

Starkville Bridges holds community training

By JESSICA BAYS
For Starkville Daily News

Starkville Bridges Out of Poverty held its second annual Community Training Friday, Feb. 22 at the Starkville Sportsplex. The event provided educational training to middle class participants on the truths about poverty and gave them insight on how to work with impoverished communities.

Some of the things discussed were the mental models of each class — poverty, middle class and wealthy — and how each model interlocks with the others. Participants learned that mental models are an internal picture of how the world works and they help determine how individuals in the community may act or respond to different situations. They also learned that in order for dialogue to occur between the middle class and those in poverty, they must suspend their mental models and perceptions of each other so that they can help each other for the betterment of the community.

The event was from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and was attended by at least 70 citizens from diverse backgrounds.

The guest speaker was Jodi Pfarr of Minneapolis, Minn. who shared her knowledge gained from direct experience with not-for-profit organizations. Pfarr served as executive director of Emma Norton Services which provides housing to single women with low income, mental illness, and/or chemical dependency. She also worked several years for Catholic Charities, supervising low income housing units for people with mental illness, chronic inebriation, and/or low income, as well as supervising the Special Needs Shelter for the Salvation Army.

Pfarr also grew up in generational poverty and was able to draw from her personal experiences to teach the “Bridges groups” about poverty.

“Starkville Bridges is remarkable in the Bridges groups,” said Pfarr. “Now, the group has their feet firmly on the ground and they are effecting real changes in people’s lives. Change cannot happen without buy-in from the middle class, as



Jodi Pfarr leads those gathered at the Starkville Sportsplex for Starkville Bridges Out of Poverty’s second a training session. (Submitted photo)

“The first step in helping to eradicate poverty is for this is the fruit”