



The State Chapter of the Federation of Families

The Ally

A Families As Allies Newsletter

October 2015

The Story of the Door



Our Youth M.O.V.E Chapter painted this door several years ago, and it became our focal piece of artwork as well as our inspiration. Every day it reminds us to open the door to each new opportunity that awaits us.

Those opportunities bring us great joy, especially when we greet them hand-in-hand with families throughout the state.

UPCOMING

FAA Board Meeting

Saturday 11/05/15

Open to the public
Public comments are encouraged

fax or email questions

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!!



Polling places around the state open at 7 tomorrow morning. Please get out and exercise the right many have fought and died for in this great nation.

Candidates Respond to Our Questions



This month we posed questions to all candidates running for statewide office. In letters to each candidate, we asked individualized questions based upon the position that candidate will hold and on our organization's mission, to make sure families are partners in all aspects of their children's care, including

MONTHLY SNAP SHOT

11 Presentations by Staff

377 Audience Members
Reached

3 Workshops/Training's
Attended by Staff

134 Calls Assisting
Families

20 New Families
Requesting Assistance

50 Face to Face Meetings
with Families

565 Brochures Given to
the Public

QUICK LINKS

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500 LIKES!!



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policies and laws that affect our children and us. Families as Allies does not endorse candidates or take positions on issues outside the scope of its mission. We do strongly encourage our members to exercise their right to vote in every election and to learn as much as possible about each candidate's position in order to make an informed decision. We reached out to every candidate on multiple occasions. Here are the responses we received.

Governor and Lieutenant Governor:

What would you do or what have you done to insure the Mississippi System of Care for Children's Mental Health that is outlined in the state's code ([Miss. Code Ann. § 43-14-1](#)) functions as mandated, including that it is family-driven?

Governor Phil Bryant: No response.

Response from Mr. Robert Gray: Thank you, and as Governor I will make sure you have full support from our state. I don't know very much about your organization, but from the little bit from what I have read. Families as Allies of Mississippi are in position to handle and know what is needed to address these problems. I do know the problems of Mississippians. That is why I know working with FAAMS will help all of Mississippi. I will make sure I will utilize all the power of being Governor and our State Government to help FAAMS. Make sure that our legislators and the people of Mississippi understand and know the need to do our best to deal with these problems and that FAAMS is on top of the issues. Taking care & supporting health care system. Physical and mental health, will not only make and help our people better, it will make the state of Mississippi a better, safer and more attractive state that will bring better opportunities in state and around the world. Thanks you and looking forward to working with FAAMS.

Lt. Governor Tate Reeves: No response.

Response from Mr. Tim Johnson: As Lieutenant Governor, I will work to ensure our public education system works for ALL our children. This is a complicated issue without a simple answer, and yet it is a perfect example of why I am passionate about being the next Lt. Governor. Every Mississippi child has the right to be educated in our public school system. And every Mississippi child deserves the very best education we can provide. Family and parental involvement are essential for a child's successful education and future.

The Joint Legislative PEER review of July 2015 state the accountability structure needs improvement, and that a results-based performance review is needed more than compliance accountability. Almost 60,000 Mississippi children in this program will be a priority. I do not believe an "adequate" education is good enough for Mississippi children. I firmly believe that if we work together, we can provide an excellent education opportunity for every child in this state, including yours and mine.

The Vision of Families as Allies is one I share - that all children have the opportunity to reach their potential and to be successful. Working together we can make great strides toward fulfilling the Mission of Families as Allies - to make sure that families are partners in all aspects of their children's care.

A first step once elected will be to meet with Families as Allies to discuss concerns and solutions you feel are needed for the Mississippi System of Care for Children's Mental Health program.

Next, I will appoint Senate Education Committee members who will lead the way to a results-driven program that effectively identifies eligible children and provides them with the best education possible based on their individual needs.

Thank you for caring. Please consider every Mississippi child's future when casting your vote Tuesday.

Attorney General:

The website of the Attorney General states: "The Attorney General has the sole power under Mississippi law to bring or defend a lawsuit on behalf of the state. He acts as counsel to state agencies to defend them or bring suit on their behalf. Most importantly, (emphasis added), the Office is charged with the representation of the people of the State of Mississippi."

To take an example that is in the court system right now, there are children of families that have experienced abuse and neglect seemingly as a result of the deficiencies of our state's mental health system, yet that same system is being defended by the AG in pending actions by the United States Department of Justice.

Who do you think it is more important to represent? How would you resolve this conflict of interest?

Response from General Hood: The Attorney General is the state's chief legal officer, and is required by law to defend the state and its agencies in legal actions. With that being said, as attorney general, I will continue to advocate at the legislature for resources to improve our mental health system for both adults and our state's children.

Mr. Mike Hurst: No Response.

Auditor:

How have you/would you insure that all State agencies that serve children are annually audited and that the results of these audits are available for families to read online?

Response from Ms. Pritchett: As your next State Auditor, I will make the well-being of our children a top priority. Our current State Auditor isn't doing enough to ensure that the agencies that protect and care for our children are audited frequently enough. Currently, the office audits agencies, school districts, and municipalities at the discretion of the auditor. There is no rhyme or reason to it. We need a system that ensures all these entities are audited on a regular basis. We need to ensure that the tax dollars we pay to keep our children safe are being

spent correctly, and as your next state auditor the transparency and efficiency of these agencies will be a top priority. We also need to move the Office of Auditor into the 21st century. As the owner of my own business, I've learned first hand how important sharing information online is. As your next Auditor I will ensure that we do everything in our power to make the Office of Auditor as transparent as possible, sharing audits online, and allowing the public to see exactly what their tax dollars are going to. As a mother of two small children, I know first-hand that the most important job we can do is provide for the next generation, and as your next State Auditor I will do just that.

Response from the campaign office of Auditor

Pickering: Every state agency is audited every year and all that information is on the website: <http://www.osa.state.ms.us/reports.aspx>

Treasurer:

The Stephen Beck, Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014 (ABLE Act) won final congressional approval and was signed into law by President Obama in December 2014. Families now have a tax-deferred savings vehicle to save for the care of children with disabilities, but each state must enact a process to make these accounts available. How would you do that?

Treasurer Lynn Fitch: No Response.

Secretary of State:

How would you make it easier for citizens with disabilities, including those with mental health challenges, to vote?

Response from Secretary Hoseman: Currently the Secretary of State's office conducts training for all election officials regarding the importance and usage of all ADA equipment at the polls. Furthermore we send observers to precincts across the state who check for ADA compliance. Counties are also encouraged to participate in a grant program offered by the Help America Vote Act to assist with ADA compliance at all polling locations. We are committed to ensuring that all Mississippians are afforded the right to vote.

Mr. Charles Graham: No response.



Our 2nd Annual Community Partnership Celebration was a huge success. We had a great time honoring our partners, visiting with families and friends, and enjoying great treats prepared by Bravo!.

Thanks to everyone who came out to help us celebrate. We hope a wonderful time was had by all.

In case you missed it, our Honorees:

Caring for Every Child and Family- Helen Johnson (in memoriam), *Southern Echo* - Helen Johnson spent her life caring for children and bringing communities together. She was instrumental in the establishment of Southern Echo and the Nollie Jenkins Family Center. She was a School board member and worked tirelessly on behalf of school children in Mississippi, especially those in the Delta. Helen was a board member of Families as Allies and never lost her focus on insuring that the organization was accountable to the families and children it served. Her life exemplified respect, compassion and dignity and serves as an inspiration for our work every day.

Excellence- Rusty Turner, Esq. (in memoriam), *Balch and Bingham, LLC* - Rusty Turner was an outstanding labor attorney who received many awards and much recognition for his accomplishments. As part of his work at Balch and Bingham, Rusty patiently and carefully guided Families as Allies in updating all of our policies and procedures in keeping with best practices, allowing us to focus much more of our time on our mission. More importantly, just by the way he chose to live his life, Rusty exemplified Families as Allies' vision that all children have the opportunity to reach their

potential and be successful. We are grateful for these memories and also honored that Rusty had committed to become a board member in 2016.

Partnership - **Chane, Fondren First Thursday**- Chane has worked with Families as Allies for the past two years to facilitate a major children's Mental Health Awareness event each May in conjunction with Fondren First Thursday. This past May, 25 organizations participated and over 5000 community members were touched by the message that children's mental health problems are real, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of. Families were connected with services and supports and children enjoyed a wide range of fun activities while learning practical ways to think and talk about mental health. Chane's commitment to community has paved the way for more and more children and families to find fun, enjoyment and support right where they live. That's exactly what we believe in!

Accountability - **Leonard Van Slyke, Esq., Brunini, Grantham, Grower and Hewes, PLLC** - Leonard Van Slyke is recognized by Best Lawyers in America in the fields of Tax Law; Trusts & Estates; Litigation-Trusts & Estates; Litigation & Controversy-Tax; and Litigation-First Amendment. Leonard has been a leader in media access issues. He has represented clients in the areas of courtroom closures, open meeting violations and public records access under Mississippi law and Freedom of Information Act issues under Federal law. He is being honored not only for his excellent legal work in attempting to make public the Technical Assistance Independent Assessment of Mississippi's Children's Mental Health System, but for doing so in partnership with the families of our organization. He is an inspiration.

Please join us in thanking our sponsors for all their support:

Southern Poverty Law Center
Balch & Bingham, LLP
Drs. Howard Roffwarg & Joy Hogge
Andrew & Rachel Canter
Atlas Communications Consultants
Hollidae Morrison
Mississippi Psychiatric Association

Parent to Parent Support



We've enjoyed working with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and Millie Sweeney, a consultant with Family Solutions LLC, over the past few months to look at effective models to train parents to provide support to other parents. As part of that work, Families as Allies conducted a survey with parents and caregivers to learn how they thought parents with lived experience with a child with mental health challenges could be most helpful to other parents in the same shoes. You can see the results of that survey [here](#).



The **Family Run Executive Director Leadership Association (FREDLA)** serves as the national representative and advocate for family-run organizations and their executive directors, and supports effective stewardship of family-run organizations. FREDLA informs its members on current and emerging policy issues, provides education on research and other program findings and best practices, provides or facilitates professional development opportunities and other consultation and technical assistance, collaborate with stakeholders and facilitates peer-to-peer sharing across member family-run organizations.

FREDLA's Mission is to empower and strengthen executive leaders of family-run organizations focused on the well-being of children and youth with mental health, emotional or behavioral challenges and their families.

It was very exciting to attend FREDLA's annual meeting on September 10 and 11 focused on **Creating a Unified Vision for the Future of Family-Run Organizations**. The energy in the room and the commitment of family leaders across the country inspired me. I am particularly grateful to Jane Walker, the executive director of FREDLA; Tom Dillingham, past president and Gail Cormier, the newly elected president for their commitment to excellence, leadership and the guidance and support they've given me as a family leader.

I was honored to be elected to serve on FREDLA's board of directors at the September meeting. Please take a few minutes to learn more about [FREDLA](#) and all that it brings to the table. Please also let me know any ideas you have about how we can all tap into the talent and expertise of this wonderful organization.