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JOB FAIRS OFFER EMPLOYMENT AND HOPE

Approximately 700 applicants came to the Quitman National Guard Armory on Tuesday, April 23, in hopes of finding employment with one of the thirty-two employers attending the first-ever Clarke County Job Fair. Many of these applicants left with a renewed sense of hope as the employers made over 150 job offers that day, and projected they would hire another 300 of those attending this event during the next twelve months. This scene has been repeated in five other communities in Mississippi since January 2002 and will continue across the state through the remainder of this year.

For those individuals who have spent the last two, four, or ten years as productive workers and then find themselves without a job, the path to reemployment is often filled with obstacles and barriers. Mississippi has a program in place that is helping its dislocated workers overcome those obstacles and barriers as they seek employment. It is referred to as the Dislocated Worker Transition Project (DWT), and is administered through Governor Ronnie Musgrove's office. The goal of the DWT Project is to insure dislocated workers move as quickly as possible into unsubsidized employment. This is a joint venture of the Governor's Office, the Mississippi Development Authority and the Mississippi Employment Security Commission.

The DWT Project has experienced phenomenal success during the past year in helping unemployed Mississippians obtain employment through a proactive effort of planning and conducting job fairs at various locations across the state. These job fairs offer those individuals who are looking for employment the opportunity to go "face to face" with the human resource representatives from many different employers in one day

and at the same location. Job fairs cut through much of the “red tape” that both employers and applicants normally encounter in the employment process, such as scheduling a formal interview. At every job fair, employers are encouraged to take the hiring process as far as they possibly can on the day of the event, and the results indicate employers are doing just that.

During the first five months of this year, the Governor’s Dislocated Worker Project has assisted in the planning of six job fairs in several different communities. More than 356 employers participated in these events, with over 3,335 job offers made to 11,000 applicants on-site at the fairs. Employers projected they would hire another 5,882 of these applicants during the next twelve months following the job fairs.

While the statistics for this program are outstanding, the real impact of this effort can be seen in those individuals who are now meaningfully employed. In addition to being able to pay their bills and feed their families, they have hope for tomorrow. It was Charles Kingsley who said, “Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being required to work and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance and self control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle never know.”

The next scheduled job fairs include the Vicksburg Area Job Fair in Vicksburg on August 6; the Louisville Area Job Fair at Lake Tiak-O’Kahata in Louisville on November 5; and the Golden Triangle Employment Expo in Columbus on November 6. For more information about these job fairs or the DWT Project, contact the Project Director, Joe Buckner, at 601-961-7507.