

INSIDE:

Meet Your Neighbor.....	2
Area Arts.....	4
Selling trees.....	5
Gifts program.....	7
Light Show.....	8
Honor Yards	10
Page 13-17 online at www.WessonNews.com	

Wesson News

SPOTLIGHT

Honoring deceased veterans

Page 12

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Volume 10, Number 12

“Good News You Can Use”

December, 2022

Christmas in Wesson



Special to Wesson News

It's Christmas time in Wesson and Wesson Garden Club (WGC) members are making sure you know it, with their decorating efforts throughout the town to spread the spirit of Christmas to everyone. It's their way of thanking everyone for support throughout the year and wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! The Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., National Garden Clubs, Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc., Natchez Trace District-Garden Clubs of Mississippi.

Shop locally and win-win-win

By Bob Arnold

It's win-win-win for local shoppers, the businesses they patronize and the local economy when Wesson folk buy their Christmas gifts in town.

The convenience offered by going first to Another Time. . . Another Place, Busy B's, Dollar General, Family Dollar, the Mill Town Mall Antique and Flea Market Mall and Wesson Ace Hardware, among other local businesses, before driving off to an out-of-town store saves shoppers time and money on gas for their cars. The local businesses, meanwhile, enjoy the benefits of sales dollars. In the process, the local economy grows because every dollar spent at a local business generates 3.5 dollars that are recirculated to create more local jobs and fund government services supported by taxes.

Scratch off the names on your Christmas list when you shop locally at:

- **Another Time. . . Another Place**, which has moved to a new location on Highway 51. In the small one-room white cottage in front of Mill Town Mall, Janet Currie is analyzing the wants and needs of her customers as she downsizes and addresses online competition, but continues to offer an array of quality, relatively low-cost gift possibilities. For this Christmas season, she recommends flower arrangements, vintage jewelry, metal ware, ornaments and decorative accessories, such as crosses.

- **Busy B's & Salon 51** at Highway 51 & Factory Street. At Busy B's, Vera Boyles features a wide array of clothing for infants and toddlers -- dresses, play suits, jumpers and gowns -- and juniors -- pageant and prom dresses. At the Salon

51 side of her business, Christmas shoppers can purchase gift certificates for salon services and hair care products, which make good stocking stuffers.

- **Dollar General** on Spring Street has the elements that will turn your home into a warm and welcoming setting to celebrate the Christmas and holiday season -- artificial trees and florals, ornaments and lighting, candles and scents and assorted décor to create the special ambiance along with holiday mugs for coffee, tea, eggnog and other seasonal drinks and kitchen essentials with a Christmas flare for get-togethers with family and friends. For gifts, consider sheet, quilt and comforter sets, bed pillows, bath towels and cosmetics.

- **Family Dollar** on Highway 51 just south of Wesson Baptist Church, not to be outdone by its Spring Street competitor, is another place to shop for holiday décor and social gatherings and gifts, with Christmas trees, lights and ornaments; holiday candies, an array of toys for the kids and home items, including glasses and small appliances.

- **Mill Town Mall Antiques and Flea Market** houses some 70 vendors under its roof on Highway 51 between Factory and Spring Streets. It's a unique alternative to Walmart that offers almost everything -- and more -- with a touch of the "old," even "historic" in gift items that set them apart and give them distinction: knives, collectible coins, glassware, jewelry, including handmade items; leather goods, clothing, furniture, pottery.

cont. on page 3

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Gift lady serves home town

By Bob Arnold

When Janet Currie took stock of the things she had collected after returning to the Wesson area with her husband to live in the house built by her great grandfather in which she grew up, the now experienced businesswoman did what came naturally: she opened a store to sell them.

Over 25 years, the store has not only sold those collectibles, but added gifts, decorative accessories and other items to the wide assortment of the products it sells. In the process, Currie has become known as Wesson's gifts lady, and her store as the place to go when you want something special to give for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and other occasions.

Today, Currie says she is learning her business all over again after a move to smaller quarters, but the gift lady and her store are still there for Wesson folk seeking that special something for special people on special occasions.

Currie grew up in the Wesson countryside off Sylvarena Road in the old house built by Elbert Jefferson Case, spending lots of time with her grandmother while her parents operated an oil field equipment supply company. She recalls Wesson back in the 1950s and 1960s as "a great place to grow up" where she played with friends and enjoyed going to school, which left her with "fond memories of my teachers."

She graduated from Co-Lin High School in 1970 before it became part of Wesson Attendance Center as Wesson High School. She studied on and off during the 1970s at Co-Lin Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi. Currie also started her work life with the City of Jackson tax assessor's office and travelled throughout Mississippi as a commercial real estate appraiser. Along the way, she met A.C. Currie, whom she married in 1980 and helped rear his two sons, Bruce and Andrew.

Currie sold real estate in the Vicksburg area during the 1980s after settling there with her husband and was a representative for a plumbing and air conditioning manufacturer during the 1990s.

In 1990, she also opened her first retailing venture in Vicksburg – Yesterday's Treasures antique mall – to sell all the old stuff she relished collecting so she could collect more, which was her passion. When she came home, the Wesson store was her second one, begun while she was still operating the Vicksburg store. She called the new store "Another Time. . . Another Place" reflecting its relationship to her initial retailing venture – a different store for a different time. "Looking back, I probably should have called it 'Janet's,'" she jokes.

Over the past two decades, Currie has also served her community as an active member of the Wesson Chamber of Commerce, including president.

After 25 years, Another Time. . . Another Place has begun a new life in the small one-room white cottage on Highway 51 in front of the Mill Town Mall Antique and Flea Market in downtown Wesson.

"I'm downsizing, and it's a challenge to discern what



Wesson News

New location of Another Time. . . Another Place.

people will buy and focusing on a narrower product line that will sell when the consumer, increasingly, is shopping online," she says. "I'm learning the business all over again."

What are your hobbies?

Collecting got me into the retail business, and I continue to collect. Old stuff, particularly. I am proud of my Santa Claus collection. I also love decorating at Christmas time. And then there are my animals. Two adopted dogs -- a 12-year-old Vischon Frise and a Chiwawa – and other mixed breeds. Seven cats – five that live outside, and two inside.

Are you a reader?

I used to be into novels, although not so much anymore because of my vision. Earl Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason novels and George Simenon's Jules Maigret mysteries are two of my favorites.

Do you enjoy movies or theater?

In the 42 years I've been married, I've only been to theaters and movie houses a

couple of times, although I do enjoy plays. And then, of course, the old Perry Mason episodes and special movies on television with those complex plots. You can watch them over and over again, and still want to see them again.

Do you enjoy any music?

I did play the clarinet in elementary school, but am mostly a listener. I am a 1960s and 1970s rock and grunge fan.

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

I have never bought a lottery ticket. So that will never happen. I have a good, blessed life without lottery winnings.

How would you change the world?

People need to be more tolerant of each other, learn to live in harmony and be less judgmental.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



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Volume 10, Number 12

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Wesson News is published on the second Tuesday of every month in Wesson, Mississippi.

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Holiday Season



cont. from front page

Shop locally and win-win-win



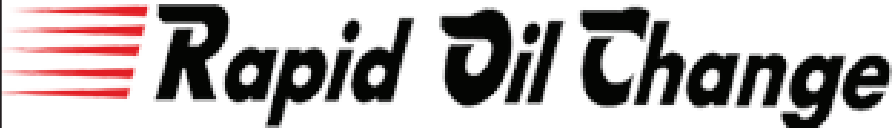
• **Wesson Ace Hardware** on Highway 51 across from Mill Town Mall. For the people on your gift list who enjoy browsing extensive hardware store inventories, gift cards in amounts up to \$500 are a good choice. Pick up Christmas trees, decorations and lighting, and those who enjoy wrapping gifts for friends and family can select from gas and wood pellet grills and smokers by Weber, Traeger and Big Green Egg; power tools and accessories by DeWalt, Milwaukee and Craftsman; and heaters and humidifiers. In midst of the hardware items are Sherpa fleece throws and Muk Luks women’s cabin socks, wool boot socks and women’s ballerina slippers, which are also nice gifts.

A few other places to stop while shopping: **Ashley’s 51** on Highway 51, where proprietor Jarred Ashley has built an animal feed business in addition to his human food service. Hunters might find ground blinds and turkey calls there. **Shop 'n Wash**, the Ashley family's sister store beside the railroad tracks on the north side of town, is a solely a human food venue, with grocery items and various takeout selections, and offers pizza gift certificates and Marathon gas cards that make good stocking stuffers. **Copiah Nutrition** on Highway 51 – a place to grab an energy drink while shopping, and add a gift card to the shopping cart at the same time for someone who will appreciate the healthy meal replacement shakes, energy teas, pre and post workout drinks, high protein snacks and other Herbalife products it sells at its Wesson location or on its website. **Dump's Barbeque**, a restaurant where Christmas shoppers can not only order food for parties and diners, but acquire the secret sauce that gives its smoked meats a distinctly different flavor. Owner Ken Dale Sullivan sells it in pint and quart size mason jars. Buy a gift card for barbeque lovers. **Uncle Ray’s** bait shop, convenience store and eatery across from Lake Lincoln State Park on Sunset Road sells its famed chicken gumbo by the quart.


That's just for starters -- some of the more visible Christmas shopping stops in town. But if you ask around, you may find a home-based artisan or craftsperson with interesting gifts. You can even find your Christmas tree a few miles out of town, where Gary Keller grows them and will cut down your choice on his ten-acre property on Highway 51 in Beauregard. Whether its local arts and crafts, collectibles, something different to use, wear or eat and drink, Wesson is often the place to find what is unavailable or not easily found elsewhere.

"Out-of-town visitors often think they have made a surprise discovery when they stumble on stores and restaurants in Wesson that residents often take for granted," Mill Town Mall's Melissa Meredith says.

Local businesses are the backbone of a community. When you shop locally, you get to know the people behind the business and you enjoy a connection you would not otherwise have. Local businesses also buy locally themselves. They hire architects, designers, cabinet shops, sign makers and contractors for construction. They use local accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants, attorneys and advertising agencies. Local businesses give communities their flavor. The combined presence of many local businesses makes it different from every other city or town in the world. By supporting those businesses, you help preserve the uniqueness of Wesson. Local businesses define our sense of place, and their survival depends on our patronage.



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Au revoir – until we meet again

By Guest Columnist R. Shaw Furlow

Over the past seven years I've had the pleasure of writing columns for the *Wesson News* about things and events I hoped were entertaining and informative.

I've learned a lot myself from doing the research. My main music source book that I used was *Legendary Musicians* edited by Dr James Brewer from Hazlehurst. He has done meticulous research for many years and was the founder of the Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame. He also pitched "Mississippi, the birth place of America's music" to the state's tourism board, which adopted it for welcome signs and car tags after finding the statement to be accurate.

There is no telling how many folks I have interviewed or featured. But mostly I have written about local artists. Dancers and singers from Mississippi School of the Arts, Brookhaven Little Theatre and



Brookhaven Region Arts Guild. Songwriters, such as Tony Norton, Cole Powell, J.F. Oakes, Charlie and Libby Hewitt, Andi Cotton, and more. My main man for music has been Tyler Bridge. His help has been immeasurable. In the arts world, my friends Don Jacobs, Jacqui Patten and Derrick Covington Smith have been my go-to specialists.

I've plugged every festival, concert and art show in our corner of the world, and attended most. I now have promoters calling me trying to get in the column. I especially enjoyed the two drive-through art shows in Hazlehurst and Brookhaven.

I delved into the topic of elephants and other wild animals in the circus. From early in my life, I've loved the circus. The color, music, pageantry and the elephants caught my attention. At one time, I inquired about auditioning for a Ring Master position with Barnum and Bailey. After I read and studied about animal treatment in captivity, reality hit me in the face, and I

changed my point of view. Never too late to learn. That column was one of my most widely read articles.

I've enjoyed exploring the lives of the Ford siblings, Virgil Brawley, Leontyne Price and other Mississippi artists.

I've had lots of help along the way. I've called on experts in several fields to get information, and all of them were happy to help, especially the good folks at Co-Lin Natchez for their help promoting the Natchez Literary and Cinema Conference and artists, promoters, writers and composers.

So, my friends, as they say, all good things must come to an end. This will be my last monthly column. I have often wondered how weekly columnists do it. This is harder work than it seems...at least for me. My biggest source of help has been my editor Bob Arnold. He taught me how to write for a newspaper. I used to call people, especially my friends, by their first names and he changed it in editing.

I learned. But some of our toughest conversations were about my ending sentences with a preposition. Yes. I know it's not correct, but I tried to convince him I was "folksy" and wrote like I talked. I sort of won that one. He agreed I was folksy, and only changed the most egregious ones.

One of my biggest pleasures was when people approached me and told me they enjoyed my column. I appreciated it. I'll be back in the future with feature articles from time to time about topics that interest me. Believe me, I'm not stopping because I've exhausted my resources. Far from it. Our little corner of the world is rich in talent and stories, and I've enjoyed telling them.

Until next time, support the arts, my friends.

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. Bob Arnold is Editor of the Wesson News.



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33 years selling Christmas trees

By Bob Arnold

More than 30 years ago, Gary Keller saw a sales notice for a house and land off Highway 51 in Beauregard just north of Wesson when he was shopping at Ashley's 51. Keller, who was moving into the area to work at a Hazlehurst saw mill after working at ones in Vicksburg and Baton Rouge, bought the 10-acre property for the house, but found it covered with trees the former owner sold for Christmas.

"I never intended to sell Christmas trees, but people started showing up during the holiday season, returning to buy trees," Keller says. "They were good people. They brought their kids with them. I enjoyed chatting with them. Bad people don't shop for Christmas trees. I couldn't say no to them, and sold them the trees they wanted."

Thirty-three years later, Keller continues to sell Christmas trees to area residents and people who travel from other places in Mississippi and Louisiana to purchase them. "They are returning customers and the grown kids of old customers," he says. "Mayor Shaw from Wesson and his family come every year."

Keller is again selling the trees for \$5 a foot – the price he has maintained for many years now. "It's not about the money," says Keller. "It's more like a hobby than a business. I like doing the work, which is pretty light, and meeting customers."

Retired from his most recent job as a lab technician at Whitfield Hospital, Keller's hobby is now his full-time work. He acquires seedlings that a North Carolina supplier starts from small twigs that have fallen from bigger trees, plants them in January on two acres of his property, mows and maintains it to prevent

weeds from snuffing out the life of his young trees, trims the growing trees to shape them in the early summer and just before Thanksgiving and then sells his trees between Thanksgiving and Christmas day. Keller's tree service includes cutting down the trees his customers select. His wife Deborah helps as required.

This year, Keller expects to sell 100-plus trees, and late-buying offshore oil workers and their families will keep him busy right up to the very end of his selling season.

Keller grows 31 rows with about 1,000 trees ranging from the new ones about a foot high started from the twigs to 20-foot trees that organizations, such as churches and businesses, purchase. The trees, he says, grow about one-foot each year. Typically, customers select six-foot trees, although smaller four-foot trees for tabletops are popular, too. Keller, however, recalls a time when it was not uncommon for customers to purchase 15-foot trees.

A former lumber inspector in the mills where he worked, Keller has grown a variety of trees on his property, but has zeroed in on Carolina Blue Sapphires, Eastern Red Cedars, which are native to Mississippi, and Leyland Cypresses.

"They are pretty trees," he says. "The sapphires have a lemon citrus smell. The cedars, of course, have their unique smell. The cypresses are a favorite of people with allergies because they have no smell. The trees I grow do not need a lot of work. They resist drought, insects and disease. I once grew Virginia Pine trees, but they require insecticides and pesticides, and people now prefer trees that are organically grown. They also dried out, and I would have to apply green paint to them to look good."

Good people and the joy Keller finds in caring for his trees are keeping him going for yet another season.



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Forced bulbs for holiday decor

By Guest Columnist Gary R. Bachman

My favorite definition of a horticulturist is paraphrased as “We make plants do what we want, when we want them to do it.”

A couple of seasonal items found in garden centers that are perfect examples of forcing bulbs -- making plants do what we want and when we want it -- are amaryllis and paperwhite bulbs. These are fun and easy holiday plants, and it's amazing to watch them grow.

The amaryllis with its beautiful and big funnel-shaped flowers are so popular that the National Garden Bureau named 2022 the Year of the Amaryllis. You can buy the bulb by itself or pick up a kit that has everything you need.

The planting and care instructions are easy. Use a good container mix, which is provided if you buy the kit. Plant with the top third of the bulb exposed. Water sparingly, as the amaryllis doesn't require much. Place it in a bright window but not in direct sunlight when the flower stalk starts to grow, water as needed. Don't allow the pot to dry out. Once the flower starts to fade, remove the stalk and allow the leaves to grow and store carbohydrates for next year.

If you're in south Mississippi, you can move these bulbs to the garden in the spring. I remember several years ago throwing out an amaryllis bulb into my back flower bed, and it came back on its own for several years, blooming in early summer.

A new-to-me way to grow this plant for the holidays is to use waxed amaryllis bulbs. Believe it or not, everything that an amaryllis needs is in the bulb. A waxed bulb doesn't need to be watered and will produce beautiful, care-free flowers.

Paperwhite daffodil bulbs produce multiple flowers that are very fragrant. You grow these plants by following the same instructions as with the amaryllis bulbs. The downside of growing paperwhites is that the flower stalks and foliage tend to be quite leggy. Their abundant flower production makes them top heavy, so support is needed.

An old technique that was proven in the lab by my old masters' degree advisor is to water paperwhites using a dilute solution of cheap alcohol. The alcohol interferes with water uptake and results in shorter, more stable foliage and flower stalks. They grow about one-half to one-third shorter when you use this trick. Make the watering



Wesson News

It is easy to force paperwhite daffodils to bloom indoors. The second and third paperwhites from the left were given a mixture of alcohol and water, which kept them shorter and more manageable.

solution by diluting one part cheap alcohol to seven parts water. A friend of mine uses cheap gin, but I use cheap vodka because cheap gin is still too good to waste on a paperwhite.

If you'd like more information on forcing bulbs, check out our Southern Gardening TV segment, <http://extension.msstate.edu/southern-gardening/video/2016/forcing-bulbs>.

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. He is also the host of the popular Southern Gardening television and radio programs.

Co-lin hoopsters see success

Co-Lin's men and lady basketball teams have both started their seasons with winning records. The men started inauspiciously with losses to Northwest Florida State 82-79 and Florida-based Gulf Coast State College 92-81, but have come back with wins against Delgado (99-62), Lawson State Community College (84-65), Baton Rouge (84-59) and Holmes (70-62). The Lady Wolves have lost only to Southern University-Shreveport 68-64, while racking up victories against Hinds (70-60), South Arkansas (71-52 and 70-58), LSU Eunice (71-59), Mississippi Gulf Coast (61-54), Baton Rouge (76-66) and Southwest (68-64).



Wesson News

Co-Lin's men team.



Wesson News

Lady Wolves.

Veterans gifts program coming back

By Bob Arnold

Wesson-based Socks for Heroes (SFH) has resumed its visits to veterans homes to bring holiday cheer to their residents.

The group, which seeks to show appreciation for the service of military veterans, through gifts of clothing, personal care and small practical items, blankets, games and knick knacks, had been stymied by the effects of the COVID-19 in recent years. It struggled to raise funds, and its visits to veterans homes in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas during the holiday season were restricted, including delivery of individual gift packages to residents and larger items, such as television sets, for the facilities to provide for their populations as a whole.

Today, fundraising is improving, and visits are allowed again, although a few homes still restrict them.

Last week and early this week, SFH teams visited homes at Collins, Kosciusko and Jackson in Mississippi and Reserve Jackson, Monroe and Bossier City and Jennings in Louisiana. Veterans at the homes received individual gift bags, including non-slip socks, toboggan hats, gloves, word search guidebooks and pens, and the facilities received supplies of body wash and shampoo, blankets and diabetic socks to share with their residents as needed. Residents also receive signed greetings cards that demonstrate they are remembered.

"The gifts are important, but the one-on-one holiday visits with veterans may be more important to bringing joy and cheer to the homes," SFH's Cathy Stroud says.

Participating in the visits were Stroud, Jean King, Carolyn Butler, Barbara Ashley, Billy Thomas, Katie Hall, Guy Nix, Patricia Lake, Mamie Dubose, Jean Errington and Sharon Langley.

With resumption of the veterans home visits, SFH is not discontinuing the "Veterans Appreciation Days," which it started last year as an alternative when it couldn't go to the homes. "Rather than going to veterans, we invite them to come to us at designated locations to pick up free "thank you" bags," Stroud explains. "It was popular last year. So we are continuing it."

SFH is scheduling "Veterans Appreciation Days" at Wesson, Georgetown and

Brookhaven. Gifts or funds to purchase items for the "thank you" bags can be donated at the Wesson American Legion hall, Georgetown City Hall and Wand's Feed Store in Brookhaven.

SFH started in a porch conversation Wesson's Stroud had with her sister and in a separate discussion with a friend about Christmas gifts. They agreed gifts were unimportant for them, and they would like to find a way to help people in need through their Christmas giving. After Stroud's husband Marty told her about the fish fries Walmart, his employer, held at Veterans Administration homes, and meeting a young disabled veteran whose special needs moved him, she formulated the concept of the unique Wesson-based charity.

"We aren't about collecting money and sending it to the Veterans Administration Jackson," Stroud says. "We're about providing direct personal assistance through gifts that show appreciation."

In 2012, Stroud visited the home for veterans at Collins, Mississippi, where she learned to her surprise that socks were the primary need of residents and that they would also appreciate gloves, hats, notebooks, pens and playing cards.

"We have just kept growing since then," Stroud says.

In recent years before COVID-19, SFH collected upwards of 15,000 pairs of socks, 800 blankets and other items for the four veterans homes in Mississippi, five in Louisiana and two in Arkansas.

"We have some 30 individual volunteers, support of Strong Hope Baptist Church members and assistance from participants in groups who need community service hours, such as Mississippi Scholars and the Wesson Attendance Center Beta Club, Stroud reports. "They help collect donations, attend Christmas ceremonies at veterans homes and bag the gifts that are part of our Christmas packages. Most of them are drawn to Socks for Heroes because they have relatives who served in the military."

SFH has 501(c) 3 not-for-profit status and is rebuilding a fundraising program that had traditionally included a fishing tournament for youth at Lake Hazle, a 5K run/walk at Hazlehurst, and an annual veterans appreciation fair -- all cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BLT stages *Christmas Story*

Special to Wesson News

Brookhaven Little Theater (BLT) is staging *A Christmas Story-The Musical* through Sunday, December 18, at the Haven Theater on Cherokee Street in downtown Brookhaven.

The local theater company's production of the two and a half hour Broadway musical comedy based on the Christmas movie classic started December 8. Tickets are still available from BLT for performances December 15, 16, 17 and 18 for \$30 (premium), \$20 (standard) and \$15 (limited view)

Set in the 1940s in the fictional town of Hohman, Indiana, the musical follows nine-year-old Ralphie Parker and his quest for the Holy Grail of Christmas gifts—an Official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot Range Model air rifle. Rebuffed at every turn with a similar echoing response, Ralphie plots numerous schemes to achieve his desperate desire for the coveted BB gun.

All the iconic scenes from the movie are in the production: Ralphie's friend, Flick, getting his tongue stuck to the flagpole; his brother, Randy, getting dressed in his snowsuit; the bullies, Farkus and Dill; the leg lamp award; the bunny suit; Christmas dinner; and many others.



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An unparalleled Christmas light show

By Bob Arnold

Just down the road outside of town, the decorative lighting that sustains the Christmas spirit in Wesson streets and yards and on its houses and commercial buildings reaches an unparalleled level in a synchronized light show along nearly a quarter mile stretch of road with myriad displays depicting the varied themes of the season.

Among Christmas light shows in Mississippi, and even across the nation, Santa's Runway ranks among the most impressive with a 100,000-plus static and synchronized lights installed by David Parks, an outage scheduler at Entergy's Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, on his 43-acre property in southwestern Copiah County near the Claiborne County border 25 miles from Wesson, Hazlehurst, Brookhaven, and Port Gibson.

The 2022 Santa's Runway show started on November 25 and runs through Christmas day. Hours are 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. daily.

More than 100 carloads of holiday season visitors come to Santa's Runway to marvel at the array of multi-colored flashing and static lights and scenes of Santa and his elves and the nativity on the road that winds past Parks' house, utility buildings, yard and fields. As they drive by the lights and scenes, they tune their car radios to a low-power FM station (106.3) Parks maintains to accompany the display with Christmas music.

New this year is the Candy Land light display added near the Leaping Stars display added in 2016. An area called the Tree Farm added in 2018 was moved and expanded, more wood cutouts were added to Elf Land, and the Mega Tree and Joy of the Toy areas are bigger. Snowman's Hill (2021), Wall of Snowflakes (2019) and Letter to Santa (2020) are popular displays added in recent years.

Santa's Runway started inauspiciously more than 30 years ago when Parks ran a string of outdoor Christmas lights along the front of his house then at Port Gibson. "The youngins liked the outdoor lights," Parks explains simply. And then there was some friendly competition from a friend who tried year after year to outdo him with light displays.

At the beginning of October, with the help of his wife Kelly, Parks unpacks the elements of Santa's Runway, stored neatly in a 28-foot x 18-foot x 8-foot space. They work through November to set up the display that includes some 55,000 stationary lights and more than 250 channels (electrical circuits) to control flashing lights.

The Parks design their display and create the musical accompaniment for it on two computers in their home office. Another small computer monitors and controls Santa's Runway. During the month-long display, the Parks electric bill only increases by \$200. In recent years, the Parks have enhanced energy-savings by switching from incandescent to LED lights.

"You don't have to be an electrical engineer to do it," says Parks. He and Kelly



Special to Wesson News

find help on the internet and through books. An array of vendors source lighting and new and used electrical equipment. They also connect with other outdoor lighting hobbyists online and face-to-face at conventions to share ideas and learn about ways to improve Santa's Runway.

Santa's Way doesn't charge visitors, but the Parks suggest you might want to contribute to Socks for Heroes, the Wesson-based charity that helps military veterans and facilities that care for them.

Santa's Runway provides a collection point for needed items. For more information, contact Cathy Stroud at 601-695-4140 or socksforheroes@yahoo.com or learn more about the organization on Facebook at fb.me.socksforheroes.ms.

Visit <https://goo.gl/maps/6cFMjnkqeFxfyCcE8> for directions. Santa's Runway is off Highway 547 in southwest Copiah County on 1028 Parks Drive Pattison, MS 39144. Watch for the sign.



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Veterans honored



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Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) honored 41 veterans last month in conjunction with the national Veterans Day celebration. WAC fed the local veterans with a breakfast. Elementary students at WAC thanked each veteran for his or her contributions to the country in a reception line following the breakfast and a special program with music and readings in the old gymnasium spotlighted the service of veterans.

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Wesson Honor yards

In November, Wesson Garden Club (WGC) recognized the landscaping efforts of Ralph and Melnee Frazier at 1185 Highway 51 and Mill Town Mall Antiques & Flea Market (2058 Highway 51) owners Lee and Melissa Meredith in residential and organizational categories, and honored Allen and Celia McSweyn at 1193 Highway 51 and the Wesson Chamber of Commerce downtown garden at Highway 51 & Main Street with its Autumn Design and Autumn Special awards. The Yard of the Month awards that recognize maintenance principles and elements of landscape design seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry which values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor landscapes during the spring, summer and fall.

All photos special to Wesson News



Mill Town Mall Antiques & Flea Market.



McSweyn property.



Frazier property.



Wesson Chamber of Commerce downtown garden.

Making your Christmas fire safe

Special to Wesson News

Christmas trees enhance the color and cheer of the holiday. Exercise care in picking them, placing them, lighting them and disposing of them to assure they don't become safety hazards, says Wesson Volunteer Fire Department Chief Ken Carraway. He offers this advice:

1. Picking the tree

- Choose an artificial tree that is labeled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Make sure live trees have fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

2. Placing the tree

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 1" - 2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand daily.

3. Lighting the tree

- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Read manufacturer's instructions for the number of LED strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

4. After Christmas

- Get rid of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.



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Library winners



Betty Harley.



Mary Hopson.



Maeve Robinson.

Betty Hartley and Maeve Robinson were November Wesson Public Library books giveaway winners. Hartley received the adult category prize book - *No Plan B* by Lee Childs -- and Robinson received *The Night Before Christmas*, the children/youth category prize. Mary Hopson also won \$50 for prolific reading during the Library's "Fall for Books" promotion in September, October and early November. Hopson checked out 34 books from the library during the time frame to get the prize money. Friends of the Library (FOL) funds the prize books awarded in drawings every month and sponsored the special fall promotion. The goal is to bring people to the library to learn how it can meet their needs. During "Fall for Books," FOL tracked book checkouts by library patrons to motivate readers. FOL is a support organization that conducts fundraisers for the library and assists in its programming through advice and counsel, volunteers, and donations.

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Wreath-laying honors war vets

Wesson News

Special wreath-laying ceremonies will honor veterans buried in area cemeteries as part of a national program recognizing more than two million deceased veterans at grave sites in 2,100 cemeteries throughout the nation.

Wreaths will be laid at the graves of veterans in Crystal Springs, Beauregard, Georgetown, Hazlehurst and Wesson town cemeteries and at Sylwarena Baptist Church and Stronghope Baptist Church cemeteries as part of Wreaths Across America (WAA).

The Wesson ceremony will start at the American Legion hall on Main Street at 11 a.m. on December 17 with remarks about the sacrifices of war veterans and special comments by Alton Ricks followed by wreath-laying at grave sites in Wesson Cemetery where volunteers will say aloud the names of the memorialized veterans and offer prayers.

The ceremonies and wreath-laying will be part of the worship service at Sylwarena Baptist Church and follow the worship service at Stronghope Baptist Church on December 18. The Georgetown event will be on December 19.

Wesson-based Socks for Heroes (SFH) Cathy Stroud, Mamie Dubose, Dixie Thornton and Jean King coordinated the WAA events at Wesson and Georgetown town cemeteries and the Sylwarena and Stronghope churches.

The number of grave sites exceeded the number wreaths SFH could purchase for the local ceremonies this year, but fundraising will be ongoing for the future, Stroud said. The wreaths cost \$15 each, and contributions can be made to SFH through Stroud, Sharon Langley and Janet Currie. Call 601-695-4140 for information.

"Our mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve and to teach our children the value of freedom," Stroud says. "We take time out to recognize the people who made the ultimate sacrifice."

WAA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester in 1992 when his organization -- Worcester Wreath in Maine -- found itself with a



Wesson News

Wesson Mayor Alton Shaw at a Socks for Heroes wreath-laying ceremony.

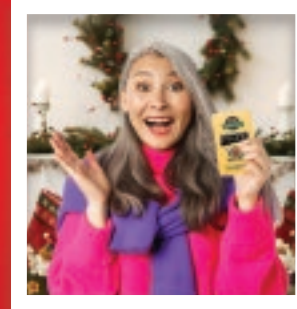
surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. Remembering a moving boyhood experience at Arlington National Cemetery, Worcester seized on it as an opportunity to honor the country's veterans.

With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, Worcester arranged for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery that had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year. A number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help, including a local trucking company that transported the wreaths to Virginia, volunteers from local American Legion and VFW Posts and members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C. who helped make wreaths and organized laying them.

The event continued quietly each year until 2005, when a photo of gravestones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet. The event drew national attention and expanded to thousands of other locations where the Arlington ceremonies were emulated.

The Arlington wreath-laying is still held annually, on the second or third Saturday of December. WAA's annual pilgrimage from Harrington, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery has become known as the world's largest veterans' parade, stopping at schools, monuments, veterans' homes and communities all along the way to remind people how important it is to remember, honor and teach about the contributions of those who served their country in war time.

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Fruitcake lover



Wesson News

Fruitcakes may be among the least-liked Christmas gifts, but Charles Fortson, the proprietor of Uncle Ray's – the bait shop, convenience store and eatery – across from the entrance to Lake Lincoln State Park on Sunset Road is a rare fruitcake lover. Next year, Fortson will be joining the Wesson News as a guest columnist covering food with monthly recipe suggestions. He may even offer one for fruitcakes.

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“A” grade, jobless, paroles, hired & retired

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KDMC gets A for safety. The nonprofit Leapfrog Group has awarded twelve Mississippi hospitals, including Brookhaven-based King’s Daughters Medical Center an A grade in its hospital safety grades for fall 2022. The grades, which are assigned to about 3,000 general acute-care hospitals across the nation twice a year, are based on how they perform in five categories -- infections, problems with surgery, safety problems, practices to prevent errors, and doctors, nurses and hospital staff – and considers more than 30 national measures from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and other data. The state’s largest hospital and only academic medical center scored a C for the fourth year in a row. No Mississippi hospitals received an F grade, and one hospital received a D -- Merit Health Biloxi. According to Leapfrog, 250,000 people die each year from preventable errors in hospitals. Other Mississippi hospitals receiving A grades were Baptist Memorial Hospitals at Booneville, Columbus and New Albany; Greenwood Leflore Hospital at Greenwood, Methodist Hospital at Olive Branch, Mississippi Baptist Medical Center at Jackson, North Mississippi Medical Centers at Tupelo and serving Amory and Gilmore, Ochsner Medical Center Hancock at Bay St. Louis and Singing River hospitals at Ocean Springs and Pascagoula.

Low unemployment. Lincoln County continues to boast the lowest jobless rate in southwest Mississippi and ranks sixteenth overall in the state with 3.4 percent of its workforce unemployed. Statewide, the jobless rate is 3.7 percent, with 47,100 persons unemployed in a labor force of 1,257,400. With a labor force of less than 2,000, Jefferson County, with a 13.9 percent unemployment rate, had the state’s highest unemployment rate. Faring better in the region, but behind Lincoln County, were Copiah (4.4 percent), Lawrence (4.6 percent), Pike (4.7 percent), Walthall and Franklin (5 percent) and Claiborne (8.7 percent) with a small labor force as well. Rankin County had the state’s lowest jobless rate at 2.7 percent.

Paroles decline. Mississippi, which already has one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation, is paroling fewer inmates now than it did before expanding parole eligibility in 2021, according to state Parole Board chairman Jeffrey Belk, and state Senate corrections committee Vice Chairman Daniel Sparks, a Republican from Belmont, says he is concerned this will mean an increasing prison population. The Department of Justice says the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman is unsafe because of low staffing levels. Mississippi law requires people convicted of nonviolent crimes and nonhabitual drug offenses to serve either 25% of their sentence or 10 years before becoming parole eligible, and Belk notes that roughly 40% of the eligible inmates who come before the board now are granted parole. Belk said he wants to streamline the process through presumptive parole -- granting parole without a hearing, provided criteria are met.

New education chief. Robert Taylor, a 30-year educator and deputy state superintendent for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, has been chosen to serve as Mississippi’s new state superintendent of education. A Mississippi native

and University of Southern Mississippi graduate, Taylor will succeed Kim Benton, who has served as interim state superintendent of education since July. He will lead the Mississippi Department of Education starting in late January 2023. Taylor started as a teacher’s assistant in Mississippi and went to work for North Carolina public schools as a teacher, principal, district superintendent and state education leader. Taylor said he was looking forward to helping school districts in his home state identify barriers to success for students. “The opportunity to return home to Mississippi and work hand in hand with all stakeholders to improve education is perhaps the pinnacle of one’s career,” Taylor said.

Gunn retiring. One of the most powerful jobs in Mississippi government will be up for grabs because state House Speaker Philip Gunn of Clinton says he will not seek reelection to the Legislature in 2023. “My service as Speaker coming to an end does not mean I will not be open to future opportunities to serve,” he says. “I love our state and will always work to make her better.” Gunn, an attorney, was first elected to the 122-member state House in 2003, and his district encompasses parts of Hinds and Madison counties in the metro Jackson area. In January 2012, he became Mississippi’s first Republican House speaker since Reconstruction. Gunn was instrumental this year in pushing legislators to pass one of the largest tax cuts in state history. Gov. Tate Reeves and Gunn

have both said they want a full elimination of the state income tax. Gunn also has supported restrictions on abortion, including a 2018 Mississippi law that banned most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Mississippi voters next year will elect a governor, lieutenant governor and six other statewide officials, plus transportation commissioners and public service commissioners from northern, central and southern districts. All 174 legislative seats also will be on the ballot.

Abortion question mark. Although Mississippi brought the lawsuit to the U.S. Supreme Court that precipitated the overturning of Roe vs. Wade and no abortion clinics operate in the state, the legality of abortion in Mississippi remains an open question. Two laws -- a ban on all abortions except in the case of rape or to preserve the life of the mother and a six-week ban except in cases of medical emergency – are on the books and an uncontested 1998 state Supreme Court decision in Pro Choice Mississippi v. Fordice ruled that the state constitution provides a right to an abortion (“we find that the state constitutional right to privacy includes an implied right to choose whether or not to have an abortion”). The conservative Mississippi Justice Institute, which is the legal arm of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, recently filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Michigan that seeks to get the state Supreme Court to overturn this ruling, but it’s not clear whether or not the Michigan-based group will have standing even in a court that would probably favor reversing the 1998 decision. The Mississippi Legislature could settle the complex issue by voting early in its 2023 session to place on the ballot as soon as possible a proposal to reverse the state Supreme Court decision granting the right to an abortion.

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- 2010 Yukon SLT, DVD, Leather Buckets, New Tires and brakes, Bose, Super Sharp
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- 2012 F150 Super **SOLD!** Platinum 4wd, Leather, Sunroof, Bed Cover, Navi, Super Sharp!
- 2011 Chevy 1500 **SOLD!** Cab, Z71, 4wd, New Tires, Recent motor rebuild, Good Solid Truck
- 2014 Chevy Malibu LS, Only 87k miles, well cared for, great gas mileage, like new.
- 2010 Chevy Silverado LT, Ext Cab, 4x4, Low Mileage, Toolbox, Trailer Two, 5.3 V8, Nice!
- 2012 Chevy Traverse LT, Only 52,000 miles, Leather, Third Row, Pearl White Beauty!
- 2014 Chevy Crew Cab with only 80k miles, bed cover, Vinyl Floor, Pwr Windows, Bargain
- 2015 Honda Accord Sport Sedan, Low Mileage, Spoiler, Backup Camera, nice
- 2013 Honda Accord LX Sedan, Dark Burgundy Beauty, Great Gas Mileage, Clean
- 2008 Hondas S2000 Convertible, Rare find, Only 57,000 miles, Fast and fun!

2010 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Mega Cab



Low Mileage, Well cared for, Local Truck, Super Nice!



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Making holidays happy & healthy

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid



Strive to maintain your well-being this holiday season by making healthier choices.

During this time of year, weight gain and increased stress are almost inevitable. Make positive choices to minimize stress, and do your best to stick to healthy practices such as exercise to assure that you and your loved ones get the most out of this joyous time of year.

Many think: "So what's the harm in a little holiday weight gain, especially if it's just a pound?" According to researchers at the National Institutes of Health, most Americans never lose the weight they gain during the winter holidays. On average, Americans add one to five pounds during the holiday season. The pounds add up year after year, making holiday weight gain an important contributor to adult obesity.

Here are some tips for activity and food consumption to make it through the season:

- **Go with a plan:** Make a point to be active 30 minutes a day and focus on your goals.
- **Never arrive hungry:** Before a party or large meal, munch on some raw vegetables or a piece of fruit to curb your appetite.
- **Pace yourself:** Eat slowly to give your stomach time to tell you it is full.
- **Divert your attention:** At holiday parties, stay away from the food table and mingle with others.
- **Outsmart the buffet:** Use the smallest plate available and don't stack your food. Be sure to watch out for sauces and dips that quickly add on the extra calories.
- **Limit alcohol:** It's not just about the calories, it is about the control. Be safe and take control of your choices.
- **Stay active:** Even in the hustle and bustle of the season, it is important to stay physically active. Take a walk after the meal.

The holiday season also brings unwelcome guests -- stress and depression -- with a dizzying array of demands: parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few.

If you let stress get the best of you, it can cause:

- Heart disease, including heart attacks.
- Skin conditions, including psoriasis and shingles.
- Digestive disorder flare-ups, such as symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn's disease.
- Immune disorders, including flare-ups of multiple sclerosis and lupus.
- Anxiety and insomnia.
- Worsening pain, if you already have a pain disorder such as arthritis, back pain, and muscle spasms.

However, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would. When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past:

1. **Acknowledge your feelings and reach out.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or social events.
2. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well.
3. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
4. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name. Give homemade gifts. Start a family gift exchange. Offer others the gift of wellness by giving subscriptions to health magazines, gym memberships, or gift certificates for yoga classes.
5. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list.
6. **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed.
7. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.
8. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps stay healthy, and prevent stress. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

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.