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Wesson News
PO Box 1028
Wesson, MS 39191

Volume 6, Number 1

“Good News You Can Use”

January 9, 2018

Snowfall knocks out power, but fun is had

Wesson News

A winter storm that hit further south than expected with a center slightly stronger than anticipated turned the Wesson area into a picturesque white snowy wonderland and knocked out electrical power of thousands of residents for several days early last month.

Winter Storm Benji blanketed the area with four to seven inches of heavy, moisture-laden snow that downed tree limbs and snapped power lines, interrupting electrical service, while providing a rare opportunity for children, youth and even adults to build snowmen, ride make-shift sleds and frolic in the white stuff, with schools closed and meetings cancelled throughout the area.

While the experts weren't sure whether or not the snowfall set records for the area, residents, who have been in the area throughout their lives, didn't hesitate to call the storm "historic." "I



Wesson News

have never seen snow accumulation like this," said Carl Craig, owner and chef at Magnolia Blues Barbeque in Brookhaven. "We have had dustings, of course, but nothing like this." Kim Coley of Loyd Star agreed that over the forty years she has lived in the area nothing compared to the snowfall.

Although meteorologist Anna Wolverton wasn't sure about historic accumulations locally after searching records, she said a trained weather spotter for the National Weather Service in Jackson reported six inches on Highway 51 north of Brookhaven. She also noted that Meadville had a one-day high of 3.8 inches on February 12, 2010, and Crystal Springs reported a one-day high of 11 inches on January 28, 1904.

For sure, the snow storm was an unexpected surprise, Wolverton conceded. "It's a little early," she said. "The majority of our snowfalls happen in January and February, but December

Cont. on page 11

Six Christmas decorators recognized

Wesson News

Wesson News and the Wesson Garden Club recognized four area residents and two businesses for outdoor decorating that enhanced the spirit of the Christmas season around and about town:

Businesses. Milltown Salon and Spa, **first place**; Laney's Steakhouse, **second place**.

Residences within the city limits. Richard and Robin Furr, **first place**; Dawn and Clinton Dunn, 1050 Oak Street, **second place**.

Residences outside the city limits. Scarlett and Todd Mooney, 1001 Dixie



Special to Wesson News

Furr home - first place residential in city limits.



Special to Wesson News

Mooney home - first place residential outside city limits.

Garden Road, **first place**; Rev. and Mrs. Hubert Greer, 134 Beauregard Road, **second place**.

The recognition of the residential and business decorators honor efforts to help spark and sustain the Christmas spirit through creative and inspirational seasonal displays throughout the Wesson area and encourage expanding efforts in future years, *Wesson News* editor Bob Arnold said. "Every year, Wesson businesses and residents turn their town into a Southern Christmas postcard-like setting with special seasonal decor and lighting displays," he said.

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Community Calendar

January weather forecast: *The Old Farmer's Almanac* calls for an average of temperature of 46 degrees F (one degree above average) with precipitation of five inches (one inch below average). January 15-18: Sunny, mild. January 19-23: T-storms, then sunny, cold. January 24-31: Rainy periods, mild.

JANUARY 9

Diabetes support group. Meets weekly on Tuesdays. Education Annex at King's Daughters Medical Center, Brookhaven. 1:30 p.m. For information, call Natalie Ybarra at 601-835-9489.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and VFW Auxiliary Post 2618 meet. \$5 for meal. VFW Hall on Industrial Park Road, Brookhaven. 5:30 p.m.

JANUARY 10

WorkKeys Assessment examination for Career Readiness Certificate. Thames Center on Co-Lin campus. 8:45 a.m.-12 noon. Also January 24 & February 7. Participants must register in advance.

Keep Copiah County Beautiful meets. USDA Service Center (27169 Highway 28, Suite A, Hazlehurst). 9 a.m.

Viewings by appointment of Greg Cartmell art show on Wednesdays through February 1. Enochs Art Gallery at Mississippi School for the Arts in downtown Brookhaven. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 601-823-1300. Cartmell showcases his works at exhibition throughout the country. For information, visit www.gregcartmell.com.

JANUARY 11

American Legion John Edwards Post 12 meets. All members, veterans and their spouses are welcome. 4 p.m. Jimmy Furlow Senior Citizens Center. For information, call 601-835-8173.

Widows Support Group meets. The group supports widows, who are walking through the grief process, with programs on pertinent issues related to their situation. Brookhaven. 5 p.m. For further information, contact Becky Vaughn Furlow at bvaughnfurlow@gmail.com or 601-540-4308.

JANUARY 12

The Mississippi Symphony Orchestra presents Mozart by Candlelight. Brookhaven Little Theatre, downtown Brookhaven. 7:30 p.m. For information, call 601-990-2243. Purchase tickets for \$30 online at www.brookhavenlittletheater.com.

JANUARY 15

Beginner clogging classes for persons of all ages beyond five-years-old are held every Monday night. A small fee is charged each month. Brookhaven Recreation Department on Highway 51. Call 601-833-3791.

JANUARY 16

Copiah County Master Gardeners monthly meeting. Mississippi State University Extension Office at Gallman. 6 p.m.

American Legion Post #79 meets. American Legion Lodge on Main Street, Wesson. 6:30 p.m. For information, call 601-563-5438.

JANUARY 18

Brookhaven Regional Arts Guild (BRAG) reception for Vicki Land and her daughter Brandy Johnson, whose works are being displayed by BRAG through January at Lincoln County Public Library. Public Library, downtown Brookhaven. 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m. Monthly BRAG meeting follows.

JANUARY 19

Annual party & membership meeting of Friends of the Brookhaven-Lincoln County Library. Home of Carole Bennett at 981 South Church Street, Brookhaven. 6 p.m.

JANUARY 22

Blood drive every second and fourth Monday. King's Daughters Medical Center Hospital Annex. 1 p.m.-6 p.m. Call 800-817-7449 for information.

JANUARY 23

Institute for Learning in Retirement spring semester social. ILR will announce its spring semester workshops, seminars, luncheons and travel. Thames Center. 2 p.m.

Annual Wesson Chamber of Commerce Banquet. Wesson Old School Community Center. 6:30 p.m.

JANUARY 25

Wesson Lions Club meets. Co-Lin Student Cafeteria Conference Room 6:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 6

Wesson Board of Aldermen meet. City Hall. 6 p.m.

CONTINUING

Alcoholics Anonymous meets at convenient times seven days of every week. First United Methodist Church, 215 West Cherokee Street, Brookhaven. Open meetings are Mondays at noon and Tuesdays (Big Book Study), Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. Closed meetings are Wednesdays and Fridays (Big Book Study) at noon and Thursdays and Sundays at 7:30 p.m.

Brookhaven Regional Arts Guild members work on projects every Thursday of the month from 9 a.m.-12 noon at the Brookhaven-Lincoln County Public Library in the Vernon Room when it is available.

Brookhaven 55 South Flea Market is open on Saturdays and Sundays next to the Lincoln County Civic Center. Ten per cent of the profits each weekend are donated to a local charity. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Email Community Calendar items to bobarnold@wessonnews.com.

Police Blotter

Special to Wesson News

During December, Wesson Police Department activity also encompassed:

Response to:

- Four vehicular accidents
- One counterfeit money
- Two general complaint
- One petty larceny
- One vandalism
- One domestic disturbance
- Three juvenile incidents
- One house fire

Citations & arrests:

- Four speeding violations
- Two driving without a license
- One shoplifting
- One improper equipment
- Three possession of a controlled substance in a motor vehicle
- Three forgeries
- One driving with no proof of liability insurance
- One noise ordinance violation
- One aggravated assault & simple domestic violence

On school days, the Wesson Police Department facilitates traffic flow at Wesson Attendance Center with officers on duty between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

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BARL implements "God's plan for animals"

Wesson News

"God has a plan for animals and we help implement the plan," says Gail Garbo in explaining the work of Brookhaven Animal Rescue League (BARL).

Garbo and Beth Adcock, from BARL, discussed the organization, its services and assistance needs at an Institute for Learning in Retirement seminar. Founded in 1981 as a no-kill animal welfare group for the care, treatment and well-being of animals in the Brookhaven area, it boards fifty to sixty dogs and fifteen to twenty cats awaiting adoption at any one time. Over its history, BARL has placed more than nine hundred animals in homes, including 600 adopted locally and some 300 transported to facilities in northern states, where pets available for adoption are in relatively short supply.

"We're about helping animals who need homes, not about getting rid of damaged goods," Adcock said.

Until 2006, when BARL moved into its present facility, it functioned solely with volunteers, but now has a part-time staff person to handle cleaning tasks particularly, as the organization has expanded its scope of operations to encompass Franklin and Copiah Counties as well as Lincoln County.

"Our mission is to humanely care for shelter animals, while contributing to community activities that reduce pet over-population, encouraging responsible pet ownership, protecting public health and safety, and promoting the human-animal bond," Adcock said.

BARL's biggest need, of course, is people to adopt dogs and cats, Garbo and Adcock agree. Its Adoption Center, which is located off Industrial Park Road, next to Delphi, behind Keystone Ballpark, in Brookhaven is open Tuesday thru Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., just for visiting the animals, as well applying for an adoption. BARL also has cats at PetSense in Brookhaven. Those wishing to adopt a dog or cat must be at least 21 years old, complete an application, provide valid photo identification and pay an adoption fee -- \$85 for dogs and \$75 for cats, which covers spaying or neutering, first vaccinations and all others needed until adoption, de-worming as needed



Wesson News

Beth Adcock and Gail Garbo talk about BARL.

until adoption, micro-chipping dogs, a complimentary adoption starter package and complimentary collar for dogs. All dogs and cats available for adoption at BARL have tested negative for disease. Dogs are on heart worm and flea preventative medication.

Towards making their animals adoptable and sociable, BARL emphasizes mental health enrichment and stimulation for animals for the dogs and cats, Adcock said. "For cats, we have a colony room, where they can socialize, and a sun porch,"

she explained. "For dogs, there is a playground with toys and swimming pools. Dogs spend four to five hours outside each day in their play yards. They splash in the kiddie pools in the summer and have fun on their playground equipment all year long. They have a sand box, tunnel, teeter totter, and all sorts of risers to climb on. In short, they are spoiled."

Comfort -- big dog houses, blankets -- is also a priority at BARL for the animals. "We try to make it a happy place," Adcock summarized. "When in their kennels, the dogs get toys,

chew bones and Kongs, sometimes filled with peanut butter. Beds are provided for all the dogs."

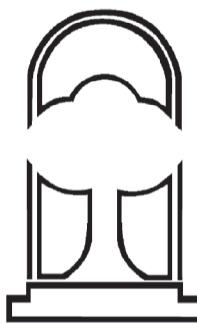
Attention to people -- particularly to children -- is also an important BARL service, Adcock pointed out. A unique feature of its public education program is *KindNews*, a newsletter distributed to 2,200 second and third graders in area schools. BARL also sells books to the public. "Our educational focus is on animal care and safety around animals," Adcock said.

Volunteers remain the key to BARL's work, Adcock added. They transport animals to adoption events or to other locations in the state for adoption, show off the animals at adoption events, sell merchandise at adoption events and festivals, email animal photos to newspapers to publicize adoptable pets, do the clerical work -- handling the paperwork involved in running a shelter, help at fund-raisers, and sell sponsorships for fund-raisers. They do specialized kennel cleaning and general cleaning, feed the animals, play with them and take care of their laundry needs -- bedding, towels and toys.

Garbo emphasized the need for fostering animals to become adoptable -- a task she has assumed as a volunteer. "Some animals need extra love and attention -- to heal for medical reasons, for example, or because they are shy and need help getting used to people," she explained. "All volunteers realize benefits and important differences in their lives because of their work, but they are particularly special for those of us who offer temporary foster shelter to animals."

BARL relies on direct donations from people and organizations and special fundraising efforts to meet its financial needs, Adcock explained. Its big fundraising event is an annual Celebrity Dinner and Auction at the Lincoln County Civic Center during the fall. It also sells memberships to individuals, families and businesses. It spends ninety percent of the funds its receives on animal care.

For information about BARL, its volunteer needs and to donate funds, contact it via telephone (601-757-4367), email (info@barl.net) or regular mail (P.O. Box 3477, Brookhaven, MS 39603).



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Jeffrey Motley - a hard worker who likes travel

By Bob Arnold

You would never know it, but Jeffrey Motley says he doesn't like to work.

Motley, in fact, is known in Wesson as one of its hardest workers, with three jobs. Since 1996, he has been building his own tax and credit repair business (Motley Tax Service), and his 250 clients, whom he serves year-round, know him as "Wesson's tax man." Since 1999, he has worked at Shop 'N Wash, where he is now the night cashier four evenings a week from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. In 2004, he started working a five-day 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift as an administrator for the State Department of Health Department in Jackson.

"My goal is to quit working by the time I reach age 44 and begin traveling the world," Motley explains.

A life-long resident of Beauregard, Motley, the son of James and Mary Motley, graduated from Wesson High School in 1996 and attended Co-Lin from 1996-98, where he studied computer technology. He trained with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service to become an Electronic Return Originator (ERO) and continues to update his training annually.

Motley is a member of the St. Peter Rock Baptist Church in Beauregard and spends time with his family.

What are your hobbies?

I don't have a lot of time, but I enjoy hunting and fishing. I also follow sports -- the Cowboys and Saints, particularly, in football. I played basketball and football as a kid. I



Wesson News

want to retire early in life and travel throughout the country and around the world. Every year, I travel between New Orleans and Lansing, Michigan, where I have family. I like spending time on Bourbon Street and very much enjoyed a trip to Washington, DC, where I toured the White House grounds, several years ago.

Are you a reader?

I keep up with subjects that relate to my work, particularly finance and business.

Favorite movies?

I like everything Tyler Perry has done -- the sassy grandma Madea in *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *Madea's Family Reunion* and *Madea Goes to Jail*. His movies use broad humor, and his string of box office hits has included *Why Did I Get Married*, *Meet the Browns* and *I Can Do Bad All By Myself*. He also publishes books, releases CDs and DVDs, and in 2006 launched a sitcom on cable television -- *Tyler Perry's House of Payne*.

Would you change anything about your life?

I probably work too much.

Do you have any wishes you would ask the good fairy to grant you?

That I have enough money to get up when I want to get up and do what I want to do.

Would you change the world in any way?

I would want everyone to get along as one. I hate gossip and the drama people create in their lives.

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Upcoming sporting events

JANUARY 9

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play at Seminary. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Wesson High School Junior Varsity girls and Varsity boys and girls soccer Cobras play Franklin County. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 11

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 12

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Columbia. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Wesson High School Varsity boys and girls soccer Cobras play at Raymon. 5:30 & 7 p.m.

JANUARY 13

Wesson High School Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Hazlehurst. 2 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.

JANUARY 15

Wesson High School Varsity boys and girls soccer Cobras play West Lincoln. 5:30 p.m. & 7 p.m.

JANUARY 16

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at Hinds Community College. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play at West Marion. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 18

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play East Central Community College. 6 p.m. & 8 p.m.

JANUARY 19

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play at Seminary. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 22

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at Southwest Mississippi Community College. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 23

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Tylertown. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 25

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play

Meridian Community College. 6 p.m. & 8 p.m.

Wesson Lions Club meets. Co-Lin Student Cafeteria Conference Room 6:30 p.m.

JANUARY 26

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Seminary. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Wesson High School Junior Varsity boys and Varsity boys and girls soccer Cobras play at Loyd Star. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 29

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at Pearl River. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 30

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity girls and boys basketball Cobras play Columbia. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 1

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at Jones Country Junior College. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Jefferson Davis County. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 5

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. 6 p.m. & 8 p.m.

FEBRUARY 6

Wesson High School Junior Varsity and Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play at West Marion. 5 p.m., 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 8

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play Hinds Community College. 6 p.m. & 8 p.m.

FEBRUARY 9

Wesson High School Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play Lawrence Couty. 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 12

Co-Lin men and lady basketball wolves play at East Central Community College. 5:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 13, 15 & 16

Wesson High School Varsity boys and girls basketball Cobras play in District Tournament at Seminary.

Graduates, All-American & tickets

Special to Wesson News

Student athletes graduate. Last month, Co-Lin continued its tradition of leadership in the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC) of graduating football players -- 22 on a roster of 29 sophomores. Student-athletes who graduate early have an enormous advantage when moving on to a four-year program in all aspects of the game, with the ability to practice in the spring. "The big thing we talk about to our guys is making yourself marketable," said Co-Lin head coach Glenn Davis. "Graduating

in December makes our players extremely valuable to these programs that are recruiting our players." Co-Lin has built an atmosphere of success around student-athletes in providing opportunities on the field and in the classroom. "Our success in graduating our student-athletes really shows the support the faculty gives us, and how they always go the extra mile," said Davis. "This would not be possible without them and the support of our administration." Several of Co-Lin's December graduates have signed with four-year schools to continue their football careers.

All-American selection. Co-Lin griddier Elbert Watson is a 2017 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) 2017 Football All-American Honorable Mention selection. Watson, a 6'6, 315-pound offensive lineman from Tunica, Mississippi, was a stand-out tackle for the Wolves this past season. The national honor is Watson's fourth post-season award, including Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC) First Team All-State, MACJC Offensive Lineman Most Valuable Player, and NJCAA All-Region 23.

Baseball tickets.

Season tickets are now available for the Co-Lin 2018 baseball season. The tickets will be valid for 26 regular season home games and cost \$40 -- a \$25 savings on tickets purchased separately for home dates. Season ticket holders will also receive a complimentary 2018 baseball media guide. Season tickets can be ordered from the Co-Lin athletic department and will be available for purchase at the gate during the initial Wolves home games. All proceeds from the sales will benefit the Co-Lin baseball program.

SPORTS SHORTS

Scoreboard

December 12 - January 9

WHS COBRAS

Boys Basketball

Record: 8-4. Recent wins: Loyd Star. 66-49. West Lincoln. 52-47. Recent losses: Crystal Springs. 80-44. Bogue Chitto. 67-62. Hazlehurst. 87-83.

Girls Basketball

Record: 1-8. Recent losses: West Lincoln. 62-27. Loyd Star. 46-36. Crystal Springs. 40-32.

Boys Soccer

Record: 4-8-1. Recent wins: West Lincoln. 8-0. Recent losses: Franklin County. 2-1.

Girls Soccer

Record: 11-4. Recent wins: Brookhaven. 7-0. North Pike. 1-0. Morton 13-2. Recent losses: Franklin County. 3-0.

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Ag growth, gift, search, honor roll, grads & readers

Special to Wesson News

Agriculture grows. Agriculture remains a \$7 billion industry in Mississippi, with poultry and forestry as the top two commodity segments followed by soybeans and cotton. Poultry values increased 13 percent to \$2.8 billion; and soybeans were up to \$1.1 billion and \$562 million respectively. Forestry product values declined eight percent to \$1.4 billion. Other crops with big declines, largely due to reduced acreage for growing, were corn, down 25 percent to \$337 million; hay, down nine percent to \$116 million; rice down 22 percent to \$105 million; and grain sorghum down 62 percent to \$1.3 million. Mississippi continues to be the national leader in production of catfish, which ranks number seven among the agricultural commodities in the state, valued at almost \$181 million, down almost 16 percent. Overall, livestock values are

NEWS NUGGETS

expected to increase about 4 percent, with beef cattle down four percent to \$285 million and hogs up 31 percent to \$117 million. Milk value is 5 percent higher at \$26 million. The value of sweet potatoes, the state's tenth largest agricultural commodity, increased slightly to \$123 million. Specialty crops, number 11, also had a slight increase to a value of \$107 million. Peanuts fell to thirteenth place, with a value of \$33 million. With an estimated value of almost \$13 million, wheat finished in fifteenth place, just ahead of grain sorghum.

Parade generates gifts. Participants in the Wesson Christmas parade this year helped the town's Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) make Christmas a little brighter for a financially-strapped family that could not afford

gifts. To participate in the parade, which it sponsors, WVFD asked individuals and groups to donate an unwrapped toy for a child. The local firefighters adopted a needy family for the holidays and provided toys for the children.

Search for president. Co-Lin will choose its next president from among existing employees. The college's Board of Trustees last month approved the recommendation of its executive committee to limit its search to replace retiring Co-Lin President Dr. Ronnie Nettles to someone already on staff. In other actions, the board announced appointments of Amanda Hood, who previously served as a mathematics instructor on the Co-Lin Natchez campus, as Director of eLearning on the Wesson campus, and Shirley Riggs as adult education instructor on the Natchez campus.

Honor roll. Co-Lin named 622 students to its fall semester President's List, Vice President's List and Honors List. The President's List, requiring a 4.0 grade point average, included nineteen full-time students from Wesson: Harmoni Ashley, Morgan Boone, Lacy Burns, Erika Gemelli, Sabria Green, Zeb Hughes, Daniel Lyle, Carmen Manicea, Judith McManus, Raul Mendez, Preston Middleton, Amelia Moreland, Mary Munn, Julie Smith, Kaitlyn Smith, Karla Szalach, Kaylee Tarver, Lacie Tarver and Mikayla Warren.

Graduates. Co-Lin graduated 228 students, including sixteen from Wesson, at its Fall 2017 commencement exercises. The Wesson graduates were Walter Bell, Jr., Brittany Burgess, Justin Busby, Ashton Farr, Elizender Hernandez, LaDarrius Kettley, Julius McCarroll, Jr., Candace McKinley, Susan Moore, Cameron Newell, Rusti Rippy, Garet Risher, Elizabeth Smith, Enrique Smith and Kaitlyn Smith.

Reading Fair winners. More than thirty students placed in local Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Reading Fair competition at Wesson Attendance Center (WAC). Individuals and teams competed in

class-appropriate K-12 divisions based on reading fiction or non-fiction books. The competitors submitted a written analysis of the books they read, which are guided by questions, along with a creative visual display that highlighted their reading. At WAC, Mrs. Jennie's kindergarten class received a first place award and winners in eight other class/age divisions were: Division B. Brody Ponder (first place), Chastin Wilson (second place) and Emory Britt (third place). Division D. Joe Brown (first place). Division E. O'Mari Johnson (first place), Brett King (second place) and Marlee Moore (third place). Division F. Ethan Laird (first place), Maedyn Ross (second place) and Gabe Selman (third place). Division H. Demry Oliver (first place), Manuel Miller (second place) and Sam Love (third place). Division I. Jesse Bowlin (first place), Noah Brister (second place) and JoVontae May (third place). Division L. Cotton Westbrook and Hunter Meredith (first place), Maci Allen and Laney Kate Earls (second place) and Amber Nicole Schillings, Tryaiesah Clay and Jolie Robinson (third place). Division M. Aiden Hargrove, Blake Westbrook

and Brandon Ebarb (first place); Stevie Martin and Tony Sanders (second place) and Emilie and Addison Hart (third place).

Wesson Town tree



Wesson News

More than a hundred town residents enjoyed Christmas goodies and looked on as Wesson officials lit the town Christmas tree in the municipal park.

Co-Lin crowns most beautiful



Special to Wesson News

Taylor Berch of Brookhaven (center) was crowned Co-Lin's 2017 Most Beautiful at its ninety-third annual Trillium Beauty Pageant held on the college's Wesson campus. Selected as Beauties (from left to right) were Breanna Boyles of Brookhaven, Lacie Tarver of Wesson, Chloe King of Roxie, and Peyton White of Brookhaven.

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Special to Wesson News

Leaders of Socks for Heroes and members of Strong Hope Baptist Church delivered Christmas gifts to veterans at Covington Ridge Retirement Home at Collins, Mississippi.

Wesson News

Wesson-based Socks for Heroes of Mississippi and Strong Hope Baptist Church teamed up to deliver Christmas gifts to veterans in Collins, Mississippi, last month.

The groups delivered gifts to veterans at the VA home and at Covington Ridge Retirement Home.

The church has collected 600 blankets for Socks for Heroes' deliveries over the past two years.

"Our residents were completely surprised," said Ridge Marketing Director Jessica Breazeale. "They were actually mid-lunch when the groups walked into the dining hall with gifts. I had secretly been coordinating with Socks for Heroes, but wanted our resident vets to have a Christmas surprise."

Gift bags included a blanket, several pairs of socks, a deck of cards,

puzzles, a notepad, hat and more.

At Ridge, six vets -- A.C. Horn, Ray Lindsey, Greg Breland, James Burns, Harold Sims -- and Pam Sumrall, Director of Nursing, received the gifts.

The group delivered 150 gifts to the vets at the VA home in Collins just prior to Ridge deliveries.

"Very nice staff at the Ridge," said Socks for Heroes Mississippi Coordinator Cathy Stroud. "We enjoyed our visit there very much. We will include them every year now in Christmas-giving visits. One of the ladies with us was 94-years-old and said she enjoyed this visit for her birthday," said Stroud.

Email socksforheroes@yahoo.com for more information on Socks for Heroes. Call 601-325-1725 for more information on residency at Covington Ridge Retirement Home.

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Restoration continues in a “throw-away” world

By Guest Columnist Shaw Furlow

Recently, I've been giving a lot of thought to our “throw-away” world. To modernize and make life easier, we did away with the writing pen, which you had to dip into the ink, and created the throw-away ball point pen. Paper towels have replaced cloth. Plastic bottles have replaced glass. And do I need to mention diapers? All these innovations have indeed made our lives more comfortable.



Special to Wesson News

I watched the implosion of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. The building was twenty-five years old, obsolete by today's stadium standards and needed to be taken down for the bigger and better \$1.5 billion Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Is a multi-million dollar building that was obsolete at twenty five years old a statement on today's craftsmen or on our growing need for the newest and greatest?

Yet in our throw-away world, restoration still has its place and is appreciated, as Wesson resident Lester Powell helped me understand recently.

Powell is involved in restoring Magnolia Hall in Natchez, which was built in 1858. Powell described in great detail how the restoration crew is replacing the old wooden pegs that hold the windows together with new hand-carved pegs that match the originals. Where the originals are still solid, they are re-using them. Pegs from 1858!

While architecture is not my field of expertise, I know what I like and it seems to me restore rather than raze is a good plan.

Now, the house in which I live was built in 1936. The previous owners did upgrades and built a very cool addition. Yet in the older part of the house, you can remove a brick and find another behind it. It is by far the best insulated house in which I've ever lived. Brick archways welcome you at the front door. Great craftsmanship that is probably too expensive to reproduce today!

Sometime, when you are on the Co-Lin campus, take a minute to look at the detail of the brickwork. The work of artisans! The Ewing Administration Building, Gertrude Mutton and the Oswald Library are great examples of caring for old buildings and restoring them. My favorite building in Wesson -- Ellzy Hall -- sits squarely in the middle of Co-Lin's campus. Built as a men's dorm, Ellzy -- named after Co-Lin president Russell Ellzy -- has been through several renovations, none more important than the one now in progress. It is one of the oldest buildings on campus. Phase one of its restoration returned the building to its original look and made it structurally sound. When its interior restoration is completed, Ellzy will house offices, computer labs, classrooms and a rehearsal hall for the Colettes.

Wesson is a snapshot of great architectural history. The Old Grammar School, finished in 1892 is an example of a community understanding and valuing its past by saving this its old structures. Now used as an event venue, the building once stood vacant and decaying. When I was a student at Co-Lin, we briefly used the basement as a coffee house, where we played guitars and sang folk songs. Now, through renovation, the grand room is used for wedding receptions, senior parties and other celebrations.

Only one of the old Wesson mill buildings, which were completed

in the late 1800's, still stands and is functional -- the Mill Town Mall, where vendors sell their wares in retail spaces -- antiques, arts and crafts, fleas and other items, both old and new. It is a shame more of those buildings didn't survive. Can you imagine what their builders would think about a facility designed to exist for twenty five years?

disarray. However, his the estate was recently purchased and an elaborate restoration project to bring the house back to its original grandeur was started. It will take about two years to complete. You can follow the progress on Facebook -- Butterfield aka Edgewood Mansion Restoration.

So, my friends, until next month thanks for supporting the arts... In the mean time, I would like to thank all of you who bought a copy of *A Brookhaven Christmas*, a CD venture to which local musicians contributed, to support Mississippi School of the Arts. MSA will receive a check soon from the successful venture. Without your support, it would not have been so successful. For those of you haven't heard the special holiday treat, a few hard copies are still available and you can download it at internet sites.

EDITOR'S NOTE: R. 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 for Brookhaven Music and Sound.



In Brookhaven, work is underway on the restoration of the old Butterfield Mansion on Storm Avenue. Over the years, the home has been through several renovations, some not for the better, and has been used, most recently, as the residence and studio of the late designer David Lovell. Since Lovell's death the once stately home, has fallen into



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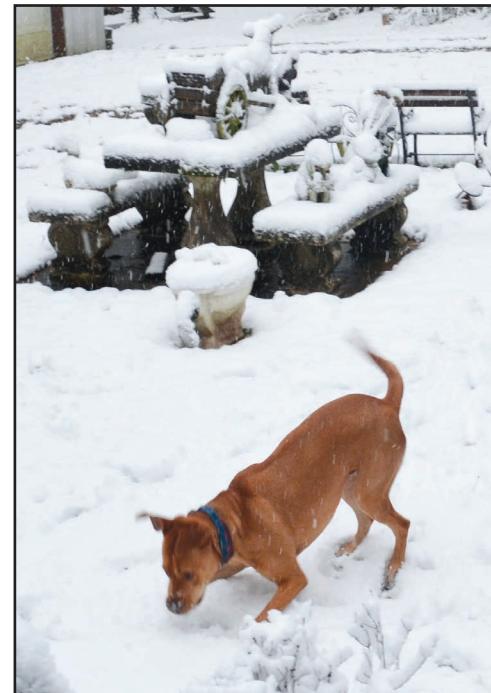
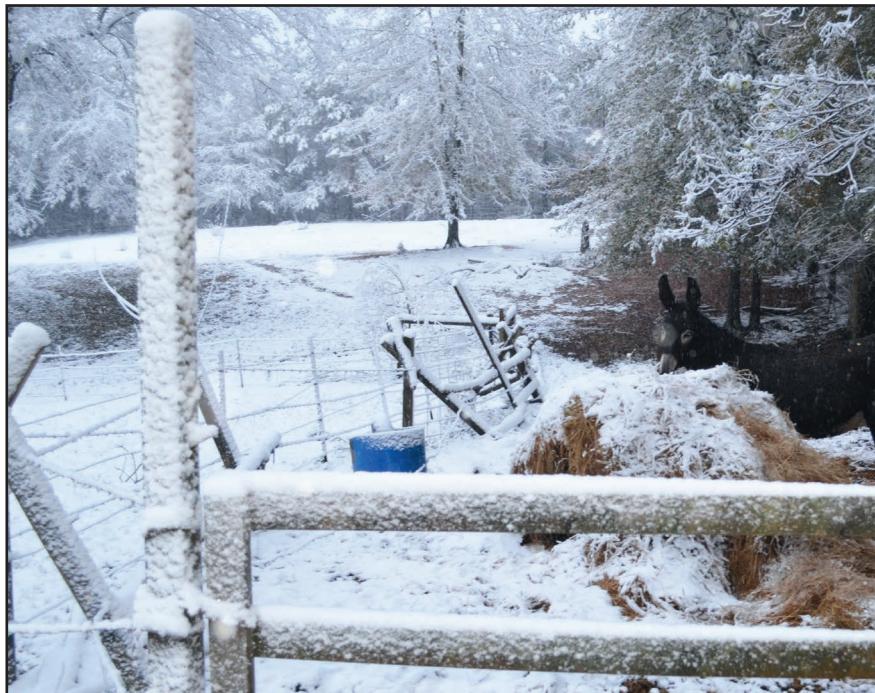
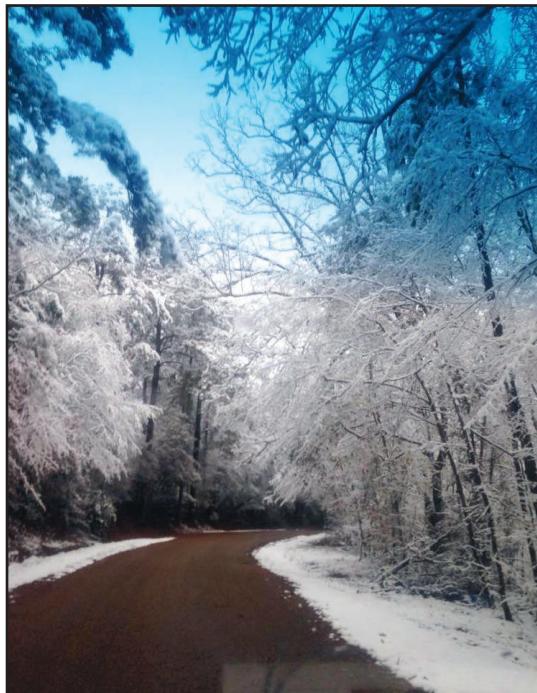
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Cont. from page 1

Snowfall knocks out power, but fun is had



All photos by Wesson News

snowfalls do happen.”

At the peak of the storm, upwards of 40,000 residents in Copiah, Franklin, Lawrence and Lincoln Counties lost power, with Southern Pine reporting 23,500 outages, Magnolia Electric, 12,750; Southwest Mississippi Electric Power Association, 6,500 in its eight-county service area; and Entergy, 3,429.

The lights started going out when the storm struck on Thursday, December

7, and although power company crews made relatively quick progress in restoring electricity, some residents did not have their power back on until Monday, December 11.

“We had problems with getting lines energized and then having a tree or tree limb knock it back out, so our numbers were not going down very fast,” Lucy Shell of Magnolia Electric said.

Brock Williamson of Southern Pine

called the storm “one of the worst we’ve had within our service territory.” “Making it more difficult was the snow which accumulated on trees, causing them to snap and hit our lines,” he explained.

Wolverton said that a cold front, which moved into the area a day before the storm, set up the conditions for the snowfall. “It kept pushing colder air into the area from Canada, pushing it

further south,” she said. “When that cold air came in, it transitioned rain to snow.”

Although icy conditions became something of a problem during the evening following the storm as snow melted and temperatures fell, officials said that roads, by and large, remained in good condition for travel and there were few accidents, none with major injuries.

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Funds to start new career-tech programs

Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) has awarded Co-Lin three Career and Technical Education (CTE) Challenge Grants for 2018 totaling more than \$658,000 for the implementation of an Electrical Technology Program on the Wesson Campus, Emergency Medical Technology Paramedic Program on the Natchez Campus, and an Automation and Control Technology Program at the Simpson County Center.

“We are very fortunate to receive this start-up funding from the MCCB for one new Career-Technical Program on each of the Co-Lin Campuses,” said Wesson Campus Vice President Dr. Jane Hulon.

Co-Lin’s Dean of Career, Technical, and Workforce Education Jackie Martin said the new programs will help close the skills gap required for jobs in Mississippi and meet the needs of current and future business and industry. She pointed out that about 60 per cent of jobs in the state are middle-skill positions, which require more education and training than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. “These are high skilled, high wage technical job training programs that will have a lasting and positive impact on the communities we serve,” said Co-Lin

President Dr. Ronnie Nettles.

CTE Challenge Grants fund industry-specific CTE programs that align to a sector or business and industry within a college district that do not qualify for traditional workforce training dollars. These programs respond to a critical need to meet the workforce demand requested by the local business community to reduce the skills gap within the district and are also intended to increase the skill levels and per capita incomes of participants in them.

“Currently, the state does not provide start-up funding to begin new career-technical programs at the community college level,” said Martin. “We must seek other avenues of funding to ensure the training we provide meets the need of our local community and is up-to-date with new technology. It is a priority to Co-Lin administration that we are meeting the workforce training needs in our district.”

All CTE Challenge Grant awards will be subject to the same monitoring requirements as existing, traditional workforce projects. The CTE Challenge Grant funds are intended to assist the college with the initial costs of establishing programs. The college will be responsible for sustaining the program after the initial start-up monies are expended.

Mathis memorialized



Special to Wesson News

At a special ceremony last month, friends and family celebrated the life of the late Alison Mathis at Copiah County Medical Center (CCMC), which she served for more than nineteen years in various nursing capacities. They included Brett, Garrett, Jessica and Kelly Boutwell, Betty and Billy Boutwell, Terri Edwards, Blair Mathis and Chris Mathis (husband of the deceased), Carroll Hood, Kent Newman, George Marx, Jim Shannon and Ben Lott, CCMC Chief Executive Officer. At CCMC, Mathis served as staff nurse, Director of Surgery and L&D Services, Medical-Surgical Nurse Manager and Emergency Management Coordinator. She received an Associate Degree in Nursing from Co-Lin and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Flu prompts changes to hospital visitation

Wesson News

With the number of diagnosed flu cases increasing, Mississippi hospitals are imposing restrictions on visitors.

Sick friends and family risk spreading the flu virus to a population whose illnesses might already make them susceptible to infection, say officials in clinics and at the emergency departments of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) adult and children hospitals. Changes to visitor policies address patient and staff safety, they say.

UMMC is following influenza guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Sheila Fletcher, the Medical Center’s director of infection prevention, said. Visitors who are sick or have flu-like symptoms – fever, cough, sore throat, runny or congested nose, body aches, chills, fatigue, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea – should check with the nurse in charge on the patient’s floor before conducting a visit. Exemptions are allowed for end-of-life patients, or on a case-by-case basis determined by the patient’s attending physician and/or nurse in charge on the patient’s floor.

At UMMC, all patients will be allowed no more than two healthy adult visitors at any one time, in both private and semi-private rooms. CDC influenza guidelines recommend children 12 years old and under refrain from visiting the hospitals, Fletcher said. Children can “be ill and exhibiting no symptoms, but still be

contagious,” she explained.

Because influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough and other serious respiratory illnesses are spread by coughing, sneezing and unclean hands, all UMMC faculty, staff, students and visitors are being instructed to properly wash their hands and to help prevent the spread of germs by covering their mouths while coughing and sneezing. “Frequent hand hygiene and controlling coughs and sneezes will help to prevent the transmission of flu and other viruses,” Fletcher said.

According to the CDC, Mississippi led the nation in the activity level for influenza-like illnesses. Mississippi, then Louisiana, were the only states at the highest end of activity, which is based on the percent of outpatient visits in a state due to influenza-like illness. An influenza-like illness is defined as fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher and a cough and/or sore throat.

The CDC strongly advises people to avoid close contact with people who are sick, to stay home when they are sick, to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth, and to use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and warm water aren’t available for frequent hand-washing. The agency also advises people to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.

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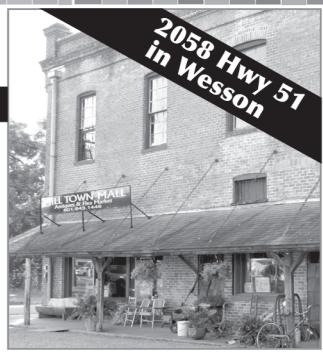
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State legislature promotes workforce development



Special to Wesson News

By Guest Columnist Philip Gunn

When we first began recruiting businesses to Mississippi, incentives played a big role. Many companies wanted to know: "What will you do for us?" That is changing. The number one thing businesses want to know now: "Do you have a trained, reliable, educated workforce?"



Special to Wesson News

If Mississippi is to prosper, we must be able to provide a solid answer to that question. A strong, educated workforce is the backbone of Mississippi. It directly impacts our level of prosperity. If our workforce is strong, we prosper. If it is weak, we suffer.

Over the last six years, your legislature has focused on workforce development. We have passed legislation to create:

- Mississippi Works Fund, which provides training to unemployed people, giving them skills to prepare them to enter the workforce.

- Mississippi Works Dual Enrollment Option, allowing potential or recent high school dropouts to dually enroll in their local school district and the local community college in dual credit programs.

- Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) Job Training Grants that authorize MDA to make grants to colleges to pay a portion of the costs associated with training or retraining employees for businesses that expand or locate their operations in Mississippi.

- Districts of Innovation, allowing local school districts to implement innovative ideas in their schools to increase performance and explore different ways to prepare students for either college or careers. Many of these districts have teamed up with manufacturers to ensure that they are teaching the appropriate curriculum and training the students on quality equipment.

- Appropriations and bonding. In 2012, we appropriated \$38.5 million for the Workforce Education Program and Industrial Training. We have steadily increased the appropriation for the program over the last six years, and this year we appropriated \$51 million, an increase of 32%. We also appropriated \$4 million in bonds for the MDA Workforce Training Fund.

As industry changes and progresses, so must education. We want to be responsive to the needs of industry. We want to be nimble. We want to provide that skilled workforce. This is one of the motivations behind our efforts to seek a new K-12 funding formula. Our goal is to move to a student-centered formula, one that provides funding tailored to the specific needs of the student. I have also recently appointed Sean Suggs, Vice President of Manufacturing for Toyota Mississippi, to our state board of education. He will bring a much-needed perspective to the role education plays in our workforce.

Your legislature believes a strong workforce is the backbone of Mississippi and that the prosperity of our state hinges on how well we put forth a trained and educated workforce.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Philip Gunn is Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives.

BRAG art show

Special to Wesson News

Brookhaven Regional Arts Guild (BRAG) is hosting Brookhaven artists Vicki Land and her daughter Brandy Johnson at an art show that will run through January 30 at the Lincoln County Public Library in Brookhaven.

Before its monthly meeting, BRAG will hold a free public reception for the local artists from 4:30 p.m.- 6 p.m. on Thursday, January 18, at the library. Refreshments will be served.

Land, a Brookhaven native, received a B.A. in art education and B.F.A. in fine arts from Louisiana Tech University. She has taught in the Louisiana and Mississippi school systems and established the four levels of art studies at Brookhaven High School. Land has also served as an adjudicator at Mississippi School of the Arts (MSA) and exhibited her work at Masur Museum, Co-Lin, as well as the Lincoln County Library. She is accomplished in watercolor, oils, pen and ink and pottery, and has studied under various potters and artists, including internationally-famous watercolorist Fealing Lin.

Her studio is located on Hog Chain Road in Brookhaven.

Johnson received a B.A. in Interior Design from Mississippi College in 1994 and has studied under Mississippi watercolorist Wyatt Waters and international watercolorist Fealing Lin. She has taught numerous classes in all art genres. She currently teaches high school art at Brookhaven Academy, and is producing watercolor portraits. Her studio is on her home property in Brookhaven.

In February, BRAG will also sponsor a two-day workshop conducted by New Orleans artist Jan Wilken. Wilken, who held a similar workshop last summer, will focus on acrylics and watercolors and employ unusual tools to create unique paintings that can be completed in a day. She will conduct the workshop at Lincoln County Public Library on Wednesday and Thursday, February 21 and 22. Workshop participants can attend on either day or both days. Visit the BRAG Facebook page for specifics on the class and janwilkenart.com for information on Wilken's paintings.

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Make SMART resolutions this year

By Guest Columnist
Dr. Stephanie Duguid

As New Year begins, many of us resolve to make changes in our lives. Most resolutions seek to adjust an undesired change or behavior to accomplish a personal goal or otherwise improve our lifestyle. Over the years, the most popular resolutions include eating less, exercising more, quitting a habit, improving financial status, or reducing the amount of time using technology.



Special to Wesson News

According to a New Year resolutions study, more than thirty percent are not realized due to unrealistic goals; another thirty percent are not realized because we don't track their progress; and others are just forgotten.

As a suggestion this year, rather than make several changes at once, try to make one small change a month throughout the year to work toward a healthier you. Here's a calendar:

January. Drink more water. One-half your body weight in ounces per day. One hundred ounces per day for a 200-pound person.

February. Make breakfast a priority.

March. Get at least eight hours of sleep every day.

April. Keep a food journal.

May. Go for a walk each day.

June. Eat fruits and vegetables at least 3 times a day.

July. Be grateful. Gratitude is good for your health.

August. Go meatless at least one day per week.

September. Find a workout buddy and exercise with your partner twenty

minutes per day to start

• **October.** Savor your meals, and eat slowly.

• **November.** Unplug and unwind. Reduce your time on electronic devices.

• **December.** Cut your consumption of processed sugar in half.

Anytime you decide to make a change in life, such as a resolution, it is very helpful if you create SMART goals. SMART is an acronym that helps you create more focused and objective goals so that you will be successful. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Specific means that you have narrowly focused on what you would like to do. Measurable means that you have a way to objectively determine if you are reaching your goals or not. Achievable means that your goal is reasonable and can be reached. Realistic means you have sensible goals that are within reach. And finally, Timely means that you have a specific time-frame to reach your goal.

Some goals you may hear are: "I want to lose weight" or "I want to get healthier."

These are poor goals because they are not SMART goals. An example of a SMART goal: "I want to lose five pounds in the next six weeks by working out thirty minutes four times per week." Another example: "I want to improve my health by eating four servings of vegetables and drinking three bottles of water each day for thirty days".

Make your New Year Resolution into a Healthy Evolution. Start this year!

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.

LIVING + HEALTHY +

How to rebloom poinsettias



Special to Wesson News

By Guest Columnist Rebecca Bates

There seems to be two camps when it comes to what to do with poinsettias after Christmas. One camp's motto is "I'm so glad Christmas has passed; now I can let the poinsettia die!" The other camp cheers "this poinsettia is so pretty I must keep it to flower again!"

Getting poinsettias to re-flower next year is possible, but it takes diligence. So for all of you poinsettia-keeper campers, here is the process.

Winter:

After Christmas, grow the poinsettia as a houseplant. Keep it evenly moist and in fairly bright light.

Spring:

In February or early March, cut back each of the old flowering stems to four to six inches in height to promote new growth.

Summer:

In May, replot into a slightly larger container. Water well and place in a sunny window. When all danger of frost has past and night temperatures are above 60 degrees, the plant can be placed outdoors in a shady location. Some morning sun is ok. Water as needed and apply a complete soluble fertilizer (20-20-20) every two weeks.

Fall and winter:

Before night temperatures fall be-

low 55-60 degrees at night, bring the poinsettia indoors to a sunny location. Keep moist but reduce fertilization.

With poinsettias, as well as Christmas cactus, flowering is 'photoperiodically' induced. That is, flowers begin to form when the days are a certain length. The poinsettia is a short-day or long-night plant. Without long nights, poinsettias will continue to produce leaves, but will not flower.

Flower initiation begins in late September and early October. Dark periods longer than 12 hours are necessary for flower set.

Because flower initiation depends upon the length of the dark period, your poinsettia must be kept completely dark from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. In order to get them to flower for Christmas, this treatment should be from the end of September until December 15.

Once you can see the flowers developing and the bracts show color, it is not as important to continue giving the dark treatment.

If all of this seems like a lot of work, then it's time to change camps, and leave poinsettias to the professionals!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Rebecca Bates is the Mississippi State University Agricultural Extension Agent based at the Lincoln County Court House in Brookhaven.

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Schools, roads & Medicaid are top legislative issues

By Guest Columnist Becky Currie

Funding for schools, roads and bridges and Medicaid are among the issues facing the Mississippi Legislature in its 2018 session, which started last week. The session is going to be very busy, with issues important both to the state and District 92.



Schools. One of the most difficult bills on which we have been working is changing the funding method for schools. I have seen parts of bills and they have a long way to go to get through both the House and the Senate, but there is a basis for a very good bill for education and our school districts. So far, the numbers show Copiah County receiving an increase in funding based on an Average Daily Membership formula -- one that schools have been requesting. The new formula will provide an opportunity for our schools to plan each year with knowledge about how much they have to spend.

Roads and bridges. Another big topic facing the session is roads and bridges. You have probably heard a lot about it. It is difficult issue because of the cost, not just for Mississippi, but for every state in the nation. I have had problems with bills in prior years because they would have given more to the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) to decide what needs to be done in our counties. I am not in favor of raising

the gasoline tax for my constituents to pay for a bridge in Madison or Desoto Counties. I want a plan that keeps our money in our counties. Something has to be done to give our cities and counties some relief. We are working on several plans that should start to improve our situation.

Medicaid. Since I have been in the legislature, I have seen the Medicaid budget double. Of course, medical costs are going up and is not something we can control, but how we spend our precious Medicaid dollars is something we can control. I fought against managed care Medicaid, which the legislature adopted about seven years ago. Managed care was to reduce cost and manage recipients' healthcare to keep them well. Not only have costs doubled, but people are sicker and we have sent a lot of money to out of state insurance companies. We need to do it in a more efficient and effective way, with the goal of making sure we take care of the disabled, poor and sick people of Mississippi.

These are just three of the big issues we face in the upcoming legislative session. There are many more. I look forward to representing you and keeping District 92 in my decisions at all times while serving you in the House of Representatives.

I wish everyone has a healthy and happy New Year!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Becky Currie is District 92 Representative in the Mississippi legislature.

Wreaths honor veterans



Special to Wesson News

Wesson News

Socks for Heroes led Copiah County's participation in nationwide Wreaths Across America ceremonies that honored armed forces veterans at their grave sites last month.

At cemeteries at Hazlehurst and Wesson on December 16, Stronghope Baptist Church on December 17 and Georgetown on December 19, wreaths were placed on graves of all veterans buried in them.

In Wesson Cemetery, Socks for Heroes and the American Legion Auxiliary laid 170 fresh evergreen wreaths at the grave sites of the town military heroes in honor of their sacrifices for their country in the armed services.

Volunteers placed the wreaths on the graves and said the names of buried veterans aloud to thank them for their service to their country and keep the memory of each one alive.

Nationwide, wreaths were laid at Arlington National Cemetery and more than 1,200 veterans cemeteries in fifty U.S. states and overseas. Individuals, businesses, clubs, civic organizations and churches donated \$15 each for purchase of the wreaths laid at Wesson Cemetery.

National Wreaths Across America Day is observed annually on the third Saturday in December to remember fallen heroes, honor those who served

and are serving in the armed force and teach about the sacrifices veterans and their families made to preserve the freedoms enjoyed in the U.S.

The observance originated in 1992 when Worcester Wreath Company in Harrington, Maine, had a wreaths surplus towards the end of the holiday season and its owner Morrill Worcester organized volunteers to lay the wreaths in honor of veterans at an older, less visited section of Arlington National Cemetery. As young boy, Worcester was moved by the sacrifice of veterans in a visit to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC. In 2007, Wreaths Across America (WAA) was founded as a non-profit organization and Worcester's inaugural event has expanded throughout the 50 states, with wreath-laying ceremonies at veterans cemeteries.

"I am an American/Yes I am" was the theme of the 2017 event, inspired by lyrics composed by Maine singer/songwriter Rick Charette. WAA adopted the theme after Kennebec (Maine) Elementary School sang Charette's song at a Wreaths Across America event last year.

"We are not about decorating graves or remembering deaths, but rather remembering lives," says Karen Worcester, Executive Director of Wreaths Across America.

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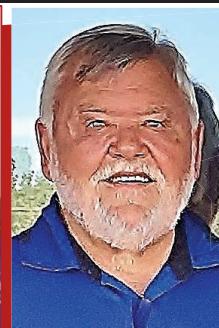
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