



The Power of US: Celebrating the JOY of 76 Years of Unity, Advocacy, and Healing

I am excited to serve as your 69th President of the Mississippi Counseling Association. Through MCA, I have benefited from meaningful networking, professional development, and advocacy for over 30 years. It is now my privilege to pay it forward by supporting our mission and investing in the next generation of counselor professionals and leaders.



The guiding theme for my presidency is *The Power of US: Celebrating the JOY of 76 Years of Unity, Advocacy, and Healing*. This theme reflects who we are and why our work matters. MCA is stronger because of the unique value each of us brings from our various counseling settings. While our roles may differ, we are united in our commitment to supporting the mental and emotional well-being of individuals and families across the lifespan.

As I look ahead, my goals build on the foundation established over the last 75 years. I am committed to continuing the work of promoting personal and professional development, advancing the counseling field, and deepening our collective impact through unified advocacy. When we stand together, our profession is stronger—and our voice becomes our power!

Our Power starts within each of us. When you join or renew your MCA membership, invite a colleague to do the same. Share your story and the impact MCA has had on your professional journey.

For me, MCA has been more than a professional home—it has been a place where lasting friendships were formed. MCA is the place where WE advocated for equal compensation for our National Board recognition and Medicaid reimbursement. Those experiences affirm *the power of us* and remind me that when we amplify our voices together, change happens. Today, our voices are still needed on issues impacting education, counselor well-being, and equitable access to mental health care across our state.

We all have a role to play.
Together... there is Power in US.

As we celebrate **76 years of unity, advocacy, and healing**, let us move forward with joy, purpose, and collective resolve. I look forward to serving alongside you as we continue to strengthen our profession—together.

Leona Bishop, incoming Mississippi Counseling Association President (2026-2027)

Don't Miss What's Next — Important Dates

- Call for Programs (Fall Conference): March 15 – May 15
- MCA Awards Nominations: March 15 – May 15
- Institute for Leadership Training (ILT): July 8–10
- The Power of Us: July 8 *IP Casino Spa Resort | Biloxi, MS*

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Calling for 2026-2027

**Nominations for
MCA Emerging Leaders!**
Email President-elect Leona Bishop
(bishop@countjoy.com) for details.

**MCA Executive Board Meeting
Friday, April 17, 2026 @ 9am
Region 8—Canton, MS**

Mississippi
Counseling
Association



THE POWER OF US:

Advocacy and Ethics for the Profession and the Practitioner

IP Hotel Ballroom F



Jan Lemon, PhD, LPC-S
BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY



Lisa Areki, LPC-S, SEP, BASE-P, CFRC
NORTHSHORE FAMILY COUNSELING



Teresa Ballinger, MAT
GULFPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Sherie Sekul, BFA, RYT
MAAT Intern
SHANTI YOGA AND COUNSELING



This is for you, if...



...Protecting the Healer Matters to You



...Recognizing Signs of Burn-Out and Impairment Early Would Be Worth Your Time



...Learning How to Release Stress and Tension In the Body Would Benefit You and Those You Serve



...Uniting with Colleagues to Advocate and Help Heal is Part of Your 2026 Journey.

REGISTER
HERE

Wednesday, July 8, 2026
Imperial Palace (IP) Casino, Resort, Spa
Biloxi, Mississippi
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Registration begins at 8:00 am



\$150
5 Contact Hours

Message from MCA Executive Director

MCA members—there are exciting events happening in our organization.

We are pleased to announce that our Fall Conference was a tremendous success. We sincerely thank everyone who attended and appreciate the valuable feedback shared about your experience. We are especially grateful for the warm hospitality extended to our two special guests. Our keynote speaker expressed how welcomed he felt throughout the conference.

A special thank you goes to “Elvis” for his outstanding performance and to Thriveway for providing this memorable entertainment. We also extend our gratitude to all sponsors and exhibitors for their generous contributions and continued support. A complete list of sponsors and exhibitors is provided below. Registration for sponsors and exhibitors will open in March, and we encourage you to reach out to potential partners to help grow this important group.

Registration for the 2026 Fall Conference will open in April. The Call for Programs will open soon. Please remember that membership must be current to receive the member registration rate. Conference pricing will remain the same as the 2025 conference.

The 2026 Fall Conference will be held in Biloxi, Mississippi.

This year’s conference will offer numerous opportunities for counselors, including a session led by a national speaker. Attendees will have the opportunity to earn CE hours or to apply for CEUs. Be sure to register by the deadline and reserve your room within the Beau Rivage Hotel room block. A program-at-a-glance, along with registration and hotel information, will be available on the MCA website under the Conference tab as soon as details are finalized. Updates will also be shared on MCA’s Facebook and Instagram pages.

MCA had a “Day at the Capitol” on January 14, 2026. This annual event remains vital to our organization. We had the opportunity to meet with many lawmakers and were represented by dedicated members, for which we are extremely thankful. Each of you plays an important role in advocating daily for the counseling profession.

Several regions and divisions are currently accepting registration for upcoming workshops. Additionally, MCA will host a one-day workshop on July 8, 2026, at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Biloxi, Mississippi. You can read more information about these opportunities through emails received from the MCA office and website.

Thank you,
Jayme Sullivan



2025 MCA Fall Conference Sponsors —THANK YOU!

Silver Sponsors:

Tupelo Convention & Visitors Bureau
Woodward Hinds Education Founda-
tion:
Get2College

MCA Donors

Count It All Joy Counseling
Matt Pitts State Farm Insurance
MCA Capitol Area Counseling
Association
MCA Delta Region Counseling
Association

Mississippi School Counseling
Association
Thriveway

Bronze Sponsors:

Mid-Eastern Counseling Association
Northwest Mississippi Counseling
Association

*"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much."*

— Helen Keller

2025 MCA Fall Conference Exhibitors —THANK YOU!

Belhaven University Adult, Graduate &
Online Programs

CHAMP for Moms

Delta State University

Graduate Admissions

Ellie Mental Health-Ridgeland

Level All

MASERVIC/MLPCA

McLean Fletcher Center

Mississippi College

Mississippi Professional Educators

Mississippi School of the Arts

Mississippi State Behavioral Health

Mississippi State University

Mississippi State University Meridian Branch

Pine Grove Behavioral Health &

Addiction Services

PowerSchool

The University of Mississippi

The University of Mississippi

Counselor Education

Thrivent

Thriveway

Woodward Hines Education Foundation:

Get2 College

MISSISSIPPI COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
Annual Conference

SAVE ^{THE} DATE

THE POWER
OF US!

Honoring the JOY
of 76 Years of
Unity, Advocacy and Healing



FEATURING
Dr. Tommie Mabry
INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER
AND BEST SELLING AUTHOR

Experience dynamic speakers, meaningful networking, and professional development designed to strengthen your impact. Renew your membership, reconnect with your colleagues, and reignite your professional passion.

THE POWER OF US BEGINS WITH YOU!

**Mississippi Coast Coliseum
and Convention Center
Biloxi, Mississippi
November 4-6, 2026**



A BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
SERVING MS SINCE 1950

Leaders Voices—Focused on Leadership Growth

2025-2026 Mississippi Counseling Association Emerging Leaders

MCA encourages all individuals to participate in this association and engage in its various activities and opportunities. The Emerging Leader program is designed for graduate students, new professionals, and experienced professionals to develop leadership competencies by attending the Institute of Leadership Training (ILT), actively participating in MCA Executive Board meetings or council, and preparing to be elected to future leadership roles within the MCA and in division, interest group, or regional. Seven mental health professionals from their respective regions had been selected to participate in the 2025-2026 Emerging Leader Program.



Michael Valentine, Ph.D, LPC-S, NCC, BC-TMH. This past year, I was able to participate in the emerging leader program at the Mississippi Counseling Association. I really did not know what to expect. Upon arrival, the room was full of materials, including a book of MCA bylaws and many craft items.

The room was also filled with a group of people with a wide variety of experiences and personal attributes from all over the State of Mississippi. Some of the participants were relatively new to the field and others had over 30 years of related experience. There were counselor educators, counselors working in private practice as LPCs, school counselors, and counselors working in community agencies. The morning of the first day, we were all a little uncertain and anxious.

Under the excellent leadership of Lynn Etheridge, we worked through a series of fun activities, learned a lot about MCA, and learned about one another. Sharing our personal stories helped to bring us together and to uncover the shared experiences. By the end of the experience, we were friends with a common goal. I would recommend this experience for anyone with an interest in becoming a leader in MCA.



TinMuk Li, MS, P-LPC. As a doctoral student, participating in the Emerging Leader Program provides me with numerous new experiences. Throughout the three-day program, we not only engage in leadership development but also have the opportunity to meet many leaders from various divisions, interest groups, or regional areas.

This significantly enhances my understanding of leadership and advocacy in mental health practice, the responsibilities of MCA, and ways we can contribute to our discipline. Therefore, these three days are not only a training session or a meeting but also a mirror. It helped me become more self-aware, develop greater empathy, and build meaningful connections with others in leadership roles. It also made me realize my potential to become a future counseling educator and leader who can contribute to this field.

Leaders Voices—Focused on Leadership Growth



Kaylan S. Wilson, MEd. I serve as the Counselor at Canton Career Center. After attending the 2024 MCA Conference, I was introduced to the Diane Speed Emerging Leaders program and immediately saw it as an opportunity to grow and lead within the profession. At the time, I was completing my school counseling internship and preparing to step into my first professional role. Being selected as an Emerging Leader during that transitional season affirmed that leadership would be an integral part of my journey from the very beginning.

Since that time, I have begun my first year as a School Counselor, presented twice at the 2025 MCA Conference, hosted my first Career Fair, established a Student Ambassador program, and will complete my EdS in Counseling this May. Each milestone has strengthened my confidence and expanded my leadership capacity.

Presenting at MCA was a defining professional experience. Although I am comfortable speaking publicly, presenting at a conference of that magnitude required preparation, vulnerability, and intentionality. Despite unexpected challenges within our cohort, we delivered a meaningful session grounded in authentic storytelling and practical strategies for counselors. I also had the opportunity to co-present with my former professor and a classmate in what was our first professional conference presentation prior to graduating from our Master’s program. Standing before a room of fellow professionals and contributing to the advancement of our field reinforced my identity as both a counselor and a leader.

In my first year at Canton Career Center, I have been intentional about cultivating a positive, student-centered culture. We launched a Welcome Week initiative to build connection and excitement at the start of the school year. I implemented a monthly newsletter to strengthen communication and highlight achievements within our center. Additionally, we introduced a monthly character trait recognition program, allowing teachers to nominate students who exemplify leadership and integrity. Hosting our Career Fair connected students directly with industry professionals and provided tangible exposure to postsecondary pathways aligned with career and technical education. These initiatives reflect my belief that school counseling extends beyond individual sessions—it includes shaping systems, creating opportunities, and building environments where students can thrive.

Counseling is more than a career for me—it is a calling. My “why” is rooted in students. Their resilience, aspirations, and trust motivate me daily. Whether I am guiding a student through academic planning, supporting career exploration, or assisting with something as simple as printing a transcript, I recognize the significance of every interaction. My first year as a counselor has been transformative, and the Diane Speed Emerging Leaders program has strengthened my leadership identity while deepening my commitment to serve, lead, and grow within MCA and the counseling profession.



Membership Reminders

From the MCA Office:

We are in the process of updating our membership records. Please log into your member portal and review your contact information, especially your email address and phone number. Many records currently contain outdated emails, incorrect work locations, or missing phone numbers. Keeping your information current ensures you receive important communications.



- Please remember that MCA membership includes membership in your regional division. Regions across the state host workshops throughout the year, and members are welcome to attend workshops in any of the ten regions. Many workshops are offered at no cost; those with fees typically offset expenses such as speakers or provided meals. Registration information is available on the MCA website.
- Membership approved in the fall a slight increase in the basic membership rate. Renewal information is available on the MCA homepage. Membership and renewals may be completed online or submitted via paper form to the MCA office. If submitting a paper form, please include the counselor's name and the divisions or interest groups you wish to join. We have received checks without identifying information, which delays processing.
- Please note that MCA's mailing address changed in June 2024. The current address is:
- Post Office Box 5827
Brandon, MS 39047
- Some forms are still being mailed to the previous address and are not being forwarded. MCA also updated its W-9 form at that time. If you or your business need a copy, please email mcaoffice@mscounselor.org.
- MCA office hours are Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The office may be reached at 769-308-7925 or via email at mcaoffice@mscounselor.org.
- Be sure to follow the Mississippi Counseling Association on Facebook and Instagram ([mca](https://www.facebook.com/mcacounselor)[counselor](https://www.instagram.com/mcacounselor)). If you have content you would like shared on social media, please email mcasocialmediarequests@gmail.com.

We look forward to another outstanding year filled with professional growth, collaboration, and advocacy for the counseling profession.



Ethical Spotlight: Balancing Safety and Trust

By Rosanne Nunnery, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC, BC-TMH, C-DBT, CGP

The counseling profession was recently shaken by the tragic death of Rebecca White, LMHC, who was killed in her Orlando, Florida, office on January 19, 2026. This devastating event, involving a former client, serves as a sobering reminder of the inherent risks in our field. As we mourn a dedicated colleague, we must also use this moment to reinforce our commitment to the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014), specifically regarding the intersection of counselor safety, client welfare, and the preservation of confidentiality.

The tragedy highlights a difficult ethical paradox: our mission is to provide a "judgment-free environment" and foster "rehabilitation" yet we must remain vigilant regarding our own physical security.

While our primary responsibility is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients (A.1.a), this cannot occur in an environment where the counselor is at risk.

Ethical practice requires a stable, secure setting. When a counselor's safety is compromised, their ability to provide "nonmaleficence" (Standard I.1.b) to the client—and themselves—is diminished.

Professional counselors are encouraged to review their practice protocols through the lens of the ACA 2014 Code.

Environmental Design: Evaluate your workspace for "exit strategies." Standard C.2.h. (Environmental Factors) suggests that counselors should provide a physical setting that is conducive to the welfare of clients, which logically includes the safety of the practitioner.

Robust initial assessments (Section E) are not just clinical tools; they are safety measures. Understanding a client's history of violence or anti-social behavior is essential for informed consent and risk management.

Never worry alone. If you feel a "gut instinct" regarding a client's potential for violence, seek peer consultation (C.2.e.) immediately to determine if the ethical threshold for breaking confidentiality or terminating the relationship has been met.

American Counseling Association (2014).
ACA code of ethics. Author.



MCA APPAREL

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<https://mscounseling.itemorder.com/shop/sale/>

Upcoming Spring Conferences & Workshops



PINE BELT & GULF COAST REGION
Spring Workshop

Stronger Together: Building Ethical, Resilient, and Collaborative Counseling Systems

06 March 2026
8:30am - 3:30pm

REGISTER NOW

\$25 FOR MEMBERS
\$150 FOR NON-MEMBERS

You may also join virtually via Zoom

Earn .5 CEUs and 5 CE Hours

NATIONAL BOARD FOR CERTIFIED COUNSELORS

MCA



F.E. WOODALL SPRING CONFERENCE FOR THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

Last Call!

Registration open until March 20.

Register here:



See you at DSU on Friday, March 27!

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY | WWW.DELTASTATE.EDU/WOODALL

Presidential Reflections - Heather Norton

Dear MCA Members,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as President of the Mississippi Counseling Association. It has truly been an honor. I love our organization and what it stands for. Our aspiration is to provide all counseling professionals across our state the opportunity to connect, advocate, and learn in ways that enhance both personal growth and professional skill within our respective fields. Our association exists to equip members with the resources, professional community, and evidence based knowledge necessary to serve students and clients with the highest level of competence and care.



I am proud to share many of the positive accomplishments MCA has achieved and the exciting work that will continue ahead. Our 2025 75th Annual Conference in Tupelo was a tremendous success, and we are already looking forward to our 2026 Conference on the beautiful Mississippi Gulf Coast, November 4–6. This year’s success was made possible by an outstanding Conference Committee whose dedication and hard work ensured everything ran smoothly. Their commitment to excellence was evident in every detail.

As President, one of my primary goals was to strengthen leadership within MCA, particularly within our regions, divisions, and interest groups. By growing these groups and empowering their presidents, we create more opportunities for counselors across Mississippi to connect, collaborate, and grow professionally. I am incredibly proud of the accomplishments of these groups and the outstanding leaders who have stepped forward to serve with passion and vision, including our Executive Director and to the Administrative Council. Their availability, guidance, and thoughtful decision-making have been invaluable.

I am also proud of MCA’s commitment to serving our broader community. This year, MCA raised \$1,425.00 for the Mississippi Food Network. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Damian Thomas, we were able to give back in a meaningful way and support an important cause.

Our Day at the Capitol was another success, and I am grateful to those who participated. Moving forward, I would love to see even more leaders join us next year to advocate for the important work you do with students and clients. This one-day opportunity in January allows MCA to shine and to educate our representatives about the real needs within our profession. A strong showing at the Capitol each year is essential.





MISSISSIPPI COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
A Branch of American Counseling Association
Serving Mississippi since 1950

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THE COMPASS

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FALL/WINTER 2026

SUBMISSIONS DUE
SEPT. 1
PUBLICATION
OCTOBER 1

PLEASE EMAIL
SUBMISSIONS TO
MPANNEL@DELTASTATE.EDU

Calendar at-a-Glance

PBCA & GCCA Spring Workshop	March 6th
Woodall Conference—Delta State	March 27th
MCA Executive Board Meeting	April 17th
MCA Conference-Gulf Coast	Nov. 4-6th

Presidential reflections continued...

I am excited to represent MCA at the American Counseling Association Conference in April and look forward to bringing back ideas that will help us continue to strengthen and lead our organization. MCA is in excellent hands as Leona Bishop begins serving as your next President on July 1. We are already planning for our Institute of Leadership Training, which will be held July 8–10 in Biloxi. If you are interested in serving as an Emerging Leader, please watch for upcoming information on how to apply.

Good things are happening within MCA, and it is truly a great time to be a member. Whether through leadership, conference participation, or attendance at our region and division fall and spring workshops, every member's involvement strengthens MCA and enhances what we collectively offer all counseling professionals.

With much gratitude,

Heather Norton

2025-2026 Mississippi Counseling Association President



MCA leaders were inspired by Dr. Tommie Mabry's impactful keynote address at the 2025 ACA Conference in Orlando, Florida. We are excited to welcome him to share his story at our 2026 conference this Fall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

***Get Your MCA
Apparel!***