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# Wesson News

## SPOTLIGHT

### Fishing on Lake Lincoln

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Volume 11, Number 8

“Good News You Can Use”

August, 2023

# Annual training for town officials

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Mayor Alton Shaw, Town Clerk Angela Hester, Public Works Director Brad Turner and Aldermen joined similar officials from across the state at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center in Biloxi for three days of information-sharing, training and networking at the Mississippi Municipal League’s (MML) 92nd Annual Conference.

Since 1931, MML has been the official non-profit private organization of Mississippi cities and towns that lobbies the state and federal legislatures, provides education for municipal elected officials and technical support, represents 293 municipalities with public and private entities, and is a networking media for municipal members.

At this year’s conference, titled “Get in the Game: A Playbook for Municipal MVPs,” the League celebrated 92 years of service to Mississippi’s cities and towns. An estimated 2,500 municipal elected officials, municipal employees, state agency representatives, legislators, exhibitors, and



Wesson News

Among locals at annual Mississippi Municipal League conference were Chad Hester, Billy Ellison, Teri Ellison, Angela Hester, Brittany Ashley, Brad Turner, Brooke Mullins, Melanie Hall, Jarrad Ashley and Larry Hall

others attended the annual event.

Hattiesburg Mayor Toby Barker, elected by MML membership as the organization’s second vice president in 2021, rotated into its top leadership post this year as president, following in the footsteps of previous Mayors of the town, Ed Morgan and Johnny Dupree.

“Leading this organization is not a role I take lightly,” Barker said.

“We’re at a critical time in our state where cities and residents need vocal leaders who will work hard on their behalf. With the unprecedented availability of federal and state-based infrastructure funds and a strong need for continued legislative support, I look forward to working with our executive team to move our state forward.”

At the event, state and federal

agencies provided speakers for the educational sessions, including the Attorney General’s office, State Auditor’s office, Mississippi Development Authority, Mississippi Planning and Development Districts and Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, among others. They covered state law updates, grant opportunities, medical marijuana, municipal liability issues,

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# Student first agenda at Copiah Lincoln

Special to Wesson News

As Co-Lin’s ninth president settles into his new job, which he started on July 1, Dr. Dewayne Middleton is viewing his work on minimizing problems and maximizing opportunities at Co-Lin through one lens: students first.

“I am excited about the direction of Co-Lin, and believe valuing students is how we continue to move forward,” he told the Wesson Lions Club.

Student focus, he explains, is about maintaining Co-Lin’s great academic and career education programs supported by great teachers reflected in the highest graduation rate among



Wesson News

Co-Lin President Dr. Dewayne Middleton (right) with Wesson Lions Club President Bobby Thornton

Mississippi colleges, recruiting and retaining students by being highly visible in communicating what the college does, advancing partnerships with business and industry and other colleges and universities to assure job and educational opportunities for students and treating all the college’s people – students, faculty and staff – right.

Within this context, Middleton says his immediate priorities are maintaining institutional accreditation, upgrading facilities and recruiting new students:

- “Accreditation is basic and is my first priority in the coming months,” Middleton says. “A Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission team will visit Co-Lin in October 2024 to review all our programs, and we want to make sure it results in a 10-year report that reaffirms the college’s accreditation. We’ve begun that process.”
- Middleton also says he wants to focus on upgrading facilities that are in disrepair or dated, similar to upgrades to athletic facilities on the Wesson campus over the past few years. Although the emphasis will be on existing buildings, he would like to see construction of new dormitories to

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WHY GO ANYWHERE ELSE?



# AC Wesson leader after retiring

By Bob Arnold

It hardly seems possible, but Aubrey Cary Currie, Jr. (known as “AC” to his many friends around and about Wesson) didn’t come to town until 1998, after his retirement from a long career with Entergy at Mississippi Power & Light (MPL).

AC, who just celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday, came with his wife Janet, bringing her back to where she grew up, and her aging mother.

While Janet continued a career as a gift shop proprietor, AC involved himself in the community through Wesson Baptist Church, Wesson Chamber of Commerce and Keep Copiah County Beautiful, and, in the process, became known as a “go-to guy” who has been a source of Christian wisdom for young men and peers alike and can fix mechanical things when they break down.

Folks say it seems like he has been around forever. But there were many stops along the way.

Born in Sanatorium, Mississippi, so called because of the tuberculosis institution there, he spent his early life in Simpson County in the Mendenhall-Magee area before moving with his family to the Jackson area, where he attended school, graduating from St. Joseph High School in 1957 following Barr Elementary, Liberty Grove Elementary and Baily Junior High School.

Back in the World War II years, Jackson was a pleasant place, where you could walk to a school bus and bike around town safely, Currie recalls. Living just outside the city, he also had a taste of country and grew up on a tractor, helping to tend to the needs of the property, while leading a liberated life as a latch key kid with working parents who didn’t have to worry about him in those days. In high school, he played football and competed in track. He drove a school bus to make money, and started developing an interest in mechanics with a motor scooter, 1929 Model A Ford and 1936 Plymouth.

Sometimes he resorted to unconventional fix-its to keep his vehicles running – like pouring oatmeal into a car radiator to gum up its leaks. But two years on active duty in the U.S. Navy on the U.S.S. Robert H McCard as a Boiler Tender 3rd Class Petty Officer after joining the Naval Reserve and going to boot camp when he was 17 years old before his high school graduation sharpened his technical skills for a 35-year career “making electricity.”

In 1960, after trying to study with students much younger than he at Hinds Community College, Currie applied for work on MPL line crews, inspired by one of them he saw on the job. For three and a half years, he worked with a line crew in Jackson, and then another year with an underground crew that serviced transformers and pumps. After one year as a meter reader in Jackson, he became an apprentice instrument mechanic at the Rex Brown Steam Electric Station (SES) in the city, transferring to a similar job at the Vicksburg Baxter Wilson SES, where he stayed 33 years until his retirement in 1995, and also worked as an instrument mechanic, instrument and control technician, instrument and control supervisor and electrical maintenance supervisor for instrument controls.

Throughout his career, Currie added to his skills set in varied self-study courses: communication engineering (Cooks School of Electronics), electronic technology (Cleveland Institute of Electronics), electronic analog control (Bailey Meter Company), system maintenance (Harris), steam turbine generators (Westinghouse), system engineering (C.E. Taylor Controls), hardware system maintenance (C.E. Taylor Controls),

boiler performance analysis (Babcock & Wilcox), electrical system maintenance and testing (South West Engineering), DC, AC, digital and electronic circuitry and semi-conductor devices (Electec, Inc. and AP&L competency-based training at Hinds Community College) and auto computer assisted design (Co-Lin).

As important as education and career advancement were to Currie in his work at MPL, he also credits a supervisor there for helping him hone his spiritual life.

“I don’t remember his name now,” says Currie. “We called him Deacon. He brought me to Jesus through teaching and the example he set loving his neighbors and not judging others. I still try to follow his example.”

Since retiring, Entergy and other organizations have called on Currie for his expertise in control technology at power plants. Following Hurricane Katrina, he worked nine months for Entergy to solve critical problems at its Sterlington SES at Perryville, Mississippi. He has also assisted in upgrading control technologies at Electro-Mech’s Navajo Generating Station Scrubber Project and Quality Technical Services at the GERAL Andrus and Attala SESs.

Currie lives with his wife in the Wesson home in which she grew up, which together they refinish, fix and remodel as an ongoing project. In 2002, the Wesson Chamber of Commerce presented its Leadership Award to Currie in recognition of his contributions to the community, including service as Deacon at Wesson Baptist Church, board member of Wesson Chamber of Commerce, board member of Keep Copiah County Beautiful and chairman of its litter committee. Currie is the father of two grown sons from an earlier marriage – Andrew in Boulder, Colorado, retired from an internet company, and Bruce, a Brookhaven physical therapist married to Representative Beckie Currie, a member of the Mississippi legislature.

## What are your hobbies?

Fixing and remodeling our homes have been a major part of the life Janet and I lived in Vicksburg and Wesson over the years. I’ve also tried watchmaking and tree farming. I am active in church. Since 1974, when a huge round,

flat Unidentified Flying Object touched down at Bovina, Mississippi, and terrified me and my dog, UFOs have been a major interest of mine. Neighbors had strange stories about being captured and taken aboard a ship. I think there’s something to the stories, and visitations of extraterrestrials.

## Are you a reader?

I have read a lot of technical books. Getting organized is something I want to do well, and I have purchased a lot of books on the subject that remain unread.

## Do you follow movies or theater?

I watch a lot of political stuff on the news television channels, but am not into much else.

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

I can’t complain about personal needs. I’d give away money to churches and charities.

## How would you change the world?

We live in a world with a lot of lost souls, who need the salvation of our Heavenly Father, to love and not judge their neighbors.



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## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR





# Fishing on Lake Lincoln

Special to Wesson News

The extraordinary heat of this summer, among other things, is driving fish into deeper cool waters, but they're still biting for those fishing at the right time and place, say two veteran Lake Lincoln fishermen undiscouraged by new demands of their sport caused by high water temperatures.

Luther (Flaky) Vaughn and Shirley Paton watched Lake Lincoln being built and have been fishing there since it opened in 1984. They say fishermen can catch their share of fish when surface waters are cool in the mornings and evenings, but the real secret of successful fishing is what it has always been: patience.

65-year-old Flaky can be found on Lake Lincoln just about every day, now that he has retired from logging. He lives close to the Co-Lin campus, is up early and on the lake fishing primarily for bass when the surface waters are cool.

"I'm there from about 5 a.m. to 11 a.m.," he says. "I want bass, but I'll take the bream, catfish and crappie that populate the lake, as well." He fishes off the bridge and piers at the lake with artificial bait.

Paton isn't on the lake as often as Flaky – maybe once or twice a week.



Wesson News

Flaky Vaughn with a prized bass.

At 77 years old, he mows lawns for people, even after his retirement as a manufacturing plant supervisor. His favorite fishing spot is the island in



Wesson News

Shirley Paton with white perch from Lake Lincoln.

the lake. He also fishes from a boat. Living just around the corner from the lake, he gets there early in the mornings on his fishing days, too. "I

fish for anything but bass," he says. "I don't like the heavy duty lines required for bass fishing." To lure his catch, he uses minnows and worms, which he buys at the Uncle Ray's bait shop that services Lake Lincoln fishermen.

Catching and eating fish is a family affair for Flaky and Paton, and their wives enjoy fishing with them. Flaky does all the cooking at his home, including the preparation of the fish he catches. Paton, on the other hand, says he just eats and lets his wife prepare and cook his catch.

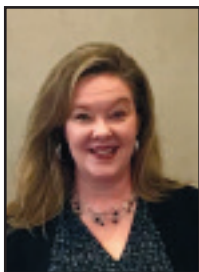
Both Flaky and Paton have fished at nearby waterways in Pike and Franklin Counties, but Lake Lincoln is their favorite place. Flaky proudly claims the title "Mr. Lake Lincoln" given to him by fellow fishermen.

On good fishing days, 15 to 20 fishermen, on average, will join Flaky and Paton, says Lake Lincoln maintenance supervisor and acting site manager Randy Chance. Bass, catfish, bream, white perch and striped bass thrive in Lake Lincoln's waters, which were last stocked in 2008, he says. Ford Creek waters from the Pearl River by way of the Little Bahalia Creek feed Lake Lincoln's 550 acres, and is the pathway for the 10 to 15 alligators that also make their home there, he adds.

## Back-to-school organizing tips

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

Back to school time is a hectic time of year, and thus a perfect time to evaluate how well you're organized and make changes for smoother living, not just for this school year, but for a life with less stress. If you begin the school year with a sense of clarity, your children will start the school year off with an advantage. Their whole learning process will go more smoothly.



Here are eight basic organizational tips for the school year that can also help in other areas of your life:

- 1. Have a place for everything.** Decide on a set spot for all of your school things. Designate specific slots or pouches for everything from papers and notebooks to pencils and pens. If you know exactly where something is, you save time spent on looking for it later.
- 2. Make a to-do list.** A to-do list is essential for staying on top of everything going on with school. If you try to keep everything you need to do in your head, you're bound to forget something. A to-do list right in front of you will help you see exactly what should be done and when. It's a great time saver.
- 3. Have your things ready the night before school.** Gather your things before you go to sleep at night. This method will be a lifesaver for you if you're not a morning person. In the morning, you can get out of bed and know that your bags are packed and ready to go. To save even more time in the mornings, lay out clothes the night before. Trying to figure out what to wear in the midst of the morning rush sets you up for a stressful day. However, a little advance planning can help you feel in control and set the stage for a productive day instead.
- 4. Plan your meals.** If you're busy, you might be tempted to skip a meal. To maintain your health and energy, ensure that you're eating nutritiously. Plan enough time in advance for breakfast in the morning and pack a healthy lunch.
- 5. Have a place for homework.** Have a set place and time to do homework. If students stay organized with a specific homework flow, the whole process can go quickly, and the homework will be done before you know it.
- 6. Keep lines of communication open.** In order to have an efficient and organized life, discuss important issues with your family members on a regular basis. Keep the lines of communication open and let your children know that you value their input and concerns.
- 7. Line up transportation.** Decide on school transportation plans early. Will your kids take the bus, or do you need to take them to school? Plan for back up transportation whenever possible for the times that things don't go according to plan.
- 8. Have the right attitude.** Remember that a positive attitude can make things run smoothly. Your attitude can be the difference between success and failure in keeping things organized. Your attitude determines whether your household is one of peace or chaos. Choose peace!

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Enjoy the process. Try new things, and keep the goal in mind. A little advance planning can go a long way towards relieving much of the stress that the beginning of school brings.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Stephanie Duguid is owner of Do Good ProHealth (CPR Classes) and Do Good Leadership (motivational speaking, and leadership and success coaching).*



cont. from front page

## Annual training for town officials

community and economic development, infrastructure funding, disaster recovery, and water and sewer issues. Attendees also heard stump speeches of candidates running for Mississippi's governor and lieutenant governor and other statewide offices.

Of special interest to Wesson officials were presentations on federal funds related to wastewater infrastructure and Mississippi rural water.

More than 200 municipal officials, including Wesson Aldermen Mike King and Larry Hall, graduated from MML's Certified Municipal Official program, 2023 Municipal Excellence Awards were presented, new members of the 2023 Municipal Hall of Fame were inducted in a special ceremony and an expo show showcased more than 150 businesses, state agencies, and other organizations.

Also at the conference, Town Clerk Hester was named an executive trustee representing the Central Central District for the Mississippi Municipal Clerks and Collectors Association and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation honored the Town of Wesson as a "Healthy Hometown," and awarded it a \$100,000 grant.

Wesson Police Chief Chad O'Quinn also attended the annual conference of the Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP), which coincided with the MML conference at Biloxi. It is MACP's primary educational conference, providing Chiefs and upper-level law enforcement executives the opportunity to receive required twenty hours of instruction.

Wide-ranging speakers included Child Protective Services Commissioner Andrea Sanders, Dr. Mark Whitman on burnout, Norm Comeaux on State and Federal Supreme Court rulings, Medical Marijuana program directors Pat Dally and Angie Calhoun, Michael Warren on 21st Century police training and Kennedy Meaders on de-escalation. A special session explored current FBI-CJIS capabilities.

At a trade show, attendees interacted with vendors of various types of equipment and technology available for law enforcement today. There was also plenty of time for social interaction between Chiefs in an information-sharing format designed to exchange ideas and talk of common problems/solutions.

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# Wesson Garden Club August Honor Yards

In August, Wesson Garden Club (WGC) recognized the landscaping efforts of Tony and Pam Hudson at 3036 Jackson Liberty Road and Copiah Bank in rural residential and organizational categories of its Yard of the Month awards program. The awards recognize maintenance principles and elements of landscape design, seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry which values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor landscapes during the spring, summer and fall.



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Hudson property.

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# Doll's House resident gets scholarship

Special to Wesson News

A 20-year-old Lincoln County woman who will begin studies at Co-Lin in the fall semester is the college's first recipient and one of the first recipients in Mississippi of a unique scholarship established by the state legislature to assist students who spent time in the foster care system.

Christina Freeman has been awarded \$1,750 for her tuition, fees and other expenses at Co-Lin during the fall semester through the "Fostering Access & Inspiring True Hope Scholarship" spearheaded by Mississippi Representative Bill KinKade in the 2022 state legislative session. The faith scholarship to promote faith and hope among those who come out of foster care pays up to the full cost of attending Mississippi colleges to former foster youth.

Until she went to a teacher with her story when she was 12 years old, Freeman had what she describes as an "awful childhood," abused regularly by her father and abandoned by her mother. Living with a brother at the time, she says "I got tired of the abuse, and had to tell somebody." She had thought about running away over the years, but "there was no place to go," she says.

Freeman, now a resident of the Doll's House, a Brookhaven mission home where women find healing from the wounds and scars of their past, still has a

hard time telling her story, which also encompasses almost seven years in Mississippi Child Protective Services (CPS) after law enforcement authorities removed her from her family situation. Those years included institutional and foster care that were a band aid, but did not address deep-rooted spiritual and mental health problems with which the Doll's House is helping her.

When Freeman aged out of CPS at 18 years old, her case worker convinced Johnnie and Stephanie Turner, who run the Doll's House program, to provide her its transitional housing alternative, which can only accommodate 12 persons at a time.

"I didn't think we could help her, but agreed to try if she could qualify for the Co-Lin high school Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) program," says Stephanie. "Christina not only qualified on the assessment test for the program, but blew it out of the water with her scores."

June 27, when she received her GED, was a landmark day for Freeman, but landmarks have characterized everyday life for her since coming to the Doll's House.

"Christina has overcome a lot of mental and physical issues and challenges," Stephanie relates. "Healthcare institutions cared for her by doping her with mind-calming drugs and sedatives, from which we weaned her so she could function normally. Rarely did she smile when



Special to Wesson News  
Christina Freeman (right) with Doll's House Johnnie and Stephanie Turner.

she came here, but she always wears a pretty grin on her face now. She is also learning to own her story and to share it with others." And, of course, there's the scholarship that will fund her studies in office business technology at Co-Lin. Her first class will mark another major landmark day.

Ask Freeman about the Doll's House, where she lives communally with other women also seeking to overcome problems that brought them there – domestic abuse, incarceration, addiction, homelessness, among others, she responds simply: "Amazing!"

The Turners came to Brookhaven ten years ago after service in the Jackson area with Baptist missions for children and youth to start the Doll's House as a stepping stone for formerly incarcerated

women returning to society. Within five years, it was clear their program could help a broad array of women in transition in different circumstances who require healing and empowerment. Its population now also includes children whom the Doll's House is trying to reunify with their mothers after they were taken away.

Their program emphasizes eight healing steps: personal development, vocational training, substance abuse counseling, interpersonal skills, personal and spiritual development, building community involvement, leisure activities and independent living skills. As a Christian mission, a foundational component of the work, the Turners say, is introducing Doll's House women to Jesus.

"When they know Jesus, it is easier to help them see the light at the end of the tunnel," Stephanie says. The Doll's House, she adds, finds scriptural guidance in Matthew 25:34-40 where Jesus commends those who gave him meat and drink when he hungered and was thirsty, took him in as a stranger, clothed and visited him when he was naked and sick, and came to him when he was in prison.

For information on the Doll's House and making donations for its work, contact Darlene Slater Rehabilitation Center for Women, P.O. Box 3172, Brookhaven, Mississippi 39603. Telephone: 601-291-8757 (Stephanie Turner) and 601-519-3546 (Johnnie Turner).

cont. from front page

## Student first agenda at Copiah Lincoln

meet demands of students on waiting lists for rooms on campus. He also wants a new gymnasium to replace the Mullens gym, which has numerous problems with the structure – a phase one of the proposed athletic arena-arts complex on the Wesson campus, a project with a price tag that worries him.


- The new Co-Lin president also wants to stimulate enrollment growth. "We're appealing to a 'show-me' generation today," he observes. "We've got to make sure people know about our programs and understand what we offer."

"I feel extremely honored and grateful to have been selected by the board of trustees to lead this incredible institution as president," says Middleton. "Co-Lin has been part of my life for nearly 30 years, first as a student-athlete here and then the place I was fortunate to build my career."

He holds an associate degree from Co-Lin, where he played on the Wolf Pack men's basketball team, a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in coaching and sports administration, a master's degree from Alcorn State University in secondary education, and a doctorate from Mississippi State University in community college leadership. At Co-Lin, he served as Executive Vice President before moving into the Presidency, and also was Vice President of Co-Lin's Simpson County Center, Dean of Student Services at the Simpson County Center, an academic advisor/instructor, the Upward Bound coordinator, and assistant men's and women's basketball coach.

Middleton serves on the Southern Association of Colleges & Schools (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Committee Review Team, the SACSCOC On-Site Committee Review Team and the Mississippi Community College Board Review Team for OCR and ADA Compliance. He is a member of the Mississippi ACT Council, Southeastern Association of Collegiate Registrars and Academic Officers, Mississippi Association of Community & Junior Colleges Student Affairs Association and Mississippi Scholars Steering Committee.


He says meeting his wife Sirkersia was the most important thing that has happened to him at Co-Lin. They have two daughters -- Mikaylin and Soumya who attended Co-Lin -- and a son, Kendal, who plans to attend Co-Lin.



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# Painter liked old Hazlehurst buildings

Special to Wesson News

Dorothy Riley Kemp of Hazlehurst painted her hometown, leaving a colorful legacy that remind locals of days gone by.

She started painting at an early age, but painted more when she was older. She used varied mediums, but favored watercolor, and displayed her works in exhibits in Crystal Springs, Hazlehurst and McComb, where she won ribbons.

Born on Halloween in 1911 to John and Zoula Riley, owners of the Hazlehurst Machine Shop, she was crowned Miss Hazlehurst and earned a Master of Arts Degree at Mississippi College after graduating from Hazlehurst High School and attending Co-Lin. She married city and local practicing attorney Carroll Abram Kemp; had one son, Carroll Kemp Jr.; was a long-time member of Hazlehurst First Baptist Church, where she taught Bible classes, played the organ and sang in the choir; and was a member and regent of the Hazlehurst chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Her favorite painting subjects were local establishments and historic buildings, such as Hazlehurst High School. The overhead bridge in Hazlehurst next to Pete's Dairy Bar is a local favorite painting. Some of her paintings feature people, with one depicting the children in her Bible class eating a watermelon under a tree. Besides buildings, other things served as her subject matter, including beautiful yellow daffodils that her friend Kathy Hildago asked her to paint.

Many homes, offices and churches display her works, and several are in the collection of George Covington Memorial Library.

Kemp died on July 4, 1992, and is buried in Hazlehurst Cemetery with her husband, son, parents and siblings.



Kemp captured bygone days.

Special to Wesson News

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



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# Tornadoes, vaccines, Medicaid, monument & voting

Special to Wesson News

**Tornadoes & mobile homes.** Tornadoes in the United States are disproportionately killing more people in mobile or manufactured homes, especially in the South, often victimizing some of the most socially and economically vulnerable residents. Since 1996, tornadoes have killed 815 people in mobile or manufactured homes, representing 53% of all the people killed at home during a tornado, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data. Tornado experts say most tornadoes should be survivable. You just have to be in some structure that's attached to the ground. And then no matter what the tornado throws at you, you have really good odds. Mobile homes fail from the bottom up because they are not secured enough to the ground, like permanent homes are. The only thing that's holding a mobile home down are the little straps in the ground. Anchoring matters and has been shown to be the difference between life or death.

**Vaccinations & religion.** Mississippi has started a court-ordered process of letting people cite religious beliefs to seek exemptions from state-mandated vaccinations that children must receive before attending day care or school. Mississippi has received praise from public health officials for years because it has some of the highest rates of childhood vaccination against diseases such as polio, measles and mumps, but U.S. District Judge Sul Ozerden ordered the state to join most other states in allowing religious exemptions from childhood vaccinations. The Mississippi State Department of Health website is now publishing information about how people can seek the religious exemptions. Mississippi already allowed people to apply for medical exemptions for a series of five vaccinations that are required for children to enroll in public or private school – those against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis; polio; hepatitis; measles, mumps and rubella; and chickenpox. Under Mississippi's new religious exemption process, state health officials cannot question the sincerity of a person's religious beliefs. The exemption must be granted if forms are properly filled out. Over the past several years, Mississippi legislators have rejected proposals to allow religious exemptions for childhood vaccinations, with health officials saying more exemptions could lead to the spread of preventable diseases.

**Medicaid rolls cut.** Mississippi has removed more than 29,000 people from Medicaid after starting to review who is eligible to keep coverage now that the federal government has ended its pandemic public health emergency. That is just over three percent of people who were enrolled in the state's program in June. The Mississippi Division of Medicaid said that it expects enrollment to further decrease in the coming months as officials continue reviewing eligibility. Medicaid provides health insurance for low-income people, with costs covered by federal and state tax dollars. Federal law prohibited states from removing people from Medicaid during the COVID-19 public health emergency, which started in early 2020 and ended this May. States received extra federal money to cover the expenses. Mississippi examined records for 67,695 Medicaid beneficiaries whose coverage was up for review in June, and about 56%

of them remain enrolled. Of the roughly 29,000 Mississippi residents who have been removed from the program, about 60% had remained on Medicaid during the pandemic because of the special eligibility rules. The Mississippi Division of Medicaid said its enrollment increased from 716,896 in March 2020 to 904,590 this June — a jump of 26 percent

**Emmett Till monument.** President Joe Biden will establish a national monument honoring Emmett Till, the Black teenager from Chicago who was abducted, tortured and killed in 1955 after he was accused of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. Biden signed a proclamation to create the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument across three sites in Illinois and Mississippi. The monument will protect places that are central to the story of Till's life and death at age 14, the acquittal of his white killers and his mother's activism. Till's mother's insistence on an open casket to show the world how her son had been brutalized and Jet's magazine's publication of the photos of his mutilated body helped galvanize the Civil Rights Movement.

**Court nixes felon voting ban.** A three-judge panel of the United States 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has struck down Mississippi's lifetime ban on voting for people convicted of certain felonies, saying it is unconstitutional because it inflicts cruel and unusual punishment. In a 2-1 ruling, the panel sent the case back to U.S. District Judge Daniel Jordan III in the Southern District of Mississippi with instructions to find the state's lifetime ban on voting to be unconstitutional. The majority said: "By severing former offenders from the body politic forever, Section 241 (the lifetime ban provision of the state Constitution) ensures that they will never be fully rehabilitated, continues to punish them beyond the terms their culpability requires and serves no protective function to society. It is thus a cruel and unusual punishment." The Court of Appeals decision comes on the heels of the United States Supreme Court refusing in June to hear another case seeking to find Mississippi's lifetime felony voting ban unconstitutional.

But the Supreme Court did not rule on whether it was cruel and unusual punishment.

**Skirmish over tideland laws.** Secretary of State Michael Watson says Attorney General Lynn Fitch ghosted him when he asked for help enforcing public tidelands leasing laws, and that her inaction is costing taxpayers and threatening a precious public resource as he hires a private firm to do the work. Mississippi currently has 152 tidelands leases, and collects between \$10 million and \$12 million a year from them. Watson said the issues for which he is asking for help are not complex, but "basic contract and trespass law." Like his secretary of state predecessors since legalized casino gambling in the early 1990s sparked a development boom on the Coast, he has faced some blowback from trying to enforce state tidelands laws and leasing. Developers, business interests and some local government leaders claim it hampers development, while environmental groups decry the state for being too willing to lease tidelands and allowing development in environmentally fragile tidelands that could hamper public access to water. Mississippi law says it's the public policy of the state to preserve coastal wetlands and ecosystems.

**NEWS  
NUGGETS**



# Potato soup for all seasons

By Guest Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

As the fall season nears, potato soup is an awesome appetizer, side dish or meal in itself for the cooler months, but it freezes well and is easy to bring back to the table for a light summer lunch or dinner

## Ingredients:

- 1-lb. Tennessee Pride sausage
- ½-lb. butter
- 1 tablespoon of table salt
- 1 teaspoon of red cyan pepper
- 1 tablespoon of salt and pepper
- 1 quart whole milk
- 2 cups mild smoked cheddar cheese
- 5-lbs. red potatoes (it does make a difference)



*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. Peel and cube potatoes.
2. Brown sausage.
3. In large pot, place cut potatoes, cover with water, bring to boil, cover with a lid and cook on medium heat for one hour. Drain into another pot and keep.
4. Add milk, butter, salt and pepper to pureed potatoes (the cooked potatoes should be pretty smooth).
5. Add sausage and cheese to mix and stir.
6. Add potato water according the consistency you desire.

Serves 20, so you will have a lot to freeze.



# ILR planning four fall trips

Special to Wesson News

Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR), the Co-Lin continuing education program for retired adults' has scheduled two day trips to areas tourist site and two holiday season trips – one day-long and a second for three days.

The travel agenda includes:

- **September 13 (Wednesday).** McClain Safari Tour and Eudora Welty House & Garden. \$71 per person (based on 30 people attending). Deadline Date: August 18.
- **October 19 (Thursday).** Heartwood Birdhouses & Berry's Seafood. \$70 per person (based on 25 people attending). Deadline Date: September 25.
- **December 12 (Tuesday).** Jeweled Christmas Tour at the Towers in Natchez. \$95 per person (based on 25 people attending) Deadline Date: November 13.
- **November 29 – December 1 (Wednesday – Friday).** Festival of Lights in Natchitoches, LA. \$425 per person quad occupancy; \$465 per person triple occupancy; \$540 per person double occupancy; \$780 per person single occupancy. Deposit due September 30. Final payment due October 30.

Existing and new ILR members can sign up for another year, and learn more

about the planned travel as well as fall educational events, workshops and movie and game days at the organization's **Fall Membership Social** on **Tuesday, August 15**, at 1:30 p.m. at the Co-Lin Thames Center.



Normally, ILR reveals the travel program at the Fall Social, but it is releasing information early so people can better plan their schedules.

In the 2022 fall and spring semesters, ILR had to cancel several trips.

"Some of our members have travelled to the places on our trip schedule, but newer members have not, and we encourage those who have enjoyed travel experiences in past will participate in them again,"

says ILR Co-Lin staff coordinator Erin Johnson. "We had several members ask us to reschedule the Jeweled Christmas Tour of the Towers in Natchez that was cancelled, and many requested a Christmas Trip to Natchitoches, Louisiana."

For information, contact ILR Coordinator Erin Johnson at 601-643-8702

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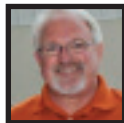
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# Co-Lin graduates first fiber splicers



Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin Workforce Education fiber splicing technician completers include (left to right) James Case of Wesson, Dalton Benton of Magee, Austin Reynolds of Silver Creek, Haddon Smith of Brookhaven, Maddox Smith of Pelahatchie and Andrew Edwards of Laurel.

Special to Wesson News

Back in 2021, Co-Lin's Workforce Education Division discovered and responded to a major regional industry gap that had emerged with growing emphasis on broadband internet technology and the sudden demand for it in the COVID-19 pandemic: the need for trained fiber splicers critical to building a fiber optic broadband infrastructure.

Access to broadband enables people more affordable and efficient access to basic services such as health care, education, and government services, and the sudden onset of COVID-19 made it an important need when work-from-home, and school-from-home sharply increased and broadband technology became not just an added benefit to the home, but a requirement for residential internet and wi-fi. While many have returned to the workplace and classroom, the demand for high-speed broadband connectivity continues to increase. In the Magnolia State, the Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi (BEAM) was created to expand broadband infrastructure and make increasing accessibility a top priority.

Co-Lin applied for funds and launched a first-of-its-kind training program to meet the demand for fiber splicing techs. This year, the college graduated six students from the program, and will start a new session September 11 on the Wesson campus with a September 1 registration deadline.

Workforce Center Director and Fiber Splicing Instructor Luke Laird assumed responsibility for the implementation of the program midway through the process as he took leadership within the workforce department. The process involved overcoming several challenges such as supply chain shortages, curriculum selection,

and curriculum training for certified instructor status.

After researching industry recognized programs, Co-Lin selected CORNING Fiber Broadband Technician (CFBT) See the Light® curriculum, which is recognized by industry training certification organizations such as BICSI, Electronics Technicians Association (ETA International), Fiber Optic Association (FOA), and the Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers/ international Society of Broadband Experts.

The Co-Lin fiber splicing technician program consists of 144 hours of training, in which students first receive comprehensive fiber optic theory and hands-on training designed for those with no industry experience. This program expands the CORNING Fiber Broadband Technician Course. First, a foundation of fiber optic basics is established consisting of but not limited to infrastructure, cable types, hardware and closures, placement, fiber optic fusion splicing, testing, and troubleshooting. Then the Co-Lin program incorporates course work for the CFBT certification, OSHA-10 safety, forklift operator's card, and CPR/First Aid certification.

"The students from our program are uniquely positioned to lead the way for trained and certified fiber splicing employees," says Laird. "The state is waiting for a funding rollout that would allow for contractors to begin the broadband network buildout. At that time, employers will be looking for certified techs, and these students are ready to lead the charge."

Information is available on the website [www.colin.edu/fibersplicing](http://www.colin.edu/fibersplicing) or by calling 601-643-8707. Enrollment requirements include scoring a 16 or higher on the ACT or a silver level or greater on the National Career Readiness Certificate.



# Snakes can be your friends

Special to Wesson News

Snakes, often spotted in the hot summer weather, are important members of the natural world, making a significant contribution to the control of pests such as mice, rats, and insects that can cause property damage or spread diseases.

Kingsnakes—so named because they feed on other snakes, including venomous ones—are particularly beneficial to people.

Venomous snakes produce venom for killing prey, defense, and to aid in digestion. Usually, they inject venom into a prey or enemy target with hollow or grooved fangs. Because of their hazard, venomous snakes are not welcome members of human habitat. Their best place is in the wild.

Despite their notorious reputation, snakes are peaceful creatures that do not seek out encounters with much larger humans. They remain motionless or flee to avoid detection. If threatened, a snake often issues a warning by hissing, flattening its head, opening its mouth, or vibrating its tail. A snake generally bites after an “enemy”

ignores these warnings or if it is startled into reacting quickly (for example, if you step on it).

The risk of a venomous snake bite is very low. Snakes will mostly bite as an unfortunate consequence of attempts to harass or kill them, even snakes that may not have been a threat (for example, snakes encountered in nature rather than in home settings). Follow these steps to reduce the risk of snake bite:

- **Clean up debris** and remove hiding spots for snakes and their prey from around buildings and yards. See Mississippi State *Extension Publication 2277, Reducing Snake Problems Around Homes*, for more information.
- **Wear heavy shoes and pants** in wooded areas and along waterways or water bodies.
- **Look before stepping** where snakes are likely to be hiding -- along or under logs, rocks, culverts, or other natural or manmade structures.



Wesson News

Charles Fortson, Jr. with rattle snake he killed near home of Wesson News Editor Bob Arnold. Fortson shot the rattler with a pistol, but came prepared with a shotgun to shoot it from a distance and a shovel and hoe to kill it without shooting a firearm.

- Give any snake you encounter **plenty of room** to leave the area on its own.

Most venomous snakes in the United States belong to the pit viper group. Pit vipers are characterized by (1) pits or small depressions on the side of their faces (used in prey detection) (2) vertical “cat-like” pupils (3) triangular heads, slim necks and a heavy, flattened body; and (4) a single row of scales on the underside of the tail. Some of these characteristics can be difficult to detect from a safe distance, but the triangular head and slender neck are more recognizable.

In Mississippi, the pit viper group includes the copperhead, pigmy rattlesnake, eastern diamondback rattlesnake, timber or canebrake rattlesnake, and cottonmouth or water moccasin. The sixth type of venomous snake in the state, the eastern coral snake, is not a pit viper. They are characterized by rounded rather than triangular heads, indistinct necks, round pupils, smooth scales, and hose-shaped bodies.

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## Clinic party celebrates school time

Special to Wesson News

Going back to school isn't always easy for children after their summer vacations, but the Copiah County Medical Center Wesson Clinic helped make it a celebratory experience with a special block party for the back-to-schoolers that also provided the facility an opportunity to introduce itself to the community.

At their July meeting, Wesson Aldermen approved the clinic's request to close Beech Street and the entrance to the municipal park to host the event on July 27 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

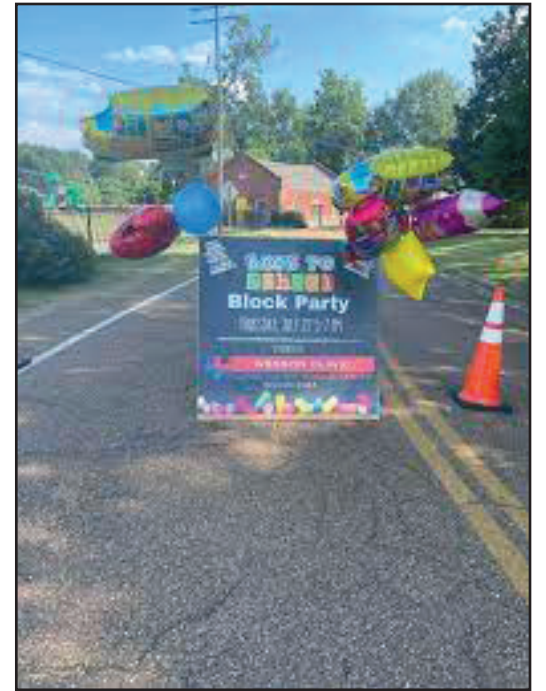
The party featured door prizes, free snack foods – ice cream, cotton candy and snow cones – games and varied fun activities, including face painting, a jump house, bubble wand party and photo booth. While the children played and enjoyed the food treats, parents could browse for and purchase school supplies.

In other action, the Aldermen agreed that taxes can remain level during the next fiscal year and scheduled a public hearing on the Town's 2023-2024 budget for their August meeting.

In connection with spending in the coming fiscal year, they will also be looking at how to spend \$100,000 awarded to the Town by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation as one of two "Healthy Hometowns" in Mississippi. Municipal park improvements, including extension of the walking track and new equipment, are priorities.

The Aldermen also:

- Hired Kanisha Stewart as part-time police officer.
- Tabled discussion on selling the former Wesson Police Department headquarters building until the August meeting pending an appraisal of the structure.
- Amended handbook policy on Paid Time Off (PTO) for employees to receive it following a 90-day grace period after hiring, with department heads instead of the Town of Wesson authorizing payment.
- Tabled discussion on a building permit for an AT&T cellular tower on a Highway 51 property owned by Peter Chasion for a special meeting.



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# Colleges facilitate broadband focus group

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin and Southwest Mississippi Community College hosted a focus group, including regional municipal leaders, educators and internet service providers, to help establish regional priorities for expansion of broadband internet, which the state is seeking to facilitate.

With a priority placed on high-speed internet infrastructure, a statewide emphasis on broadband infrastructure and increasing accessibility has been initiated through the Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi (BEAM) under the Department of Finance and Administration as the state's one point of contact for all broadband issues. It currently is spearheading a five-year expansion plan for the state with a \$1.2 billion allocation of broadband funds in the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

"We are ready to provide training, but want to know what is needed," Southwest Community College Workforce Center Director Dr. Wendy Smith told the focus group. "We are here to train as many people as we can if that is what you need, but our goal is to better understand the needs in our

region."

Talking points centered on the importance of broadband infrastructure throughout the state, how to help the region gain funding priority, and the expected training needs for the workforce related to the five-year network buildout in the state. Workforce training was also at the forefront of discussion.

Regional service providers and related infrastructure employers expressed a need to train individuals within the industry with new skills for fiber to allow them to keep their workforce even after the five-year BEAM initiative is complete. Schools presented a variety of ways to provide a trained workforce, such as on-the-job-training funds, workforce custom training events, and short term training programs. While training plans are not complete, all representatives expressed commitment to the expansion of broadband and advancement of the needed skills for the initiative.

Co-Lin Workforce Center Director Luke Laird encouraged participants in the focus group to help provide BEAM with much needed information. "We need to paint a true picture of internet connection in Southwest Mississippi, and the public can help," said Laird. "The BEAM office is about to manage a \$1 billion grant and needs to decide



Wesson News

Co-Lin President Dr. Dewayne Middleton and Southwest Mississippi Community College President Dr. Steve Bishop along with staff from both colleges' Workforce Centers hosted a regional focus group discussion on broadband expansion. Pictured are (back, left to right) Robert C. McCall, Jr., Brent Duguid, Stacy Fells, Middleton, Bishop, Reginald Matthews, Dr. Wendy Smith, Charles Morris; (front, left to right) Luke Laird, Krysti Martinez, Dr. Sharolyn Magee, Robin Mitchell, and Addie Boone.

on what requests will get the state more bang for the buck. Providing data that demonstrates the lack of coverage will elevate the region to the top of the list."

Mississippi computer users can test their internet speed at BEAM's website, which collects speed test data of those who currently have some form of internet access. They should visit the site while connected to their home network --www.broadbandms.com -- and go to "Test Your Internet" to run speed tests. The data is used to make a broadband Mississippi service map. A Connectivity Survey, which will take approximately five minutes or less to complete, is also accessible at www.

broadbandms.com/connectivitysurvey. It asks a series of questions about current internet service or lack thereof. Those with no internet service at home

may text or call 601-439-2535.

Broadband access enables people more affordable and efficient access to basic services such as health care, education, and government services. Economically, high speed internet is a priority criterion for relocating businesses. Fully wired communities are best positioned to interest and then retain new business and encourage expansion of existing industry. Employers benefit and so does the workforce as broadband allows for more accessible career and skill development opportunities. Online and hybrid learning allows for skills improvement at any time and on any schedule. Distance learning is not only for the enrolled student, but also for the employed or underemployed who need improved or new skills.

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# New Co-Lin Foundation board members

Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin Foundation elected seven new members to its board: Shannon Aker, Susan Buckley Berry, Andrew Calvit, Scott Christensen, Stacy Fells, Jr., Morgan Halford Poore and Tammy Underwood Torrey.

- **Shannon Aker** of Brookhaven is a 1984 graduate of the University of Mississippi, where he received a degree in radio and television journalism. He currently is the president of Bank of Brookhaven. Aker is the chairman of the Industrial Development Foundation and the Lincoln County Fellowship of Christian Athletes board, a deacon of First Baptist Church-Brookhaven and a member of the Brookhaven-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce board, the Brookhaven Tourism Council board and the Brookhaven Servitium Club. He and his wife, Robyn, have two children --Allison McCaffrey and Leslie Franciskato.

- **Susan Buckley Berry** of New Hebron is a 1967 Co-Lin graduate, where she received an Associate's Degree in home economics, and she is a 1969 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, where she received a Bachelor of Science in home economics and science. Before retirement, she was a teacher at New Hebron Attendance Center and Simpson Academy. Berry is a Women's Club officer, Student Council sponsor, former Sunday school teacher, 4-H advisor, former president and secretary of the Co-Lin Alumni Association, and a library board member. She and her husband, Mims, have four children --Trey Berry, Andy Berry, Suzanne Berry Williams and Ryan Berry.

- **Andrew Calvit** of Natchez received an Associate's Degree from Co-Lin Natchez, a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi --Natchez and a Master of Business Administration from Alcorn State University. He is retired after a long career at Atmos Energy. Calvit received Outstanding Soldier of the Quarter while in



The Co-Lin Foundation welcomes new board members: (from left) Andrew Calvit, Scott Christensen, Morgan Poore, Tammy Torrey, Stacy Fells, Susan Berry and Shannon Aker.

the U.S. Army, and he was named an Unsung Hero. He is a long-time member of the Natchez Rotary Club, which recently honored him by establishing a scholarship at Co-Lin in his honor. He is also a board member for Merit Health Natchez. He returns to the Foundation board after previously serving as a member for 18 years. He and his late wife have two children: Felecia Lyles and Andrea Denise Calvit.

- **Scott Christensen** of Brookhaven received a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, completed postgraduate studies in health services administration at Xavier University and received a Master of Business Administration from Delta State University. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer of King's Daughters Medical Center. Christensen is the chairman of the Mississippi Hospital Association, a past chairman of the MHA Medicaid Advisory Committee, a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, and a past member of the American Hospital Association Regional Policy Board. He was named a Community Legend by the Mississippi Association of Supervisors. He received the Mississippi CEO award from the *Mississippi Business Journal*, and he is a co-author of *Change for the Delta: A Process for Strategic Planning in a Challenging Market*, written for the Healthcare Fi-

ancial Management Association. He and his wife, Melia, have three children: Marianna, 9, Martin, 6, and Makenna, 5.

- **Stacy Fells, Jr.** of Brookhaven is a 2005 graduate of Co-Lin, a 2014 graduate of Alcorn State University, where he received a Bachelor's Degree in interdisciplinary studies and a 2017 graduate of Walden University, where he received a Master's Degree in higher education administration with an emphasis in leadership for student success. He currently works as workforce navigator for Co-Lin. Fells received the Malinda Clark "Power of the 8" Memorial Award from Region 8. He is the founder/president of the Southern Wildcats Youth Travel Football team, and he is a Lincoln Civic Center Dixie Youth Baseball committee member. He and his wife, Monica, have four children: Jai'Juan, 16, Lee'Land, 12, Grason, 8, and Jaxson, 8.

- **Morgan Halford Poore** of Meadville is a 2009 graduate of Co-Lin. She received a Bachelor of Science in accounting from Mississippi State University in 2011 and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 2013. She currently works as an associate attorney at Halford Law Firm and serves as Franklin County board attorney and Roxie municipal board attorney. Poore is a member of Mississipp-

pi Bar Board of Commissioners, a lay member to the Annual Conference for Meadville United Methodist Church, board attorney for Bude Community Foundation, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce board member, ACT Work Ready Communities county leader, Meadville/Franklin County Lions Club member, American Legion Auxiliary member and a youth leader for Meadville United Methodist Church. She and her husband, Dain, have one child: Dani, 2.

- **Tammy Underwood Torrey** of Meadville is a 1980 graduate of Co-Lin, and received a Bachelor of Business Administration from Delta State University in 1982. She currently works as Vice President of Operations at Franklin Telephone Co., Inc. Torrey is a Certified Public Accountant and Certified Management Accountant. She was honored as Co-Lin Alumna of the Year in 2014 and is a member of the Co-Lin Foundation Hall of Fame. She received the Mid-South Chapter of Independent Telephone Pioneers Wade H. Creekmore Sr. Award of Excellence 2022. She also serves as treasurer for the Brookhaven Animal Rescue League and the Southwest Mississippi Chess Foundation. She returns to the board after previously serving as a member for 18 years. She was married to the late James A. Torrey, Jr. and she has six dear pets: Sally, Pete, Lilly, Coal, Alex and Harris.

"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 skillset and network to the table that I look forward to utilizing in our efforts to support the college."

The Co-Lin Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which serves as the fundraising arm of the college. The Foundation is governed by a 25-member board of directors whose goal is to raise private monies to support the mission of the college.

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# Students claim high FBLA honors



Wesson News

*Pictured from left are Co-Lin FBLA Collegiate chapter advisor Laney Smith and students Kylie Windmiller, Brooklyn Laird, Whitney Howell, Seth Ammann, Josh McCreary, Maggie O'Quinn, Caitlyn Burns, and Emma Grice. Not pictured: Briar Hamilton and chapter advisor Dr. Richard Baker.*

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin students in the Future Business Leaders of America Collegiate (FBLA) -- previously called Phi Beta Lambda -- walked away with high honors in competition at the the FBLA National Leadership Conference in Atlanta.

The Co-Lin students were among more than 14,000 students from around the country attending and competing at the national conference, including students from Purdue, Penn State, and many other prestigious universities and colleges. Earning awards at the national competition were:

Second place

Emma Grice of McCall Creek, Finance Case Study

Fourth place

Josh McCreary of Brookhaven and Caitlyn Burnes of Wesson, Digital Media

Sixth place

Briar Hamilton of Summit, Emerging Business Issues

Sixth place

Briar Hamilton of Summit, Integrated Marketing

Eighth place

Caitlyn Burns of Wesson, Hospitality Management

Ninth place

Kylie Windmiller of Bogue Chitto, Client Services

Additionally, McCreary placed in the Top 15 for impromptu speaking; Grice and Whitney Howell of Brookhaven placed in the Top 15 for state of the chapter; and Hamilton was named a national scholarship recipient and participated in the state president parade, as he will serve as the 2023-24 president for Mississippi.

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