

*I.M.P.A.C.T. Fundraising Dinner (Gentry HS)
Pickeled Okra Restaurant, Indianola: 6:00 p.m. 5/14/03*

Good evening! Thank you for that warm welcome and for your invitation to be here. It is a pleasure to meet with you tonight to honor Indianola's Model for Progressive Academic Creative Training, or IMPACT as we all know it. On behalf of Governor Musgrove, please allow me to say thanks to each of you for being here tonight in support of IMPACT and in support of providing the young people of Indianola with the opportunities that they deserve.

Programs such as IMPACT are critical to our schools, but more importantly, to our communities. As I was reviewing the IMPACT materials that Martha Smith forwarded to me, two sentences jumped out at me. These two sentences simply stated, “IMPACT offers several programs to help students excel academically and to develop courage, responsibility and self-respect in ambivalent times. IMPACT desires to have a positive and progressive affect on the children within our community.”

The bottom line is this – you get it!
Good schools = good jobs = good
communities. The Indianola School District
gets it and the town of Indianola gets it.
Your future is sitting in your classrooms.
You've gone the extra mile by providing
additional resources and time to your
students via the IMPACT program to
reinforce their efforts in creating a brighter
future for themselves, your schools and thus,
your community.

Governor Musgrove shares your desire to improve your schools and your communities. He also gets it! Since his first election to public office as a state senator in 1987, Governor Ronnie Musgrove has worked tirelessly to improve education in Mississippi.

In the first year of his administration, Governor Musgrove began an initiative known as “Computers in the Classroom,” with a mission of placing of an Internet-

accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state. The National Governors Association has confirmed that Mississippi is the first state in the nation to accomplish this. According to the NGA, Mississippi is “at the head of the wave of technological innovations.”

Musgrove also led the way in the passage of an ambitious teacher pay raise package which, when fully implemented, will raise the average teacher salary for

Mississippi from 49th to 19th in the nation.

The day after Musgrove signed the legislation, the New York Times commented in an editorial that Mississippi had put together the kind of package that continued to elude New York.

This wasn't a choice for the future of our state, it was a necessity. We must pay our teachers competitive salaries so that we don't lose experienced educators to neighboring states and so that top students

are encouraged to go into teaching. We must make the commitment to improving and building upon Mississippi's public education system so that we may develop the workforce that will attract new business and economic growth to our state.

Recognizing teachers' accomplishments and their qualifications is already paying off for Mississippi teachers and students. Mississippi now ranks sixth in the nation overall for the number of National Board

Certified teachers, with 1,459 National Board Certified Teachers.

Indianola had several teachers who earned National Board certification this past year. Teachers such as Shelia Applewhite who teaches at Carver Lower Elementary and Helen Beamon who lives here in Indianola and teaches at Moorhead Middle School. These two ladies endured the two-year national board process in order to

improve their classroom skills for the betterment of their students.

Mississippi was the first state selected by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges to host a Leadership Summit on Higher Education. Governor Musgrove chaired the steering committee that produced a report in January of 2002 of six priorities for education in Mississippi, ranging from early childhood education to adult learning.

As a member of the National Governors Association Executive Committee, Musgrove was one of two governors chosen to lead the NGA effort regarding the “No Child Left Behind” legislation passed by Congress. Mississippi is also one of six states to participate in Following the Leaders, a pilot program on the implementation of the mandates of the new act. In selecting Mississippi for this program, it was said that Mississippi had “an

infectious enthusiasm and commitment to students.”

Mississippi’s accountability system has been ranked nationally as one of the strongest systems in the country. A 2002 report of the *Princeton Review* ranked states based on testing programs for the schools, and Mississippi was ranked sixth in the nation. The 2003 report was recently released, and although Mississippi dropped slightly to 12th, Princeton Review Vice

President Steven Hodas stated that
“Mississippi has an excellent start on a good
accountability system.”

In addition, a January 29, 2003, *USA Today* article which discussed states’ compliance with the requirements of No Child Left Behind, stated “of the 40 federal requirements examined by ECS (Education Commission of the States), 12 states are close to fulfilling half or more. Among the

furthest along: Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas...”

Because of Governor Musgrove’s leadership, education was fully funded for FY 2004 during the first month of the 2003 legislative session, was funded before other agencies’ budgets, and was funded at 62% of the state budget.

In preparing his budget recommendations, the Governor funded education first and then funded other

agencies with remaining revenues.

Governor Musgrove's recommendations funded education at a level of \$2.4 billion, or 62% of the budget. Governor Musgrove called on the Legislature during this State of the State address to appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill at 62% of the general fund and to send the appropriation bill to his desk for his signature during the first month of the legislative session, rather

than during the last two weeks as has been tradition.

Following his State of the State address, the Governor visited schools, community colleges and universities through out Mississippi for two weeks. The Governor also held town hall meetings with both educators and the public to discuss the importance of funding education first.

The Legislature passed the education appropriation bills on January 31, 2003.

When Governor Musgrove signed the historic education funding bills on February 5, 2003, we changed education funding in Mississippi forever.

Governor Musgrove continued to visit local communities to stress the historic significance of this legislation. In fact, he had the privilege to attend Ellis Wym's jersey retirement ceremony here in Indianola at Gentry High School on February 13.

With the growth of Mississippi during a sluggish national economy, creating jobs has become a trademark of the Musgrove administration, but the education of Mississippi's children remains Governor Musgrove's personal passion. So where do we go from here? What are our next steps in providing the needed resources to our educational system to build good schools and colleges that will bring about good jobs, which build strong communities?

Will Rogers once said, “Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there. Mississippi is on the right track, but we aren’t just going to sit there.

Early childhood education is critical and we must provide quality services to our children before they reach the age of 5. In October 2002, Governor Musgrove announced a partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Barksdale Reading Institute to assess the

needs of early childhood education in our state. This assessment will identify what is needed and the resources available to improve childcare in our state. Governor Musgrove will use the recommendations of this assessment to create a plan to improve Mississippi's early childhood education during his second term.

The most important thing we can do to ensure a world-class education for all of our children is to provide adequate funding for

education. When we put our schools first and our children are not competing for funds with convicted felons in prison and other state agencies, we are able to focus in greater detail on other education priorities like early childhood education, implementing No Child Left Behind, and ensuring an adequate number of school counselors and nurses in our schools.

IMPACT cannot sit still either. Since its implementation in 2001, IMPACT has

grown from six activities to twelve activities. But, that isn't enough. You have to keep reinforcing your students. Your presence here tonight demonstrates your commitment to IMPACT, to the Indianola School District and to your community.

There's a lot of focus on what we're doing in Mississippi. Other states are looking at us and realizing that things are changing, there's a new energy and emphasis on moving forward and that we

are proving education is a priority. We're not just sitting still. We're on the right track and no one is going to run us over.

I'm going to stop here and ask for your participation. We're all going to take a test. We're talking about education remember, so a test is not unusual. This test doesn't require a pencil or paper and you won't be graded. This is just a simple test to make us stop and think. I'll ask you a few questions and I'd like you to think of your answers -

you can grade yourself if you would like.

Here we go:

- 1.Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
- 2.Name the last five Heisman winners.
- 3.Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
- 4.Name the last five Academy Award winners for best actor and best actress.

How did you do? The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But applause dies, awards tarnish, and with today's stock market, we can have a new round of wealthiest people tomorrow.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and

special. Were any of them teachers or mentors or tutors in after school programs?

2. List a few of the teachers who aided your journey through school.

3. Name your first-grade teacher.

Easier? The lesson? The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most money, the most awards or the flashiest lifestyle. They are the ones that care. For many of us, such a caring

relationship is nurtured and grows in our classrooms or in after school programs, such as IMPACT. The people who make a difference are people like Martha Smith, Pierce McIntosh, Richard Davis, Joe McCall and Willie Mae Perryman – people who invest in the youth of today for the betterment of tomorrow.

As the Governor stated in his inaugural address, the opportunity belongs to us to forget excuses and focus instead on

solutions. I hope that I have shared with you tonight, a few of the Governor's solutions. It is not enough, however, to just say these words. We must take calculated risks when the rewards are great. We must do that for our children and for their children.

Thank you again for your invitation. On behalf of the Governor, please allow me to offer best wishes for IMPACT's continued success and for its continued dedication to service.

