

# Cuttin' Up

FRONT PAGE



ENTERPRISE PHOTO -- Cheryl Rasbury

Inmates at the Stone County Regional Correctional Facility work the portable sawmill that was donated to Stone County by Wood-Mizer.

## Portable sawmill operational

Cheryl Rasbury  
Enterprise Staff

Stone County Regional Corrections Facility already has a vocational program designed to help rehabilitate inmates. Now that program is helping rehabilitate Stone County.

"It was the logical answer", said Patty Rogers who works with USDA. She was instrumental in getting the plan in motion. Ms. Rogers saw that there was a large amount of fallen timber from Hurricane Katrina. She wanted to help find a way to salvage as much as possible as well as get it cleared out before the rotting trees spread disease to other trees. She contacted Wood-Mizer who agreed to send a mill down along with John Hicks, of Wood-Mizer, who would instruct on the proper operation of the portable mill. The county would have to supply the labor and the financing to keep the mill.

Rogers contacted Warden Brewer who jumped on the opportunity. The inmates in the facility's vocational education program were given the opportunity under the supervision of John Hicks and Obey Parker, Vocational Instructor, to learn how to operate the



mill which is capable of milling approx. 30 logs a day into usable boards. The goal is for Hicks to train Parker and the inmates who will then train other inmates and keep the process going.

The timber is being brought in by the Forestry Commission and the lumber being milled will be used to repair or rebuild Forestry Commission buildings damaged or destroyed by Katrina. The County is applying for grant money to cover the \$53,000 needed for the mill so that when Hicks returns to Wood-Mizer, the mill will stay and continue the valuable milling process.

"There is so much good

coming from this," said Parker. The wood is being salvaged and this is a great opportunity for the inmates to learn another usable skill to help enable them to start their life again when they are released."

Mississippi's wood industry took a big hit when Katrina came ashore on August 29th. Early estimates by the Mississippi Forestry Commission was that there was \$2.4 billion in tree damage in Mississippi. More than one half of that is to the white pine forest. The felled trees quickly lose commercial value as they rot or contract blue strain fungus which thrives in the hit humid climate here.