

# delivering the Promise

A Quarterly Publication of  
Indianola Promise Community  
SUMMER 2014

When children get the right start,  
Indianola prospers.

Early Childhood

Kindergarten

College and Career

Grade 12

## IPC PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



### Promise School

Entering “big” school can be one of the most exciting yet scariest times for upcoming kindergartners. And, for parents, it is a milestone event as their child transitions from pre-school to formal school and begins their educational foundation needed for future learning. Indianola School District, in partnership with Indianola Promise Community, is helping to make this transition easier with the Promise School’s **“Roaring into Kindergarten”** Program.

A program designed to prepare incoming kindergartners and their parents for this milestone in their child’s life, Promise School provides children with the opportunity to experience kindergarten during the summer months and gives them that much-needed boost into kindergarten curriculum and day-to-day classroom operations.

This summer, 120 rising kindergartners are participating and receiving help from 27 teachers in the Promise School program. Located at Lockard Elementary, Promise School is one of the most successful early learning programs in the Mississippi Delta and has grown in reputation as a program that really makes a difference. Children come to the program from Head Start, traditional daycare and from families that home school.

“From day one, we start impressing on our children that this is their high school graduating class. We tell them, ‘Look around. All of you must graduate together,’” said Jeffrey Blackmon, Lockard principal during the school year and director of the Promise School in the summer. Blackmon is dedicated to providing Indianola children the best opportunity of starting strong in school with a solid educational and social foundation to build upon.

With about 14 students and three teachers per class, each child receives the individual attention needed to learn. From 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day, five days a week for 32 days, the young students are involved in activities that will put them about nine weeks ahead of other kindergartners.

“In the past, there was very little communication between Head Start teachers and kindergarten teachers,” Blackmon said. “In this program, each class has a Head Start teacher, a kindergarten teacher as well as a teaching assistant from Lockard Elementary. We want to establish all those relationships before the regular school year.”

The school focuses on the basics – early literacy, spelling, writing skills, sound fluency, math and social skills. Equally important, the program concentrates on structure, a component often overlooked.

Promise School is an amazing opportunity for young students and has the ability to guide them into a bright and promising future.

BY LOLITA GLADNEY

### DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Robert L. Merritt (for whom Merritt Jr. High School is named) was the first African-American to become superintendent of the Indianola Public School District.

Dr. Merritt had previously served as the principal of Carver Middle School, for many years.



The Indianola Promise Community (IPC) is a community-based initiative to provide children with the opportunity to succeed in school, graduate, and attend college. Our priority is making sure children in Indianola have the opportunities they need to excel. The IPC is a project of Delta Health Alliance. For more information, to volunteer, and to get involved, call us or come by and visit us. IPC Office, 135 Front Street, Indianola, MS 38751, 662-686-3933

# FAMILY spotlight

Marilyn, Dexter,  
Deja, Mia, and Kavie James



## The Indianola Promise Community honors a "Family of the Month."

Each month, the Indianola Promise Community recognizes a family for displaying exemplary efforts to improve their family life, strengthening their connections to the community, and setting an outstanding example of parental engagement. The June 2014 Family of the Month is the James family: Marilyn, Dexter, Deja, Mia, and Kavie. Marilyn is a 2013 Parents for Public Schools of Jackson Parent Leader Institute graduate and has served in numerous leadership roles throughout the community; including 2013 President of Lockard Elementary School's PTA, 2014 President of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association, PPSJ Site Coordinator and Sunflower-Humphries Counties Progress

Headstart Policy Council member. The family's call to service began at an early age with the ideas and teachings of their parents. Marilyn stated her reason for always developing ideas to help her neighbors and friends is because "It feels good to help other people". The James family had heavily employed the practice of the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child", which means that the work of raising a child cannot be done alone. Marilyn and Dexter treat each neighborhood child as one of their own. To keep neighbors and friends informed, Marilyn posts daily school and community updates on her social media page.

As a family, they have organized neighborhood gatherings for the

youth during the summer, participated in numerous community beautification projects, volunteered at each child's school and this spring organized an Easter Egg Hunt for their community youth. Even the youngest family members have been praised for their exemplary character and outstanding academic achievements by parents and friends. Marilyn stated that a number of parents have acknowledged their children's acts of kindness and humility.

"Helping others helps us" is a motto that is heavily engraved in the lives of each family member. The James family would like to empower other families to take charge of their neighborhoods, community and schools by committing to acts of service.



"I would like to express my appreciation and support for the Indianola Promise Community. The work

and financial resources that have been invested in our children and community are remarkable. Thank you for enriching our community."

– DANA S. MYRICK, WARD 4 ALDERMAN

## HEALTH & FITNESS 101



### Tips to help children eat more Fruit

- Set a good example for your child by eating fruit every day with meals or as snacks and offer children a choice of fruits for lunch.
- Top off a bowl of cereal with some berries (strawberries, blueberries, or dried cranberries.)
- Make a "smiley face" with sliced bananas for eyes, raisins for a nose, and an orange slice for a mouth.
- Replace candy with raisins or other dried fruits.
- Make fruit kabobs using pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes, melons and berries.
- Pack a juice box (100% juice) in children's lunches instead of soda or other sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Look for and choose fruit options: such as sliced apples, mixed fruit cup, or 100% fruit juice in fast food restaurants.
- Select juices made from 100% juice, not concentrate.



## HealthyDelta

# SUMMERCAMPS

## Who Says Learning Can't Be Fun?

BY DR. DEBORAH MOORE

While other children rest during the summer and/or go on summer vacations, children in Indianola continue to learn and have fun while doing it. As the heat is turned up, so is the learning.



Beginning its fifth year, IPC's summer camps program has become a vital part of the Indianola community with parents and children expecting an enhanced learning experience during June and July. Camps offer remarkable between-school and pre-school learning programs.

Over 500 children are attending eight camps this summer. Camps give children a safe haven during the summer months. Camps also help limit summer learning loss between the academic school year, while serving as an economic development driver, as they employ a significant number of Indianola residents.

### 2014 Summer Camps include:

**Freedom Summer 2014** is sponsored by the Sunflower County Freedom Project. 7th-9th graders are provided core academic instruction, plus art enrichment and fitness training. Students also enjoy a weeklong visit to Ole Miss University.

**Reading, Music & Drama** is sponsored by the Rasberry United Methodist Men's Club. Three age ranges are targeted: 8-11, 12-14 and 15-18, with an emphasis on language, literature and reading. Activities include creative speech, dramatic arts, music, poetry and plays.

**Farming & Literacy** is sponsored by Indianola Main Street, Inc. This camp targets 14-19 year olds with a focus on language and literacy development. Participants interact with farmers and agricultural professionals with an emphasis on the importance of language and communication.

**The Writing Camp** is sponsored by On Track Community Development Corporation. Students from all grades enhance and reinforce their literacy,

vocabulary and writing skills through creative and fun programs such as poetry slamming, drama/theater production, spelling bees and arts enrichment.

**College Preparation** is sponsored by the Sunflower County Ministerial Alliance, 10th and 11th graders focus on preparing for college with the intent to complete a degree by placing an emphasis on vocabulary and reading comprehension.



**Summer Reading** is sponsored by the City of Indianola. Children ranging from ages 7-10 focus on reading comprehension and writing. This camp also include arts and crafts, drama, dance, word challenge, baseball and softball for participants.

**Art of Living Smart** is sponsored by the BB King Museum. This camp integrates the arts into health, nutrition and fitness.

**Promise School** is sponsored by Indianola School District and is a transition program for incoming kindergartners.

## communitypartners

B.B. KING MUSEUM AND DELTA INTERPRETIVE CENTER

BY DR. GLORIA MCINTOSH



With efforts beginning in 2002, the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center (BBKM) opened its doors in September 2008. The life of B.B. King provides the backdrop for the Museum to share its mission; which is to empower, unite and heal through music, art and education and share with the world the rich, cultural heritage of the Mississippi Delta. The vision is to inspire hope, creativity and greatness. Through an authentic presentation of music, art, artifacts and video, along with educational programs, the Museum honors its namesake as an internationally renowned and influential musician. The Indianola Promise Community makes it possible for BBKM to offer **The Art of Living**

**Smart Program** to children throughout the school year with a Monday through Thursday afterschool program and a week of Spring Fling during spring break. The afterschool program promotes academics. Results show the students have improved in their class work. The healthy lifestyle component encourages the students to eat healthy meals and to exercise. Additionally, the BBKM offers an eight-week summer camp program to eighty campers in an effort to prevent a loss of learning during the summer months and provide exposure to the arts, music, dance, fitness and culinary arts. The BBKM also presented the opportunity for children to take lessons in piano and guitar.



Indianola  
Promise Community  
SUPPORTED BY DELTA HEALTH ALLIANCE

# upcoming events

**JULY 17 AT 6:00 PM**

**Excel By 5: Community Connection Conference**

**SEPTEMBER 8 – 13**

**IPC WEEK**

- September 8** Open House at IPC, 11am - 3pm
- September 9** Town Hall Meeting at 6:00 pm  
*Announcement of Art Contest Winners*
- September 10** College/Job Fair at MDCC
- September 11** 9/11 Event
- September 13** Social Service Fair/Fit Day
- September 8-12** Reading Circles at School

Current funding for the Indianola Promise Neighborhood is made possible in part through a grant from the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhood Program (Award # U215N120032).

Indianola Promise Community  
135 Front Street  
Indianola, MS 38751

## MEET OUR STAFF INDIANOLA PROMISE COMMUNITY



**CASSANDRA RULE** is the Social Service Coordinator for IPC. She joined the IPC family in December 2010. Cassandra is responsible for assisting in the implementation and operation of social service initiatives for children and adults in Indianola.

Through the Social Service

Collaborative, Cassandra works to link the community with social and health service providers, area social service workers, and health ministry representatives to increase the utilization of available social/health programs. She assists and guides families through community health resources and treatment services to ensure families are able to access and keep medical appointments, participate in recommended care plans, and receive appropriate resource information.

Cassandra is a native of Greenwood, MS. She received a Bachelor and Master degrees in Social Work from Mississippi Valley State University. Cassandra enjoys watching the Discovery and History channels, cooking, event planning, and working within the community.



**ANTHONY POWELL** is the Community Relations Project Manager for IPC. Anthony joined Delta Health Alliance in 2009 and the IPC family in 2010. Currently, he manages six IPC summer camps, the Abstinence Plus Program, Excel by 5, and the Indianola Youth Council.

Anthony provides oversight and technical assistance in the formation of Indianola neighborhood associations. He also provides assistance to the IPC Healthy Lifestyle Initiative Project Manager by managing the IPC Community Garden. Anthony works with the Associate Vice President of Community Relations to ensure the goals, activities, and accomplishments of IPC are communicated to the public through radio, newspaper, social media, and other outlets.

Anthony comes to us from Greenville, MS. He received a Bachelor and Master of Science degree in Biology from Jackson State University. Anthony's favorite hobby is simply enjoying life.