

Mississippi Development Authority
P.O. Box 849
Jackson, MS 39205

Media contact: Stephen Martin, 601.359.3555

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STATE TOURISM OFFICE DEVELOPS PILOT FRONTLINE HOSPITALITY
TRAINING PROGRAM**

Jackson, Miss., March – Tourism Development, a division of the Mississippi Development Authority will begin a pilot hospitality training program with meetings scheduled in Greenville, Clarksdale and Greenwood the week of March 19 – 23.

“Each day, Mississippi welcomes thousands of visitors. It is important their visit is a pleasant one. Front line employees have the most frequent contact with our guests. Our goal is to reinforce the importance of good service, and how important front-line employees are to the hospitality industry,” said Darienne Wilson, executive director, Tourism Development.

Hospitality training programs exist throughout the tourism industry. Traditional methods of hospitality training are based on models developed in prior decades. These training programs typically involved a half or whole day of training conducted in a central civic location on an annual basis. Managers and supervisors were typically the participants in these training sessions.

The Mississippi Division of Tourism has developed a new approach to hospitality training. Staff with the Division will begin training at the front line level with managers and supervisors attending the course at a later date. The training program will be conducted on site at tourism businesses and services. This method of teaching is designed so that the instructor and the front line students will establish a rapport and discover the desire to deliver a higher level of service to Mississippi’s visitor – one at a time.

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to visit various businesses involved with the hospitality industry and conduct our training program. By brining the program directly to the businesses we are able to minimize an employees time away from the job. The training received at these meetings can be utilized immediately, added Wilson.

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Level II training in the Delta will be begin in the fall of 2001. Level II is the formal training with participants selected by Delta Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureaus. Participants with Level II training will graduate as instructors for the Level I course. It is the goal of Tourism Development to have 5-10 qualified trainers in each Delta town or county by the Spring of 2002. The program will then be expanded to other regions of the State in February 2002.

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