



7 HABITS for Citizen Leaders

The Montgomery Institute

September 2003



Former Governor William Winter keynotes the 1st Annual Volunteer Leadership Fair and Symposium. Held in the Kahlmus Auditorium at MSU-Meridian, the new fair brings non-profit and public agencies together with citizen leaders willing to volunteer time to improve their community. This first fair was a special project of the 2002-2003 class of Leadership Lauderdale and included their graduation ceremony. The event was made possible by a 7 Habits grant from The Riley Foundation.

Winter's Challenge: Learn to Get Along

"All of us must remember that we are living in a world full of diverse human beings," former Gov. William Winter told the 1st Annual Volunteer Fair and Symposium. Winter's vision of the Habit 6 principle of "valuing differences" resonated with his audience.

"And we must learn how to get along with other people whose culture and religion and color are different from our own. That is going to be very important in the future here in Mississippi, as our state grows increasingly
(See **Winter** on next page)

7 Habits Reflections

Perfect Wings

By Bill Crawford

Our own 7 Habits guru, Jerry Aull, was on the Canadian equivalent of Good Morning America a couple of years ago before a concert in Calgary.

"They kept telling me to not do anything too 'spiritual'," Jerry said. "So, I did the song *Don't Laugh at Me* by Mark Wills. The 'act' after me was a special needs child a lot like Jessica. The entire crew and set became silent...and then were crying."

These comments were part of an e-mail I got from Jerry that began: "Good morning Bill.
(See **Reflections** on next page)

7 HABITS for Citizen Leaders

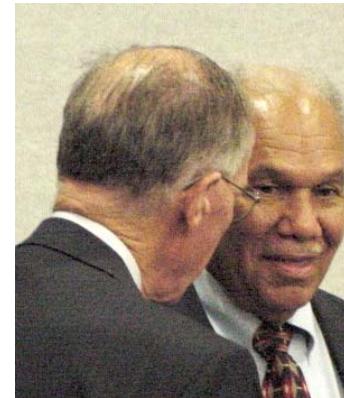
(Winter continued)

diverse. We must embrace it as an exciting new dimension of our human experience.

"That liberation from our old biases and prejudices will enable us to pass on to our children and grandchildren a better place for them to live than the one which we inherited.

"This is what leadership is all about – in doing the things that may not immediately and directly benefit us, but will ensure that those who come after us will have the opportunity for a more fulfilling and productive life."

Gov. Winter confers with his longtime friend and supporter, state Rep. Charles Young, who introduced him at the Symposium.



Approximately 50 non-profit and public agencies put up displays at the fair and attracted volunteers from the several hundred attendees.

Twenty-nine Leadership Lauderdale participants received graduation certificates from MCC President Scott Elliott and EMBDC president Wade Jones.

(Reflections continued)

I'm in Boston, and my thoughts are you should write that." I had written Jerry about Wills' song and Jessica.

I heard the song just last month in Eugene, Oregon. The last evening of this conference, the host introduced a student named Jessica and asked her to come forward and sing:

Jessica's accompanist assists her on stage. Jessica cannot see. Her face and left hand are badly deformed. The audience fills with sadness and pity. The accompanist puts the microphone in her hand.

A soft, well-spoken voice greets us. She smiles...a warm, soulful, wonderful smile. Our aversion begins to transform. She speaks humorously and captures our hearts. Then, she sings *Don't Laugh at Me*:

I'm a cripple on the corner
You pass me on the street ...

Don't laugh at me,
Don't call me names
Don't get your pleasure from my pain
In God's eyes we're all the same
Someday we'll all have perfect wings
Don't laugh at me.

Three hundred spirits surge. Jessica lifts us like dry leaves in a fresh wind. Sadness and pity retreat from love, hope, joy and wonder. We are lifted on perfect wings to a splendid rapture...a transcendent moment...a node of inspiration.

We thrust to our feet in adulation and applause. We turn to each other with dewy-eyes and astonishment. We know we have, so unexpectedly, glimpsed something higher, more

(Reflections continued on next page)

7 HABITS for Citizen Leaders

(Reflections continued)

wonderful than our trite lives...something of the spirit.

We remark. We expound. We settle down. Soon, we are seemingly back to normal, though something abides in each of us.

Jessica, I find out, is one of 26 children with disabilities adopted by Don and Lahna Rasmussen in Eugene. Born without any, she has glass eyes. Part of her brain grew where her nose was supposed to be. She has undergone more than 10 surgeries to correct a cleft lip and restructure her misshapen face.

"Children sometimes make fun of her," the local newspaper wrote. "'Get that dumb blind girl out of here,' a fellow student yelled at her."

"I wasn't hurt by that," Jessica explained, "because problems are not about me. **Problems are about everyone else. And I'm here to help everyone else.**"

Back home, I find I cannot let go of my vision of Jessica. It is a *geas*, compelling me to think and write. With each pause in writing my mind drifts to the scene of Jessica singing and smiling at us. I have always thought of angels as surreal creatures of unconditional love. Now, I know they can exist in the flesh. And, that caring, courageous folk like the Rasmussens can help engender and nurture them.

This is the story that Jerry encourages me to witness as I continue my own 7 *Habits* journey...as I strive to see only the *perfect wings* in others.

Institute Named "Southern Innovator" by Southern Growth Policies Board

At its Leadership Summit this summer, the 13-state Southern Growth Policies Board honored The Montgomery Institute with its "Southern Innovator in Leadership Development and Civic Engagement" award. Innovators were chosen based on their unique approach to leadership development and creative tactics to reach and involve citizens throughout the community.



NAACP Chairman Walter Patton interacts with 1st Mississippi Federal Credit Union's Kimberly Magaldi at the March 2003 7 *Habits* workshop at MCC.



Clear Channel's Paul Bucurel has a laugh with Super Stop's Doug Deweese.



Riley Hospital's Brenda Nause makes a strong point during the July 2003 7 *Habits* workshop.

The Montgomery Institute
P.O. Box 1889
Meridian, MS 39302

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MERIDIAN, MS
39302
PERMIT NO. 1076

7 HABITS for Citizen Leaders



G. V. "Sonny"
Montgomery

7 Habits for Citizen Leaders is an information newsletter published by The Montgomery Institute, a charitable, tax-exempt organization and a certified provider of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People training. Named to honor former Congressman G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery and sustain his leadership legacy, the Institute has been designated a *Southern Innovator in Leadership Development and Civic Engagement* by the Southern Growth Policies Board. The Institute operates in east central Mississippi and west central Alabama to train and develop, promote strategic thinking and analysis by, and disseminate information to citizen leaders. Created and generously supported by grants from The Riley Foundation, the Institute is also aided by major grants and contributions from The Phil Hardin Foundation, Rush Health Systems, the Regional Medical Support Group, BellSouth, Structural Steel Services, and Sonny Montgomery.

Upcoming Events: Regional Education Summit at MSU-Meridian on September 25th; *An Evening with Jerry Aull* October 20th; and 7 *Habits of Highly Effective People* workshop October 21st – 23rd in the Dulaney Room at MCC.

For further information, please call 601-483-2661, e-mail Bill@TheMontgomeryInstitute.com or check our web site: www.TheMontgomeryInstitute.com