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SPOTLIGHT

Co-Lin Cops Softball Crown

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Volume 13, Number 6

“Good News You Can Use”

June, 2025

Shaw & Martin election victors

By Bob Arnold

Incumbent Mayor Alton Shaw and Alderman-at-Large candidate Stanley Martin won sweeping victories in Wesson municipal elections last week.

Shaw won 65 percent of the vote in defeating his challenger, Teri Bath, and Martin captured 56 percent of the vote in a three-person race against Cathy Stroud and Chad Sills.

In the election, voters also returned uncontested Aldermen Larry Hall from Ward 1, Jarrad Ashley from Ward 2, Billy Ellison from Ward 3 and Michael King from Ward 4.

In a political environment characterized nationally, and even in Mississippi, by increasingly thin margins and sometimes bitter partisanship, Shaw's landslide was a rarity, particularly after 22 years of service as Wesson Mayor.

While Bath thematically framed her campaign against the incumbent Mayor around “fresh leadership for a better Wesson” as a slogan, voters apparently agreed, as they have in his previous re-election campaigns, with Shaw's slogan that “experience matters.”

During his campaign for four more years, Shaw emphasized his capacity to help find public and private monies beyond tax revenues to fund community improvements, including water/sewage system upgrades, street paving, a new police department facility, continuing amenities at the municipal park and a veterans' memorial. He also pointed to new businesses that have opened, or are planning to open, in town.

“We may not always do right, but we'll make it right,” he said. “I enjoy helping people and making a difference.”

Shaw won all four wards with more than 60 percent of the vote, and by a whopping 74 percent in Ward 4, Wesson's smallest.

Facing two opponents, Martins' election victory was impressive as well, demonstrating the value of knocking on doors and talking to voters in a race in which the incumbent, Van Graham, is retiring. Winning a decisive majority in a crowded field, he garnered 63 percent of the vote in Ward 2, 57 percent in Wards 3 and 4 and 51 percent in Ward 1.



Mayor Alton Shaw



Stanley Martin

In a *Wesson News* ad, Martin thanked his supporters, expressed appreciation for the “clean and honest race” conducted by Stroud and Sills, saying “it would have been an honor if either of you would have won,” and acknowledged Van Gra-

ham's “dedicated years given unselfishly to the town.”

Among the ballots cast, the Mayor's race attracted 322 votes; the Alderman-at-Large contest, 320 votes, and the uncontested Aldermen elections, 285 votes.

In Wesson's largest ward (Ward 3), Billy Ellison captured the most votes for an Alderman – 99, while King received 40 votes in the town's smallest ward (Ward 4), and Hall (Ward 1) and Ashley (Ward 2) had 81 and 66 votes, respectively.

Here's a breakdown in voting by ward

	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Total
Shaw	50	50	77	32	209
Bath	32	31	39	11	113
Martin	41	49	64	26	180
Stroud	30	15	39	9	93
Sills	10	14	12	11	47
Hall	81				81
Ashley		66			66
Ellison			99		99
King				40	40
TOTAL					928

Co-Lin again softball champs

Special to Wesson News

Two years after winning the national junior college world series, the Co-Lin softball team is again taking the NJCAA trophy back to Wesson.

The team entered the final day of the NJCAA Division II National Tournament knowing they needed one win to take home their second national championship in the last three years as they faced off against MACCC foe Jones. The Bobcats and Lady Wolves needed two games to decide a winner as the Bobcats beat the Wolves, 7-3, to force a winner take all game where the Lady Wolves won, 6-4.

Co-Lin finishes the season 48-6 overall including a record-breaking 27-1 in MAC-CC play and captured back-to-back MAC-CC regular season titles for the first time in school history in addition to winning the second national championship in the last three years.

In game one, the Lady Wolves got on the board first with a solo run in the bottom of the first as Olivia Banes (Pelahatchie) stepped up to the plate with one out on the board, took one swing of the bat, and crushed a 2-2 pitch over the fence in left centerfield for a solo home run, her 12th of the season, gave the Lady Wolves a 1-0 lead.

The Bobcats then responded by tying the game with a run in the top of the second and then scored one run in the fourth, three in the fifth, and two in the sixth while holding the Lady Wolves scoreless to take a 7-1 lead.

The Lady Wolves added two runs in the bottom of the sixth as Brelie Phillips stepped up to the plate, took one swing, and smashed a 1-1 pitch over fence in centerfield for a leadoff solo home run, her 12th of the season, to cut the lead down to 7-2. Banes then followed with a double, took third on a flyout by Taylor Efferson (Holden, LA), and then scored on a groundout by Avery Williams (Olive Branch) cutting the lead down to 7-3. The Lady Wolves then got a leadoff single by Emeri Warren (Sebastopol) to start the bottom of the seventh while Noelle Laiche (Gonzales, LA) was then brought in as a pinch runner. However, two popouts followed by a foul out ended the game as the Bobcats sealed the 7-3 win.

The Lady Wolves totaled five hits as Olivia Banes led the way with two hits while Brelie Phillips, Kynlee Madere (Paulina, LA), and Avery Williams had one hit each. Phillips, Banes, and Avery Williams had one RBI each.

Taylor Efferson fell to 18-3 overall as she got the start and pitched four innings allowing four runs, all earned, on six hits with two walks and one strikeout. Keegan McCorkle (Tyronza, AR) pitched three innings of relief allowing three runs, all earned, on six hits with one walk and one strikeout.

In the second game of the day, once again the Lady Wolves scored first as they plated one run in the bottom of the second. Avery Williams stepped up to the plate, took one swing of the bat, and demolished an 0-1 pitch nearly clearing the centerfield stands for a leadoff solo home run, her eighth of the season, gave the Lady Wolves a 1-0 lead.

The Lady Wolves then added a single run in the bottom of the third as Brelie Phillips hit a one-out double to get the offense



Special to Wesson News

going and then took third as Olivia Banes reached on an error. Taylor Efferson then drew a walk to load the bases while Phillips then scored on a sacrifice fly by Avery Williams making the lead, 2-0.

The Lady Wolves then added two runs in the bottom of the fifth as Banes drew a leadoff walk and then advanced to two bases to third on a wild pitch. Efferson then drew a walk to put runners on the corner while Emma Kate Fimiano (Petal) was brought in as a pinch runner. Later in the inning, Banes scored as Kynlee Madere reached on a fielder's choice making the lead, 3-0. After Fimiano was forced out as

to 4-3, while the Lady Wolves responded with a pair of runs in the bottom half as Carson Hughey (Brookhaven) hit a lead-off single and then advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt by Phillips. Hughey then took third as Banes reached on an infield single. After Banes stole second, Efferson delivered a one-out, two-RBI single scoring Hughey and Banes and increasing the lead to 6-3.

The Bobcats then started the top of the seventh with a strikeout and a lineout for two quick outs. However, then they hit a double followed by back-to-back singles to cut the lead down to 6-4 and put the tying run on first base. A popout to Abby Burnette (Brookhaven) ended the game secure the victory and national championship for the Lady Wolves.

The Lady Wolves totaled eight hits as Morgan Chisolm and Carson Hughey led the way with two hits apiece while Brelie Phillips, Olivia Banes, Taylor Efferson, and Avery Williams had one hit each. Efferson and Avery Williams led the Lady Wolves in RBIs with two each while Kynlee Madere and Chisolm had one RBI each.

In her final start in a Lady Wolves uniform, Emily Richard (Lakeland, TN) improved to 22-1 with the complete game win allowing four runs, all earned, on nine hits with two walks and two strikeouts.



Emeri Warren reached on a fielder's choice while Madere then scored on an RBI-single by Morgan Chisolm (Madison) increasing the lead to 4-0.

The Bobcats then scored three runs in the top of the sixth to cut the lead down

Howard MACCC Coach of Year

Special to Wesson News

After leading the Co-Lin Softball team to a record-breaking 27-1 finish in conference play, head coach Meleah Howard has been named the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges Conference (MACCC) Coach of the Year.

The Lady Wolves started MACCC play by winning 15 straight until dropping game two of their doubleheader against the Bobcats to sit at 15-1. The team then won 12 straight on their way to a second-straight MACCC regular season championship representing the first time in program history that the Lady Wolves have won two-straight conference titles.

Through the national championship run, the Lady Wolves finished an outstanding 32-3 against MACCC opponents. Howard earned her 250th win at Co-Lin this season with the Lady Wolves 10-2 win against Hinds on April 23 and now has a career 261-62 for a career winning percentage of 80.8 percent in her seven seasons at Co-Lin. Including her high school coaching career, she has a 789-206 record for a career winning percentage of 79.2 percent.

Howard was also named the Gulf District A Coach of the Year as well as taking home the NJCAA DII National Tournament Coach of the Tournament award for the second time in the last three seasons.



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Dance recital honors Nena Smith



Special to Wesson News

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The inaugural dance recital of Precision Dance Company, formerly known as the Nena Smith Studio of Dance (NSSD) and recently sold to new owners who renamed it, honored the woman whose name it carried for the 50 years she operated it.

Those who came to the recital at Co-Lin to pay tribute to Nena Smith were from all over. One drove in overnight from St. Louis. One flew in from Oakland, California. Smith's daughter, Macie Smith Anderson, Class of '95, travelled from Kingsport, Tennessee, for the celebration.

NSSD alumni participated in the special show for Smith, secretly planning it along with commemorative t-shirts, rehearsals, and a reception in Facebook meetings. Marsha Mullins Raiford of Wesson, Class of '98, and Taylor Beasley Burke of Brookhaven, Class of 2013, choreographed dance routines. The shirts were created by Melissa Bueto Brady of Petal, Class of '97, and Emily Allen Childress of Brookhaven, Class of '95, coordinated cards and gifts.

The recital featured NSSD alumni dancers in a routine featuring each dancer with a special mini dance celebrating one of five decades Nena Smith operated her studio. With Smith watching in the front row, halfway through the first act, one of Smith's favorite songs started playing, and NSSD alumni made their way onto the stage for the memorable performance. Sixty people took the stage again later for a final performance in Smith's honor.

Before the show, Smith's former dancers hosted a surprise reception for her at the Co-Lin library. Other NSSD alumni, community members, friends and family attended, bringing cards, gifts and food. A 10-minute slideshow of photos telling the story of Smith's 50-year career played on a loop.

Following the reception, everyone walked together across to Co-Lin's Rea Auditorium for the recital.

For the dancers who celebrated her, Smith was more than just a teacher. Guided by a motto – "Character First, Dance Second," Smith made her

studio a ministry, encouraging and helping students, often leading them in devotionals at weekend dance workshops, teaching them biblical truths, and helping write scripture on their hearts.

Her everyday sayings, like "don't sweat the small stuff; put your hands on your hips and a smile on your lips," gave them words to live by.

Deeply loved by her alumni, they made it a sentimental evening with lots of laughs, hugs and tears.



Dance Award winner



Special to Wesson News

Precision Dance Company of Wesson, led by director Kaila Denton, won three overall first place group awards in the Star Systems National Talent Competition in Slidell, LA, and was recognized as the highest scoring studio. Its awards included overall first place for production, top overall scoring routine award, Top Studio Award and multiple individual and group awards.

WHS spotlights scholarship winners & honorees

Special to Wesson News

Wesson High School spotlighted its seniors who received scholarships and were honored for varied achievements and service during the 2024-2025 school year.

Scholarships

Co-Lin scholarship recipients: Lucas Shelton (ACT, Endowment), Hunter Meredith (ACT, Cheer), Taylor Watson (ACT), Yadi Silvan (ACT), Kalana Nhem (ACT, Trustmark), Jayson Rios (ACT), Brianna Myers (ACT), Aubree Smith (ACT, Collette Dance, and AT&T), Avery Anna Watts (ACT, Endowment), Mary Gwyn Hynum (ACT, Endowment), Lilly Kate Channell (ACT, Leadership, Cheer, Memorial), and Laney Kate Earls (Endowment, Memorial).

Trevor McRee (ACT, Cheer), Chase Britt (ACT, Memorial, Endowment), Ella Logan (ACT, Memorial), Cailley Duplantis (ACT), Ben McKenzie (ACT, Eagle Scout, Lion's Club), Ayden Carraway (Memorial), Christian Marin (ACT), Manuel Miller (ACT, Blue Wave Show Band), Cotton Westbrook (ACT, Memorial), Austin Johnson (ACT), and Eric Merrill (ACT, Blue Wave Show Band, Lion's Club).

Abbey Berch (ACT, Collette Dance), Bryce Coleman (Blue Wave Show Band), Gracie Curtis (Endowment), Brett King (ACT), Maggie Runnels (ACT, Collette Dance, Taylor's Presidential), and Emileigh Woodson (ACT).

Other College/University scholarships: Cole Gipson (Football and Dean's Award to East Central Community College), Korbin Ashmore (Football at University of Louisiana at Lafayette), Courtney Carr (Academic and Cheer to East Central Community College), Allison Hamilton (Speed and Beacon of Excellence to Mississippi College), Tiara Tronstad (Academic Excellence to USM), Myles Elkins (Academic Excellence and Band to William Carey), Wyatt Garrett (Presidential ACT and Baseball to Southwest MS Community College), Le'Aysia Johnson (Band to Gulf Coast Community College), Gracie Martin (Opportunity Scholarship to Ole Miss), and Taylor Davis (Honors College – USM).

Copiah County Junior Auxiliary Scholarship. Aubree Smith.

Billy O. Britt Memorial Scholarship. Aubree Smith and Laney Kate Earls.

Jim Lowery Memorial Scholarship. Chase Britt and Joy Lowery.

Greenbriar Scholarship. Gracie Curtis.

State Representative District 76 Gregory Holloway Scholarship. Chase Britt, Ayden Carraway and Brynn Brice.

Methodist Foundation Scholarship. Avery Anna Watts.

Honored for Achievements & Service

Class Academics: Kalana Nhem (Outstanding Achievement in Economics), Cailley Duplantis (Outstanding Achievement in Economics and Human A & P), Cotton Westbrook (Outstanding Achievement in US Government and Highest Average in English Comp II), Zariah Jackson (Outstanding Achievement in English IV, Highest Average in Essentials for College Math, Outstanding Achievement in Exploring Computer Science).

Le'Aysia Johnson (Outstanding Achievement in English IV, Resource Management, and Family Dynamics), Laney Kate Earls (Outstanding Achievement in Essentials for College Math), Courtney Carr (Outstanding Achievement in Essentials for College Math), Aubree Smith (Outstanding Achievement in Economics and Highest Average in English Comp I), Lilly Kate Channell (Outstanding Achievement in US Government and Economics, Highest Average in Human A & P), and Jordan Taylor (Outstanding Achievement in Resource Management).

Allison Hamilton (Highest Averages in US Government, Economics, College Algebra, and Outstanding Achievement in Human A & P), Korbin Ashmore (Outstanding Achievement in English IV), JaQuavion Martin (Outstanding Achievement in Essentials for College Math and Exploring Computer Science and Highest Averages in English IV and Family Dynamics), Mallory Ezell (Outstanding Achievement in Resource Management), Emileigh Woodson (Outstanding Achievement in Family Dynamics and Highest Average in Resource Management), Deshawn Smith (Outstanding Achievement in Family Dynamics and Highest Average in Health), Brianna Myers (Highest Average in Psychology), Wyatt Hughes (Outstanding Achievement in Zoology), Luke Shelton (Outstanding Achievement in Botany), and Eric Merrill (Outstanding Achievement in AP Chemistry).

Army National Guard service. Peyton Mire and Hunter Ray

4H Shooting Sports. Chase Britt, Ayden Carraway and Trevor McRee.

Boy's State Delegates. Chase Britt, Manuel Miller, Ben McKenzie and Trevor McRee

Girl's State Delegates. Avery Anna Watts, Kalana Nhem, Cailley Duplantis, Mary Gwyn Hynum and Abbey Berch.

Lindy Callahan Nominees. Hunter Meredith and Lilly Kate Channell.

Educator Preparation Program Completers. Taylor Watson, Aubree Smith, Gracie Martin, Emmaleigh Dunaway and Mallory Ezell.

Wesson Senior Citizenship Award. Aubree Smith and Ben McKenzie.

Wesson Senior Service Award. Ella Logan and Ben McKenzie.

Wesson Cobra Character Award. Trevor McRee and Laney Kate Earls.

Wesson Hall of Fame Inductees. Trevor McRee, Ella Logan and Ben McKenzie.

Senior Class President Award. Ben McKenzie.

Cobra Yearbook Staff Awards. Aubree Smith (Editor-in-Chief), Maggie Runnels (Senior Editor) and Abbey Berch (Senior Editor). Senior Staff Members Allison Hamilton, Cailley Duplantis and Kalana Nhem.

Student Council Awards. Courtney Carr (President). Senior Representatives Cailley Duplantis and Abbey Berch.

Perfect Attendance Awards. Mallory Ezell, Gracie Martin, Eric Merrill, Kalana Nhem, Yadi Silvan and Cotton Westbrook.

Star Student. Allison Hamilton. Star Teacher. Jackie Johnson.

Beta Club Awards.

- Service. Laney Kate Earls and Abbey Berch.
- Academics. Taylor Davis and Allison Hamilton.
- Character. Ben McKenzie and Cailley Duplantis.
- Leadership. Allison Hamilton.



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Thank You

As a Candidate for Mayor of Wesson Teri Bath, I would like to congratulate all the winners.

MAYOR ALTON SHAW
ALDERMAN AT LARGE STANLEY MARTIN
ALDERMAN LARRY HALL
ALDERMAN MIKE KING
ALDERMAN JAROD ASHLEY
ALDERMAN BILLY ELLISON

Also, I would like to thank the voters who participated in the process and supported all the candidates. Wesson is such a special community in South Mississippi. The voters have spoken, and we need to get behind these fine elected officials and help in any way possible. Such a special opportunity to be able to vote and support your candidate of choice.

"LET'S ALL MAKE WESSON GREAT AGAIN."

SINCERELY, *Teri Bath*


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Wesson High School graduating seniors

Special to Wesson News

Korbin Montell Ashmore, Abbey Caroline Berch, Brynn Yahn Brice, Ba'Niya Brice, Michael Chase Britt, Courtney Marie Carr, Ayden William Carraway, Diamond Ashanti Catchings, Christian Geovanny Cayax-Marin, Lilly Kate Channell (Salutatorian), Bryce Len Coleman, Reid Roy Joseph Cuevas, Gracie Lynn Curtis, Taylor Nicole Davis, Hannah Ann Derouen, Emmaleigh Grace Dunaway, Cailley Elise Duplantis, Laney Kate Earls, Myles Rue Elkins, Mallory Reneas Ezell, Wyatt Zolon Garrett.

Kenneth Cole Gipson, Hinds Daniel Gunter, Allison Paige Hamilton (Valedictorian), Wyatt Layne Hughes, Mary Gwyn Hynum, Clifford Austin Jackson, Zariah Cortniana Jackson, Austin Elijah Johnson, La'Aysia Monae Johnson, Brett Kristoffer King, Ellas Marie Logan, Samuel Conrad Love, Amanda Grace Martin, JaQuavion Tashun Martin, Benjamin Conner McKenzie, Trevor Michael McRee, Hunter Blaylock Meredith, Eric Roland Merrill, Manuel Heith Miller, Peyton Michael Mire, Brianna Grace Myers.

Myrah Charlize Myers, Kalana Marie Nhem, Hunter Zachery Ray, Jayson Brainard Rios-Ramirez, Maggie Grace Runnels, Lucas Baldwin Shelton, Yadhira Alexandra Silvan Martinez, Aubree Lee Smith, Deshawn La'vel Smith, Ra'Kerra Denise Smith, Jordan Kelly Taylor, Andrew Brett Thompson, Tiera Emily Tronstad, Ahmya Fayth Wade, Taylor Marlayne Watson, Avery Anna Watts, William Cotton Westbrook, Braxton Lee Whaley, Emileigh Hayden Woodson.



Wesson News



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**STANLEY MARTIN,
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To all the residents of Wesson, it will be my pleasure to serve as your next Alderman at Large in the town of Wesson. I'd like to thank all of those who got out and voted yesterday, and I'd like to also thank Cathy Stroud and Chad Sills for a clean and honest race. Personally, it would have been honor if ether of you would have won!! I would also like to thank Van Graham for all of the dedicated years you have given unselfishly to the town...you will truly be missed. Now it's time for your voices to be heard.

Thanks again!
Stanley Martin

State lawmakers approve budget



Special to Wesson News

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi Lawmakers finally passed a \$7.1 billion state budget to fund government agencies – a 1.57 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, while continuing their political fighting.

Senators complained about their House counterparts, House members fought bitterly among themselves about budget details and lawmakers knowingly passed a bill that conflicts with federal Medicaid regulations. During the regular legislative session, they could not approve a budget because of the disputes, and Governor Tate Reeve had to bring them back to Jackson to do the job.

The Senate approved the budget after Governor Reeves promised he would veto a provision in the Department of Health portion of the budget the could have jeopardized \$1.2 billion in federal Medicaid money for Mississippi.

Republican Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann thanked the senators for their work, but he accused House leaders of working in bad faith by renegeing on some prior budget agreements and by filing bills that were outside Reeves’ parameters for the special session.

“There were three significant bills that came from the House, which were not on the governor’s call and did not reflect the agreement of the House, the governor and the Senate,” Hosemann said.

In the House, Republicans and Democrats quibbled over asking questions about bills and reading them on the floor, but contended more substantively over the Mississippi Development Authority’s budget, the agency responsible for economic development.

Rep. Robert Johnson III, the Democratic leader, tried, but failed to amend the legisla-tion to reduce the amount of money counties are required to contribute to economic development projects in areas with extremely high poverty rates or failing school districts.

Most agencies in the proposed budget will see flat funding with no major increases or decreases. They will see a drop-off starting in July of millions of dollars in “one-time” money, either federal pandemic funds that are drying up or state cash for projects that lawmakers are withholding this year.

Under the budget agreement, lawmakers are planning to leave about \$1 billion un-encumbered. Some legislative leaders say this is prudent, given federal cuts and un-certainty in Washington. Others question whether state agencies will suffer, and con-tractors go unpaid on already started projects, from not having capital expense money allocated in the coming year.

Some highlights of the spending agreements House and Senate leaders have reached for the coming budget year include:

- **Medicaid:** \$969.9 million, a 6.69 percent increase.
- **K-12 education:** \$3.34 billion, a .4 percent decrease, primarily due to a decrease in enrollment.
- **Universities:** \$838.4 million, a .4 percent decrease.
- **Community colleges:** \$299.4 million, a .22 percent increase
- **Department of Corrections:** \$438.2 million, a 4.4 percent increase

EDITOR'S NOTE: Excerpted from a Mississippi Today report.

Library hosts Summer Reading Program

Special to Wesson News

Children four years old to 12 years old from throughout the area will enter a wider and bigger world through learning and reading gates Wesson Public Library (WPL) is opening for them in its annual Summer Reading Program starting this month and continuing into July.

WPL is expecting 50 to 75 kids to participate in the program starting Thursday, June 26, and brings them together weekly on subsequent Thursdays through July 31.

Thematically framed as "Color Our World," the program will be a venue for learning experiences, encouraging use of library resources, crafts, food and fun and making new friends from 10 a.m. until noon each Thursday.

Weekly learning experiences will cover:

Quilt making. Dr. Steven Liverman will lead June 26 and July 24 crafts sessions, initially focusing on making a quilt on the first date, with the second date for completing it, if required, or focused on another craft.

Agriculture, Farming & Feeding the World. On July 10, Shelby Burge, Ag in the Classroom Coordinator for Mississippi Farm Bureau, will bring virtual reality goggles that offer the kids immersive and interactive exploration of the world of farming, and Lilly Belle, a simulated cow that the kids can milk, providing a unique farming experience.

Horses in Law Enforcement. On July 17, Captain Ellis Lee Morrison, who leads the Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division, and is responsible for training the horses and officers who serve in it, will talk about



Special to Wesson News

Captain Ellis Lee Morrison will talk about the Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division at Library's Summer Reading Program.

the role of the division, with a particular focus on search and rescue. He will bring four horses from his Wesson stables for photos of children atop them.

Throughout the program, participants will be encouraged to read books and other literature that introduce them to the wider world library resources open. On Thursday, July 31, the most voracious readers will be recognized and receive prizes in their age group categories.

Snacks and fun time will be part of each Thursday's experience, with ice cream a special treat on July 31 Awards Day.

Parents can register their kids for the Summer Reading Program at Wesson Public Library throughout June up and until the first Thursday session (June 26). The registration form includes a reading contract that makes a child eligible for reading prizes and agrees that books, minutes or pages will be part of a child's experience.



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Wesson Memorial Day ceremony



Special to Wesson News

In its celebration of Memorial Day, Wesson Garden Club partnered with The American Legion Drane-Prine Auxiliary Unit #79 to remember the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom by placing a memorial wreath on the Club's Blue Star Highway Marker at the south stoplight on Highway 51. Left to right are Sheila Stewart, Cherry Head, Teri Bath, Sherri Carty, Joy Westbrooks, Lisa Smith, Jean Ricks, Sonya Cowen and Jennifer Peets. The Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., The National Garden Clubs, Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc., and the Natchez Trace District.

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Oil spill, history test & shrimpers

Special to Wesson News

Lingering oil spill effects. Fifteen years after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded off the Gulf Coast, killing 11 and sending 134 million gallons (500 million liters) of crude gushing into the ocean, the effects of the nation's worst offshore oil spill are still being felt. British Petroleum paid billions of dollars in damages, propelling ambitious coastal restoration projects across five states. Yet cleanup workers and local residents who suffered health impacts they attribute to the oil spill have struggled to have their cases heard in court and few have received significant compensation. All but a handful of roughly 4,800 lawsuits seeking compensation for health problems linked to the oil spill have been dismissed and only one has been settled. While more than 300 restoration projects worth \$5.38 billion have been approved, including acquisition of wetlands in Mississippi to protect nesting areas for birds, rebuilding reefs along Pensacola Bay in Florida and restoring around 4 square miles of marsh in Lake Borgne near New Orleans have stalled.

End of history test. The Mississippi Board of Education will receive public comment on whether to eliminate the state U.S. history test as a high school graduation requirement. If approved, the statewide U.S. History Mississippi Academic Assessment Program test would no longer be a graduation requirement beginning this fall. Mississippi students, however, would still be required to take and pass a U.S. history class to graduate from high school. Getting rid of the test would save the state money and add more weight to the other three state assessments: Algebra, Biology, and English.

Shrimpers welcome tariffs. While American consumers and markets wonder and worry about President Donald Trump's on-again, off-again tariffs, there's one group cheering him as they hope he'll prop up their sinking business: Gulf coast shrimpers. American shrimpers have been hammered in recent years by cheap imports flooding the U.S. market and restaurants, driving down prices to the point that profits are razor thin or shrimpers are losing money and struggling to stay afloat. Tariffs, they hope, could level the playing field and help their businesses not just survive but thrive. Since 2021, the price of imported shrimp has dropped by more than \$1.5 billion, according to the Southern Shrimpers Alliance, causing the U.S. shrimp industry to lose nearly 50% of its market value. The shrimpers alliance

complains that the overseas industry has benefitted from billions of dollars invested in shrimp aquaculture, cheap or even forced labor, use of antibiotics banned in the U.S., and few or no environment regulations. More than 90% of shrimp consumed in the U.S. is imported, according to the alliance.

Tortoise back home. Myrtle, a cherished pet tortoise, has been reunited with its family in Mississippi weeks after disappearing during a deadly tornado outbreak in March. Tiffany Emanuel fled her home with her family in the rural Kokomo area as a tornado hit on March 15. She returned to find two pine trees had fall-

NEWS NUGGETS

en on top of her tortoise's backyard home. Myrtle was missing. Weeks later, a neighbor found the injured tortoise. She was taken to the Central Mississippi Turtle Rescue for medical treatment. Emanuel is now nursing Myrtle back to health. "It feels good to kind of have some kind of happy out of so much sad and grief and loss," she said.

Tornado safety. With new innovations and technology, scientists have learned from major tornado outbreaks over the years how to improve safety guidance. Forecasters try to get the word out about staying safe during a storm — but also planning for it ahead of time. Safety experts recommend: Getting emergency updates on weather radios, specialized receivers that get alerts and sound an alarm in an emergency. If possible, going to an enclosed, underground shelter or basement, or an above ground safe room that can withstand tornadic winds. If you have to be above ground in a tornado, put as many walls and barriers between you and the outside as you possibly can. Mattresses, couch cushions, a car seat or other sturdy items can provide protection from deadly flying or falling debris. Wear a bicycle or sports helmet. Closing your home's garage door and all interior doors can ease the high winds inside by compartmentalizing them. When the storm is over and you come out of a shelter, dress with long pants and sturdy shoes to navigate downed trees and power lines and shredded buildings.



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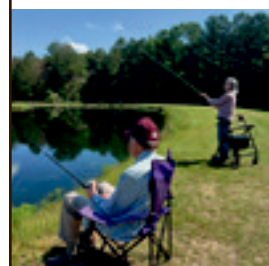
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New Co-Lin Academic Instruction Dean



Special to Wesson News

Dr. Stephanie L. Henderson

Special to Wesson News

Dr. Stephanie L. Henderson of Brookhaven has been named Dean of Academic Instruction at Co-Lin effective July 1, 2025.

A seasoned educator and administrator, Henderson brings more than two decades of experience in K-12 and higher education to her new role.

“We are pleased to welcome Dr. Stephanie Henderson to the Co-Lin family,” said Co-Lin President Dr. Dewayne Middleton. “Her extensive experience and strong reputation in academic leadership make her an exceptional addition to our team. We look forward to the vision and energy she will bring as our new Dean of Academic Instruction.”

As Dean, Henderson will oversee the academic instructional programs of the college, working with faculty and staff to maintain high academic standards, promote student success, and support curriculum innovation across all campuses.

“I am excited to join the Co-Lin family and contribute to its strong tradition of academic excellence,” said Henderson. “My passion lies in supporting students, empowering faculty, and helping institutions thrive through intentional leadership and collaboration.”

Henderson currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Education and Psychology at Alcorn State University. She previously served as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Mississippi College. Her administrative background also includes serving as Interim Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent in the Brookhaven School District, where she led district-wide instructional planning, compliance initiatives, and strategic budgeting.

Throughout her career, Henderson

has championed accreditation readiness, curriculum development, and equity in education. She has advised doctoral students, led academic committees, and facilitated professional development at the local and state levels.

Henderson earned a Doctor of Education and Education Specialist degree from Mississippi College, a master’s degree from Millsaps College, and a bachelor’s degree from Spelman College. She is also a certified accreditation team member with both CAEP and Cognia and was named Mississippi College’s Distinguished Alumna in 2022.

She is actively involved in her community as a teacher and ministry leader in her church, a life member of the Junior Auxiliary of Brookhaven, a member of the National Association of Junior Auxiliaries Scholarship Committee, and a member of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College. She also serves as a board member for both Mission First and Magnolia Speech School and is an active member of The Natchez, Mississippi Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. She is married to Dr. Roderick Henderson, and they have two sons, RJ and Michael.

“Dr. Henderson brings a depth of knowledge, a passion for education, a strong track record of academic leadership, and a high level of professionalism that make her an excellent fit for this role,” said Dr. Jackie Martin, Vice President of the Wesson Campus. “Her experience as both a classroom educator and an academic administrator in higher education gives her a well-rounded perspective that will serve our faculty, staff, and students well. We are thrilled to welcome her to the Co-Lin family and look forward to the positive impact she will make.”



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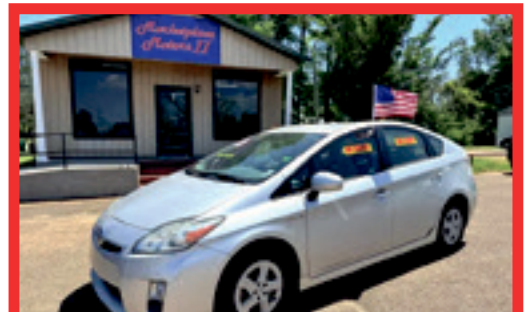


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Keeping safe to enjoy summer

By Guest Columnist Dr. Stephanie Duguid

As temperatures climb and humidity thickens in South Central Mississippi, it's important to stay mindful of how extreme heat can impact our health. Whether you're working outdoors, relaxing in the backyard, or enjoying time by the pool, summer safety should be top of mind. Heat-related illnesses can sneak up quickly, especially during the hot and humid days we often see in June and July. Here are some simple, yet effective, ways to protect yourself and your loved ones:

- **Hydrate Frequently:** Water is your best friend. Drink plenty throughout the day -- even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid sugary or alcoholic drinks, as they can lead to dehydration.
- **Dress for the Weather:** Lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing helps your body breathe. Don't forget a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses when outdoors!
- **Limit Outdoor Activities:** Try to schedule outdoor tasks in the early morning or late evening. Take frequent breaks in the shade or indoors when needed.
- **Know the Signs of Heat Exhaustion:** Watch for symptoms like dizziness, nausea, heavy sweating, or weakness. If these appear, move to a cool place, sip water, and seek medical attention if symptoms persist.
- Pools and splash pads are great ways to cool off in the heat, but they also require caution -- especially when children are involved.
- **Supervise at All Times:** Drowning can happen in seconds and in just inches of water. Never leave children unattended, even for a moment.
- **Avoid Running Near Water Areas:** Wet surfaces are slippery. Prevent falls by encouraging walking, not running, near pools and splash zones.
- **Teach Water Safety Early:** Children should learn how to float, swim, and safely enter and exit the water. Enroll them in local swim classes if possible.
- **Have Safety Equipment Nearby:** Keep life vests, a reaching pole, and a phone in close proximity in case of emergency.
- **Visit the Wesson Park Splash Pad:** Looking for a fun, safe, and local way to cool off? Don't forget about the splash pad at Wesson Park. It's a perfect spot for kids to enjoy water play while staying cool -- and it's free and open to the public during the summer months. Just remember to bring sunscreen, water bottles, and towel

Our pets feel the heat, too -- and they can suffer from heatstroke just like humans. Keep your four-legged family members safe with these summer pet tips:

- **Provide Shade and Water:** Make sure pets have access to fresh water and a cool, shaded place to rest -- especially if they're outdoors.
- **Never Leave Pets in Cars:** Even with the windows cracked, the temperature inside a car can rise dangerously in just minutes.
- **Protect Their Paws:** Hot pavement can burn sensitive paws. Walk pets in the early morning or evening when surfaces are cooler.
- **Watch for Heat Stress:** Excessive panting, lethargy, drooling, and vomiting can all be signs of heatstroke. If your pet shows these symptoms, get them to a vet immediately.

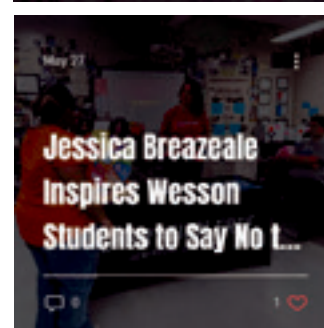
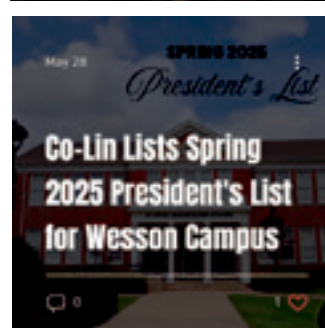
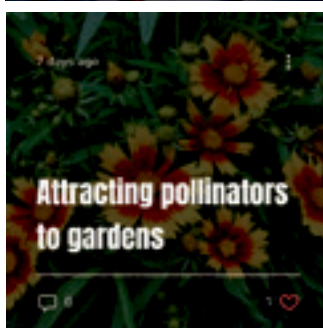
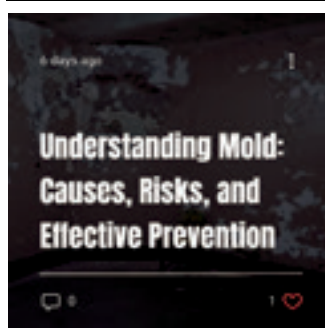
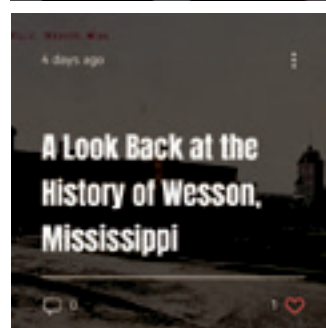
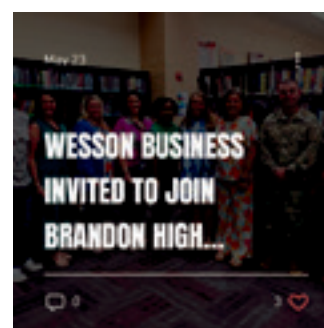
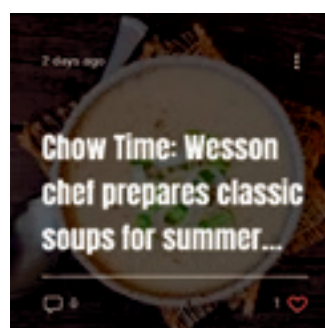
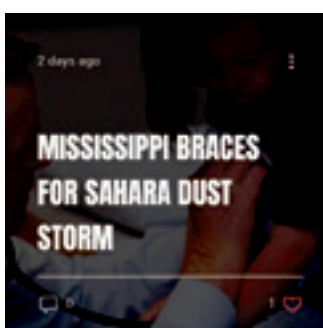
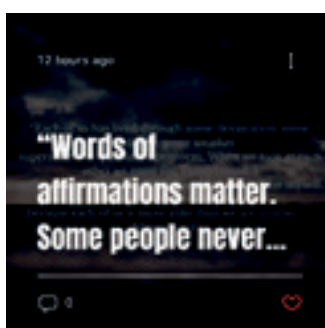
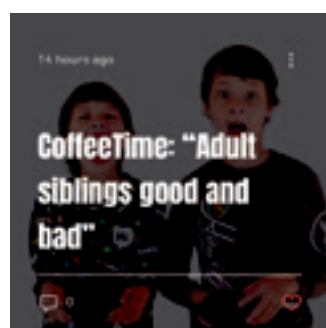
This summer, enjoy everything summer has to offer -- from backyard BBQs and pool-side fun to refreshing splash pad outings, but don't forget to protect yourself, your family, and your pets from the dangers of extreme heat. Wishing you a safe, sunny, and joyful summer!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Stephanie Duguid is owner of Do Good ProHealth (CPR Classes) and Do Good Leadership (motivational speaking, and leadership and success coaching). She is also a Mississippi Health Ambassador.



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Curing boredom & fighting trafficking

Wesson News

Christy Shaw settled in Wesson in 2008 after marrying the Mayor of the town, and its First Lady has become known among local shoppers as a source of deals and gifts since 2013 when she started doing yard sales with her mother, which evolved into a store they operate together on Highway 51 downtown.

She served eight years in the military, another seven as a paramedic and, along the way, was a volunteer reservist for fire and police departments before becoming a shopkeeper seeking to raise money to help childhood victims of sex trafficking through her business.

Shaw says her checkered career reflects “someone who gets bored easily, and needs to be working on many projects.”

Born and raised in Richland, Mississippi, Shaw’s interests growing up included cheerleading in the seventh through ninth grades and marching on her high school band’s flag team in the tenth through twelfth grades.

Shaw graduated from Richland High School in 1996, attended Hinds Community College for one semester during which “I enjoyed everything about the life of a student except studying,” dropped out and enlisted in the Army National Guard.

“The military was my choice because I enjoyed ROTC in high school with my friends,” Shaw explains. “It was the way to go.”

Shaw spent most of her military career from 1997 to 2005 at Camps Shelby and McCain in Mississippi, with a one-year deployment to Kuwait as an administrative specialist for the Rear Operations Center unit, which prepared troops for their service in Iraq and decompressed them after they completed their service.

During her National Guard service, she also worked on an ambulance and completed paramedics school at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) in 2004 and 2005. On an ambulance orientation in 1998, she met her future husband, Alton Shaw from Wesson.

During 2010-20017, Shaw worked with the UMMC Med Com air care and critical care transport service as a paramedic, and also found time to serve the Pearl, Mississippi, fire and police departments, often riding to fires on trucks with crews and accompanying narcotics patrols to calls as an observer. She also started teaming up with her mother, Linda Hales, on yard sales.

The yard sales, which started in 2013 as “just something to do,” increasingly, became Shaw’s main focus after she and her husband went to a Christian leadership conference in Atlanta where they met representatives from Destiny Rescue, a not-for-profit organization that rescues childhood sex trafficking victims.

“I had just had a given birth to my son Parker, now 12, and saw his face in their statistics and stories they told,” Shaw says. “They fired my passion.” A 2016 mission trip with the organization to Cambodia and Thailand gave her first-hand experience with the issue.

“My mother and I started seeking donations to sell and raise money for the children,” she says.

Donations from individuals and organizations, including Walmart Distribution Center and other companies, grew. Life View Ministries (LVM), a not-for-profit organization that her husband had started several years earlier, has become the organization to which donors can make tax deductible contributions. Shaw and her mother named their growing business C&L (for Christy and Linda) Yard

Sales and moved it indoors to an old building on Spring Street which LVM had acquired for anticipated programs that never became a reality.

Today, a building in downtown Wesson on Highway 51, houses the old yard sales business, now called C&L Treasures, and local shoppers can find, among other things, kitchenware, crafts, tools and clothing. “Our customers include bargain hunters looking for deals and people looking for quality gifts,” says Shaw. “We tell them we’re the place for ‘gifts and thrifts.’”

The first store on Spring Street has been renovated and now offers space for small events – receptions, parties, meetings, trainings. It’s called The Events Venue and is new source of funds for LVM.

It has proved a pretty good way to beat boredom.

What are your hobbies?

I used to enjoy scuba diving and travel, but now focus on puzzles and diamond darts for the calm they provide.

Are you a reader?

I am an avid reader, mostly focused on self-improvement and sci-fi. My current reading includes two self-improvement books – *Let Them* and *Anxious Generation* – *The Holy Bible* and the sci-fi book *Uglies*.

How about music?

I am a listener, and enjoy 1980s and 1990s oldie rock and Christian rock music.

Aerosmith is my favorite artist. I sing, but hurt other person’s ears when I do.

Do you go to the theater or movies?

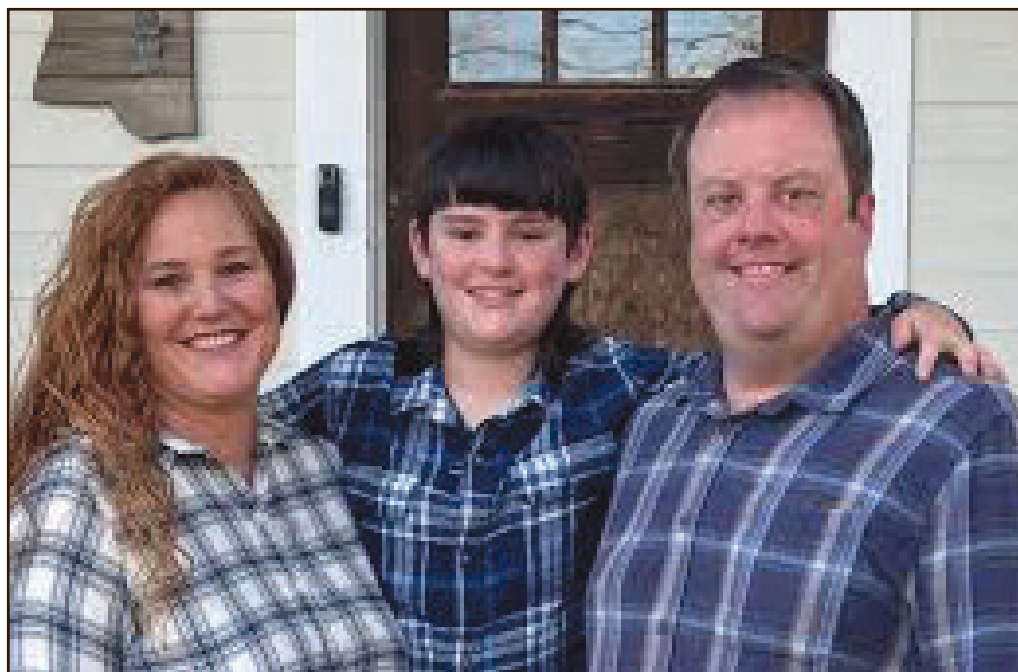
When I travel, I always try to go to theatrical performances. On one trip, I enjoyed *Les Miserables* and *Cats*. My favorite movies are *Dirty Dancing* and *Ghost*. I also like action and sci-fi, like *The Avengers* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

If you won a lot of money in the lottery, how would you spend it?

I would put it into my not-for-profit.

How would you change the world?

The world is terribly broken. I try to do my part helping to rescue kids from the sex trade, but only God can fix the world.



Special to Wesson News

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Club installs new 2025-27 officers

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Garden Club installed its newly elected officers for 2025-2027 at a special ceremony last month at the Wesson Library Pavilion.

Dixie Thornton, Third Vice President of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, officiated at the ceremony that installed President Sherri Carty, Vice President Debbie Hoaglin, Secretary Rebecca Harrison, Treasurer Pollyanna Patterson, Member at Large Jennifer Peets, and Executive Board Member Past President Denise Jackson.

The Club is looking forward to the new leadership over the next two years to help build on its accomplishments, Thornton, who is also a member, said.

The Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc., and The National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Special to Wesson News

Dixie Thornton (far left), a Wesson Garden Club (WGC) member who is Third Vice President of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, officiated at ceremony installing new WGC officers (left to right) Sherri Carty, Debbie Hoaglin, Rebecca Harrison, Pollyanna Patterson, Jennifer Peets and Denise Jackson.



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Yellow-blooming plants for gardens

By Guest Columnist Eddie Smith

Yellow-blooming plants bring a bright, cheerful energy to gardens. There's something about that bold splash of golden color that lifts the spirit and catches the eye, especially after the gray tones of winter.

The Lady Banks' Rose, known scientifically as *Rosa banksiae*, is an old-fashioned climber with timeless charm and exceptional resistance to pests and diseases. This vigorous, rambling rose is nearly thornless, making it easy to train over fences, arbors or trellises.

As spring settles in, Lady Banks puts on one of the most breathtaking floral displays. In early to mid-spring, the long canes are smothered in clusters of soft yellow blossoms, each about an inch across.

The rose blooms range from semi-double to fully double, and their sheer number creates the illusion of a golden waterfall spilling down the garden structure. These have a delicate, sweet fragrance and completely transform the plant for a few glorious weeks with their abundant blooms.

Lady Banks is relatively low maintenance once established. It thrives in full sun but tolerates light shade, especially in hot Southern gardens. Well-draining soil is a must, and a layer of mulch around the base helps retain moisture and regulate soil temperature.

You can give this rose a light pruning after it blooms to shape the plant and remove any dead wood, but this is not necessary. In Mississippi, it holds its deep green, glossy foliage nearly year-round, providing a lush backdrop for other plants, even when it's not in bloom.

Japanese Rose plants, which are known scientifically as *Kerria japonica*, are another garden choice, graceful and adaptable shrubs with a completely different but equally delightful presence.

Japanese Rose plants have elegant, arching stems that create soft, fountain-like form. In early to mid-spring, they are covered with bright, golden-yellow double flowers that look like tiny pom-poms or ruffled miniature roses. Each bloom measures about 1 to 2 inches across and glows against the fresh green foliage.

TENDING YOUR GARDEN



Special to Wesson News

This plant thrives in partial shade, making it useful where other plants struggle, like under trees, along woodland edges or in mixed borders with dappled light. Its slender green stems remain eye-catching in winter, adding structure and color to the dormant landscape when most plants fade into the background.

Japanese Rose is a hardy and low-fuss shrub that thrives in average, well-drained soil. It is especially tolerant of shade, drought and even some neglect. Rejuvenate it by pruning it hard every few years right after flowering to encourage fresh growth and more blooms the following season.

Both of these yellow bloomers bring brightness to the spring garden. Their glowing flowers, graceful growth habits and reliable nature make them standout plants in the landscape.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Eddie Smith is a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. He is also host of the popular Southern Gardening television program. Locate Southern Gardening products online at <http://extension.ms-state.edu/shows/southern-gardening>.

Locals advise school on CTE

Special to Wesson News

The Brandon High School Business & Industry Advisory Committee has added representatives from a Wesson company to join its team of counselors.

Grace Foam Solutions (GFS), a Wesson-based spray foam distribution and installation company, sent Ricky and Jessica Breazeale, two of its four owners, to the spring meeting of the committee on the invitation of the school's Family and Consumer Science Department.

Brandon High School has different areas of career and technical education (CTE) and seeks a diversity of professionals for an advisory group that guides its programs and students.

"I was encouraged that there is a level of secondary school students interested in entering the trade field," Ricky Breazeale said. "In the last seven years, we've seen a sharp decline in skilled and qualified trade workers. So I'm encouraged that Brandon High School is taking proactive measures to solve a problem."



Special to Wesson News

Wesson's Ricky and Jessica Breazeale (far left) join school advisory committee.

Brent and Dr. Stephanie Duguid, the two other GFS owners, are currently working with Spray Foam Polyurethane Alliance (SPFA) to develop an approved curriculum based off the current professional standards to increase the opportunities for individuals interested in entering the spray foam industry.

The curriculum initiative is in the first stage of development, with a goal of utilizing the workforce pro-

grams at educational institutions across the nation in collaboration with approved spray foam companies in an apprenticeship program. The goal is for GFS to qualify interested parties to become licensed spray foam contractors.

Brent Duguid was the former Dean of Career, Technical, and Workforce Education at Co-Lin, and Dr. Duguid served the college as Dean of Academic Instruction

and Chief Academic Officer.

Brandon High School's Business & Industry Advisory Committee meets twice a year. The committee helps the school maintain the highest industry standards for the CTE and Family and Consumer Science classes taught there.

"I'm honored we were asked to be part of this group," said Breazeale. "It shows so much promise."

PRAM award



Special to Wesson News
Jessica Breazeale of Wesson received an Award of Excellence at the Public Relations Association of Mississippi's (PRAM) annual state professional development conference. PRAM's conference was themed "Anchored in Communication, Building Connections" at the Golden Nugget Biloxi Hotel & Casino. PRAM members across Mississippi assembled their notable campaigns from 2024 to enter into the organization's premier public relations awards program. Award-winning entries demonstrate practitioners' knowledge and application of the public relations strategic planning process. This was Breazeale's third award in the program.

50+ Club



Special to Wesson News
The 50+ Club closed out its year, but will resume meeting in September. The club will meet monthly into the spring at the Anderson Building on the Co-Lin Wesson campus. The college's culinary art students cooked and served a wonderful lunches under the direction of Abby Rials and included presentations of high-interest speakers or entertainment. At the year-end meeting, the Brookmont Stings Plus provided its unique sound of predominantly dulcimers. Membership of the 50+ Club comes from Wesson and surrounding towns.



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