

# THE RAMBLER

Journal of the Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi  
VOLUME 8 ISSUE 1 FEBRUARY 2015



Biloxi Lighthouse ~ Biloxi, MS

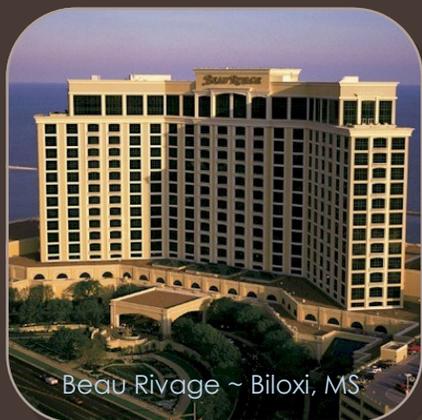
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## 2015 NRA/SERNRA/RAM Training Conference

October 5-8, 2015

Beau Rivage ~ Biloxi, MS



Beau Rivage ~ Biloxi, MS

Please join us on the beautiful Mississippi Gulf Coast for the 2015 NRA/SERNRA/RAM Conference! Stay tuned for more info...

\*\*Exhibitors needed—see page 13

### Facts about Biloxi, MS

**Nickname:** The Playground of the South

**Population (2013):** 44,820

**Elevation:** 25 feet

**Land Area:** 46.53 square miles

**Avg. Temps in October:** 79/61

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Donny Frazier, RAM President

Greetings fellow RAM members! The year is off to a fast start and so is your RAM Board. During our first meeting in January new members took the oath of service; Shella Head as President-Elect, Mylinda Dempsey as Secretary, Betsy Simoneaux as Treasurer, Kim Ratliff as Board Member (one year), and Donna Dungan, Melanie McClain, and Susan Smith-Patterson as Board Members (three years). New Division representatives are Rhonda Wade for MAIL and Kathy Woodard for MRCEA. Let's take a few minutes to express appreciation to those who fulfilled services to our association last year. Thank you Tommy Burnham, Jo Ann Crudup, and Allison Lowther for the three year commitment of Board Member. Thank you Anita Naik for your work as Secretary over the past three years. The Divisions received precise representation on the Board from Angela Eley for MAIL and Gwen Smith for MRCEA.

Many individuals joining together make RAM strong. We would not be where we are if fellow RAMsters did not volunteer for various committees. Thanks to everyone who worked on a committee last year and to those who have already partnered with RAM to serve on a committee this year. Feel free to contact committee chairs, listed as the end of this newsletter, if you would like to be a part of keeping our association strong.

What an exciting time for our State and association. We will be hosting the NRA/SERNRA/RAM conference (57th RAM Conference)! The conference will be held on October 5-8, 2015 at the Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Mississippi. We have a big year ahead of us including this conference and we will all be working diligently to make sure that it is the best conference yet!

RAM donated to several charities and fundraisers this past year including the LIFE of Mississippi – Bridging the Gap Walk, MADE House Fire Fundraiser, Mississippi Society for Disabilities (Accessible Playground), and the Winston Strong Disaster Relief efforts that assisted individuals impacted by the April 2014 tornadoes. At our January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, RAM continued the business of serving individuals with disabilities and organizations that assist individuals with disabilities. Some items the Board voted on to help cover were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual EmployAbility Job Fair (March 4, 2015 at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum) and construction of a zip line at Center Ridge Outpost that will accommodate individuals with special needs (TEAAM Autism).

Your board is here to meet the opportunities set before us. We believe in recreation for all. For the past 10 years, there has been an annual RAM Golf Tournament. The Board recently discussed at our January meeting to continue with the annual golf tournament or to consider ideas for a different recreational event. You are encouraged to offer ideas and suggestions to Allison Lowther.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT.

In an effort to increase our membership we will have a Membership Campaign starting April 1<sup>st</sup>. We hope that everyone will participate in actively recruiting others to join this vital organization. Please see the Membership Campaign flyer on page 9 for more information on our membership campaign. For information on how you can become a Membership Ambassador please contact Kim Ratliff.

We treasure the memories of a long-time supporter of RAM and former Board member Connie Fitzhugh. Although she closed her eyes to us in November 2014, she remains in our hearts.

Please let me know what we can do for each of you throughout the year to make RAM and your experience even better. You are encouraged to contact me or any of our Board Members with ideas and/or comments.

Thank you for your continued support!

~Donny Frazier, RAM President



## SWEARING-IN OF 2015 RAM BOARD MEMBERS

Board members from left to right: Donna Dungan, (Board Member – 3 years) Mylinda Dempsey (Secretary), Susan Smith-Patterson (Board Member – 3 years) , Betsy Simoneaux (Treasurer), Donny Frazier (President), Shella Head (President-Elect), Melanie McClain (Board Member – 3 years) , and Kim Ratliff (Board Member – 1 year) .

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

First, let me thank the RAM community for electing me as your 2015 RAM President-Elect. It is indeed, both a privilege and an honor to be chosen to represent such a distinguished group of people.

To those seasoned and new RAM members, it is a pleasure to welcome each of you to the RAM family. It is my hope that each RAM member feels a sense of pride in belonging to this growing chapter. We encourage you to take advantage of the many benefits that come with your RAM membership.

We hope that each of you will be able to use the RAM Chapter as both a forum for the exchange of innovative ideas to benefit individuals with disabilities, and as a resource for recruiting new members throughout the year, and for years to come.

As your President-Elect, one of my goals is to actively recruit new membership; so don't be surprised if you see me smiling in the backroom of one of the many rehab meetings (in all divisions), and/or gatherings, or somewhere in the state recruiting non-agency members. And, as Uncle Sam would say, "RAM NEEDS YOU!!!"



### RAM NEEDS YOU!

In a nutshell, **RAM** has been organized to promote, advocate and empower all individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society. Our members set the very foundation by which this goal can be reached and we encourage you to become actively involved. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or any RAM officer. We look forward to representing you.

~Sheila M. Head, RAM President-Elect



Sheila M. Head, President-Elect

## TREASURER'S REPORT

In January, the RAM Board approved on making a donation to TEAAM Autism, Center Ridge Outpost, to help fund a zip-line project. Center Ridge Outpost hosts summer camps and retreats for persons with autism spectrum disorders and related intellectual development disabilities along with their families. The zip-line will give attendees to the camps and retreats a new way "to travel"!

The board also approved of hosting a vendor booth, at the Counsel for Exceptional Children, Mississippi CEC 2015 Annual Conference held in Biloxi, MS in February. The theme of the Conference was, "Parading into a Brighter Future for Exceptional Children", where our RAM President, Donny Frazier, made a presentation.

Also, assisting MDRS, an Employability Job Fair Employee Reception was approved which will be held in March, 2015.

To honor an individual, Randy Kelly, Executive Director of the Three Rivers Planning and Development District, the board voted for RAM to become a Bronze Sponsor at the Regional Rehab Center, Red Raspberry Humanitarian Awards Dinner in April, 2015. Mr. Kelly is a strong supporter of people with disabilities and is being honored at the dinner.

The above projects and the finalization for 2014 RAM Conference and Golf Tournament had expenditures in the amount of \$58,288.00. Income from the RAM Conference and Golf Tournament resulted in deposits of \$36,872.69.

~Betsy Simoneaux, RAM Treasurer



# 2014 ANNUAL RAM TRAINING CONFERENCE



## RECAP

The 2014 Annual RAM Training Conference was a huge success! Everyone came together to make it a wonderful conference for all to learn from and enjoy!



Above: 2014 President, Cindy Goodin, presenting JaKyra McDonald a check for \$500 from the Golf Tournament proceeds.

\*\*To see more photos, got to <http://mdrconnect> and click on Agency Photos

# 2014 ANNUAL RAM TRAINING CONFERENCE, CONT.



## FUNDRAISING

The 2014 Special Fundraising event was once again a HUGE success!!! Members from the fundraising and door prize committee worked together to collect items for the Silent Auction as well as door prizes. The results were SPECTACULAR, we collected over 300 donated items and \$1,806.32 was raised from the Silent Auction. Thank you MDRS Family for all of your support!

~DeLinda Armstrong



\*\*To see more photos, go to <http://mdrsconnect> and click on Agency Photos

# 2014 ANNUAL RAM TRAINING CONFERENCE AWARDS



**Employer of the Year**

Biloxi Police Department



**Professional Achievement**

Susan Williams



**Personal Achievement**

Kris Geroux



**RAMster of the Year**

Lea King



**Travis McCharen Award**

Theresa Taylor



**MRCEA Outstanding Service Award**

Lisa Prestidge



**25 Year Service Award**

Jeanette Yates



**15 Year Service Award**

Pam Hall



**15 Year Service Award**

Gwen Smith



**10 Year Service Award**

Karren Cresap



**10 Year Service Award**

Mary Hudgens



**Rolling off Board**

Donny Frazier

# 2014 ANNUAL RAM TRAINING CONFERENCE AWARDS, CONT.



**Rolling off Board**

Lavonda Hart



**Rolling off Board**

Anita Naik



**Rolling off Board**

Tommy Burnham



**Rolling off Board**

Joann Crudup

## Not Pictured

**MRCEA Counselor of the Year** — Connie Fitzhugh

**MAIL Support Staff of the Year** — Dallas Eaves

**MAIL Counselor of the Year** — Lenetra Ellis-Shields

**25 Years Service Award** — Beth Frantz

**20 Years Service Award** — Bob McDonald

**20 Years Service Award** — Will Christian

**15 Years Service Award** — Shelia Mills

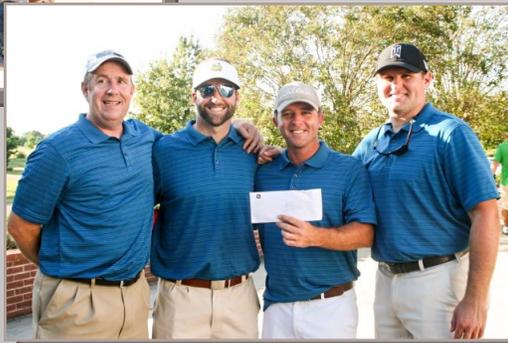
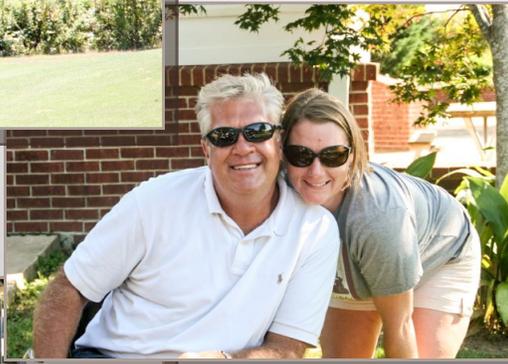
**15 Years Service Award** — Jean Walley

**10 Years Service Award** — Laura Hughes

**10 Years Service Award** — Shannon Love

**Rolling off Board** — Allison Lowther

# 2014 ANNUAL SCRAMBLE GOLF TOURNAMENT



## RECAP

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual RAM Golf Tournament was held August 26, 2014 at Patrick Farms Golf Club, kicking off the 2014 RAM Conference. 12 teams participated in the tournament and players and participants were treated to a fantastic meal of seafood specialties and fried catfish. \$500 of the proceeds from the golf tournament was donated to JaKyra McDonald, a child with a disability, to assist with meeting her special needs.

~Allison Lowther

\*\*To see more photos, go to <http://mdrconnect> and click on Agency Photos

## LETTER FROM MRCEA PRESIDENT



Happy New Year from MRCEA!

As President of MRCEA, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new officers:

President-Elect ----- Leslie Shake  
Past President ----- Gwen Smith  
Secretary/Treasurer ----- Shannon Love  
Board Member-at-Large ----- Laura McCoy

MRCEA members last met at RAM in August 2014. At that time, we had 22 members. The MRCEA Counselor of the Year Award for 2014 was given to Connie Fitzhugh, former VRB Counselor in the Jackson area. The MRCEA Outstanding Service Award for 2014 was presented to Lisa Prestridge, VTI in Brookhaven.

Planning has already begun for the 2015 NRA Annual Training Conference to be held in Biloxi, MS at the Beau Rivage Resort on Oct 5 - 8, 2015.

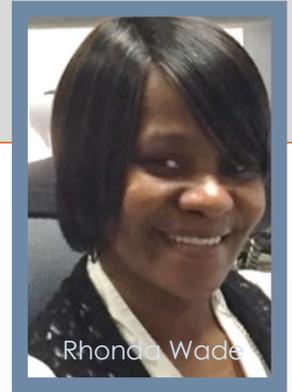
Everyone is invited to come join MRCEA and be a part of the excitement in 2015!

~Kathy Woodard, President

“With a focus on professionalism, RCEA provides its member base with a framework for state chapters, regional affiliations and offers a national presence. The member base is comprised of educators and counselors employed in both public and private settings. Recognizing the broad based of persons with disabilities, RCEA promotes through its Journal and training opportunities, continuing activities to insure that those in the field of rehabilitation stay up-to-date about their profession. Public information, as well as education, are recognized as a responsibility of a professional group. We have developed the Rehabilitation Reading Society as a means to keep our members involved with research.”

Source: <http://rehabcea.org/>

## LETTER FROM MAIL PRESIDENT



Greetings,

I am honored to serve as the 2015 President for the Mississippi Association for Independent Living (MAIL). I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who voted for me. Without your vote, I would not be in this position. I look forward to working with each and every one of you, to make this a productive year. My goals for 2015 are to increase membership, engage membership and to maximize the organizations operations. By doing this, we can continue to be united by our shared goals and common individuality.

MAIL's Mission is to promote and protect all aspects of life for individuals with disabilities to live independently with their family, home and community. In staying true to MAIL's mission we were visible in the community by taking on projects such as: the "Chasing Tail 5K Run" race, which benefits Brandon-based Ride ABILITY, a therapeutic riding center that helps individuals with special needs build confidence, balance, strength and coordination by learning to ride horses; The ARC of Mississippi, "ARC Angel Project" who's mission is to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and "Great Strides" Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Brookhaven which gave us an a great opportunity to get involved in the community for a great cause!

The MAIL Board Members for 2015 are: Rhonda Wade- President, Angela Ely-Past President, Allison Lowther- President-Elect, Lashonda Barnes-Secretary, Terri Baylor- Board Member at Large, and Mylinda Dempsey-Treasurer

We are always recruiting members who wish to be involved in MAIL's leadership and committee positions. Please feel free to contact any of the board members if you are interested in serving in anyway.

~Rhonda Wade, MAIL President

## OTHER BUSINESS

### EXHIBITORS NEEDED!

Do you know a vendor or advocacy organization who wants to exhibit at the NRA/SERNRA/RAM conference. Contact Carolyn Mack, RAM Exhibits Chairperson, [cmack@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:cmack@mdrs.ms.gov) or 662-453-2270

### JPD WANTS YOU

Tracy Hester, Facility Manager in Tupelo and Secretary of the NRA Job Placement and Development (JPD) Division, wants to breathe new life into the RAM JPD. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact Tracy at [trhester@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:trhester@mdrs.ms.gov) or 662-842-2144.

### RAM PAGE ON MDRS CONNECT

We have a page just for RAM on MDRS Connect, the agency intranet. Currently we have announcements and newsletters there so you can go and find them anytime. Go to <http://mdrsconnect> and click on RAM on the left-hand menu.

### RAM WEBSITE—IDEAS NEEDED!

We will be developing a website for RAM! If you have ideas or information that you would like to see on the website, please email them to Susan Smith-Patterson at [ssmith@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:ssmith@mdrs.ms.gov).

### IMPORTANT NRA DATES

- ⇒ Government Affairs Summit – March 22-24, 2015 – Alexandria, VA
- ⇒ NRA/SERNRA/RAM Conference – October 5-8, 2015 – Biloxi, MS

# MEMBERSHIP

## What's in it for me?

- ♣ Opportunities to earn CEUs
- ♣ Networking opportunities with professionals
- ♣ Leadership development and skill building
- ♣ Participation in community service activities
- ♣ Opportunities to attend state, regional, and national conferences & receive current, accurate advocacy and legislative updates relating to rehabilitation

To join RAM, annual dues are paid to the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA). Please go to: [www.nationalrehab.org](http://www.nationalrehab.org) for more information and to complete a membership registration form online and to view payment options.



**Our Association is only as good as the involvement of our members, so please reach out to any Board Member or Committee Chair if you would like to get involved. We have many different committees and welcome all who want to volunteer!**

**Coming Soon!**

A large red balloon with a white string and a small red base. The balloon contains the following text:

**Membership Campaign**  
**April 1st - June 30th**  
**Recruit!**  
**Teamwork!**  
**Competition!**  
**Rewards!**  
**Bragging Rights!**

**Membership Ambassadors Needed!**



Contact Kim Ratliff for details  
(601) 853-5212; [kratliff@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:kratliff@mdrs.ms.gov)

**Dottie Blansett, Membership Chair, [dblansett@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:dblansett@mdrs.ms.gov) (662-227-0183)**

## 2015 RAM OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	— Donny Frazier
<b>President Elect</b>	— Shella Head
<b>Immediate Past President</b>	— Cindy Goodin
<b>Treasurer</b>	— Betsy Simoneaux
<b>Secretary</b>	— Mylinda Dempsey

## 2015 RAM BOARD MEMBERS

<b><u>Term Expires 2015</u></b>	<b><u>Term Expires 2016</u></b>	<b><u>Term Expires 2017</u></b>
Delinda Armstrong	Valerie Buckley	Donna Dungan
Gaylin Matthews	Carol "Sissy" Elrod	Melanie McClain
Kim Ratliff	Carolyn Mack	Susan Smith-Patterson

## 2015 RAM STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

<b>Awards</b>	— Gwen Smith
<b>Program</b>	— Shella Head
<b>Nomination</b>	— Cindy Goodin
<b>Election and Credentials</b>	— Tommy Burnham
<b>CRC and CEU</b>	— Lou Ellen McDonald
<b>Membership</b>	— Dottie Blansett
<b>Necrology</b>	— Gaylin Matthews
<b>Constitution and Bylaws</b>	— Jolynn Hall

## 2015 RAM SPECIAL COMMITTEE CHAIRS

<b>Legislative</b>	— Vacant
<b>Exhibits</b>	— Carolyn Mack
<b>Registration</b>	— Brandi Kennedy
<b>Door Prizes</b>	— Kim Ratliff
<b>Service Awards</b>	— Betsy Simoneaux
<b>Newsletter and Publicity</b>	— Susan Smith Patterson
<b>Social Functions</b>	— Leslie Shake
<b>Community Service</b>	— Delinda Armstrong
<b>Special Fundraising Project</b>	— Michele Langford
<b>Golf Tournament (Recreational)</b>	— Allison Lowther
<b>Conference Facilitators</b>	— Patti Rayner
<b>Conference Program Book</b>	— Renee Skali
<b>Audio/Visual/AT</b>	— Denee Smith
<b>MAIL Representative to RAM Board</b>	— Rhonda Wade
<b>MRCEA Representative to RAM Board</b>	— Kathy Woodard
<b>RAM Representative to SERNRA Board</b>	— Lavonda Hart