

## INSIDE:

Founders Day.....	2
Chow Time.....	5
Living Healthy.....	7
Storm Assistance.....	9
News Nuggets.....	10
Area Arts.....	12
Page 13-17 online at <a href="http://www.WessonNews.com">www.WessonNews.com</a>	

# Wesson News

## SPOTLIGHT

### State Park Upgrades

Page 8

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Volume 11, Number 4

“Good News You Can Use”

April, 2023

# Retiring Co-Lin president targeted growth

By Bob Arnold

Ask outgoing Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims why she is retiring from her job at the college now, what the high and low points have been in her work and what is her vision for the future of the local institution, and she keeps coming back to one word: growth.

From the college’s welcoming sign on Highway 51 to upgrading its athletic facilities to taking on regional economic development as a mission, she says it is all about investing in Co-Lin’s growth.

Because the college is in a good position and well-positioned for growth into the future, Hulon Sims believes “it’s a good time to pass the ball.” While she and her husband will be resettling in Oxford, Mississippi, near Ole Miss, Hulon Sims says she has no thoughts of moving into new work at another institution or in other service any time soon.

“We’ll enjoy the music and fine arts available in a university town, but, while I am still in good health, spend time with family and travel,” she says.

When Hulon Sims took over as President of Co-Lin, the primary item on her agenda was the college’s growth, and she thinks its enrollment increase going into the fall semester, which she hopes will continue with the spring semester, reflects her efforts to make the school “special,” “grand” and “collegiate.”

In projects big and small – down to the bricks used in building renovations, she has aimed not only at enhancing the campus to increase its functionality, but to appeal to students and visitors. She points to a new welcoming sign on Highway 51 and the new President’s home as important first impressions, new residence halls that create a “special” feeling on campus, new parking facilities, lighting and a sidewalk funded by the Mississippi Department of Transportation under construction on the visitors’ side of Stone Stadium

that make a difference in how people perceive the college.

“We want students to make Co-Lin a stop in their college and university journey,” says Hulon Sims. “Hopefully, they will stay and earn an Associates Degree, but we want them to at least begin their journey with us.”

Construction projects during her tenure as president of the college also included a Career-Technical Building at the Simpson County Center, a Diesel Lab on the Natchez Campus and several campus beautification projects. Renovations at the college have encompassed the Cosmetology lab, bridge replacements on Wolf Hollow Golf Course, The Wolf Den Grill and Smoothie Bar, Fortenberry Career-Tech Building classrooms, and PJ’s Coffee.

A major project – upgrading the athletic program’s facilities – was not a priority when she started the job, she says.

“I did not intend to become Co-Lin’s athletic program president, but the college’s classrooms and laboratories had been upgraded in previous years, and our coaches filed into my office soon after I became president to point out the need to repair and renovate the athletic facilities,” she relates. “I am a list-maker, took faithful notes, and talked to our board about the needs.” The result was a three-phase plan to address the athletic program’s needs, including installation of turf and a new scoreboard at Stone Stadium, an eight-court tennis complex and renovations at the Sullivan Baseball Field funded by corporate sponsors and other private donors through the “Back the Pack” capital campaign.

Beyond meeting needs of the athletic program, “Back the Pack” helped build Co-Lin’s experience in working with donors outside the public sphere, Hulon Sims says.

“State and other government funds are dwindling, and external funding from private sources is increasingly



Wesson News

more important for meeting Co-Lin’s needs,” she points out.

The funding of a \$30 to \$40 million Educational, Performing Arts and Athletic Center (EPAAC) on the Co-Lin campus will be a major test of the college’s capacity to tap private sector support in the coming years, but Hulon-Sims, who has requested state funds three times for the project without a significant response, is confident it has the strength to capture the dollars, and says she expects to return sooner than later for its ground breaking.

“Fundraising is progressing, and I am optimistic the next Co-Lin president can continue it successfully,” she says. “The college needs a performing arts center and new gymnasium, and southwest Mississippi needs the

economic impact EPAAC can make,” she says.

During her tenure as president, Co-Lin has also seen new instructional programs, scholarships, services that have increased student success and graduation rates 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 and the Blue Wave Show Band grew to be the largest band in school history.

Hulon Sims has also broadened the

cont. on page 11

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# Founders Day to Celebrate Wesson



Special to Wesson News

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A 5K Run/Walk, musicians, vendors with an array of arts and crafts; snacks, refreshments and meals; the crowning of a new Queen, a parade and fireworks will highlight the Wesson Founders Day celebration on Friday, May 5, and Saturday, May 6.

The Wesson Chamber of Commerce is the primary sponsor of the event, with additional support committed so far by the Town of Wesson, Trustmark National Bank, Copiah County Medical Center and Taylor's Legacy, LLC.

The festivities start on Friday evening with a Run/Walk that begins at 6 p.m. Walkers and runners start the 5K event on Highway 51, with signs along the way directing them through Wesson and the Co-Lin campus and ending at their starting point on Highway 51. Overall Run/Walk winners and those finishing first, second and third place in four age categories -- under 20, 21-35, 36-50 and 51 and over -- will be recognized. The fee is \$25 for the run/walk. Last year, more than 60 adults and youth participated, and larger numbers are expected this year.

On Saturday, the Chamber will crown a new Founders Day Queen and celebrate the reign of the outgoing 2022-23 Queen, Ally Sullivan, who has represented the Chamber at various events throughout the year.

Throughout the day, soloists and bands now being lined up by Chamber President Stephen Ashley will take the Spring Street stage with an assortment of gospel, rock and country music, dance and crowd-pleasing performances. Shoppers will browse vendor

booths and bargain for clothing, jewelry, arts and crafts. An abundance of food, snacks and drinks will be available to satisfy the hunger needs of visitors. Keys vs. Strings from Brookhaven will provide the music for street dancing in the evening hours.

The Town of Wesson is also planning activities to celebrate Copiah County's Bicentennial, and the American Legion will present a Wesson citizen with the American Legion Continuous Membership Award.

The Founders parade will roll at 3 p.m. Participants will start lining up at 2:30 p.m. in the parking lot of the old Sunflower grocery store on Highway 51. Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims is this year's Grand Marshal.

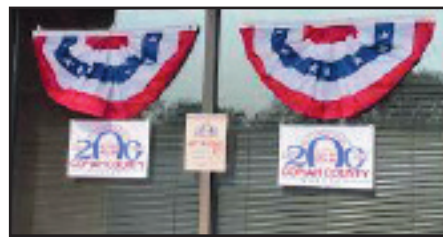
As darkness descends on Saturday, the celebration will culminate on Spring Street by the railroad tracks with a spectacular fireworks display.

Chamber Board Secretary Deemie Letchworth says the celebratory event, in the final analysis, is about boosting the local economy.

"Everyone is encouraged to come to Wesson, enjoy the event and also shop our local businesses," she says. "Our local businesses are why the Chamber sponsors events such as this. We believe in our local businesses and want to see them thrive in our town."

More specifics about the 5K Run/Walk and other events will be shared in the coming weeks on the Wesson Chamber Happenings Facebook page. Contact Stephanie Duguid at 601-643-8341 for information about the 5K Run/Walk.

## Town looks to celebrate county



Special to Wesson News

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Town Clerk Angela Hester is looking for help on Founders Day to make the Copiah County bicentennial part of the festivities.

Dressed in a style recalling life in 1823 when Mississippi added Copiah County to its map, Hester will maintain the presence for the Town in a special tent, and is seeking ideas to spotlight the county's bicentennial year and incorporate them into the Founders Day celebration.

So far, a kid's station is part of her plans. Coloring cards promoting the bicentennial will be there to fill in the subject matter with paints or crayons so they can be used in stores, places of business and other public areas to call attention to Copiah County's birthday.

"We want to involve more people of all ages," she says.

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. 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.

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 rich history of the county should inspire to help us celebrate and honor it as it deserves to be," Hester says.



P.O. Box 1028

Wesson, MS 39191

601-990-3003

ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

**Volume 11, Number 4****Publisher/Owner**

Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

**Editor**

Bob Arnold

BobArnold@WessonNews.com

**Designer**

Brad Henderson

Designer@WessonNews.com

**Special Contributors**

Dr. Stephanie Duguid

*Healthy Living*

R. Shaw Furlow

*Area Arts*

Rebecca Bates

*Tending Your Garden***Sales**

Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

Ursula Hooks

ursula@wessonnews.com

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For submission information, email ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

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## Hester Certified Municipal Clerk

Special to Wesson News

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) has designated Wesson Town Clerk Angela Hester a Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC).

“The CMC is more than a pin, a certificate and three letters at the end of a name,” IIMC Certification Manager Kellie Siggson told Hester. “It is a declaration that you are proficient in your important position and that you have demonstrated mastery of administrative skills critical to good government.”

For the CMC, Hester attended extensive education programs in which she earned 60 points toward the designation and demonstrated pertinent experience in work as Wesson Town Clerk to earn another 50 points.

IIMC, which established the CMC program in 1970, says it prepares designees “to meet the challenges of the complex role of Municipal Clerk by providing quality education in partnership with institutions of higher learning, as well as State, Provincial and National associations.” The program is designed to enhance the job performance of the Clerk in small and large municipalities alike.

Hester earned her new CMC designation over the past six years, and now plans to continue working over the next four years toward the 60 advanced education points and 40 professional contribution points she needs to become a Master Municipal Clerk (MMC).

“The working environment of a Municipal Clerk changes every day with new laws and governmental change, and I try to keep up,” says Hester.



Wesson News

## Messy park needs citizens' help



Special to Wesson News

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Municipal Park is a busy place where children frolic in a newly resurfaced splash pad and enjoy other playground delights, and families and town groups utilize a pavilion for special events such as birthday parties, and different kinds of get-togethers. Unfortunately, it all leaves a mess that the town's public works department has neither the time nor manpower to address adequately.

“It takes a town to keep a park clean,” says Town Clerk Angela Hester.

The events in the pavilion generate lots of trash, and much of it does not find its way to garbage barrels. Even though the park is a smoke-free facility, people not

only enjoy a cigarette while sitting on a bench but throw the butts on the ground. Restrooms get dirty.

“The park is a nice place, but the town needs the help of park users and citizens who care about it to keep it nice,” says Hester. “The town can't do it alone.”

While park users need to assume responsibility for the their messes, Hester is calling on citizen volunteers.

“Pick up trash and put it in receptacles,” she says. “If a garbage bag needs to be replaced, don't wait for town public works personnel to do it. If you see people smoking in the park, remind them it is smoke-free. Ask people nicely to respect the park's facilities and help keep them nice for people to enjoy.”

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# Lions Club conducts sight screenings

Special to Wesson News

Equipped with a new technology, Wesson Lions Club is helping to spearhead efforts in the Mississippi Lions South District 30 to sight-screen as many children and youth as possible to catch eye disorders before they become more serious.

The local effort is in the tradition of Lions Clubs throughout the world that have focused their mission on preventing blindness and serving the visually-impaired, Wesson Lions Club President Randy Davis says.

In recent weeks, the organization has brought its advanced Plusoptix vision device to a health fair at Colton and special sight screenings for kindergarteners and first through sixth graders at Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) and members of the Hazlehurst Boys and Girls Club. It is seeking to schedule visits to Head Start programs and day care centers in and around Brookhaven, Crystal Springs and Hazlehurst.

At the WAC screening, almost 400 kindergarten and elementary school children received the quick



Wesson News

vision screenings enabled by the scanner, which can detect problems when just pointed at eyes. One hundred of them were referred to healthcare professionals for further evaluation.

Because the Plusoptix vision

screeener requires only an eye scan and not reading lines of words or letters, children and adults who are evaluated do not have to be proficient in any language or be able to speak articulately. It allows Lions Club volunteers, pediatricians and

school nurses to detect the most prevalent vision disorders at an early age.

“Plusoptix is most useful for persons up to the age of 25, and we want to screen children under seven – the earlier the better, as young as six months old – to identify, effectively treat and prevent ongoing problems, such as amblyopia (lazy eye),” Davis says.

Since the Mississippi Lions South District 30 purchased two Plusoptix machines four years ago, the Wesson Lions Club has assisted other clubs in Brookhaven and Hazlehurst in schools and Head Start centers, and screened hundreds of adults and kids.

“We have wanted to use the devices as much as possible since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions,” Davis says. Although the Wesson Club has used loaned devices, a dozen Mississippi Lions Clubs – on the Coast, at Madison and Hattiesburg and in the northern part of the state -- have acquired their own machines.

To set up a sight screening event in southwest Mississippi, call 601-754-4832.

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# Chow Time: Dump apple pie

By Guest Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

Apple pies and apple cobblers are country delights. Here's a fast, easy way make a dessert that can compete with the best of them. Twenty minutes preparation time, 45 minutes cooking time, and you can serve up a treat that you'll have a hard time saving, with folks coming back for more.

### Ingredients:

- 1 can of apple pie filling
- 1 large can of uncooked cinnamon rolls
- 1 cup of chopped pecans
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 box of butter yellow cake mix



### Directions:

1. With thin layers of butter, wipe down a medium size baking pan with sides.
2. Place the uncooked cinnamon rolls in the pan and roll them out from side to side (a little should go up the sides of the pan).
3. Spread the apple filling evenly over the rolled out cinnamon rolls.
4. Spread the chopped pecans over the apple pie filling.
5. Spread a nice thin layer of the cake mix over everything.
6. Cut butter into 1/8-inch slices and place them over the top
7. Preheat oven for 350 degrees
8. Cook for 45 minutes.
9. Cut in small pieces so you have enough for everybody. It's addicting!

*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.*

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# Garden club celebrates spring



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Jennifer Peets, Lisa Smith and Dixie Thornton at Deep South Garden Club convention on behalf of WGC.



Wesson News

Bradford pears at Sylvarena Church.

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Garden Club (WGC) is celebrating spring, receiving awards for its activities, recognizing those who are helping the town burst out in spring colors and producing a spring flower show.

WGC members Jennifer Peets, Lisa Smith and Dixie Thornton represented the club last month (March 8-10) at the Deep South Garden Club convention at Kenner, Louisiana, returning with first place awards in two categories: Adopt a Park and Roadside Beautification (shared with the Chautauqua Garden Club of Crystal Springs).

In addition to celebrating its own recognition, the club spotlighted two local organizations and a deceased local gardener in its Springtime in Wesson program for plantings that are helping sustain the spring season in town:

- Trustmark Bank's yellow pansies;
- The late Lucille Horton's azaleas;
- Sylvarena Baptist Church's Bradford pears.



Wesson News

Tina Brumfield and Donna Smith at March WGC meeting.

WGC made its own contribution to the town's spring season as well with a flower show at the Old School Community Center last week (April 4 from 2 p.m.-6 p.m.). The Club's youth Butterbean group competed among themselves in a show within the flower show.

In March, Donna Smith and Tina Brumfield from the McComb Garden Club, both considered experts in flower show planning and design, helped prepare WGC members for the show, explaining the art of a flower show and how to create floral and horticulture designs. Members left the presentation with tips and new knowledge on creating a design that could be a blue ribbon winner.

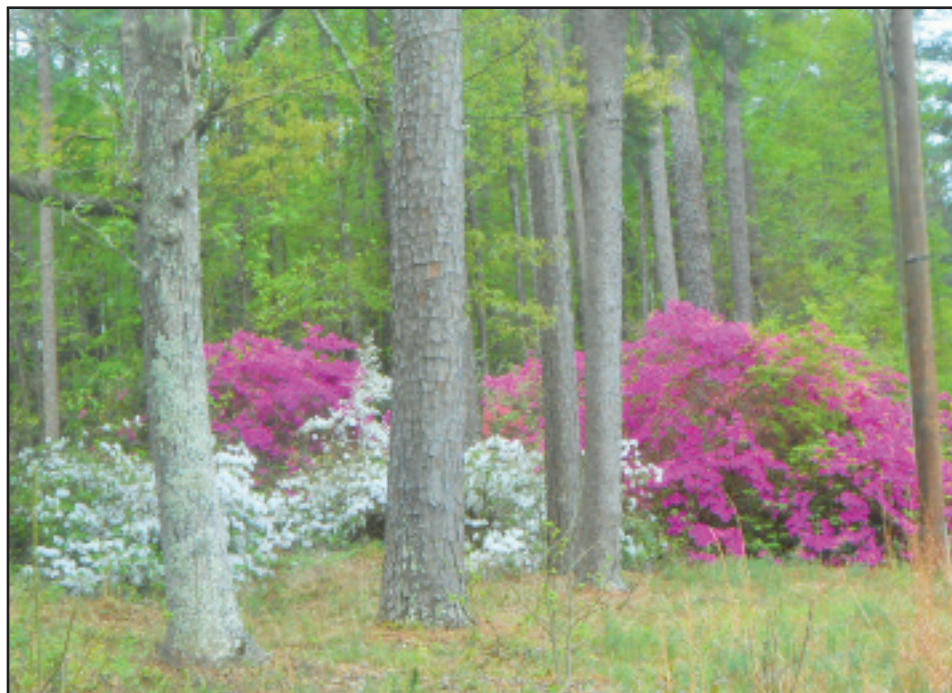
Marilyn Britt, Rebecca Norma Carroll, Sherri Carty, Sonya Cowen, Ramona Hartzog, Cherry Head, Rhonda Ishee, Denise Jackson, Camille Johnston, Vickie Martin, Pam McLemore, June Owens, Pam Owens, Jennifer Peets, Joy Phillips, Jean Ricks, Debbie Smith, Lisa Smith and Dixie Thornton were on hand at the March 13 meeting at American Legion Post 79. Providing refreshments were hostesses Paige Anderson, Robin Furr, Ramona Hartzog and Rhonda Ishee.

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, Inc.



Wesson News

Pansies at Trustmark Bank.



Wesson News

Azaleas planted by the late Lucille Horton.

# Living Healthy: Removing stress from your life

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

April is Stress Awareness Month. Take some time to identify signs of chronic stress that may be detrimental to your well-being.

Everyone has moments of stress from time to time, such as when you're stuck in traffic, or you have a hard day at the office. But, for some people, stress can also become a serious issue. Expose yourself to too much chronic stress, and you're putting yourself at significant risk of a range of health challenges. In fact, experts say that stress is directly connected to many of the main causes of premature death.

The good news is that there are various ways you can begin to cut down on stress, from exercising to changing your routine. However, before you get started, it's important to be able to recognize the symptoms of stress. Be aware of these red flags:

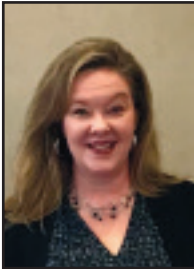
**1. Tooth or jaw pain.** Yes, stress does affect your teeth, more than you might think. If you've noticed soreness in your jaw or pain in your gums, then it might be because you're dealing with feelings of stress. Grinding your teeth is often something that you may not even realize you've been doing until you get to the dentist, and they berate you for signs of bruxism. If you do notice signs of discomfort in your jaw, check with your dentist to ensure that you're doing everything you can to protect your teeth.

**2. Your memory is getting worse.** As your schedule becomes more overwhelming, and you end up with more things to think about each day, it's easy to brush off issues with forgetfulness. However, if your memory is really letting you down lately, it could be because of stress. When you're putting your brain under too much pressure, you expose it to a lot of extra work, and you end up getting frazzled or burning out a lot faster. Paying attention to where you lose track of your train of thought could show you where you have too much on your plate. It might be time to slow down.

**3. Your digestion isn't right.** Digestive health and stress are closely connected. You might have noticed during stressful periods in the past that you tend to have challenges with heartburn, diarrhea, and constipation. These are all common gastrointestinal symptoms of stress. Your stomach will often churn and feel uncomfortable when you're stressed because feelings of anxiety cause the body to produce additional digestive acid. These feelings can also mean that you don't empty food from your stomach as quickly as you should, which leads to cramping, gas, and bloating.

**4. You're always thirsty.** If you're constantly suffering from a major thirst, it's worth speaking to a doctor. Excessive thirst can be a sign of things like diabetes. However, you could also be dehydrated because of excess stress. That's because stress causes your body to pump out extra hormones from your adrenal glands. Those glands are also responsible for the hormones that regulate the fluid levels in your body, as well as electrolytes. If your adrenal glands are worn out, then the body might feel like it needs more hydration, when it really doesn't. Although upping your H2O intake shouldn't cause any problems, it's still a sign of a long-term problem that's important to rectify.

**5. Your muscles are sore.** Sore muscles often happen as a result of tension. If you're under a ton of stress, your body responds by involuntarily tensing up. This can gradually lead to more body pain over time, because your muscles aren't used to being under that much strain. When your body is in fight or flight mode, this produces excess cortisol, too, and more tensing. The same way you suffer from soreness from grinding your teeth, you could experience soreness elsewhere in your body, because you're placing more pressure on your muscles. A good massage or a hot bath might help in the short term, but eventually you'll need to tackle stress.



**LIVING  
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**6. Your sleep pattern is inconsistent.** If you're having trouble with falling asleep at night, it could be because stress is making it harder for you to relax. It's likely that you spend a lot of time thinking about the things that worry you when you're in bed. After all, there's nothing else to take your mind off those worries. You might also notice that you're having more odd dreams because of your stress. On the other hand, some people experience a desire to sleep more often when they're stressed. This could be an indication that you're not just suffering from stress, but that you're having issues with anxiety and depression, too. Consider speaking to your doctor about these issues. They should be able to offer some personalized guidance.

It's critical to your health and wellbeing that you learn to relieve stress. Try these 15 simple ways to stress less to build your resilience and create a calmer environment.

#### To build resilience:

**1. Slow down.** Cut your to do list down to a realistic size. Schedule breaks throughout the day. Breathe deeply. Your feelings are closely tied to your breath. Lie down on your back and place one hand on your abdomen. Your body will naturally start to breathe more fully from your diaphragm rather than taking shallow breaths from your chest.

**2. Laugh it up.** Humor drives away tension. Look for the funny side of difficult situations.

**3. Eat healthy.** Sticking to a balanced diet will make your body more effective at tolerating stress. Get most of your calories from natural whole foods. Cut down on added sugar and salt.

**4. Sleep well.** Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Move your bedtime back an hour each night until you are able to wake up feeling refreshed.

**5. Work out.** Exercise is a constructive way to handle disturbing news or conflicts at work. Buy resistance bands so you can do strength training movements at home.

**6. Create something.** Creativity is another stress buster. Find a medium that you enjoy. You may want to paint, cook, or write.

**7. Reach out.** Build a network of mutually supportive relationships. Connect with positive family and friends on a regular basis.

**8. Advocate for yourself.** Let others know how they can help you. Ask for what you need tactfully and directly.

#### Environment adjustments:

**1. Clear away clutter.** A tidy home and workspace will reduce your anxiety levels. Get rid of anything you seldom use. Donate it to charity or sell it online.

**2. Add scent.** Fragrance is invisible but powerful. Wear your favorite perfume. Practice aromatherapy with soothing essential oils like lavender and chamomile.

**3. Play music.** Use sound to create the mood you want. Put together a playlist for different activities.

**4. Enjoy silence.** On the other hand, the lack of sound can also be soothing. Turn off your devices for a designated period each day, including mealtimes and before bed.

**5. Decorate naturally.** Green spaces are energizing. Spend more time outdoors and bring nature into your home. Grow ferns and herbs..

**6. Create a refuge.** Design a meditation room or space in your home. If you have trouble meditating, you can use it for reading or relaxation practices.

Dealing with stress is an ongoing process. Take time each day to think about what you can do to make your surroundings more peaceful to protect your health and wellbeing. Make it a priority to take care of yourself by reducing your stress.

*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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# State park upgrades on the horizon

By Bob Anrold

Lake Lincoln State Park may have seen the early fruits of new funding that the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) can tap to upgrade state parks and a MDWFP five-year strategic plan that, among other things, addresses needs of parks, which have suffered from lack of sufficient funds for maintenance and improvements.

Last month for a full week, a MDWFP deployment team visited Lake Lincoln, primarily focusing on overgrown vegetation and foliage that has become a problem throughout the state park system. The three-person team, including Park Administrator Cary Spence, Toney Fleming, Director of Park Operations; and Zach Watts, a construction project assistant; along with volunteers from area high schools and Co-Lin "delimbed" trees and bushes that were blocking views of the park's lake front and managed controlled burns to eliminate growth on the park's forest floor that chokes off new plants, stresses established plants and trees, reduces food and shelter options of animal populations and can fuel wildfires. The team and volunteers also cleaned and upgraded cottages in the park, installing a ramp for disabled persons and repairing hand rails.

In recent months, similar work has helped Percy Quinn and Roosevelt State Parks catch up on maintenance, and the team's next stop is Waldoxie State Park. WDWFP's Andere Hollis and Brian Ferguson are organizing the



Wesson News

Uncle Rays across from Lake Lincoln State Park hosted a Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks deployment team for lunch. From left to right are Randy Chance, Lake Lincoln maintenance supervisor; Rebecca Thigpin, Lake Lincoln Clerk; Charles Fortson, Uncle Rays owner; Zach Watts, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (WDWFP), construction project assistant; Cary Spence, WDWFP Park Administrator; and Toney Fleming, WDWFP Director of Park Operations. The deployment team helped on delimiting trees, controlled burns and upgrading cabins.

deployment teams.

Mississippi has 25 state parks with varying needs for maintenance and amenities. While the deployment teams are not new, their visits have been few and far between due to lack of resources. But a new funding mechanism and a five-year MDWFP strategic plan promise to change things in the parks. Capital improvements as

well as maintenance assistance are also on the horizon.

Following the 2022 state legislative session, Governor Tate Reeves signed into law a bill that created the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund for appropriation of funds to improve the Mississippi outdoors. The fund, to which the legislature can designate funds as it sees fit, has a \$20

million cap, excluding federal funds, with a seven-member board appointed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to oversee their distribution. Among other things, MDWFP can draw on the fund to improve state park outdoor recreation features and trails.

To carry on its work in the broad area for which it is responsible, MDWFP is also looking to a strategic plan that recognizes "state parks are not being full utilized" and calls for:

- Public surveys to identify amenities desired in the parks.
- Expanding community involvement through Friends of the Park groups working with management of the individual parks to address needs, help plan and implement community-oriented events and establish new amenities.
- Partnering with other state bureaus and agencies and local organizations to identify and utilize historical, natural and other resources.
- A multi-media marketing program to increase awareness of parks and the recreational opportunities they offer.
- Generating federal funds to augment state resources.

Follow Mississippi State Parks on Facebook for information about the state park system.

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# Wesson Locals can assist storm survivors



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Wesson area donors seeking to assist Mississippi storm survivors have been giving money and goods to help them through at least two organizations locally.

Both Co-Lin and American Legion Drane-Prine Post # 79 announced they would accept donations, and local churches, although they made no public announcements, often are affiliated with national disaster response agencies.

Through March 30, Co-Lin, in partnership with Mississippi Delta Community College, collected water, protein bars, peanut butter and toiletries from donors who brought them to Student Services in the Henley Building for distribution to affected persons.

The American Legion started collecting funds and goods April 3-8, and is continuing April 10-15 at its 1014 Main Street location from 3 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday and noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

The Legion is requesting personal hygiene items, including toothpaste, tooth brushes, deodorant, bath towels, shampoos and conditioner; new pillows, sheets, blankets, air mattresses and cots; charcoal, trash bags, bandaids, five-gallon buckets with lids, peanut butter, individual wrapped snacks, protein bars and bottled water; and pet supplies, including dog and cat food and kennels.

With donated funds, the Legion will

buy supplies and contribute to the American Legion Emergency Relief Fund, which also assists veterans and their families who are members of the Legion.

Two church agencies with local congregations always on the scene at disasters are the Southern Baptist Convention and United Methodist Committee on Relief.

In late March, a powerful storm spawned at least one devastating tornado that killed 25 people in Mississippi and leveled hundreds of buildings. Rolling Fork, a town of around 1,900 in western Mississippi, was hit the hardest, with its water tower destroyed, homes reduced to rubble, tree trunks snapped like twigs and cars tossed aside like toys. Silver City, a rural community of around 300, saw similar devastation.

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves declared a state of emergency in affected areas, observing that "the scale of the damage and loss is evident everywhere affected. Homes, businesses ... entire communities." President Joe Biden ordered federal aid to supplement state, tribal and local recovery efforts in the affected areas, specifically Carroll, Humphreys, Monroe, and Sharkey counties. Mississippi officials set up three emergency shelters, including at the National Guard Armory in Rolling Fork, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director travelled to the scene.



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# Legislature, education chief & clinic

Special to Wesson News

**Legislators go home after budget hike.** The three-month session of the Mississippi Legislature ended with lawmakers passing a state budget of \$7.6 billion -- the largest budget — not counting federal funds — in the state's history. In the process, they guaranteed Medicaid coverage for women after birth, voted to enlarge state police presence in Jackson to reduce crime and shortened the list of people who can collect and transmit mailed absentee ballots to another person to prevent fraud. Although they increased spending on education by \$100 million during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, they did not fully fund the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, a budget formula designed to give schools enough money to meet midlevel academic standards. They also rejected efforts to expand Medicaid for working people whose jobs don't provide health insurance, although, at the same time, appropriated \$100 million in state funds for a one-year hospital grant program. They did not phase out the state income tax or restore an initiative process to let people put issues on statewide ballots, which Mississippi allowed for about 30 years until the state Supreme Court ruled in May 2021 that the process was invalid because it required people to gather signatures from five outdated congressional districts rather than four districts the state has had since the early 2000s.

**Interim education superintendent.** After the Republican-led state Senate voted against confirming veteran educator Robert P. Taylor as state superintendent of education, the Mississippi State Board of Education named Mike Kent to fill the role on an interim basis. The move to kill Taylor's nomination angered some Black Democrats who said the rejection was at least partly because Taylor is Black and wrote years ago about the state's racist history. Kent is white. Senate Education Committee Chair Dennis DeBar said he wanted to see a superintendent "with a better resume on improving low-performing schools." "Mike Kent has deep roots and experience in Mississippi's public school system at the state and district level and is respected throughout the state for his wisdom and effective leadership," said State Board of Education Chair Rosemary Aultman. "The Board is confident he will provide continuity in leadership of the Mississippi Department of Education during this transition." Kent will serve from April 3 through June 30. The state Board of Education plans on appointing a long-term interim superintendent to begin July 1.

**Orthopedic clinic.** A new orthopedic clinic is serving the area, a partnership of King's Daughters Medical Center, KDMC Sports Medicine & Orthopedic (SMO) Clinic and Capital Ortho (CO). At the former SMO Clinic at 601 Brookman Drive, it provides access to ten Board Certified physicians, one Board Eligible and a team of mid-level providers across multiple sub-specialties who offer the latest, most advanced surgical and non-surgical treatment methods, specializing in sports medicine and general orthopedic services

**Smoking out heart disease.** Heart disease is killing more Mississippians than cancer and diabetes combined, data from a 2021 study reveals, according to the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). Mississippi also has some of the highest rates of smoking in the nation. African Americans are disproportionately affected by heart disease as well as tobacco use. The Office of Tobacco Control at MSDH encourages all Mississippians to engage in heart-healthy behaviors, including eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and quitting smoking. Visit [www.healthymy.com/tobacco](http://www.healthymy.com/tobacco) for information. For help with quitting smoking, visit [www.quitlinems.com](http://www.quitlinems.com) or call

1-800-QUIT-NOW.

**Summer music.** Soul music played by Mike Rob and the 601 Band from Jackson will kick off the summer concert series May 5 staged by the Brookhaven/Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce in Brookhaven's Railroad Park downtown. Four Way Stop from Brookhaven will present a gritty, high energy show of classic rock on June 2, and The Bridge Band from Brookhaven will close out the series with a performance of classics on July 7.

**Missouri trip.** Co-Lin's Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) is partnering with ILR at Southwest Mississippi Community College to offer a four-night trip to Eureka Springs and Branson, Missouri, for various shows and tours June 6-10. The Co-Lin ILR had previously cancelled a two night trip in May to Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and Pensacola, Florida. A \$100 deposit for the June trip is due April 14 and a final payment on May 8 that covers hotel accommodations at Eureka Springs and Branson, daily breakfasts, a lunch and dinner, four shows — *Great Passion Play*, *Queen Esther* production, Duttons Show and *#1 Hits of the 60s*; and the Holy Land Tour. Cost of the trip is \$620 (quad occupancy), \$665 (triple occupancy), \$725 (double occupancy) and \$1,025 (single). Contact Co-Lin ILR Program Coordinator Erin Johnson at 601-643-8702 or [erin.johnson@colin.edu](mailto:erin.johnson@colin.edu).

## NEWS NUGGETS

## Ribbon-cutting



Special to Wesson News

Wesson Chamber of Commerce celebrated the opening of Hometown Family Dental (HFD) new offices on Spring Street with a ribbon-cutting. On hand for the occasion in front row (left to right) were Patty McCardle and Marilyn Britt, Chamber members from Trustmark Bank; Stephanie Duguid, Chamber board member from Co-Lin; HFD's owner Dr. Marissa Smith, the office receptionist Summer Evans and Smith's spouse Maverick Smith; and Chamber board members Deemie Letchworth and Jessica Breazeale. At the ceremony in back row (left to right) were Chamber board members Ken Sullivan, Juanita Proffitt and Stephen Ashley. The new dental office is open Monday to Wednesday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Thursday from 7 a.m. to 12 noon.

# Jones is Sports Hall of Famer

Special to Wesson News

Mike Jones, a 1973 Co-Lin graduate from Madison, Mississippi, will be inducted into the Mississippi Community College Sports Hall of Fame on Tuesday, April 25 at the Hinds Community College Clyde Muse Center in Pearl.

Jones graduated with an associate degree from Co-Lin, where he played baseball and basketball. He continued his education at Mississippi College, where he earned a bachelor's and master's degree. During his time on the Choctaw baseball team, he was named to All Conference.

He returned to Co-Lin as the head basketball coach from 1985 to 1988 before taking the head basketball job at Missis-

issippi College, where he remained for the rest of his career. He held the title of head basketball coach from 1988-2002 and 2006-2008. He also served as athletic director at MC from 2002-2006 and 2008-2021.

Jones guided the Wolves to two National Junior College Athletic Association National Tournament appearances and was named MACCC Coach of the Year twice. His record at Co-Lin was 112-20. At MC, he had a home winning streak from 1995-1999, won the 1995 Gulf South Conference Championship and had seven appearances in the NCAA Tournament. He was a three time American Southwest Confer-

ence Coach of the Year and a Five time ASC Champion. He posted an overall record at MC of 342-127. Of all his years coaching, Jones favorite were the two years he was able to coach his grandson, Zach Jones, at MC.

Jones was inducted into the Co-Lin Hall of Fame in 1996, the Mississippi College Hall of Fame in 2002, and the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.

Jones and his wife, Jane, have two children, Michael Jones, Jr., and Amanda Rae Jones Sisson (Taylor) and six grandchildren -- Zach Jones, 23, Ansley Jones, 19, Will Jones, 16, Charlotte Jane Sisson, 10, Rhett Sisson, 7, and Ward Sisson, 4.



Mike Jones

Wesson News

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cont. from front page

## Retiring Co-Lin president targeted growth

college's participation in regional economic development beyond its traditional role of training a workforce for employers. Co-Lin has 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." The college is partnering with Southwest Community College in Summit to bring together economic development leaders from the region to explore strategic planning and cooperative efforts in recruiting new employers. This year, it is focusing on preparing workers for the future economy by supporting and implementing programs that advance the goals of the Mississippi Economic Council's Accelerate Mississippi and the Woodward Hines Education Foundation's "Ascent to 55."

"In the final analysis, Co-Lin's growth is tied to economic growth in southwest Mississippi," Hulon Sims observes. "We train students to live and work in the region, but that requires an economy that can support them."

In her quest to stimulate Co-Lin's growth, Hulon Sims singles out the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down the college's traditional programming, as her biggest challenge.

"I knew the college could meet educational needs through its distance learning capabilities, but I wasn't sure the internet and broadband infrastructure was in place to connect," she says.

COVID stalled her agenda, but "we accomplished a lot," she asserts. "There are things we didn't accomplish, but I believe we're leaving a legacy of growth." Hulon Sims predicts a new president will be ready take over at Co-Lin when she leaves at the end of June, and says the announcement about her successor could come within weeks.

"I am grateful to have served as Co-Lin's president," she says. "Co-Lin has always been there for me, even through some of my lowest points personally, and I have sought to give back. I followed some great leaders at the college, filling some big shoes, but believe I have continued in the right direction. I have appreciated the support of the college's board, and particularly the work of my leadership team that has worked along side me to do what needed to be done. I have functioned as head cheerleader, but depended on others who share my desire for educational excellence on all our campuses. It has been a joy and honor to work with them."

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. She has had a 34-year career in education – 23 of them at Co-Lin starting in 1999 as Director of Planning and Research. Before becoming president of the college, she also served as Vice President of the Wesson Campus, Vice President of Instructional Services and Academic Dean of Instruction.

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# Painter & potter liked flowers

Special to Wesson News

Painter and sculptor Edith Lotterhos, born in 1888, was the only daughter of well-known merchant Augustus Lotterhos and his wife Magdalene Lieb. Her father and his family came from Germany to the U.S., arriving by boat at New Orleans, later settling in Crystal Springs, while other members of his family chose Summit.

Meliora "Ora" Newton Gibson, the Crystal Springs painter, and well-known artist Marie Hull taught Lotterhos, who also cultivated her art skills and made long-lasting friends at several colleges, receiving her primary education at Newton Female Institute, graduating from Mississippi Synodical College, a Presbyterian school at Holly Springs in 1909, earning a certification to teach kindergarten from Newcomb College at Tulane in 1914 and making other educational stops at the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkley.

In the 1920s, Lotterhos joined the Mississippi Art Association, became an active member and started exhibiting her works. The Municipal Art Gallery (known as the "Clubhouse"), which opened in 1929, honored her as its first artist as a lone exhibitor, displaying 60 of her oil and watercolor paintings, nine handmade and cast pottery pieces and an assortment of clay modeling, basketry and hand-painted china. She would go on to win many ribbons, honors and prizes over the years, along with a cousin, Helen J. Lotterhos, also known as an outstanding artist.

Lotterhos participated in the Crystal Springs Floral Club, Southern States Art League, New Orleans Art Association and the Arts and

Crafts Club of New Orleans. On one occasion, she hosted a Crystal Spring Floral Club Original Day at her home in which local authors competed for an engraved silver loving cup with their name, and Flo Hampton's "Preachin' All Day" received the grand prize. She exhibited in New Orleans on several occasions, mostly displaying works in which flowers around her Georgetown Street home in Crystal Springs were the subjects – wisteria, japonicas, black-eyed Susans and petunias.

Foregoing marriage, Lotterhos took care of her father until 1945 and painted in their old home in Crystal Springs following her mother's death in 1920. Lotterhos died in 1965, and her family's old home, which had withered over the years, was torn down in 1972 to make way for expansion of the Methodist Church. Lotterhos is buried under a simple marker with the word "Artist" with her parents in Crystal Springs Cemetery. Her works are scattered, with a few, such as "Camellias" and "Chrysanthemums," in the hands of Mississippi collectors.



*EDITOR'S NOTE: Throughout the 2023 Copiah County Bicentennial year, Wesson News will feature sketches of past and present visual artists, musicians, authors and photographers who are natives of the county. They will be excerpted from Tricia Nelson's reporting in A Shared History: Copiah County, Mississippi 1823-2023, edited and compiled by Paul C. Cartwright and available through Cartwright for \$25 plus \$5 for shipping at 3 Waverly Circle, Hattiesburg, MS 39402. Nelson is a Crystal Springs writer who contributes to the Copiah County Monitor.*

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# Coming home brings son & career

By Bob Arnold

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, growing up in Madison, Mississippi, Mandeville, Louisiana, and Atlanta, and spending her early working life and child-rearing years in and around the Georgia capital, Leah Embry didn't settle in our little of the world, which she always considered her home, until 13 years ago. Area folk concerned about their health and nutrition are glad she did.

Embry's parents settled in Birmingham after leaving their families in Brookhaven, but southwest Mississippi just naturally became home to their daughter as she regularly returned with them over the years to visit grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Today, Embry is the retail manager for Co-Lin Aladdin Campus Dining as part of a dramatic life change after "coming home," which included becoming a mom at age 40 to a son born 13 years after her oldest daughter and giving up a career in insurance and financial services to follow a growing interest in food preparation and nutrition that had started as a hobby while working in Atlanta.

Embry grew up in Mandeville, Louisiana, and Atlanta. In elementary school in St. Tammany Parish near New Orleans, she enjoyed dancing, starting when she was nine years old as a member of the St. Tammany Starlets, with which she performed during half time at Super Bowl XXIV in 1989. At 16 years old, when her family moved to the Atlanta area, she joined the cheerleading squad, played softball and competed on the swimming team at Harrison High School in Marietta, Georgia, from which she graduated in 1993.

"We couldn't find a venue for dancing, so I became a cheerleader and athlete as a high school sophomore," Embry explains.

Foreshadowing her pursuit of a business career, Embry also participated in her high school chapter of Future Business Leaders of America, and remembers meeting President Clinton at a conference.

From high school, it was on to the University of West Georgia at Carrollton, where she graduated with a degree in finance, and then started a 15-year career in insurance and financial planning in 2000 with New York Life and AFLAC. In college, she also met her husband Scott, with whom she had two daughters while living and working in Atlanta.

When she wasn't working or mothering, Embry, who always enjoyed cooking, also started focusing seriously on nutritional food preparation in her spare time.

"I started studying nutrition after reading labels on cans and food packaging and wondering about those big words I couldn't pronounce or which, like 'BHT,' were abbreviated," she says. "I started visiting health food stores in the Atlanta area, picking up brochures, doing research, learned about the dangers of food preservatives and sugar and organic foods alternatives."

Then Embry came home, and everything has changed.

Embry's husband, whose work involved travel related to Kinder Morgan's oil and gas lands on the Atlantic coast, told her he could do his work from almost any location, and he wouldn't mind doing it where she called home. So they moved with their two daughters to Brookhaven in 2010. Initially, she continued her insurance and financial planning career at their new

location, but Embry decided to change her life five years later when she became pregnant at age 40.

"I quit my job to become a stay-at-home mom, home-school my daughters – Sophie and Bella, who were in the first and sixth grades – and care for my new son, Asher," Embry recounts. She continued her self-directed education in nutrition, studied online with the Spencer Institute to earn a certification as a personal fitness chef in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and started counseling and cooking meals for clients with special health needs – diabetics and persons with other health issues, including high blood pressure and celiac disease.

In May a year ago, before her older daughter Bella, now 19, decided to enroll at Co-Lin, Embry accompanied her on a tour of the campus led by Richard Baker, the college's vice president of finance. On the tour, Baker stopped at a renovation site and talked to them about the future opening of a campus hangout that would serve grilled food and items that were nutritionally planned.

"My heart started beating rapidly, and I texted him later that day about my business background, passion for cooking and nutrition, and interest in helping make that happen," Embry says. A few days later they were talking about the job she is now doing at Co-Lin.

Embry is at home!

## What are your hobbies?

After cooking and mothering, I also study and teach the Word of God. At Easthaven Baptist Church in Brookhaven, I teach a Sunday School for women. When I have time, I enjoy painting and drawing.

## Are you a reader?

I love reading. I enjoy history and cookbooks. I'm also a news nerd, and read about politics. I like Christian fiction, particularly writings of Francene Rivers. Outside of the Bible, I very much enjoy *Redeeming Love*, which she wrote.

## Do you follow movies or theater?

I'm too busy to keep up, and would rather pursue studies, but I enjoy some movies out of the past – *Dirty Dancing*, *Top Gun*, *Little Mermaid* and the Jason Bourne films. I also follow the *Yellowstone* television series with Kevin Costner about the Western expansion.

## How about music?

Anything I can dance to – Motown, the oldies, country, even rap. My kids have also introduced me to new music, some of which I enjoy. I don't play an instrument or sing.

## What would you do with the winnings if you won the lottery?

I'd give to my church first, then invest as a good financial planner. Finally, believe it or not, I am into

five-speed fast muscle cars – Mustangs, GTs.

## How would you change the world?

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## Non-compliant properties discussion focus



Special to Wesson News

Wesson aldermen started discussion about properties around town that are not compliant with ordinances at their March meeting and continued it to April when more of them are available to share their ideas.

In the initial discussions, they agreed the Town should reach out to the non-compliant owners towards helping them understand the issues they need to address around the conditions of their properties and maintenance requirements.

In other actions, the aldermen:

- Awarded Huntington Lumber a contract for work on columns (\$55,000) at the Old School Community Center and purchase of railings (\$13,000) there. A second company also bid \$55,000 on the columns, but Huntington, a local company withing Copiah, won the bidding.
- Increased fees for 12 ½ x 12 ½ foot plots at Wesson Cemetery to \$600 from \$200.
- Hired Albert Smith at \$1150 per month for lawn maintenance at Wesson Cemetery and rehired Steve Wages at \$10 per hour for the Town's grass cutting on a part-time basis.
- Accepted the resignation of Jeff Varas as Town attorney in a letter announcing his retirement from his Hazlehurst law practice. On Thursday, June 8, at 11 a.m. at City Hall (1011 Spring Street), the Town will honor Varas at a retirement luncheon. Varas will remain the municipal court judge.

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- 2017 (2) Chev 1500 Crew Cab Z71 4WD, Leather Buckets, rear view Camera, Like New
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# Sowing sunflowers in successful succession

By Guest Columnist Kayla Dowden

I'm a fan of whatever plants happen to be in bloom at any given time, but sunflowers are definitely one of my top five favorites, especially for use in arrangements.

Last summer, I decided I wanted to have sunflowers every week until frost. I got a little bit of a late start, then scorching June temperatures and several torrential downpours in July got me way off track. But with determination, fresh seeds and just a little planning, I was able to harvest sunflowers every week for about 10 weeks until Nov. 1.

I live in northeast Mississippi right on the line between U.S. Department of Agriculture cold hardiness zones 7b and 8a, so my growing season is well over 200 days long. That gives me plenty of time to grow sunflowers.

My favorite sunflower variety is ProCut Horizon. I love this series because they mature in 50-60 days, have very dependable germination and are pollenless. That means they don't make a mess of your tabletop when you use them for arrangements. Whether you want to have sunnies (because it's just more fun to call them that) all the way to frost or you just want to have an abundant supply throughout the summer, the process is the same. Most sunflowers bloom in about 50 days, but it's a good idea to check the number of days to bloom for the variety you want to plant. Then find out when the first and last frost dates are for your area. I find this information online at the "Farmers' Almanac."

My first frost date for 2023 is approximately Nov. 4, and the last frost for my area is approximately March 29.

We know to never plant anything before Good

Friday lest our grandmothers bring their switches out. I want to have sunflowers for as long as possible, so I started my first round of Procut sunflowers March 27. I hope to have sunflowers in bloom by mid-May for this growing season.

I already have seeds, but you can find Procut sunflowers from any reputable online seed retailer. I sow mine in a 72-cell tray with a moist seed-starter mix. I have grow lights, but I find natural light works just as well. Cover the seeds with soil, place them in a sunny area of your home, and keep them moist until germination. Normally, I let the seedlings grow in these trays for 8 days, which means the first round were ready to go in the ground April 4. Even though this is technically after my last frost date, I waited until April 7 for good measure and to stay out of trouble.

When one round goes in the ground, I plant another round in trays right behind them. I continue this every week for as long as I have seeds or garden space. Count backward 60 days from the first frost date to let you know when to stop planting new seeds and setting out seedlings. I will stop setting out new plants around September 5.

I pop my 8- to 10-day-old seedlings in the ground 6 inches apart. With just a little care, they will take off and you'll be harvesting sunflowers in approximately 50 days.

You can definitely sow sunflower seeds directly in the ground, but I have found that birds and mice love them and will stop at nothing to dig up your

hard work. By putting in a little effort up front and starting them in trays, it's less frustrating later when you were supposed to have sunflowers and have nothing.

I hope you have a summer full of sunnies!



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