

## **The Neshoba County Fair – A Tradition For Mississippians**

To many people the month of July brings with it thoughts of July Fourth festivities, family vacations and summer camp. I have those same type of thoughts, but the one event in the month of July always stands out in my mind is the Mississippi Neshoba County Fair. For about ten years now, I've spent a couple of days in the heat of July/August visiting with life-long and week-long Neshoba County residents at the world famous Fair. Folks who go back year after year will tell you there's only one real fair in the state, and it's in Neshoba County.

Attending the fair and enjoying the festivities has become a real tradition for many of us. I know it has for the Musgrove family. Red clay, lemonade and cabins overrun with children, friends and relatives. Sitting on the Vickers' front porch, walking through Sleepy Hollow and wandering through the 'new' cabins – I wouldn't miss it for anything. Although this year it will be different.

Time moves on and things change, I know. But, I have to tell you, I will miss going to the square in town for a milkshake at the local family-owned drug store. Those had to be among the finest milkshakes in the entire state of Mississippi, but times change and we have to adapt.

Some of the cabins will have new paint, new air conditioners, new refrigerators and new occupants. A lot of work goes into getting the cabins ready for company for this one very special week of the year. After all, you never know who will drop by.

The same can be said for any town, any city, in our state. We never know who might drop by to look around. We've been told by the 'experts' that when big corporate leaders first look at a community to build a new business or bring in industry, more often than not, they come into town unannounced and we never know they've come and gone. That gives a whole new meaning to first impressions.

We have put hours, days and months into a new economic development plan for our state. We want to make sure that the paint is on, the air conditioners work and the refrigerator is full because we don't know who might drop by to visit, and we want to make the best impression we can because we are being watched consistently.

That's why we've traveled this state from one end to the other talking to businessmen and women, community leaders, planners, developers, and anybody else who wanted to chime in to tell us what they think we need to do to replace our current out-dated economic development strategy.

You've told us. It's all about our people – investing in our people. Education. Healthcare. Jobs. Transportation. Quality of life. With incentives that give us that extra edge over other states. We are looking forward to talking more specifically over the

coming days about our plan, your plan, the plan for Mississippi that will grow jobs and expand existing and new business and industry in our state.

I will be at the Fair this Thursday and I will take the opportunity to talk with you about our plans for making Mississippi, America's State of Promise. See y'all at the Fair.