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Volume 10, Number 1

"Good News You Can Use"

January, 2022

Local firm launches building products line



Photos Special to Wesson News

Steel Outdoors is now customizing pole barns, barndominiums, storage facilities and other residential and commercial structures after investing several hundred thousand dollars in equipment to produce frame and cold form building systems, metal roofing and trusses, purlins, siding, trim, doors and other building components. Its new building products line also includes pine and cedar wood support beams and insulation, which it does not manufacture.



By Bob Arnold

Fourteen years after Steel Outdoors started its custom metal fabricating business in a Hazlehurst backyard with a deer feeder as its lone product, the now Wesson-based manufacturer is expanding into residential and industrial building products.

As its sales grow with the expansion, Steel Outdoors expects its workforce to grow from 20 employees currently to 30 to 35 over the short term and to as many 50 over the long term, reports Pam McLemore, who started Steel Outdoors with her husband Dwayne in their Hazlehurst backyard in 2007.

The latest step in the metal fabricator's continuing slow, steady expansion started quietly last year with an investment of several hundred thousand dollars in equipment to produce rigid frame and cold form building systems, metal roofing and trusses, including 26 and 29 gauge metal panels, cee, zee and receiver channel steel purlins; siding, trim, doors and other building

components which meet the most stringent snow and wind load codes.

Joe Lea from Monticello has come on board in sales for the new building products line, and Carlos Garcia of Wesson is managing the new operations.

"We can now customize pole barns, storage and factory facilities and open floor barndominium homes as our customers specify," says McLemore. Steel Outdoors' welding and sheet metal assembly operation -- its initial business -- can also create interior and exterior staircases, indoor partitions and decor and outdoor gates and fencing, among other building components, she adds. In addition, the company is also selling pine and cedar wooden beams, insulation and other building products it does not manufacture. The company recommends contractors to help customers build.

While Steel Outdoors will maintain its special niche in the metal fabricating industry in customizing and modifying its buildings to meet customer needs,

its plans for the future call for making varied buildings available in kit form, McLemore says.

After API Technologies left its 55,000 square foot building on Highway 51 in Wesson, the McLemores moved Steel Outdoors there in 2019 from a 10,000 square foot facility they grew from a two-person operation started in a truck body in their backyard where they manufactured metal deer feeders.

Working together part-time, the McLemores initially shared metal-cutting, welding and painting tasks, expanded their production with addition of new workers to include some 30 types of deer feeders, deer blinds, fire pits and cookers and metal art sold throughout the United States; and launched a companion company -- Alpha Machine & Welding -- that engineers, builds and installs custom metal products for saw mills, food plants and other industrial customers located predominantly in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and

Tennessee.

At its new Wesson location, Steel Outdoors utilized the expanded space to start a retail business oriented to hunters and outdoors enthusiasts. It is using the 15 acres that surround the building outside for special commercial and community events -- product exhibits, a wildlife extravaganza, cookouts for Wesson's first responders and other leaders and citizens. And now it is beginning a new phase in its growth.

The Highway 51 facility started as a garment factory and later housed Potter Production Corporation after Spectrum Control acquired the company in 1998. API Technologies, based in San Jose, California, acquired the Spectrum plant and consolidated the operation with its facilities in Pennsylvania in 2017.

"We're in a highly visible location as you come into Wesson from the north on Highway 51," notes McLemore. "We want to reflect the growth and ongoing development of a small town."

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Garden Club Honor yards



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Dunn property.



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Stamps property.

Wesson News

In December, Wesson Garden Club recognized both Christmas decorating and landscaping efforts. Three Christmas decorating awards were conferred: Clint and Dawn Dunn at 1050 Oak Street received the Special Christmas Award; and the Victorian display on the corner of Highway 51 and Church Street and the Fountain Garden Christmas decor on Highway 51 were recognized. The Garden Club also presented its town, organizational and rural Yard of the Month awards to the Old Wesson School Community Center at 1047 Eighth Street, which it designated as a "Special Historical Garden," Wesson Public Library at 1012 Spring Street and Ken and Pam Stamps at 7076 Highway 51 North. The Yard of the Month awards, based on maintenance principles and elements of landscape design, seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry that values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor landscapes during the spring, summer and fall.



Special to Wesson News

Special Historical Garden Award winner.



Special to Wesson News

Organizational Yard of the Month.



Special to Wesson News

Christmas decor recognized.



Special to Wesson News

Victorian Christmas decor cited.



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Volume 10, Number 1

Circulation 5,000

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

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www.WessonNews.com



Christmas Decorating awards honor five

Wesson News

The Wesson branch of Trustmark National Bank received the \$100 grand prize for its Christmas decor in annual Spirit of Christmas Awards sponsored by Wesson Chamber of Commerce, Wesson Garden Club and *Wesson News*.

The awards program, which seeks to encourage local businesses and other organizations based in town buildings to decorate creatively for the Christmas season, also honored as runner-ups:

- Another Time. . . Another Place;
- Mill Town Salon and Day Spa;
- Wesson Ace Hardware;
- Decell Memorial United Methodist Church.

A Wesson Garden Club judges team including Debbie Hoaglin, June Owens, Jean Ricks and Ramona Smith selected the award winners.



Wesson News

Wesson Trustmark bank manager Marilyn Britt (center) accepts \$100 grand prize for the local financial institution's Christmas decor from Wesson Garden Club's Jean Ricks. Pictured from left to right are Garden Club members Ramona Smith and Debbie Hoaglin; Britt, Ricks and Trustmark tellers Mamie Sherrod and Danya Greer.



Wesson News

Runner-up Wesson Ace Hardware.



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Runner-up Another Time. . . Another Place.



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Runner-up Decell Memorial United Methodist Church.



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Runner-up Mill Town Salon and Day Spa.

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Natchez art fest next month

By Guest Columnist R. Shaw Furlow

"A Tapestry of American Life" is the theme of the 2022 Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration (NLCC), with lectures and other presentations next month focusing on how different races and cultures influenced modern Mississippi.

The conference begins on Thursday, February 24, with opening remarks by Co-Lin Vice President Dr. Sandra Barnes and two films -- *Smoot's* and *Look Away, Look Away*, a film documenting the fight to remove the confederate emblem from the state flags of South Carolina and Mississippi.

For the past thirty-three years, the City of Natchez and Co-Lin Natchez have sponsored NLCC. Begun in 1990 by Copiah-Lincoln Community College, the Celebration annually presents a theme-based lecture series enhanced by films, field trips, workshops, exhibits, book signings, concerts, and discussions. Each February, the 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 Friday, February 25, following remarks by Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, President of Co-Lin, Natchez Mayor Dan Gipson and Dr. Barnes, former Co-Lin History teacher G. Mark LaFrancis will present a film entitled *NLCC Tribute to William Winter*. The late Governor Winter was a major supporter of the conference. Two other interesting events that day are "The Captives Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery" presented by Dr. Richard Blackett of Vanderbilt University and "William Faulkner's Civil War" presented by Michael Gorra from Smith College.



Wesson News



Thursday, February 24, 2022

- 5:30 p.m. Opening Remarks by Dr. Sandra Barnes, Vice-President, Co-Lin
- 5:35 – 5:45 p.m. Short Film Screening: *Smoots* presented by Brian Duong
- 5:45 – 7:15 p.m. Screening Event: *Look Away, Look Away* presented by Patrick O'Connor

Friday, February 25, 2022

- 8:30 a.m. Opening Ceremony with President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, Co-Lin; Dan Gibson, Mayor of Natchez; and Vice-President Dr. Sandra Barnes, Co-Lin, Natchez campus. Recognition of William Winter Scholars and Vance Fellows
- 8:45 a.m. Screening Event: *NLCC Tribute to William Winter*, presented by G. Mark LaFrancis
- 9 a.m. "The Complexities of Early Mississippi," a panel discussion featuring Dr. Christian Pinnen, Mississippi College, Dr. Max Grivno, University of Southern Mississippi & Mike Bunn, Director of Historic Blakeley State Park, Spanish Fort, Alabama
- 10 a.m. "The Captives Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery," Dr. Richard Blackett, Vanderbilt University
- 11 a.m. "From North to Natchez and Back Again," Dr. Cory James, University of Nebraska
- 1 p.m. "Pennsylvania Decorative Arts Come South," Sarah Duggan, Historic New Orleans Collection
- 1:45 p.m. "Little Lies for Great Perfection: The Question of Truthfulness in Persac's Plantation Landscape," Laura KilcerVanHuss, editor, *Charting the Plantation Landscape from Natchez to New Orleans*
- 2:45 p.m. "The Fabric of Civilization," Virginia Postrel, Chapman University
- 3:30 p.m. "William Faulkner's Civil War," Michael Gorra, Smith College

On Saturday, the conference ends with "Robert E. Lee and Me, a Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause" presented by Ty Seidule, Brigadier General, West Point Academy.

There are many other presentations, and most of them are free. Some of the events are ticketed. One thing for sure: participants don't leave the conference hungry. There are food and drink gatherings at The Carriage House at Stanton Hall, The Natchez Heritage School of Cooking, Mississippi School of Folk Arts and at Smoot's.

There are several awards given during the conference to people who have dedicated their lives to the arts and history of our region, not the least of which is the Thad Cochran Award, which went to former Co-Lin President Dr. Billy Thames for his support of the conference.

The Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration has won numerous awards for its outstanding programming. They include a Cultural Olympiad Award, Best Event of the Year Award at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, the Mississippi Tourism Award, the Mississippi Historical Society's Award of Merit, the Mississippi Humanities Council Humanities Achievement Award, the College Public Relations Association of Mississippi Award, and the 2011 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

The NLCC has been called by official evaluators "Mississippi's most significant annual conference devoted to literature, history, film, and culture." This is an event we should all be proud of and, if possible, attend. That's it for this month. Support the arts, my friends.

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

- 5:30 p.m. "Indigo Dyeing, Mardi Gras, and Jambalaya", Mississippi School of Folk Arts, Cooking by Lil' Italia' (209 Franklin Street), ticketed event \$30; Krewe of Phoenix Parade rolls at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 26, 2022

- 9:00 a.m. "Gender, Movement, and Violence in Natchez, 1799-1865," Dr. Nik Ribianszky, Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland
- 9:44 a.m. "The Sweet Taste of Liberty," Caleb McDaniel, Rice University, Pulitzer Prize Winner, 2020
- 10:45 a.m. Presentation by Horton Foot Award for Special Achievement in Screenwriting; Presentation of the Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award; Presentation of the Thad Cochran Award of Achievement
- 11:30 a.m. Luncheon at The Carriage House Restaurant, "Literature at Lunch" featuring R. J. Lee, "The King Falls," Susan Cushman, "John and Mary Margaret," Josh Foreman and Ryan Starrett, "The Hidden History of Natchez," Ticketed event \$30.
- 1:15 p.m. "The Ones Who Say They Love You, Stories," Maurice Carlos Ruffin, Random House
- 2:15 p.m. Screening event. *Talk from the Start: Growing Mississippi Readers!* presented by Ben Powell and Corrine Hegwood, The Barksdale Reading Institute
- 2:20 p.m. Recognition of the John D. W. Guice Young Writers Competition winners
- 2:45 p.m. "A Sitting in St. James," Rita Williams-Garcia, Harper Collins
- 3:30 p.m. "Stories for Young Readers," Panel Discussion featuring: Chris Barton, Tim Tingle, and Margaret McMullan.
- 5 p.m. Eats, Drinks, and Music at Smoots. Ticketed event. Music
- 7 p.m. "Robert E. Lee and Me, a Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause," Ty Seidule, Brigadier General, West Point Academy

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Wesson PR executive honored



Wesson News

Jessica Breazeale of Wesson received two public relations awards at the Public Relations Association of MS (PRAM) -Pine Belt Chapter meeting at the OgleTree Alumni House at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

Breazeale received an award of merit on a 2020 summer safety campaign she implemented. She was also honored with a 2021 Senior Practitioner Award by the Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF).

The senior practitioner designation was established to honor Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) members who are recognized by their peers as veteran public relations professionals with high ethical standing. Nomination and selection are made by local public relations association chapters based on criteria set by the Federation. To receive the designation "senior practitioner," a recipient must qualify in three of the following four criteria:

- 15 years of full-time public relations experience
- Accreditation by a Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) member organization
- Officer or board member at the chapter, state or SPRF level
- Recognition of professionalism as evidenced by such awards as Practitioner of the Year, Lantern Award or similar honor

The emcee presenting the award to Breazeale said she "checked every box."

Breazeale was recognized at SPRF's annual conference this year at Panama City Beach, but was not able to attend due to prior commitments.

"It was a huge honor being nominated and recognized - even though I couldn't be in Panama City," she said. "When they told me they wanted to also recognize me in Hattiesburg, I asked my mom to come with me. It was nice having her there with me, as well."

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California transplant shapes area health

By Bob Arnold

Through her years as a commercial artist and teacher and a struggle with cancer, health and nutrition have always been important parts of Ana Mason's life, but it wasn't until she discovered Herbalife products to gain weight after training to run a 5K marathon that she decided to become an independent distributor for the company and make a business of her passions.

"Unlike commercial art and teaching, running a business, however, did not come naturally for me, but I've enjoyed meeting new people and building relationships with customers since starting Copenh Nutrition in 2013 in Wesson," Mason says.

Today, Mason is helping to shape the health of Wesson residents with her small store, where she sells healthy meal replacement shakes, energy teas, pre-and-post workout drinks and high protein snacks; and offers friendly advice.

Mason landed in Mississippi in 2003 after growing up, working in commercial art, rearing two children and becoming a special and general education teacher in San Diego, California.

She recalls a childhood playing outside in San Diego's downtown area, where she would ride her bike to visit friends who lived five miles away. Mason graduated from Mt. Miguel High School in Spring Valley outside San Diego in 1986 and attended Cuyamaca Community College. She moved to Tennessee to live with her father, received an Associate Degree in Commercial Art and Music from Dyersburg State in 1989



Special to Wesson News

and then returned to California to work in commercial art from 1990 to 1992, when a job injury cut her career short.

"I married and reared two children, now grown -- Justin Hickey, 31, a Navy CB; and Elizabeth Payne, 29, who is married to a police officer," she relates. "When I volunteered in a kindergarten, a teacher suggested that I start a second career in ed-

wife. "A teaching career opened for me when Mississippi school officials learned about my California experience during the school registration process for my kids," she says. She first taught at Crystal Springs Elementary School (2003-2008) followed by tenures at Hazlehurst Elementary School (2008-09) and Walton Elementary School in Jackson (2010-11).

ucation. So I went on to earn a bachelors and masters degrees at San Diego State University in 1999 and 2003 and to teach kindergarten and special education in the seventh grade before budget cuts in California schools again cut my career short."

Mississippi was Mason's next stop, when she took over the Wesson property of the late mother of her father's second

In 2007, doctors told Mason she had uterine cancer, which she fought over the next four years, learning to conquer the stress which triggered it to re-occur. She has been cancer-free since 2011.

The Paul Lacoste Boot Camp -- a 12-week gymnasium program that prepares participants for 5K runs through intense one hour per day five-day per week

workouts -- provided stress-relief during her cancer fight, but caused her to lose the weight that Herbalife products helped her regain, and led her to start Copenh Nutrition in 2013.

Mason chose Wesson as the location for her business to be close to her mother, who she brought to Mississippi in 2006 to live with her.

What are your hobbies?

For the most part, they are on hold because of my business, but I like to work out and enjoy travel.

Are you a reader?

I focus on leadership development in both reading books and listening to podcasts. I pay particular attention to what Steve Harvey, Jim Rohn and Herbalife founder Mark Hughes have to say.

Are you into music?

I like Christian music. I am a fan of the group Pentatonix and singer Amy Grant. I listen to Pandora.

Do you enjoy movies or theater?

Sandra Bullock is my favorite actress. I liked her in *The Blind Side*. *Sweet Home Alabama* is also one of my favorite movies. I watch sports on television, too. I follow the Tennessee Titans.

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

I save my money.

How would you change the world?

I am changing the world, encouraging nutrition, good eating habits and exercise.

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Co-Lin tops for graduation rate



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the Best Associate Degree Colleges in Mississippi.

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USDA \$\$, jobless, meals & teachers

By Bob Arnold

USDA \$\$ for producers. Nine Mississippi counties, including Franklin, Lincoln, Pike and Walthall, have been designated as primary national disaster areas eligible for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans. Farmers affected by Hurricane Ida's winds and rain in the contiguous counties can also apply for the emergency loans to cover up to 100 percent of their actual production loss or the amount they need to restore their operation to pre-disaster condition, whichever is less. Affected producers may also qualify for refinancing certain debts. George, Hancock, Jackson, Kemper and Marion were also designated as primary disaster areas.

Jobless rates plunge. Jobless rates continue to fall in Mississippi -- down 2.5 percentage points to 5 percent across the state. Lincoln County's unemployment rate is down to 2.7 percent and Copiah's has fallen

to 4.5 percent.

Funds for school meals. More than \$17 million from \$1.5 billion in federal funds will help Mississippi school meal program operators. The money, coming from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Credit Corporation, encompasses \$11.3 million from \$1 billion for supply chain assistance, \$3.6 million from \$300 million for USDA food purchases and \$2.3 million from \$200 million for local food for school cooperative agreements.

State teachers shortage. Even though the number of teachers across Mississippi is about 32,000, there are 3,036 certified teacher vacancies that document a long-standing state teacher shortage. There are 958 vacancies at the elementary level, 881 in high schools and 1,200 among middle school, music, arts and special education teachers, according to the Mississippi Department of Education. A major contributing factor to the teachers shortage is the

lowest-in-the-nation pay they receive -- an issue state lawmakers say they plan to address this year.

Bonuses for officers. Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves has awarded one-time \$1,000 bonuses to some 1,750 law enforcement officers employed by state agencies from federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funds. Officers from a variety of agencies received the "hazard pay" bonuses, although most of them are with the Mississippi Department of Public Service.

COVID-19 cases soar. The Mississippi State Department of Health reported surging COVID-19 cases, with 7,000 new ones during the Christmas holiday period. Just a few weeks ago during the Thanksgiving holiday period, Mississippi confirmed 5,185 new cases. In the Jackson area, parking lots have been full at medical clinics that offer COVID-19 testing. The Health Department also reported an increase in the number of people hospitalized with confirmed cases of COVID-19.

MSA dancers



Special to Wesson News

Mississippi School of the Arts (MSA) students Page Henry, Christen Johnson, and Rain Walley recently participated DTCEB Dancewave college auditions. Traditionally, in-person auditions are held in New York City at Hunter College in partnership with Dance Magazine. However, the auditions were held virtually this year due to COVID-19. On average, Brookhaven-based MSA dancers are accepted to 10 or more university dance programs. Last year, MSA dancer Allison Dobson ('21) was accepted by dance programs at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, Dillard University of New Orleans, State University New York (SUNY) at Ferdonia, Alabama State University, University of Arts in Philadelphia, University of Roehampton of London, Hussian College of Los Angeles, Point Park University of Pittsburgh, Belhaven, USM, Carey, University of Holy Cross of New Orleans and University of Buffalo in New York. MSA dancer Heaven Gordon ('21) also was accepted by programs at Springfield College of Massachusetts, DeSales University Pennsylvania, State University of New York at Ferdonia, Ohio State University, University of Roehampton of London, Belhaven, USM, William Carey, Southern Methodist University, Alabama State University and The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts of England.

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Beaus and beauties grace WAC



All Photos by Wesson News

WAC beauties and beaus participated in Wesson Christmas parade.

Special to Wesson News

New beaus and beauties grace Wesson Attendance Center throughout the school term every year. Among selections this term in the elementary grades were:

Kindergarten. Most Handsome Gatlin Burch and beaus Slayde King, Darrell Miller and Cotton Wall. Most Beautiful Mila Wallace and beauties Alyvia Bacot, Autumn Howard, Jojo Williams and Kassadee Ryan.

First grade. Most Handsome Kade Banks and beaus Eli Carr and Peck Newman. Most Beautiful Bristol Rorie and beauties Hayden Ryan and Rennlya Curtis.

Second grade. Most Handsome Asher Formby and beaus Jude Carr and Antonio



Walker. Most Beautiful Ella Shelton and beauties Madalyn Benton, Addisyn Coleman and Madison Smith.

Third grade. Most Beautiful Evelyn Westrope and beauties Zada Ashley, Harper Johnson and Aubree Williams.

Fourth grade. Most Beautiful Lyla Formby and beauties Aria Gemelli, Augumn Harris, Azyiah James and Lexi Ryan.

Fifth grade. Most Beautiful Ady Prestridge and beauties Maklya Jackson, Madison Rowley, Isabella Shoop, Caroline Smith and Hartley Walker.

Fifth and Sixth grade beaus. Most Handsome Ayden Lee and beaus Rykey Galdden and Silas Hall.



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Men's hoopsters 3-6, Lady Wolves 6-4



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The men's basketball Co-Lin Wolves started their season with a 3-6 record, beating Hinds Community College (62-55), East Central (77-65) and Southern University-Shreveport (91-82); and losing to East Mississippi (74-71), Jones (92-84), Southern University-Shreveport (96-92), Lawson State (94-88), Northeast (99-83) and Southwest (91-82).



Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin Lady Wolves basketball team started its season with a 6-4 record, beating Wallace Community College-Selma (73-65), Hinds (77-61), Southern University-Shreveport (73-26 and 85-44), Holmes (76-57) and Baton Rouge Community College (66-61); and losing to Bishop State (66-53), Southwest (57-55 and 60-54) and Baton Rouge Community College (53-45).

Good, bad & ugly in football

By Guest Columnist Yancy Methvien

In every sport, there are impressive things, while other things leave you wondering why the sport is played at all.

The year 2020 did not leave a very high bar to hurdle in sports. From youth recreational levels all the way up to the highest professional levels, the COVID outbreak caused chaos across every sports league in this country and throughout the world. Major league sports were fortunate to be able to cobble together abbreviated seasons, and players competed in silent stadiums in front of seats filled with cardboard cutout fans.

This year came as a pleasant surprise in sports, especially here in Mississippi. Probably the biggest thing that happened was the Mississippi State Bulldogs making another trip to Omaha and finally getting over the hump to claim their first College Baseball World Series Championship. State made a decision to invest in what was already a successful program. It renovated an already good facility to the point that the "new dude" is now the top-rated facility in the country. State also invested in personnel, support staff, players and every other individual involved in making the team a winner. It not only committed to the task of winning and then going all-in as a unit, but managed to do so while maintaining its integrity and keeping fans and students as the main priority.

As football season closes, it is instructive to look back at the good, bad

and ugly parts of the game this year.

As far as the bad goes, there were the number of injuries across every level of football, and then there was the officiating.

In many sports, not a single player gets hurt in competition. With football, the exact opposite is the norm. There is hardly any level of football where there isn't at least one injury above a minor level of severity. It is basically something you must accept as part of the game.

Time off due to COVID may explain some of the injuries, and could be an excuse as well for football officiating, particularly at the collegiate level. Several officiating crews found themselves under the microscope this year with game-changing calls questioned by people throughout the country. A year away due to the pandemic had everyone a bit rusty. There is also a shortage of officials. It is probably time for the major college conferences to start hiring their officials in a full-time capacity instead of contracting them. Not requiring a referee to drive across three states to call a game on Saturday afternoon after calling a Friday night high school game should help resolve some of the issues.

As for the ugly, peewee football takes home part of the dishonor. After having seen several games in person, I have to ask myself and you an honest question:

Why are we still letting kids under the age of ten play full-contact football?

Football is a complex game, and kids under ten don't have a solid grasp about what they are supposed to be doing. They haven't seen the game and had it explained to them enough to fully comprehend how to execute a play from start to finish without committing some kind of infraction. At the same time, the equipment is almost all old hand-me-down or ill-fitting in all but the best-funded leagues. Injuries are the result, almost an expectation. Full-contact football creates more opportunities

for kids under ten or eleven to sustain concussions and break bones, and keep them from advancing in the sport as they age. It's a smarter and safer idea for kids to wait until they are more physically and mentally capable. Flag football is safer and every bit as effective in teaching the game at young ages. Mississippi should research flag football and invest in it as an alternative to peewee football.

As for the big ugly, fan behavior went off the rails this year. It was a rarity for a professional football game not to have a fight in the stands, and it was extremely frightening to see this at the high school level as well. I don't understand what drives people to get into fights at sporting events. They must know that an arrest is almost always the outcome. Some fans are going to act like idiots no

matter what, but some of us may have forgotten how to act after being stuck in lockdown.

Now what about the good.

For starters, Mississippi programs have had very successful years grown from seeds planted a few years ago. Ole Miss, Mississippi State and Jackson State University all hired big-name coaches, and now these guys are producing wins. State made it to a bowl game, with a winning season under Coach Mike Leach. Ole Miss, with ten wins, went to the Sugar Bowl on the back of a high-powered offense installed by Coach Lane Kiffin. It is quite remarkable how fast the Rebs have become a contender in the SEC West. The best for last: Jackson State University under Deion Sanders, better known as "Coach Prime," his new nickname. He turned the Tigers into the talk of not only the SWAC, but the entire country, and recently one of the country's top players committed to playing for him at Jackson State. Keep your eyes on Coach Prime and the J-State Tigers. I have a feeling he is building a giant-killer.

You can agree or disagree, but that was the year in football in Mississippi as I've seen it. Happy New Year. Here's to a safe and winning year for Mississippi sports in 2022!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Yancy Methvien holds the world's record for the most rounds of golf played in a single year; referees local sporting events and follows sports throughout Mississippi.

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Heart group cites Co-Lin health culture

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin has achieved national Silver recognition in the latest American Heart Association 2021 Workplace Health Achievement Index for taking significant steps to build a culture of health and well-being for their workforce.

The college is one of more than 450 organizations nationwide that completed the Index assessment this year, evaluating the time period of July 31, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Of the organizations that completed the Index assessment, nearly all earned gold (43%), silver (31%) or bronze (19%) status.

The American Heart Association, a global force for longer, healthier lives for all, created the Index with its CEO Roundtable, a leadership collaborative of more than 45 members from some of America's largest companies. The Index is a web-based scorecard that evaluates the overall quality and comprehensiveness of an organization's workplace health program through a combination of best practices and a snapshot of its aggregate employee heart health.

Studies show, healthy employees are

more productive and use less sick time, and organizations which create a culture of health in the workplace can improve employee retention and organizational reputation.

"We are proud to achieve this recognition from the American Heart Association for prioritizing the health and well-being of our employees," said Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims. "Our institution remains committed to supporting the physical and mental well-being of our faculty and staff and promoting professional and personal growth."

In the new year, the American Heart Association will introduce a reimagined Index, the Workforce Well-Being Scorecard. Building on the legacy of the Workplace Health Achievement Index, the new Scorecard will provide organizations with a way to measure the total health and well-being of their workforce, including the importance of the mental well-being of employees. Participating organizations will receive specific, evidence-informed tools and services to help build and maximize effective cultures of workforce health and well-being.

For more information, visit www.heart.org/WHSrecognitions.






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Police officers leaving WPD

Wesson News

The Wesson Board of Alderman has accepted resignations of two police officers.

Full-time Officer John Brent is leaving Wesson Police Department (WPD) to serve both the Hazlehurst Police Department and the Copleah County Sheriff's Office, while part-time Officer Andrew Arnett is leaving WPD to focus exclusively on the demands of his full-time work at Mississippi Forestry.

The Aldermen also held public

hearings at their January meeting related to discussions around the provisions of a new low-speed vehicle ordinance aimed at regulating the use of golf carts on Wesson roadways and soliciting bids from contractors to collect garbage for the town.

Wesson residents currently are serviced by garbage collectors contracted by Copleah County, but the town's Aldermen believe the municipality would be better served by contractors working directly for Wesson.



Special to Wesson News

Wesson Aldermen are exploring the town's contracting garbage pickup.

Wesson Wreath-laying ceremony



All Photos by Wesson News



Special December wreath-laying ceremonies honored veterans buried in Wesson Cemetery. Wesson-based Socks For Heroes organized the event among 2,100 nationwide sponsored by Wreaths Across America, which was founded to continue and expand an annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester in 1992. Nearly two million veteran wreaths are placed on headstones at participating cemeteries around the country to remember the fallen, honor those who serve and teach the value of freedom. With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe and a number of other individuals and organizations, Morrill arranged for wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery that had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year. Volunteers from local American Legion and VFW Posts and members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C. helped make wreaths. A photo of gravestones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet, and starting in 2005, thousands of other locations emulated the wreath-laying ceremonies. The Arlington wreath-laying is still held annually, on the second or third Saturday of December. The annual pilgrimage from Harrington, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery has become known as the world's largest veterans' parade, stopping at schools, monuments, veterans' homes and communities along the way.



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Happy New Years resolutions

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

When a year comes to a close and a fresh year is set to begin, we naturally begin to reflect. We reflect on what went right, what was not so great, what worked, what did not work, and so on.

If 2021 has left you feeling depleted, or like you did not quite achieve what you set out to, you are not alone. For many, it was not quite the year they had in mind. However, taking time to reassess and set some realistic goals can be a way of moving forward in a positive manner.

Think of 2022 as a Happy You Year! Reflect on your current health, nutritional, activity status, and more. What are your realistic and reachable goals you would like to work towards? Now is the perfect time to start setting yourself up for success in 2022.

For many years, it has become tradition to make New Year's Resolutions and goals that last for a few weeks, and then get thrown aside. In fact, 80% of people give up on their resolutions by the second week of the year. The problem is that many resolutions are unrealistic and poorly executed with no preparation. Change that and make some plans that will last! Try setting attainable, sustainable 2022 New Year's Resolutions and goals.

Why do we set goals? We all set goals for a variety of reasons. Our goals are usually a combination of these:

- Finding motivation
- Improving your current situation
- Getting through your "wish list" or "to do list" in life
- Helping get to your next step
- Keeping yourself accountable

Where do you start? And how do you actually make them fun, so you are more likely to stick to them? Here are 20 small changes you can make to effect a big difference. Try one or more that you find attractive. You never know, they may even become a permanent part of your lifestyle:



1. Try one new recipe per week.
2. Try making one smoothie per day.
3. Try a new style of fitness each week or month.
4. Establish a simple meditation practice.
5. Read one new book a month.
6. Drink an extra cup of water a day.
7. Declutter that problem area once a week.
8. Take a walk each day.
9. Sanitize your phone every week.
10. Eat a snack before you grocery shop.
11. Put your phone in a different room while you work.
12. Build a gratitude practice.
13. Compliment yourself every day.
14. Start a wind down routine before bed.
15. Take a social media detox once a month.
16. Practice random acts of kindness.
17. Add extra fruits/veggies to your grocery cart.
18. Laugh once a day.
19. spend quality time with your loved ones once a week.
20. Try a new journal prompt every day.



Go for a resolution you can count on; small, achievable, and fun! Be sure to reflect monthly to check your progress, make some adjustments, and even to refocus.

Cheers to a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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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Co-Lin graduates 152 students

One hundred-fifty-two Co-Lin students, nine from Wesson, received degrees or certificates during the college's 2021 commencement exercises held in Mullen Gymnasium in December.

Twenty-four students from Brookhaven and six each from Crystal Springs and Hazlehurst were also part of the exercises.

- **Wesson:** Shelby Carwyle, Latavia Doss, Cody Goodman, Molly Granger, Robert Pettigrew, Jordan Slonaker, Ashley Smith, Crystalin Tanner, Mallory Turner
- **Brookhaven:** Caitlyn Beemer, Lydia Butler, Adrainuna Dennis, Jaquarius Edwards, Tamia Elmore, Tailor Harmon, Elizabeth Hutson, Gayton Johnson, Whitney Knight, Timothy Leggett, Goldiette McCall, Gina McKnight, Aramis Merchant, Walker Minter, Traveon Murray, Trace Owens, Madlyn Phelps, Zabien Price, Lani Smith, Terrell Smith, Latonya Tucker, Beyonce Washington, Jamilynn Wolff, and Tabbetha Wyant
- **Crystal Springs:** Jaqueya Brown, Davante Glasper, Malik Jones, Alondra Rivera, and Rylee Young
- **Hazlehurst:** Blakeney Byrd, Ashley Crisler, Emonuel Harper, Terrence Mason, Jake Papizan, and Daraneisha Stewart

Other graduates were:

- **Bogue Chitto:** Jermaine Black, Skylar Coleman, George Fairman, Emily Hardin, Emalyn Langley, Leslie Moak, Micah Powell, and Sheryl Spraggins
- **Brandon:** Tyler Baldwin, Ian Jackson, and Darryl Nichols
- **Byhalia:** Bailes Jones and Jamal Pye
- **Canton:** Tyquan Henderson
- **Collins:** Blake Boleware, Tamika Harper, and Anna Rogers
- **Columbus:** Jessica Luke and Demario Martin
- **Fayette:** Mercedes Bailey, Shyviqva Brooks, Allison Collins, Deja Hudson, T'amber Lee, and Iyonna McMiller
- **Ferriday, LA:** Shatterrica Gilmore
- **Florence:** Landon Brewer
- **Georgetown:** Keiarre Funchess
- **Harrisville:** Jamiria Sorrell and Madelynn Spitchley
- **Jackson:** Devondria King and William McCollum
- **Jayess:** Dymond Ball, Andrew Beverly, Hannah Boyd, and Bella Ready
- **Leland:** Eli Fratesi
- **Lena:** Joseph Barton
- **London, England:** Tyrese Johnson-Fisher
- **Lorman:** Angelique Jackson
- **Magee:** Kristin Busby, Kyeasha Graves, Kellie McCollum, Nyla Sims, and Macie West
- **Magnolia:** Jaterica Wilson
- **Mansfield, TX:** Christopher Jackson
- **McComb:** Teddrionna Lewis
- **Meadville:** Braden Tyson
- **Mendenhall:** Jacqueline Barnett, Osheena Langston, Kelsi Millis, Mandrell Sullivan, and Elizabeth Wells
- **Mize:** Felisha Thompson
- **Mobile:** Breanna Rollins
- **Monticello:** Ahmad Brown, Travaris Cole, Antanious Jackson, Ana Olveratorres, Alannah Pittman, Vanteshia Preston, David Stanley, Madelyn Stokes, and Jaiden Sutton

- **Mount Olive:** Chelsey Booth, Shania Green, Cara Hampton, and Blane Jones
- **Natchez:** Danasia Caston, Elon Fuery, Landon Havard, Hallie Holland, Sherilyn Johnson, Alexis Jones, Shelby Mize, Karlie Owens, Miracle Posey, Haley Robertson, Jha'nyla Smith, Devonta Stancel, Hugh Taylor, Gary Woods, and Randy Woods
- **New Hebron:** Rebecca Maye
- **Pearl:** Hannah Furlow and Cameron Reeves
- **Raleigh:** Sherpaul Boykin
- **Richland:** Joshua Aldridge and Gabriel Denham
- **Roxie:** Kimberly Anderson and Kenneth Logan
- **Ruth:** Jady Bickham and Ashley Carithers
- **Sarah:** Samantha Cothorn
- **Silver Creek:** Brady Nations
- **Sontag:** Maycee Francis
- **Summit:** Patricia Butler, Samaria Hughes, Precious James, and Kadarius Miller
- **Tylertown:** Robbie Puder and Deanna Deans
- **Vidalia:** Kerryon Swift
- **Washington:** Kevantria King
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- **Woodville:** Nathaniel Hull

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Nine cadets complete Law Enforcement Academy

Wesson News

Co-Lin, in partnership with the Simpson County Sheriff's Office, has just completed the thirteenth Simpson County Law Enforcement Officer Training Academy (SCLEOTA) in which cadets participated in more than 366 hours of rigorous training encompassing firearms, self-defense, use of force, civil liability, wildlife and active shooter situations, among other subjects.

The participating cadets are now eligible for a part-time law enforcement training certificate, which they can hold as long as they are employed by a law enforcement agency.

SCLEOTA is authorized to teach under the State of Mississippi Board of Minimum Standards and Training for Law Enforcement Officers. The academy is staffed by State Certified Law Enforcement Officers, directed by Simpson County Sheriff Paul Mullins, and managed by Co-Lin Workforce Education Coordinator Robin Mitchell.

A recent graduation event for Class XIII cadets at Co-Lin's Simpson County Center featured a host of speakers and well-wishers. Mississippi 13th Circuit Court District Judge Matt Sullivan was the keynote speaker. SCLEOTA Lead Instructor and Simpson County Sheriff's Deputy Clay McPherson recognized the Most Outstanding Overall Graduate (Top Cop) Matthew Wooten, Most



All Photos by Wesson News

Simpson County Law Enforcement Training Academy graduate were Don Ahshapanek, Garrett Irwin and Matthew Wooten of Carthage, Mississippi; Tyler Massey of Sallis, Mississippi, Pryce Hunter and David Soto of Brandon, Mississippi, Michael Jones of Pinola, Mississippi and Chris Rogers of Columbia, Mississippi.

Outstanding Firearms Graduate Chris Rogers, Most Outstanding Physical Fitness Award Pryce Hunter and Most Outstanding Academic Graduate Matthew Wooten. A reception for cadets and their families was held following the ceremony.

Class XIII graduating cadets included Leake County Sheriff's Office sponsored cadets Matthew Wooten and Tyler Massey, Pelahatchie Police Department sponsored cadets Garrett Irwin and David Soto, Mendenhall Police Department sponsored cadet Michael Jones, Columbia Police

Department sponsored cadet Chris Rogers, Pearl Police Department sponsored cadet Pryce Hunter, Walnut Grove Police Department sponsored cadet Don Ahshapanek. Walter Burkett of Mendenhall and Chris Jones of Brandon completed a 200-hour refresher course as part of the Academy.

Enrollment for the 2022 Class XIV training session is now open. Individuals must be at least 21 years of age, have a high school diploma or equivalent, hold a current driver's license, pass a criminal background

check, and possess a clean arrest record. Participants must pass a physical fitness test, a medical examination, and be mentally stable. Additionally, future officers must have a strong desire to serve the public. The training session starts in July 2022 and will last approximately 18 weeks. Applications are available at the Simpson County Sheriff Department. Additional information regarding student cost and the possibility of funding assistance will be available closer to the start of the session. For more information contact Clay McPherson at 601-847-2155.

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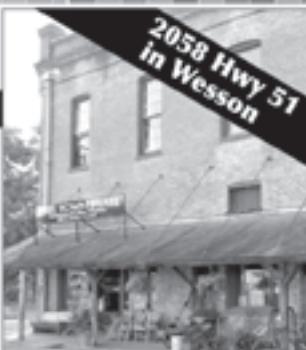
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New student rep sought by SBE

Wesson News

The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) is seeking applications from high school sophomores to serve as the new high school junior student representative on the SBE Board for the 2022-23 school year. Application deadline is January 28, 2022.

Now in its fourth year, the Student Representatives of the Mississippi State Board of Education program includes a high school junior and a high school senior who serve as non-voting SBE members to share their viewpoints on policy decisions regarding Mississippi public schools.

The current SBE junior representative, Micha Hill of Laurel High School, will serve as the senior representative in 2022-23. Through a competitive process, the SBE will appoint a new junior representative to serve a two-year term starting July 1, 2022.

The top 10 semi-finalists among applicants, including the junior representative appointed and an alternate representative, automatically get to serve on the State Superintendent's Student Advisory Council. More than 70 students applied to be the junior representative for the 2021-22 school year.

The SBE adopted policy in 2018 outlining criteria for adding student representatives to the State Board. Student representatives are responsible for attending monthly SBE meetings and any standing committees or subcommittees to which they are assigned. They are excused from school to attend SBE meetings as official school business, and they also work as liaisons for their peers to SBE.

The application packet must be mailed and postmarked by January 28, 2022. Access the application at www.mdek12.org/MBE/Student-Representatives. A video component of the application must be uploaded by 5 p.m. January 28, 2022. For more information, contact Donna Hales at (601) 359-2331 or dhales@mdek12.org.



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Life is tough on a buck

By Guest Columnist Bronson Strickland

Each year in Mississippi, thousands of hunters spend time in the woods hoping to see and harvest a buck. Last year, hunters in the Magnolia State harvested about 122,000 bucks, producing venison for the table and antlers to admire for a lifetime.

But prize bucks are made in a tough life.

First, at the age of about a year, a buck's mother kicks him out of the house to make a life for himself. The yearling buck may establish his new home range a mile or two away, but sometimes much farther. Over the course of a buck's life, he not only needs to figure out where to find valuable forage plants, where the oak trees are dropping acorns, and where the safe places are to bed and ruminant, but he also has to determine where he falls in the buck social hierarchy.

Bucks sort out their social hierarchy by fighting it out. Starting after they turn 1 and especially 2 years old, bucks engage in a behavior biologists call "sparring." Sparring is not an outright fight, but rather an opportunity for two bucks to push each other around to sort out which one is stronger. Most of the time, when two bucks have their antlers locked together, they are simply sparring. On some occasions, when two evenly sized bucks refuse to back down, they will fight. This is the behavior hunters try to mimic with rattling antlers. When two bucks fight, it draws a crowd. Other bucks will often run to the scene when they hear bucks fighting.

Typically, a fight will last from a few seconds to a couple minutes, and it stops when one of the bucks simply gives up and runs away. Of course, when fighting occurs, there can be some unintended consequences. Eyes can be gouged out, bucks can be gored in the neck and shoulders, and some bucks get their antlers locked and both die of exhaustion.

Another deadly outcome of a fight may be a brain abscess. These abscesses occur when the antler pedicle is broken, or when the skin around



the antlers is cut or torn, and a bacterium named *Trueperella pyogenes* invades. This bacterium is commonly on the skin of deer and poses no threat until it is allowed to enter the body through a cut in the skin. When it gets in the tissue of a buck, the bacterium can cause an area of infection -- an abscess -- to form beneath the skin of the forehead. If the infection invades the cranium and enters the brain, the buck will die.

The lifespan of bucks is generally less than does, and the brain abscess is one reason. Learning about all the trials and tribulations bucks go through will help you appreciate seeing one even more. To report a sick deer, visit the Mississippi Department of Wildlife app, mdwfp.com, or call 601-432-2199.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bronson Strickland writes for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

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