

## **Stand Up and Be Counted**

It's 2009, which means it's almost census time again. You have probably already seen articles, ads or features about the upcoming 2010 Census. As set forth in the U.S. Constitution, a census has been conducted every ten years since 1790 by the U.S. Census Bureau to obtain an accurate count of our population. The Census' main purpose has been to allocate Congressional seats and electoral votes based on population. But in recent decades, the Census has become increasingly important for purposes of distributing governmental funding. Yes, that's right, giving away money!

As part of the Leadership Bibb 2009 adult program's kickoff session on Tuesday, January 27, the adult class participants and Brent Civitan Club members heard from keynote speaker Dr. Annette Watters of The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development that Bibb County did not get a fair shake in that arena in the year 2000.

Many of Bibb County's leaders became aware during the 2000 Census that the Bureau had gotten the State Cattle Farm mixed up with the Bibb County Correctional Facility. Their efforts to correct this failed. And as you may know or guess, the prison population here is much larger than the Cattle Farm's. Therefore, Bibb County's population was incorrectly recorded to be much smaller. In addition, it is widely believed that many people in Bibb County did not complete a census form, or they did not receive one because they did not have a mailing address or house number.

The bottom line, according to Dr. Watters, is that Bibb County lost an average of \$2,000 per person, per year in funding allocations---that's \$20,000 per person over ten years! Multiply that latter dollar figure by the total number of people you think were missed and it's absolutely sickening, regardless of the number you multiply it by.

Expanding on the slogan for the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, "Stand Up and Be Counted," Dr. Watters' message amounted to "make sure you and EVERYONE ELSE is counted." Dr. Watters mentioned several measures we can take to make sure Bibb County is properly counted in 2010:

- 1) Word of mouth---make sure your friends, family members and neighbors understand the political and financial implications of the Census, and encourage them to fill one out when it begins in 2010;
- 2) Form a Complete Count Committee, comprised of community leaders and concerned citizens, to conduct public relations and marketing activities to promote a complete and thorough census in our county. The Census Bureau provides tools to work with, but Committee would be responsible for doing the work and finding the money needed to support its efforts. This Committee should be formed soon in order to have an impact;
- 3) Census In The Schools---This Census Bureau program complements school curricula to encourage children to take information about the Census home to their parents. The idea is that if children take word home to their parents about the importance of the Census, parents will be more likely to cooperate on Census Day in 2010.

It's not too early to start thinking about and preparing for that day. Another way you might consider helping, especially if you're looking for a paying job [albeit temporary], is to apply to become a Census worker. For more information on temporary employment

with the Census Bureau, or to schedule an appointment to take an employment test and submit an application, call the toll-free 2010 Census Jobs Line: 1-866-861-2010.

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