

Petal's Excel by 5 program is up for recertification

By Dana Gower

Staff Writer

Petal, which became the first certified Excel By Five community in the state in 2007, is scheduled to have its three-year recertification visit in December.

Nadine Coleman, certification manager for Excel By Five, said the final Excel Coalition meeting to be held prior to the December recertification visit will be held Nov. 18.

Coleman said the group has developed a continuing plan of action, and that a number of positive things have happened since the



community was certified in 2007.

"One of the major highlights is we have developed a funding plan to support our efforts," she said. In addition to receiving

outside grants, funding has been committed by the Petal School District, Petal Education Foundation and the city of Petal, which has given financial support for the past two years.

"This year will be the third year" that the city has provided funding for the project, Coleman said.

"The other significant thing that has happened, we have hired an Early Care and Education Coordinator," she said. "This is the second year for this position." Miranda Brister came on in August, taking over from the original coordinator, Coleman said.

In addition, the Petal Rotary Club is

sponsoring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, which provides books for children.

"They are raising the funds to pay for that," Coleman said of the Rotary Club. Currently, 54 babies are signed up for the program, and that number is expected to continue to grow, she said.

The Excel By Five initiative is designed to encourage and assist communities to become actively involved in supporting their young children.

"The whole goal is to make sure the students enter schools with the skills they need," Coleman said.