

The Cleburne News

Cleburne received \$5,736,728 in recovery funds

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According to a recent report issued by Arise Citizens' Policy Project, Cleburne County has been the recipient of \$5,736,728 in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act payments

The money includes the Making Work Pay tax credits, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefit increases and Emergency Unemployment Compensation.

Ron Gilbert, Senior Policy Analyst for Arise said Alabama's unemployment rate jumped from 3.3 percent in March 2007 to over 11 percent this past February.

"State and local governments were faced with declining revenues at the same time that the recession was creating increased demands for services and assistance.

He said the federal outlays that have been most effective at stemming economic decline are "the direct assistance measures that put money in the hands of Alabama's citizens" which he said began flowing quickly.

In Alabama direct assistance to individuals, including tax cuts, accounted for 41 percent of the spending and by late May the five major forms of cash assistance had provided more than 42.1 billion to the state's economy.

Cleburne County received \$3,550,00 in Making Work Pay tax credits.

Cleburne County also received a \$456,728 SNAP increase which is Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or food stamps. This program, according to Gilbert, "has been a mainstay in helping Alabama's low-income families make ends meet since the late 1960s." Most households receiving food stamps received a 13.6 percent increase. Said Gilbert, "The benefit will remain at the current level until the normal inflation adjustments, usually made annually, catch up with the ARRA provisions, making the food stamp increase the longest-lasting of the direct aid provisions.

In May, figures statewide from the Alabama Department of Human Resources, indicated 347,000 households receiving food stamps with a total of over \$102 million in monthly benefits.

Gilbert sees the program's trickle down effect as families spend for food, grocers have more income to pay workers, wholesalers, farmers and others. "Those employees and suppliers then have more spending power they can exercise in local economies across the state," he said.