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Chamber launches 'shop local' project

Special to Wesson News

The Wesson Chamber of Commerce has launched a unique promotion to help local merchants, eateries and other consumer-oriented enterprises rebuild businesses that have been slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The promotion, which the Chamber calls the "Shop Local -- Shop Downtown Wesson Project" -- features special registration boxes at participating businesses where customers and patrons sign up on entry forms and place them for a future drawing to win a gift card they can use for purchases. The Chamber is providing funds to the participating businesses to cover the gift card purchases of the winners.

The Chamber asked businesses to employ their particular promotion skills that have proven effective in their unique marketing activities to create their own drawing boxes and set them



Photo Special to Wesson News

up in prominent display spaces. Those with the best drawing box promotional display received award incentives that recognized their creativity.

"Our goal in this project is to stimulate business and to encourage shopping local," the Chamber's Marilyn Britt said. "The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Chamber to



Photo Special to Wesson News

Drawing boxes for Chamber of Commerce promotion are at businesses throughout Wesson.

cancel the annual Founders Day celebration, which is a focal point for local businesses to both enjoy a one-day sales boost and cultivate ongoing customers. The idea of the drawbox promotion is to help local businesses in a similar way."

Twenty-four organizations are participating in the promotion: 51

Diner, Salon 51, Steel Outdoors/Alpha Machine and Welding, Deb's All Tangled Up, Wolf Hollow Golf Course, The Carpenter Shop, Serendipity Salon and Therapy, Mill Town Salon and Day Spa, Wesson Ace Hardware, Runyun Automotive, Park Place Ice Cream, Dump's Restaurant, Skeet's, Copiah Nutrition, Shop-N-Wash, Ashley's 51, Another Time. . . .Another Place, Mill Town Mall, Nan Drane's Massage Therapy, East End, Wilma Turnbo Produce, Discount Liquor Store, Royal Touch Massage (Bittany Thaddison at Mill Town Salon) and Dollar General.

The Chamber is publicizing the promotion on its Facebook page and sending out materials that spotlight the participating businesses and encourage customers to visit and patronize them.

The date of the drawings for gift card winners has not been determined, but the Chamber is planning a centralized event that will bring a crowd to town, Britt said.

Library renovation starts



Wesson News

Hazlehurst-based Huntington Construction Company has started the \$379,600 renovation work at the Wesson Public Library. Mississippi Development Authority funded the total project costing \$443,600 with Americans with Disabilities Act monies. It includes addition of 1,000 square feet, facade restoration and installation of new shelving. The library is now operating at the Wesson Old School Community Center.

Pandemic effects shape austere budget

Special to Wesson News

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wesson is projecting a five percent decline in revenues and a four percent decrease in its expenditures for the 2020-2021 fiscal year from its 2019-2020 budgeted revenues and expenses.

With forecasted revenues of \$1,133,757 and expenditures of 1,113,260 for the coming year, the town will continue to run a projected budget surplus of \$20,496 -- down \$14,801 or 42 percent.

"It's an austere budget for tough times, but it entails no new taxes," Wesson Mayor Alton Shaw said.

The town's budget encompasses revenues that pay for general government expenses, the police and street departments, Old School Community Center and public library; and revenues and expenses for the

fire and water/sewer departments and water meters.

In the budget for the coming year, Old School rentals showed the sharpest percentage forecasted decline from \$10,000 to \$1,000 (90 percent) and water/sewer revenue showed the largest dollar drop from \$538,600 to \$506,600 (a six percent slide) on projected declines from sewer charges to customers (\$17,000 from \$187,000) and metered water sales (\$5,000 to \$80,000). Other revenue dips included the motor vehicle tax levy (down \$5,000 to \$50,000), sales tax (down \$5,000 to \$155,000) and fines and forfeitures (down \$10,000 to \$35,000).

On the expenditures side of the budget, the street department enjoyed a \$4,500 increase to \$83,350 and fire department expenses were projected to remain the same as the

cont. on page 11

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Non-road shut down at park



Wesson News

Mound of gravel blocks roadway motorists created at municipal park.

Wesson News

A road is a road is a road!

Not so, say Wesson Aldermen.

Some motorists who visited the Wesson municipal park created a new road from the parking area on Church Street to Spring Street.

"They would enter the parking area from the east on Church Street and exit on the west on their non-road to Spring Street," Mayor Alton Shaw explained. "In truth,

the park was not supposed to have separate entry and exit roads."

There were many complaints about use of the non-road, and the Aldermen saw it as safety a hazard, Mayor Shaw said.

So the non-road is now "no road" by vote of the Aldermen.

"We've blocked off access to the west exit," Shaw said. "If you're going to the municipal park, there is just one way in and one way out."

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POLICE BLOTTER

During August, Wesson Police Department activity encompassed:

Responses to:

Two vehicle accidents

One family disturbance

Two disturbing the peace incidents

Arrests & citations for:

Twelve speeding violations

Four driving with no insurance

Two disregarding traffic device

One simple assault

One disorderly conduct & failure to comply

Two cyber stalking (warrants issued)

One malicious mischief

Wesson police assisted Hazlehurst-based ASAP Ambulance on one response.

Wesson Police conduct nightly business checks. On school days, they facilitate 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.

PRENTISS SMITH FOR SENATE

My wife, Isabel Rainer Smith, and I moved to her hometown of Brookhaven 12 years ago. I fell in love with this area and its people, and I'm grateful for the opportunities we've been granted. I want to help make those opportunities available to many more young men and women. We have three children, and we are proud to be raising them in such a wonderful place. I am the General Manager of Toyota of Brookhaven, and I believe it's time to allow a businessman a chance to represent our economic interests.

I am running for this office because I best represent a fresh, long-term vision for District 39. What we are doing in Southwest Mississippi is not working. Economic development is almost non-existent, rural broadband is still unavailable to a large percentage of our residents, public schools have been massively underfunded and over-regulated, and healthcare providers are not receiving the reimbursements they need to thrive, or in some cases survive. Mississippi consistently ranks near the bottom in economic, education and healthcare categories and Southwest Mississippi is falling behind the rest of Mississippi. If you allow me the opportunity to represent you, I'll fight to guarantee our schools are fully funded. I have a vested interest in our public schools, not only because I have three children in Brookhaven School District, but also because I understand strong public schools are necessary if we ever hope to see real economic development. I'll fight for the interests of our local healthcare providers. Most importantly, I'll fight to represent the economic interests of the working class people of this District. You deserve representation that is only focused on you, your family and moving this part of the state into the 21st century. I am hard working, energetic, forward thinking, and beholden to no special interest group. I hope you'll cast your vote for me on **Tuesday, September 22nd**. I want to represent the hard working people of this District who, like me, want the best for their children and families.

VOTE: Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Mississippi Senate District 39

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Wesson Flea Market cancelled



There will be no Wesson Flea Market next month.

Special to Wesson News

October won't be as festive in the Wesson area this year, but it looks like it may be healthier.

Due to continuing COVID-19 concerns, the Wesson Volunteer Fire Department and Brookhaven-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce cancelled two traditional events that normally attract thousands of visitors with arts and crafts and fleas vendors, food and entertainment: the Wesson Flea Market on October 17 and the Ole Brook Festival on the first weekend in October.

The announcements came at a time when Mississippi is seeing an 80 percent decline in new COVID-19 cases across the state, which Governor Tate Reeves attributes to the commitment of people to mask-wearing and social distancing.

The festival cancellations answered the Governor's call for people not to become complacent. "The numbers are going down," he said. "Let's be happy about that, but let's not rest. Let's not ignore it. Let's fight and continue to crush this virus."

Reeves encouraged county leaders to enforce his executive orders to wear masks, limit crowd sizes, as the festival cancellations will do, and curb restaurant capacities. With the school year starting, he extended his orders to encompass crowd sizes at extracurricular events, such as football games and band concerts, which will be limited to two spectators per participant.

Copiah County has reported slightly more than one thousand COVID-19 cases, with 30 deaths, and Lincoln County's case toll is less than one thousand, with 50 deaths.

All photos Special to Wesson News

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- 2017 Ford Fusion S **SOLD!** Owner, Backup Camera, 32 MPG, Like New!
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- 2008 Toyota Highlander Limited, Leather, Backup Camera, New Tires
- 2012 Cadillac SRX, **SOLD!** Collection, Low Miles, Sunroof, Like New
- 2009 Toyota Avalon **SOLD!** Low Mileage, Leather Seats, Sunroof, Luxury
- 2012 Mercedes C250 Sport, Low Mileage, Sunroof, Leather, Like New
- 2014 Ford Escape Titanium, Leather, Backup Camera, 32 MPG
- 2012 Chrysler Town and Country Touring L Pkge, Leather, DVD
- 2012 Chev 3500 Crew Cab Flatbed Low Low mileage, PW, PL, Cruise Druamax Diesel

2011 Chevrolet Silverado 1500



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August Honor yards



All photos Special to Wesson News

Wesson Garden Club has recognized the August landscaping efforts of Barbara Joe and Sherri Carty at 2017 Railroad Street (top), Nick and Jennifer Smith at 1125 Old Red Star Road (above) and Wilma Turnbo Produce at 2056 Main Street (below) for Yard of the Month honors in town residential, rural residential and organizational categories. The awards, based on maintenance principles and elements of landscape design, seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry that values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor properties during the spring, summer and fall.



Art in these crazy times

By Guest Columnist Shaw Furlow

Well, folks, here we are again. Another month has come and gone and still no live performances. I miss the music, but I miss my friends, as well. I have committed to do a show in Natchez at a small venue at the end of this month. It's something I have to do for me. It's been a while.

With the world still reeling from the Coronavirus and two hurricanes, the future of live performances, as we knew them, is bleak. Broadway and professional regional theatres are still dark. Thousands of actors, writers, musicians, tech personnel, costumers and stage hands are all sitting at home hoping for an end. Bands with new music out should be on the road promoting the album. But they are at home, as well. I recently read where the venerable soul band, Tower of Power, had to cancel a European tour for the first time. Legendary guitarist Al Di Meola is at home showing off his Italian roots in the kitchen.

Some musicians have used this time



Wesson News

to write and create new music. Pop superstar Taylor Swift dropped an album no one even knew she was recording. On the other side of the music business, young Brookhaven rapper and former Co-Lin Blue Wave Show Band member Kris Jamz took to his small, home studio and went to work producing several new tracks.

I guess out of weirdness some normalcy is welcomed. Creativity comes from many sources.

A friend of mine, who has pretty much quarantined as much as I, plays his guitar and writes songs every day.

Tony Norton, one of the partners in the Downtown Music Academy, has used his time off to cook with his daughter. He also has done some wood carving, creating keepsakes for his friends.

Recently, on my weekly day out of the house, I ran into local guitarist, former Co-Lin rock band Sojourner Kyle Graves, and I asked him about gigs. He has some venues where he plays solo shows and has been able to hold onto some of them, depending on the size of venue. "It's not the same," he told me, "but it is something." Ahh, youth.

Virtual concerts are becoming quite prolific on the internet. Everyone from established stars like Jimmy Buffet and Vince Gill to members of the Chicago Symphony have placed music on Face-

book and YouTube, all remotely recorded and carefully edited. I will cite some links at the end of this column. I highly recommend Eric Whitaker's mass choir.

Once again, the creative minds at the Brookhaven Regional Arts Guild (BRAG) have come up with a way to show their works during this long spell. "Landmarks and Landscapes" is their latest endeavor, a virtual art show that



promotes the talents of guild members. Like other art shows, it was adjudicated, and there were works for sale. Winners were selected, and prizes were awarded. Although the voting is complete to honor particular show works, you can still catch many pieces on the "Landmarks and Landscapes" website. Visit its Facebook page for all the information that would be too much for this column. "We really had to get creative," local

artist Derek Covington Smith, vice president of BRAG, said. The latest BRAG venture follows its drive-through art show, which it hosted in a downtown Brookhaven parking lot a few months ago. The latest virtual project was a bit difficult to judge, Smith noted. "There were works for sale, like at an in-person show," he said. "We are now looking for a venue that can handle our annual regional show in November. There will be well over a hundred entries from all over the southeast."

Here are some websites of the virtual shows.

- <https://youtu.be/D7o7BrlbaDs>
- https://youtu.be/P_QE0rbUB6Y
- <https://bragarts.weebly.com/#/>

In these crazy times, when you can't go out, these clips will have to suffice. Support the arts, my friends. Artists want to work.

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

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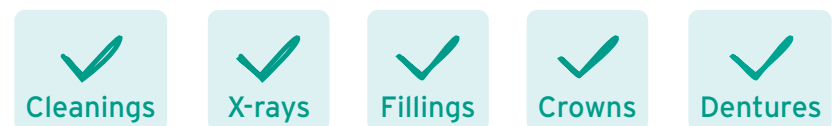


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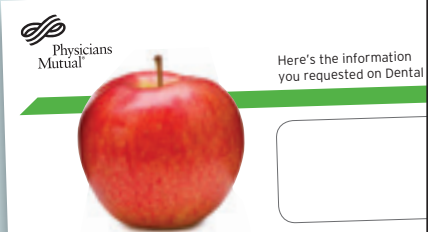


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Vocational exam launched PR career

By Bob Arnold

In junior high school at Wesson Attendance Center in the 1990s, a computerized vocational exam set Jessica Breazeale on the career path she has pursued since. Based on her answers to questions, it concluded she would be best suited for work in public relations.

More than two decades later, Breazeale operates Jessica Breazeale Consulting (JBC), her own public relations organization based in Wesson with clients throughout the nation. Earlier this year, The Public Relations Association of Mississippi honored JBC's work with an Award of Excellence for "setting a new standard of excellence" among statewide organizations engaged in communications, public relations, marketing and media activities. In 2020, Breazeale was also the sole Mississippi public relations practitioner to receive the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) conferred by the Public Relations Society of America to certify exceptional professionals who complete a special project and successfully pass a rigorous examination.

"I love what I do, and have never strayed from the career path that Wesson Attendance Center helped me identify," Breazeale says.

The Wesson native says she loved growing up in a small town "where you can walk around freely and drive four-wheelers." She helped her family operate their local business -- the Wesson truck stop off the Interstate 55 exit -- learned dance and assisted other would-be dancers at Nena Smith Studios and enjoyed swimming in the local pool.

Breazeale graduated from Wesson High School in 2000, where she was Homecoming Queen, and received an Associate's Degree in general studies at Co-Lin in 2003, where she was Miss Co-Lin, Colettes captain, a show choir member, Trailblazer and Diamond Doll. In 2006, she received her BS in public relations and theater from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). She received her Master's Degree in public relations from Northern Alabama in 2009, where she also met her husband, Ricky, an aspiring pastor.



Wesson News

During her college years, Breazeale had a gig as a performer for Disney Cruise Line at Fort Canaveral, Florida, as singer, dancer and actress. At USM, she also got a taste of public relations work as an area recruiter in northern Mississippi and northern Alabama. Her "first real pr job," she relates, was in tobacco education for the Alabama Department of Health's Tobacco Free Alabama program.

Breazeale returned with her husband from the Mississippi Gulf Coast to Wesson to be near her parents ("my step father was seriously ill") after recruiting for USM's College of Business and College of Science and Technology in 2012-2013 and serving as an American Heart Association Heart Walk Director in 2013. She started building the freelance business that grew into JBC while working as public relations and marketing director at Brookhaven-based Reeds Metals from 2014-2017 and public affairs manager at Georgia Pacific at Monticello in 2018-2019.

"It has been a weird time to start my own consulting firm in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's working," says Breazeale. JBC has ten to twelve clients that it serves on an ongoing basis, and several others it helps part-time in the digital marketing and advertising and public relations services it offers across the U.S. Among its clients are Thermaguard Industries in Zachery, Louisiana, Protec in Kentucky and Brookhaven-based Tree Extractors, Rushing Metals and Martin's Construction.

Breazeale and her husband have one son, Walker, 9, in the fourth grade at Wesson Attendance Center,

Wesson Chamber of Commerce, The Public Relations Association of Mississippi.

Are you a reader?

I read Christian and spiritual literature. I am currently reading Joyce Myer's *Unshakable Trust*.

Do you enjoy movies or theater?

I would rather be in them than watch them. As a child, I dreamed of performing on Broadway. I enjoy the Netflix show, *The 100*. My favorite movie is *Gone with the Wind*.

What kind of music do you like?

I am into modern worship and Christian contemporary music. I also am a dancer. I was captain of the Colettes at Co-Lin and the Dixie Darlins' at Southern Mississippi. I danced with Disney Cruise Line and in theater shows.

What would you do with lottery winnings if you were so lucky?

I don't play the lottery, but if I did, any winnings would be tithed to the church. Then I would pay my bills and spend them on travel.

How would you change the world?

I would promote peace with one another!

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

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What are your hobbies?

I enjoy swimming. I like to travel -- to New York City and places I have never been, and on cruises. I am also active in community organizations -- Lincoln County Rotary,

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Time to prepare for disasters

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

"Disasters Happen. Prepare Now. Learn How." That is the slogan of this year's National Preparedness Month during September. It's a time to make certain you are prepared for any disaster -- a good time to learn lifesaving skills and check insurance policies for hazards you may face (floods, tornadoes or hurricanes). It's also a time to prepare for any other challenges you may face, whether it's loss of power or water for an extended time.

Last year was one of the most active hurricane seasons on record. During the current hurricane season, we need to make sure we are prepared for any emergency or natural disaster. Officially, the Atlantic hurricane season starts on June 1 and runs until November 30. In the Eastern Pacific Ocean, hurricane season begins May 15 and ends November 30. Most of these storms hit between August and October on both coasts.

You need to make your disaster preparedness decisions before an event. After the event is much too late. For any situation, there are a few preparedness steps:

1. Make a plan, prepare, and practice it with your family;
2. Make an emergency kit;
3. Recheck and restock the emergency kit often;
4. Stay informed and monitor and adjust your plan as needed.

Planning. Plans need to be devised for all family members and any pets you may have. Communicate and practice the plan, including evacuation routes, with everyone in your household and family. Children, too. Plan for when you or your children are at work or school, and when commuting to or from them. Plans should include who you will contact, how you will evacuate from your home or office, where you will meet if separated and alternate routes if roads or bridges are closed. For large scale evacuations, such as before a hurricane strikes, plan adequately for the route, where you will stay, and resources needed to get there (gas and food). Plan how to communicate, as well. During a large emergency, cell phone service



Special to Wesson News

may be limited, but texting may be available. Everyone in your family should have correct telephone numbers and know how to text. Visit www.ready.gov to guide you.

Emergency kits. Create a kit that will last at least three days:

- One gallon of water per person per day, and consider that children and those who are ill may need extra water. In warm weather areas, such as Mississippi, more water may be needed.
- A supply of nonperishable foods. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, and little or no water. Pack a can opener and eating utensils.
- A first aid kit with any prescription medications and eye glasses.
- Emergency radio (battery powered or crank).
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Whistle.
- Maps of the area (as a GPS may not always be reliable).
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members.

Other items to consider for your emergency kit: pet food, important family documents (insurance policies, identification, and bank account records) in a waterproof/portable container, cash/change (debit and credit cards may

not be functional), sleeping bags or warm blankets, complete change of clothes, garbage bags, hand sanitizer, wet wipes, books, games, puzzles, or other items for children's activities.

When you make an emergency kit, do not simply store and forget about it. Review your emergency supplies often, monthly if possible. Some items may need to be checked and replaced after they have expired. Replace any items you use as soon as possible (and not wait until the next disaster occurs, which will be too late).

If you move or have a change in family status (birth of a child, family members moving in or out), you will need to share your plan and adjust your kit as necessary.

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

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Garden Club receives four awards

By Bob Arnold

Wesson Garden Club has received four prestigious awards for its projects and programs.

Mississippi Department of Transportation recognized the club's work around roadsides in presenting it the 2019 Transportation Commissioner's Mississippi Roadside Award -- a beautiful silver bowl given to an organization for an effective and outstanding roadside improvement project along a highway median and/or in an approach to a town or community. Good landscape design and maintenance to ensure permanent beauty, with highway safety in mind are major considerations in selecting award recipients.

The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., also presented three awards to the local organization:

- A second place "Youth Special Service" award which recognizes a club that contributes the most outstanding service in the promotion of gardening and conservation among youth. The Wesson Garden Club established a Youth Garden Club called "The Butterbeans" in September 2019 to cultivate the love of gardening among students, and teaching and exposing them to garden therapy,

conservation, horticulture, nature study and an anti-litter program.

- A third place "Garden Therapy Program" award that recognizes a club for sponsoring an outstanding garden therapy program in which physically challenged or learning disabled and/or shut-ins receive noteworthy benefit. The

Wesson Garden Club partnered with Boswell Regional Center in Wesson to design and sponsor a garden therapy program for its residents.

- A "Publicity Press Book" honorable mention award presented to a club for its book of press clippings, demonstrating publicity it

has generated throughout the year.

At its monthly meeting, Marilyn Britt, proposed a new Club Holiday Award to recognize local gardeners like its Yard of the Month awards.

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



Special to Wesson News

Wesson Garden Club members (front row from left) Robin Furr, Jennifer Peets, Debbie Smith, Lisa Smith, Nancy Sullivan, (back row from left) Joy Wesbrooks, Debbie Hoaglin, Cathy Warren, Jean Ricks, Beverly King and Marilyn Britt celebrated recent awards presented to club. Not Pictured: Dixie Thornton.

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cont. from page 1
Pandemic effects shape austere budget

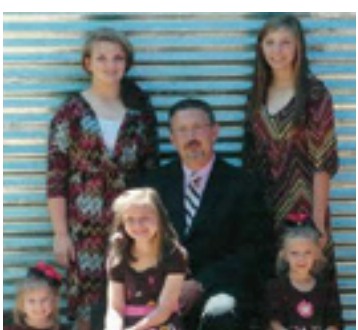


previous fiscal year at \$24,900 on stable revenues of \$31,532. While general government expenditures showed a new \$10,000 budget item for payment on an \$80,000 bond for emergency cash, budgeted expenses for travel were slashed to \$2,500 from \$15,000. Budgeted expenses for the Old School Community Center and public library were cut from \$38,500 to \$24,700 and from \$17,460 to \$12,460 respectively. The police department sustained a small \$2,500 budget cut to \$279,000. Budgeted water/sewer department expenses were trimmed by \$32,000 in accordance with an estimated six

percent revenue decline. "The budget largely reflects the impact of the pandemic," Mayor Shaw pointed out. Reduced water/sewer usage by Co-Lin and Wesson Attendance Center due to closures and curtailed operations have had a major effect on town revenues. Sales tax revenues have just naturally decreased with declining levels of business at merchants and restaurants. The town also borrowed \$80,000 through a bond issue that created a new debt obligation. "It could have been worse, but it still made a difference," Shaw concluded.

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Co-Lin adds softball & baseball coaches

Special to Wesson News

Amber Adcock Beall, from Delta State University by way of Brandon High School, will assist in coaching the Co-Lin softball team in 2020-21. Co-Lin is Beall's second stop in the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC). She was the assistant softball coach at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) for two seasons in 2018 and 2019. Over the past year, she served as coach of the Mississippi Elite 14U travel team.

At Delta State, she helped lead the Lady Statesmen to the NCAA DII Region Tournament as a middle infielder. As a player, she enjoyed All-Gulf South Conference (GSC) and DakTronics All-Region honors, and was a three-time member of the GSC All-Tournament team. She also posted a .332 batting average with 137 RBIs, 50 doubles, and 23 homers. The athletic infielder also posted a .930 career fielding percentage. This year, she was named a member of the Gulf South Conference All-Decade softball team for her stellar career. After her playing career ended, Beall received a Master's Degree in Sports Management from Delta State, while working as a graduate assistant coach.

"I've always wanted to work for



Special to Wesson News

Amber Adcock Beall

Co-Lin Head Coach Meleah Howard because of her reputation for hard work and how she has maintained the excellence of the Co-Lin softball program," says Beall. "I recruited heavily for Delta State and brought in some valuable players to MGCCC. I feel that is a big asset that I bring to Co-Lin, and I'm ready to hit the recruiting trail."

Meleah Howard, Co-Lin's head softball coach, echoed her sentiments say-



Special to Wesson News

Kreg Gardner

ing, "We are thrilled to add Amber to our staff. We love her personality and the energy that she brings. She is an amazing recruiter and knows the game.

She is going to be a huge addition to the Co-Lin softball program."

Beall, and her husband Seth, will reside in Wesson, where she will also serve as a dorm supervisor at Nettles Hall.

Baseball team adds coach. Kreg Garner, a Brandon, Mississippi, native, will be joining the Co-Lin baseball

coaching staff in 2020-21. Garner will be coaching Co-Lin's catchers and outfielders, but with a strong knowledge of the game in all areas, he will prove to be an asset in all facets of coaching.

The 2013 Northwest Rankin High School graduate, was a standout catcher for the Cougars. *The Clarion Ledger* Dandy Dozen and Second Team All-American continued his career at Pearl River Community College before playing his final two seasons at Belhaven University. He graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Sports Management in 2018, and already has two years of collegiate coaching experience at Meridian Community College as an assistant coach in 2019 and 2020.

"I've been really looking forward to an opportunity like this, especially coaching with Co-Lin coaches" says Garner. "I've experienced the community college system as a player and a coach, so I know the competition level of this league."

Co-Lin's head baseball coach, Clay Smith, praised Garner: "He has a great baseball background from his playing experience in high school, the NJCAA, and the NCAA. He is definitely going to help with the development of our current players and the recruitment of new student-athletes."

Garner resides in Wesson.



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Police HQ site



Special to Wesson News

A vacant lot on Spring Street just east of the public library will be the site of the new Wesson Police Department headquarters. The 2019 state legislative session appropriated \$300,000 in its bond bill for construction of the facility.

New officers for Co-Lin Foundation

Special to Wesson News

Sammye Burris of Brookhaven is the new president of the Co-Lin Foundation Board of Directors. She follows Andrew Calvit of Natchez. Other officers are Dr. Donald Cotten of Hattiesburg, vice-president; Sarah Johnson of Ruth, secretary; and Charles Hart of Wesson, treasurer.

- **Burris** graduated from Co-Lin in 1987 and later attended The University of Mississippi School of Banking. She currently works as a loan officer and executive vice president at United Mississippi Bank. Burris has been a member of the Co-Lin Foundation Board since 2013.

- **Cotten** graduated from Co-Lin in 1966. He received a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in science education with an emphasis in biology from The University of Southern Mississippi, and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from West Virginia University. He currently works as a consultant to universities in the private sector for funding initiatives



Special to Wesson News

Sammye Burris

and business development. Cotten has been a member of the Co-Lin Foundation Board since 2016.

- **Johnson** graduated from Co-Lin in 2010 and Mississippi State University in 2012 with a degree in apparel, textiles and merchandising, and a minor in general business administration. Johnson currently works as office manager of the Co-Lin Foundation and Alumni Relations office.

- **Hart** graduated from Co-Lin in 1970 and received a bachelor's degree from Delta State University and a master's degree in accounting from The University of Southern Mississippi. He is an accounting instructor at Co-Lin, manager of the college's bookstore and is a licensed CPA. Hart has been a member of the Co-Lin Foundation Board since it was founded in 1981.

The Co-Lin Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which serves as the fundraising arm of the college. The Foundation is governed by a 25-member board of directors whose goal is to raise private monies to support the mission of the college.

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Five honored for Co-Lin service



Special to Wesson News

Don Blandon



Special to Wesson News

Christopher Brady



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Julia Parker



Special to Wesson News

Michelle Crace



Special to Wesson News

Denise Thibodeaux

Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin Alumni Association has honored five outstanding faculty and staff members: Don Blandon of Bogue Chitto, Christopher Brady of Ridgeland, and Julia Parker of Brookhaven on the Wesson campus. Michelle Crace of Magee at the Simpson County Center. Denise Thibodeaux of Natchez on the Natchez Campus.

Blandon was selected as an Outstanding Career-Technical Instructor. He has been employed at Co-Lin since 2015, and is an instructor in the welding department. Blandon received his welding certificate from Co-Lin in 1998. He is also a National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Craft Instructor. Blandon previously worked for Wastequip in Brookhaven. He is a member of Living Word Faith Ministry. Blandon has three children, Don Jr., Damon, and Jasmine.

Brady was selected as an Outstanding

Academic Instructor. He has been employed at Co-Lin since 2015, and is a 1995 graduate of Mississippi College. Brady received a Master of Arts and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Mississippi. He previously worked as an instructor at East Central Community College. Brady is a member of St. Columbus Episcopal Church and is a volunteer at the Lone House food shelter. He and his wife Leanne live in Ridgeland.

Parker was selected as an Outstanding Staff Member. She has been employed at Co-Lin since 2007 and serves as the Director of Human Resources. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from Jackson State University and a Master's Degree from the University of Mississippi. Parker is also an adjunct instructor for Mississippi Virtual Community College. She is a Society for Human Resource Management Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and is a licensed professional in human

resources from the HR Certification Institute. Parker is a member of Bethel AME Church in Brookhaven, where she serves as church secretary, young people's and children's division director, and stewardess. She is a life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She and her husband Louis (2000 Co-Lin alum) have two children, Louis X ('17 Co-Lin alum) and Julian (Co-Lin freshman).

Crace was selected as an Outstanding Faculty/Staff Member. She has been employed at Co-Lin since 2005, and is an English instructor and an academic chair. Crace has a Bachelor's Degree from Mississippi State University and a Master's Degree from William Carey University. Prior to joining Co-Lin, she was an English teacher at Mize Attendance Center and Hunt Academy. Crace is a member of St. Stephens Catholic Church in Magee. She and her husband Nathan have three children -- Emily, Cameron, and Cole.

Thibodeaux was selected as an

Outstanding Faculty/Staff Member. She has Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Delta State University. Thibodeaux has been employed at Co-Lin since 2012, starting as an adjunct faculty member, teaching Anatomy and Physiology and dual enrollment classes at Cathedral High School. She became a full-time instructor of biological sciences at Co-Lin in 2018. Before coming to Co-Lin, she taught at St. Joseph High School in Madison and was an adjunct faculty member at Holmes Community College in Ridgeland. Thibodeaux is a member of the Pilgrimage Garden Club, the Science Teaching Excites Medical Interest (STEMI) program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and is regional director of the Southwest Mississippi Science Olympiad. She is a member of St. Mary Basilica Catholic Church in Natchez. She and her husband Dan have three children -- Ansleigh, Owen, and Emma.

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Garden enjoyment during pandemic



Special to Wesson News

The Summerific Summer Storm hibiscus has been excellent this year. After a bountiful set of blooms this spring, it is blooming again in late summer.

By Guest Columnist Gary R. Bachman

One consequence of the pandemic has been a surge of interest in gardening. Since many people have been at home, lots of folks have developed a deeper enjoyment of the yard and garden. And why not? The landscape and garden are places of constant change and wonder.

It was fortunate that our Mississippi independent garden centers were deemed essential and were able to stay open and help many people. I periodically visited throughout the shelter-in-heartened by the number of the garden centers place time, and I was out buying plants. home gardeners I saw



This spring, I received lots of questions about starting plants from seeds. Seeds are little miracles for those who have never gardened before. A tiny seed contains all the genetic information needed for the growth and development of an entire plant. I love the phrase from Chaucer, “mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow.”

One plant that has given me much enjoyment this spring and summer is my Summerific Summer Storm hibiscus.

This plant is a favorite, with deep-maroon leaves and huge and plentiful flowers, some of which are 9 inches across. The flowers are gorgeous, with red-center eyes and white petals streaked with red.

I was happy to enjoy 25 flower buds this spring, but to my surprise, the plant started a second bloom cycle. After the plant flowered for several days, I counted the new buds and found 55 about to open over the next couple of weeks. I think my hibiscus has enjoyed the extra attention I have given it during the pandemic.

Who knows what our futures are going to look like? I think everyone should continue working in and enjoying their garden and landscape. The garden and landscape are the perfect place to social distance. You get some fresh air and vitamin D, and you don’t have to wear a mask.

We’ll get through this. Garden on.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Dr. Gary Bachman is an Extension and research professor of horticulture at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi.



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Social distancing, grants, reopenings

Special to Wesson News

Social distancing disliked in state. Mississippians are among the worst at adhering to social distancing guidelines to protect themselves from the coronavirus, and the state, as a result, has one of the highest rates of coronavirus infections, a new study shows. The state is 44th on adherence to social distancing guidelines. The TOP Agency made the discovery in an analysis of mobility data to determine the number of daily close human interactions that lasted longer the five minutes. The study also showed that residents of former COVID-19 hotspots -- New York, Arizona, Texas, Florida and California -- are now adhering well to social distancing regulations.

KDMC great workplace. King's Daughters Medical Center in Brookhaven is one of the 2020 Best Places to Work in Healthcare, according to *Modern Healthcare* (MH). The distinction, which KDMC has earned ten times since 2008, is based on an extensive employee survey. MH editor Aurora Aguilar noted that "loyalty and trust between employers and their workers" has become more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, when healthcare employees have seen their colleagues fall ill with the virus and their organizations suffer the economic effects.

Grant to save animals. Brookhaven Animal Rescue League (BARL) has received a \$4,000 Save Them All grant from Best Animals Friends Society (BAFS) to help save lives of homeless pets in Lincoln, Copiah and Franklin Counties. BARL meets BAFS strict grant guidelines, providing food, shelter, and veterinary services for homeless animals until they are adopted;

vaccinating and spaying or neutering all its animals and microchipping dogs. BFAS, which partners with 2,800 animal welfare groups nationwide, has helped reduce the number animals killed in shelters to less than one million (733,000) every year from 17 million.

MAC funds BLT. With its theater season curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic and planning for its 54th season on hold, Brookhaven Little Theater (BLT), has received a \$14,500 grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) to advance its mission of exposing the region to high quality performing arts programs.

BLT, the longest continuously running community theater in Mississippi, offers a variety of plays, musicals, performing arts classes, camps, workshops, special events and musical festivals. BLT has launched a GoFundMe campaign to raise another \$25,000 during this challenging financial time.

Zoo reopens. The 11-month shutdown of Jackson Zoo for comprehensive infrastructure repairs and to secure its U.S. Department of Agriculture license to exhibit animals has ended, but its hours are limited to 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sundays, and only 500 visitors are allowed each day due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of Jackson is negotiating with St. Louis-based ZoOceanarium Group to take over operations of the facility.

Movies return. Regal UA Westbrook Theater in Brookhaven is showing movies again. Tickets are available online. The multiplex theater has implemented new health and safety measures based on Center for Disease Control guidelines and feedback from employees and moviegoers.

NEWS NUGGETS

Brookhaven fuel stop



Wesson News

When the SpaceX Endeavour Crew Dragon spacecraft splashed down safely in the Gulf of Mexico last month, helicopters operated by Tim (left) and Brian (right) were there to meet it after a fuel stop at Lincoln County-Brookhaven (LC-B) Airport. Tim brought Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken back from the Gulf to Pensacola, where they caught a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) jet to Houston. Brian's helicopter was there to back him up. On the Dragon, Behnken and Hurley returned from a 62-day space station stay during which they spent more than 100 hours working on science investigations and participating in four spacewalks. LC-B Airport Manager John Coleman says Tim and Brian like to drop off at the local facility to fuel up, and may make it a regular stop as NASA and SpaceX continue their launchings.

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Copiah County gets MDEQ grants

Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has awarded Copiah County a solid waste assistance grant of \$48,917 for unauthorized dumpsite cleanup and a solid waste enforcement officer program. The agency also awarded the county a \$75,000 two-year waste tire grant to continue the local waste tire collection program for small quantity generators of waste tires.

“The Solid Waste Assistance Grants support a variety of useful solid waste management activities for cities and counties, and these grants will assist Copiah County’s efforts in improving its management of solid waste,” said Chris Wells, MDEQ Interim Executive Director.

Cities and counties may apply for Solid Waste Assistance Grants

through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. In addition to funding programs to prevent and clean up unauthorized dumps and hiring local solid waste enforcement officers, these grants are used by local communities for public education efforts on solid waste disposal and recycling; and to establish programs for the collection of white goods, bulky wastes and recyclables.

Funding for waste tire grants is provided by a waste tire account funded from a fee charged on wholesale of every new motor vehicle tire sold in Mississippi. This fee provides the funds to ensure and encourage the proper management and disposal of waste

tires. Information about on the grant program and other initiatives is available at www.mdeq.ms.gov/solid-waste-management-programs.



Nursing School graduates pinned



Wesson News

At a pinning ceremony were Co-Lin's Wesson Campus Practical Nursing Program graduates (left to right) Umeko Sparkman of McComb, Sina Windham of Brookhaven, Freddye Johnson of Hazlehurst, Sydne Gayten of Brookhaven, Keisha Roberson of Hazlehurst, Shikeitha Quin of McComb, Brooke David of Meadville, Keisha Simmons of Jackson, Candace McKinley of Crystal Springs, Miosha Daniels, Judy James Lyons and KeAriel Caston, all of Brookhaven.

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Flower & Garden Fest goes virtual

By Guest Columnist Susan Collins-Smith

The 2020 Fall Flower & Garden Fest will be a virtual, educational event this year.

The in-person fest normally held in October on the grounds of the Mississippi State University (MSU) Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station in Crystal Springs started on the Fall Flower & Garden website September 1 with educational gardening videos and other materials. Registration is not required, and the content is free.

"In light of COVID-19 cases still persisting in Mississippi, we believe this is the best option," said Rick Snyder, fest organizer and vegetable specialist with the MSU Extension Service. "This was a difficult decision, and we know that thousands of our regular attendees will be very disappointed."

Experts with the Extension Service and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station share information on a variety of



Wesson News

There will be no crowds at the Fall Flower & Garden Fest, which will be virtual.

topics, including research updates, how-to videos, and information on caring for gardens, including pest and disease management.

More than 100 videos covering a huge variety of horticultural and home gardening topics are available. They are divided into seven categories: vegetable gardening, healthy cooking, flowers and arrangements, landscapes and lawns, pests and diseases, fruits for the homeowner, and small-scale gardens and herbs.

To view the videos and other educational content, visit the Fall Flower & Garden Fest page on the Extension website at <https://bit.ly/3aDrPYZ>.

MSU is an equal opportunity institution. For disability accommodation, please contact Rick Snyder at 601-892-3731 or Rick.Snyder@msstate.edu.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Susan Collins-Smith writes for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

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