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# Wesson News

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### Area Economic Development

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Volume 11, Number 2

“Good News You Can Use”

February, 2023

## President Hulon Sims retiring from Co-Lin

*Special to Wesson News*

After over 34 years in education, Copiah-Lincoln Community College President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims has announced her retirement effective June 30, 2023. The announcement came at the college’s monthly Board of Trustees meeting.

“It has been a blessing for me to serve as the eighth president of Copiah-Lincoln Community College for the past five years,” said Hulon Sims. “I have been fortunate to have spent 23 years in various leadership roles at the college, but the pinnacle of my career has been serving as president of this incredible institution.”

Before becoming president of the college, Dr. Hulon Sims served as Vice President of the Wesson Campus, Vice President of Instructional Services, Academic Dean of Instruction, and Director of Planning and Research.

During her tenure as president, Co-Lin has seen new instructional programs, scholarships, services that have increased student success and graduation rates, construction and

renovations on its three campuses, and creation of new partnerships with universities and business and industry in the Co-Lin district. The college has been ranked number one in the state for graduation rates and for student success and been named “A Great College to Work For” and an Aspen Top 150 Community College during her leadership. Both men’s and women’s soccer were reinstated (2020) and the Blue Wave Show Band grew to be the largest band in school history.

Construction projects during her tenure as president of the college included the installation of turf and a jumbotron at Stone Stadium (2019), an eight-court tennis complex (2020), a new president’s home (2020), a Career-Technical Building at the Simpson County Center (2020), a Diesel Lab on the Natchez Campus (2021), phase one of renovations at the Sullivan Baseball field (2023), and several campus beautification projects.



Wesson News

Renovations at the college encompassed the Cosmetology lab (2020), bridge replacements on Wolf Hollow Golf Course (2021), The Wolf Den Grill and Smoothie Bar (2022), Fortenberry Career-Tech Building classrooms (2022), and PJ’s Coffee (2023).

“In addition to my gratitude to each board member, I would like to recognize and express my deep appreciation to my leadership team,” Hulon Sims said. “They share my desire for educational excellence on all campuses. Working along side them has been a joy and an honor.”

Dr. Hulon Sims is a member of numerous organizations, including the Mississippi Academic Officers Association (Past President), the Mississippi Association of Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges with Associate Degrees, American Association of University Women, Wesson Chamber of Commerce (past member of the Board of Directors),

Brookhaven Rotary Club, Delta Kappa Gamma, and Wesson Garden Club.

She has served as a representative to the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation and was selected to serve on its Board of Trustees. She has participated in the Education Policy Fellowship Program, Leadership Jones County and Mississippi Community College Leadership Academy (MCCLA). Dr. Hulon Sims received the Phi Theta Kappa National Distinguished Administrator Award, Phi Theta Kappa Paragon Award, Co-Lin’s High Performance Award, and was inducted into the Co-Lin Foundation Hall of Fame in 2022.

Dr. Hulon Sims is a graduate of Jones County Junior College, received both a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Southern Mississippi, and earned her Doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Mississippi State University.

Dr. Hulon Sims is the proud mother of two sons, Will and Drew, and is married to Dennis Sims.

## Ten receive annual Chamber awards

*Special to Wesson News*

Wesson Chamber of Commerce last month presented its annual awards to ten individuals and organizations that contribute to the life of Wesson through business, education and not-for-profit service

The Chamber recognized Mill Town Mall Antiques and Flea Market, Wesson Friends of the Library and Marilyn Britt as Business of the Year, Organization of the Year and Citizen of the Year. The other honorees were:

- **Stephanie Allen**, Wesson Attendance Center Educator of the Year;
- **Rachelle Hackney**, Co-Lin Educator of the Year;
- **Wesson Volunteer Fire Department**, recipient of the Community Spirit Award;
- **Trustmark National Bank**, Best Customer Service Award recipient;
- **Steel Outdoors**, Innovative Business Award recipient;
- **Wolf Hollow Golf Course**, Positive Social Media Presence Award recipient;
- **Copiah Medical Associates**, Best New Business Award.

Keynote speaker Stephanie DuGuid, Dean of Academic Instruction at Co-Lin and  
*cont. on page 9*



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Marilyn Britt (right), Citizen of Year, accepts award from Chamber’s Deemie Letchworth.



Wesson News

Founders Day Queen Ally Sullivan with Chamber President Stephen Ashley.



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# Creating jobs in Copiah County

By Bob Arnold

For 11 years, Arthur Lee (Pokey) Evans has applied the lessons he learned sitting on the bench of Crystal Springs High School basketball and track teams, working for his father's trucking company and then managing his own, and serving as Mayor of Crystal Springs to the task of keeping Copiah Countians at work.

Evans is Executive Director of the Copiah County Economic Development District (CCEDD), and in that job makes sure there are employers for the people in Copiah County who want jobs.

"I learned the values of being all-in and giving 100 percent to the team, whether or not you played as a starter, treating people with respect and responding readily to needs," says Evans. People who want to live and work in Copiah County are glad he learned those lessons well.

On the wall next to his desk, a wood plaque also guides Evans: "Be still and know that I am God," it says. "I'm often tempted shout and jump up and down if something goes wrong. I'm reminded that isn't the answer."

Born and raised in Crystal Springs, Evans graduated from high school there in 1978, where he played basketball and participated in track and field events.

"I never started for the team, but I am proud that I never got cut," he recalls. "I played as I was called upon to contribute to the team, giving my all."

After high school, he decided he would work for his father at A.L. Evans Trucking Company and go to college the following year, but never returned to his studies.

"I found the money good, and eventually started AL Evans, Jr., Trucking Company, which owned three trucks and had several employees," Evans says. "The companies hauled gravel, asphalt, raw materials and anything else people needed to move."

In the process, Evans learned business success stemmed from dealing right with people – your customers, workers and everyone else upon which your company depended. "Treating people with respect made all the difference in the world."

Twenty years later while driving one of his trucks, Evans heard a voice tell him: "You need to do something else." He followed the advice, ran for Mayor of Crystal Springs in 2001, lost, returned to his trucking business, but heeded the voice again four years later and won by two votes.

"I was told later the job of Mayor is kissing babies and cutting ribbons, but shortly after taking office, I was faced with the major damage Hurricane Katrina did to Crystal Springs, the murder of a police officer and a traffic accident in which a fire truck was hit by a gravel truck," Evans says. "I learned about public service in a hurry."

The voters of Crystal Springs re-elected Evans Mayor in 2009, but two years later, when he could focus on babies and ribbons while addressing issues around improving the town's infrastructure, he took the job as CCEDD Executive Director, with its focus on the wider county and new service challenges.

Evans cites two major challenges in the job that have defined his approach to it over the past 11 years: Advanced Auto Parts closure -- a crisis that threatened many job losses -- and the decision of McNeely Plastics to locate a plant in Copiah County -- an important economic development coup. In both cases, Evans drew on his skills as a team player and people person, working with his staff assistant Brenda Harper, the CCEDD board, Copiah County Supervisors and state economic development officials to get Premier Transportation to



Wesson News

take over the Advanced Auto Parts facility and to address the needs of McNeely Plastics that would bring it to Copiah County. And, in both cases, the result was new job opportunities for Copiah Countians – the mission Evans sees for his work in the final analysis.

Evans is married to Judy Hicks Evans, a lab technician at Copiah County Medical Center, and they have two grown children – Arthur Lee Evans III, 39, a business manager, and JaBrean Evans Hood, 25, a first grade teacher.

## What are your hobbies?

My wife says it is work – answering phones 24/7, but I enjoy Alcorn and Jackson State football, particularly tailgating. Since 2001, I have served on the Copiah County School Board, when I was asked to serve out the term of a deceased member of the board and was subsequently identified as the best replacement. I also find lawn and garden work therapeutic. I like being with my family, too.

## Are you a reader?

I read newspapers to know what is going on, and to converse with people. I also read inspirational and motivational books. A favorite is Max Lucado's *It's Not About Me*. The Bible keeps me grounded.

## Do you have favorite movies or plays?

I watch Netflix. It may seem odd, but movies about the drug cartels fascinate me – their business sense and how they make things happen.

## Do you enjoy music?

My wife, son and daughter sing and play, but I am just a listener, and eclectic, with my tastes ranging from gospel to rap to R&B and country.

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

After making sure my family, including a brother, sister and in-laws, were not in financial stress, I would help the school system meet the vocational and technical needs of students through a votech center.

## How would you change the world?

The world needs a big dose of common sense.



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**Volume 11, Number 2**

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

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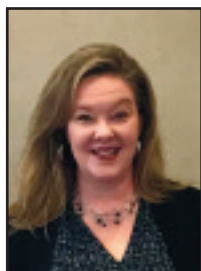
## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



# Healthy habits start very early in life

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

Every parent wants the very best for their children. Helping them cultivate healthy habits that last a lifetime is an important part of assuring that happens, and it must start the at the youngest possible age.



Many habits, like consuming the right foods and beverages and physical activity, can have a profound effect on the quality of their lives and their likelihood of developing major illnesses later in life, including heart disease. It is important to get kids off to the healthiest possible start.

In recent years, we have seen the very troubling emergence of obesity as a national health crisis affecting adults and children, as well. Nearly one in five children is obese. Not only do overweight adolescents have an average 40% (and up to 80%) chance of becoming obese as adults, but, as children, obesity is causing them a broad range of physical health problems -- high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and elevated blood cholesterol levels -- that previously were not seen until adulthood. Excess weight at a young age has been

linked to higher and earlier death rates in adulthood. Anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem are also problems, and obese children as young as three years old show indicators of developing heart disease later in life.

There is no quick and easy solution to childhood obesity. But children who grow up in healthy environments have an advantage. If they have constant access to playgrounds or are encouraged to go outside rather than play video and other computer games or watch television, physical activity is more likely to become a way of life for them. If their meals at school and at home are rich in fruits and vegetables, they are more likely to pass on unhealthy snacks and processed foods. Together, parents and the community can make a positive difference by helping to steer more kids along the healthiest possible path.

Here are a few tips to help children develop healthy habits:

- **Make dinnertime a family time:** When everyone sits down together to eat, there is less chance of children eating the wrong foods or snacking too much. Get your kids involved in cooking and planning meals. Have fun picking out new fruits and vegetables at the grocery store. Focus

on lean proteins and whole grains. Look for foods with the American Heart Association's trusted Heart-Check mark to make smarter food choices. Everyone develops good eating habits together, and quality time with the family is an added bonus.

- **Get the whole family moving:** Plan times for everyone to get moving together. Take walks, ride bikes, go swimming, garden or just play hide-and-seek outside. Everyone will benefit from the exercise and the time together.

- **Curb television, video games and computer time:** With them comes a sedentary lifestyle and excessive snacking, which increase risks of obesity and cardiovascular disease. Limit screen time to two hours per day.

- **Learn to love the labels and focus on proportion:** Read food labels, as they provide essential information. Pay attention to portion control in the package and at home. Pre-pack healthy snacks by keeping fresh fruit, veggies and healthy nuts on-hand.

- **Be a good role model:** You don't have to be perfect all the time, but if kids see you trying to eat right and getting physically active, they will take notice of your efforts. You will send a message that good health is important to your family.

- **Learn more about how to help your family be healthier at heart.org/healthyhome.** Keep up with annual appointments and physical examinations, tracking the important numbers such as blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol readings. In addition, Body Mass Index (BMI), body fat percentage, and height-weight charts can help monitor progress as well as any challenges that may arise related to health. By staying current and up to date regarding your healthy information, you can avoid developing life threatening conditions.

With our busy lives, it is challenging to focus on healthy eating and daily physical activity. Make a commitment today to focus on your health!

*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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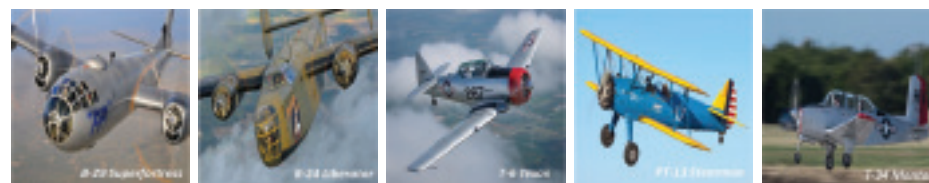
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# Mouth-watering tender, juicy ribs

By Guest Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

If country cooking is your thing, pork ribs are probably a favorite – those that are tender and juicy and fall off the bone.

The secret to those mouth-watering ribs, whether you prefer baby back or spare, is scoring the membrane on the back of them with a knife and slow-cooking them. Baby back ribs are more tender and leaner than spare ribs, and are typically more expensive. Each rack is around 2 pounds, around half of which is bone, and one rack feeds one hungry adult. Spare ribs, longer and fatter, are cut from the ends of baby backs, and run along the pig's breast bone.

## CHOW TIME

### Ingredients:

1 rack of spare ribs

Or

1 rack of baby backs

½ cup of vinegar

Weber KC BBQ dry rub

Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ Sauce

### Directions:

1. Cover ribs with water and add vinegar.
2. Soak them for one to two hours to hydrate and help tenderize them.
3. Drain the water-vinegar mix, and score the back of the rib with a knife to remove the membrane. Scoring is easiest.
4. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.
5. Generously cover both sides of the ribs with your favorite dry rub. I like Weber KC BBQ.
6. Place rib pan in a smoker oven.
7. After one hour, remove them, put aluminum foil over the pan, and return it to your cooker for another one and one half hours.
8. Gently remove them, because they will tend to fall apart on the cutting board. Most of the time you can remove bones.
9. Baste with Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ Sauce.
10. Cut in individual pieces, and serve with your favorite side dishes.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Charles Fortson, Jr., is proprietor-chef at Uncle Ray's across from Lake Lincoln State Park. He makes lunches and dinners to take out or for table service, while also operating a convenience store and bait shop at his Sunset Road location. Follow his cooking tips on Uncle Ray's Facebook page or call 601-643-0174 to check on his daily specials.*



# COVID \$

**The Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program is one of the most misunderstood elements of the pandemic relief package passed by congress.**

**Your business is likely eligible and should immediately explore the ERTC!**

- **Qualify even if you did not lose revenue.**
- **Qualify even if you received PPP.**
- **Claim up to \$26k per W2 employee.**

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# Community center serviceability improving

Wesson News

The Town of Wesson is spending \$300,000 it received from the State of Mississippi to repair and update the Old School Community Center and plans to focus on increasing its use for municipal events and intensify its efforts to get community organizations to use the facility.

“We want it to be used as it was intended to be used – as a community center,” Wesson Alderman Mike King told the audience at the Chamber of Commerce awards program last month.

Two ways the money is being spent reflect the focus on increasing its use: creating a preparation area for caterers with kitchen equipment and renovating and updating the second floor for users.

“The lack of catering space and the second floor functionality are two of the biggest problems potential users of the facility cite,” King said.

King pointed out that the comprehensive renovation is addressing both exterior and interior needs – repairing columns on the porch and floors, outdoor and indoor painting, updating the HVAC system and creating a bigger and better parking area.

At the same, the new police department building is just about ready for occupancy, King said. Because of delays in deliveries of computers and other equipment, the move-in date has been pushed back several times, he explained.

One-half of the new building will house the police department, and the other half provides space for the municipal court. On the police side of the building, there will an area for the dispatcher and varied rooms for the diverse functions of the department.

“All and all, the Aldermen are working hard to make Wesson a better place to live,” King said.



Wesson Old School community center.

Special to Wesson News

## WESSON AREA DINING GUIDE

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# Hoopsters head to winning seasons

Special to Wesson News

Both Co-Lin men's and women's basketball teams are headed for winning seasons going into February, with the men 11 -5 so far and the ladies 14-5.

The men have racked up wins against Delgado (99-62, 97-75), Lawson State (84-65), Holmes (70-62), Baton Rouge Community (84-59, 72-59), Southwest (88-84), Jones (76-74), Mississippi Delta (82-67), Northeast (84-79) and Pearl River (82-79) with losses to Northwest Florida State (82-79), Gulf Coast State-Florida (98-81) LSU Eunice (74-78), East Mississippi (71-62) and Holmes (90-83).

The Ladies have defeated Hinds (70-60), South Arkansas Community College (71-52, 70-58), LSU Eunice (71-59), Gulf Coast (61-54), Baton Rouge Community College (76-66, 77-55), Southwest (68-64), Coastal Alabama (77-58), Southwest (69-67), Southern University-Shreveport (72-63), East Mississippi (74-62), Northeast (75-57) and Coahoma (62-

64) while losing to Southern University-Shreveport (68-61), Holmes (78-75), Jones (87-58), Mississippi Delta (55-38) and Pearl River (84-56).

The team schedules in February are as follows:

## Men

- 2 @ Coahoma
- 6 East Central
- 9 @ Hinds
- 13 Itawamba
- 16 @ Meridian
- 21 Gulf Coast
- 23 @ Northwest

## Women

- 2 Coahoma
- 6 @ East Central
- 9 Hinds
- 13 @ Itawamba
- 16 Meridian
- 21 @ Gulf Coast
- 23 Northwest

All games are at 6 p.m., except for the Lady Wolves matchup at Itawamba at 5:30 p.m. on February 13.



**SPORTS**  
**SHORTS**

# Wesson star signs with Co-Lin

Special to Wesson News

Wesson High School's (WHS) starting quarterback will continue to wear the colors of blue and white.

Will Loy has signed a football scholarship to play with the Co-Lin Wolfpack. Loy had a host of family members, friends, coaches, and teammates on hand at a signing ceremony, which also celebrated his playing football at the next level.

Loy finished his WHS career with impressive career stats: 10,156 career total yards, including 9,964 passing, 128 total touchdowns – 112 on passes.

Off the field, Loy earned a composite score of 32 and super score of 33 on his ACT, and is Wesson's 2023 STAR Student. He is an honor roll student and a member of Beta Club, and has received numerous academic awards. He was chosen by the WHS student body and staff as Mr. Wesson High School and as Most Athletic in the Senior Who's Who. Loy has been a member of the football team for six years, the baseball team for six years, and the golf team for three years. He was selected All-District for three years, District Offensive MVP, All-State Team, and the 2022 3A State Offensive Player of the Year.



Family, friends and coaches helped Wesson High School (WHS) quarterback Will Loy celebrate his decision to continue playing at Co-Lin. Front row (L to R): WHS Head Football Coach and Will's Dad Jeremy Loy, Will Loy, and Sarah Loy, his mom. Back row (L to R): WHS Football Assistant Coaches Hank Jordan, Steve Barrington and Josh Garrett.

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# Copiah County begins bicentennial



Wesson News

Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James W. (Jim) Kitchens.



Wesson News

Copiah County Board of Supervisors President Judson Jackson (center) accepts commemorative plaque with Mississippi Legislature resolution recognizing the county from State Representative Greg Holloway, Sr., (left) and State Senator Albert Butler (right).

By Bob Arnold

If you search the internet for “Copiah County,” it will produce only one result: Copiah County, Mississippi.

“That proves to me we live in a very special place,” Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James W. (Jim) Kitchens told more than 100 Copiah County government, business and civic leaders at kick-off the county’s year-long the bicentennial celebration.

In keynote remarks at the breakfast celebration at the Safe Room Community Center at Gallman, Kitchens, a Copiah County native and continuing resident, declared “Copiah County, Mississippi, is the only Copiah County in the world. No other place is like it. It’s a very special place.”

At the event, Greg Holloway, Sr., who serves District 76 in the Mississippi House of Representatives, and Albert Butler, who serves Mississippi Senate District 56, presented to Copiah County Board of Supervisors President Judson Jackson a plaque with a commemorative resolution adopted by the Mississippi Legislature that recognized the county for “its excellence, quality of life and values.”

Kitchens said diversity was the mark of Copiah County. He recalled a sign once on the grounds of the Copiah Court House at Hazlehurst: “Welcome to Copiah County. Mississippi’s most diversified.”

“It referred to our economy, but diversity characterizes Copiah County’s people, culture, town and rural life, geography and in many other respects,” Kitchens said.

Sketching the history of the country, Kitchens said indigenous peoples lived in Copiah County before the Egyptians built the ancient pyramids, and “copiah” is a Choctaw word for “calling panther” that honors the elegant and graceful sleek felines which roamed the forests that are still part of the county’s landscape.

“The Mississippi legislature established Copiah County on January 21, 1823, carving it out of Hinds County, which was created in 1798 from Native American territory,” Kitchens related. “It has remained Mississippi’s seventh largest county in size since a portion of it was surrendered in the creation of Lincoln County in 1870.”

In the period before the Civil War, the slave population grew in the county and is still reflected in its racial mix today, Kitchens said. He noted there was a small slave market at Crystal Springs and an underground railroad that transported slaves to their freedom outside the county in non-slave states.

Kitchens illustrated the unique diversity of Copiah County in two natives who made history: Robert Johnson, a guitarist considered “the father of Blues music” and Bernita Shelton Matthews, the first woman Federal District Judge, a 1949 President Truman appointee who served until she was 88 years old.

“We live here because we want to live here,” Kitchens declared. “What will you and I do to make Copiah County better and more hospitable?”

The Copiah County Board of Supervisors and a special Bicentennial Committee are planning events throughout 2023.

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# Arts celebration marks 34th year

By Guest Columnist R. Shaw Furlow

For the 34th year, Co-Lin and partner state organizations which promote the arts will present a wide variety of presentations, book signings, screenings, and even a vintage fashion show at the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration (NLCC) Thursday and Friday, February 23 and 24.

This year's program is framed thematically as "The Better Half? Fact, Fiction, or Fable." Most of the events and presentations are free of charge and will be held at the Natchez Convention Center in downtown Natchez (211 Main Street).

NLCC is a time-honored tradition in the State of Mississippi, with a reputation as one of the state's most significant annual conferences devoted to literature, history, film, and culture. Every February, NLCC chooses a new topic related to humanities in the American South and brings nationally known scholars and authors to Natchez for the award-winning conference.

On the Thursday agenda are:

- Opening remarks by Natchez Mayor Dan Gibson, Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, and Dr. Sandra Barnes, Vice President of the Natchez Campus.
- Recognition of William Winter Scholars and Vance Fellows.
- Presentations by The *Washington Post* journalist and author Amy Argetsinger, author Julie Hines Mabus, and author Dr. Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, followed by a book signing.
- "There She Is, Queen's Luncheon" featuring former Miss Mississippi Kimberly Morgan Myles, current Miss Mississippi Emmie Perkins, Miss America 1960 Lynda Lee Mead Shea, and Miss America 1980 Cheryl Prewitt Salem, hosted by the Carriage House Restaurant at Stanton Hall. Tickets are \$40.
- Presentations by author Danielle Dreilinger and Dr. Joan DeJean of the University of Pennsylvania, with a book signing.
- Kathleen Bond, Superintendent of the Natchez Historical Park.

- A conversation with Dr. Rebecca Hall, author of *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts*.

- Author Kristen Green and Dr. Cybèle Gontar, Guest Curator of The Cabildo, the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans.

- A vintage fashion style show, food, libations, and music, and a screening of *Rhythms of the Land* by Dr. Gail Myers.

Friday features:

- Presentation of the Richard Wright Award for Literary Excellence and Thad Cochran Award of Achievement, and recognition of the John D. W. Guice Young Writers Competition winners.

- A panel discussion -- "Changing the Narrative and Telling a More Complete Story" -- with Dr. Jodi Skipper and Dr. Elizabeth Bronwyn Boyd moderated by Dr. Roscoe Barnes.

- Author Dr. Rebecca Sharpless of Texas Christian University.

- A "Brunch from the Summer Kitchen at Gloucester" with author and former food historian Dr. Leni Sorensen. Tickets for this event are \$40.

- Dr. Jonathan White, Elisabeth Grant-Gibson in conversation with Valerie Martin.

- A panel discussion with Kelby Ouchley and Shelby Harriel on women of the Civil War.

- A panel discussion with Dr. Sarah Adlahka and Diane McPhail on Southern fiction.

- Screening of *The Saloon*, a documentary by filmmaker Timothy Givens.

Visit [www.colin.edu/nlcc](http://www.colin.edu/nlcc) to view the full conference agenda, purchase tickets, and learn more about the NLCC.



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cont. from front page

## Ten receive annual Chamber awards



Wesson News

Chamber's Deemie Letchworth (far right) congratulates Friends of Library members on Organization of the Year award. Left to right are Sharon Langley, Barbara Locke, Kim Whittington, Joy Phillips, Steven Liverman, Marilyn Britt, Violet Corrales, Sonya Cowen and Deemie Letchworth.

a Wesson-based motivational consultant, talked about dealing effectively with people and quality customer service – the skills that make individuals and organizations award winners.

Success stems from relating to other people properly, based on correctly understanding them, she said. She described several ways of understanding people – as extroverts or introverts, thinkers or feelers; verbal or non-verbal, perspective or experience oriented.

“You might understand them as possessing the character of animals,” she said. “Lions are leaders, decisive and like to accomplish things and achieve immediate results. Otters are fun-loving, avoid confrontation and can motivate others. Golden retrievers are loyal, need close relationships and are compassionate. Beavers keep a close watch on their emotions, make careful and intentional decisions and have high standards.”

Wesson Alderman Michael King and Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims also spoke about what's happening around town and at the college to the awards event audience, including honorees and their families and friends.

At the event, the Chamber introduced its 2023 Board of Directors: Stephen Ashley, president; Stephanie Duguid, vice president; Deemie Letchworth, secretary; Brent Duguid, treasurer; and members Jessica Breazeale, Gina Dixon, Juanita Proffitt and Ken Sullivan. Founder's Day Queen Ally Sullivan was also on hand.

In his closing remarks, Chamber President Stephen Ashley lauded the board members as “hard working movers and shakers,” noted that the Chamber will sponsor the annual Founder's Day celebration on May 5 and 6, and proclaimed “I am proud of Wesson – a special place made by special people.”



Wesson News

Milltown Town Mall Antiques and Flea Market owners Lee and Melisa Meredith (left and center) accept Business of Year award from Chamber's Deemie Letchworth.

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# Co-Lin economic development activity grows

By Bob Arnold

Co-Lin, which has significantly broadened its role in economic development in recent years beyond preparing students to enter the workforce, will participate in two new statewide initiatives this year to lure new industry to Mississippi.

Today, the college focuses on the future economy, as well as the here and now, and in the coming year will support and implement programs to advance the goals of the Mississippi Economic Council's Accelerate Mississippi and Woodward Hines Education Foundation's "Ascent to 55," Co-Lin Workforce Education Director Luke Laird reports.

Accelerate Mississippi is a state-managed effort that seeks to promote and deliver workforce education and advance economic development through localized assistance in eight distinct regional "ecosystems" to organize customized programs that share best practices, improve communication and enhance collaboration to address the particulars of the market data, supply chain needs, available educational resources and regional/community assets. "Ascent to 55" defines a goal that 55 percent of the state's working adults earn a degree, credential or certification beyond a high school diploma.

Co-Lin, Laird says, is spending \$1.5 million provided by Accelerate Mississippi to improve Workforce Education programs in commercial truck driving, welding, fiber splicing, and power line repair.

"We're investing the money to improve and expand training in areas that will produce workers for new and expanding industry in southwest Mississippi, which include Accelerate Mississippi's Ecosystems 5 and 7," says Laird. "The region will need more commercial truck drivers with experience in different vehicles as it becomes a major transportation hub, with more shipping in and out of Gulf ports and the importance of the Mississippi River, our railroads and the interstate highway infrastructure increases. The need for welders who can meet changing requirements of maintenance operations in new and existing industries as new technologies are introduced is a constant. With the push nationally to bring broadband to rural areas and to power new vehicles with electricity, the need for skilled workers who can install fiber optic cable and linemen who can maintain the electrical grid is growing."

The college's purchases for classes will assure students are exposed to the most

up-to-date technologies and tools in their field, Laird points out. Students will handle vehicles equipped with computerized systems that automate driving. In power line repair classes, a new bucket truck will expose linemen in training to equipment they will find when they go to work in the field. Fiber optics splicing tools will prepare students to readily work on building modern internet networks.

"A cost-saver for the college that will also broaden exposure of students to equipment and technology will be simulators that provide augmented reality and virtual reality experiences," Laird says. "Welding students, for example, will put on helmets that place them in simulated work situations that provide training not available in the classroom."

Historically, the Career and Technical and Workforce Education divisions of Co-Lin have produced the region's workers by training people for existing and new jobs and assuring they are equipped with the knowledge and skills for changing work requirements throughout its service area encompassing Adams, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lincoln and Simpson Counties. The college's Career and Technical Division continues to offer two-year degree programs, so students can take their place in the area labor force, and its Workforce Training Division continues to respond to business needs for ongoing and special training, so workers have current skills and knowledge to do their jobs safely and productively.

Every year, more than 700 students take courses that are part of Co-Lin Technical and Career programs, more than 5,000 first-time students enroll in Workforce Education classes for job-specific training, and more than 17,000 students return for additional Workforce Education classes.

In addition to the programs that are the focus of this year's Accelerate Mississippi spending, the college's certificate and Associate Degree programs include construction equipment operation, cosmetology, diesel equipment technology, food production and management technology, HVAC technology, practical nursing, precision machine technology, Business and Marketing Management Technology, Business and Office Technology, Computer Networking Technology, Drafting and Design Technology/Architectural Engineering Technology, Early Childhood Education Technology, Electronics Technology, Hotel and Restaurant Management Technology, Medical Laboratory Technology, Medical Radiological Technology, Military Technology and Respiratory Care Technology.

cont. on page 11

# Good year is on Copiah's horizon

Special to Wesson News

Professionals in economic development say the year before a Presidential election is often a good one for recruiting new businesses. The uncertainties of who will be in power following elections temper the decision-making around major corporate activities, such as investing in new facilities at new locations. It's a different story the year before the election.

And so it is as 2023 dawns, according to Arthur Lee (Pokey) Evans, Executive Director of Copiah County Economic Development District (CCEDD).

"I've already had several exciting and promising discussions with employers looking at Copiah County as a place to locate their operations," Evans says. "Some companies already doing business here are also considering expansion possibilities."

An increasing number of tourists who visit Copiah County to enjoy its restaurants, use its parks and wilderness and recreational areas and learn about its musical heritage, in particular, feed Evan's optimism. These attractions and new ones, such as restaurants and a walking trail along Highway 51 from a park to downtown Crystal Springs, boost economic development in showcasing the county, he says.

"When I meet visitors from outside Copiah County, I talk to them like they might be prospects for locating new businesses," Evans says. CCEDD offices, he notes, bring in a lot of these visitors because they are now located at the Robert Johnson Blues Museum. "We meet people from all over the place – the U.S. and throughout the world."

Also feeding Evans' optimism are several other factors:

- **The current economic climate.** Copiah County's unemployment has remained low, hovering around 3.9 percent, and local employers have not laid off workers or are looking to do so. Sales tax revenues are up, indicating locals are staying in Copiah County to shop and visitors are spending money.
- One of the longest-held properties by the County in the Copiah County industrial park at Gallman – **the Universal building** -- has been purchased by a wood pellet manufacturer that had to stall the beginning of operations there because it couldn't find financing. The company has maintained a maintenance crew at the building to make sure it's ready to produce and ship to European fuel users when its finances permit. The building purchase suggests the time may be getting closer.
- **An industrial park** that offers attractive business sites because of modern infrastructure and property safety features. Sewage and water systems have been

recently upgraded for companies that operate in the Gallman facility. Accessibility to an abundant supply of quality water – problematic in some areas today – is not a concern in the park, and a volunteer fire department has located within the park, reducing costs of insurance coverage.

- **Small businesses**, including new food services and other retailers, have started up in Hazlehurst and Crystal Springs.

Among existing employers in Copiah County are Premier Transport, a regional distribution center; Sanderson Farms poultry hatchery and feed plant, Entergy, Mississippi's primary electricity provider, DG Food poultry processing and foods, ABB, Inc., industrial controls and electrical transformers; Westlake Chemical chemical and vinyl manufacturing, Metaline Products, Inc., industrial metal fabrication, design, prototyping and finishing; CCI Industries, pipeline construction; Copiah Lumber Products, Inc., Fab-Tek Industry, McNeely Plastics, Jones Lumber Company, Steel Outdoors, residential and commercial metal fabrication and customize buildings.

Evans works with Brenda Harper at CCEDD and praises its board and the Copiah County Supervisors for their support and assistance in telling the Copiah County economic development story to the business community. CCEDD board members are James Mitchell of Copiah Bank; Michael Hutchison of Trustmark Bank; Jerry Hood, a business leader; Chris Palmer, retired Crystal Springs police officer; and Jimbob Brock, a builder.

In addition to many in-person meetings and telephone calls, Evan's primary tools in outreach to companies seeking to locate new facilities are a web site ([www.copiahworks.com](http://www.copiahworks.com)) and Facebook page which emphasize:

- A **workforce** that is willing and ready to serve employers;
- A **location** near key markets with rail, interstate, air and nearby water access;
- **Government officials** who understand business needs, provide incentives, and facilitate location;
- **Copiah-Lincoln Community College** as a leader in workforce development;
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cont. from page 10

# Co-Lin economic development activity grows

The focus this year on preparing workers for the future economy continues. Co-Lin's orientation in recent years to go the extra mile and leave a bigger footprint in economic development. Among other things, it is partnering with Southwest Community College in Summit to bring together economic development leaders from the region they serve to explore strategic planning and cooperative efforts in recruiting new employers. The college has also sought to assist entrepreneurs in advancing business concepts and supports the ACT Work Ready program in the seven Co-Lin district counties by administering the WorkKeys Assessment to certify their emerging, existing and transitional workforces as "Work Ready."

This year will again see Co-Lin and Southwest Community College (SCC) hosting meetings of the Southwest Council on economic development. Two representatives from each of the 11 participating counties will attend meetings, where they will conduct a SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) analysis towards delineating objectives, goals, strategies and tactics in a strategic plan to guide cooperative economic development activities in southwest Mississippi. There will be at least two meetings, with the representatives coming from Co-Lin's district counties and the SCC district, including Amite, Walthall, Pike and Wilkinson Counties.

The idea is to cultivate a mindset that there is strength numbers, and a regional voice can recruit new business, support business expansion and create jobs similar to what is happening on the Gulf Coast, in the Hinds-Madison Counties area, around DeSoto County and in the Golden Triangle area around Tupelo. One possibility is identifying a super site as a location for a major employer and jointly market it.

Another highlight of Co-Lin's economic development activity this year comes early with its long-standing Pathway Job Fair. On March 23 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., some 100 employers will be on hand at the Thames Center on the college's Wesson campus to meet job-seekers. Today, prospective employees and hiring organizations alike use Handshake, an online service on which they can engage, connecting before the event to make appointments for serious conversations. Job-seekers discover jobs and internships, receive direct messages from employers about jobs and events, connect with employees at organizations and get an inside look at employers and jobs.

Although it has been held annually for more than two decades, the job fair is a dramatic visible illustration of Co-Lin's work in economic development grounded in building partnerships and relationships with movers and shakers in the economy. Its continuing growth highlights the college's growing engagement with economic issues and advancing economic development.

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# Economic payoffs coming this year

By Bob Arnold

Investments of some \$245 million in the Lincoln County economy announced over the past 12-18 months will begin paying off in the coming year, says Garrick Combs, who is responsible for economic development in Brookhaven and Lincoln County as executive director of Brookhaven-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce (BLCCC) and Brookhaven-Lincoln County Economic Development Alliance (BLCEDA).

They include returns on spending for projects by Walmart Distribution Center, Rex Lumber and CM Biomass, AITX and Southwest Electric.

"This is a big deal when coupled with the absence of any major worker layoffs in ten years," says Combs. "It's an unprecedented boost for our retail and banking sectors."

Only Southwest Electric (SE) has not yet broken ground on 65 acres in Brookhaven's Linbrook Business Park, where it plans to spend almost \$20 million on a new district office that will create a 110 jobs, says Combs.

"SE has done the pre-construction work for several buildings for a dispatching center, IT services, warehouse, mechanic shop, truck staging area and laydown yard to house emergency storm crews," he notes. "Its plan is to distribute staff, material and equipment across its Lincoln, Copiah, Franklin, Amite, Adams, Hinds, Jefferson and Wilkinson Counties service area to better serve its 25,000 members and increase overall system reliability. We're looking for construction to begin during 2023, but SE is progressing methodically."

At the same time, Combs says AITX is completing work on "the region's largest industrial expansion in decades" -- a \$32 million project encompassing property, redevelopment, construction and equipment, and creation of more than 100 jobs on Industrial Park Road in Brookhaven. The project also included bringing a new rail spur into the area. AITX, formerly American Rail Car, will do complete repair and maintenance of all types of rail cars at the new facility. Wages and benefits for the new jobs at the Brookhaven operation will be 110 per cent of the state average, Combs says.

Meanwhile, Rex Lumber and CM Biomass has opened Brookhaven Pellets after investing \$15 million to \$20 million in a manufacturing plant that is shipping wood pellets for fuel to Europe. "Fifteen jobs were created at the new facility," says Combs.

Finally, Walmart Distribution Center invested \$180 million in automation and new technologies at its Brookhaven facility. Although the project did not create new jobs, Combs called it a "good sign" that indicated Walmart's commitment to the area. The distribution facility employs 1,100 persons.

This year, Combs is looking for new investors in the area economy. In 2022, BLCC and BLCEDA completed a new 50,000 spec building in Linbrook Business Park ready for a business to set up operations, and it will be the focus during the coming year for marketing geared to industrial companies, he says. Mississippi Economic Development Council (MEDC) has recognized the unique BLCC-CLCEDA economic development model centered around speculative industrial buildings to lure an employer that wants to deploy workers and machinery to get its product to market as quickly as possible without a long wait for construction of manufacturing facilities.

"Ninety percent of companies looking to locate a facility want an existing building rather than raw land on which to build," Combs points out. A web site which promotes the new building is the initial BLCC-BLCEDA connection to industrial organizations seeking a business location followed by numerous meetings and telephone calls with prospects. "Our strategy is to stimulate interest with a spec building, sell it and reload with another building," Combs explains. "We also show prospective employers how we can support them through worker training and job fairs for their recruiting."

While new retail business isn't Combs's province, it is on BLCC's radar, Combs adds. With funds it receives from a two percent sales tax assessed on Brookhaven hotels and motels, the BLCC Tourism Council has hired a retail business development organization to promote Brookhaven. The Council also uses the fund to build retail traffic and stimulate sales at existing stores through social media and special events -- in the process, generating convincing data for retail organizations looking for new markets. Combs points to the new Tractor Supply facility near Home Depot on Brookway Boulevard,

"All and all, we're anticipating a busy year in economic development," says Combs.



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# Candidates, pets, book & marijuana

Special to Wesson News

**Candidates preview race.** In a preview of the upcoming Mississippi gubernatorial race, incumbent Republican Governor Tate Reeves and his likely Democrat challenger Brandon Presley clashed on occasion of Reeves State-of-the-State message. Saying the state “is primed and ready for the challenges of tomorrow,” Reeves pointed to higher wages, an increase in the high school graduation rate and an “economic boom” that has led to a \$4 billion surplus in the state budget. Reeves also renewed his call to eliminate the state income tax and raised anti-transgender anti-abortion themes popular among conservatives across the country. The Governor called on the legislature to put more money into the Capitol Police, who patrol part of Jackson, which, he said, had “an unacceptably high rate of homicides.” “In Mississippi we choose to fund the police,” Reeves asserted. “We choose to back the blue.” He also said Mississippi should boost health care by cutting bureaucracy, increasing medical residency programs and relying on technology, but not “cave under the pressure of Democrats and their allies in the media who are pushing for the expansion of Obamacare, welfare and socialized medicine.” In a response for Democrats, Presley, who is a public service commissioner, spoke from inside a shuttered hospital that once employed 200 people in Newton, Mississippi, and said Reeves “is moving the state in wrong direction,” particularly in not expanding Medicaid with federal Obamacare funds to address needs of 38 rural hospitals that face closure. Presley also said Mississippi is “at the bottom of the nation for economic growth,” and Reeves can not state he is pro-life when there is only one pediatrician for every 4,000 kids in the Mississippi Delta.

**Pet insurance bill advances.** Legislation passed in the Mississippi Senate and headed to the House would allow more state pet owners to buy insurance to cover the medical expenses for their dogs, cats, reptiles and birds. The bill, introduced by Walter Michel, a Ridgeland Republican, would create “a comprehensive legal framework within which pet insurance may be sold” in Mississippi, amending current Mississippi law so health and life insurance agents could sell insurance for pets, not just brokers licensed to sell property and casualty insurance. Insurance companies are advocating for pet insurance bills across the country so they can offer consistent health coverage for animals. About four million pets are now insured in the U.S., and the pet insurance industry has annual premiums of about \$2.8 billion. Dogs and cats would be the primary beneficiaries of the new law, but some pet insurance plans also offer coverage to reptiles and birds. The policies mostly cover broken bones and cancer, do not include life insurance for pets, and must disclose if they do not cover preexisting health conditions or other chronic disorders. Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney would have the authority to regulate the industry.

## NEWS NUGGETS

**Book on Copiah County.** A new book that coincides with the Copiah County bicentennial celebration during 2023 presents a comprehensive view of the county’s history, zeroing in on specific aspects of it and profiling notable people who played important roles in the county. *A Shared History: Copiah County 1823-2023* tells the Copiah County story in 199 pages with 16 chapters written by Paul Cartwright from Hattiesburg and Tricia Nelson and Rev. Gene Horton from Crystal Springs, along with other special contributors. There are chapters that focus on the county’s transportation and waterways, flora and fauna, architecture, artists, participation in the Civil War and use of slaves, and specific communities, among other topics. Wesson native Sharron Hailey Baird chronicles the history of her hometown in one chapter. Copies of the book are available for \$25 plus \$5 for shipping from Paul Cartwright, 3 Waverly Circle, Hattiesburg, MS 39402.

**First medical marijuana sales.** More than 1,700 patients are enrolled in Mississippi’s medical marijuana program, and they are now purchasing products legalized nearly a year ago at dispensaries, including one in Brookhaven and two in Oxford, Mississippi. “We have been working since 2018 to get medical marijuana in the hands of patients in Mississippi, and it’s surreal to see it finally come to fruition,” Ken Newburger, executive director of the Medical Marijuana Association, says. “This is only the beginning. More and more businesses will be harvesting, testing, and getting their products on the shelves in the coming months.” A majority of Mississippi voters approved a medical marijuana initiative in November 2020, and the legislature authorized the sale of medical marijuana after the state Supreme Court invalidated the initiative process as outdated and said the marijuana measure was not put properly on the ballot. The first sales came after months of formulating regulations, and some communities opting out of allowing facilities that grow or sell products.

**Racial disparities in maternal deaths.** The latest Mississippi Maternal Mortality Report reveals major disparities between outcomes for new black and white mothers and says most of the 93 maternal deaths between 2017 and 2019 were preventable. The Mississippi Mortality Review Committee (MMRC), which is statutorily tasked with investigating maternal deaths and identifying and recommending improvements, reports 43 percent were directly related to pregnancy, 87.5 percent were preventable and 57.5 percent occurred during pregnancy or within 60 days after delivery; Black, non-Hispanic women had a maternal mortality rate four times higher than White, non-Hispanic women; and most maternal deaths among Black, non-Hispanic mothers were attributed to cardiovascular conditions and cardiomyopathy (a weakening of the heart muscle). The report recommends insurance coverage before pregnancy and beyond the current 60 day postpartum to one year. The report is accessible at [www.HealthyMS.com/maternal](http://www.HealthyMS.com/maternal).

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## Learning, food & fun for retirees

Wesson News

The Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) spring semester at Co-Lin features four workshops, a movie day, a special fun day with bingo and snacks, three luncheons and a year-ending picnic. A luncheon featuring a Co-Lin Choir choral performance and celebrating Valentine's Day followed by the movie, *Letters to Juliet* about visits of the heartbroken to a wall to write notes to Shakespeare's tragic heroine – Juliet Capulet, started the new semester this week, while a Chair Yoga class conducted by Co-Lin Fitness Instructor Cheryl Myers that meets every Tuesday, continued into the new term after beginning as a workshop in the fall.

ILR, a Co-Lin-sponsored membership organization, provides continuing education experiences for retired and semi-retired older adults who define their own informal educational goals based on their choices and talents and pursue them at their own pace. Members, who design the group's program, come from wide ranging backgrounds and bring varied experiences to the organization. Co-Lin staff administers ILR, and the college provides facilities for the organization, which is fully funded by member dues.

Also on the ILR spring calendar are:

### February 23.

A nutrition workshop conducted by Leah Embry at the Wolf Den, a new grill-hangout on the Co-Lin campus for students and the wider Wesson community. Embry says a few simple steps and a small amount of nutritional knowledge can make a huge difference for people just trying to take care of themselves. His discussion will look at aging, nutritional supplements and healthy lifestyles. Following the workshop, participants can order milkshakes and smoothies (\$5-\$8) at the Wolf Den. 2 p.m.

### March 2.

Luncheon prepared and served by Co-Lin culinary students at the Anderson Building on the college's campus. \$9. 10:30 a.m.

### March 9.

Original Cypress painting workshop led by Dawn Marks. \$25, including supplies. Thames Center on the Co-Lin campus. 1 p.m.

### April 4.

Luncheon with entertainment provided by pianist Steve Russell. \$12. Thames Center on the Co-Lin campus. 10:30 a.m.

History workshop led by a member of the Co-Lin Centurions, the college history club. Subject to be confirmed, but may focus on the history of Angola, the Louisiana prison. Thames Center on the Co-Lin campus. 12 noon.

### April 18.

An afternoon of bingo. Prizes and light refreshments, fun and fellowship. Thames Center on the Co-Lin campus. 1:30 p.m.

### May 16.

The ILR year ends with a picnic at Slay Wilderness. Bring your favorite meat, casserole, vegetable, salad and/or dessert. Tea and drinks provided, fun and fellowship. Slay Wilderness is at 2142 Tyson Road, Wesson, off Highway 51 going north towards Hazlehurst. 10:30 a.m.

The ongoing Chair Yoga class meets at 10 a.m. every Tuesday at the Thames Center on the Co-Lin campus. The fee is \$10 for each session.

For information, contact Co-Lin Program Coordinator and Events Coordinator Erin Johnson (erin.johnson@colin.edu, 601-643-8702).

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# Brookhaven Mardi Gras tradition grows

Wesson News

Cold temperatures and rain forced the Lincoln County-Brookhaven Chamber of Commerce (LCBCC) Tourism Council to scrub much of a planned New Orleans-inspired Mardi Gras celebration in downtown Brookhaven last Saturday (February 11).

The town's restaurants and a New Orleans jazz band, however, helped preserve the merry-making of the sixth Downtown Jazzed-Up for visitors looking to celebrate Mardi Gras in Brookhaven without travelling outside the area.

The NOLA Dukes, a jazz band from the Crescent City, which had been scheduled to lead a second line parade and perform outdoors, went indoors to entertain folk in an auditorium at Mississippi School of the Arts.

Local restaurants decorated for Mardi Gras, with their staffs in beads and traditional garb, also helped capture the magic of New Orleans with its painters, musicians and street performers for locals and visitors primed for festivities that would have included bounce houses and face painting for the kids, plenty of beads, and much more, as well as what remained in the inclement weather.

The big disappointment was the cancellation of the second line parade that would have had walkers, kids and adults on bikes and golf cart drivers from the crowds expected on Whitworth and Railroad Avenues and in Railroad Park and the municipal parking to fall in behind the NOLA Dukes.

A second line parade is a New Orleans tradition, sometimes described as a jazz funeral procession without a body and with happy, upbeat, celebratory music. The "second line" is spectators who join or follow a parade's main line and "second lining" references their strutting and chicken-like dance movements to keep pace with a brass band usually including a trumpet, trombone, saxophone, tuba and brass and snare drums.

The LCBCC Tourism Council started the family-oriented affair six years ago, and it has become a growing part of the Brookhaven scene, which did not previously have an organized visible Mardi Gras tradition.

Now the Tourism Council moves forward with a plethora of other events, while hoping the weather will be more charitable for Downtown Jazz-Up next year:

- Next up is the **Goin' to Town Car Show** on March 4. Last year, some 300 vehicles participated. More will be there this year from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- In April (date to be announced), LCBCC members can learn about activity of the Mississippi legislative session at a special **Meet Your Legislator Breakfast**.
- **Girls Night Out** is June 15. From 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., the ladies of the area can shop for bargains and enjoy meal specials at 30 boutiques, retail stores and restaurants. For \$20, you get coupons, meal vouchers and a t-shirt.
- Every Friday from 7 a.m. to noon starting in late May or early June through the growing season, a **Farmers' Market in Railroad Park** will offer the vegetables and fruits from the gardens of more than 20 producers. Baked goods will also be available, and live music will make for a festive shopping experience. **Dairy Day** during the second week in June will feature fun activities.
- **Summer concerts** start in May and run through July in the evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Railroad Park.

- On **July 4**, local events will make the nation's birthday both a festive and solemn occasion.
- The two-day **48th Ole Brook Festival**, with more than 100 vendors, 15 food trucks, live music and a kids play zone starts Friday, October 7.



- Stay tuned for information about a **fall concert series** now being planned.
  - The holiday and Christmas season starts November 11 with **open houses** from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. hosted by participating retailers.
  - **Live music and Santa Claus** at the Railroad Park log cabin will be part of the ceremonies around the lighting of a 30-foot tree on November 24.
  - The annual **Christmas parade** in downtown Brookhaven is November 30.
- Visit [brookhavenchamber.org](http://brookhavenchamber.org) to keep up to date on events.

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