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PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

TRIBE RECEIVES FUNDING TO OPERATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration in the amount of \$670,342, 80.45% of total program costs. The Tribe has pledged an additional \$131,037, 19.55% of total program costs, as an additional contribution to this program. This grant will initiate on October 1, 2009.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program provides services leading to employment outcomes for Tribal Members with disabilities who live on or near the MBCI Reservation.

The program has the vision that every Tribal member with a disability will be afforded the right to be as active in society and in all areas of life to the extent they desire and are able. The mission is to enhance the quality of life of Tribal members who are individuals with physical or mental impairments which are substantial barriers to employment, and who have reasonable expectations to benefit from services in terms of employment, recognizing limitations and emphasizing strengths, resulting in employment which fulfills the individual's personal goals and society's need for qualified workers.

In 1987, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians received its first funding from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to operate a Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program to meet the intense needs of Choctaws who experience physical or mental disability. Since 1987, the soundness of the Choctaw Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program has steadily increased with staff training. Customarily, 15 program staff members serve an ongoing caseload of 150-160 individuals with a reported 85% success

rate reported during the last fiscal year – with 85% of participants leaving the program and going into long-term successful employment. Low staff turnover resulting in a highly trained staff has been a major factor in the Program’s success. This program is seen in the funding agency and across the nation as an exemplary program and has received recognition as such. In past years, it has received two citations for excellence: *Best Practices - Model Program Award* given by the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in 2001; and again recognized in 2007 for *Excellence* by the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation.

The Program is administered under the direction of Laura John, Division of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Director, Dalton Henry, Tribal Education Services Officer, and Beasley Denson, Tribal Miko.

Referrals for program services can be made by calling the program office at 601-650-7333.

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The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, under the esteemed leadership of Miko Beasley Denson has an enrolled membership of almost 10,000 and is the only federally recognized tribe in the State of Mississippi. Headquartered in the Pearl River community, near Philadelphia, Mississippi, the Tribe has emerged as a leader in economic development. The Tribe provides a range of governmental services for its members including schools, a hospital, medical clinics, police and fire protection, courts, an elderly center, among many others.