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SPOTLIGHT

Back to School
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(and online)

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Uncertainty clouds reopening schools

By Bob Arnold

There's a lot of uncertainty as the beginning of a new school term at Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) nears on August 7. Will students return to classrooms, face distance learning alternatives or both? Will tentatively scheduled events on the normal school calendar happen as planned or even at all -- teachers meetings, parent and student orientations, yearbook photography, the ordering process for graduation invitations, rings and pictures; ceremonies, beauty pageants, special assemblies, testing, awards programs? Will sports teams compete, and will there be crowds on hand to watch them if they do?

The only certainty now is that in some way school will start on August 7. But even if it starts one way, it may change as the school term unfolds.

"There continue to be questions and concerns related to the reopening of schools in August," says Rickey Clopton, Copiah County School District Superintendent of Education. "While we are in the business of educating, our first priority is the safety of our students and our employees."



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Based on information-gathering

from parents, employees, community members, administrators, state leaders, the Mississippi Department of Education and medical professionals, restart plans are in the works with safety procedures at the forefront, Clopton says.

One of three scenarios will emerge by August 7:

- A traditional plan, which Clopton says the School District would prefer. It would feature a relatively normal face-to-face classroom situation with increased safety precautions -- hand sanitizer and hand washing availability, cleaning of high frequency areas, limited visitation to campus that would facilitate transition to other kinds of school operations if required. Implementation of this plan will be predicated on guidance from health officials and the Governor.
- A virtual learning (full distance learning) plan in which students would not return to classrooms, but rather utilize distance learning materials, media and learning platforms. An executive order by the Governor to close schools would require this approach.
- A hybrid plan combining distance learning and face-to-face instruction with increased safety and disinfecting measures.

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New flag to fly over Mississippi

Wesson News

Nineteen years after Mississippians voted overwhelmingly to keep the flag that has been the state's symbol since 1894, they are again facing a referendum on the flag they want the state to fly. This time, however, that 1894 flag, which features the controversial Confederate battle flag in the upper left corner, will not be a choice after Governor Tate Reeves signed a bill which mandates its removal and bans future use of the Confederate emblem.

The State House and Senate passed the bill the weekend before July 4. A nine-person commission will be appointed to develop a single new design by September for Mississippi voters to approve or reject on the November 2020 ballot. In the meantime, Mississippi will have no official state flag.

The death of George Floyd, a black man, on Memorial Day in Minneapolis at the hands of a white police officer, who knelt for nearly nine minutes on his neck, triggered the events that led to the decision by the Mississippi legislature and Governor. The video of the incident went viral, focusing the nation as a whole on racial inequality, and opinion leaders in Mississippi, which, as of the 2010 census, has a higher percentage of black residents than any other state, on the state flag as a symbol of white supremacy.

Cheers echoed in the halls of the Mississippi State Capitol shortly after the final votes were cast, and many Mississippians who visited the building to witness the moment openly wept.

"We are better today than we were yesterday," said Speaker of the Missis-

issippi House Philip Gunn, who authored the bill. "Today, the future has taken root in the present. Today, we and the rest of the nation can look on our state with new eyes, with pride and hope. "We are not betraying our heritage," Gunn continued. "We are fulfilling it."

In 2001, Mississippi voters decided nearly 2-to-1 to keep the emblem on the state flag, solidifying its place on the official state banner for nearly two decades. For years, supporters of changing the flag have not been able to garner the simple majority needed to change the banner through the normal legislative process. However, a growing list of Mississippi businesses, cities, counties and other groups either stopped flying the flag or asked state leaders to change it. Religious leaders spoke out, saying changing the flag was a "moral issue."

The NCAA, SEC, and Conference USA took action to ban postseason play in Mississippi until the flag was changed.

In preliminary votes, local lawmakers supported efforts to put the existing state flag on the ballot in an up-down vote, but approved the final bill to remove the flag. In the House, Representative Becky Currie opposed the rules change that put the decision on the flag in the legislature's hands, and Senator Sally Doty supported amendments in the upper chamber for an up-down vote on the flag.

Both Currie and Doty, however, agreed the time had come to retire the flag. "Whether we like it or not, a magnifying glass is on our State and this symbol," Doty said. "Business owners in my District have given examples of

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Greer retires after 25 years

By Bob Arnold

To many around town, it may seem like Ron Greer, who retired last month as principal of Wesson High School, has always been part of the local scene.

But it just feels that way, since Greer has been involved in the community as a teacher, coach and an administrator at Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) and Wesson High School (WHS) for a quarter of a century. Actually, he was born in Pascagoula, Mississippi, which he left with his parents, Hubert and Dolores, when his father became a Southern Baptist evangelist and the family started moving with his calls to various Mississippi churches.

"I thank Wesson for accepting me as an outsider," he says. "I am thankful for the friends and colleagues I have made here, and look for great things to continue at Wesson Attendance Center and Wesson High School."

On his way to Wesson, Greer and his family stopped at Picayune, Mendenhall and Brookhaven, where they landed in 1977, both to be near his father's churches and his mother's family. Greer spent the greater part of his youth there, graduating from Brookhaven High School in 1983.

Greer made his first stop in Wesson at Co-Lin, where he earned an Associate Degree in education in 1985 and played baseball and offensive lineman for the Wolves gridders.

"I enjoyed working with kids," Greer says. "So I became a teacher."

After Co-Lin, Greer completed his undergraduate degree in education at Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi, in 1987 and started his career there, teaching history and coaching football at Sumner Hill Junior High School. In 1989, he moved to Clinton High School, where he taught history

and served as its football team's defensive coordinator.

Greer received his Master's Degree in school administration at Mississippi College in 1995, and then came to Wesson Attendance Center to teach



Wesson News

history and assume the reins of the football team as head coach. For 25 years, he has continued to play a major role in the life of the town.

Greer has seen 16 WAC classes progress from kindergarten through

graduation and "I hope I have done well by the kids," he says. "I remember the influence my teachers and coaches had on me, and I hope I have been equal to the task." Greer never planned that being a principal would be part of his service, but "I have followed the Lord's call."

At WAC, Greer served as head football coach from 1995 to 2003 and 2012 to 2016, WAC assistant principal from 2003 to 2007, WAC principal from 2007 to 2012 and WHS prin-

cipal from 2012 until his retirement. Greer and his wife Jennye, a nurse at the Hazlehurst Region 8 Mental Health Center, have three children and four grandchildren: Casey Berry, a third grade teacher at West

Point, Mississippi, married to a highway patrolman, with two children, Meredith, 3, and Greer, 2 months; Lea, a Co-Lin recruiter married to Lucas Culbert, with one child, Ruby, 10 months; and Cullen, a Brookhaven High School coach married to Alli, a nurse, with one child, Colby, 10 months;

Looking forward to his retirement, Greer sees playing with his grandkids as a big part of it, but adds that "I think the Lord has other things in store for me, although I don't know what they are yet."

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy hunting and fishing and, in retirement, of course, I look forward to playing with my grandkids. I also teach Sunday School at Wesson

Baptist Church, and serve as Deacon and small group leader there.

Are you a reader?

Religious and spiritual literature mostly. The Bible is my favorite book. I study God's word. I also read Christian writers A.W. Tozer and Henry Blackaby.

Do you enjoy movies or theater?

I am a Denzel Washington fan. *Glory* and *Remember the Titans* are two of my favorite movies.

How about music?

Contemporary Christian and Country

How would you spend your lottery winnings if you were so lucky?

I would tithe to the church, help needy people and build a cabin in the mountains.

How would you change the world?

I would help spread the good news of Jesus Christ.



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



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COVID-19 vs. arts: good & bad news

By Guest Columnist Shaw Furlow

I am stumped. Really. I have been writing this column for several years now. Each month, I have plugged a show of some sort. At no time have I been at a loss for material. We live in a pretty fertile area. But this month, I am stumped.



Wesson News

Normally I would be telling you about the youth shows at Brookhaven Little Theatre. The summer shows at BLT are some of the most popular. But I talked to Emily Waterloo, executive director, and she told me the Haven will be dark all summer. First time I can remember.

Brookstock XX has been postponed. How many columns have I written about Brookstock? This was supposed to be a huge year, with musicians coming to Brookhaven from all over the country. However, due to flying restrictions and the dangers of being cooped up in a plane, the headliner and others had to cancel. Don Jacobs, Brookstock creator/organizer and over all guru, wrestled with the decision. In April, we talked, and decided to give it four more weeks. In May, we said the same thing. On June 1, we talked, and he pulled the plug. I felt badly for him. So Brookstock XX will take place in July of 2021. It will be a wing-ding!!!

So that left the Overbrook Songwriters Festival -- my production. We were scheduled for July 31 and August 1, with thirty songwriters converging on six different venues in Brookhaven. After last year's success, the festival, celebrating the talents of regional songwriters, was postponed. I talked to musicians, health care workers, Brookhaven city officials. After a lot of prayer, I decided to postpone. Jacobs called me to commiserate. We spent twelve months working on sponsors, venues, artists and schedules



Wesson News

2020 Brookstock has been cancelled.

and to have the rug pulled out from under us is quite a blow. Not only was I disappointed, but I heard from many of the artists who understood how hard a decision it was to make.

I guess in the great scheme of things, shutting down Brookhaven Little Theatre, Brookstock and the Overbrook Songwriters Festival aren't as big as no Major League Baseball, but in our little corner of the world, they are fun events to which people look forward.

Yet artists are finding ways to beat COVID-19. Let me share some good news. One of the coolest things I have seen in quite a while occurred in a parking lot in Brookhaven. The Brookhaven Regional Arts Guild (BRAG) hosted a drive-through art show. Fifteen artists showed their works on easels or tables, and the guests drove through, never leaving their cars. We were giv-

en a program introducing the artists and their works as we drove into the parking lot. Through the open passenger side window, artists explained their pieces or answered questions. Derek Covington Smith, another veteran of this column, joked: "This isn't the first event where I've caused a traffic jam." A clever idea, and I expect there will be more drive-through shows.

Things are beginning to reopen, but the restrictions on bars and restaurants mean many musicians, who either support their families or at least supplement their income by playing, are still struggling. Many have resorted to the internet and live shows from their back porches.

With movie theaters remaining closed for the foreseeable future, drive-in movies are making a comeback. That could be fun. Technology has im-

proved the experience. So who knows. As I write this, *Jaws* has made a major comeback in drive-in theatres. Imagine the scene when that monster first comes up on the boat on a screen as big as a barn! Drive-ins could indeed be fun.

As a promoter of events, a player of gigs and a writer of art events, I wish I could give you an idea about when all this madness is going away. I miss baseball. I miss live music. I miss theatre and movies. I advise you to listen to a song by Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame member Jimmy Buffet. Check it out: *Breathe In, Breathe Out, Move On*. It's good advice.

Until next time, chin up and support the arts.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Shaw Furlow is a local composer, musician and arts promoter. He produces an internet-based video show -- *From the Shadyside* -- that spotlights area musical talent and is a consultant to school bands in the region.



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A simple & effective health habit

Special to Wesson News

During the COVID-19 health pandemic, hand-washing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Yes, the power is in your hands to prevent many conditions. Washing hands is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs throughout an entire community -- at home, school and work.

According to Will Sawyer, MD, an international infection prevention expert, true disease prevention encompasses:

1. Not touching the T-zone -- the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose, and mouth
2. Regular hand-washing
3. Vaccinations

Imagine how great it would be if you or your family were never sick again from a respiratory infection. This can include diseases such as flu, common colds, conjunctivitis, pharyngitis, tonsillitis, bronchitis, pneumonia, strep, coronavirus, and more.

The T-zone is the portal of entry into our body for majority of diseases, all respiratory infections, and gastrointestinal diseases.

The American Medical Association and American Academy of Physicians cite "Four Principles of Hand Awareness" behaviors to ensure you stay well:

1. Wash your hands when they are dirty and before eating
2. Do not cough into your hands
3. Do not sneeze into your hands.
4. Above all, do not put your hands in your eyes, nose, or mouth (T-zone).

What actually happens to the surrounding environment when you cough or sneeze? According to "Inside Science," a news site supported by the American Institute of Physics,



an average cough forces about 3,000 droplets out of the body at around 50 miles per hour. On a much grander scale, ONE human sneeze releases around 40,000 droplets into the air, which travel at an astounding 200 miles per hour

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), washing your

hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes on your hands.

You can help yourself and others stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during the key times when germs are likely to get on your hands, and can easily spread to others:

- Before, during, and after preparing food;
- Before eating food;
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick;
- Before and after treating a cut or wound;
- After using the bathroom;
- After changing diapers;
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
- After inserting or removing contact lenses;
- After shaking hands with others;
- After touching an animal, animal food, or animal waste;
- After touching garbage;
- Whenever your hands look dirty.

What is the best way to wash your hands? CDC advises:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water, warm if available, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers including your thumb, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds (hum the "happy birthday" song twice).
4. Thoroughly rinse your hands under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
6. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet (and to open the door in public facilities).

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Note: while alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situation, they do NOT get rid of all types of germs.

Help to "spread the word, not the germs."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stephanie Duguid is Dean of Academic Instruction at Co-Lin. She is also an athletic trainer and nutrition specialist and has been teaching courses related to those two areas as well as practicing what she preaches for more than twenty years.

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cont. from page 1

New flag to fly over Mississippi

problems they face with our current flag." Currie said she favored a new flag with "In God We Trust" prominently displayed.

The House approved the bill by a vote of 92-23, with eight more House members voting to approve the final bill than they did on suspending the rules. The Senate approved the bill by a vote of 37-14.

Governor Reeves, who previously advocated for a referendum on the flag, signed the bill that came out of the legislature because "the issue had grown too divisive," he said. "Whether you are proud of this step or angry with us over the process, I want you to know that I love you," he said. "I am praying for you."

"I think the Mississippi Senate and me personally want Mississippi to have a heart and a soul," said Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann after the vote. "Today she had one."

"For 100 plus years, we have been living under this flag," said Sen. David Jordan, D-Greenwood. "We watered this land with our tears and made it rich with our bones, so it's only fair that we

have a symbol that represents us and (does) not remind us of what has happened to us."

The debate over the state flag captured the close attention of Mississippians for weeks. Many prominent Mississippians expressed their appreciation. "Removal of the Confederate battle flag from our state flag is long overdue," former Gov. William Winter said in a statement. "I congratulate the Mississippi Legislature on their decisive action today removing this divisive symbol. Along with many committed Mississippians, I have fought for decades to change the flag, most notably during the flag referendum 20 years ago."

"All eyes are on Mississippi, and today, we have made an historic decision," said Sen. Angela Turner Ford, chairwoman of the Legislative Black Caucus "... Today we mark a transition for Mississippi, a day when we can be proud to move forward to adopt a symbol that is inclusive, a symbol that all of us can rally behind ... We've made a decision to move forward, and I hope Mississippians are proud of that decision."

OBITUARY

Gail Oglesby Norman

Mrs. Gail Oglesby Norman, 63, of Meadville, Mississippi, passed from this life on Saturday, June 6, 2020, at the Meadville Convalescent Home. She was born on December 16, 1956, in Natchez, Mississippi, to Walter Lee Oglesby Sr. and Alberta Pritchard Oglesby.

A walk-through visitation was held at Providence Baptist Church on Saturday, June 13, 2020, from 9 a.m. until the time of the private family service at 11 a.m. The family respectfully asked that everyone follow COVID-19 guidelines by practicing social distancing and wearing masks at all times. A Celebration of Life service will be scheduled at a later date.

Rev. Herman Aldridge and Rev. Marvin Howard officiated the service. Franklin Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.

She lived life to the fullest, despite having a stroke at age 31 leaving her with the inability to speak or move. With assistive technology, she used the gift of art to inspire others. She was a loving mother, grandmother, sister and

friend.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Walter Lee Oglesby Sr. and Alberta Pritchard Oglesby.

Survivors include her daughter, Kayla McDavid (Chance) of Clinton, Mississippi; son, Will Norman (Jennifer) of Wesson, Mississippi; brothers, Walter Lee Oglesby Jr. (Jane) of Sulphur, Louisiana, Ronald Oglesby (Linda) of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Stephen Oglesby (Charlotte) of Meadville; and four grandchildren, Brayden, Trace, and Joshua McDavid and Leah Norman.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made in Gail's name to the Gail Oglesby Norman Memorial Fund, which will be available soon at the Bank of Franklin. This fund will be used to further Rev. Marvin Howard's ministry to enhance the quality of life of Franklin County residents needing assistive technology for communication. Memorials can also be made to the Meadville Convalescent Home or Providence Baptist Church.

Please visit www.franklinfh.com to share condolences.



New principal on board at WAC



Special to Wesson News

Special to Wesson News

A former Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) student, Wesson High School teacher and head football coach is returning to become principal WAC.

Tommy Clopton brings 22 years of public education experience to the position, which Marilyn Phillips is leaving to become principal of the WAC elementary school and assist in transitioning to new administrative leadership.

Clopton joins WAC following eight years at Brookhaven High School, where he was head football coach and athletic director for six years, and then assistant principal, while remaining athletic director.

A Wesson native, Clopton graduated from Wesson High School in 1992 after attending kindergarten through the twelfth grade at WAC.

Clopton received an AA Degree in pre-pharmacy from Co-Lin in 1994, a BS Degree in Chemistry from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in 1997 and an MA Degree in curriculum and instruction from USM in 1998. He did post-graduate studies in education at Mississippi

State and Arkansas State Universities.

Before coming to WAC as a math and science teacher and football coach in 2004, Clopton taught science and coached football for one year at Quitman High School in Clark County, and then taught chemistry and coached football for five years at East Central Community College.

Clopton and his wife of 22 years, April, the former librarian at Crystal Springs Elementary School and the current website and communication staff person for Brookhaven School District, have two grown children -- Micah, 26, a telecommunications specialist in Tupelo, and Trace, 20, a football player and student at USM.

Although he thought he wanted to become a scientist while growing up, Clopton ultimately decided to follow the career choice of his parents, aunts and uncles in education. When he is not in an educational setting, he is probably outdoors hunting, traveling or spending time with his family.

"My vision at WAC is to build on the success of the past, continuing to push students to prepare for the future and making WAC the pride of the community," Clopton says.

Library renovation back on track



Special to Wesson News

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Aldermen have put the renovation of the public library back on track with authorization of \$443,801 for construction related to the project.

The action comes with an additional \$128,801 awarded by the Mississippi Development Authority for the work, after initial bids submitted for it exceeded the original \$315,000 provided by an MDA grant to the town. The total grant monies are available under Americans with Disability Act (ADA) funding.

Following receipt of the earlier bids, the town asked MDA for the additional funds that were awarded in a supplemental grant. New bids have been submitted in response to advertising for the project under the revised grant amount.

The public library renovation work calls for:

- . A new facade
- . Remodeled interior
- . An additional 1,000 square feet of space
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Reopening plans announced by Co-Lin

Special to Wesson News

All 15 colleges in the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges system, including Co-Lin, plan to resume traditional operations and classes on their campuses this fall.

"Mississippi community colleges are looking forward to students returning to our campuses and dorms in the fall of 2020 for an exceptional college experience," says Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College President Dr. Mary S. Graham, current MACC president. "We are following recommended safety protocols to create safe learning, living, and working environments for all."

"It is Co-Lin's intention to reopen our campuses this fall and offer on-site instruction along with the traditional residential experience for our students," says Dr. Jane Hulon, president of the college. "Our team has been busy doing a lot of background work to ensure we are ready to institute the necessary safety precautions in all areas of the college that will be part of the new normal as students return to campus. We are being proactive in ensuring that our fall plans are fluid in the instance we need to react to stricter health guidelines and recommendations, all while continuing to provide a quality education."

As part of the plan for the safety of its students and employees, the dates for the Co-Lin fall term will be adjusted. Co-Lin administration has been in communication with other members of the higher education community to determine the most common schedule plan for fall. Classes for the Fall 2020 term will begin on Monday, August 17. The college will observe Labor Day on Monday, September 7. Fall exams are scheduled for November 16-19. Because the semester will be shortened, all classes will be in hybrid format, which means instruction will be a combination of face-to-face and online.

Co-Lin administrators have been monitoring information concerning COVID-19 from the Mississippi Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Due to the concern students may travel over college breaks and put themselves and others at greater risk of COVID-19 exposure, there will not be a tradition-



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al Fall Break, and the semester will be completed before the Thanksgiving Break. Students will not return to campus until the spring semester in January.

The MACC system was forced to move to all online operations in mid-March due to COVID-19. Since that time, each community college in the state has organized committees and established protocols to safely restart traditional activities at their campuses.

In addition to Co-Lin, MACC includes Coahoma Community College, East Central Community College, East Mississippi Community College, Holmes Community College, Hinds Community College, Itawamba Community College, Jones College, Meridian Community College, Mississippi Delta Community College, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Northeast Mississippi Community College, Northwest Mississippi Community College, Pearl River Community College and Southwest Mississippi Community College. These colleges will also announce updated operational hours and procedures.

Co-Lin will provide additional information on its fall classes on the college's website at www.colin.edu and on social media.

The following Co-Lin offices opened to the public beginning Mon-

day, June 15, 2020. Summer hours are 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Friday.

On the Wesson Campus, the following offices will be open:

- Ewing Administration Building -- Business Office
- Henley Building -- Enrollment Services & Student Services
- Oswalt Library -- Proctor Lab
- Fortenberry offices

On the Natchez Campus:

- Tom Reed Academic Building -- Enrollment Services, Business Office
- Willie Mae Dunn Library -- Proctor Lab

On the Simpson County Center:

- Sidney Parker Academic Building -- Enrollment Services, Business Office

In order to keep students, faculty, staff, and the community as safe as possible, the college is committed to:

- Cleaning and disinfecting facilities in accordance with CDC guidelines,

- Requiring social distancing and recommending face masks,
- Providing hand sanitizer in all offices,
- Conducting frequent cleaning of "high touch" surfaces in high traffic areas,
- Placing visual signs on the floor to ensure social distancing,
- Posting signs externally and internally throughout high traffic areas to remain six feet apart,
- Recommending visitors self-check their temperature prior to arriving on campus (100.4 or less) to ensure safety, and
- Utilizing safety shields in high traffic customer service areas.

In order to keep its staff and their families safe, Co-Lin is asking that persons do not enter any building if they or members of their families or households have (1) come in contact with an affected individual or area or (2) traveled to an international destination or on a cruise ship in the past 14 days.

Co-Lin requests that faculty, staff, students and their families follow the CDC guidelines for self-isolation and social distancing to slow down the spread of the coronavirus. Students, faculty, staff and their families should monitor the www.colin.edu website, Co-Lin social media accounts and their email for updated information.

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cont. from page 1

Uncertainty clouds reopening school

sure. Limits to the number of people in groups and social distancing requirements would necessitate this approach.

The District will maintain communications with parents through its web site (www.copiah.ms), related social media, regular mail and print and electronic media (i.e., *Wesson News*) on developing plans and actions required by parents and students related to transportation, acquisition of needed classroom supplies and other things required for a normal school situation or for distance learning platforms and materials under virtual learning or hybrid plans.

One pressing need that will arise in the near future is registration of new and incoming students. Registration will be online this year for the first time, and parents and guardians will receive login information for accounts and instructions on completing back-to-school paperwork in the online format.

All WAC students must reside within its district or have been released by their local school board and approved by the Copiah County School Board. Residency means a student lives full time, days and nights throughout the week and on weekends, at a place of abode within the limits of the school district. Students must reside full time at the address used for registration. Further, students must reside with a natural parent or have legal documentation on file with WAC that they are under the guardianship of someone.

For this year only, the Mississippi State Department of Education has waived the requirement that returning students who have not moved since the fall 2019 registration at WAC must provide new copies of residency documents. For those who have not moved, parents will sign an online form stating that they live in the same location.

Students who have a new address

and any new students must upload three proofs of residency (real estate documentation, utility bill or deposit receipt, official identification). Incoming students who did not attend WAC last year must also provide birth certificates, Social Security Cards, copies of Mississippi Immunization Form 121, final report cards from previous schools. Legal guardians will be required to provide additional documents.

Assuming students return to a traditional classroom setting on August 7, several related events are tentatively scheduled to prepare parents, students and teachers for the year ahead:

- Teachers return to WAC for a staff development program on August 3, 4, 5 and 6 that will orient them to their working environment, review their job landscape and expectations and give them direction to perform effectively. Faculty and staff will get their ID badges starting at 8 a.m. on August 3.
- From 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on August 4, parents and students will learn more about WAC. At an open house, students, parents and teachers will meet informally on the elementary school program, and a Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) meeting will show parents how they can sustain their relationship with WAC throughout the school year. A special orientation for incoming seventh graders will also cover the transition for both students and their parents -- one with big changes, such as storing books in lockers and going to different classes and teachers when the bell rings.
- Meet the Cobras on August 13 will introduce students to WAC's athletic program at the Old Gym. Players and coaches will make presentations in a rally-like atmosphere.

WAC staff and personnel are accessible by telephone, fax and email:

- Principal Tommy Clopton. tommy.clopton@copiah.ms
- High School Principal Dr. Barbara Roberson. barbara.roberson@copiah.ms
- Elementary School Principal Marilyn Phillips. marilyn.phillips@copiah.ms
- Guidance Counselor Stephanie Allen
- Elementary Counselor Ginger Heard
- High School Secretary Gwen Shannon
- Elementary Secretary Aretha Butler
- Nurse Michelle Berch
- Bookkeeper/Secretary Paula Smith & Jacque McCormick (also Records Clerk)
- High School telephone: (601) 643-2221/2222
- Elementary telephone: (601) 643-2295
- Fax: (601) 643-2458 or (601) 643-5838

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Easy mix for tomato gardens

By Guest Columnist Bonnie Coblentz

Successful Mississippi gardens are filling up with beautiful tomatoes, but unless gardeners stay alert and act, these plants can succumb to summer insect pests and diseases.

Blackened areas at or near the bottom of the fruit are most likely blossom-end rot. While not a disease, this problem can ruin fruit. The solution is to make sure plants get enough calcium and never let them dry out between waterings. Mulch helps with water retention.

Wilted plants can be caused by a number of diseases, but make sure plants are getting enough water -- an inch to an inch and a half each week, whether from the hose or natural rainfall, advises Rick Snyder, MSU Extension vegetable specialist working from the Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station in Crystal Springs. When wilt is not caused by a lack of water, it can indicate Southern blight, bacterial wilt, tomato spotted wilt virus or several other diseases. One of the most common diseases on tomatoes is early blight indicated by brown spots on lower leaves that have concentric rings in them, with lower leaves turning yellow and eventually falling off as it progresses.



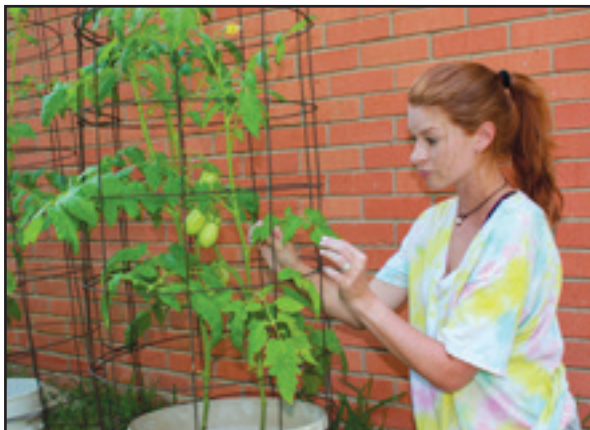
es. Left unchecked, it will move up the plant with spots, yellowing and leaf drop.

To prevent the diseases and keep insects at bay as well, gardener Blake Layton, also an entomologist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, recommends spraying with a mix of three common chemicals -- permethrin, chlorothalonil and copper octanoate. Mix the ingredients with water in a hand pump sprayer and apply to vegetable gardens, spraying on tomato plants starting one to two weeks after transplanting and continuing every seven to 10 days through the season.

"Pick first, spray later that day, wait two to three days before picking again, and wash or peel fruit before eating," Layton says. "As long as I maintain this spray schedule, we enjoy good insect and disease control. Once I start missing a few sprays, pest problems increase and fruit quality declines drastically."

Tomatoes are primarily wind-pollinated, but bees do visit tomato blooms. So spray as late in the day as possible to protect them, as bee activity usually declines near dusk.

The products containing ingredients recommended by Layton are readily available at local seed and feed stores.



Noa Katherine Hardin tends to her healthy, growing tomatoes outside her house in Starkville, Mississippi.

Special to Wesson News

Layton says to read labels carefully to be sure the product you buy is for tomatoes, and mix and apply according to directions. Permethrin controls fruitworms, hornworms, stink bugs and leaf-footed bugs, while the other products are for disease control.

Each of the ingredients has a zero-day pre-harvest interval, but Layton suggests allowing a couple of days to pass before resuming harvest.

Layton says it is wise to alternate the products used to maintain effective disease and insect control. This practice helps prevent the development of resistance. "Mancozeb is a good alternative for chlorothalonil, but because it has a 5-day pre-harvest interval, it is best used in early season," he says. "If caterpillar pests are your only insect concern, Spinosad is an effective alternative for permethrin, but Spinosad does not control stink bugs and is best used in early season when stink bug numbers are low."

For those interested in gardening organically, there are several organic fungicide products. Organic insecticides that contain Spinosad do a great job controlling fruitworms and hornworms, but there are no effective organic options for controlling stink bugs or leaf-footed bugs, other than hand-removing the pests.

The MSU Extension Service offers information at <http://extension.msstate.edu/publications>. Search for Extension Publication 2347, "Insect Pests of the Home Vegetable Garden," or Extension Publication 3175, "Common Diseases of Tomatoes."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bonnie Coblentz is a writer for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

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SMW on TV, new judge, MS investments

Special to Wesson News

National TV focuses on area business. A national television business show last month profiled a Brookhaven manufacturer that will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in September. *Manufacturing Marvels*, hosted by Lou Dobbs on the Fox Business Channel, focused on the history and work of Smith Machine & Welding Company (SMW), which produces steel fabricated machines in its 55,000 square foot facility, including CNC cutting, CNC machining, code pressure piping and machines for diverse industries and clients. Pat Smith and her husband Shelby (Chuck) founded SMW in 1970. They started in rented space on Highway 51 and moved to their current location on Union Street Extension near Interstate 55 in 1982. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SMW has continued to operate as an essential business.

Judge appointed. The U.S. Senate confirmed Mississippi Appeals Court Judge Cory T. Wilson as U.S. Circuit Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. The 200th federal judge to be confirmed to a lifetime appointment by the Senate since President Trump took office, his confirmation was the last remaining federal circuit court vacancy. Wilson will assume the seat vacated by E. Grady Jolly. Wilson, a na-

tive of Moss Point, recently received the highest rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association to serve on the Fifth Circuit. Wilson earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Mississippi and a law degree from Yale Law School, where he served on the *Yale Law Journal*. He served as a law clerk to Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Emmett Ripley Cox, in addition to being a White House Fellow in the U.S. Department of Defense. Wilson served in the Mississippi House of Representatives and held senior positions within the offices of the Mississippi State Treasurer and Mississippi Secretary of State. Wilson is also a former adjunct professor at Mississippi College School of Law.

Ship builder awarded contract. Mississippi-based Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division has received a third contract modification from the U.S. Navy for \$145 million to provide long-lead-time material and advance procurement activities for the amphibious assault ship LHA 9. It has received total advance funding of \$350 million for LHA 9. Ingalls is the

sole builder of large-deck amphibious ships for the Navy. The shipyard delivered its first amphibious assault ship, the *Iwo Jima*-class *USS Tripoli* (LPH 10), in 1966. Ingalls has since built five *Tarawa*-class (LHA 1) ships, eight *Wasp*-class (LHD 1) ships and the first in a new class of amphibious assault ships, *America* (LHA 6). The second ship in that class, *Tripoli* (LHA 7), was delivered to the Navy earlier this year. *Bougainville* (LHA 8) is under construction. Huntington Ingalls Industries is America's largest military shipbuilding company and a provider of professional services to partners in government and industry.

Netflix dollars coming to Mississippi poor. As part of a \$100 million commitment to bring capital into Black communities across the country, Netflix is placing a "Transformational Deposit" in a small Mississippi credit union to support small businesses, housing, home and car ownership and other community needs in a small town of 1,800 in which it is the sole financial institution. HOPE Credit Union at Itta Bena, Mississippi, could receive more than \$10

million from Netflix to help the capital-starved town in the Mississippi Delta. While many rural people lost their jobs and economic viability as a result of COVID-19, HOPE has provided payment flexibility and financial resources to some of them. With a \$10 million deposit from Netflix, the credit union looks to do even more. Over the next two years, the Netflix funds will support financing of more than 2,000 entrepreneurs and homebuyers of color. Bill Bynum, CEO of the member-owned financial institution, said his organization wasn't surprised that a disproportionate number of people of color tested positive and died from COVID-19. In addition to the health effects, the economic impact of the pandemic on low-income Black workers were worse.

"We believe at HOPE that whether you're trying to close education or housing gaps, making sure communities have grocery stores that sell healthy food or improving housing conditions, at some point all of those needs require capital," Bynum said. "We help to address these conditions by providing affordable, responsible financial services that more wealthy and more prosperous white communities take for granted, but are absent in the communities we serve."

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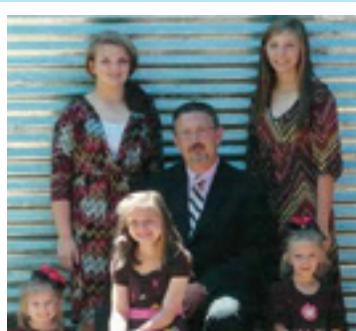
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FOOTBALL COBRAS

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| AUGUST | OCTOBER |
| 14 TYLERTOWN SCRIMMAGE | 2 WEST LINCOLN (HOMECOMING) |
| 21 AT CRYSTAL SPRINGS | 9 AT BOGUE CHITTO |
| 28 SUMRALL | 16 AT AMITE COUNTY |
| SEPTEMBER | 23 LOYD STAR |
| 4 AT MIZE | 30 ENTERPRISE |
| 11 AT FRANKLIN COUNTY | NOVEMBER |
| 18 HAZLEHURST | 6, 13, 20, 27 DECEMBER 4 PLAYOFFS/CHAMPIONSHIP |
| 25 LAWRENCE COUNTY | ALL GAMES PLAYED AT 7 P.M. |

SOCCER COBRAS

| | |
|--|--|
| NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
| 5 LAWRENCE COUNTY 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) | 10 WEST LINCOLN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 10 AT MCLAURIN 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) | 14 BOGUE CHITTO 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) |
| 12 AT NORTH PIKE 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) | 17 AT FRANKLIN COUNTY 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 16 PISGAH 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) | |
| 19 BROOKHAVEN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | JANUARY |
| 30 AT PISGAH 5 P.M. (G) 6:30 P.M. (B) | 5 HAZLEHURST 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| | 7 AT BOGUE CHITTO 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) |
| | 12 AT LOYD STAR 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| | 14 FRANKLIN COUNTY 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| | 19 AT HAZLEHURST 5 P.M. (G) 6:30 P.M. (B) |
| | 21 LOYD STAR 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| DECEMBER | |
| 1 WEST LINCOLN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | |
| 3 NORTH PIKE 5:30 P.M. (G) 7 P.M. (B) | |
| 7 AT BROOKHAVEN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | |

BASKETBALL COBRAS

| | |
|--|---|
| OCTOBER | JANUARY |
| 31 AT OAK GROVE TBA (G) | 5 BOGUE CHITTO 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| JAMBOREE 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 7 AMITE COUNTY 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| NOVEMBER | 12 AT WEST LINCOLN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 17 MCLAURIN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 15 AT LOYD STAR 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 19 AT WEST MARION 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 16 AT PORT GIBSON 2:30 P.M. |
| DECEMBER | 22 AT BOGUE CHITTO 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 1 SALEM 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 24 ENTERPRISE 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 5 AT ST. ANDREWS 4:30 P.M. (B) | 26 AT AMITE COUNTY 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 8 AT MCLAURIN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 29 WEST LINCOLN 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 11 RICHLAND 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | FEBRUARY |
| 12 AT PARKLANE TBA | 2 LOYD STAR 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 15 AT NORTH PIKE 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 5 AT ENTERPRISE 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) |
| 18 WEST MARION 6 P.M. (G) 7:30 P.M. (B) | 9-12 DISTRICT TOURNAMENT TBA |
| 19 AT CRYSTAL SPRINGS 3 P.M. (G) 4:30 P.M. (B) | |
| 21 WESSON SHOOTOUT TBA | |

*G - GIRLS * B - BOYS

Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi Association of Community Colleges (MACC), a group composed of the state's 15 community college presidents, has confirmed a recommendation from the colleges' athletic directors to postpone the start of the 2020 football season and shorten the season by one game due to concerns over COVID-19. The change will eliminate the first game of the season, originally set for Thursday, August 27 for all schools, and push the start date to Thursday, September 10.

The Co-Lin season will now kick off with a home contest against the Itawamba Indians in Wesson on September 10 at 6:30 p.m. The Wolves then will head into South Division play. The playoffs will still remain as a four-team system featuring the North and South Division winners and runners up.

Updates on the season will be provided as the MACC, MACJC conference office, and NJCAA work through the developing coronavirus and COVID-19 situation.

WHS fall sports. Wesson High School has full fall schedules for its football, soccer and basketball seasons. The WHS Cobras start their regular football season at Crystal Springs on August 21, with the homecoming game set against West Lincoln on October 2. Soccer season starts November 5, and the varsity hoopsters hit the court at the Oak Grove Jamboree on October 31. All, of course, is subject to change in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The PTA Royals, the Brookhaven BU coach pitch baseball team, qualified for and placed second in the 2020 Summer Games World Series at Ocean Springs, and finished third overall in the state. Two of the players are from Wesson. The team members were (bottom row left to right) Caden Williams, Cayden Falvey, Gavin Haley, Gage Wisinger, Wes Wooley; (middle row left to right) Tommy Smith, Mason Waldrop, Walker Breazeale of Wesson, Collin Watts of Wesson, Stone Wallace; (top row from left to right) and coaches Andy Maddox, Sawyer Smith, Ricky Breazeale and Ryan Williams.

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Isolation, quarantine and the law &
Tentative 2020-2021 WAC Calendar

MSDH urges immunizations

Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is urging parents to act now to schedule their child's age-appropriate immunizations before summer is over.

Mississippi state law requires children to be immunized against childhood diseases to enter public or private school, Head Start or daycare.

Current state entry immunization requirements encompass vaccinations that provide protection against:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP)
- Polio (IPV)
- Hepatitis B
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (chickenpox)

Mississippi instituted the whooping cough booster (Tdap) vaccination requirement in 2012 due to increasing concern about pertussis -- a highly contagious and life-threatening disease that adolescents can contract and easily transmit to younger children. Immunity to pertussis from early childhood

vaccinations weakens over time.

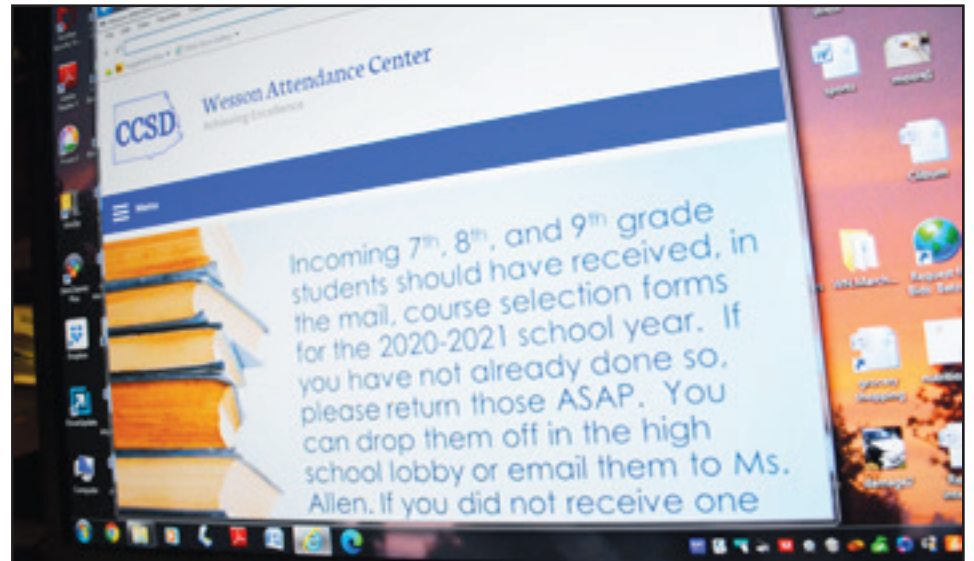
The Mississippi State Department of Health also suggests consideration of vaccinations against meningococcal disease and human papillomavirus (HPV), and a varicella (chickenpox) booster as well for teenagers. Doctors, other health care providers, and county health departments provide vaccinations and complete the Form #121 Certificate of Immunization Compliance to present to schools.

Make an appointment at your county health department clinic to bring your child in for their immunizations. A list of county health department locations along with times and days the clinics are open can be found at www.HealthyMS.com/locations.

Parents should bring the child's social security card and insurance card if available. Parents and children over 2 must wear a mask when entering the county health department clinic.

For more information on immunizations, visit www.HealthyMS.com/immunizations. Follow MSDH by e-mail and social media at HealthyMS.com/connect.

Website becomes key education tool



Wesson News

Special to Wesson News

The Wesson Attendance Center website, established as largely a convenience for WAC students, parents, teachers, staff and other constituents, has become an important educational tool with changes WAC has had to make to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the shutdown that started in the winter-spring semester this year, it became the venue for distance learning materials and computer-based platforms. It has also become the primary communications tool supporting WAC educational plans that are in constant flux with the changing situation around the pandemic.

This year, it will be the place to go to enroll in WAC.

During a normal school year, the user friendly website is updated weekly, tracking events, schedules, and topics of interest for WAC constituents and stakeholders.

Online visitors can access the website through the Copiah County School District website at www.copiah.ms. On the School District website, which provides information about the Copiah County School District board and its policies, visitors can select "Wesson Attendance Center" from a drop-

down menu to go to the component of the site dedicated to WAC.

In addition to content related to learning, the WAC homepage includes photos and stories, notices of upcoming events with access to the full WAC calendar, links to student handbooks and click-on menu items that go to detailed information about WAC in general, and specifics about its elementary and secondary schools, special interest topics geared to teachers, students and parents and news about athletic events. WAC staff and teachers are listed on the site with email addresses through which they can be reached. *Cobra Chatters* -- a weekly newsletter that covers what is happening at WAC and spotlights dates -- is also accessible on the homepage.

Through the WAC website, parents can download an Active Parent application form to access information related to their students -- attendance, schedules and grades -- and school news. WAC verifies completed forms and assigns a login name and password to use the Active Parent website -- <http://ms1500.activeparent.net>.

The WAC website is maintained and updated from the start of the school year in August through May, when it ends.

PTO is active WAC partner



Special to Wesson News

Parents can partner with Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) and help meet the needs of students through an active Parent Teachers Organization (PTO).

The first meeting of the group is scheduled tentatively for August 4, in connection with an open house, Meet the Teacher and seventh grade orientation events. It will look at plans for the 2020-21 school term.

Over the year, the PTO works with WAC in providing funding support and materials for school projects and to meet special needs in the classroom and for individual students. The annual Red Ribbon Festival in October is its big fundraiser. The PTO also sells school t-shirts and holds bake sales.

For information, call Tiffany Nicholson, the PTO president, through the school at 601-643-2295.

Resolution urges federal COVID-19 funds

Special to Wesson News

Wesson has joined other Mississippi municipalities in urging the U.S. Congress to support direct federal funding of them to help fight COVID-19 and protect their citizens from the effects of the novel coronavirus.

The town's Mayor and Aldermen approved a Mississippi Municipalities League resolution that declares "the United States Congress must act to ensure every municipality impacted

by this pandemic -- regardless of size -- has direct access to federal emergency funding."

The resolution noted that no state municipalities qualified for direct funding from the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and, in fact, only 36 of 19,000 American cities, towns and villages were eligible with populations over 500,000 -- "only .5 per cent of municipalities nationwide and

only 14 per cent of the country's total population."

CARES only allocates funds to the Mississippi state government and does not mandate state governments to share their portion of revenue received.

At the same time, the resolution pointed out "96 per cent of all municipalities nationwide report that budget shortfalls are the result of unanticipated (COVID-19) revenue related declines that will negatively impact the important services municipalities

provide to their citizens, including fire and police protection."

The resolution argues that "municipal leaders are best positioned to make emergency management decisions related to allocation of resources because they understand the needs of their citizens" and that "Mississippi's municipal leaders need the flexibility to use any federal funding that might be provided to not only address unbudgeted expenses, but also losses in revenue."

Tentative 2020-2021 WAC Calendar

August

- 3, 4, 5, 6 Pre-term teacher workdays focus on staff development.
- 3 Faculty & staff get id badges. 8 a.m.
Beta Club Initiation Ceremonies (TBD)
- 4 Meet the Teacher for elementary school teachers, Seventh Grade Orientation, Open House/PTO Meeting. 6 p.m.-7 p.m.
- 7 First school day for students
- 13 Meet the Cobras. Old gym. 6:30 p.m.
- 12 Deadline for returning signed handbook forms to office
Kindergarten universal screener starts (TBD)

September

- 1 Ring presentation to juniors
- 2, 3 Photography for school pictures
- 7 Labor Day holiday
- 8 Juniors order rigns
- 10 First Nine-Week Progress Reports

October

- 1 Makeup day for school photos
- 2 Homecoming
- 7, 8, 9 Nine Week Tests
Who's Who Pictures (TBD)
- 9 Presentation of graduation invitations to seniors
- 12, 13 Fall Break
- 15 Seniors order graduation invitations
- 16 Report cards
- 17 Elementary beauty pageant
- 24 High School beauty pageant
- 29 Red Ribbon Week Festival. 5 p.m.-8 p.m.

November

- College Fair (TBD)
- Book Fair (TBD)
- 12 Second Nine-Weeks Progress Reports
- 11 Veterans Day program
- 23-27 Thanksgiving Holidays

December

- Wesson Christmas Parade dismissal. 2:20 p.m. (TBD)
- 16, 17, 18 Nine-week tests
- 21 Christmas holidays begin

January

- 4 Second semester begins.
- 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.
- 19 Parents pick up report cards. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Student holiday.

February

- 11 Third Nine-Week progress reports
- 12 Valentine's Dance for grades 4-6. 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
African American History program (TBD)

March

- 3, 4, 5 Nine-week tests
- ACT Statewide (11th Grade only) (TBD)
- 8-12 Spring Break
- 15 School resumes
- 18 Spring pictures
- 19 Report cards

April

- 2, 5 Easter Holiday, Weather Day
- 9 First Priority & Beta Club Assembly
- 3 Prom (tentative)
- 15 Progress Reports for fourth nine-weeks
- 28 Vespers rehearsal at WAC

May

- 2 Vespers rehearsal at Co-Lin
- 3 Vespers. 7 p.m.
- Elementary Awards Program 2nd & 3rd grades 9 a.m.; 4th-6th grades 12:30 p.m. (TBD)
- Senior Awards Night (TBD)
- Junior High & High School Awards (TBD)
- 21 Graduation
- 24, 25, 26 Nine-week tests start & continue on May 20 & 21
- Kindergarten Awards Program (TBD)
- 27 Teacher Workday
- 31 Memorial Day

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West Nile Virus season begins

Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) reports the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) for 2020. The case was reported in Claiborne County.

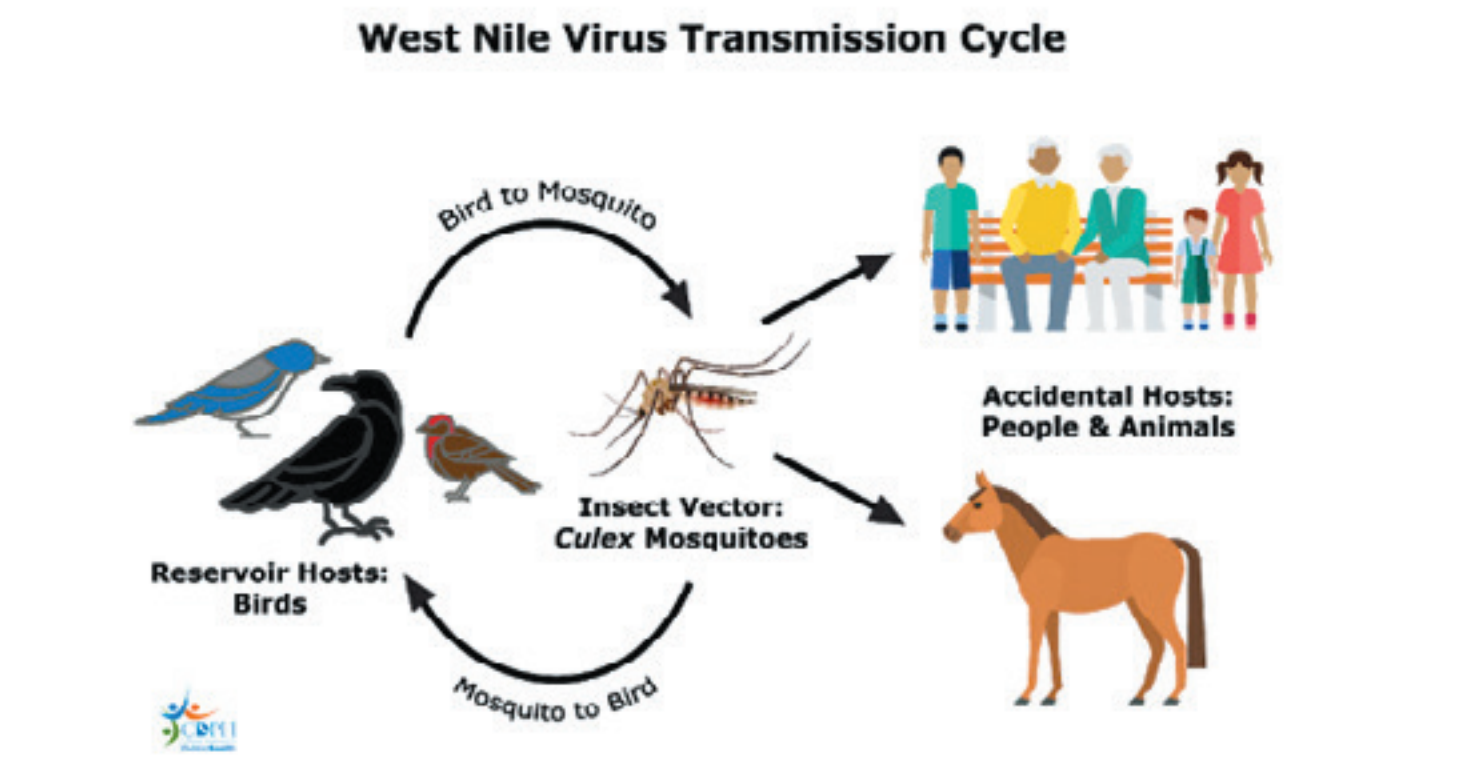
In 2019, Mississippi had a total of 15 WNV cases and no deaths.

“This is a reminder that even though we are in the midst of ongoing transmission of COVID-19, West Nile virus has not gone away,” says MSDH State Epidemiologist Dr. Paul Byers. “We are approaching the time of year when WNV is most active in Mississippi, so it’s important to protect yourself.”

Byers says while most infected people recover without any long-term problems, some develop a more severe infection that can lead to complications and even death, especially in those over 50 years of age.

Symptoms of WNV infection are often mild and may include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, a rash, muscle weakness or swollen lymph nodes. In a small number of cases, infection can result in encephalitis or meningitis, which can lead to paralysis, coma and possibly death.

The MSDH suggests the following precautions to protect yourself



Special to Wesson News

- and your family from the mosquito-borne illness:
- Use a mosquito repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient such as DEET while you are outdoors.

- Remove all sources of standing water around your home and yard to prevent mosquito breeding.
 - Wear loose, long clothing to cover the arms and legs when outdoors.
 - Avoid areas where mosquitoes are prevalent.
- For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, visit the MSDH website at [HealthyMS.com/westnile](https://www.healthymississippi.com/westnile).

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COVID-19 isn't going away

Special to Wesson News

In the midst of soaring new cases of COVID-19 throughout the state, the top health official in Mississippi says the state will mirror the near healthcare crisis that occurred in New York several weeks ago because too many residents are not taking precautions that can keep the novel coronavirus pandemic at bay lightly.

State health officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs warned the rising numbers of cases will continue if Mississippians don't take social distancing and mask-wearing seriously.

"It's not just the cases," he adds. "We have seen the highest number of hospitalized patients. I'm terrified we will overwhelm the health care system, the hospitals, the ICUs. Not in the fall, but imminently. If we're not careful, Mississippi is going to look like New York at the height of the pandemic there."

"We can stick our head in the sand and try to find excuses so that we don't have to modify our behaviors, but it doesn't change the truth. "The truth is, there's a lot of COVID-19 out there; it's killing people; it's going to kill a lot of people and it's going to stress out our healthcare system."

The good news continues to be no deaths reported along the coast, which

still totals 36 deaths from COVID-19 -- 3.5 percent of the statewide total.

Mississippi is not alone in seeing dramatic spikes in new cases of the coronavirus. States across the South from Florida to Texas are reporting a spike in cases. Governors in both Florida and Texas ordered all bars in those states to stop serving alcohol.

According to Johns Hopkins University, COVID-19 cases are trending upward in about half of the 50 states, and several have joined Mississippi in setting new daily high marks.

About six percent of the U.S. population has been infected with the virus.

Like public health officials elsewhere, Dobbs says Mississippi officials are open to imposing mask-wearing requirements to temper the virus. Tupelo Mayor Jason Shelton announced an intent to impose new safety orders, including masking requirements inside the all of city's businesses. Two Biloxi casinos -- Beau Rivage and Harrah's -- are requiring patrons to wear masks.

Dobbs scoffs at the idea the spike in coronavirus cases is simply the result of an increase in testing, as some have proposed. Total testing has actually gone down, he says. In Mississippi, it is approaching 300,000 -- about

ten percent of the state's population, with a positive rate of 8.8 percent.

While the 60-plus age group continues to be hardest hit by the virus in terms of deaths (84.5 percent) and hospitalizations (60.1 percent), the 18-29 age group has by far the most total number of cases at almost 6,000.

Mississippi's drastic increase comes weeks after state officials began taking measures to reopen the state. Restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and movie theaters are among the businesses currently open with limited seating.

Dobbs says he doesn't think the new cases were caused by the state opening back up too quickly. The real problem is a lack of concern for safety guidelines, the health officer said. Dobbs also says a statewide facial mask mandate, which has been proposed and passed in several other states, would be "untenable" in Mississippi if state and local leaders, as well as law enforcement officials, don't "live by example."

State Epidemiologist Paul Byers says many of the new cases stem from community transmission of the virus from younger, asymptomatic people to their older relatives after attending social gatherings. "There have been lots of parties where 300-plus people

are getting together and they're close and they're drinking," Byers points out. "We can't act surprised that we're seeing these types of increases in cases."

Dobbs says the recent increases "feel like a slap in the face after weeks of forward momentum." Officials were just considering starting to lift restriction on nursing home visitations, and now they need to start discussing implementing more restrictions, Dobbs notes.

"This is screwing it up," he says. "It is so selfish for people to be out doing stuff, perpetuating this pandemic for nothing more than the crawfish boil."

For now, the best thing people can do to protect themselves and others is to avoid large groups, wear masks and be cautious, Byers says. "We need to start with a vengeance," he says. "Once things start going, it's like trying to turn around the Titanic."

Governor Tate Reeves has taken to Twitter to back up Dobbs, and warn people that COVID-19 is not gone just because they "give up." "Please listen," Reeves pleads. "We've been beating this drum for months. Dr. Dobbs is graphic in his warnings to us about where this heads. If people just follow current orders and aren't reckless, we can beat this."



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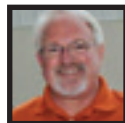
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The difference between isolation & quarantine - and the law

By Guest Columnist Nathan Gregory

Knowing the difference between quarantining and isolating is critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

In mid-June, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) reported the COVID-19 case total exceeded 20,000, with more than 900 deaths. Rising along with those numbers is the seven-day average of cases by date when the patients became sick. MSDH data indicated an average of around 300 cases per day through the first half of June compared to approximately 250 daily at the beginning of May.

Mississippi State University Extension health specialist David Buys says the most important message to take from any data maps and charts is to continue practicing social distancing as much as possible, while following all health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Buys says isolation is required for those who test positive for COVID-19 and are known to be contagious, while quarantine is recommended for those who have possibly been exposed to the virus.

"Isolation is pretty cut-and-dried," he explains. "It means to separate from people who are not sick according to the orders of a health care provider or the local public health authority. A quarantine separates people who were exposed to a contagious disease from others during the time when they could become sick from that exposure. It is important for those in quarantine to monitor for symptoms and contact their health care provider if they develop symptoms."

People who discover they have been exposed to the novel coronavirus should contact their health care provider as soon as possible after exposure. Those who know they have the virus and are not isolating themselves at home are actually breaking state law in addition to putting their communities at risk.

"Some folks in quarantine are given stricter guidance than others, depending on the nature of their condition and the contact they have with others as well as their job," Buys adds. "Ideally, those who are in quarantine should limit their activity as much as pos-

sible and strictly follow what they are told by their health care provider or MSDH."

Buys notes that sometimes MSDH is delayed in issuing isolation orders until a few days after a patient is diagnosed by a local health care professional. This also delays contact tracing.

"It is essential to follow the guidance of your local provider, even if you have not heard from MSDH with official orders to isolate or quarantine," he says.

The CDC advises the use of face coverings to slow the spread of the disease, especially in high-traffic indoor areas such as grocery stores and restaurants. But those who have tested positive are urged not to leave their homes for two weeks after the onset of symptoms, even if wearing face coverings.

"Our state health officer, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, is authorized under state code to issue orders which are legally binding ordinances that protect the public's health or safety," Buys says. "They may be general, such as we've seen with orders for certain health professions to limit services during this COVID-19 pandemic; and they may be issued to individuals who have tested positive for a communicable disease like COVID-19. In any case, these are enforceable by law."

Will Evans, head of the MSU Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, says anyone living with a person who has tested positive must wear a face covering at home to avoid contracting the coronavirus.

While caring for someone with the coronavirus, Evans recommends using the same safety practices as required for safe food preparation, including cleaning kitchen and bathroom surfaces with an approved disinfecting wipe after each use by anyone in the family.

"Everyone should wash hands before and after contacting any foods, containers and surfaces," he said. "Use hand sanitizer liberally and isolate in another room where possible."

For more COVID-19 information and prevention tips, visit <http://extension.msstate.edu/food-and-health/coronavirus>.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Nathan Gregory writes for the Mississippi State University Extension Service



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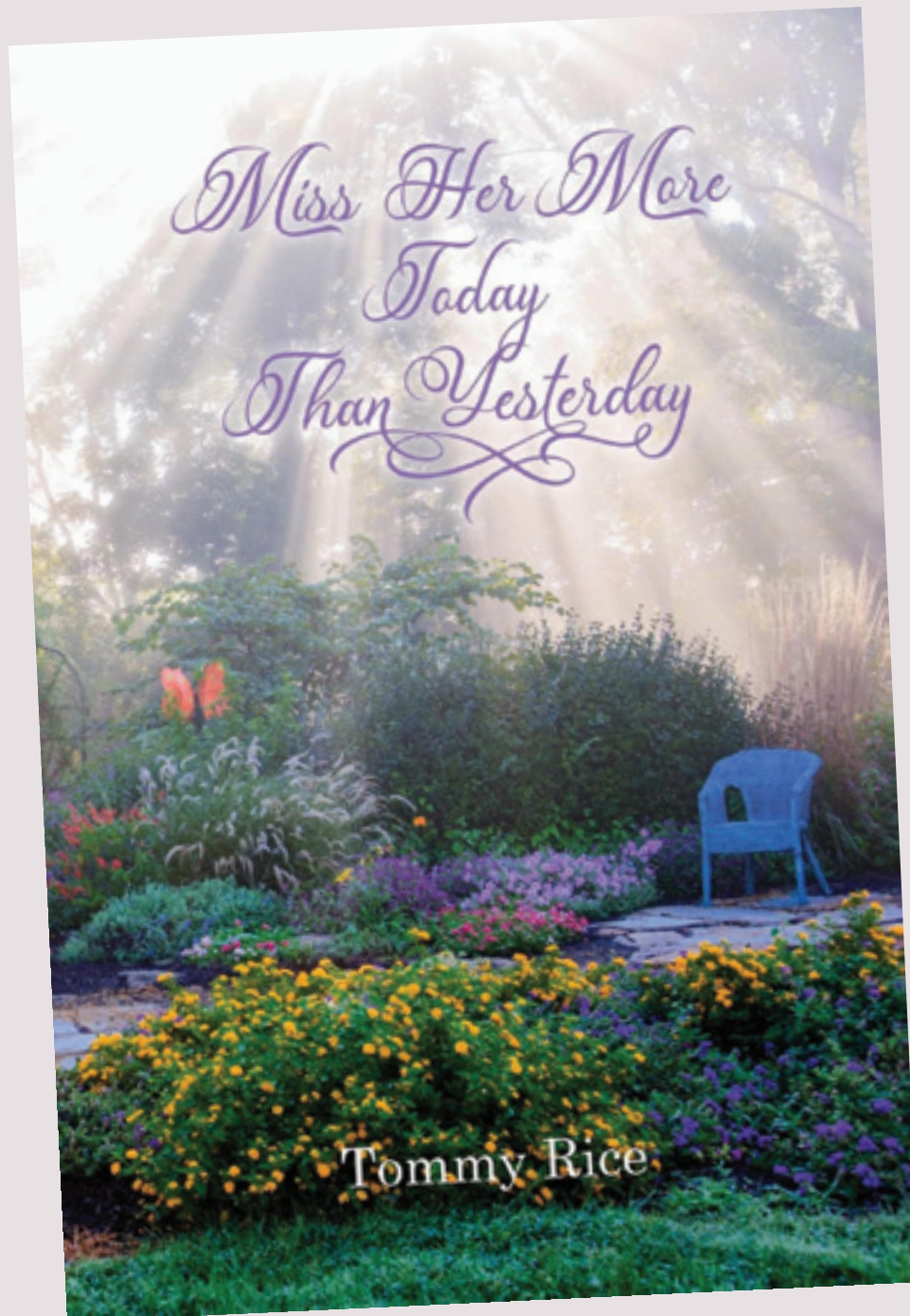
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"I heartily recommend my friend Tommy Rice's new book "Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday". Tommy's work is an open, honest, compassionate and at times raw look at a loved one's handling of a spouse's terminal illness. Tommy writes unapologetically from a Christian point of view. It is a testimony of how one couple of faith handled a devastating personal crisis. In 47 years of pastoral ministry I have witnessed many who have walked by faith "in the valley of death". "Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday" is a story of one couple's faith intersecting a terminal illness. Tommy Rice tells that story in literary form."

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A successful entrepreneur for many years, Tommy Rice has flourished in the car business with Tommy Rice Motors in Byram, Mississippi, and also as a real estate broker in Byram (Tommy L. Rice, Real Estate LLC). An accomplished songwriter, he has ties to the music scene in Nashville that go back several decades. An Alabama native, he's a lifelong Crimson Tide fan. Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday is his first book.

Tomatoes focus of grower education

By Guest Columnist Bonnie Coblentz

Knowing that many Mississippians share a love for home-grown tomatoes, two Mississippi State University Extension Service agents designed programs just for them.

Crayton Coleman, Extension agent in Noxubee County, has 45 members in a 4-H Virtual Garden Club this summer. 4-H is the Extension development program for young people ages 5 to 18 that creates supportive environments for culturally diverse young people and adults to reach their fullest potential.

"In our virtual garden club, members are growing their very own 4-H container garden," Coleman says. "Our 4-H'ers planted two varieties of tomatoes, along with squash or cucumber and okra from seed in their 4-H Container Garden."

The project's goal was to help Noxubee County 4-H'ers learn where their food comes from by growing it themselves. Those who signed up for the project received a large container, soil, plants, fertilizer and seed. Coleman provided step-by-step instructions to guide them through the process of growing their own garden.

This is a good project for families to spend time socializing and working together at home as a while keeping safe from COVID-19 -- an answer for parents searching for creative and productive activities for their children to get involved in, Coleman says. "Research has shown that children are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables if they grow the produce themselves," he adds.

To track progress, 4-H'ers send photos of their growing plants to the Noxubee County Extension office, and these are posted on the office's Facebook page. Coleman also responds to questions

and gives growing and harvest tips to the young gardeners.

"We also have a little friendly competition going on to see who can grow the biggest tomato," Coleman says. "This has been a very rewarding project for our 4-H'ers and their families during these challenging times."

By late June, the local farmers market manager saw the 4-H'ers' photos online and offered to buy their produce.

"I thought this would be a great way for them to learn about the entrepreneurial part of being a farmer," Coleman says.

Jim McAdory, Extension agent in Winston County, is also hosting a biggest tomato contest in cooperation with a local farm supply store.

"Since tomatoes are so popular, it will generate some interest in learning better growing practices of tomatoes and other vegetables," McAdory explains. "The Extension office is an excellent source of information, and this contest will direct attention to the services we offer."

McAdory also uses social media to highlight his own container garden, giving updates and educational tips on what to do at home and how to improve home gardens.

"By using the humble tomato, my hope is to develop lasting relationships with county gardeners and add to the Extension family of clients," he says. "Tomatoes make a good training tool because everybody and their momma grows them and are passionate about them. If you can teach someone about growing tomatoes, you can teach them about everything gardening."

For more information on growing tomatoes and other garden vegetables, visit <http://extension.msstate.edu/publications> and search for the desired plant.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bonnie Coblentz is a writer for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.



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