

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Non-profit Launches Southeast MO Campaign; Walt Wildman Hired As Organizer**

(CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO) Because of concern about the persistence of high poverty rates in counties in southeastern Missouri, Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW) has launched a new campaign, based in Cape Girardeau. MASW, founded in 1901, is a grassroots citizen's organization which provides leadership, research, education, and advocacy to improve public policy and programs impacting the health and welfare of all Missourians, with a special emphasis on basic human needs.

Walt Wildman, a long-time resident of Cape Girardeau, has been hired as Southeast Missouri Organizer for the campaign. Wildman has years of experience in not-for-profit agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, the Boy Scouts of America, and Easter Seals. He also was executive director of an 18-county economic development organization. As the MASW organizer for southeast Missouri, Wildman will travel extensively through high poverty counties, educating local communities about reductions in poverty that have been won through citizen advocacy in Missouri and other states and enlisting volunteers.

Jeanette Mott Oxford, executive director of MASW, said, "We are pleased to have Walt Wildman join the MASW team. His network of existing connections in commerce, city and county governments, universities, and communities of faith will provide the perfect mix to effectively address poverty in southeast Missouri."

Wildman said, "One of the most exciting possibilities this year is reducing the number of uninsured residents. The Cape Girardeau Chamber of Commerce and the statewide Chamber have endorsed a change in the Medicaid eligibility guidelines that can offer affordable coverage to almost 300,000 Missourians, including many of our neighbors with low-wage jobs. This transformation of the Medicaid program would create employment and put local hospitals and clinics on firmer financial footing."

Oxford added, "We have previously had a small southeast Missouri chapter and a student chapter in Cape Girardeau, but raising funds for staffing represents a new level of investment and commitment by MASW. We hope those who have worked with us in the past will join this effort. We welcome inquiries by all."

Area residents are invited to hear Oxford and Wildman speak about poverty, health care, and MASW on:

- Thursday, January 23, 6-8 pm, United Way, 430 Broadway, Cape Girardeau
- Friday, January 24, 1:15-2:45 pm, University Extension office, 222 N. Broadway, Poplar Bluff
- Thursday, March 13, noon-1:30 pm, Public Library, 711 N. Clark, Cape Girardeau

To receive notice of additional public meetings and training opportunities, contact Wildman at 573-579-8626.

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