

Congressman Thompson visits Lexington



U.S. Congressman Bennie Thompson visited Lexington on May 27 and toured the Lexington Food Pantry, Holmes County Courthouse, and the Lundy House. He was joined by local and state leaders to learn more about ongoing community projects in Holmes County. Pictured, l-r: Dr. Percy Washington, Mayor of Lexington; James Young, Holmes County Supervisor; Rep. Bryant Clark, Mississippi state Representative; U.S. Congressman Bennie Thompson; and Sen. Bradford Blackmon, Mississippi state Senator.



Building Access, Not Barriers

One hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It's not an insignificant sum of money. It can pay off a home – cover the purchase of a new car (and years' worth of gas) – pay for college – deliver financial security. Now, imagine losing it.

This spring, my team was doing a routine scan of unclaimed money records when they came across \$15,000 for a widow in Madison, Mississippi. As is practice, we reached out immediately seeing that it was a simple, uncontested return process. Then, we dug a little deeper.

For decades, this woman had served the state of Mississippi, teaching school in the Madison area. As any educator would tell you: while you're heavily rewarded with the idea of shaping the next generation, the financial reward isn't always as lucrative. Now in her retirement, she was living on a fixed income. A discovery from our team, however, was about to change things for her.

When her husband passed, an account fell through the cracks. The financial institution didn't know who the rightful owner was now that the primary holder was gone. So, it was sent to the State Treasury for safe keeping. But this money was never ours to keep. After our



team found the initial unclaimed funds, we dug further and uncovered another \$150,000.

Let me tell you: making the call to inform a woman that she was about to receive a check worth a total of \$173,546 is something our team won't long forget. It's the kind of money that can make the recipient breathe a sigh of relief as tears flood their eyes.

For most Mississippians, the unclaimed money in their name will be far less than what we found for this woman. But in today's economy, even a few hundred dollars can make a difference.

The rising cost of gas and groceries is something many feel every week, but the instability of the housing market has not only made housing less affordable but less abundant. This is one of the many reasons why it's critical for the state to maintain its strong credit rating, which I've done as Treasurer.

When a state's credit rating is strong, it can help

drive down the interest rates applied when municipal bonds are issued. This, in turn, allows agencies to competitively finance more affordable housing units, increasing supply and helping to lower costs for buyers and renters.

I don't know how that widow from Madison chose to spend the \$173,546 in unclaimed money we found for her. I don't know if it was put into savings, given to her grandchildren, or used to pay off a home. What I do know is that the State Treasury will always fight to deliver financial security where we can – whether that's returning your unclaimed money or keeping the state's credit rating strong.

To search for unclaimed money in your own name, please visit treasury.ms.gov/search.

Mississippi Treasurer David McRae is the 55th Treasurer for the State of Mississippi. In this

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National Sweet Tea Month

June is National Iced Tea Month. In the South, every month is Sweet Tea Month. Sweet tea is also known as the "white wine of the south". We serve it with every meal, no matter what the season. Our babies have it in their bottles and sip-pee cups.

When serving as food stylist for The Help, I was asked to prepare some Southern dishes for several Dreamworks executives who were coming to Greenwood in preparation for the movie's filming. One special request made was for slushy iced tea – a favorite from Tate Taylor's childhood. The property master told me what she needed for me to prepare. I had no earthly idea what slushy iced tea was, but I had decided early on that I would just say I could do whatever they needed and worry about how to do it when I got home.

I remembered having a recipe for a Vodka Slush, but knew that it never froze all the way because of the alcohol. I decided to pre-

pare a recipe of sweet tea with lemon and freeze it in a Ziploc bag. I took it out and timed how long it took for the tea to thaw and become slushy. They loved it and Tate said it was just like he remembered from his childhood – Whew, dodged a bullet there!

role, he helps manage the state's cash flow, oversees College and Career Savings Mississippi, and has returned more than \$170 million in unclaimed money to Mississippians. For more information, visit Treasury.MS.gov.

I prepared a luncheon for a dozen visitors on set from Los Angeles. When asked how much sugar I put in a gallon of tea, my reply was about 2 cups. I was quickly told that no one in LA had consumed a cup of sugar in the last 10 years! I prepared both sweet tea and unsweetened tea for the guests. The sweet tea was gone in a heartbeat. If you build it, they will come. If you sweeten it, they will drink.

After several years of visiting my sister in San Francisco, I finally learned not to ask for sweet tea. They look at you like you have 4 heads. I just opened the sugar packets and tried to make my own sweet tea. It never quite tasted the same.

Hope you enjoy these tea recipes on these hot summer days. Thanks for reading.

SOUTHERN SWEET TEA

8 cup water, divided
2 family size tea bags
2 cups sugar
Garnish: fresh mint and lemon slices
Bring 4 cups of water to a boil; remove from heat and add tea bags. Cover and steep for about 30 minutes. Add sugar to warm tea mixture and stir until dissolved. Add remaining water and chill. Serve over ice with mint and lemon slices.

APRICOT NECTAR TEA

6 family size tea bags
2 sprigs mint
1 cup sugar
1 (12 oz.) can frozen lemonade, thawed
4 (11 oz.) cans apricot nectar

1 tsp. almond extract
Bring 4 cups water to a rolling boil; add tea bags and mint. Cover and steep for 15 minutes; remove tea bags and mint. Stir in sugar to dissolve; add remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into a gallon container and fill with water to make a gallon. Chill and garnish with mint.

FRUIT TEA

2 cups water
2 cups sugar
4 family size tea bags
2 cups orange juice
1 cup lemon juice
Simmer water and sugar for 10 minutes; remove from heat. Add tea bags and steep for 20 minutes. Pour into a gallon container and add orange and lemon juices. Fill with water to make a gallon.

Garnish with lemon and orange slices.

**Lee Ann Fleming is a Holmes County native, food columnist and has garnered fame for her recipes featured in the film, The Help. Fleming can be reached at lafkitchen@hughes.net.*

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