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Volume 11, Number 6

“Good News You Can Use”

June, 2023

Softball lady Wolves national champs



Special to Wesson News

The softball lady Wolves are Co-Lin's first national champions in any sport.

Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin Softball team entered the final day of its 2023 season knowing one thing: a familiar foe stood in their way from winning the first national championship for any sport in school history – Mississippi rival Jones Community College.

The Lady Wolves were up to the task, handing the Bobcats just their second shutout of the season in a 7-0 win on May 27.

“What a day,” exclaimed head coach Meleah Howard. “I am so blessed and grateful to be a part of this team and program. To be a part of the first national championship in school history is a memory that will last a lifetime.”

The game was scoreless through the first two innings, but the Lady Wolves scored their first two runs in the top of the third as Zykeria Cole (Magee) and Josie Meggs (Koscius-

ko) hit back-to-back singles with one out to get the offense going. Cole then scored on an RBI single by Madison Moak (Brookhaven) while both Meggs and Moak advanced to third and second respectively on the play. Meggs later scored in the inning on a wild pitch making the score, 2-0.

The Lady Wolves then exploded for another five-run inning against the Bobcats, their second in as many games, as Meggs hit a leadoff single then Moak drew a walk. Maddie Weeks (Clinton) drew another walk to load the bases with no outs. Then Abby Grace Richardson stepped up, took one swing of the bat, and smashed a grand slam (her 24th home run of the season) to give the Lady Wolves a 6-0 lead. Belle West (Byram) then hit a single, took second on a wild pitch, advanced to third on a single by Faith Kivett (Tallulah, LA) and then scored on a sacrifice bunt by Leia Phillips (Philadelphia)

making the score, 7-0.

The Bobcats then got back-to-back singles in the bottom of the fifth, but a double play followed by a groundout ended the inning. The Lady Wolves then allowed just one hit over the final two innings securing the 7-0 win and the 2023 NJCAA Division II Softball National Championship.

The Lady Wolves totaled six hits as a team with Josie Meggs, Madison Moak, Abby Grace Richardson, Belle West, Faith Kivett, and Zykeria Cole having one hit each. Richardson led the Lady Wolves in RBIs with four while Moak and Leia Phillips had one RBI each.

Belle West got the start for the Lady Wolves and improved to 11-5 with the complete game shutout allowing just five hits with three walks and two strikeouts.

“This team was just on a whole other level this whole week,” Howard said. “Playing all these games

against the best competition in the country and we never backed down. Every single player on our team contributed in a major way all week and I am just so proud of every single one of them. I love them all and I am just so happy to be able to say that we are National Champions!”

Co-Lin finishes the season with a program record for wins at 49-10 overall in addition to winning the first Region 23 Championship since 2008.

Madison Moak and Cara Biswell (Brandon) were named to the All-Tournament Team, while Abby Grace Richardson was named the Tournament Most Valuable Player and the Offensive Most Valuable Player. Faith Kivett was named the Defensive Most Valuable Player, Cara Biswell was also named the Most Outstanding Pitcher of the Tournament, while Meleah Howard was awarded as Coach of the Year after the conclusion of the game.

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WHY GO ANYWHERE ELSE?

Tony Norton nurtures area music

By Bob Arnold

Music is alive and well in Southwest Mississippi. Young and old alike who feel called to express themselves through music can develop their skills to play instruments and sing. Musicians who have learned their lessons well can continue to grow in their art by interacting with peers, whether they are soloists or want to perform with them in more than a few bands that have emerged in recent years encouraged by the variety of venues and events that have flourished to showcase them for appreciative audiences.

There are many reasons for the robust music scene in the area. Tony Norton, who grew up in Loyd Star, is one of them.

Norton, a 1999 graduate of Loyd Star Attendance Center, which he started as a kindergartener, opened Downtown Music Academy in 2019 on South Railroad Avenue in Brookhaven with Gregory Smith to teach music and repair musical instruments following the greater part of two decades doing almost anything but music.

After high school, he earned a certificate in welding at Co-Lin, but went to work at Walmart stocking merchandise on the late night shift because he didn't want to lay oilfield pipelines. "I then spent some time in construction, gutting the old buildings for what is now the Mississippi School of the Arts campus in Brookhaven," he says.

For 14 years, Norton thought he had found his career in landscaping based in Jackson, first for Lakeland Yard & Garden and then self-employed as a contractor, but his love of music brought him back home nine years ago. "I grew up in a music family," he recalls. "I was introduced to the guitar in the late 1980s, and jammed with friends. I never played sports. My passion was always music. My sister played guitar, too, and both of us performed."

When Norton returned to the area, he played shows at Recess and Magnolia Blues in Brookhaven, recorded his own CD album – *Songs from an Unfinished House* -- and joined other locals -- Shaw Furlow, Tyler Bridge and his later partner at Downtown Music Academy Gregory Smith -- in helping to nurture the nascent music scene in the area. For several years, he recruited new musicians and bands to play on Open Mic nights at the then just-opened Magnolia Blues restaurant.

Since 2019, Norton has focused on Downtown Music Academy, which now has eight instructors that teach more than 100 students aged three years old to 80 years old piano, wind and string instruments. Norton himself teaches beginner guitar and repairs string instruments. His business also repairs wind instruments, rents band instruments and sells string instruments. Its hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Norton no longer performs, but he continues to compose – "mostly for myself" – in what he consider a "country" style, although he'll let others decide whether it is or not. His best known song, he says, is "Kings of Lincoln County" about "growing



Tony Norton

up as a teen locally, getting married and divorced, people I know dying and special events in my life." He considers "The Best" his best song which, he says, Cole Furlow, his recording engineer, made it so by bringing out the best in his voice and musical sound. Both are on *Songs from an Unfinished House*, which refers to the music he made while building the Loyd Star home in which he lives.

Norton has an 18-year-old daughter, a recent culinary arts graduate.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy kayaking and fishing in local waterways – Lake Lincoln and the Homa Chitto River. I also like to cook.

Are you a reader?

I am not an avid reader, but I will get into it if it's weird and quirky. My favorite novel is *Confederacy of Dunces*.

Do you follow movies or theater?

Yes. And the dumber the better! I love comedies and actors Paul Rudd, Jack Black and Bob Bergen.

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

I am happy with my life. My house. My vehicle. But I would like help paying bills. And new experiences would be nice – the red rocks in Colorado, travel to see the northern lights in Alaska or Sweden.

How would you change the world?

I like the place in the *Invention of Lying* where people can't tell lies. We'd have a better world if people would quit lying.



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Hester attends IIMC conference

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Town Clerk Angela Hester has returned to her job at Wesson Town Hall after honing her skills and equipping herself with new knowledge at the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) annual conference last month.

Hester joined other municipal clerks from around the world at the IIMC conference held May 14-17 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Minneapolis.

IIMC, which is the premier membership organization of Municipal Clerks that has been dedicated to improving their professionalism since 1947, recently designated Hester a Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC), and she has started work on becoming a Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) through the 15,000-member group that encompasses officials from towns, small municipalities and large urban jurisdictions.

"The conference was an intense educational experience and I was able to network with other municipal clerks from throughout the world," Hester says.

IIMC calls municipal clerks "the gateway to city hall" whom elected officials "count on to make sure public meetings, public records, elections and special projects op-



Special to Wesson News

Angela Hester

erate smoothly." The group's annual conference seeks to provide a vehicle for its members to receive background and knowledge needed to help them deal with current problems and assure that municipal government is served by informed public officials.

In Minneapolis, delegates heard keynote speakers on "Strategic Communication: 'LIFE' Skills for Leaders," and "GET YOUR SHIFT TOGETHER: How to Think, Laugh & Enjoy Your Way to Success in Business & in Life." Other education highlights included four Athenian Dialogues, six Academy Sessions and a bevy of concurrent sessions, including "4 Unspoken Communication Secrets Every Municipal Clerk Needs to Know," "How to Master the Whin-



Special to Wesson News

Mississippi delegation at International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) conference encouraged Wesson Town Clerk Angela Hester, who competed in Prince look-alike contest for expenses paid to attend 2024 IIMC conference. Left to right are Mary Ann Hess, Laurel Town Clerk, who is new IIMC president; Kristal Jones, Laurel Deputy Town Clerk; Rosezea Scott, McComb Town Clerk; Suzette Davis, Collins Town Clerk; Hester in her Prince costume; Cathy Clark, retired Carthage Town Clerk; Leslie Thompson, Meadville Town Clerk; Ruth Combest, Enterprise Town Clerk; Lauren Stewart, Laurel Deputy Clerk; and Kimberly Johnson, Smithville Town Clerk.

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"Digital Government: Bringing Your Municipality into the 21st Century" and "Understanding Modern Discrimination and Diversity in Municipal Affairs."



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Wesson High School 2023 grads



Special to Wesson News

2023 Wesson High School graduates were (front row left to right) Alex Luong, Will Loy, Harlan Brewer, Ethan Laird, Lucas McRee, Marley Channell, Allyson Sullivan, Orrin Ainsworth, Taylor Papizan, Grayson Coates (Valedictorian), Madalynn McManus (Salutatorian), Lexie Freeman, Hannah Meredith, Akiria Brown, Lena Coleman, Jaylynn Cloy, Sadie Sandifer, Kiera Haynes, Jayonce Stewart, (second row left to right) Jessie Cole, Abbie Edwards, Sarajo Dear, Victoria Silvan, Caleb Carty, Justin Hailey, Olivia Grantham, Jo'vontae May, Slayd Oswald, Noah Brister, Kalyn Benton, Caleb Sutton, Gabe Selman, Emma Thaxton. (third row left to right) Jordan Morse, Chris Harrison, Kris Hurtado, Ally Adams, Javier Vasquez, Troy Byther, Dawson Butler, Brayden Coleman, Christian Davis, Connor Brister, Trip Richardson, Stevie Martin, Tony Sanders, (back row left to right) Adam Walker, Laila Stogner, Chloey Smith, Madeline Smith, Cole Short, A.J. Perkins, Coleman Bonds, Noah Cameron, Wade Tanner and Brandon Gladden.

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Folk artist decorated her yard

By Bob Arnold

Mary Tillman Smith, an African American folk artist born in Brookhaven around 1904 or 1905, started painting to decorate her yard in the Martinsville community near Hazlehurst and was discovered by curator and collector William Arnette, who promoted her work.

The third of 13 children, she lived most of her life in Copiah County, growing up in a hard working sharecropper family that grew tomatoes, cabbages and beans, which they wrapped, packed and shipped. Her father was able eventually to purchase a house and land.

A speech impairment made it difficult for people to understand her, and she made it only through the fifth grade in school, which in itself was something of an accomplishment since even African Americans without disabilities rarely made it beyond the eighth grade. Excluded by schoolmates from activities, she found an outlet in drawing.

In her teens, Smith left home for a short marriage of a few months to Gus Williams, and then settled down in Wesson, where she did cooking and cleaning for a white family, and had another short-lived marriage with John Smith, a sharecropper who had been shortchanged by \$1,000 in a year-end settlement with a landowner. Smith had discovered the problem and made it known to the landowner, who told her husband to get rid of his wife.

Smith moved to Hazlehurst, where she had a son (Sheridan L. "Jay Bird" Major). She did not marry her son's father, but he provided her land and a house, where she started her career in art to decorate her property. She used discarded materials collected from a nearby dump as her canvasses. She painted folkart pictures of people and animals, sometimes accompanied by religious sayings or self-reflections, on used tin scraps and wood. She used strong col-



Smith at work.

Special to Wesson News

ors with animating dots and dashes. It was said she sometimes wore clothing to compliment the message of a piece. She filled her yard with her expressions, and constructed out buildings, a table, benches and a make-shift studio. She lined her fence and and space within with colorful folkart paintings and thoughtful sayings.

In 1987, her promoter Arnette tried to convince the state to preserve her yard as an important cultural site, but was rebuffed because "Smith was an eccentric whose art did not fall under any folklore category." Nevertheless, her work has been featured in solo shows in the U.S. and Europe, and her pieces are owned by all the major galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Several universities have her pieces, including Tuft University, Willamette University and the University of Mississippi. Her works have been,

and continue to be, showcased in group shows.

Smith's health declined around 1990 and she painted less frequently. She died penniless in 1995, and her artwork has been removed from her old Martinsville property.



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

First Tomato Fest Art Show

Special to Wesson News

Chautauqua Arts Foundation, Inc. (CAFI) is joining the Crystal Springs Chamber of Commerce Tomato Festival to produce the inaugural Tomato Fest Art Show on June 24 to raise funds for construction of a new amphitheater at Chautauqua Park.

The new addition to the Crystal Springs Tomato Festival will be at the historic and recently renovated Marion Building, formerly Biggs Pharmacy, located at 101 East Georgetown Street.

Artists are invited to enter whatever inspires them in thirteen categories: Media Categories: Painting, Drawing, Mixed Media, Sculpture, Wood, Fiber, Ceramic, Mosaic, Metalsmithing, Glass, Sculpture, Photography and Prints. Works must be original and hand-crafted. The regular entry fee is \$25 for works in each category and \$10 for students up to 18 years old.

The juried show will award \$250 for Best of Show, \$100 each for two Judge's Choices, \$25 for student Best of Show and first, second and third place ribbons in each category.

Artists may show three pieces of work for sale, including non-juried pieces, on festival day. CAFI will charge a ten percent commission up to \$50 on each sale. There will also be a Silent Auction, and artist donations will be appreciated.



Download the show guidelines and an entry form at cafi-ms.org. Information is also available at chautauquaeventinfo@gmail.com or 601-927-1533. Pick up forms at the Crystal Springs Chamber of Commerce office, 210 East Railroad Avenue.

The Crystal Springs Tomato Festival is a popular family-oriented event and draws thousands to the Tomatopolis for a day of fellowship, good food, entertainment, shopping, a car show and Tomato Fest 5K Run/Walk. Contact the Chamber of Commerce (telephone: 601-892-2711 or email: crystalsprings-chamber@gmail.com) for information on renting a vendor space.



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Ceremonies remember armed forces vets

Wesson News

Wesson Garden Club (WGC) and American Legion Drane-Prine Post 79 members honored and remembered armed forces veterans in two special wreath-laying ceremonies on the eve of Memorial Day.

Garden Club members joined Legionnaires and Auxiliary members in front of Wesson Legion Hall for a Legion ceremony at which World War II veteran Alton Ricks and Auxiliary member Melnee Frazier placed a memorial wreath at the Post's outdoor flag pole to remember POW/MIAs and fallen war veterans.

Following the Legion ceremony, guests, veterans and city officials joined Wesson Legionnaires and Garden Club members at the Blue Star Memorial on the east side of Highway 51 at Church Street for a second wreath laying ceremony led by the Garden Club. Legion Post Commander Bobby Thornton, Auxiliary member Kim Whittington and WGC President Dixie Thornton placed the memorial wreath at the Blue Star Marker.



Wreath-laying at Wesson Blue Star Memorial.

Wesson News

At the Legion ceremony, Commander Thornton noted people will place flags at the graves of fallen armed forces heroes, and urged them to say the veterans' names out loud and a prayer in remembrance of that brave soul.

The Memorial Day holiday is "a powerful reminder of the high cost of freedom that millions of Americans have paid since our country was founded," Thornton said. "It's a sa-

cred opportunity to honor the sacrifices of our sons and daughters who didn't make it home. "As we celebrate their legacy, let's continue to keep their memories alive and marvel at their shared fundamental qualities. They embodied courage, pride, determination, selflessness, dedication to duty and great personal integrity – all the values needed to serve a cause larger than themselves."

WGC President Dixie Thornton

said National Garden Clubs Inc. started the Blue Star Highway marker program to honor veterans in 1945. "Our Blue Star Highway marker, placed by the Wesson Garden Club, stands proudly on this corner of our town reminding all who pass of the bravery and sacrifice of the men and women who serve and have served in the United States Armed Forces defending our great nation," she said.

At the marker with the wreath-laying, WGC members and veterans led a ceremony of remembrance celebrating "the many brave men and women who gave their all to our country," "the price of freedom and the many soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors whose lives were lost to protect it" and "the families who lost a loved one in service to our country."

Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi Inc, National Garden Clubs Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs Inc., and Natchez Trace District Garden Clubs of Mississippi.

Legionnaires visiting local schools



Post 70 Commander Bobby Thornton talks about flag care.

Special to Wesson News

In line with the American Legion's focus on support of children and youth and Military Child Month during April and Military Family Month during May, local Legionnaires from Post 79 and members of its Auxiliary Unit have been visiting area elementary schools to talk about the American flag, military veterans, and service to the country.

They made stops at Copiah Academy on April 12 and May 3, Wesson Attendance Center on May 4 and 5 and Enterprise Elementary School on May 8.

Post 79 Commander Bobby Thornton, with the help of Legionnaires Butch White, John Wesley and Randy Costilow, spoke at Wesson Attendance Center about how to handle the flag -- how to fold it, how to retire it and where to take the flag when it is torn, faded or weathered. Fourth grade students also learned about the meaning of the flag's colors, and were given a flag and a copy of the *Our Country's Flag* comic book.

Members of Auxiliary Unit 79 presented a Poppy Day program to third graders at all three schools. In addition, Auxiliary District 7 President Sara Lassiter, with the help of Auxiliary Unit 79's Kim Whittington and Dixie Thornton, donated copies of *America's White Table* to the school libraries. The book teaches children about the importance of the White Table at all American Legion Post to honor and remember our country's over 87,000 service members who are or were Prisoners of War (POW) or Missing in Action (MIA).

Contact the American Legion Post 79 at 601-951-5871 about making a school presentation.

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Chow Time: Pecan bread pudding for Southern palates

By Guest Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

Old fashioned bread pudding is a popular Southern dessert, the recipes of which have been handed down by many cooks.

Well-known Wesson cook Clancy Hewitt, who worked with me and in more than a few area eateries, helped me develop this bread pudding adapted from recipes several cooks have passed on over the years.

Bread pudding is not only a favorite for tasting so good, but it keeps well as a leftover because it reheats and freezes well.



Ingredients:

- 12 eggs.
- Rum extract.
- 2 cups of pecan pieces.
- 2 cups of sugar.
- 3 hot dog bun eight-packs.
- 2 cups of white chocolate.
- 1 quart of heavy whipping cream.
- 2 teaspoons of cinnamon.

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

Directions:

1. Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. (Hold on to your lug nuts because something good is fixing to happen!)
2. In large bowl, add broken eggs, sugar, 1 cup of chocolate, ½ quart of whipping creaming, 2 caps of rum extract (drink a shot if you like) and 1 cup of pecan pieces.
3. Stir this mixture vigorously.
4. Tear the hot dog buns into small pieces and add to the mixture.
5. Pour the mixture into a large cooking pan (i.e., 13 x 19-inches).
6. Sprinkle cinnamon lightly over top of mixture, and then spread another cup of pecans over it.
7. Bake at 375 degrees in your pre-heated oven for 45 minutes.
8. While your pudding is cooking, prepare the topping sauce:
 1. In a sauce pan, mix 1 cup of chocolate, 2 caps of rum extract (again, drink another shot if you like) and ½ quart of heavy whipping cream.
 2. Place over low to medium heat on your stove burner.
 3. Stir constantly until chocolate has melted.
 4. Pour sauce over pudding when cooked. For extra sweetness, add powdered sugar if you desire. Slice pudding according to your taste. Serves 24 for a party.





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OBITUARY

Ms. Brenda Holder Roberts

Ms. Brenda Holder Roberts, 70, of Wesson, died May 20, 2023, in Brookhaven, MS. She was born in Hazlehurst, MS, on December 8, 1952, to W.D. Holder and Emma Mae Barlow Holder.

She was a graduate of Hazlehurst High School and Copiah Lincoln Community College. While at Co-Lin, she was a member of the Collettes. Ms. Roberts enjoyed a variety of hobbies, including Scrap Happy Mama's Scrapbooking Club and the Red Hat Society. She retired from Co-Lin where she was Librarian for many years.

She is preceded in death by her parents and one grandson, Joshua Ellis Tarver.

She is survived by her children, William Daniel Roberts and Jamie Tarver Roberts; sister, Debbie Davis; three grandchildren, Chasity Paige Henderson, William Laine Roberts, and Victoria Nichole Tarver; and one great grandchild, Thea Elanor Kelly. She is also survived by many other loving family members and friends.

Condolences and other information are available online at: www.riverwoodfamily.com.



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Miss Mississippi highlights conference



Special to Wesson News

Miss Mississippi 2022 brought her special passion for music to Co-Lin's annual "Grit and Grace" women's conference last month to help an audience of more than 100 area women reflect on making tough decisions, overcoming obstacles and maintaining charm to chart their success.

Emmie Perkins from Hattiesburg, who was crowned Miss Mississippi in June 2022, got a relatively late start in the pageant world, and did not start competing until she was in college after learning about the scholarship opportunities associated with the competitions. She sang a rendition of Brandi Carlile's "The Story" in the talent portion of the Miss Mississippi competition, and is an outspoken advocate for the arts and music and initiated Music is Medicine that brings musical performances into healthcare facilities and nursing homes throughout the state.

At the Co-Lin event, she cited *Proverbs 31*, a Biblical exhortation to women to "speak out, judge righteously and defend the rights of the poor and needy" and includes ode to a "capable wife" whose clothing are "strength and dignity" and "opens her mouth with wisdom." She called on members of her audience to become *Proverbs 31* women by looking to the letters that spell MUSIC to remind them of what will give them the grit and grace they need:

- **M** for motivation – understanding what gets you out of bed in the morning so you'll work hard with the right attitude. "Music motivated me," Perkins said.
- **U** for uniqueness – being who you are and sharing it by walking the stage with confidence. "For me, it was it was competing as a short 5-foot 1-inch contestant in a pageant."
- **S** for success – having that "Peter Pan" feeling of flying, cheering the people around you while not comparing yourself with others.
- **I** for influence – leading with the right words that make other people somebody and avoiding hurtful words.
- **C** for compassion – being kind and loving, turning lives around by being positive.

Co-Lin started the Grit and Grace conference in 2019 to both honor successful women and encourage their continuing efforts by providing an inspiring educational and empowering experience for them. This year, "Clothing Yourself in Strength and Dignity" framed the program thematically.

Co-Lin's Amanda Hood reminded conference attendees that "grit is about effort through determination and strength," grace encompasses compassion, humility and poise" and "grace and grit together in relationship spawn success."

"This special conference is designed to help women develop themselves professionally and find fulfillment in everything they do," noted Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, who significantly is culminating her successful career at Co-Lin at the end of next month.

"There are absolutely no limits to what women can achieve, especially when they are equipped with the right tools, the right plan and the right attitude. That's what this conference is all about. Participants will go away with meaningful insights as they learn from others who face the same life situations."

In addition to the educational aspect of the conference, the event provided an opportunity for participants to network as they enjoyed a three-course luncheon prepared by Chef Chris McSweyn, who formerly prepared meals and was a manager/owner at Porches Restaurant, a dining landmark in Wesson for many years.

Co-Lin camps run into July

Special to Wesson News

Basketball day camps for girls and boys in the first through sixth grade started Co-Lin's camping season for children and youth last month, and a theater camp being held this week will present a performance of *Legally Blonde the Musical* on Saturday, June 17.

Into July, the college is offering 11 athletic camps and five non-athletic learning camps on the Wesson campus, a "College 4 Kids" program with an assortment of learning experiences at its Simpson County Center and eight camping choices, including tennis lessons, in the "Kids College" on its Natchez campus.

At the basketball day camps on May 25 and May 26 and a football youth camp for children and youth five years old to 13 years held last week on June 5 and 6, Co-Lin coaches taught campers, regardless of their abilities, sound fundamentals of the sports in a pleasant learning environment at Wesson. This week (June 12-15), children and youth four years old to 14 years old are participating in a similar soccer camp, and other camps will focus on baseball and softball fundamentals.

Last week on June 8 at Stone Stadium on the Wesson campus, a 7 on 7 Football Camp provided participants a taste of competition in a unique version of football that emphasizes passing and route-running. Teams with seven players vied against each other in at least five games, including an elimination tournament, on a 40-yard field on which they were allowed only two first downs when they had possession of the ball. The players wore no pads because there was no tackling, but were downed when touched below their necks.

Upcoming athletic camps are:

• **June 15.**

Soccer teams, most of them from local schools, will play in a 7 v 7 tournament on Wesson campus fields. Seven players are on each team, which compete under rules different from regular soccer towards honing their skills and building their understanding of the sport. \$250 registration fee per team.

• Offensive and defensive football linemen from area schools will practice fundamentals of their positions and scrimmage against each other at OL/DL Camp at Stone Stadium. Registration is at Pitts Field House on the Wesson campus starting at 8:30 a.m. The fee is \$60. Participants should bring their own helmets, athletic gear and cleats. Contact Coach Fleming at 601-551-4290 for information.

• **June 19-21.**

Baseball Kids Summer Camp is June 19-21 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Wesson's Sullivan Field for children six years old to 12 years old (\$100 registration fee).

• **July 14.**

Second 7 v 7 soccer tournament on Wesson campus fields for teams. \$250 registration fee.

• **July 24-27.**

Second soccer fundamentals camp for children and youth four years old to 14 years old. \$150 registration fee.

Non-athletes started their camps this week:

• On the Wesson campus, a Programming and Robotics Camp is meeting June 12 to 15 to educate campers ages 11 to 13 on logic and the fundamentals of programming for online gaming and robotics. The Co-Lin Theater Department is working with children in the fourth through 12th grades June 12 to 17 to present a performance of *Legally Blonde the Musical* at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 17, that will be directed and choreographed by Co-Lin staffers Bobby G. Helms and Wendi Case.

• "College 4 Kids" for seven year old to ten year old children is also meeting June 12 to 15 at Co-Lin's Simpson County Center, mixing outdoor fun with studies focused on the earth and science, robotics and engineering and agriculture and farm safety.

• "Little Picassos," an introduction to basic art techniques for children in grades one to four, is also meeting June 12 to 15 to begin "Kids College" on the Co-Lin Natchez campus. Classes also begin in tennis for children in the first to third grade, "Tasty Treats" (learning to design, dipping and selling delightful snacks) for youth in sixth to eighth grade and "Custom Treasures" (learning to make bracelets and iPhone bands with beads, charms, watch connectors and other materials) for children in fourth to sixth grade.

Upcoming camps on the Wesson campus are:

• **July 10, 11 & 12.**

Pee Wee Cheer Camp (July 10 & 11) led by Co-Lin cheerleaders teaches dance, cheers, chants and jumps based on grade and ability to children from four years old to nine years old. Campers will perform for parents at end of camp. 9 a.m.-12 noon. \$60 fee.

"Drum Days" teaches marching percussion (July 10 & 11, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.) and drum set (July 12, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.), with instruction from Buddy Gibbons, whose projects include ESPN, NBC, Fox Sports, Super Bowl 52 and Los Angeles Dodgers, for youth in the ninth grade and above. Fee is \$50. Registration deadline is July 6. For information, contact Chad Austin at 601-543-8387 or chad.austin@colin.edu.

• **July 13-14.**

Color Guard Camp for youth in eighth grade and above who participate in color guards or aspire to be part of them at their schools. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Fee is \$40. Registration deadline is July 6. Contact Cody McElwain at 601-643-8431 or cody.mcelwain@colin.edu.

Other camps at the Natchez Kids College are:

• **June 19-22.**

"Crafty Kids" on drawing, painting and sculpting for fifth to seventh graders. \$65 fee. Tennis for fourth to sixth graders. \$70 fee. "Tasty Treats" for fifth to seventh graders. \$80 fee. "Custom Treasures" for seventh and eighth graders. \$70 fee.

• **July 10-13.**

"We've Go Spirit" on dance for children in second grade to fifth grade. \$60 fee. Tennis for seventh and eighth graders. \$70 fee. "Tasty Treats" for sixth to eighth graders. \$80 fee.

• **July 10-20.**

"Big Apple Performers" on the art of theater for fifth to eighth graders. \$85 fee.

• **July 17-20.**

"Cheer Squad" on body positions, chant, twists, flexibility and tumbling skills for cheerleading geared to fourth to sixth graders. \$60 fee. Tennis for second to fifth graders. \$70 fee. "Tasty Treats" for fifth to seventh graders. \$80 fee.

• **July 17-20.**

"Crafty Crochet" for fifth to seventh graders. \$65 fee

For information, call 601-643-5101 (Wesson campus), 601-422-9111 (Natchez campus) and 601-849-5149 (Simpson County Center).

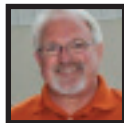
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98 Co-Lin grads from Wesson



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Wesson News

Co-Lin graduated 443 students at its 2023 spring commencement, including 205 from Crystal Springs, Georgetown, Hazlehurst and Wesson in Copiah County.

Ninety-eight graduates were from Wesson, 65 from Crystal Springs, 41 from Hazlehurst and one from Georgetown:

- **Crystal Springs:** Landa N. Alhanshaly, Navarion Sewan Benson, Christian Chandler Callahan, Shelby Drew Courtney, Cornelius Cortex Cunningham, Charles Carson Flumm, Tasia Rena Glasper, Zykerion Tramaine Holloway, Angela Noel Kelly, Shay Danielle Matrick, Kaitlyn Alise McMillian, Arien Grace Phillips, Aqavious Trevontae Pickett, Demond Quintae Powell, Larry Jan Re-taesquivel, Catrina Lachell Robinson, Jennifer Santos Marcelino, Lainey Claire Smith, Abigail Autumn Lee Starkey, Mattie Virginia White, and Justin Gage Zeigler
- **Georgetown:** Alijah Jackson Jackson
- **Hazlehurst:** Akura Traneshia Brown, Preston J. Chapman, Sabra Leona Fortenberry, Shannyn Alexis Gandy, Anessa Arie Harris, Dinetta Hillard, Jaquashia Q. Hillard, Dion Market Jones, Bryce Patrick Ledet, Cory M. Nichols, Tina Marie Reed, Dynasty K. Sumrall, Omarion Tanner and Kavin Torae Wright
- **Wesson:** Kayla Alana Barfield, Timothy Alexander Bergeron, Garrett William Boutwell, William Cooper Brinson, Gunar Eli Brister, Dontrel Louis Brown, Hannah Marie Burgess, Caitlyn Marie Burns, William Colton Falvey, Nicholas Scott Grady, Abby Danielle Harrison, Hannah D'lane Henderson, Sky-lar Laine James, Hannah Nicolle Jarreau, Preston Lee, Larson Pouncey Lewis, Peyton Michael Lewis, Shelby Leighann Martin, Cody L. Meredith, Aaron Kyle Mooney, Judith Michelle Moore, Derek Mora, Chandler Blake Price, Ryleigh Paige Sheppard, Jaiden Colson Smith, Kelsey Garrett Smith, Breanna Hope Sullivan, Brian Keyshawn Thomas, Christopher L Viramontez, Jayden Kesean Weathersby, Amber Lynn Westbrook, Zackary Barlow Woods and Christalyn Gianna Penn

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Wesson Founders' Day

All photos Special to Wesson News

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Outgoing Founders' Day Queen Ally Sullivan crowns new Queen, Mackenzie Martin.

Town folk celebrated Wesson last month shopping, listening to music and dancing at the annual Founders' Day festivities. A 5K Run/Walk race started events on the evening of May 5. Events the next day included crowning of a new queen, who will assist the Chamber of Commerce with their activities over the next 12 months; and a parade and fireworks that fired the spirit of the crowds.



In runners 5K race under 20 age category, second, first and third place finishers (left to right) were Noah Brister, Brendon Duguid and A.J. Perkins.



In runners 5K race 36-50 age category, third, first and second place finishers (left to right) were Jennifer Johnson, Michale Johnson and Ricky Breazeale.



Yemy Wolfe finished first among runners in 21-35 age category in 5K race.



First, second and third place finishers among walkers in 5K race were (left to right) Brian Norwood, Maddy Walker and Brendan Bowman.



Retiring Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims presided as Marshal of the Founders' Day parade.



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Wesson News

WHS seniors get scholarship help



Special to Wesson News

Eighteen Wesson High School graduates will be going to Co-Lin on scholarships awarded by the school and assistance provided by other organizations. They include (front left to right), Madalynn McManus, Marley Channell, Emma Thaxton, Olivia Grantham, Allyson Sullivan, Taylor Papizan, Gabe Selman, Jaylynn Cloy, Kalyn Benton, (back left to right) Connor Brister, Caleb Sutton, Ethan Laird, Will Loy, Justin Hailey, Lena Coleman, Sarajo Dear, Chloey Smith and Abbie Edwards

Special to Wesson News

Thirty Wesson High School graduating seniors will be going to colleges and universities with scholarship assistance.

Eighteen WHS seniors will be heading to Co-Lin on scholarship (see photo).

Eleven seniors will be going to other colleges and universities with direct assistance from them as well as support from other organizations: Jo'vontae May, Dawson Butler, Jayonce Stewart, AJ Perkins, Victoria Silvan, Grayson Coates, Cole Short, Emma Thaxton, Lexie Freeman, Kiara Haynes and Akiria Brown.

Among the varied organizations providing scholarship assistance to WHS students are:

- 4H/Southern Ag to Jaylynn Cloy.
- Jim Lowery Memorial Scholarship to Gabe Selman.
- Wesson Lions Club to Gabe Selman (Jimmy Hodges Memorial), Sarajo Dear and Madeline Smith (James.M. Lewis Scholarship).
- Crystal Springs Junior Auxiliary to Akiria Brown.
- Copiah County Minister's Alliance to Jayonce Stewart and Kiara Haynes.
- Mississippi Association of Supervisors to Emma Thaxton and Allyson Sullivan.
- Zeta Phi Beta to Kiara Haynes, Akiria Brown, and Jayonce Stewart

Loy honored as STAR student

Special to Wesson News

Will Loy and Coach Hank Jordan are the Wesson Attendance Center 2022-23 STAR student and teacher.

The Mississippi Economic Council and its M.B. Swayze Foundation sponsor the Student-Teacher Recognition program to encourage scholastic achievement among Mississippi high school students. The program emphasizes scholastic excellence and encourages greater scholastic effort among state students, and recognizes the important role of the teaching profession in advancing the achievement of students.

Loy, the son of Jeremy and Sarah Loy, he earned a composite score of 32 and a Super Score of 33 on his ACT. He is an honor roll student and a member of the Beta Club. Loy received numerous academic awards



Special to Wesson News

Will Loy

throughout his school career. He was chosen by the student body and staff as Mr. Wesson High School and as Most Athletic in Senior Who's Who. Loy has been a member of the football team for six years, the baseball team for six years, and the golf team for three years. Among his athletic awards, he was honored as the 2022 3A Offensive player of the year in football. He is an active member of First Baptist Church of Brookhaven and plans to attend Co-Lin to play football before transferring to a university.

Coach Jordan is currently in his fifth year at Wesson and tenth year in teaching. He teaches Physics, Chemistry, and AP Chemistry and is the Defensive Coordinator for the football team and the Head Boys' Soccer Coach. Jordan earned his Bachelor's degree in Sports Coaching Education with a minor in Biology from The University of Southern Mississippi in 2013. He is married to Jennifer Byrd. Jordan and is the father of two children, Ray and Anna Collins.

Among other recognitions of its students at the end of the school term, WAC also:

- Inducted Loy along with Taylor Papizan and Orrin Ainsworth into its Hall of Fame.
- Honored Loy with Allyson Sullivan with its Senior Service Award.
- Presented its Senior Character Award to Papizan and Ainsworth.
- Presented its Senior Citizenship Award to Marley Channell and Grayson Coates.

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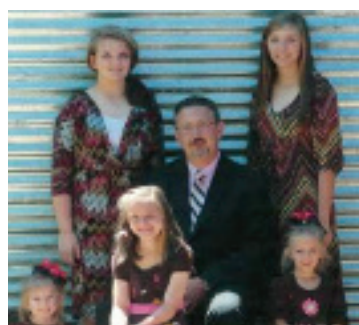
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Officials going to MML conference

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Wesson's Mayor, City Clerk, Public Works Director and Aldermen will all be part of the 92nd Mississippi Municipal League (MML) conference at Biloxi from June 25 to 29.

Aldermen approved travel to the event at their May meeting. This year's conference, with an agenda framed thematically as "Get in the Game – A Playbook for Municipal MVPs" -- will feature occasions for attendees to meet candidates for statewide office face-to-face, including forums to ask them questions about critical issues confronting Mississippi municipalities. The event will also offer its usual array of timely educational courses and important networking opportunities for participants, conference planners say.



In their meeting, the Aldermen also approved sending a letter of recommendation from Mayor Alton Shaw to the Mississippi Municipal Court Clerks Association (MMCCA) Executive Board that urges consideration of Town Clerk Angela Hester for the open position as Trustee from the Central-Central District encompassing Holmes, Yazoo, Sharkey, Issaquena, Warren, Hinds, Claiborne and Jefferson as well as Copiah Counties. Hester meets the requirements for the job, including at least five years of service as a city clerk, three years membership in MMCCA, certification as a Municipal Clerk by the state, designation by International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) as a Certified Municipal Clerk and two years service on an MMCCA committee.

In other action, the Aldermen voted to:

- Hire Danny Ready as a part time police officer.
- Establish a special fund at Trustmark Bank for drug-seized monies.
- Purchase a laptop computer for the Town Clerk to use in the Court Room and remote to the Clerk's desktop computer when out of the office.

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Retirement, storms, voting & useless grants

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Epidemiologist retires. After 30 years, Dr. Paul Byers is retiring as State Epidemiologist at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). Dr. Kathryn Taylor is replacing him as Interim State Epidemiologist effective July 1. Byers has served in numerous leadership positions during his tenure at MSDH. He served as Deputy State Health Officer and the medical director for several county health department clinics, the Office of Epidemiology, and the Office of Communicable Diseases before becoming State Epidemiologist in 2016. Serving as Deputy State Epidemiologist since 2019, Dr. Taylor has worked previously as District V Health Officer and Medical Consultant for the Office of Communicable Diseases. A Jackson native, Taylor is a graduate of Mississippi College and the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where she completed her residency in family medicine. She is a member of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians, and the Mississippi State Medical Association. "Dr. Byers will be hugely missed – not only for his institutional knowledge and expertise, but also for his constant professionalism and patience," said MSDH State Health Officer Dr. Dan Edney. "He has an unparalleled ability to explain complicated issues with clarity and simplicity. That has been a huge asset in working with the public and our public health partners."

Hurricane season. The Atlantic Hurricane Season started on June 1 and runs through November 30, with the most activity occurring between mid August and mid-October, and the peak around September 10. There is a developing El Nino, which could suppress the number of storms that develop in the Atlantic, but record ocean heat and a potentially busy African monsoon season could increase storm activity.

Absentee ballots. Mississippi's new restrictions on absentee ballots could disenfranchise voters who have disabilities by preventing them from receiving help from people they trust, according to a lawsuit seeking to block a law set to take effect July 1. Under the legislation, only employees of the U.S. Postal Service or other mail carriers and any "family member, household member or caregiver" of a person receiving an absentee ballot can "collect and transmit" an absentee ballot. "Governor Tate Reeves said when he signed the new law that it will ban political operatives from collecting and handling large numbers of ballots. Opponents said the new restrictions could hurt candidates, campaign workers, nursing home employees or others who make good-faith efforts to help people obtain and mail absentee ballots. The federal Voting Rights Act guarantees that people who require help in voting because of a disability, blindness or inability to read or write can receive assistance "by a person of the voter's choice." Unlike some states that allow widespread use of voting by mail, Mississippi already limits absentee ballots to voters who are 65 or older; any voter with a temporary or permanent physical disability, any voter who is that person's caretaker or any voters who will be away from their home counties on election day, including college students.

Useless grant program. State lawmakers approved sending millions of dollars to save Mississippi's struggling hospitals this year, but hospital

leaders are running into difficulties trying to access that money. A third of Mississippi's rural hospitals are at risk of closure, and many of them were counting on the state grants to survive the year. Legislators in February established the grant program -- \$103 million to be disseminated among the state's struggling health care providers. Hospitals were allocated varying amounts through a formula that accounted for bed counts, hospital designation, emergency rooms and other factors. But there was a hitch: the money wouldn't come from the state general fund. Instead, it would come from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, federal money that can only be used to cover COVID-related expenses, which many hospital have already claimed and rendering the grant money useless for them. Some of the state's larger hospitals might be able to get their hands on some of the money, but it's less likely for the state's smaller, rural hospitals, the intended recipients of the grants which are in much more dire financial straits. Unless the Department of Health finds out some way to get around some of the issues, there doesn't seem to be an avenue for them to claim any money.

Suit challenges flood insurance. Attorney General Lynn Fitch has joined nine other states in a lawsuit against the federal government over its flood insurance rating system. The rating system calculates the risk of flooding for homeowners who have signed up for the National Flood Insurance Program and determines their monthly rates. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently released an updated version of the system, called "Risk Rating 2.0," which the agency says more accurately determines flood risk and more equitably distributes premium costs. But after seeing large rate increases for some, Fitch and other state leaders argue the new system is hurting homeowners. Louisiana, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia are also plaintiffs in the lawsuit. According to an infographic on FEMA's website, the average policyholder will see an \$8 per month increase on their premium, and 4% of policyholders will see an increase of more than \$20 a month. But areas that have especially high flood risks, including parts of southeastern Louisiana, will have an average increase of over 500%. Fitch claims some rates will increase "by more than 10 times" in Mississippi. Fitch also claims FEMA "failed to work collaboratively with state and local governments," and didn't account for mitigation measures such as levees that kept previous rates lower.

Civil rights investigations. Thirty-two school districts in Mississippi that are still under federal desegregation orders highlight an array of civil rights violations under federal investigations at state jails and police departments as well. Mississippi has the highest percentage of Black residents of any state. It has been home, as have other states, to legal fights over desegregation. In 2017, a Mississippi Delta school district agreed to merge two high schools after nearly 50 years of litigation in which the district sought to maintain historically Black and white schools. In addition to school districts, five Mississippi jails and prisons have come under federal scrutiny. The department is looking into whether the facilities protect prisoners from violence and meet housing standards. The facilities include the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, the South Mississippi Correctional Institution, the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, the Wilkinson County Correctional Facility and a Hinds County Jail.

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Community encouraged to learn more about foster care during National Foster Care Month

By Guest Columnist Kelsey Neeley

National Foster Care Month is an initiative of the U.S. Children's Bureau that seeks to increase national awareness of foster care issues. Southern Christian Services is joining in the effort to raise awareness for this year's theme, "Strengthening Minds. Uplifting Families."



According to the Children's Bureau, there are more than 390,000 children and youth in the foster care system nationwide. Eighty percent of those children and youth are experiencing significant mental health issues. This is four times higher than children in the general population.

There are two primary contributing factors to the development of a child's mental health. The first is biology. A large majority of children served in the child welfare system are predisposed to mental health challenges at birth solely based on genetics being passed down to them from their biological family. The second contributing factor is environment. Children who enter the foster care system have been exposed to a wide range of adverse experiences, such as substance abuse, deplorable living environments and abuse by the hands of those tasked with caring for them. Studies conducted by the CDC show that ad-

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verse childhood experiences increase the likelihood of a child developing long-term emotional, physical and behavioral health issues as they age.

While the odds seem stacked against our children, there is hope for healing. Research shows that the brain of a traumatized child can be healed through positive experiences. It is through repeated positive, safe and loving experiences created in connected relationships that a traumatized child can truly heal from the adversity they have experienced. Despite the hope offered for healing,

mental and behavioral health continue to be one of largest unmet health needs for children and youth in the foster care system today.

Considering these facts, Southern Christian Services is committed to meeting those needs by providing safe places for our Mississippi foster children. One way we do this is through our therapeutic foster care program. This program utilizes a community-based and trauma-informed approach to caring for children and youth with mental, emotional and behavioral challenges in the least re-

strictive environment possible. The program incorporates a "team" approach by directly engaging the therapeutic foster parents and foster children in the healing process.

It is critical for everyone's voice to be heard and valued in this process. By working alongside our therapeutic foster parents, we are able to provide our parents with practical tools and insights to help our Mississippi foster children reach their fullest potential and heal from the trauma they have experienced.

In addition to providing targeted support to our foster parents, we also ensure every child has access to qualified mental health therapists who specialize in treating trauma.

As an agency, we envision a community where every child has a safe place to call home and the opportunity to thrive. You can help give our Mississippi foster children that opportunity by becoming a licensed therapeutic foster parent.

To learn more about how you can change a Mississippi child's life forever, please visit our website at www.SCSCY.org/TherapeuticFosterCare, or call 601-354-0983.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Kelsey Neeley is a licensed master social worker who serves as division director of therapeutic foster care and adoption for Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, Inc.

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