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Volume 13, Number 8

“Good News You Can Use”

August, 2025

Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division Wesson-based

Wesson News

A 160-acre Wesson ranch is the base of the relatively new Mississippi Highway Patrol (MHP) Mounted Division.

Ellis Lee Morrison, a 28-year Wesson resident, life-long horseman and veteran state Highway Patrol officer is Captain of the Special Operations Group (SOG) based at his ranch off St. John Road.

Along with SWAT, Air Op, Motorcycle, K9 and CRASH teams, the new SOG enhances MHP's law enforcement capacity. The four-year old unit is on call 24/7 to assist in search and rescue of missing persons and accident victims in hard-to-reach areas, tracking down prison escapees and other targets of man hunts, providing an added level of security and crowd control at special events – fairs, parades, sports and entertainment attractions – and presenting a public face for the Highway Patrol.

Horses, Morrison notes, are a good fit in law enforcement because “they have keen senses of sight, smell and hearing; they have a height advantage, are stealthy and can go to places where others can't.”

“It was a vision of Governor Tate Reeves and Commissioner of Public Safety Sean Tindell,” Morrison explains.

They asked Morrison, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Bureau of Investigations at the time, to create the new division and lead it, following a model similar to K9 teams in which the leaders train, feed and maintain dogs on their own properties. Morrison's credentials as a

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Special to Wesson News

Kate Malta, a Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division volunteer (left) learns how to handle horses with children. Division Captain Ellis Lee Morrison (right) is assisted by Trooper Stargell Catchings in teaching Malta.

American Legion Auxiliary honored with top awards

Wesson News

Local American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) members brought home top honors from their 2025 state convention July 18–21 at Natchez.

The annual gathering brought together Auxiliary members from across the state to celebrate achievements, share ideas, and elect new officers.

This year, the local unit made an impressive showing, earning multiple first-place awards and statewide recognition for outstanding programs and service:

- First Place in the ALA Academy Award competition, which included a \$250 gift certificate to Flag & Emblem.
- 100% Membership Award.



Special to Wesson News

Locals attended American Legion Auxiliary convention at Natchez brought home awards and moved into elected positions. Left to right are (front row) Mary Murphy Brady, Dixie Thornton, Sara Lassiter, Janet Currie, (back row) Sharon Langley, President Kim Whittington, Melnee Frazier, Vivian Hoefflich and Joy Westbrooks.

- First Place in Education.
- Best Juniors Program led by Mary Murphy Brady (age 16) of Petal, who served as President of the Juniors Program. Brady, who also spoke at the event, is the granddaughter of Kim Whittington, President of the Drane-Prine Unit 79 Auxiliary. “I encourage all units to sign up their Juniors because we are the future of this organization,” said Brady.
- First Place Unit Scrapbook for Division I.
- Unit of the Year – Category I.
- First Place Historian Award.

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



Coaching family inspires elementary principal

By Bob Arnold

Ann Shelby Smith, the new elementary school principal at Wesson Attendance Center (WAC), grew up in a coaching family, and, in a way, is following in the footsteps of her father, Glen Davis, who retired as Co-Lin's head football coach following the 2024 season after 21 years to be succeeded by her older brother Micah.

Smith, however, is not the same kind of coach as her father and brother, focusing on academics instead of athletics as an educator – an “instructional coach” at WAC for the past three years before moving into her latest role there after her predecessor Vanda Brister became Wesson High School principal.

“I helped kids who needed to catch up, particularly in math and reading, to be successful students,” Smith explains in describing her coaching activity.

Born in Florence, Alabama, where her father coached defensive backs and wide receivers for University of North Alabama football, Smith first lived in Wesson when Davis was the Co-Lin offensive coordinator in 1995-96 and returned when she entered the seventh grade at WAC in 2005 after he became the Wolves head coach following seven years as an assistant at Mississippi State in Starkville.

Smith recalls a childhood mostly spent with her mom while her dad was either on the football field or recruiting talent for his teams. While coaching athletes wasn't her calling, she did enjoy playing basketball at Co-Lin and Delta State, where she also earned associate and bachelor degrees in education after graduating from Wesson High School in 2010. In 2014, she received a Masters in educational leadership from the University of Arkansas.

“It wasn't like I always dreamed of being a teacher, but I enjoy working with kids, and education became my career path,” Smith recounts.

“As a teacher, I am rewarded when I see a kid in an ah-ha moment after learning something. I also enjoy the relationships with students and other teachers.”

Smith started her teaching career in 2015 at North Shore Elementary School in Brandon with first graders and fourth-grade math students, and also taught at Brookhaven Elementary School in the 2019-2020 school term before joining Wesson Attendance Center as a second grade teacher in 2020-21 and then becoming an instructional coach, testing coordinator and specialist

for students who require extra help.

Beginning this month as the WAC elementary school principal, Smith says she'll be responsible for making the K through sixth grades “run like a well-oiled machine,” overseeing instruction, teachers, students and discipline, not unlike a head coach for a sports team responsible for assistants, players and execution.

While the new role will be challenging, Smith will not only be drawing on the coaching examples in her family, but perhaps more importantly, “the foundation Vanda Brister and I laid as a team over the past three years at Wesson Elementary.”

Smith lives in Brookhaven with husband, Josh, a CPA who works in Flowood. They have two children – Jackson, 5, who is entering kindergarten at WAC, and Kay, 3.

What are your hobbies?

I run and work out. I like to travel and cook, and follow sports – the Wesson Cobras, the Co-Lin Wolves, Mississippi State Bulldogs and, would you believe, the Buffalo Bills, because Josh Allen won us over as fans.

Are you a reader?

I wouldn't call myself an avid reader, but I'm eclectic, following recommendations of others. I recently completed *The Wound* about Vietnam War nurses.

How about music?

I am a listener, particularly to country and Christian music. Give me a ball, but not an instrument to play.

Movies, theater, television?

I watch the Food Channel. And Friday night is movie night, with the fare dictated by the kids.

If you won a lot of money in the lottery, how would you spend it?

Helping the needy through community organizations, particularly through Clear Branch Baptist Church, where I am an active member.

How would you change the world?

Although social media has a positive impact on society and culture, we need to address the negative effects. I also want to see a cure for cancer, which affected my grandmother and father.



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Young artists nurtured in Brookhaven

Special to Wesson News

Budding young artists from throughout Mississippi come to Brookhaven every summer to hone their nascent talents and gain inspiration to continue their pursuits.

Back in June, 85 of them came to the Mississippi School of the Arts Foundation (MSAF) eleventh annual summer camp for arts students in the eighth through tenth grades. The young campers from across the state participated in an intensive arts experience, selecting two arts disciplines to study throughout the week-long event and learn foundational techniques.

They engaged directly with the award winning arts faculty at Mississippi School of the Arts, which teaches high school students in their junior and senior years. The MSA faculty members provided hands-on, intensive instruction during three-hour class sessions daily.

In the evenings, the campers enjoyed a variety of residential life activities, including a dance, talent show, water games, mystery dinner theatre, carnival, dance showcase, and a movie night. The week concludes with culminating perfor-



Special to Wesson News

mances, a literary journal presentation, and an art exhibition for camper's families.

Alumni of MSA served as camp interns, assisting students as they navigated campus life and creative challenges.

Some campers chose to stay overnight in a campus residence hall, and others commuted daily.

The annual camp is the first full week of June. Scholarships are available by application. The camp is supported in part by a project



grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission.

MSA is an eleventh-and-twelfth-grade visual and performing arts residential, public high school located in Brookhaven. Students not only meet and exceed the traditional Mississippi high school curriculum, but they also receive special instruction in visual arts, vocal music, dance, writing/literary arts, filmmaking/media arts and theatre. MSA also has a "Collegiate Academy" program where qualified stu-

dents can earn their high school diploma and an associate degree at the same time at no cost. In addition to MSA students winning awards for their work on the state, regional and national levels, the school consistently has one of the highest ACT averages in the state.

Students interested in MSA apply by February 1 of their sophomore year in high school. For more information, contact admissions@msabrookhaven.org and visit www.msabrookhaven.org or call 601-823-1300



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Wesson Public Library Summer Reading Program finale

Special to Wesson News

Staff from Copiah County Farm Bureau headlined the final session of the Wesson Public Library Summer Reading Program, with a focus on agriculture and farming. They brought Lilly Belle, a simulated cow that could be milked as a learning experience. With the help of Ann Clark, the Reading Program participants in kindergarten through sixth grade also completed a quilt that they crafted through the weekly sessions that started in June and continued into July. The kids were recognized for their reading achievements over the four weeks, including first place winners Hunter Lang, Kennedy Lang, Andy Arnett and Brook Griffity in 3-4, 5, 7 and 10 year old age groups. Park Place Ice Cream also rewarded the children with special treats. More than 70 children registered for the program.



Special to Wesson News

Copiah County Farm Bureau's Shelby Burge helps Summer Reading Program participant milk a simulated cow.



Special to Wesson News

Copiah County Farm Bureau staff (left to right) are Austin Graham, Shelby Burge, Melissa Morgan with County Agricultural Extension Agent Shelby Bearden, along with Lilly Belle, a simulated cow.



Special to Wesson News

Volunteers – members of Friends of the Library (FOL) and other Wesson Public Library supporters – helped at Summer Reading Program. Left to right are FOL members Dr. Steven Liverman, Sonya Cowen and Marilyn Britt; Ruth Docter (Liverman daughter), FOL member Terri Bath and Tillie Docter (Liverman daughter).



Special to Wesson News

Kids relax with ice cream treats.



Special to Wesson News

Ann Clark holds up completed quilt – a Summer Reading Program project. The program participants made the squares, and Clark sewed them together to create the quilt.



Special to Wesson News

Park Place's Misty Spndifer supplied ice cream treats.



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cont. from front page

Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division Wesson-based



Special to Wesson News

Trooper Stargell Catchings rides Tank in training session at Wesson ranch, which is base for Mississippi Highway Patrol Mounted Division.

horse trainer with his own ranch in a good central location made him the ideal choice.

Morrison took the job, and started by consulting with Texas officials at Capital Security in Austin and the state's Department of Criminal Justice, which has 100 horses available to track prison escapees. He acquired the initial horses for the new Mississippi unit from Texas.

Four years later, the MHP Mounted Division has 12 equines – two at the Mississippi State Prison at Parchman and 10 on Morrison's Wesson ranch – Colt, Nemo, Maggie, Delta, Dake, Missie, Chewy, Bradley, Tank (Morrison's personal horse) and Elvis, a mascot pony. One other permanent police officer works with Morrison – Trooper Stargell Catchings, and the division has 12 special duty members. Volunteers who are good with children also play an important role in the division's public relations activities.

Training the horses is ongoing at Morrison's ranch, with the major focus on desensitizing them to distractions from their job focus – sights and sounds, people, other animals. Morrison even has a pig on his ranch to annoy the horses so they aren't spooked on a search and rescue mission when they encounter a Mississippi wild hog.

"The Mounted Division is at work constantly," Morrison summarizes. "When our horses aren't involved in a law enforcement function, they are interacting with people – particularly children – presenting the Mississippi Highway Patrol positively. As trained, friendly animals that also support public safety, they uniquely demonstrate that law enforcement is not to be feared, but is there to help, not harm."

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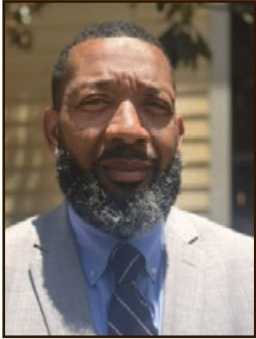
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Six elected to Foundation board



Dr. Jonathan Bines



Nancy Fisher



Nick Herring



Burrell Kyzar



Col. Forrest C. Wentworth



Rebecca Thames Wilson

Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin Foundation has elected six new members to its board of directors:

- **Dr. Jonathan Bines** of New Hebron, received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1998, a Master of Arts in Education from William Carey University in 2001, certification as an Education Specialist in 2008, and a PhD in 2013, both from Jackson State University. He currently works as the executive director of the Five County Child Development Program, Inc.

Bines has received several Administrator of the Year awards and is a past president for both the Region IV and the Mississippi Head Start Association boards. He is a member of Oak Ridge Lodge No. 426/33rd Degree and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He has two children: Jarane and Jonathan.

- **Nancy Fisher** of Brookhaven is a 1980 Co-Lin graduate and a 1982 graduate of Mississippi College, where she received a bachelor's degree. She also received a master's degree from Arkansas State University. She en-

joyed a long career as an administrator in the Brookhaven School District before her recent retirement. She and her husband, Rob, have two children: Kayla Fisher and Abby Fisher Downing; and one grandchild.

- **Nick Herring** of Vidalia received an associate's degree from Co-Lin at Natchez, where he studied Automation and Control Technology. He works as a design supervisor for Enterger in Natchez. Herring is president of Concordia Diamond Youth Baseball. He and his wife, Joan, have two children: Lyle and Grant.

- **Burrell Kyzar** of Sumrall is a 1964 graduate of Co-Lin and a 1967 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, where he received a bachelor's degree in marketing. He retired from Kyzar and Company, P.A. Kyzar is a member of the Foundation Hall of Fame and is a previous member of the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation Board. He has one son, Frank.

- **Col. Forrest C. Wentworth** of Meadville is a 1979 graduate of Co-

Lin and a 1981 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, where he received a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice. He received a Master of Science in human resources management from Troy University in 1999.

Before retirement, Wentworth had 30-year career in the U.S. Army, where he served as a logistician for 25 years. He commanded for eight years at company, battalion, and brigade levels. He served overseas in Germany, Southwest Asia and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He served as the Chief of Support with the Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai, Egypt. He and his wife, Denise, have two children, Cliff and Brandon, and five grandchildren.

- **Rebecca Thames Wilson** of Wesson is a 1987 graduate of Co-Lin, a 1989 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, and a 1992 graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law. She currently serves as the legal counsel to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce following 26 years with the Mississippi Attorney General's office.

Wilson is a member of Madison

Methodist Church, where she teaches Sunday school. She is admitted to practice in all Mississippi state and federal courts. She is a member of the Mississippi Bar, the Mississippi Prosecutors Association, and the American Agricultural Law Association. She is an alumna of the National District Attorney's Career Prosecutor Course, a sustainer in the Junior League of Jackson, a member of the Kappa Delta Sorority Alumnae Association, and a volunteer for several ministries including Connections and Soul City Church. She and her husband, Brent, have two children, Emma and Mary Thames.

"I am excited to add these new members to our board," Angela Furr, executive director of the Co-Lin Foundation, said. "Each one brings a unique skill set and network to the table that I look forward to utilizing in our efforts to support the college."

The Co-Lin Foundation is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization which serves as the fundraising arm of the college. The Foundation is governed by a 26-member board of directors whose goal is to raise private monies to support the mission of the college.

Security measures at WAC

Special to Wesson News

"In school, you can change a lot of things that aren't working, but you have only one chance for safety," says Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) Principal Tommy Clopton.

That's the guiding principle in maintaining security at WAC, which encompasses:

- Justin Royal, a security officer assigned by the Copiah County School District.
- Strong relationship with the Wesson Police Department, which responds promptly when assistance is required.
- Limited and controlled access. When school is in session or students and teachers are present, entrances are locked. At all WAC to entrances, there are push button door ringers, cameras and phones to communicate with indoor personnel to assure visitors are properly identified and allowed to enter only if they have legitimate business inside.
- Communication with parents and guardians of students about security issues.

Church celebrates anniversary



Special to Wesson News

A worship service and luncheon on Sunday, September 28, will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Strong Hope Baptist Church. Dr. Stan Weatherford, the Copiah Baptist Association mission strategist, will speak at the worship service, which starts at 10 a.m. The luncheon will follow the service. The church is at 1144 King Road, Wesson.

Hart completes policy fellowship program

Special to Wesson News

Scarlett Hart, Director of Communications and Special Assistant to the President at Copiah-Lincoln Community College, has completed the prestigious Mississippi Community College Policy Fellowship Program --a year-long program focused on advocacy, legislation, leadership, and policy development in higher education.

The program culminated with a trip to Washington, D.C., where fellows met with national leaders and Mississippi's Congressional delegation to advocate for initiatives that strengthen the state's community college system. Sponsored by the Mississippi Community College Board in partnership

with AdvocacyBuild, a Washington, D.C.-based organization, the program has produced more than 120 alumni since its founding in 2012.

Hart has been employed at the college since 2016. In her current role, she oversees all areas of college communications, including public relations, sports information, and marketing affairs for the college's three campuses. Additionally, she works with the college president concerning legislative affairs and legislative priorities, special projects, and cultivating internal and external relationships to move the college's initiatives forward.

She earned a bachelor's degree

in marketing from The University of Southern Mississippi and a master's degree in community development from Delta State University. She is a graduate of the Mississippi Community College Leadership Academy and the Leadership Co-Lin program. She is a member of the College Public Relations Association of Mississippi (CPRAM) where her campaigns and photography have earned numerous awards including the Grand Award for Digital Media Campaigns. Hart was named Outstanding Staff Member of the Year in 2022.

She and her husband Matthew have three daughters, Nora (7), and twins Mamie Frances and

Myla Wren (4). They are members of First Baptist Church of Brookhaven.



Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin President Dewayne Middleton congratulates Scarlett Hart on completing Mississippi Community College Fellowship Program.

New career education courses added

Special to Wesson News

Two new career education electives will be offered on the Wesson High School course menu during the 2025-26 term at Wesson Attendance Center.

- **Introduction to Engineering**, a math or science elective, will explore basic engineering principles, including engineering professionalism, computational and programming skills, communication (graphical, written and oral), problem solving, design analysis, teamwork and project management. The new

course will also provide an overview of engineering as a career path.

- **Entrepreneurship** will introduce students to elements that will help contribute to success in owning and operating a business. This course will incorporate entrepreneurial skills and trends along with idea generation and validation. Students will gain knowledge in areas such as finance, accounting, marketing, economics, and management as they pertain to owning a business. The course will examine legal concepts, business models, Lean Canvas and business planning.

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Restarting school and resetting wellness routines

By Guest Columnist Dr. Stephanie Duguid



As summer winds down and August rolls in, families begin preparing for a new school year. Backpacks are unpacked, supply lists checked off, and routines start shifting. But while academic readiness is a top priority, it's equally important to focus on resetting wellness routines that support both students and their families.

1. Rebuild sleep routines. Summer often brings late bedtimes and relaxed mornings. However, sleep is crucial for a successful school year. Elementary-age children need 9–11 hours of sleep, and teens require 8–10 hours. To ease the transition, gradually adjust bedtimes and wake-up times

two weeks before school starts. Shut down screens an hour before bed and create a calming bedtime routine -- like reading, listening to quiet music, or simply talking through the next day. A good night's sleep boosts focus, mood, and immune health.

2. Fuel with smart nutrition. Packing school lunches is more than just filling a lunchbox -- it's fueling your child's mind and body. Focus on including a balance of protein (chicken, eggs, beans), whole grains (whole wheat bread, brown rice), fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats (avocado, nuts or seeds).

Let kids help choose produce or prepare their lunch -- it gives them a sense of ownership and teaches healthy habits. Planning ahead with a weekly lunch menu can save time and reduce stress during busy mornings.

3. Establish smooth morning routines. Mornings can set the tone for the entire day. Build a calm and consistent routine with a simple checklist: get dressed, eat breakfast, brush teeth, pack your bag. Avoid screen time in the morning, and consider playing upbeat or calming music instead. A protein-rich breakfast -- like oatmeal with nuts, eggs, or Greek yogurt -- can keep kids fuller longer and improve focus at school.

4. Watch for emotional wellness. Back-to-school transitions can bring anxiety, especially for young children or students starting at a new school. Look for signs such as trouble sleeping, stomach aches, irritability, or avoidance.

Help ease worries by talking openly about the new year. Normalize nervousness, practice common scenarios, and introduce calming strategies like deep breathing. Meeting up with classmates before school starts can also help ease jitters.

5. Create balance after school. After a full school day, kids need time to move, focus, and relax. Encourage physical activity, even a simple walk or bike ride. Set up a dedicated, distraction-free space for homework, and allow time for screen-free play or quiet activities.

A healthy start for the whole family

Back-to-school season is the perfect time to reset habits and prioritize family wellness. A few small changes can lead to better focus, more energy, and less stress for everyone.

Let this be the month your family steps into a new season of structure, health, and well-being -- ready to learn, grow, and thrive together.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Stephanie Duguid is owner of Do Good ProHealth (CPR Classes) and Do Good Leadership (motivational speaking, and leadership and success coaching). She is also a Mississippi Health Ambassador.



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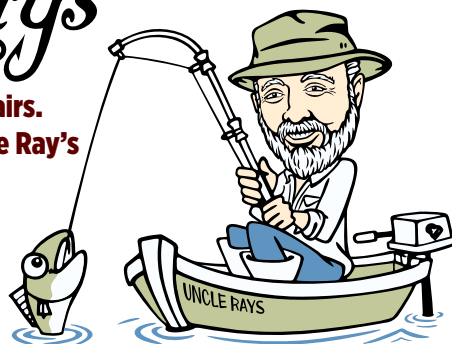
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78 Co-Lin Wolves on academic teams

Special to Wesson News

Seventy-eight Co-Lin athletes have earned spots on 2024-25 All-Academic teams named by the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).

Among the record-setting numbers, Co-Lin’s baseball squad had 19 athletes on three teams and Wolves softball and women’s soccer teams had 13 and 11 respectively.

Student-athletes are eligible to earn academic honors by achieving an overall grade point average of 3.60 or higher for the academic year. Student-athletes who held a GPA of 4.0 earned first team selections, second team selections achieved a 3.80-3.99 GPA and third team earned a 3.60-3.79 GPA.

Co-Lin student-athletes honored for their academic performance were:

1. All-Academic First Team.

- Women's Soccer** | Amelia Bubb (St. George's, Grenada), Olivia Conway (Huddersfield, England), Shannon Land (Glasgow, Scotland)
- Women's Tennis** | Allie Grace McNeil (Brookhaven), Sophie Sisson (Moss Point), Ann-Clark Van (Jayess)
- Softball** | Abby Burnette (Brookhaven), Morgan Chisolm (Madison), Brelie Phillips (Conehatta)
- Men's Tennis** | Mason Brand (Mantee), Nikoloz Gurgenidze (Tbilisi, Georgia)
- Golf** | Lander Guibert (San Sebastian, Spain), Oscar Toreld (Binnerbäck, Sweden)
- Football** | Ladainian Davis (Madison), DJ Hill-Smith (Reed, AR)
- Men's Basketball** | Brick Nkugwa (Kampala, Uganda)
- Men's Soccer** | Harrison Willsey (Starkville)
- Baseball** | Gavin Bledsoe (Brandon)

2. All-Academic Second Team.

- Baseball** | Tanner Blackwell (Flora), Caleb Brooks (Brandon), Sam Cook (Shubu-

ta), Tucker Jones (Brandon), Jennings Kimbrell (Flowood), Carter Leggett (Laurel), Aiden Philyaw (Enterprise), Jaxon Rayborn (Laurel), Lane Robertson (Columbia), Nash Sturdivant (Brandon), Brady White (Ethel)

- Women's Soccer** | Reagan Fortenberry (Brookhaven), Alisa Johnson (Leakesville), Madeline Logan (Brandon), Isabella Moore (Starkville), Sara Pinzon (Starkville), Kristina Seymour (Madison), Maelee Thibodeaux (Brookhaven)
- Softball** | Emma Kate Fimiano (Petal), Carson Hughey (Brookhaven), Addison Lindley (Madison), Stella Roberts (Raymond)
- Women's Basketball** | Amari Barnes (Tylertown), Tyra Johnson (Morton), Kaylee Johnson (Booneville)
- Men's Soccer** | Braxton Williams (Flowood), Holloway Willsey (Starkville)
- Golf** | Harlan Brewer (Wesson), Kolby Cox (Meadville)
- Men's Tennis** | Jake Bucek (Geelong, Australia), Andrew Lambert (Monticello)
- Men's Basketball** | Dawson Knox (Brookhaven)
- Football** | Jackson Easton (Starkville)
- Women's Tennis** | Gracie Smith (Lucedale)

3. All-Academic Third Team.

- Baseball** | Jacob Buffalo (Foxworth), Bradley Hanlon (Monroe, LA), Parker Ishee (Ridgeland), Dee Morgan (Tallulah, LA), Cameron Patterson (Central, LA), Owen Spooner (Stone), Wes White (Flowood)
- Football** | Ricardo Butler, Jr. (Alligator), Bryce Hooker (Biloxi), Will Loy (Wesson), Mekhi Mayweather (Jackson), Will Pritchard (West Palm Beach, FL), Eli Viniard (Bassfield)
- Softball** | Olivia Banes (Pelahatchie), Kynlee Madere (Paulina, LA), Keegan McCorkle (Tyronza, AR), Anna Grace Rice (Greenwood), Emily Richarde (Lakeland, TN), Emeri Warren (Sebastopol)
- Women's Tennis** | Yariange Bello (Caracas Venezuela), Kayleigh Ann Griffin (Houston)
- Women's Soccer** | Michaela Sannoh (London, England)
- Men's Basketball** | Prince Ojukwu (Etobicoke, Ontario)
- Golf** | Max Seidemann (Bruchhausen-Vilsen, Germany)
- Men's Soccer** | Francisco Miquel (Bogota, Colombia)
- Women's Basketball** | Angel Wilkinson (Brookhaven)

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cont. from front page

American Legion Auxiliary honored with top awards

“These awards are a reflection of the tireless work and passion of our members,” said a local Auxiliary President Kim Whittington. “We’re incredibly proud of what we’ve accomplished this year in service to veterans, youth, and our community.”

At the convention, several local members were installed into key positions at the district and state levels:

- Sara Lassiter was installed as Department First Vice President.
- Dixie Thornton was installed as Department Second Vice President.
- Janet Currie was installed as District 7 President.
- Cathy Stroud was installed as District 7 Vice President.

The American Legion Auxiliary, one of the nation's leading patriotic service organizations, supports veterans, active-duty military, and their families through volunteerism, advocacy, and education. The annual convention honors service, reviews accomplishments and plans for the year ahead.

With its victories and new leadership roles, the local unit is looking forward to continuing its mission with renewed energy and purpose.

For more information about the American Legion Auxiliary or to get involved, email kbuetto@yahoo.com and reach out to their Facebook page.



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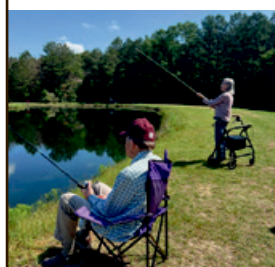


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Physical therapy provides lasting relief

Special to Wesson News

For persistent pain, limited mobility, balance or coordination issues, or assistance in recovering from surgery or an injury, physical therapy just could be more helpful than visiting a medical doctor for a pill, a Brookhaven physical therapist told the Wesson Lions Club.

Richard Barker, who has practiced physical therapy for 35 years and is a partner at Brookhaven-based Tri Therapy, said physical therapy addresses the root causes of physical health problems through exercises, stretching and other treatments in contrast to medications that ameliorate symptoms and can produce side effects.

"Some research, for example, associates cholesterol drugs with Alzheimer's disease, cramps, dehydration and sepsis," Barker noted. "Expensive orthotics prescribed by doctors for foot pain can drive the price of a pair of shoes to more than \$500 and provide only temporary relief. Physical therapy is about lifestyle changes that provide lasting relief."

General exercise programs managed by physical therapists strengthen muscles that tend to be weak and stiff, and in turn, take the stress off overworked muscles and joints, he said. At the same time, he added, appropriate exercises "make you feel better, energize you and cause no pain."

"Everyday activities, such as walking, picking up objects, and getting up and down become much easier through exercise routines that improve strength in problem areas," Barker said.

Although Barker works with all age groups at Tri Therapy, older persons are a major focus individually and through services to clients of assisted living facilities, Barker said.

"Our goal is to help them remain happy, healthy and strong, ensuring their good health by keeping them active through a general exercise program," he explained. "As you grow older, you shouldn't try to do what you used to do, but personalized exercises help improve strength, stability and mobility for staying active."

For seniors, fall prevention is particularly important, Barker said, noting that as people grow old, their balance reactions are more sluggish and less responsive. One in four people over 65 years old will experience falls, and the complications – for example, broken bones – and death.

Customized arthritis exercises can also improve the quality of life of seniors, relieving pain and fatigue while also preserving their joint structure and function, Barker added. Osteo arthritis exercises gradually restore a patient's full range of motion and improve bone density, joint mobility, muscle strength, and overall physical conditioning and help them maintain a healthy weight.

Tri Therapy's work also concerns mental as well as physical health.

"Elderly and disabled persons, particularly, can lose their connections to others, and, as a result, suffer from depression, turn to drugs for relief and even take their own lives," Barker said. "We look for ways to connect them – religious services, games and other activities that bring people together."

Physical therapists can make important contributions to people who want to lead healthy lives, but not overnight, Barker concluded.

"Waiting is part of physical therapy," he said. "Life is a long ride with no shortcuts."



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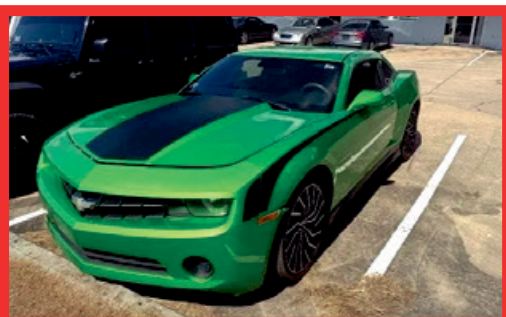
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Budget vacations at Lake Lincoln

Special to Wesson News

With the cost of family vacations away from home busting budgets, many locals are rediscovering Lake Lincoln State Park as an alternative to travel outside the area, say park officials.

Park manager Cindy Durr says increasing numbers of people from the surrounding area are coming back with their families to what was once a playground for them growing up, but long since forgotten.

“More and more, we’re hearing people say ‘I forgot about this place,’ ‘I haven’t been here for 30 years,’ or ‘I didn’t think we could afford a family vacation this year,’” says Durr.

This year, Lake Lincoln State Park is expecting to draw up to 16,000 visitors to the Wesson area.

Lake Lincoln State Park, if you don’t recall, is nestled in the shade of towering hardwood trees in the northeast corner of Lincoln County in close proximity to Interstate 55, U.S. Highway 51 and State Highway 27.

Lincoln County opened the 1000-acre facility in 1984 as a watershed lake area to control flooding of streams in its northeastern sector, and the State of Mississippi took it over in 1996. It is now the third most used park in the state system, and it ranks in the top 25 among 4,000 parks and campgrounds nationally for water recreation, picnic areas, beaches, fishing, bird-watching, camping, and being “kid-friendly,” according to a Reserve America survey a few years ago.

The park’s major feature is its 550-acre lake stocked with bream, large-mouth and striped bass, crappie, white perch, and catfish for fishermen who come year-round, and which offers a 1 ½-acre swimming beach and sections for boating and water and jet skiing.

There are also nature trails for hiking, volleyball sand courts, playgrounds with swings and other equipment for kids, a 200-foot walk bridge where fishermen cast their lines, picnic areas with grills, tables, shelters and two group pavilions; two rebuilt fishing piers, a water skiing pier,



a boat dock, laundry facilities, bath houses and the Magnolia Arbor chapel for worship services and weddings, as well as camping and lodging options. There is even an 18-hole disk golf course where players hurl frisbees towards baskets, rather than hit small balls towards holes.

A few miles away on the Co-Lin campus in Wesson, people into real golf can find an 18-hole public course, and within a few minutes drive, there are hunting grounds at wildlife management areas, antique shopping and a variety of restaurants.

Since the park sits in a valley, it has promoted itself as a great place to unplug because cell phone and internet service is problematic, but connecting with civilization, if you really want to do it, is another off-premises amenity. At Uncle Ray’s, just across from the park’s entrance on Sunset Road, you can find a good cellular phone signal and set up a computer to get email, while picking up needed camping supplies, in-

cluding food and snacks; buying bait for fishing adventures, taking out meals or sitting down for lunches and dinners.

The park has, increasingly, produced special events for visitors, with a new Friends of the Park (FOP) group helping develop and implement new ones. On July 4, when the park has traditionally encouraged celebrations, FOP this year sold hamburgers and hot dogs to picnickers. New events on the park calendar are a fall fest carnival, BINGO nights and planting Christmas memory trees. A Mardi Gras parade, Halloween trick-or-treat for children and an Easter egg hunt are special events that have become a tradition in recent years, and an antique car show and flea market are future possibilities.

Visitors can stay in a one bedroom cabin (\$86.50 per day) or three cottages – a pair with two bedrooms (\$101.65 per day on weekends) and one with three bedrooms (\$111.35 per day on weekends), and camp on 150

sites with electricity (\$23 per night/\$33 per night on weekends and holidays), 90 sites with no power (\$16 per night/\$22 per night on weekends and holidays) and 31 primitive sites for tents (\$12 per night). Weekday rates for the cottages are 40 percent less.

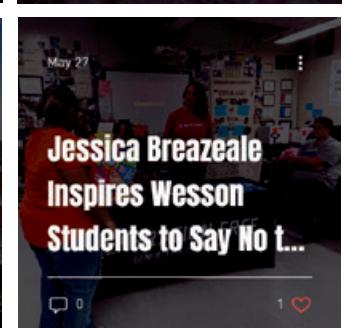
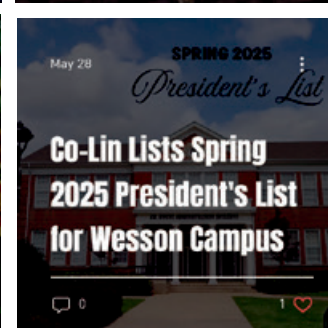
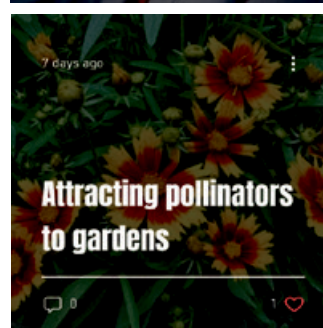
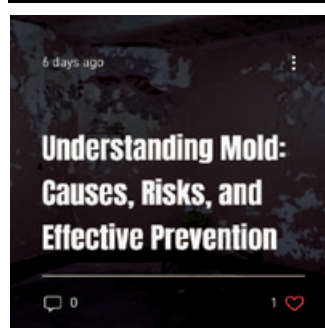
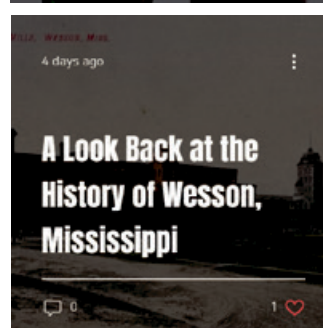
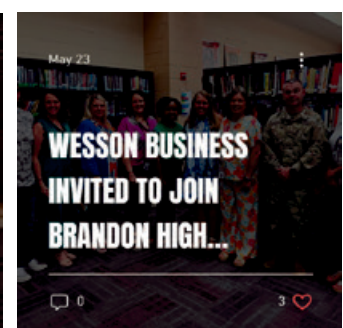
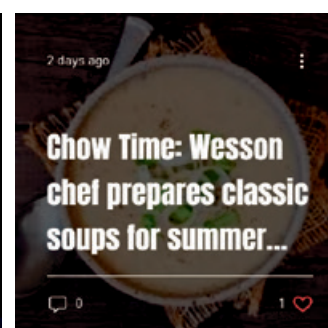
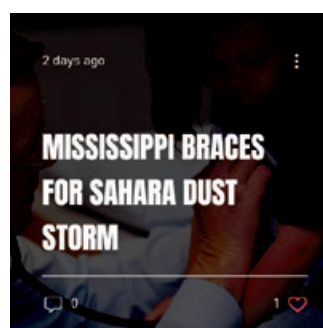
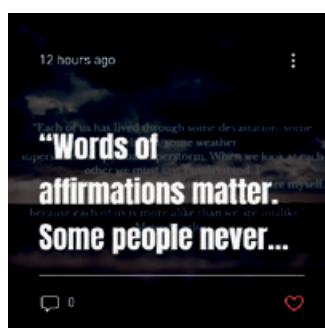
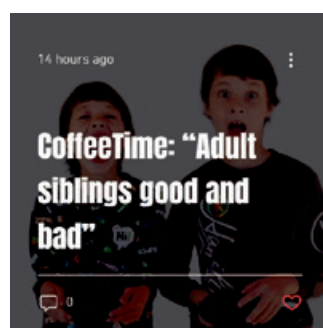
Other park rates are:

- **Day use:** \$2 per person per day (under five years old no charge). \$6 for special events.
- **Fishing:** \$5 per person per day (16–64 years old)/\$7 with skiing boat, \$3 per person per day for disabled and seniors/\$6 with skiing boat.
- **Disk golf:** \$3 per person per day.
- **Small pavilions** suitable for 60 persons: \$48.15 per day plus entrance fee.
- **Large pavilions** for 100–150 persons: \$58.85 per day plus entrance fee.



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Plants thrive on sheer will

By Guest Columnist Dr. Eddie Miles Louis Smith

Sometimes, the most powerful examples of plant resilience do not come from cultivated garden beds, but from the cracks in the pavement.

Vinca, also known as Madagascar periwinkle, is one of those humble garden plants that quietly earn your admiration for its beauty and sheer will to thrive. Known scientifically as *Catharanthus roseus*, vinca is a popular and durable summer annual.

I once wrote about a cluster of tiny vinca seedlings that managed to sprout from a narrow crack in the floor of my greenhouse. These seedlings dropped as seeds from last season’s plants soon emerged with surprising vigor. Within weeks, they were covered in blooms dancing above glossy green leaves. Their ability to thrive in such a harsh environment left a lasting impression on me.

Vincas have a habit of showing up in the most unexpected places -- wedged tightly between bricks in garden paths, nestled in gravel along driveways or popping up along the edges of sidewalks where the sun blazes and the soil is dry as dust. Despite the lack of irrigation or care, they thrive.

Vincas’ tidy, mounding form remains compact, and their flowers keep blooming steadily through the most brutal days of summer. Bloom color ranges from snow white and bubblegum pink to deep fuchsia, scarlet and even bi-color varieties.

I fondly remember a lone vinca plant that appeared one summer in a crack in the concrete parking lot of my former office building. This little plant stood tall with no soil in sight, exposed to the full force of the Mississippi sun and getting splashed by hot runoff water during every summer storm. Its rich green foliage stayed lush, and its bright pink flower glowed like a jewel against the gray pavement.

Its thick, leathery leaves resist wilting and help the plant retain moisture during dry spells. Beneath the surface, a deep and efficient root system searches out water far below where many other annuals give up.

Vinca is a plant that doesn’t ask for much. It thrives in well-drained soil and full sun, and once established, it can handle extended periods without rain or supplemental watering.

Drought tolerance makes vincas a standout choice for Southern gardens where the summers can be relentless. They fill in hot, dry areas where little else will grow. Whether tucked into containers, planted along walkways or simply allowed to reseed and surprise you in odd corners of your yard, vincas deliver both beauty and toughness in equal measure.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Dr. Eddie Miles Louis Smith writes for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.



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Dancercise brings out Wesson ladies

Special to Wesson News

Wesson women are discovering dancercise, where dance meets exercise for fun, calorie-burning and cardio in a class is offered every Tuesday evening for ladies only.

There are 6 p.m. or 7 p.m. classes for women of all ages, led by Marsha Raiford, Taylor Burke and Jessica Breazeale of Wesson and former Nena Smith teachers.

"Dance, it's cheaper than therapy," says Raiford, who is spearheading the efforts.

The dancercise idea was birthed at the Nena Smith surprise 50th anniversary celebration, where former dancers expressed their desire and need for adult dance classes less technical and more fun and providing exercise. Participants do not have to have any experience in dance or even be good at it. The classes are for fun, fellowship and exercise.

Raiford explains: "I realized how much joy dance brought me. Taylor (Burke) and I were talking to each other about how much we missed it and enjoyed making up the routines. Hearing



Special to Wesson News

others ask for us to start an adult dance class got me to thinking, why not? At the Wesson Chamber of Commerce Banquet, Mayor Alton Shaw noted that his wife Christy had a room for rent, and I went to her to see if we could do an adult dance class there."

The class is \$5, which pays

for the room rental fees. Classes are held at The Event Room on Spring Street (1014 Spring Street beside Wesson Public Library).

"I'm so excited about the opportunity to fellowship with some wonderful ladies, get a little exercise, and get back to

dancing," says Burke.

Women are invited and encouraged to attend. There is no commitment to join or attend regularly. Simply attend when available.

"You don't stop dancing because you grow old," says Raiford. "You grow old because you stop dancing."

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