the Co-Leader of the firm's Banking and Finance Team.

In the legal arena, Phil is a member of the American Bar Association, including the Banking Law Committee. He is also a member of the Business Law Section of the Mississippi Bar Association. He also is a member of the Independent Community Bankers Association, the American Bankruptcy Institute, and the International Association of Defense Counsel.

Phil serves as an adjunct professor at Mississippi College School of Law, and is a former President of the Mississippi College School of Law Alumni. He earned his J.D. from Mississippi College School of Law in 1984. He earned a double major in banking and finance/insurance at University of Mississippi, earning a B.B.A. in 1981.

In the community, Phil is heavily involved with St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, currently serving as a Vestry Member and having served in various positions and on numerous committees. In addition, Phil serves as the chairperson of the Government Relations Committee for the Madison County Business League. In the past, he has also served on various nonprofit organizations boards, including serving as a former board member of Jackson Futbol Club, Inc. and Habitat for Humanity/Metro Jackson, Inc. Adams & Reese is GOLD Sponsor of the MCBL.



*Brad Maley*

Brad Maley is North Metro President in BancorpSouth's Mid Mississippi Division. He is responsible for managing operations in the Madison County and North Metro markets. Brad began his banking career in 1996. He has served many roles over the past 18 years including: Credit Analysis, Retail Management, Private Banking, Public Finance and Market Management. Brad received a degree in Managerial Finance from the University of Mississippi and a Master of Business Administration from Mississippi College. He holds NASD Series 7 and Series 66 securities licenses and has successfully completed the Mississippi School of Banking and the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.

Brad is an active member of the community. He currently serves on the boards of the Mississippi Children's Home Services and Mississippi Council on Economic Education. In addition to his board responsibilities, Brad sits on the Business League's Government Relations Committee for Madison County. Brad is past President of the Madison City Chamber of Commerce, Past Trustee for the MS Nurses Foundation, a graduate of Leadership Mississippi, a graduate of Leadership Greater Jackson and was named to the Mississippi Business Journal's Top 40 Under 40 in 2010. He is married to Olivia Holmes of Meridian and will celebrate 16 years of marriage this year. Brad is a devoted father and a strong supporter of youth athletics, previously coaching in Madison Ridgeland Youth Leagues, Jackson Futbol Club and NJYBB. BancorpSouth is a PLATINUM Sponsor of the MCBL.



*Brad McMullan*

This father of three is the host of his own soon to be released late night TV show and the CEO of two award winning technology companies. McMullan is the founder and CEO and founder of bfac, LLC and Texting Leader, LLC., two technology companies own or operate more than 120 websites/domains including [bfac.com](http://bfac.com), [textingleader.com](http://textingleader.com), [BuyFromAChristian.com](http://BuyFromAChristian.com), [WeddingTexting.com](http://WeddingTexting.com) and [CollegeGarageSale.com](http://CollegeGarageSale.com).

Today, [bfac.com](http://bfac.com) is the #1 ranked Business Texting Company according to Google and Bing. The company ranks #1 out of more than 16 million listings when you search business texting companies. Media outlets around the country have featured [bfac.com](http://bfac.com), including NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, Clear Channel Radio, Raycom Media, The Radio People and Gannett publishing.

[bfac.com](http://bfac.com) is also the #1 mobile app publisher in Mississippi (Apple) and one of the fastest growing mobile app design companies in North America. [bfac.com](http://bfac.com) has built apps for a number of companies and organizations including Chick-fil-A, Back Yard

Burger, 7-Eleven, AT&T Ozarka Water, Pepsi and F.C.A. (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). [TextingLeader.com](http://TextingLeader.com) is also an award winning business texting and mobile app technology company. [TextingLeader.com](http://TextingLeader.com) boasts clients all over the world.

Under McMullan's leadership, [TextingLeader.com](http://TextingLeader.com) won the 2012 MTA New Venture Challenge. One year earlier, [bfac.com](http://bfac.com) won the 2011 MTA New Venture Challenge. It marked the first time a CEO guided two different companies to the victory. The award highlights the best commercial technology company. For his success in growing [bfac](http://bfac.com), LLC and Texting Leader, LLC, McMullan was voted the Executive of the Year by the Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

In April 2013, McMullan was named the Community Advocate of the Year by New Horizon International Church for his work with non-profit organizations. McMullan is an active volunteer for multiple organizations and serves as the Chairman of the Mississippi Salvation Army Advisory Board. McMullan also serves as a deacon at Broadmoor Baptist Church.

When he is not running his company or working in the community, McMullan can usually be found on the speaking circuit. McMullan is also known by many as an Emmy Award Winning Journalist. In April 2011, McMullan and his former WAPT colleagues were recognized with an Edward R. Murrow Award and another Emmy nomination (McMullan's fifth). McMullan has interviewed a number of newsmakers including President Obama, Former President George W. Bush, Former Vice President Dick Cheney, Former President George H. Bush, Sen. John McCain, J.C. Watts, Oliver North, and Rudy Giuliani. McMullan's work has been featured on Real Sports with Bryant Gumble (HBO), The History Channel, CNN, and in a number of newspapers including the Washington Post.

McMullan is a graduate of Norman High School and The University of Oklahoma. While at OU, McMullan was elected student body president and was selected by Project Interchange as one of only 13-student body presidents nationwide for a leadership seminar in Israel. During the fall, McMullan can be heard on Mississippi's #1 rated high school football radio show, "The Mississippi Scoreboard with Brad McMullan." The Clear Channel Radio show airs during the football season on Miss 103 FM WMSI, [miss103.com](http://miss103.com) and on the i heart radio app. [Bfac.com](http://bfac.com) is a GOLD Sponsor of the MCBL.

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT FROM SEN. WILL LONGWITZ



Senator  
Will Longwitz

Madison County benefited from laws the legislature passed this year. These laws will directly affect job creation, and will help make Madison County and the entire state a better place to do business and to live, work, worship and play.

### Responsible Budgeting

We have changed the way the legislature works. For the last three years, we have finished early, passed conservative budgets and paid off more than we borrowed. Our goal is to control spending and to reduce the burden of debt on future generations, and we are succeeding.

When we did spend, it benefited Madison County. \$1,000,000 in new bond money will help expand Madison Avenue, relieving traffic and making your commute easier by connecting Highway 51 to Interstate 55.

### Jobs & Industry

When I authored a bill last session to increase Madison County's bonding authority, I could not imagine Nissan would move so quickly. Please go see the new 1.5 million square foot supplier park under construction. This is a prime example of the legislature creating the right climate for job creation in Madison County.

### Business Climate

The world needs to know Mississippi is a great

place to do business, and that we will not allow the harmful effects of union activity. Under new laws, an organization, corporation or individual cannot damage a business's property and products or threaten to damage, harass or coerce a business or individual into surrendering their rights under federal labor law. You now cannot force employees into neutrality agreements, card check agreements or collective bargaining. Organizers now cannot use picketing or objects, to block a business's sidewalk, entrance or exit, or a private residence, as part of a labor dispute. Also, employers may now inquire about criminal history in background checks. Finally, cities and counties cannot use ordinances, zoning, licensure or conditions of a procurement to force employers to use organized labor.

To help business, we passed lien rights for subcontractors and other professionals in the building industry. This gives much-needed certainty to employers, borrowers and construction lenders.

We reformed the state's tax code to remove some of the burden from taxpayers. We improved the tax appeals process and we put the burden on the Department of Revenue to show they are using the right method of estimating your tax debt. And taxpayers will no longer have to post bond when appealing a decision.

We took important steps toward updating and modernizing our trust laws. This will help

individuals and charities that create trusts and will also help keep investment dollars here.

We made it easier to reserve business names and we created a single step process to either allow an out-of-state business to reorganize here or convert into another type of entity.

We also passed a \$1 million expansion relocation tax credit for actual relocation costs to any existing business that expands their labor force and moves jobs to Mississippi.

Last, we gave our many commercial real estate brokers a lien to protect them when they don't get paid their commission under a contract for sale or lease.

I hope you will see from this summary that your legislature is working hard. I also hope you will see that I am at the Capitol to work, not for the social life. I am there to draft bills and pass laws that help Madison County grow. I appreciate the chance you give me to represent you and to work with Gov. Phil Bryant, Speaker Philip Gunn and Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves. Please visit [WillLongwitz.com](http://WillLongwitz.com) for more information on these and other laws we have passed.

## MADISON COUNTY BUSINESS LEAGUE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

MAY 2014



Phil Buffington

As everyone knows, the 2014 Legislative Session came to an end in April of this year. There were many accomplishments achieved during the session thanks to the hard work of numerous people. As you may recall, the final legislative agenda for the Madison County Business League ("MCBL") was as follows:

1. Connector roads;
2. Issues affecting public schools in Madison County;
3. Citizens for Economic Development Act;
4. Additional enhancements under the Healthcare Industry Zone Act; and
5. Creation of a circuit court district for Madison County, including the addition of one circuit court judge and a new district attorney.

While there was no major legislation regarding these issues, the MCBL played a role in providing information to its members and the general public on all of these issues. However, it should be noted that the legislature passed a teacher pay raise this session.

In addition, the MCBL developed a process by which key issues concerning Madison County can be identified and supported during future legislative sessions. We believe this process was successful this year and hope to continue that process in the future in helping identify the issues of importance to the elected officials in Madison County and the membership of the MCBL.

Through this process, the Executive Committee and Government Relations Committee of the MCBL will seek input from elected officials regarding the priorities for Madison County's legislative agenda. We believe this process was successful this year and will continue to be beneficial not only to the elected officials, but also to the MCBL and its membership. We look forward to continuing to work with all of our elected officials for the further development of Madison County.

*Phil Buffington serves as the MCBL Government Relations Committee Chairman*