



# W A E M

West Alabama – East Mississippi

## Enterprise-Ready

February 2008

### MDA Announces MyBiz Entrepreneur Network Grant

JACKSON, MS -- Gray Swoope, executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) announced major funding on January 30th for the MyBiz Entrepreneur Network, a new initiative to connect entrepreneurs with local, state and federal resources to help their businesses.

“The MyBiz Entrepreneur Network will spur the growth of small businesses across the state of Mississippi by connecting entrepreneurs to Small Business Development Centers, MDA’s Minority Enterprise and Entrepreneur programs, college training programs, community development corporations and funding opportunities,” said Swoope. MDA’s funding will offer MyBiz services to low and moderate income communities across the state and Katrina-impacted communities in the coastal area.

Piloted by the West Alabama-East Mississippi WIRED Initiative, this unique program is designed to connect communities and entrepreneurs to the programs, services and organizations that support small business development. MyBiz is partnering with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, the Mississippi Technology Alliance and the state’s network of community and junior colleges to build a comprehensive approach to entrepreneur development, education, training and financing.

Swoope added, “Our community colleges will play an integral role in the MyBiz Network by identifying lead entities in each community, pinpointing information important to small business owners and distributing information to connect directly with entrepreneurs.”



*Gray Swoope, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, as he makes the announcement for additional funding for the MyBiz Entrepreneur Network.*

Currently, four of the state’s 15 community colleges are already engaged in MyBiz services through the WIRED Initiative. MDA will invest \$627,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to extend the MyBiz Entrepreneur Network across the state. The Montgomery Institute in Meridian will administer the program.

Internet-based tools will also be available to entrepreneurs through the program’s web site at



**MyBiz**.am

the entrepreneur *SourceLink* for Alabama and Mississippi



## New JCJC Learning Center in Bay Springs Offers Opportunities

ELLISVILLE, MS -- The first Jones County Junior College Learning Center of its kind was opened in Bay Springs with a lot of expectations. The partnership between county and city officials and JCJC marks the beginning of new opportunities for the area.

“(Improving) literacy is one of our strategic planning goals,” said Jasper County Supervisor, Johnny Rowell. “We want jobs to come to Jasper County. We all know someone who needs training. Let’s encourage them to come so we can compete regionally.”

The new Learning Center is an opportunity for Jasper County residents to get an education and training. “We want to make it easy for people to access training,” said JCJC President, Dr. Jesse Smith. “This will have a direct impact on the economy.”

Services offered at the new center, located at 439 Highway 18, in Bay Springs include free GED classes, computer classes, pre-employment testing, and technical training. In addition, the center will offer a career pathway leading to a certificate or two-year degree and ultimately increase adult training and job related skills for industries in Mississippi.

The center will also be capable of offering the new “any-time, anywhere” virtual workforce training system (a product of the WAEM Initiative) as part of the center’s online offerings. This innovative system allows the user to access training to fit the user’s schedule, not a specific class schedule. Participants can use this online training system to attain the new Modern, Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Certification.

Created by the Amatrol Corporation and purchased through WAEM WIRED funding, the E-Learning training system consists of more than 450 advanced manufacturing training modules that assess technical knowledge, track technical instruction and practice, and require authenticated skills performance.

“This center is dedicated to the adult learner. We can help adults brush up on skills, customize training, and offer classes on line in an effort to get a liberal arts degree. I hope you tell as many people as you can so they can take advantage of this opportunity,” said JCJC

Dean of the Advanced Technology Center, Dr. Shannon Campbell.

JCJC instructors will provide services from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday. State Senator Haskins Montgomery said he hopes services will quickly have to expand because of the demand. “We can grow as fast as we want and Jones will provide the resources. I hope we have to have a satellite campus one day soon because of the demand.”

Bay Springs businessman, Jody Fail challenged Jasper Countians to utilize the learning facility. “Education is the best thing we have here. We have a good workforce but if we can get them even more training, it would be even better. You can live better with a better education,” stated Fail, Telephone Electronics Corporation President and Chairman of Omni Bank.

Jones has plans to open similar facilities in each of its eight county district. For more information about the new JCJC learning center in Bay Springs call 601-764-9393.



*JCJC and Jasper County officials and friends cut the ribbon to officially open the first JCJC Learning Center. The center opened in Bay Springs with plans to open more Learning Centers in the JCJC district.*

*Pictured left to right are: JCJC Learning Center teachers, Annie Page and Mark Brown; Jasper County Supervisor, Lonnie Thigpen; Jasper County Supervisor, Billy Helms; State Senator Haskins Montgomery; President of Telephone Electronics Corporation and Chairman of Omni Bank, Jody Fail; JCJC President, Dr. Jesse Smith; JCJC Dean of the Advanced Technology Center, Dr. Shannon Campbell; Hol-Mac President, Charles Holder; JCJC Jasper County Learning Center and Community Development Facilitator, Lela Bryan; Jasper County Supervisor, Henry Hayes; Jasper County Supervisor, Johnny Rowell; Jasper County Supervisor, Curtis Gray; JCJC Board Member Sonny McDonald; JCJC ABE Director, Jennifer Griffith*

## WAEM Alliance Formed

MERIDIAN, MS -- Eight community and junior colleges in West Alabama and East Mississippi joined forces Friday, January 11, 2008 to build an innovative regional workforce system. Alabama Southern Community College, Bevill State Community College, Shelton State Community College, Wallace Community College-Selma, East Central Community College, East Mississippi Community College, Jones County Junior College, and Meridian Community College joined with The Montgomery Institute to create the “WAEM Alliance.”

“The formalization of the WAEM Alliance is a vital step in assuring continuing development of our region’s workforce,” Wade Jones, President of the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation observed.

He continued, “Employers, employees and economic developers are not bound by city limits, county lines, college districts nor state lines. We consider a 65-mile commuting radius as we define workforce capacity for our existing and potential customers.”

Bill Scaggs, President of The Montgomery Institute described the Alliance as “a one-of-a-kind cross state collaboration” demonstrating “the willingness of these college leaders to work across jurisdictional lines to



*Dr. James Mitchell*  
WAEM Alliance  
President



*Dr. Scott Elliott*  
WAEM Alliance  
Vice President

build better opportunities for the people of our region.”

The WAEM Alliance adopted by-laws and elected officers: Dr. James Mitchell, President of Wallace Community College-Selma, Alliance President; Dr. Scott Elliott, President of Meridian Community College, Alliance Vice President. Each will serve a period of two years.

An initial project of the WAEM Alliance will be the issuance of a common modern multi-skilled advanced manufacturing credential called the M3. Utilizing national standards created with employer and employee input, representatives of the colleges have built a training and skill assessment system supported by internet mediated instruction.

## Position Changes with WAEM and TMI

MERIDIAN, MS -- As the month of February began, Bill Crawford once again returned to The Montgomery Institute as President.

For the past four years, Bill Crawford, founding President of The Montgomery Institute, has served as Deputy Director for Strategic Initiatives of The Mississippi Development Authority. In that office, he has served as Director of the West Alabama-East Mississippi (WAEM) Workforce Innovation in Economic Development Initiative.

Bill Scaggs who has served as Institute president since July 1, 2006 will step down as president. Bill will remain on Institute Staff as Senior Consultant.

Ken Dupre, formerly of Meridian Community College, will join The Montgomery Institute as Vice President. Ken’s work with Jones County Junior College, Meridian Community College and Small Business Development Center activities will bring added experience and energy to the rural entrepreneurship work The Montgomery Institute shares with our community college partners in Mississippi and Alabama.

These changes will facilitate the continuing region building, leader formation, workforce training, and entrepreneurship network development programs of The Montgomery Institute.

## Q & A with newly appointed Vice-President Ken Dupre

### ***What is your education background?***

B.S in Marketing from Nicholls State University (Thibodaux, LA); MBA from Mississippi College; graduate work at Mississippi State University and University of Southern Mississippi; I have taught undergraduate courses in Management, Marketing, and Quantitative Analysis and graduate courses at William Carey College in Management.

### ***What was your first connection with DOL?***

My first connection with the Department of Labor was managing a \$3.2 million National Emergency Grant (NEG) for Clarke and surrounding counties. Three major plants shut down within a 12-month period (Burlington, Nazareth-Century Mills, and A & B Industries), putting 2,010 people out of work. Through the NEG, we were able to offer job skills training and education assistance to any of the affected workers who would accept training. I quickly learned the importance of documentation to the Department of Labor auditors. After learning exactly what DOL wanted for the verification of our numbers, we created a comprehensive file system on each client, which included a copy of their picture ID along with copies of other forms, certificates earned, training records, and a contact log. Anytime any contact was made with a client (even phone calls which were not answered), we wrote the information in the log. All our work paid off, though, as both Congressman Chip Pickering and White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card referred to the Clarke County NEG as a “model” for National Emergency Grants.

### ***How did you get involved with the WAEM Initiative?***

I first heard about the WAEM WIRED Initiative while working at Jones County Junior College. Soon after, my wife was named Publisher of The Meridian Star, relocating us to Meridian. I reached out to fellow colleagues about employment opportunities in the area. The timing was just right as the openings for the two WAEM staff positions were just about to be announced. I was fortunate to be hired as the Civic Leadership Facilitator in October, 2006.

### ***How will your role with WAEM change?***

My focus has become both broader and deeper. As a Goal 1 staffer, I was primarily focused on Goal 1 activities for my area. Now, I am focusing on all four

goal areas and have been working on developing the metrics for performance reporting for the grant.

### ***Describe your new role with TMI?***

The primary focus on my work will be with the WAEM Initiative. With this ongoing work, I will be able to network throughout the region, looking for partnerships and future opportunities for The Montgomery Institute.

For the future of The Montgomery Institute, I would like to see The Montgomery Institute continue to develop a wide variety of entrepreneurship, economic, educational, and leadership training programs for civic, social, and governmental organizations in the West Alabama, East Mississippi region.

Ken is the proud father of three beautiful children: Reagan (12), Haley (10), and Christopher (5). He is married to his wife, of 14 years, Crystal, who is the Publisher of the Meridian Star. The family resides in Meridian, MS.



*Ken Dupre, The Montgomery Institute Vice President, and his wife Crystal.*

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



**Victoria Liddell** has replaced Michael Gibson at Meridian Community College as the **Community Development Facilitator**. Victoria has been with MCC for four and half years. She recently joined the WAEM staff in January. Victoria is no stranger to the WAEM Initiative having assisted the goal 2 facilitator for the past year.

Victoria is a native of the Mississippi Delta; graduating from Humphreys County High school in Belzoni. Victoria is also an Alumni of Meridian Community College, receiving her associates in business. She is currently working on her bachelor's degree at the University of West Alabama.

Victoria has a background in fund-raising, working with foundations and planned giving, as well as capital campaigns.

Victoria believes the WAEM Initiative is a great opportunity for the communities in the region. She feels the training WAEM provides will assist in becoming a highly competitive region.

**WELCOME VICTORIA!**

## Facts about the **M3** Credential

- The credential is the product of the WAEM Initiative.
- One goal of this initiative is to Certify, Credential, and Transform to a Regionally “Branded” Technical Workforce through (8) Community Colleges.
- Surveys indicate “advanced manufacturing” should be the emphasis for any workforce qualification system or credential.
- Developed with input from the industrial customer-bases of (8) community colleges.
- Instructional alignments with MSSC/NCIST.
- Amatrol E-Learning LMS – assesses technical knowledge, tracks technical instruction/practice (“anytime, anywhere”), and requires authenticated skills performance.
- Enables standardized technical qualification across a region for quantities of workforce members.
- Supplements secondary curricula, enhances career-technical programs, and creates capacity for customized training.

### Required Skills for Basic Production Levels

Blueprint Reading, Computer Fundamentals, Fundamental Technical Applications, Hand & Power Tools, Quality & Measurement.

### Required Skills for Advanced Production Levels

Basic Electrical Systems, Basic Mechanical Power Transmission Systems, Blueprint Reading, Quality & Measurement.

**Modern**  
**Multi-Skill**  
**Manufacturing**





# Monroeville & **MONROE COUNTY** CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**A REAL HOME FOR  
YOU AND YOUR  
BUSINESS!!!**

*The Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce, on the Square in Downtown Monroeville, serves the entire county and maintains information on major employers, area businesses, civic clubs, city/county officials, legislative contacts, demographics, visitor and relocation packages, and news releases. In 2004, the Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce became part of the University of Alabama's Entrepreneurial Research Network, a new small business initiative.*

*The Chamber also works with the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Planning Commission on business development, as well as with the University of South Alabama Small Business Development Center. The Chamber of Commerce also works with the Alabama Bureau of Tourism & Travel to promote tourism in the county, as well as with the Monroe County Tourism Board.*

63 N. Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Monroeville, AL 35461 251-743-2879

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

## **Current MyBiz.am Service Providers**

Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Mississippi State University Library
Alabama International Trade Center	Mississippi State University Small Business Development Center
Alabama Secretary of State – Corporations Division	Mississippi Technology Alliance Innovation Center
Alabama Small Business Administration	Mississippi Technology Alliance Readiness Level (on-line)
Alabama Virtual Library	Mississippi Virtual Library
Business Owners ToolKit (on-line)	Mississippi World Trade Center
Center for Capital Formation – Mississippi Technology Alliance	<b>Monroeville/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce</b>
Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship – Mississippi Technology Alliance	MSU Technology Resource Institute
Choctaw County Chamber of Commerce	MSU Meridian Small Business Consulting at MCC Webb Center
Community Enterprise Investments, Inc.	Neshoba County Business Enterprise Center
Crudup-Ward Women's Business Center	Northeast Mississippi Contract Procurement Center
East Central Community College Small Business Development Center	Quick MBA (on-line)
East Mississippi Business Development Corporation	SBA – Alabama
Golden Triangle Planning and Development District	SBA - Mississippi
Greater Starkville Development Partnership	Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce
Hinds County Community College International Trade Center	Selma Career Link
Internal Revenue Service (on-line)	SME Toolkit (on-line)
Jones County Junior College Small Business Development Center	Southwest Alabama Chamber of Commerce
Kauffman Venturing	The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama
Legal Services of Alabama, Selma Office	Tuscaloosa Career Link
Meridian Downtown Association	Tuscaloosa One Stop Business & Learning Center
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Small Business Development Center	University of Alabama Angelo Bruno Business Library
Mississippi Development Authority	University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center
Mississippi Manufacturing Extension Partnership	Walker Area Community Foundation
Mississippi Secretary of State – Corporations Unit	Walker County Career Center
Mississippi Small Business Administration	Walker County Economic and Industrial Development Authority
Mississippi Small Business Development Center	Women's Business Center, Mobile, AL
	Women's Center for Entrepreneurship at MUW

# The World is Different

Regional economies across the U.S. are undergoing fundamental shifts. The integration of global markets, coupled with the explosion of the Internet, has created a "perfect storm" of deep economic change. These changes are profound and irreversible.

These changes also mean different things to different people:

- Students will have to shift from rote learning to acquiring 21st century skills;
- Schools will need to explore new approaches to teaching to engage students;
- Parents will need to assume new responsibilities to set higher expectations for their children;
- Businesses will have to learn how to collaborate in order to compete;
- Colleges and universities will need to find new ways to connect with the community;
- Libraries will need to find new ways to serve as "the people's university";
- Community foundations will need to find new ways to align and leverage their grants.

In sum, we will all need to rethink what we are doing and find new ways to work together.

To thrive in this environment, we will need to implement new, more collaborative approaches to education, economic development and workforce development.

Regions that develop strong habits of collaboration will have a distinct competitive advantage. They will spot opportunities faster, align their resources faster, and act faster.

## Collaborating to Compete

Economic development and workforce development happen in the "civic space" that exists outside the four walls of any one organization. In simpler times, most communities delegated responsibilities for economic development to a single organization: typically, a chamber of commerce or an economic development authority.

On a separate track, workforce investment boards

handled investments in workforce training. And on still other tracks, our primary, secondary and post-secondary schools operated largely within their own systems.

This isolation no longer works.

To be competitive globally, West Alabama-East Mississippi must move toward an economy based on new collaborations. Here's the tricky part: Old, "go it alone" behaviors do not work well in this new environment.

The reason is simple: No one can tell anyone else what to do. A mayor cannot command the city council. The chamber of commerce cannot direct the schools. And no one can get much done at all without the support of leading citizens.

Regions that move ahead in the global game will figure out new ways to collaborate. Regions that remain stuck in old patterns will fall behind. With so much change moving the global economy forward, standing still is not an option.

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Enterprise Ready is a monthly publication of the WAEM Regional Initiative. For questions, comments, ideas, or stories for this publication contact:

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# WAEM

West Alabama-East Mississippi

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