

LIFESTYLES

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Section B

'GETTING AHEAD'



Professionals work together to design and implement the "Building Bridges for Kids" curriculum for the Starkville Bridges of Poverty "Getting Ahead" program. (Submitted photo)

SBOP sponsors 'Building Bridges for Kids'

A group of Starkville professionals is creating a national curriculum for children whose parents participate in the "Getting Ahead" course sponsored by Starkville Bridges out of Poverty.

When parents participate in "Getting Ahead," they commit to a 15-week course. Starkville Bridges' first "Getting Ahead" class was held in fall 2011. For each class meeting, childcare was provided and staffed by MSU's Maroon Volunteer Center. These volunteers were a diverse group of students and staff at Mississippi State University.

The Maroon Volunteer Center quickly realized that the children had specific needs and could benefit from a curriculum that paralleled with the goals of the adult program. To date, the national "Getting

Ahead" movement does not have a parallel curriculum for children. Therefore, this group of adult professionals is working together to research, create, design, and implement a curriculum exclusively for children. The curriculum is called "Building Bridges for Kids" or "BB4K." During each session, the kids will receive one-on-one mentoring with a student volunteer from the Maroon Volunteer Center or the Starkville Mayor's Youth Council, participate in group activities, self-reflections, mini presentations, goal setting activities, and creative thinking exercises.

"Last fall, the children really enjoyed the volunteers playing games and reading with them. With a curriculum implemented, I am positive that they will appreciate

better structure on our behalf and also learn valuable and useful lessons from a curriculum designed especially for them," said Yolanda Boyd, committee member and volunteer.

The poverty level for Oktibbeha County is 32 percent based upon the 2010 census. Worse still is the finding that 24 percent of the population in the county is under the age of 18 and in poverty. Starkville Bridges is a community organization committed to eradicating poverty in Oktibbeha County. Since poverty is a problem that affects everyone, Bridges provides a framework for everyone to understand its causes and work together for solutions.

For more information go to <http://www.starkvillebridges.com>.