

Reaching Out

A publication of Southern Good Faith Fund

Asset Builders

Business Development Center

Career Pathways

Public Policy

Welcome!

Welcome to the first Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) participant newsletter. This new, combined newsletter will help you, our participants, know and understand all of the products and services offered at SGFF. We hope you will find the information useful and that it will help you to discover other SGFF programs that can help you achieve your goals and dreams. The newsletter is divided into sections: Asset Builders' two programs—Individual Development Accounts (IDA) and Saving for Entrepreneurship, Education, and Downpayment (SEED); Business Development Center (BDC); Career Pathways (CP); and Public Policy. We hope this will be a great benefit to you.

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Top 10 Ways to Spend Your Tax Refund

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What Are Your New Year's Resolutions?

A new year is a time to look back at the past, but more importantly, look forward to the coming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want (or need) to make and start fresh.

Resolutions are often hard to keep. Keep your resolutions realistic and create a plan. Don't forget to make Southern Good Faith Fund part of your plan. Our Asset Builders, Business Development Center, and Career Pathways programs can help you make real and lasting changes in your life. We've put together a list of resolutions we can help you achieve in 2007:

- Buy a home (Asset Builders)
- Pay off bills and save money (Asset Builders)
- Take a computer class (Business Development Center)
- Overcome your fear and insecurity of college (Career Pathways)
- Get started on a college degree (Career Pathways)
- Learn a new skill (Career Pathways)
- Tune into your passions—turn your hobby into a business or go to school to have the career you've always dreamed of (Business Development Center and Career Pathways)
- Take a small business course (Business Development Center)
- Make business planning a priority (Business Development Center)
- Take better care of your cash (Asset Builders and Business Development Center)

Call us today and let us help you get started on your new year's resolutions!

Reduce Your Taxes Or Get A Bigger Refund

Take advantage of the EITC

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is for people who work, but don't earn much money. If you qualify, it could be worth up to \$4,500 this year. So you could pay less federal tax or even get a refund. That's money you can use to make a difference in your life. For more information on EITC use the interactive EITC Assistant at www.irs.gov/eitc to show you if you qualify, call the IRS toll free at 1.800.TAX.1040, or visit a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site for free help and tax preparation or your tax preparer. VITA sites in our service area that will file your tax return electronically for FREE:

Phillips County, Arkansas

Sponsored by Southern Good Faith Fund and First Bank of the Delta.

First Bank of the Delta

502 Cherry Street
Helena-West Helena
By appointment only on
Mon, Tues, Thurs, Sat
Call 870.816.1126 to schedule

Jefferson County, Arkansas (Pine Bluff locations)

ACORN Tax & Benefits Center

104 S. Main Street
By appointment only on
Mon, Wed, Fri: 5 p.m. -9 p.m.
Sat: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Call 870.536.6300 to schedule

ICVR, Inc./ Weed & Seed

2003 N. University Drive
UAPB Plaza Suite 5
Tues & Thurs: 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Other times by appointment only by calling 870.536.7274

St. James United Methodist Church

900 University Drive
By appointment only on
Mon-Fri: 8 a.m. -4 p.m.
Call 870.536.6366 to schedule

Sponsored by Southern Good Faith Fund and Delta Southern Bank.

Bolivar County, Mississippi

Shelby

Delta Southern Bank
905 N. Broadway
By appointment only on
Mon, Tues, and Thur
Call Edna Bland at 662.398.5115 to schedule

Coahoma County, Mississippi

Friars Point

Delta Southern Bank
574 2nd Street
By appointment only on
Tues and Thur
Call Brenda Dye at 662.383.2440 to schedule

Clarksdale

Delta Southern Bank
875 S. State St.
By appointment only on
Tues, Wed, and Thur
Call Ashley Robertson at 662.624.5776 to schedule

Top 10 Ways To Spend Your Tax Refund

After using the FREE VITA tax preparation services (see above), put your refund money to good use.

This excellent list was compiled by IDA participants, the Savers' Club, and Asset Builders staff.

1. Make a deposit into your regular savings account, emergency savings account, or your IDA and/or SEED account. (Take advantage of the new splitting option—put part of your return into your spending account and part in your saving account!)
2. Pay credit card balances down, or even pay them off!
3. Pay off small bills.
4. Make minor repairs to your home or automobile that will save in the long run.
5. Set aside money in a savings account for an "emergency fund."
6. Begin a retirement plan.
7. Invest (IRA, 529-college investment plan, stocks, CDs)

8. Spend money on things that will last or improve your life, like a class to increase your earning power, a cooking class, or buy a computer.
9. Open a child's college education savings account.
10. Save for a vacation or pay down principal on a home.

With the beginning of the new year and your "extra" tax return funds, take time to reflect on your spending and saving habits. Make a budget and stick to it! If you were running a business you would not expect to be successful without a budget, so why should your personal finances be any different?

And think about changing your spending habits. Here are a few suggestions: take your lunch to work several days a week, ask yourself "is it a want or a need," and track all spending to determine where you can cut back.

Free Credit Report

On the Web:

www.annualcreditreport.com

Phone Toll-free: 877.322.8228

Mailing address:

Annual Credit Report

Request Service

P.O. Box 105281

Atlanta, GA 30348-5281

What's In Your Credit Report?

Order a free credit report once a year

Do you know what's in your credit report? It's good to know, especially if you're thinking about buying a house or applying for credit. Your credit report is used to evaluate your applications for credit, insurance, employment, or renting or buying a home.

You're entitled by law to one free copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus once a year.

Only one Web site is authorized to fill orders for the free annual credit report you are entitled to—**annualcreditreport.com**. Beware of imposter sites that claim to offer free credit reports. In some cases, the free report comes with strings attached and end up costing you money.

When you get your credit report, review it carefully for errors and make sure all the loans and credit cards really belong to you.

Match Your Savings!

The Individual Development Account (IDA) is a matched savings program for low-income and low-asset families.

Every dollar you save is matched with \$3 up to a maximum match of \$2,000 per individual and \$4,000 per household. The economic skills classes and counseling will help you manage your money.

Credit Counseling Can Help You Out Of Debt

Do you want to start your financial year off right but not sure how to start? If you're behind on your bills, credit counseling can get you back on the right track.

And now SGFF is offering credit counseling to participants in our programs. Our credit counselors are here to give you assistance whether you need just a little help or a whole lot of help!

In Pine Bluff call Frances Newsome at 870.535.6233, ext.23 or toll free 1.888.323.6233, ext. 23 and in Helena-West Helena call Vida Fielder at 870.816.1126.

When To Call A Credit Counselor:

- You can't pay the minimums on your credit cards.
- You're consistently late paying one or more of your regular bills.
- Creditors and collection agencies are hounding you.
- You can't work out repayment plans with creditors.



Upcoming IDA Classes

Pine Bluff

Classes are held at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.* at the Southern Good Faith Fund office, 2304 W. 29th Ave.

*Free child care at the 6 p.m. class in Pine Bluff on Feb. 6, Feb. 22, Mar. 20, and April 9.

February

- 1 Information Meeting (6 p.m.)
- 6* Asset Specific Training (AST)-Home Ownership
- 15 Money Management
- 22* Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal

March

- 7 Information Meeting (6 p.m.)
- 12 Financial Services
- 20* Credit Management
- 29* Renting, Leasing, or Buying

April

- 2 Information Meeting
- 9** AST-Education
- 17 AST-Home Ownership
- 26** AST-Home Repair

Helena-West Helena

Classes are held at 10 a.m. (designated by **) and 5:30 p.m. at First Bank of the Delta, 502 Cherry St.

February

- 5 Asset Specific Training (AST)-Home Ownership
- 20** Money Management
- 22 Spending as a Habit—Saving as a Goal
- 26 Information Meeting

March

- 6** Financial Services
- 13 Credit Management
- 20 Information Meeting
- 26** Renting, Leasing, or Buying

April

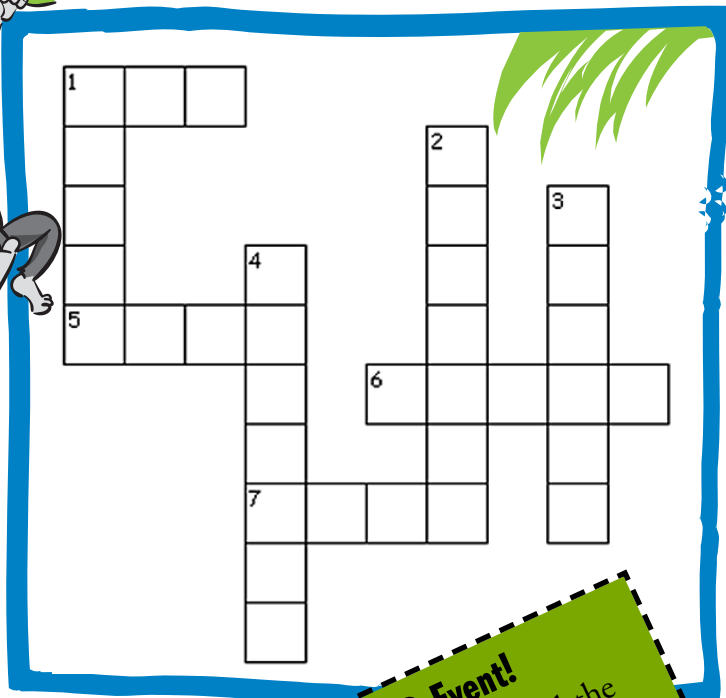
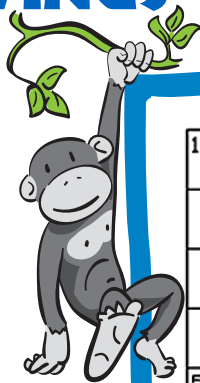
- 3 AST-Education
- 12 SEED Event (6 p.m.)
- 16** AST-Home Ownership
- 24 Information Meeting
- 30 AST-Home Repair

Enrolling in the IDA program is easy—just attend an information session (see right for schedule).

In Pine Bluff call Tara Irby at 870.535.6233, ext. 36 or toll free 1.888.323.6233, ext 36. In Helena-West Helena call Mindy Maupin at 870.816.1104.

WILD ABOUT SAVINGS

SEED Activity



Across

1. Your SEED bank is shaped like this animal.
5. What do two nickels equal?
6. The smallest of all coins (value)?
7. Do this with your money and it will add up fast.

Down

1. What you'll be when you save your money.
2. Your SEED money is going to be used to help for this.
3. What do you call pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters?
4. This is what you do with your SEED money at the bank.

Answers: Across: 1. pig 5. dime 6. penny 7. save
Down: 1. proud 2. college 3. change 4. deposit

SEED Event!
Make plans to attend the next SEED Event on April 12 at 6 p.m.

SEED Accounts Help Kids Save For College

75 Families in Phillips County Participating

Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) accounts are long-term asset-building accounts that provide children an opportunity to attend college while making a case for national policy so all children in the U.S. can do the same.

Southern Good Faith Fund along with eleven community partners throughout the United States are participating in this initiative.

We reached our SEED enrollment goal of 75 families in Phillips County in the

spring of 2005 and are very excited to have them getting a head start on their future.

These accounts are “seeded” with \$1,000 and over time each family makes an additional deposit of \$1,000. Then it’s matched with another \$1,000, for a total of \$3,000.

Currently these funds are in a savings account, however, at the end of the initiative they will be rolled over to a 529 plan where they will earn a higher return.



Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) is led by nationally renowned partners—CFED, the Center for Social Development, the Initiative on Financial Security of The Aspen Institute, the New America Foundation, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, and community partners nationwide.



Small Steps Lead To A College Degree

Rosetta Grant, a single mother of three children, is enrolled in Early Childhood Education at Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas. Zelda Simes, a student support consultant with Southern Good Faith Fund's Career Pathways program helped Rosetta with child care assistance so she could attend classes.

Now that her youngest child has enrolled in school and no longer needs childcare assistance, Rosetta continues to benefit from the support of the Career Pathways team and the computer lab.

In the spring of 2006, Rosetta earned her Technical Certificate, and later that summer was awarded her Child Development Associate certificate. She is currently completing her Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education and expecting to graduate in May 2007.

She was awarded Student of the Month by Career Pathways and her 3.5 GPA earned her the award for Exceptional Classroom Performance.



With 3 children to provide for, Rosetta Grant turned to Career Pathways and PCCUA to earn a degree.

Rosetta's ultimate goal is to receive her bachelor's degree in education and her motivation and spirit should help her achieve her dream.

Discover Your Career Potential

Would you like to go to college but think you're too old, don't have the money, time, or the skills to succeed? You might be surprised. Our Career Pathways program works with Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (PCCUA) and Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) to put you on the path to a degree in allied health, behavioral health technology, business, early childhood education, education, industrial maintenance, manufacturing, nursing, or welding. Our career counselors work with you to discover your career interests, skills, and goals and design a program specific to your needs.

Maybe you need to brush up on your basic math, vocabulary, and writing skills. Maybe you have children and need childcare. Maybe you don't have a car. Or maybe you don't have the money to pay for college.

Career Pathways can help with all of it. We'll even help you find a job while you go to school and even after you graduate. So toss out the excuses and take the leap. Give our career counselors in a call in Pine Bluff or Helena-West Helena.

Call Today!

Zelda Simes at PCCUA: 870.372.3279

Lisa Ponder at SEARK: 870.543.5999

Important Dates

PCCUA

May 2-8	Final exams
May 11	Graduation
Apr. 30	Summer Session starts
Aug. 20	Fall Semester starts

SEARK

May 2-8	Final Exams
May 11	Graduation
May 29	Summer Session starts
Aug. 20	Fall Semester starts

Preparing For The Tax Season

Make organizing your financials a priority

Yeah! It's exciting to own a small business, but along with that comes the responsibility of paying a variety of taxes. In 2007, make it your highest priority to get your financials organized by using these simple steps suggested by Ines Polonius, Executive Director of alt.Consulting:

One

Bookkeeping—Don't panic! It doesn't have to be difficult. A good bookkeeping system can be done by hand or it can be computerized. It just has to be set up and maintained properly to make sure you are:

- Tracking all expenses and tracking them correctly
- Tracking those expenses that you have paid out of your pocket

- Tracking all income
- Tracking your cash, your receivables and your payables

Two

Bank accounts—Separate your personal account from you business and write checks to document every business expense and investment properly.

- Track all expenses
- Track all investments

Three

Talk to your accountant—Before tax season, sit down with your accountant or whoever prepares your taxes. Do NOT assume that:

- Your accountant will 'just know' what you did with the cash you took out of the business.

- Your accountant will have time to ask all the right questions during the busy tax time.
- You will remember every expense you paid in cash throughout the whole year.

In general, there are different taxes that your small business is liable for depending on the type of business, its size, and structure. Some of them will include state taxes like Sales and Use Taxes, Unemployment Taxes, and Withholding Taxes. Federal taxes may include Employment Taxes.

If you'd like help getting a financials system in place, give us a call at the Business Development Center.



Upcoming Training At The Business Development Center

Get the complete schedule on our Web site at www.southerngoodfaithfund.org

Child Care Licensing Requirements Workshop

Monthly in Pine Bluff and Forrest City

The Business Side of Childcare

Training starts March 6 in Helena-West Helena and June 19 in Forrest City

Developing & Enforcing Child Care Policies & Procedures

February 27 in Helena-West Helena and April 30 in Pine Bluff

How to Start a Small Business

Monthly in Pine Bluff

Financing Your Small Business

February 6 in Forrest City

Preparing to Meet the Lender

February 28 and June 14 in Pine Bluff

Budgeting & Money Management

February 15 in Pine Bluff

Special
Discounts
for IDA
Participants!

To learn more about these classes and others, give us a call at 870.535.6233 or visit our Web site at www.southerngoodfaithfund.org.

Finally, Health Insurance Benefits For Small Business Employees

It's new, it's affordable, and it's specifically designed for Arkansas' small businesses. The cost is based in part on the income of your employees, making it a win-win situation for small business owners and employees.

Great news is in store for small business owners in Arkansas—health insurance may be within reach for you and your employees starting January 2007.

ARHealthNet is a new insurance program to help qualified small businesses with low income workers, provide an affordable package of health care benefits to their employees.

Another great feature of this program is that all employees enrolled in the plan receive immediate benefits with no waiting period upon initial enrollment of the group. And benefits are available to everyone in the group regardless of any pre-existing medical conditions.

All types of businesses are eligible, including beauticians, child care, elderly care, janitorial, lawn care, and others. If your business has between 2 and 500 employees, has not

provided health insurance in the past year or longer, and employees meet certain income guidelines, you may be eligible for this new program.

Currently policies are available for only 15,000 employees so you must act fast. To find out if you are eligible for the program please contact one of the agents listed in the blue box below.

For more information about the program visit www.arhealthnet.com or call the Business Development Center.

ARHealthNet health insurance program is a partnership with the federal government, the state government, and private businesses to offer health benefits to uninsured workers.



Call one of the participating insurance agents today and get your business enrolled.

Buster Crook
William H. Crook Insurance
& Financial Services
Pine Bluff 870.534.5200

Stephanie Foreman
Foreman Benefits Plus
Marianna 870.295.2633

Scooter Gabbie
Farm Bureau
Helena-West Helena
870.572.4099

Bev Hargraves
Hargraves Insurance Agency
Helena-West Helena
870.338.3425

Sharen Lightsey
Numbers 2 Numbers
Pine Bluff 870.536.4464

Mack Milner
Milner Insurance
Pine Bluff 870.534.2823

Make 2007 A Year Of Growth

The Business Development Center has declared 2007 a year of **GROWTH**. This means we want to help our small business owners grow their personal incomes by growing their small businesses.

Every year we survey businesses that received over ten hours of services two years ago. In 2006, we surveyed clients who received services in 2004 and compared how they performed in 2004 and 2005. Overall, 76 clients, or 76% of our sample, responded to the survey. Some of our findings were exciting! Median revenue grew by 152% while mean revenue increased by 27%. Median household income grew by 52% while the mean grew by 37%.

Our focus for 2007 will be to ensure that 100% of clients receive a draw

from their business. Only 64% of clients served in 2004 took a draw from their business in 2005. In addition, we want to grow the actual amount of draw that our clients will be taking from their business.

While growing your business can be challenging, increasing the bottom line can be accomplished by developing and implementing a strategic plan. A strategic plan will help you look at ways that you can grow your business or make it more profitable. It will also break the plan down into clearly defined steps that you can easily accomplish.

We'd love to help your business. Call the Business Development Center at 870.535.6233 and get your business on the way to growth.

BDC is partially funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) under Cooperative Agreement Number (SBAHQ-04-W-0032). The Office of Women's Business Ownership is established to help women become full partners in economic development through small business ownership. The Women's Business Ownership homepage is: www.wbconline.gov. BDC is a public-private partnership of the U.S. Small Business Administration and Southern Good Faith Fund, a non-profit affiliate of Southern Bancorp. SBA's cooperation does not constitute or imply its endorsement of any opinions, products, and/or services. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact Miriam Karanja, 2304 W. 29th Ave., Pine Bluff, AR 71603 or call 870.535.6233. All SBA programs provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Public Policy

What We're Working On At The Capitol

Our Public Policy program plays an important part in the programs and services that you've come to know, and they've worked hard to prepare for the current General Assembly of the Arkansas Legislature.

During this session, our staff will focus on increasing funding for IDAs; a state-funded savings match for Arkansas' 529 College Savings Plan accounts; and enforcement of the Arkansas Constitution's usury provision, which limits annual interest on consumer loans to 17 percent.

This last point is significant because payday lenders in Arkansas regularly charge interest rates of 372 to 869 percent annually, forcing the average payday borrower to pay as much as \$800 to borrow \$325!

Offices

Pine Bluff

Asset Builders
Business Development Center
Career Pathways

2304 W. 29th Avenue
Pine Bluff, AR 71603
870.535.6233

Helena-West Helena

Asset Builders
502 Cherry Street
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.816.1104

Business Development Center
502 Cherry Street
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.816.1120

Career Pathways
P.O. Box 514
1000 Campus Dr., T & I Building
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
870.338.3279

Little Rock

Public Policy
1400 W. Markham, Suite 302
Little Rock, AR 72201
501.661.0322

Web Site

For more information
please visit us at:
<http://www.southerngoodfaithfund.org>

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