



# ASPIRE

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## A LETTER FROM ROBERT LANDRUM

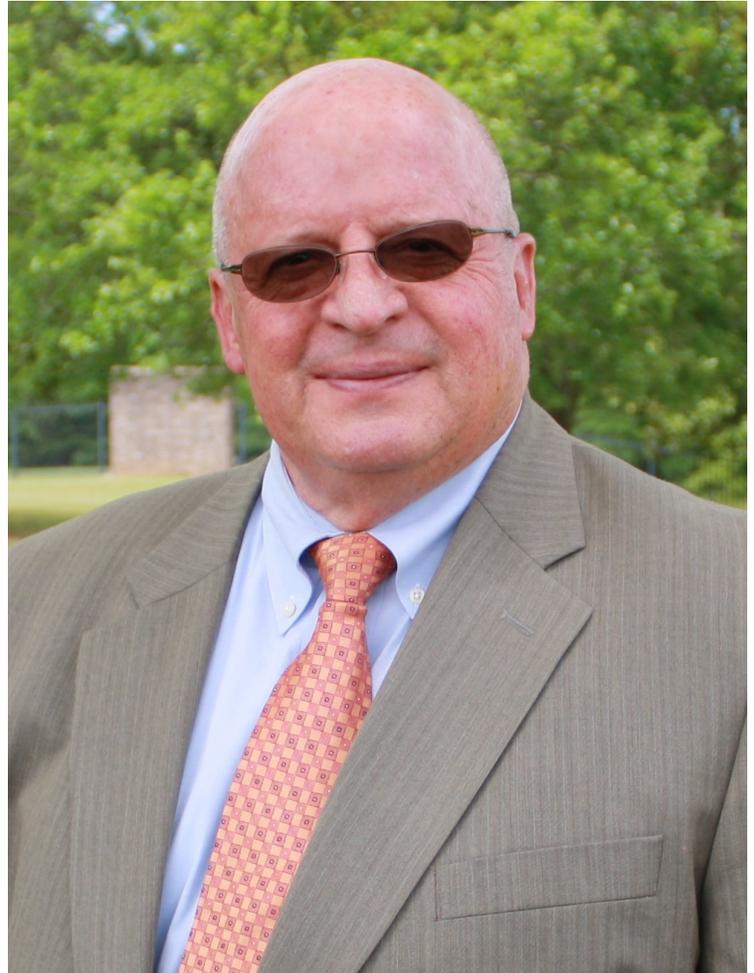
As the new chair of the Mississippi Board of Mental Health, I would like to introduce myself and respond to some recent news coverage about the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

My wife, Jennie and I were parents of a child with severe disabilities. We were life-long teachers for our entire career of 48 years. We kept our son, Josh, home for more than six years with the help of our mothers. He was a very smart little boy and knew all his ABC's and the pledge to the flag by the time he was four years old. Josh was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder known as San Flippo Syndrome, which is a progressive disease that causes profound mental retardation and decline in health. Soon the situation became overwhelming when our son started sleeping a couple of hours each night and staying up the remaining part of the night. We had to make the decision to either place him in Ellisville State School or one of us quit work and take care of him full time. He entered Ellisville State School in 1983 at six years of age. He was expected to live only to 15 years of age, but due to his excellent care at Ellisville State School and the love of his family, he lived until 23 years of age and died in 2000.

As most parents would do, we participated in the Parents and Friends Association at Ellisville State School, helping to raise funds for buses, swimming pools and many other projects. We also served as the president of the Parents and Friends organization for many years. I was appointed by Governor Fordice to the State Board of Mental Health in 1996 to represent the consumers/families and have been re-appointed by every Governor since, including Governor Bryant. It is important for me to tell you this so you will know that what I say and what I write comes from our family living and walking with our child's mental health issues, primarily developmental disabilities, for over 35 years, and 21 of those years as a Board member.

Many parents and advocates have to make the same decisions that we had to make in the early 80's. In the 80's, our son could have lived in a group setting; however, his health declined such that he had to have medical care that would have been costly and difficult to provide in a private home setting. His being at Ellisville State School was the best option for him. Having options and choices is what we want for families.

During the 2017 legislative session, there were many legislators who supported DMH and stood up for the individuals and families we serve. We can't thank them enough for their support. Unfortunately, there are some elected officials who would have you believe their knowledge of the Department of Mental Health is vast; however, I would ask if they have ever toured or visited a DMH Program. The individuals that suffer



most from all this political rhetoric are the clients, their families and the dedicated staff providing services.

As the new chair, I want to fully work with the Governor's Office and members of the legislature to continue to improve our system and expand community services and choices for our loved ones. We want to make sure that the people remain the focus, not politics.

**Robert Landrum**  
Chair, Mississippi Board of Mental Health  
Ellisville, MS

# FOUR FROM MSH COMPLETE RIGOROUS HUMAN RESOURCES CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

BY MIKE CHRISTENSEN

Four Mississippi State Hospital employees formally graduated from the Mississippi State Personnel Board's Human Resources Certification Program on May 23 in a ceremony at the Department of Education Auditorium in Jackson.

The new grads are MSH Director James G. Chastain, Director of Fiscal Services Alicia Harris, Personnel Director Diana Hunter and Human Resources Director Kristi Finehout. Finehout was unable to attend the ceremony.

Joe Goff, Deputy Director at MSPB, spoke about the juggling act the graduates had to perform between work, family and HRCP classes.

"We're here today to acknowledge your hard work and celebrate your hard work," he said. "We know the amount of work it takes to complete the program. ... This is a very rigorous course. We wanted to make it something that will benefit you personally and your agency."

The purpose of the Human Resources Certification Program is to develop well-trained human resources practitioners in Mississippi state government by providing a comprehensive training program specifically tailored to them at both the technical and managerial levels, according to the MSPB website. HRCP focuses on the application of key HR rules, regulations, procedures, and practices.

The program began in 2005 and is administered by the MSPB. Participants earning the HRCP designation have completed the five levels of HRCP curriculum and implemented an HR-related project at their agencies. The program's administrators are MSPB Executive Director Kelly Hardwick, MSPB Director of Workforce Development Jan Sims and HRCP Program Director Jennifer Jasper.



Chastain was selected to deliver the speech for the 2017 graduating class, and he expressed for all of them their "appreciation and gratitude to the people who make this program possible."

"In gratitude for what we have received, let's go forward and fulfill our calling," he said. "Let's strive to make our work environments healthy, just and rewarding."

Hardwick, the MSPB Executive Director, reminded the graduates that "you are all in a fraternity now with a solid foundation."

He urged the class to act as partners with one another and to rely on each other.

"You're unique in your organization now," he said. "You have a rock-solid base in dealing with humans. You have knowledge. Use it. ... You're not doing your job if you're not reaching out to others."

His parting message: "It's time for you to go forth and prosper."

## MCAFFEE REACHES 40-YEAR MILESTONE AS DEDICATED AS EVER

BY MIKE CHRISTENSEN

Annie Marie McAfee, a Recreation Assistant on Building 32, is a soft-spoken and very proper woman with a subtle sense of humor. When asked if she has given any thought to retirement, McAfee smiled and responded, "I thought about retiring ever since I started working."

Funny thing is, she started working at Mississippi State Hospital 40 years ago and is still going strong, no end in sight.

McAfee's first day of work at MSH was May 9, 1977. This wasn't her first job. It was her second. The lifelong Brandon resident and Brandon High School graduate worked briefly at Norman Shirtmakers in downtown Jackson. Her sister Patricia, who worked at MSH, enticed McAfee to apply. She was happy to get the job. "It was nice starting out here," she said.

Forty years ago, Mississippi State Hospital was a very different place, as McAfee attests.

Her first job was in the Dietary Department, working in the Dining Hall, then located on Building 50. The Dining Hall was employee-run at that time, McAfee recalls, and a full meal cost \$1.

She moved to the Recreation Department after about a year and initially worked on B-38, which was a much smaller unit in those days. Her next move was to Occupational Therapy on B-27. About seven years ago, McAfee began working at her current position in the Community Integration Program on B-32.

McAfee stresses that she has always enjoyed working with the patients and participating in their therapeutic activities, and she laments that the population has declined so markedly during



her tenure.

She recalled going on camping and canoeing trips with patients to places like Okatoma Creek and Bogue Chitto River. "That was fun," she said.

McAfee also designed the first MSH T-shirt, featuring a March of Dimes theme, back in 1985.

Compassion is one essential trait in working with MSH patients, McAfee said: “You never know where you might end up yourself one day.”

Another is dedication. That’s something she’d like to be remembered for, whenever that retirement time comes.

“I was never late for work,” McAfee said proudly. “I did the job I was assigned to do, and I helped my co-workers.”

## POLICE DEPARTMENT APPRECIATION COOKOUT



In recognition of National Police Week, the MSH Police Department was treated to home-grilled burgers, sausage and all the fix-ins on May 17. The event was sponsored and conducted by MSH Police leadership and the SAIS and Risk Management Departments.

## CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER



Timeka Hampton, an Accountant Auditor II on Building 24, has completed the Mississippi State Personnel Board’s Basic Supervisory Course. Hampton, a Jackson resident, has worked at Mississippi State Hospital for four years. ...

## BIG CAT TAKES TOP PRIZE AT FISHING RODEO

It was a good day for fishing – are there really any bad days? – and the competition for prizes was keen.

Approximately 15 fish, including catfish, bass and bream, were checked in to be weighed during the annual Fishing Rodeo, hosted by the Therapeutic Recreation Department on May 24 on the MSH campus’ front lake.

A catfish weighing 5.14 pounds, hauled in by a patient on Building 81, took top honors. Second place went to a patient on B-43 for a 3.47-pound catfish. A total of \$100 in prizes was handed out for the five biggest catches.

Patients, residents and staffers rimmed the big lake on a cool, sunny morning, most of them fishing with cane poles and worms. Lunch was served after the event -- chicken tenders, not fish. Those were thrown back in the lake.



# CONGRATULATIONS MAY EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



**Direct Care**  
**Monica Woodruff,**  
**IPS, B-201, C Shift**

Monica Woodruff has been named Mississippi State Hospital's May Employee of the Month for Direct Care.

Woodruff, a Pearl resident, is a Mental Health Technician who works on Building 201, Dr. Albert Randel Hendrix Treatment Center.

Woodruff, a Canton native and Canton High School graduate, has worked at MSH for more than 23 years.

"Webster's Dictionary defines 'selfless' as 'showing great concern for and willingness to give unselfishly to others,'" said Gerona Brown, who nominated Woodruff. "Ms. Monica Woodruff is the personification of selflessness. She is meticulous in performing her work duties. She is always available to lend a helping hand to her fellow co-workers and supervisors.

"Many would agree that first impressions are lasting impressions. Upon meeting Ms. Woodruff, one is drawn to her pleasant smile and demeanor. She exhibits a positive attitude and her professionalism encourages those around her to do their best."



**Clinical Service**  
**Shemeka Miner,**  
**IPS, B-46, A Shift**

Shemeka Miner has been named Mississippi State Hospital's May Employee of the Month for Clinical Service.

Miner, a Registered Nurse, is the Charge Nurse on Building 46, Medical Psychiatric Unit.

A Pearl resident, she has worked at the hospital for two years.

Miner was cited by Dr. Robert Maddux, MSH Clinical Director, for her "initiative and attention to detail."

"She prevents problems from occurring by taking proactive measures. She managed the clinical care of medically complex patients in a highly accurate and reliable manner."



**Support Services**  
**Verlene Gillon,**  
**Health Records, B-21, A Shift**

Verlene Gillon has been named Mississippi State Hospital's May Employee of the Month for Support Services.

Gillon is an Administrative Assistant V who worked in Health Records on Building 21.

Gillon, a Magee native who now lives in Brandon, has worked at MSH for almost 25 years.

"Verlene is one of those employees who stays hidden in the background," said Donna Boykin, who nominated Gillon. "She comes to work daily, does her work and goes home. She has worked at MSH for many years and has a wealth of knowledge about medical records and the hospital. ...

"Verlene is one of those employees that bosses want to have. She is dependable, knowledgeable, a team player and can fill in when others are out in health records."