

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 16, 2007**  
**Contact: Anika Mitchell Perkins**  
**(662) 329-7124**

### **Students complete Crossroads program**

COLUMBUS, Miss. -- Four months of hard work paid off for 47 seventh and eighth graders who attend Lee Middle School.

The students recently received certificates of completion from the Crossroads project, which focuses on meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of program participants. Crossroads Family Night highlighted individual and group achievements including perfect attendance, class awards and performances, Boys & Girls Club awards, and volunteerism.

Dr. Suzanne Bean congratulated the students for their hard work. "This is a very special night. We want to say how proud we are of you for sticking with this program. You have grown through your leadership skills and made improvements academically."

Bean is project director for Crossroads and director of the Roger F. Wicker Center for Creative Learning. "This project is also special because we have six different agencies in Columbus working together," she added.

The effort is being made possible through a \$1 million grant from the Mississippi Department of Education Office of Innovation and School Improvement. The community partners include the Roger F. Wicker Center for Creative Learning, the Columbus Municipal School District, Boys & Girls Club of Columbus/Lowndes County, Columbus Arts Council, Lowndes County Youth Court and Community Counseling Services. Each partner provides a valuable service for the Crossroads participants. In addition to the community partners, the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science provides tutoring services for the project at Lee Middle School.

Brianna Jones, an eighth grader at Lee Middle School, received several awards, including the volunteer drive individual prize, safety and creativity awards and a certificate of completion. Jones and her class were rewarded for recruiting the most adult volunteers. She received a \$50 gift certificate from Wal-Mart, and her class won a limousine ride from Leo's Luxury Limos and dinner at Harvey's. All volunteer drive prizes were donated by project sponsors. Leigh Mall provided gift certificates for the adult volunteers who gave the most time to the project.

"It gave me something better to do other than go home. I've made new friends and will participate in the summer program," Jones said.

Devante Benning-Rice, also an eighth grader at Lee Middle School, received awards for super attitude, most dedicated, perfect attendance and a certificate of completion. Rice

recited the poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost during the class performances. He said getting to know other students and learning new things made the program enjoyable. “It’s a second school where you can have fun and be yourself.”

Ivey Ivy, project manager, worked closely with the students throughout the semester. “We made it through the semester, and we’re honoring them for being so dedicated,” she said.