

Mississippi fair director charged in prostitution promotion

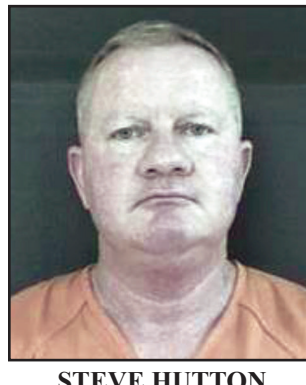
Associated Press

The executive director of the Mississippi Fair Commission has been fired after he was charged with promoting prostitution.

Multiple news outlets report that 54-year-old Steve Hutton was arrested Wednesday, April 8, by officers from the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation and Madison police. He was booked into the Madison County jail. It was not immediately clear whether Hutton is represented by an attorney.

WLBT-TV reported that the Fair Commission fired Hutton from the job he has held since 2018.

The commission says it has experienced staff mem-



STEVE HUTTON

bers in place to continue operating the Mississippi State Fairgrounds near downtown Jackson. Renovations continue inside the Mississippi Coliseum, and a new trade mart is being built. The fairgrounds are hosting a coronavirus drive-thru testing facility.

Opinion: A path toward recovery in Mississippi

The spread of the coronavirus pandemic has uprooted many in this country, and all over the world. Kids are at home. The same place many of us are working. If you still have a job at all.

Things are being done differently. We watch church online. We use Zoom video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings. We pick up our groceries and restaurant orders, or we get them delivered to our house.

With time, normalcy in our day-to-day lives will return. Schools will open. Sporting events will come back. Toilet paper will be in stock. And perhaps the way government functions will change as well. Before we have another crisis on our hands. Because as the current pandemic crystalized, we witnessed how government regulations often got in the way and stymied the help they are designed to provide. This was true in the past, it is true today, and will be true in the future.

Once the coronavirus began to spread, we saw numerous regulations repealed almost overnight. Particularly regulations that limit access to healthcare and seem to do nothing but protect the interest of market incumbents. One of those regulations is Certificate of Need laws, something the federal government repealed more than three decades ago but they are still on the books in Mississippi. These laws circumvent the normal supply and demand process and require would-be medical providers to prove — essentially to their competitors — that their community needs a new

facility or service. And they are one of the reasons we see a shortage of hospital beds during a time of crisis. That is why we have seen both Republican and Democratic governors in other states roll back such regulations during this time. Bills have been introduced virtually every year to repeal CONs in Mississippi, and 2020 was no different than prior years. The issue wasn't even considered, and it died in committee without a vote or a discussion.

A positive change that we have seen in virtually every state was an expansion of telemedicine, something that is vitally important in a rural state like Mississippi, pandemic or not. And the state has been recognized as an early leader in this technology. Yet that doesn't mean we don't have restrictions in place. Almost immediately, we began to see states waive the requirement that you can only use an in-state physician. Mississippi did that. And then just as quickly walked back that change to only allow this if you have a prior patient-physician relationship, greatly limiting your options as a consumer. Mississippians should be able to access the doctor or nurse practitioner of their choosing, regardless of the state they are licensed.

Speaking of nurse practitioners, if we want to increase healthcare access, the state should move to allow nurse practitioners to practice to their full practice authority. Today, they are required to enter into a "collaborative agreement" with a physician if a nurse practitioner wishes to open

DMH and MSU offer The Alliance Project Suicide Prevention training online

MS Dept. of Health

A federal grant is allowing the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Mississippi State University (MSU) to offer training focused on youth suicide prevention, and crucially making it available online to be accessed during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Since last year, The Alliance Project training has taught thousands of parents and caregivers, educators, mental health professionals, and others in Mississippi on how to identify when a person is in distress, make a connection with that person, and learn how to help them.

A special edition of this training, created by MSU Department of Psychology staff, is now available online, allowing access when so many people and professions are practicing social distancing to help limit the

spread of the coronavirus. "This training is designed to help you learn how to reach out to those who need help despite our need to keep a distance," said Rachel-Clair Franklin, LPC-S, with the MSU Department of Psychology. "We have tailored our normal, in-person training to fit the unique times we are living in."

The training is the result of the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant made available in 2019 by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The grant called for recipients to utilize a gatekeeper training for suicide prevention. Gatekeepers are anyone who can "open the gate" to help another person find support and services. MSU is acting as a subgrantee to provide The Alliance Project gatekeeper training. "Gatekeepers include family members, friends, acquaintances, partners, members of the community — anyone who can help and support another person," said Ja'Quila Newsome, Director of Suicide Prevention at DMH. "We are all gatekeepers and we play an important role in preventing suicide just by recognizing the signs and responding to them immediately."

Common warning signs of suicide include talking, thinking, or writing about suicide, talking about feeling worthless or hopeless, a loss of interest in activities one usually enjoys, or other significant changes in someone's typical behavior. In Mississippi, suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 10-24 years old. The training is now online and available on YouTube on the page of Dr. Michael Nadorff, with the MSU Department of Psychology, and on the DMH Facebook page. It is titled "The Alliance Project Training: Suicide Prevention During COVID-19."

"During this time, I think so many of us want to know how to help and still stay safe," Dr. Nadorff said. "The good news is that research tells us even just small interventions, like checking in with someone and expressing our concern, can have a huge impact."

Dr. Nadorff also noted that even during the current pandemic, a term often used — social distancing — does need, or using technology to make our lives easier and better. *Brett Kittredge is the Director of Marketing & Communications of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, the state's non-partisan, free-market think tank.

spread of the coronavirus. "This training is designed to help you learn how to reach out to those who need help despite our need to keep a distance," said Rachel-Clair Franklin, LPC-S, with the MSU Department of Psychology. "We have tailored our normal, in-person training to fit the unique times we are living in."

The training is the result of the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant made available in 2019 by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The grant called for recipients to utilize a gatekeeper training for suicide prevention. Gatekeepers are anyone who can "open the gate" to help another person find support and services. MSU is acting as a subgrantee to provide The Alliance Project gatekeeper training.

"Gatekeepers include family members, friends, acquaintances, partners, members of the community — anyone who can help and support another person," said Ja'Quila Newsome, Director of Suicide Prevention at DMH. "We are all gatekeepers and we play an important role in preventing suicide just by recognizing the signs and responding to them immediately."

Common warning signs of suicide include talking, thinking, or writing about suicide, talking about feeling worthless or hopeless, a loss of interest in activities one usually enjoys, or other significant changes in someone's typical behavior.

In Mississippi, suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 10-24 years old.

The training is now online and available on YouTube on the page of Dr. Michael Nadorff, with the MSU Department of Psychology, and on the DMH Facebook page. It is titled "The Alliance Project Training: Suicide Prevention During COVID-19."

"During this time, I think so many of us want to know how to help and still stay safe," Dr. Nadorff said. "The good news is that research tells us even just small interventions, like checking in with someone and expressing our concern, can have a huge impact."

Dr. Nadorff also noted that even during the current pandemic, a term often used — social distancing — does need, or using technology to make our lives easier and better.

*Brett Kittredge is the Director of Marketing & Communications of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, the state's non-partisan, free-market think tank.

not really mean that people can't be social with their friends and families.

"Social distancing does not mean we should be disconnected," he said. "This is a great time to reach out to your friends and loved ones, particularly those who may be struggling, as they may not reach out to you otherwise."

His colleagues, Dr. Emily Stafford and Rachel-Clair Franklin, LPC-S, said that it is important for people to check on those they love during stressful times, and that it is also okay for people to reach out for help if they are struggling.

"The support numbers are still there, and many providers are now providing telehealth," Franklin said. "Help is still available."

The Alliance Project training can be found directly

at <https://youtu.be/pRKec-Oce7AA>.

It is also available on the DMH Facebook page, www.facebook.com/dmhmississippi.

Help is Available

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a Disaster Distress Hotline at 1-800-985-5990, and you may text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The Crisis Text Line can connect someone with a crisis counselor by texting HOME to 741741. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is also available at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

The DMH Helpline will remain staffed at all times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 1-877-210-8513 for information about services or supports near you. Additional resources for Mississippians are located www.mentalhealthms.com and www.standupms.org.

Conservation Corner
by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

As the world responds to the coronavirus pandemic, many have taken to comparing this current crisis to some in the past. Mississippi is not new to a crisis like this. Our state experienced a horrific epidemic of yellow fever in the late 1870s.

Yellow fever is an acute arbovirus, transmitted by infected female Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, that caused its victim to suffer a sudden spike in fever, bloodshot eyes, jaundice, and chills among other issues. And, much like we have seen with COVID-19, mild infections often went undiagnosed.

In 1878, yellow fever began to make its way along the Mississippi River. The boat John Porter left New Orleans and headed upstream. By the time it arrived in Vicksburg, the ship was a virtual ghost ship, with most of the crew already dead. Local citizens buried the crew, leaving everyone vulnerable. By August, half of Vicksburg had fled the area, and of those remaining, 1,500 perished.

Within days, the fever made its way to the Delta. Greenville suffered horribly with over 300 deaths, including the town's mayor, councilmen, and the majority of the town's doctors and attorneys. Grenada was also hit hard. At the beginning of the outbreak, Grenada had 2,500 citizens. By the end of the epidemic, Grenada suffered the deaths of 350 of its citizens as they refused to enact a quarantine.

Remarkably, some Mississippi towns survived mostly unharmed. Jackson successfully maintained their quarantine and reported only 80 deaths while Natchez, one of

the largest towns in the state, survived the entire duration of the epidemic without a single yellow fever death.

During those late summer months of 1878, Mississippians experienced the worst epidemic of yellow fever, with 16,461 cases and 4,118 deaths. Quarantines halted all commerce, forcing residents to seek donations from across the country in order to survive. In 1879, in response to the preceding year's epidemic, Congress created the National Board of Health. Ship Island, a Mississippi barrier island, was presented as a quarantine station for the Gulf of Mexico between New Orleans and Pensacola, Florida.

Thankfully, a safe and effective vaccine now exists to prevent yellow fever.

When Mississippian William Faulkner accepted the Nobel Prize, he said "Man will not merely endure: He will prevail. He is immortal, not because he among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion, sacrifice, and endurance."

While COVID-19 poses a great threat, I think Mr. Faulkner would be proud of our state's spirit, cooperation, and help for others. With the knowledge we are gaining each day, we will weather another storm and be the stronger for it.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi, a non-profit, conservation organization founded to conserve, restore and enhance fish, wildlife and plant resources throughout Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.