

# EOHS alumni making headway with project

By BECKY WILKES  
Starkville Daily News

There is a driving force behind the beautification of the grounds at East Oktibbeha High School.

The EOHS alumni group — formally known as the Education Association for the Eastern Oktibbeha County Schools (EAEOCS) has more power and determination than a bulldozer; in fact, it orders up the bulldozers.

"The supervisors have been kind enough to help us with this project," said EOHS alumni Jackie Ellis last weekend.

Ellis stood on a hillside by the school, overlooking the area that will become the school's amphitheater. Back toward the school, Ellis and other alumni could see evidence of the group's earlier efforts: sod has been laid in front of the main building, shrubs planted, trees have been cut and grass seed sown.

The plan includes a courtyard area for the students, complete with pavers for the foundation and picnic tables. They've been assisted by Mississippi State's



## HELPING HAND

Carl Small Town Center.

"The kids have put out the grass in the front and helped plant trees; they cleared off the rubble where they removed the trailers," said Marian Wright, an English teacher at EOHS.

Wright has instituted a service learning requirement in her classes and many of the students work on the beautification project in fulfillment of those hours. Students have to complete eight hours of service each nine weeks as part of their English III and English IV requirements.

"Juniors and seniors have to do service hours and this is one thing they can use; some of

*See 'Project' page A-8*



Becky Wilkes/SDN

Spending Saturday morning working on the grounds at East Oktibbeha High School are, left to right, Trenecia Logan, Jelaney Price, teacher Marian Wright, Kendal Halbert, Willie R. Thomas, Sr., Ernest Rogers, Jr., Tommie Roberson, and EOHS alumni supporter Jackie Ellis. The alumni group, EOHS students, and the MSU School of Architecture's Small Town Center have come together to create an impressive campus for the school.

# Project

*from page A-1*

them will work at Brickfire and others will work in other service capacities," Wright said.

"Some of the kids play sports but aren't used to this kind of physical labor. We take it in short terms, and we provide water for them. When we're through, we'll cook hamburgers and hot dogs."

The fellowship aspect appeals to the students.

"I like it because we are helping make the school look better, and it's a good way for us to get to hangout with each other," said Jelaney Price, 17, an EOHS senior.

Trenecia Logan, also a 17-

year-old senior, agreed.

"I get excited about working on this project; I like working around friends and we cook afterward," she said.

Loyalty to the school runs deep. Willie R. Thomas Sr. works full time with the National Guard at Camp McCain.

But on Saturday morning, he's at his alma mater with a shovel in hand.

"Whatever it takes for this project to be effective I will do," Thomas said. "Being a '73 alum, it makes me feel good to see the students here working on it and knowing it will be better for the ones coming in."

When Thomas attended the school, it was known as B.L. Moor High School. That's what it was when Tommie Roberson, who is current president of the

EOHS Booster Club, attended, too. The school's name was changed when the Oktibbeha County School District consolidated schools into an east and west high school.

Another alumnus expressed his support of the project with a check.

"Jerry Rice attended our banquet last year; he was so impressed with the project that he gave us a check for \$30,000 to help with it," Ellis said. Rice, a National Football League superstar, currently plays for the Oakland Raiders.

The EAEOCS organized in 2002 when a group of people in the community came together to see what they could do to help with restoration of the property after a fire damaged the school.

The interior of the building was renovated by the school dis-

trict; school district officials suggested improvements to the outdoor area.

Supt. Walter Conley is excited about the project. Ellis is a former student of his, and he knows that her dominant trait is persistence, Conley said.

"We are extremely excited about the efforts of the alumni; Jacqueline Ellis and the group she's working with have done a fantastic job. I'm ecstatic about it," Conley said.

"It's really an asset and I hope the community will jump in and get behind them 100 percent. What they can do is unlimited."

We're pleased to present to you this quality water and services we deliver. We want you to enjoy the process and protect our water resources from wells drawing from the Gordo F...