



Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau,  
Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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## The Southeast Missouri Autism Center – Back on Track

Whatever you do, try to make tomorrow just a little bit better than today. That's the hope for the Southeast Missouri Autism Center — to make life here in Southeast Missouri for families of a child with autism just a little bit better than it was before. On Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was honored to join the groundbreaking that marked the beginning of construction of the Southeast Missouri Autism Center for Diagnosis and Treatment. Just one week later, it was announced that some MOHELA-funded construction projects, including the autism center, would be halted or put under review because of our nation's slowing economy.

In the following weeks, I worked with Gov. Nixon and Office of Administration Commissioner, Kelvin Simmons. They were open, honest, and cooperative, and today I am pleased to announce we were able get this project funded and back on track. The good that this center will do for families in Southeast Missouri is immeasurable, and I am grateful that all parties involved

in this process were able to recognize the value of the project.

Getting this funding back on track continues the work we have been doing since 2007 when we secured \$2.6 million for the Southeast Missouri Autism Center. Also in 2008, we secured an additional \$494,000 in operating and startup funds for the center for the 2009 fiscal year budget; over \$3 million to help Southeast Missouri families

The center will be an 11,582-square-foot facility next to Southeast Missouri State University at the old Washington School at the corner of Middle and Mill Streets in Cape Girardeau. The plans include numerous therapy areas that will be equipped with special observation areas — this includes rooms designed specifically for music therapy, occupational therapy, and life-skills training. As well as specializing in autism diagnosis and treatment, the center will be equipped with conference and training space for parent education, staff meetings, and university instruction.

The number of children with autism continues to increase. In Southeast Missouri, we have seen a 107% increase in school-age autism diagnoses. In 2007 alone, the number of students in our area that utilize autism services grew from 90 to 290 students. There is no doubt that more families are in need of diagnosis and treatment services, and I am proud to say that we can now announce a local resource. Together we can continue the work of making tomorrow better than today.



*Ground breaking ceremony January 23, 2009, on the future Southeast Missouri State University Autism Center for Diagnosis and Treatment. From left are Dr. Kenneth Dobbins, President of Southeast Missouri State University; State Rep. Steve Hodges; State Rep. Clint Tracy; Former MO First Lady Betty Hearnes; State Sen. Jason Crowell; Brad Bedell, President of the Southeast Missouri State University Board of Regents; Connie Hebert, Interim Director of Autism Center; Julia Kaufmann, Director of the Office of Autism Services, MO Dept. of Mental Health; Elaine Buessink, Director of The Tailor Institute; Rebecca Blackwell, Executive Director, Judevine Center for Autism; Dr. David Crowe, founder and CEO of The Tailor Institute; Myra Bax, Director Judevine Center for Autism, Southeast Project; and Taylor Crowe of The Tailor Institute.*

## **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: [jcrowell@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jcrowell@senate.mo.gov) or visit me on the web at <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

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