

Mississippi Head Start Association
Tuesday, April 11, 2000
7:00 p.m.
Crowne Plaza Hotel – Windsor Ballroom

You will be addressing an audience of approximately 350 people. The sponsoring group is MS Head Start Association. Remember your low tones and stand up straight.

I know you know this, but... Head Start is a national program, which provides comprehensive developmental services for America's low-income, pre-school children ages three to five and social services for their families. Approximately 1,400 community-based non-profit organizations and school systems develop unique and innovative programs to meet specific needs.

General Welcome

The theme for tonight's program is: Head Start – A New Vision For Empowerment in the 21st Century.

In order to develop a Vision that determines your direction, I believe it is important to know where you have been and the progress and achievements that you have had.

Headstart provides diverse services to meet the goals of four components, which are; education, health, parent involvement, and social services.

Education

Head Start believes that every child should receive a variety of learning experiences to foster intellectual, social and emotional growth, and I believe that we must pick up where Head Start leaves off in the area of education.

- Computer Technology

One investment that we have already started working on is the improved computer technology for our students.

Computer Technology Task Force

This task force has been charged with the challenge of placing an Internet-accessible computer in every public elementary and secondary classroom in Mississippi by the end of the year 2002. The men and women on the task force are representative of the people of our state. They are educators, parents, business owners and professionals with one common goal of working together to increase the educational resources available to Mississippi students. They are working diligently to reach their goal, which when completed, will positively influence all of our students in Mississippi.

Our young people's education determines the future

of economic development in Mississippi. To provide employers with the best qualified workforce, we must have well-paid teachers in the classroom who are responsible for educating our children, Mississippi's workforce of tomorrow.

Better education equals better jobs.

- Teacher Pay Raises

The most critical issue facing our state is raising teacher pay to the southeastern average.

I believed when I was campaigning, and I believe now, that the single most important issue to move education forward is increasing teacher pay.

From the beginning of my administration I outlined a plan that would allow the Legislature to bring Mississippi teachers' salaries up to the Southeastern Average. There are now other plans on the table. I can promise you that we will work together to develop a plan that provides a sensible solution during this legislative session.

We cannot afford to wait on this critical issue. The time to invest in our children is now.

Health

Head Start believes that every child should be involved in a comprehensive health program, and I agree.

We are also taking steps forward in the area of healthcare with the redevelopment of the Mississippi Children's Health Benefits Program.

- 4,000 MS children are now enrolled out of an approximate 85,000 eligible.
- Governor Tommy Thompson
- My administration is working to develop a new action plan and marketing strategy to ensure that all Mississippi children have health coverage.
- We will soon reveal a new and improved action plan that, with the assistance of our outreach coordinators, we will see that our children are cared for.

Parent Involvement

Head Start believes in the involvement of parents. Parents are not only involved in education, program planning and operating activities, but they are also benefiting through their own learning programs.

- We must enable our parents to be better caregivers of, and teachers to their children.

(Insert personal story about your and Mrs. Musgrove's involvement in your children's lives)

- We must help parents meet their own goals because if they don't have pride in themselves, then they cannot teach those characteristics to their children.

Social Services

Head Start believes in gearing specific services to each individual family after their needs are determined.

Those services are far reaching and range from emergency assistance to community outreach.



It is important that we stay in touch with the needs of the people and families in our communities because

we can offer services that people don't need, but what good would that do?

It is important for us to take the time to take care of one another. We tend to forget about one another when our lives get so busy that it is easier to worry about ourselves than about others.

The Head Start program has done an outstanding job in expanding it's services to meet the needs of children and adults.

The future is bright for the children of Mississippi and we are doing all that we can to make sure that it gets even brighter as we move into the 21st century.