

ERCO works with Hope Rising: Help when it's needed

By Katie White

On April 22, The Ever Reaching Community Outreach (ERCO) held their annual Love Out Loud event at Yogi Bear on the Lake. The event is meant to bring people together and to ensure that hope and helping others is on the forefront of the community's minds. One of the many programs that ERCO works with is Hope Rising Mississippi.

Tammy Brun, Founding Member and Director of ERCO, elaborated on what Hope Rising Mississippi is, "When the programs of Hope are referenced, the "H" is for housing and transportation, "O" is for opportunities for treatment, "P" is for the parent, child and familial support (in which Brun is a co-chair) and the "E" is for economic security. The program finds family support and resources all over the state."

"Right now, the committee is working on a handbook that we give the parents of children who have been involved with the judicial court so that they can understand the whys and hows of the circumstances they are in, and how they can be the best supporter for their child - something that is easier to understand." Brun also states that "It's very confusing [for all parties involved], and also the attorney that is assigned to the child is not assigned to the parents, so they may want to get some advice. But usually the attorney is the advocate for the child. Sometimes it is recommended that the parents go through training. Jennifer Johnson who is also on the Hope Rising committee is an attorney. She is holding such training classes. Sometimes the parents themselves may not have had a mentor to look up to."

"Housing and transportation, we're trying to find a way to get more housing and low income transportation. The Department of Transportation is doing great things. They are trying to make sure that people are aware that they have free transportation for you. They can help you get to that doctor's appointment, and they can help you grocery

shop," said Brun.

Opportunities for treatment helps with rehab and similar services. "Ministries like All Things New and Celebrate Recovery and others, those are great



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Tammy Brun, Founding Member and Director of ERCO, stopped to take a quick photo.

services to help you through the program and help you have a better life, as well."

"Economic security is supported by those like Karen Fogel from Tempstaff and other places that connect those who need a job with businesses that are hiring," said Brun. "This is helpful for those who, for example, have been released from prison, and they can give you a second chance, or a third chance or whatever it takes. Those are the areas after two years of research where we could make a difference for our families in Mississippi. We've changed the percentage of children taken from their parents to about 67%-70%. This isn't abuse necessarily. It may just be that their home needs repairs, they may not have enough beds, or a parent may need to go to rehab or get a better job. The federal government has funding so that

we can find ways to not have their children taken away from them."

Baptist Children's Village can provide services such as caring for a child while the parent is in distress. Brun said, "This doesn't involve the courts, it doesn't involve Child Protection Services. You come to them and with no judgment, the child is cared for at a house by other parents in that location. They help make sure they go to school. If they get a job, they make sure that a certain amount goes into a savings account. I've visited the houses and they have a schedule and they help with laundry. When the parent(s) are ready, they can go back home."



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The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services gave out free bicycle helmets for children.

ERCO's Love Out Loud is about giving people an opportunity to find the resources and help from area churches. This is a hope that ERCO has - by using this type of communication, a family will get involved in church.

"God has given all of us talents, but if they aren't in the church using them, where are they using them? God is putting this all together. In John 17, in His last prayer before He (Jesus) was on the cross, He prayed that we would all come together and we would all be one, and that's where my heart is also - that we would all be one," said Brun.

ERCO believes in being "doers of the Word and not hearers only" (James

1:22), and to "love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). They are committed to the teaching in James 2:14-16 and Isaiah 58:7, that calls people to "share your food with the hungry...give clothes to those who need them." ERCO believes they should use their faith by giving and using their actions to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate, at no cost to them.

Hope Rising Mississippi also works with children and families in improving their lives when needed. They state on their website, "Over 41,000,000 people in the U.S. have been exposed to over four adverse childhood experiences. These numbers are so large, they are a struggle to comprehend. That means forty-one million kids were exposed to traumas such as abuse, neglect, or a significant household dysfunction. We have to do something that is both meaningful and makes a lasting difference in their lives. We believe that answer is HOPE."



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Heather Pennypacker represented Pelahatchie City Hall at Love Out Loud.

ERCO is located at 306 North Brooks Avenue. Learn more about ERCO by visiting ERCO@everreaching.net. To learn more about Hope Rising Mississippi, visit online at www.hoperisingms.org.

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