

A Collaborative Publication from MSCDD, DRMS and IDS

**Welcome and thank you for reading the second issue of DD Network News!**

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Welcome



**Catie Marie Martin** is thrilled to be joining the Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS) team after graduating from Brooklyn Law School (BLS) in May. While at BLS, Catie Marie served as an intern in the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, which led to her current work as the children's rights attorney at DRMS. Prior to law school, Catie Marie attended Mississippi State University, where she majored in English. When she is not working at DRMS, Catie Marie can be found reading stories of true crime, teaching her golden retriever the Pledge of Allegiance, or spending time on her back porch in Fondren. She can be reached at [cmartin@drms.ms](mailto:cmartin@drms.ms).

**WE'RE  
HIRING!**

DRMS is hiring an experienced Civil Rights attorney. Please, see the full announcement on our website at [www.drms.ms](http://www.drms.ms). You may e-mail resumes to [resume@drms.ms](mailto:resume@drms.ms).

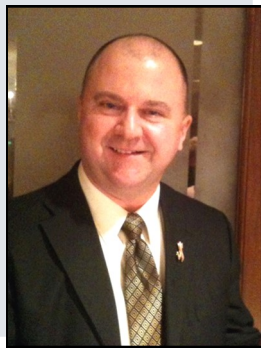


"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." -**Christopher Reeve**

If you have information or news you would like to be included in the next issue, please email Jin Joo Crosby at [jin.mcclendon@usm.edu](mailto:jin.mcclendon@usm.edu).

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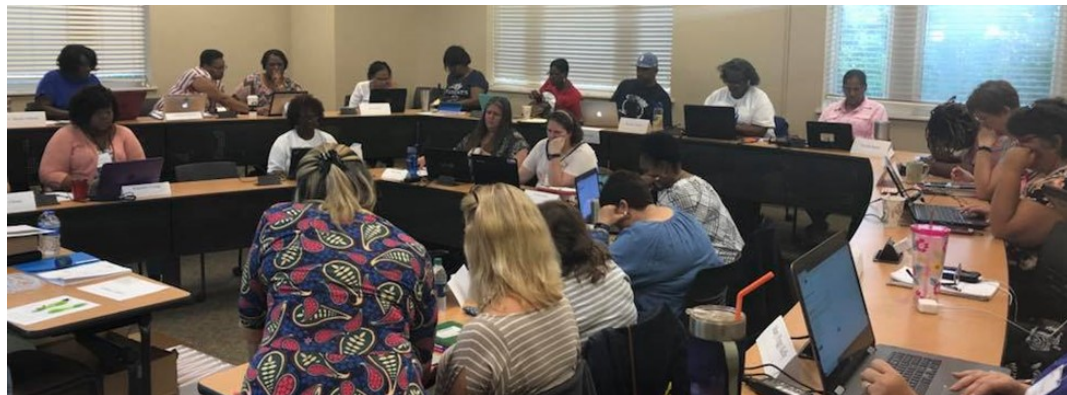




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# MSCDD

## MISSISSIPPI COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



In July 2018, the Mississippi Council on Economic Education launched the first ever Master Teacher of Personal Finance program for special education teachers thanks to the support from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities (MSCDD).



Charles Hughes (pictured far right), MSCDD executive director, was recently elected to the office of secretary of the board of directors for the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) during its annual meeting held in National Harbor, Maryland.

Three grant recipients of the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities presented at the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities National Conference in National Harbor, Maryland, on July 11, 2018. Selena Swartzfager from the Mississippi Council on Economic Education, Calvin Head of Mileston Cooperative, and Dr. Daniel Gadke from Mississippi State University provided conference attendees with project details and ideas to implement in their states. (Photos on left)





## ***Mileston Cooperative Association***

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### **Mileston Cooperative: Supporting New Business Development Opportunities for People with Disabilities**

Mileston Cooperative Association (MCA), with funding from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, has initiated a project to assist people with disabilities to own and operate their own businesses. These businesses include, but are not limited to, a daycare, a dry cleaner, a nursery, a restaurant and a recording/photography studio. MCA hosted community listening sessions to introduce the project to local residents. As a result, four families of people with disabilities expressed interest in opening their own businesses. In support of these businesses, potential business owners were introduced to feasibility studies, business plans, Money Smart and fiscal management. Federal, state, and local health regulatory procedures were also shared with these business proprietors. Additionally, research was conducted to ensure proper license permits and certifications were secured as part of the process. Space and business infrastructure have also been provided. This initiative is on-going.



#### ***Pictured beginning from top left:***

*Antonio Rowe of Rico's and Antonio's Nursery, Bobbie Gamble of Mileston Daycare, Leroy Williams of L&E Restaurant; and Shenay Byrd of Byrd's and Brown's Studio*





## INSTITUTE FOR DISABILITY STUDIES

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**The Institute for Disability Studies (IDS)** celebrated the graduation of its third Project SEARCH Southern Miss class on May 14, 2018. Project SEARCH is a 10-month training program funded by a grant from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities and administered by IDS that provides daily employment preparatory skills training, community development, mentoring services and work internships for high school students and young adults from the community. The primary goal of this project is to increase the number of young adults with intellectual, cognitive and other developmental disabilities who obtain competitive, community-based employment.

Through collaborative relationships with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, Hattiesburg Public School District, Aramark, Payne Center, Center for Child Development, and School of Social Work Eagles Nest Food Pantry, IDS has been able to provide Project SEARCH interns with opportunities to gain real-world employment experience with support from a full-time teacher and two job coaches.

The 2018 graduating class of Project SEARCH Southern Miss was comprised of four Hattiesburg High School students and four young adults from the community. Upon graduation, all eight 2018 Project SEARCH interns had secured employment.

If you have questions about Project SEARCH Southern Miss, contact Project SEARCH Coordinator Jin Joo Crosby at 601-266-6037.





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## DISABILITY RIGHTS MISSISSIPPI

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities

Disability Rights Mississippi is excited about the recent passage of the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act (HR 4547), which will enable Protection and Advocacy programs (P&As) like DRMS to monitor and investigate how representative payees are utilizing Social Security funds. Representative payees are those designated to receive Social Security Disability or Supplemental Security Income for persons with disabilities who are not fully capable of managing their own benefits.

This new law was signed by President Trump in April and will authorize P&As to conduct on-site reviews of payees, as well as conduct additional discretionary reviews. The enactment of this law comes at a critical time, as recent investigations have shown that representative payees frequently steal or misuse funds, neglect, exploit and even abuse those they are supposed to be helping. HR 4547 seeks to remedy this by prioritizing the rights of Americans with disabilities and ensuring their Social Security funds are utilized for their benefit alone by implementing safeguards to ensure that representative payees do not take advantage of the program and usurp the benefits to which their recipients are entitled.

Because of its strong community relationships throughout the state of Mississippi, DRMS is in the ideal position to identify and review payees on a personal level to prevent, uncover and remedy abuse and misconduct. In addition to in-person visits from P&As, HR 4547 will also require parents serving as payee for their child, as well as individuals serving as payee for their spouse, to provide yearly accounting for the use of the benefits, which the Social Security Administration will then check to ensure the benefits are accounted for within a 10 percent margin. The new law will also provide funds to improve payee selection by prioritizing family members, friends, legal guardians, conservators and others who display strong concern for the beneficiary. DRMS is hopeful this combination of personal visits and administrative checkpoints will enhance the representative payee program and improve the lives of the 249,440 Mississippians who currently receive Social Security benefits.

If you have any questions about the representative payee program in Mississippi or would like further information about the role DRMS will play in this process, please email us at [info@drms.ms](mailto:info@drms.ms).

