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Mississippi needs to empower more women

Too many women and girls in Mississippi have too few opportunities to improve their lives and the lives of those they love.

To increase their odds for success, the women and girls of Mississippi now have the Women's Fund of Mississippi working to enhance their economic security. The Fund's theory of social change is simple: When women are economically secure, safe and healthy, then families and communities are economically secure, safe and healthy.

The Fund plans to focus on three areas:

- p The early education and care of children.
- p Reducing the teen pregnancy rate.
- p Preventing violence against women.

But at the same time, other matters will receive the Fund's attention. And in order to speak more freely and independently on any issue, the Fund "graduated" from the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson last year and has set up its own operation. One of the first issues it has decided to tackle is payday lending. Carol Penick, the executive director of the Women's Fund, was on the Coast last week to champion lower interest rates on payday loans in the state.

She also spread the word of the Fund's support of the Women in Construction program at the Moore Community House in East Biloxi. "Women in Construction is exactly what we want to do," said Penick. "We want to help women learn skills, get on their feet and become economically secure."

The Fund is off to an impressive start and we trust with time more will be accomplished.

This editorial represents the views of the Sun Herald editorial board, which consists of President-Publisher Glen Nardi, Vice President and Executive Editor Stan Tiner, Opinion Page Editor B. Marie Harris, Associate Editor Tony Biffle, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Flora S. Point and Marketing Services Director John McFarland. Opinions expressed by columnists, cartoonists and letter writers are their own.