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Volume 12, Number 1

“Good News You Can Use”

January, 2024

Student success tops at Co-Lin

By Bob Arnold

Co-Lin has been ranked number one for student success among Mississippi community colleges on the 2022 Report Card.

Each year, all 15 Mississippi community colleges must provide data to the Mississippi Community College Board to be compiled into a Report Card as required by the Mississippi Legislature. On the 2022 Report Card, Co-Lin had the highest percentage for student success of all 15 community colleges in the state, with a total student success rate of 66.4 percent, far exceeding the state average of 59.7 percent. Co-Lin also ranked second in the state in the student retention/progression category at 65.7 percent, again exceeding the state average of 60.2 percent. Additionally, Co-Lin came in



third in the state in the adult education category with 61.9 percent of adult education participants showing measurable skills gained.

Student success is captured as earned awards, transferred, or retained at the institution within 150 percent of expected time to graduation. Among all 15 community colleges in Mississippi, Co-Lin has the highest percentage of graduates.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the outstanding success of our students, whose achievements stand as a testament to their unwavering dedication and hard work along with faculty, staff, and administrators,” said Dr. Tiffany Perryman, Co-Lin Director of Institutional Effectiveness. “The data show why Co-Lin is truly ‘The Place To Be.’”

Schedule a campus tour or apply now at www.colin.edu.

First Day Hikes launch for 2024

Special to Wesson News

More than 65,900 participants, including locals at Lake Lincoln State Park who put on their boots and appropriate clothes, hiked 138,722 miles in First Day Hikes on January 1.

First Day Hikes are a nationwide initiative led by America’s State Parks, an alliance of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) to encourage people to get outdoors. On New Year’s Day, hundreds of free, guided hikes were organized in all 50 states. Kids and adults across America participated, getting their hearts pumping and enjoying the beauty of a state park.

At Lake Lincoln, officials gave local participants free access to the park trails, waiving the \$2.00 entrance fee for the day.

First Day Hikes are led by knowledgeable state park staff and volunteers. The distance and rigor vary from park to park, but all hikes aim to create a fun experience for the whole family. People are invited to savor the beauty of the state park’s natural resources with the comfort of an experienced guide so they may be inspired to take advantage of these local treasures throughout the year.

Guided activities from coast to coast this year included sunrise hikes, hikes on new trails, polar plunges, horseback rides, bike rides, paddles, and much more.



In 2023, First Day Hikes started a year that saw more than 500,000 persons hiking one million miles in state parks throughout the country.

America’s State Parks help capture the collective strength and importance of the great park systems developed in the 50 states. NASPD board members represent each region of the country and govern the America’s State Parks alliance.

With some 8,565 units and more than 807 million visits, the nation’s state parks contribute more than \$20 billion to the economies of communities throughout the country. Together, they offer 14,672 trails covering 52,603 miles, 221,367 campsites and 8,909 cabins and lodges.

Stephen T. Mather, founder of the National Park Service, envisioned that the states and the federal government needed to work together to develop

a great national system of parks. By working together the nation would develop a national system of parks that would be the envy of the world.

Thanks to the vision of Mather and his contemporaries, more than a billion visits a year are made to state and national parks. “A visit inspires love of country; begets contentment; engenders pride of possession and contains the antidote for national restlessness,” Mather said. “He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the nations parks.”

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Dave Pace helps people remember

By Bob Arnold

When he looks back over almost six decades of helping folk memorialize the lives of people they want to be remembered into the future, Dave Pace recalls the many conversations with them -- listening to sorrowful and joyful people, speaking seriously or humorously about loved ones or friends they have lost or others who weren't necessarily close, but rather admired or influential persons whom they wanted to thank. The variety is awesome.

Since he sold his first monument at 14 years old when he worked for his father's Jackson-based business, Pace has been making recommendations on appropriate memorials and crafting them into long-lasting stonework for a wide spectrum of people and organizations, including the likes of monument builders for rock music legends Lynyrd Skynyrd and Jerry Lee Lewis and less celebrated people like the mother who wanted her son remembered at his gravesite as someone who "loved his mama as much as a fat boy loves cake."

Since 1977, Pace's venue has been Brookhaven Monument Company, which he operates and manages along with its McComb and Natchez branches.

Born in 1955 at Canton, Mississippi, Pace grew up in Jackson's Manhattan area playing and riding his bike on trails in Parham Bridges Park. As a teenager, he travelled with the Jackson First Baptist Church youth group on mission trips to Europe and Canada. He also enjoyed monthly camping trips as part of Jackson Boy Scout Troop 8 in which he earned Scouting's highest rank as an Eagle. He also came to the monument business early.

"My family got into it in 1956 when a Gluckstadt, Mississippi, cemetery hired my father, who sold sports equipment, including life belt boating straps that could hold down tombstones," Pace recounts. "At age 10, I was hanging out at the cemetery and cutting the grass there. By age 14, I was selling monuments for my father, who had gone beyond supplying and working with tombstone strapping at a cemetery to providing the tombstones themselves as a Jackson retailer."

After studying marketing at Mississippi State University from 1973 to 1977, Pace joined the business, which had expanded into Louisiana and throughout Mississippi, including Brookhaven and Mendenhall, where he started working as the manager under his father's guidance.

Led by Pace for more than 40 years, Brookhaven Monument's workforce has grown from three to 15 persons. At one time, it had eight Mississippi branches, but now just serves customers at Natchez and McComb locations as well as Brookhaven. In the process, Pace has earned the respect of his industry peers, who chose him to serve as president of the Monument Builders of North America and invited him to serve on the exclusive 40-member American Institute of Commemorative Arts, where he has

consulted on monuments for celebrities and other notable persons.

At Brookhaven Monument, Pace has also built a reputation for quality work. "Mississippi is not a source of durable stone in which you cut letters or images," he explains.

"We go to the 600 to 700 quarries in the 20 U.S. states where there is useable granite, and others in China, India, Venezuela, Uruguay and Italy." The company also employs advanced technology. "Eighty percent of the work is done by computers," Pace points out. "Artificial intelligence generates design from which other computer applications produce stencils used in hand-cutting."

Pace and his wife LilAnn Hollingsworth Pace have four grown children and seven grandchildren. They split their time between a camp on Lake Saint John at Natchez and a second floor downtown Brookhaven apartment across from the Haven Theater, the home of Brookhaven Little Theater on West Cherokee Street. Their apartment features an outdoor balcony, indoor brick walls, flooring that survived an historic Brookhaven fire that destroyed a Masonic lodge and a pharmacy and antique doors from a Methodist Church and the Johnson Institute, now Mississippi School of the Arts, where Pace's uncle served as president.



Special to Wesson News

What are your hobbies?

I visit cemeteries to see monuments, follow Mississippi State baseball and ride my tri-ton pontoon boat on Lake Saint John, regional rivers and on the Gulf Coast. I am the longest tenured member of the Brookhaven Lions Club, with a 43-year pin.

Are you a reader?

I read periodicals and listen to Lee Child's *Jack Reacher* and Tom Clancy fiction and podcasts with conservative political commentary.

Do you have a special interest in music?

I like Reba McEntyre and 1970s rock. I liked Lynyrd Skynyrd, Blue Man Group and Three Dog Night in performance.

How about movies or theater?

Winnie Holzman's *Wicked* about the witches of Oz before Dorothy dropped in is a favorite musical.

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

I would pay my children's bills, keep enough to live comfortably, give to the church, endow the Lions Club and scholarships and buy box seats for Mississippi State baseball games.

How would you change the world?

If people lived according to the Ten Commandments, it would make a huge difference.



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

State Legislature faces key issues

Special to Wesson News

Taxes, school vouchers, ballot initiatives and healthcare are among the issues facing Mississippi legislators when they settle into their work following initial organizing tasks.

In their first order of business, they elected Representative Jason White, a Republican from West, Mississippi, as Speaker of the 122-member state House of Representatives. White succeeds Philip Gunn, who opted to step down and not pursue a fourth term as speaker. Representative Manly Barton of Moss Point replaces White as pro tempore.

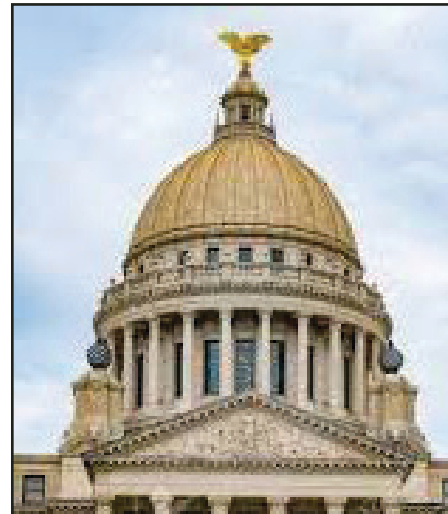
In the state Senate, Republican Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann will serve a second term, with Dean Kirby (R-Pearl) as Senate pro tempore, second-in-command.

Over the past few days, eight statewide officials -- all incumbents -- were sworn into office.

As the Legislature begins legislating, a pivotal 2024 session is shaping up with key issues on the agenda:

• **Tax cuts.** Governor Tate Reeves, who was reelected this past November by the narrowest margin in a gubernatorial election since 1999, still wants to eliminate the state's personal income tax. White and other expected House leaders also have expressed support for eliminating the personal income tax, which accounts for nearly one-third of state general fund revenue. Senate leaders have said they will consider tax reductions in 2024, but perhaps not the complete elimination of the income tax.

• **School vouchers.** Reeves has been a big supporter of providing public funds to students to attend private schools, though he did not campaign on the issue. As a matter of fact, few candidates elected in 2023 campaigned on the issue, though, it could be a big one



during the 2024 session.

• **Restoring the ballot initiative.** For the third year in a row, lawmakers plan to introduce legislation to restore the ballot initiative, the way for citizens to place issues directly on a statewide ballot. The Mississippi Supreme Court ruled in 2021 that the prior initiative process was invalid. During the last two years, the House and

Senate failed to reach an agreement over how the process should be replaced.

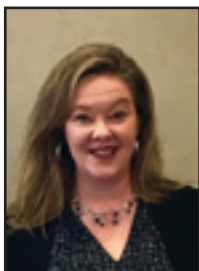
• **Mississippi's health care crisis.** Scores of rural hospitals across the state are on the verge of closing or significantly cutting back health services, and numerous Mississippians do not have health insurance. One potential solution that legislative leaders might consider is the expansion of Medicaid coverage to more people under the Affordable Care Act, as 40 other states have done. White, the new Speaker, has previously said he is open to at least considering the expansion of Medicaid and studying health care issues closely during the session. Hosemann also has voiced support for at least the consideration of Medicaid expansion. Reeves has been a staunch opponent of Medicaid expansion.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A Mississippi Today report.

A New Years look at diabetes

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

Happy New Year! As we step into January, it's the perfect time for reflection and setting new goals. The start of a new year offers an ideal opportunity to reassess and take charge of your well-being.



In this spirit of new beginnings and better health, a growing concern that needs our attention is type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes, a chronic condition affecting how the body turns food into energy, is often silent until significant complications arise, but is impacting millions. Understanding the disease, its risk factors, and preventive measures can be a life-changing step. Unmanaged type 2 diabetes can lead to severe complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, vision loss and nerve damage. These complications not only deteriorate the quality of life but can also be life-threatening.

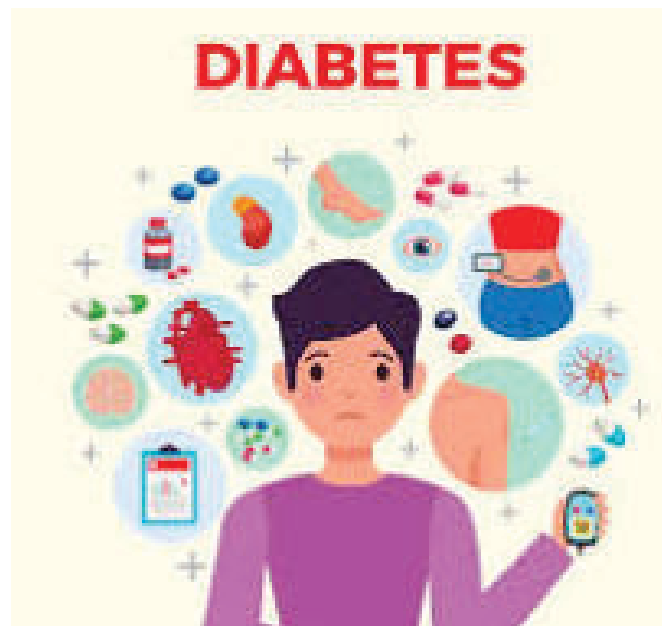
As you jot down your goals for the year, delve into what type 2 diabetes is, how it impacts individuals and communities, and most importantly, how you can take proactive steps to either manage or prevent it.

Type 2 diabetes is becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States, especially among individuals age 18 and

older. In Mississippi, 14 percent of the population has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and 35.6 percent of the population has prediabetes. Approximately 37.3 million Americans are living with type 2 diabetes, and, shockingly, one in five of them are unaware of their condition. The lack of awareness highlights the need for better education and screening programs.

Individuals with a family history of type 2 diabetes, those who are overweight and lead sedentary lifestyles or have high blood pressure are more prone to developing the disease. Higher rates occur in the African American, Hispanic, Native American, and some Asian American communities.

Mississippi stands out in the U.S. for its high type 2 diabetes prevalence. Factors contributing to this include socioeconomic challenges, dietary habits and limited access to healthcare services. The cost of managing the disease -- including medications, insulin, monitoring supplies and healthcare services -- can be overwhelming for individuals and families. The state's struggle is a microcosm of the larger national



battle. Nationally, the total healthcare costs attributed to type 2 diabetes run into billions of dollars annually.

Diagnosing type 2 diabetes involves testing blood glucose levels. The main tests include the A1C test, which measures average blood sugar levels over the past 23 months, and the fasting plasma glucose test.

To see if you are at risk for type 2 di-

abetes, take the survey at www.Type2Diabetes.org/socrisktest.

Preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes is possible with lifestyle changes:

- **Diet.** Focus on a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- **Exercise.** Regular physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight and improves insulin sensitivity.
- **Regular check-ups.** Early detection through regular medical checkups can prevent complications.
- **Education.** Awareness about the risk factors and symptoms of type 2 diabetes is crucial.

With informed strategies and proactive healthcare measures, it's possible to control and reduce the impact of type 2 diabetes.

It's a collective fight that requires awareness, education, and action from all community members. Use the start of a new year to shift habits, practices and activities to reduce your chance of developing the disease.

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

**LIVING
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Gospel singer's recognition grows

Special to Wesson News

Gospel singer/songwriter Ramsey Prine -- not to be confused with his father Calvin Prine, a well-known singer around Hattiesburg -- is making his own music and becoming recognized for his special talent from Crystal Springs, where he settled in 2013.

Nicknamed "Mr. Guitar," he was the baby in a musical family of 18 children in which almost every one of them sings or plays music. He wrote his first song when he was six about the girl next door and won the first talent show he entered when he was seven playing a three-string guitar and singing to an Elvis CD.

Elvis remains his main source of inspiration, with Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash close seconds.

Although he can sing almost anything, country gospel, which he also writes, is his favorite. He "sings anything from George Strait to George Thorogood," opens shows for other musical talents and performs at weddings, funerals, graduations, birthdays and valentine banquets.


He doesn't read music, but thanks God for the gifts of being able to hear a song and play it by feel and rhythm and to write songs from the heart -- being in touch with an emotion, such as love or grief, and recording the words that come.

He struggled growing up, and fought addiction before "music saved my life," and he started "singing for the right reasons," turning to gospel. He and his wife have two musical children -- Kenzie, who plays piano, and Colton, who is already singing and playing guitar like his dad. He calls Crystal Springs "a place of redemption" where "people have been so nice."

A MAC Records owner from Columbus, Mississippi, heard him singing in a church in 2014 and approached him about recording, a new career route on which he embarked a few years ago that is expanding his renown.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The 2023 Copiah County Bicentennial year has ended, but Wesson News continues to feature sketches of past and present visual artists, musicians, authors and photographers who are natives of the county 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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Triplets grow as individuals at Co-Lin

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin sophomores Galen, Gavriel, and Gary Clark Jr. of Brookhaven do things together.

After all, they are triplets, sons of Teresa and Gary Clark, Sr., and have always done things together, but Co-Lin is also helping each of them open new doors unique to their own lives.

At Brookhaven High School, they played together in the band. They left together to continue to play together in the low brass section of Co-Lin's Blue Wave Show Band -- all three of them are on scholarship. All three together have been inducted into the Eta Omega Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. They were also honored together as selections to Who's Who at Co-Lin, which recognizes outstanding sophomores with at least a 3.0 GPA who are nominated by a faculty or professional staff member, actively serve the college and demonstrate leadership in extra-curricular activities as well as academics, citizenship and potential for future achievement.

"The Clark triplets are three outstanding, hardworking students," says Juanita Proffitt, Co-Lin Director of Bands and Fine Arts Division Chair. "All three are on the band's leadership team. Anytime we need something done, they are there and always have a positive attitude. Their presence has made an impact in their sections and on the rest of the band. We are extremely proud to have the Clark triplets at Co-Lin."

While continuing their achievements together at Co-Lin, the college has also helped them grow as individuals.

Galen, for example, alone was inducted into Mu Alpha Theta, the mathematics honor society, and Sigma Kappa Delta, the English honor society.

The brothers all have their own special memories of being involved on the Co-Lin Wesson campus.

"So far, my favorite memory at Co-Lin has to be when the band traveled and played when our football team went to play in the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges Conference (MACCC) championship game this year," says Galen. "One of the reasons I came to Co-Lin was because of the really great band scholarship they offered me. It was much more affordable to come to a community college first instead of going straight to a university. I have absolutely been happy with my decision to come to Co-Lin."

For Gary, his experiences at Co-Lin, including being chosen as president of the band and elected "Mr. Co-Lin" by his peers, have helped him come out of a shell. "Being elected as Mr. Co-Lin was a dream come true," he relates. "Growing up, I was a shy person. Then at Brookhaven High School, I encountered an environment that was all new to me -- the classes, people, student groups and



Special to Wesson News

Brookhaven triplets Galen, Gavriel, and Gary Clark Jr. have all found success at Co-Lin.

clubs were more than I imagined they would be. Joining the band at BHS had the greatest influence on my personality. It increased my friendliness, discipline, and leadership. And now, I am president of the Co-Lin band and Mr. Co-Lin. It feels amazing to be voted Mr. Co-Lin."

"I wasn't concrete on what I wanted my career to be when I was in high school," Gary also points out. "So, coming to Co-Lin helped me pinpoint what career I truly wanted to pursue."

Gavriel concurs with his brother and adds: "Co-Lin has done an amazing job at preparing me for Ole Miss. I've learned things and accomplished things I thought I would never be good at. One of the classes that has helped me a lot was English Composition I and II taught by Ms. Glenda Silverii. Knowing how to write papers is going to be very crucial for my next step. Another class that has prepared me is Human Anatomy I and II with Mrs. Anita Cliburn. I thank those two instructors and my academic advisor, Mrs. Stewart. The overall experience at Co-Lin has made me feel very confident in my future. I feel like I can accomplish anything."

When the triplets leave Co-Lin, Gary and Gavriel, at least for the present, will go together to Oxford and the University of Mississippi, where they both plan to pursue dreams of becoming physical therapists. Galen, however, wants to continue his education in cybersecurity and will head to the University of Southern Mississippi. No longer triplets doing things together, but individuals who have made their own career decisions with the help of Co-Lin.

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Prom for special needs persons

Special to Wesson News

Easthaven Baptist Church will host the 2024 Night to Shine, a global prom night experience for people with special needs who are at least 14 years old.

Sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and community donors, Night to Shine events are held simultaneously by host churches around the world on the same night, creating a truly unified and special moment for all those involved. The Brookhaven Night to Shine will be held on Friday, February 9, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Easthaven Baptist Church.

"Easthaven is excited to be a part of this worldwide movement that God is using as a catalyst to change how cultures embrace people with disabilities and to rally the church worldwide to honor their local community of people with special needs, ensuring they know they are valued and loved," says planning volunteer Celeste Williamson.

This will be the first year for the Brookhaven area event.

Night to Shine is open to anyone living with disabilities, ages 14 and older. There is no fee to attend, but registration is required. Each guest will be assigned a volunteer buddy to escort them through the evening. While each event is a little different, some activities include a red-carpet entrance complete with a warm welcome from a friendly crowd and paparazzi, hair and makeup stations, limousine rides, corsages and boutonnieres, a catered dinner, dancing, karaoke, gifts, a respite room for parents and caregivers, a sensory room, and a crowning ceremony where every honored guest receives a crown or tiara.

Over the years, Night to Shine, through hundreds of churches from 56 different countries, has provided over half a million guest experiences. 2024 marks the 10th anniversary of Night to Shine.

"I'm so excited that we will celebrate 10 years of Night to Shine this coming year," says Tim Tebow, founder of the Tim Tebow Foundation. "All around the world, people with special needs are going to be cheered for on the red carpet, dance the night away with their friends, be crowned a king or a queen of the prom. Most importantly, they're going to hear that they are loved by the God of this universe. We continue to be in awe of all God has done over the past nine years, but we believe He has even more in store. Every town, every village, every nation needs Night to Shine because we want every person with special needs to know that they are one of one, created in love, by love and for love."

Easthaven Baptist Pastor Hal Kitchings adds "we are so excited to bring the Night to Shine experience to Brookhaven. This event is a beautiful reminder that all of us are worthy of love, respect, and a special night out. We can't wait to celebrate with our honored guests and their caregivers and show them the love of Christ."

In addition to the prom for the honored guests, there will also be a special dinner and activities planned for the caregivers of honored guests. "Caregivers play a vital role in the lives of their loved ones, and this dinner will provide them with a well-deserved respite while their loved-one is cared for at the prom," says Williamson.

To register to attend or for more information, visit www.easthaven.net/nighttoshine or contact the church office at 601-833-2597.

Williamson reports the local NTS organizers are seeking support of local businesses in sponsoring the event. Sponsorships can be arranged at www.easthaven.net/nighttoshine or by contacting nighttoshine@easthaven.net.

Information about the worldwide Night to Shine movement and the Tim Tebow Foundation, is at: www.timtebowfoundation.org/night-to-shine.

Easthaven Baptist Church is located in Brookhaven on Highway 84 East. Easthaven offers a variety of ministries for all ages, including Sunday School, Bible studies, youth and college groups, music, and a thriving preschool/childcare. The Tim Tebow Foundation exists to bring Faith, Hope and Love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need. It provides outreach in Orphan Care + Prevention, Special Needs, Profound Medical Needs, and Anti- Human Trafficking & Child Exploitation.



Special to Wesson News

Taylor Wells is looking forward to walking the red carpet at the Night to Shine prom event in Brookhaven on February 9. She's previously attended the event in Hattiesburg and can't wait to meet her assigned volunteer "buddy" who will accompany her throughout the night. Taylor's caregivers benefit, too, as they are treated to a catered supper on site and enjoy a little time of rest and encouragement. Individuals with special needs who are 14 years of age and older are invited to attend. The event is free, and registration is required. Those interested should call Easthaven Baptist Church at 601-833-2597.



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- 2006 Mazda mx5 miata convertible, 5 speed, air, power windows, Fun Fun at a bargain price!
- 2018 Ford F150 SuperCrew XLT Sport 4x4, Ruby Red w/black, Sharpest truck around
- 2012 Ford Fusion (2 to choose) both have low mileage, and are super clean w/great gas mileage
- 2014 Honda Accord (2) one EXL V6 and one Sport Package, Both are really nice
- 2013 Lexus LS 460, f sport edition, one owner, fully loaded, nicest luxury cars made.
- 2016 Chev Impala LT - Newbody, Leather, Sunroof, low mileage, Super Sharp!
- 2018 GMC Sierra SLT Crew Cab Z71 4x4, Leather, Loaded, local one owner, New tires, Nice!
- 2018 Toyota Prius 5 Door Hatchback only 60k miles, unbelievable fuel mileage super nice!
- 2015 Ford F150 Supercre 4wd Platinum with only 89k miles, leather, pano sunroof, navi, sharp!
- 2015 Nissan Frontier 4x4 Crew Cab SI Pkge, 6 cyl, Auto, Sunroof, leather, like new
- 2011 Buick Lacrosse OXL, Local tradein, leather, chrome wheels, red and sharp!
- 2011 Chev Suburban LT, local tradein, leather, family size, Clean
- 2012 GMC YukonXL, SLT Pkge, DVD, sunroof, rear camera, 2nds row blts



2014 GMC Yukon SLT
Leather, Low miles, 3rd Row, Clean



2013 JEEP Wrangler Sport
6 Speed, Low miles, lady driven, small lift



2010 Honda Accord EXL
Sunroof, Leather, Low miles, Xtra nice



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MDOT winter weather advice for Mississippians

Special to Wesson News

With cooler conditions likely to arrive in the Magnolia State in the coming months, the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), says its prepared to respond to winter weather, extreme cold events and rapid change in weather conditions.

“As we’ve seen in recent years, winter weather and extreme cold events can strike with little warning and are capable of impacting Mississippi highways for multiple days,” says Brad White, MDOT Executive Director. “MDOT crews and personnel are trained and prepared to fight conditions to keep Mississippi highways open and passable as much as possible during winter weather events.”

Different materials are used for specific winter weather events. Salt brine can be sprayed on the dry road surfaces to help prevent ice formation on travel lanes. If the roads are already wet, granular salt can be applied to help prevent the formation of ice by lowering the freezing point of water. Sand and slag can also be spread to help improve traction in slushy conditions.

While MDOT is prepared to monitor road conditions and keep highways passable, it advises motorists to also prepare for winter weather. Before loading up to travel during the winter months, MDOT offers these tips on vehicle maintenance:

- Have your vehicle battery and charging system checked for optimum performance.
- Clean, flush and put new antifreeze in your vehicle’s cooling system.
- Get your brakes checked to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Make sure the heater, defroster and windshield wipers are good to go for the winter.

Creating a winter weather kit to keep in the car in case of a winter weather emergency can be a lifesaver, MDOT says. While its crews will be working to keep roads passable, sometimes conditions can overwhelm available resources, and cars can be on the highways for long periods. Here are some important components of a winter weather kit:

- Windshield scraper.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Jumper cables.
- Bottled water and snacks.
- Extra blankets.

“In Mississippi winter weather is often unpredictable,” says White. “Always have a plan, monitor road conditions and follow guidance from your local weather officials to remain safe.”

For more information on how to prepare for winter weather, visit GoMDOT.com/winter. For real-time road conditions on Mississippi’s highways and bridges, download the MDOT Traffic mobile app, visit MDOTtraffic.com and follow @MississippiDOT on Facebook and X (former Twitter).



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Library display helped holiday decorators

Special to Wesson News

Locals looking for creative holiday décor ideas could get started at a month-long display in December at Wesson Public Library. Friends of the Library set up the display of seasonal decor shared by folk around town from their personal collections of ornaments, lighting and other items they use in their own homes and on properties.

Dr. Steven Liverman coordinated the exhibit including:

- Christmas quilts from Jacque Coons, Frances Taylor and Marilyn Britt, who shared two that her mother Elene Hutson handcrafted.

- A decorated Christmas tree adorned by library manager Ann Clark.
- A Christmas wagon and decorated Christmas tree from Violet Corrales.
- An angel grouping featuring two very large ones from Violet Corrales, stained glass and miniature ones from Sonya Cowen and trumpet angels from Billy Sturdivant.
- A large painted egg from other library décor complemented the angel grouping.
- Nutcrackers and a cranberry stand from Marilyn Britt.
- Garlands from Terri Bath and Violet Corrales.
- A nativity scene from Kim Roberts.
- Grinch items near the library front desk from Violet Corrales.



Making boxed food come alive

Ingredients:

Family sized box of Zatarains Jambalaya, which includes a rice mix with vegetables and spices.

4-5 chicken leg quarters

1 lb. of your favorite smoked sausage cut

2 cups of finally chopped onions

2 tbsp. minced or chopped garlic

1 cup of chopped bell peppers

½ cup of uncooked rice (NEVER instant rice)

2 tbsp. of butter (a quarter cup for a moister meal)

Directions:

1. Cover chicken with water seasoned with 1 tbsp. of salt, 1 teasp. of your favorite pepper and a cap of crab boil. Boil for 45 minutes.
2. Remove chicken, cool and debone. Save the flavored broth resulting from boiling the chicken in the seasoned water.
3. In a 4-6 quart stock pot, sautee the onions, bell peppers and garlic in 2 tbsp. of butter, stirring as needed.
4. Add 4 ½ cups of the flavored chicken broth on top of the sauteed onions-bell peppers-garlic mix. Add the boxed food and extra uncooked rice and simmer on a low-fire for 20 minutes or until the rice is cooked. Add a quarter cup of butter for greater moisture, if desired.
5. When rice is half done, stir in sausage cuts. Five minutes before rice is cooked, stir in the chicken.
6. Monitor rice. Add water in ½ cup measures as needed until it is fully cooked.

Serves at least eight persons.

By Guest Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

Busy people on tight budgets these days turn to boxed foods for convenient preparation of meals. With minimal effort, you can tweak your preparation of these meals to 5-star restaurant level, recalling those grandma used to make.

There's a saying that grandma could cook old shoes and you would want seconds. That's what I am talking about when I speak about making boxed food come alive.

Jambalaya, a favorite Southern meal that traces to the 18th century when Spanish settlers around New Orleans in southern Louisiana tried to recreate paella with Louisiana ingredients, is an example. This is how to turn a jambalaya boxed mix into a meal worthy of music festivals, Mardi Gras parties and quiet weeknight dinners.



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

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153 graduate after fall term

Co-Lin graduated 153 students in its fall 2023 class. The graduates, who received degrees or certificates, listed with their home towns were:

- Agricola, Mississippi: Kaden Alexis Garner. Anchorage, Alaska: Hannah Ruth Warren.

Ball, Louisiana: Amery Lewis Edwards.

Batesville, Mississippi: Tajavious Alvonte Cotton.

Beulah, Mississippi: Shamyira Moena Huff.

Bogue Chitto, Mississippi: Jacob Shown Lester, Kylee Parker Posey and Samuel Grady Redd.

Bolton, Mississippi: Kevontay S. Wells.

Brandon, Mississippi: Madison Alyse Crain and Macayla Nicole Douglas.

Braxton, Mississippi: Makaylin E. Cuellar.

Brookhaven, Mississippi : Samuel Dawson Edwards, Cameron Lee Emfinger, Naya Nicole Fleming, Tyler Rayburn Fortenberry, Kaytlin Renee Humphreys, Myuhna Johnson, Abby Kate Magee, Serena Trinette McClung, Dakeidra Antreal Mitchell, Trinity Nykeisha Watson and Pedro J. Wilson.

Bude, Mississippi: Serencia Martin.

Byram, Mississippi: Ariyah C. King and Zavion Patrick Shaw.

Centreville, Mississippi: Quantis Rochelle Griffin. Clinton, Mississippi: Octavia Jnay Adams and William Eric Ivester.

Collins, Mississippi: Kaden M. Dukes and Haley Elizabeth Williamson.

Columbus, Mississippi: Elijah Short.

Crystal Springs, Mississippi: Johnnie Darcea Daniels and Chandler Isaac Parker.

Fayette, Mississippi: Zaria Dejorion Monroe, De'Arbony D. Parker and Zakyeria M. Thomas.

Ferriday, Louisiana: James Tillman Jacobs.

Florence, Mississippi: Daniel Joseph Conville and Madison Holt.

Georgetown, Mississippi: Amaria Amya Collins, T'myah Nimyjanee Denson and Mikyla Harper.

Gloster, Mississippi: Keundra Shantrice Anderson and Alana Antoinae Wilson.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi: Kenya N. Wilson. Hazlehurst, Mississippi: Kimberly Nicole Ayers, Patricia Kaye Claiborne, Justeena Grace Sandifer and Angela Burch Shannon.

Houma, Louisiana: Oryan James.

Jackson, Mississippi: Ladainian Davis, Sharman Holmes and Mekhi Omiyo Mayweather.

Jayess, Mississippi: Halle Claire Harvey and Jaslynn Lashay White.

Jonesville, Louisiana: Herman Kendell Seltzer.

La Vergne, Tennessee: Adrian Huey.

Laurel, Mississippi: Carlos Lorenzo Martin.

Liberty, Mississippi: Hailey B. Etheridge.

Lorman, Mississippi: Lafaita Cherie Evans and Jordan D. Lowe. Mabank, Texas: Billy Jay Pullen.

Madison, Mississippi: Thomas Ladd Dyess.

Magee, Mississippi: Jamaal Rashad Dinkins, Dakota Cortez Lofton, Marley Belle Lott, Lydia Denyce McGee and Lauren Elizabeth Teater.
- McComb, Mississippi: Araial Samone Campbell and Samuel F. Reese.

Mendenhall, Mississippi: Julia Alyssa Allbritton, Jaylen Kejuan Hicks, Marya Yolanda Hobbs, William Roland Kindrex, Meredith Riley Mangum, Loren Alesha Mauldin, Justin Lane Russell, Mykel Lee Thornton and Dvonshay Quintoria Wilson.

Mize, Mississippi: Madison Haleigh Frith and Brittany Nicole Layton.

Monticello, Mississippi: Lysie Blair Thompson.

Mount Olive, Mississippi: Blaine Adams Coker.

Natchez, Mississippi: Lagarian Raynard Bridgewater, Rameria Denise Burks, Kimberly Keshawn Chatmon, Jonathan Ricardo Cook, Abbie Alexandra Dill, Nicholas Scout Earls, Hannah Elisabeth Edwards, Chelsey Alexandria Ellis, Tirrany Lashea Gurley, Elene Grace Harrigill, Janeisha Hunt, Jaimya Zakia Jenkins, Shanice L. Kennedy, Hunter Nycole Knight, Mallory Anne Lees, Mary Shantia Moore, Deontae Lee Edward Owens, Jerilyn Shanta Owens, Anjelica Symone Proby, Tiffany Chantel Smith, Destiny Chance Turner, Marquita Danielle Wallace, Jaylon Terrelle West and Peyton Warren Wilson.

New Orleans, Louisiana: Jahron Manning. Oakvale, Mississippi: Janiya Mikayle Johnson. Pereira, Colombia: Manuel Lopez Wolff.

Pinola, Mississippi: James Thomas Bryant and Jonathan Scott Easterling.

Prentiss, Mississippi: Abigail Lora Burkett and Lashonda Graves

Richland, Mississippi: Benjamin Jesus Hernandez and Angela Rene Ryan.

Ridgecrest, Louisiana: Rayven E. Johnson.

Ridgeland, Mississippi: Richard Lee Mays.

Roxie, Mississippi: Sherrell Amara Doss, Daeldrew J. Stampley and Zorria E. Wilson.

Ruth, Mississippi: Laith Xavier Elrai, Caleb Joseph Moree and Alexis Leonna Pittman.

Sardis, Mississippi: Brandon Lee Wallace.

Silver Creek, Mississippi: Rileigh Laidyn Martin.

Snellville, Georgia: Dakota Thomas.

Sontag, Mississippi: Halle Jordan Alexander,

Summit, Mississippi: Kimberly Mae Coon and Faith Danielle Dickerson.

Sumrall, Mississippi: Ayla Rose Alford and Caden Blake Dedeaux.

Tailorsville, Mississippi: Dedric L. Hicks.

Vicksburg, Mississippi: Brandon Michael Gilliam.

Vidalia, Louisiana: Christopher Ryan Harper, Lewaylon Amald Lloyd, Brittany Nicole Straha and Kelsee Rose White.

Walker, Louisiana: Sadie Elizabeth Smith.

Waterproof, Louisiana: Dyniasti Roeshael Roby.

Waveland, Mississippi: Kurtai Fantasia Mitchell.

Wesson, Mississippi: Chloe Grace Aaron, Benson Brown Armstrong, Jakyle Pauvion Brown, Akeem Ahmad Harried, Kayla Brooke Oberschmidt, Lacey Caroline Smith, Suzanna Grace Smith, Rayanna Lynn West and Candace Alayna Westrope

Woodville, Mississippi: Latoya M. Carter. Yazoo City, Mississippi: Christopher Alexander Burnett.

Writer chronicles daily miracles

Special to Wesson News

In two recent books, a Crystal Springs woman chronicles how people with debilitating illnesses and disabilities struggle successfully with the help of others to enjoy fulfilling lives.

Ordinary Miracles, by Dorothy (Dot) Ainsworth Day, tells 61 stories of 26 Southern writers, including herself, who live with daily miracles to confront and overcome the challenges of their varied situations. *Battles, Glimpses of Truth*, published in November, continues to tell the stories of others.

Since 1995, Day, a teacher and family therapist as well as a writer, has had to adjust the way she lives many times with the progression of Inclusion Body Myositis -- a late on-set muscular dystrophy.

Ordinary Miracles "pays homage to the helpers -- the miracle workers of the ordinary acts making life a little better for each of us," Day wrote. "May their examples inspire us."

Day's miracles have come through the help of a friend, Barbara Grillot Gaddy. When her limitations made it impossible for her to type, Day partnered with Gaddy, a former business instructor and communications manager, who has assisted her in her writing and publishing tasks.

Ordinary Miracles and its sequel can be purchased directly from Day via email at dotdaypathways@gmail.com or by phone at 601-320-9473, from Gaddy at bgrillot1949@gmail.com or 228-369-0963; or through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Apple ebooks. Signed copies are available at Clear Creek Flowers & Gifts in Crystal Springs, Alfred's on the Square in Hazlehurst, Lorelei Book in Vicksburg and Lemurie Books in Jackson.

A portion of the profit from Day's books support Christian mission work in India through Agape Mission-India, led by Sam and Jerry Varghese of Brookhaven.



Special to Wesson News

Clark retiring from public library

Special to Wesson News

After 10 years as Wesson Public Library (WPL) manager, Ann Clark is retiring.

Clark, who will leave her job on February 29, says she will spend a lot of time practicing her life-long passion -- sewing -- in retirement. "I do baby stuff," she says simply.

Clark came to WPL after working 16 years at Precious Moments Day Care. A 1978 graduate of Wesson Co-Lin High School before Wesson Attendance Center, she started her working days in Wesson as a teaching assistant for five years with kindergarteners.

She is married to Michael Clark, who is a supervisor at West Lake Plastics in the Copiah County Industrial Park at Gallman.

"I have loved working people and helping them use Wesson Public Library resources," Clark says. "I will miss it."



Wesson News

Copiah County Sheriff's Office Job Fair



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2015 F150 Platinum Supercrew
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2008 JEEP Wrangler Unlimited 4wd
Auto, Low miles, One owner, PW, PL, cruise, NICE!



2013 Chev Silverado X-Cab
LWB, one owner, low miles, 5.3 V8

- 2008 Honda S2000, Rare find, only 57,000 miles, fast, fun and furious!
- 2013 Chevrolet Silverado LT Pkge, Xcab, LWB, only 102k miles, PW, PL, tilt, cruise, dont miss it!
- 1996 Harley Davidson Heritage Softail, only 1800 miles, many many custom parts, garage kept, like new
- 2006 Mazda mx5 miata convertible, 5 speed, air, power windows, Fun Fun at a bargain price!
- 2018 Ford F150 SuperCrew XLT Sport 4x4, Ruby Red w/black, Sharpest truck around
- 2012 Ford Fusion (2 to choose) both have low mileage, and are super clean w/great gas mileage
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Planning for new gardening year



By Guest Columnist Eddie Smith

As we embark on a new year, gardeners and plant enthusiasts alike are gearing up for a fresh season of growth, color and the promise of a bountiful harvest.

Whether you're a seasoned green-thumb gardener or a novice with dreams of a flourishing garden, the new year is the perfect time to sow the seeds of your botanical aspirations.

Before you plunge hands first into the soil, take a moment to reflect on your successes and challenges of the past growing season. Consider what worked well and what could be improved. Use this reflection as a foundation for your gardening resolutions and plans for the new year.

What do you hope to achieve with your garden this year? Whether it's enhancing curb appeal, growing your own vegetables, creating a haven for pollinators or simply enjoying a more colorful landscape, clearly define your goals. Setting specific objectives will guide your plant choices and gardening activities.

I always like to make the new year an opportunity to diversify my garden. If you feel like trying something new, explore new plant varieties, colors and textures to add interest and complexity to your outdoor space. Consider incorporating native plants that are well-suited to your region. This promotes biodiversity and supports the local ecosystems.

Develop a planting calendar tailored to your local climate and growing zone. Research the optimal times for planting different types of plants, considering frost dates, temperature fluctuations and seasonal changes. This strategic approach makes it possible for you to create a garden that remains in a constant state of bloom and productivity.

Healthy soil is the foundation for a thriving garden; be sure to conduct a soil test to assess its composition and nutrient levels. Based on the

results, amend your soil with nutrients and organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure. Healthy soil provides the necessary nutrients and structure for plants to flourish.

Consider making a commitment to incorporate some sustainable practices in your garden. You can reduce your environmental footprint by composting kitchen and garden waste, using organic fertilizers or minimizing the use of chemical pesticides.

These steps can help you create a garden that not only flourishes aesthetically but also harmonizes with the natural ecosystem. Gardening is a journey of continuous learning. Dedicate time to expand your horticultural knowledge through books, online resources and local gardening events. Stay informed about new gardening techniques, plant varieties and sustainable practices. This allows you to evolve as a knowledgeable and skilled gardener.

Remember the Mississippi State University Extension Service has offices in every county and staff to assist you in becoming a successful gardener. Visit your local Extension office to see what resources are available to you.

I truly believe that with thoughtful planning, sustainable practices and a spirit of continuous learning, you'll cultivate a garden that not only thrives in the new year but also brings joy and fulfillment every season. Happy gardening!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Eddie Smith is a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. He is also host of the popular Southern Gardening television programs. Locate Southern Gardening products online at <http://extension.msstate.edu/shows/southern-gardening>.



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Appointees, drilling, marijuana tests, clinic

Special to Wesson News

Education Board names superintendent. The Mississippi State Board of Education has named Dr. Lance Evans, the superintendent of the New Albany School District, as the next state superintendent of education to serve as the chief administrative officer of the state Department of Education. Evans will succeed Dr. Ray Morgigno, who is serving as interim state superintendent of education through June 30, 2024. The job was previously held by Carey Wright, who retired in 2022. Evans has spent 24 years working in education and is the 2023 Mississippi Association of School Administrators' Superintendent of the Year. He has led the New Albany School District since 2017 and worked as a teacher, coach and administrator in the Oxford and Itawamba County school districts. Senate confirmation during the 2024 legislative session is required to complete the appointment.

New economic development leader. Governor Tate Reeves has appointed Bill Cork as the new executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority. "We are committed to expanding our economy, driving further growth, raising wages, and bringing in more jobs for the people of Mississippi," Reeves said. Cork previously served as the deputy director of the agency. Before working in state government, he worked at the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission, the Texarkana Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Sempra Energy Solutions. Cork's appointment still needs to go before the Mississippi Senate for confirmation, but he can serve in the post until the confirmation hearing.

Drilling rights bids. Oil companies have offered \$382 million for drilling rights in the Gulf of Mexico after courts rejected the Biden administration's plans to scale back the sale to protect an endangered whale species. Companies, including Chevron, Hess and BP, offered bids on more than 300 parcels covering 2,700 square miles. The dollar amount of the successful bids marked a sharp increase from the previous sale in March 2023, when the Interior Department awarded leases covering about 2,500 square miles for \$250 million. The lease sale was required under a compromise with Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a supporter of the oil and gas industry who cast the deciding vote in favor of the landmark climate law. Under the terms negotiated by Manchin, the government must offer at least 60 million acres of offshore oil and gas leases in any one-year period before it can offer offshore wind leases that are part of its strategy to fight climate change. Holly Hopkins, API vice president of upstream policy, called the sale "a positive step after multiple delays," and noted that it generated the highest dollar value for bids in nearly a decade. The results demonstrate that the oil and gas industry "is working to meet growing demand and investing in the nation's long-term energy security," Hopkins said.

Retesting marijuana products. The Mississippi State Department says "a large number" of medical marijuana products are on hold so they can be retested "to validate results related to the use of pesticides and presence of mycotoxins," which are produced by fungi. No illnesses from the products have been reported. The department is overseeing the new testing of the medical cannabis products in licensed testing facilities. "Through the state's seed-to-sale tracking system, the agency can isolate the batch and lot numbers associated with this administrative hold and expedite the retesting," said Laura Goodson, director of the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Program. "The tracking system is an invaluable tool to assist with regulatory compliance and overall product safety." Cannabis flower or bud was being tested first because it is the base for many of products, followed by concentrates and infused products. The department said as batches of products are cleared, the hold on those will be lifted and

the products will be back on the market.

Whistle blower rewards proposed. Mississippi State Auditor Shad White wants the 2024 state legislative session to enact whistleblower rewards that will motivate private citizens to come forward with information about corruption or theft of taxpayer funds. Rewards would come from funds retrieved if the information leads to an arrest and recovery. White's legislative priorities also include strengthening the Open Meetings Act so decisions made in illegal secret meetings are null and void, free community college for graduates of JROTC military programs in high schools and creating a study committee to explore basing funding to universities on awarding degrees that fit Mississippi's economy.

Pediatric clinic. By the end of the month, nurse practitioners Kayla Thomas and Amber Martin plan to open a Brookhaven pediatric clinic -- Ole Brook Kids -- to treat fevers, coughs, acute illnesses, minor injuries and simple wounds. Dr. Darren Scoggin of Jackson will be their physician partner. The clinic will be at 301-C U.S. 51 South. For the last five years, Thurman and Martin have shared a small office space and worked closely together. Martin and Thurman have 24 years and 11 years of pediatric experience respectively.

NEWS NUGGETS

FOL Quilt winner



Special to Wesson News

Mrs. Lanelle Wusterbarth of Brookhaven (left) accepts a quilt she won in Wesson Friends of the Library (FOL) raffle to raise funds for library projects. FOL member Violet Carrales, who sold her the winning ticket, offers congratulations. Mrs. Bobbie McCaffrey of Bogue Chitto donated the beautiful fan quilt to FOL for the raffle prize. The Friends of the Library appreciated the support of those who donated money through the raffle and encourage the public to use the resources of Wesson Public Library.

Takeout Food & Groceries

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New golfer



Special to Wesson News

Kolby Cox of Franklin County has signed with Co-Lin to play golf. "We're really looking forward to having Kolby with us," said Co-Lin Head Golf Coach Allen Kent. "He's got a solid swing and as with most golfers, it's the short game that really defines you. He's been working extremely hard refining his game. Kolby's a great kid and a good athlete. We believe he will thrive focusing on one sport."

Senior colleges sign 18 grididders

Special to Wesson News

Coming off the heels of one of the most successful seasons in program history, the Co-Lin Football team is celebrating the continuation of the careers of several sophomore members of the team. The Wolves had 18 sophomores sign with senior colleges in the early National Signing Day last month. The sophomores and colleges they have signed with are as follows:

- Johnnie Daniels (Crystal Springs, MS) – Mississippi State University
- Tyler Fortenberry (Brookhaven, MS) – Vanderbilt University
- Billy Pullen (Kaufman, Texas) – University of Louisiana Monroe
- Kevontay Wells (Jackson, MS) – University of Louisiana Monroe
- Quentis Griffin (Woodville, MS) – University of Louisiana Monroe
- Jahron Manning (New Orleans, LA) – Old Dominion University
- Navarion Benson (Crystal Springs, MS) – Louisiana Tech University
- DeVon Tott (Mandeville, LA) – Norfolk State University
- Carlos Martin (Laurel, MS) – Norfolk State University
- O'Ryan James (Houma, LA) – Mississippi Valley State University
- Richard Mays, Jr. (Ridgeland, MS) – Jackson State University
- Montra Edwards (Lexington, MS) – Florida A&M University
- Zane Hooper (Denham Springs, LA) – Southeastern Louisiana University
- Brandon Gilliam (Vicksburg, MS) – Alabama State University
- Christopher Burnett (Yazoo City, MS) – University of North Alabama
- Andrew Johnson (Olive Branch, MS) – Samford University
- Brandon Wallace (Batesville, MS) – University of West Alabama
- Kaden Dukes (Petal, MS) – Delta State University

The 2023 Co-Lin Wolves finished the season with an overall record of 10-2, hitting the 10-win mark for the second time in program history. The Wolves were also MACCC South Division Champions and won the C.H.A.M.P.S. Heart of Texas Bowl and finished the season ranked as the No. 4 team in the nation.

Four Wolves All-Region 23 NJCAA



Special to Wesson News

The National Junior Colleges Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Region 23 Team include four members of the Co-Lin football Wolves -- running back Johnnie Daniels, defensive lineman Billy Pullen, defensive back Navarion Benson and wide receiver Jaylen Smith.

- Daniels had a spectacular sophomore season that saw him finish with 1,253 yards on 183 carries for an average of 104.4 yards per game with 15 touchdowns. He averaged 6.8 yards per carry and had a longest rush of 88 yards, leading the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges Conference (MACCC) in all the statistical categories. The Crystal Springs native led the NJCAA in touchdowns and was second in yards, yards per game, and longest rush; third in carries and fifth in yards per carry. Daniels scored four rushing touchdowns in a single game twice this season and was named MACCC South Offensive Player of the Year, while gaining MACCC All-South First Team honors.
- Pullen made the most of his only season with the Wolves, turning in one of the best single seasons in program history. Pullen had 58 tackles averaging 4.8 per game with 17.5 tackles for loss including, 13 sacks, while also accounting for four forced fumbles, one interception, and two pass breakups during the season. The Kaufman, Texas, native led the MACCC in sacks, shared the conference lead in tackles for loss and forced fumbles, and was second in the NJCAA in sacks, tied for fifth in tackles for loss, and tied for the lead in forced fumbles. Pullen was named MACCC Defensive Player of the Week four times during the season, and was named the MACCC South Defensive Player of the Year, while garnering MACCC All-South First Team honors.
- Benson was an anchor for the Wolves secondary in his sophomore season. The Crystal Springs native finished the season with 41 total tackles for an average of 3.4 per game, while accounting for two interceptions, four pass breakups and four blocks on special teams. Benson also earned MACCC All-South First Team honors.
- Smith was the leader of the Wolves receiving corps, while also a factor in the return game all season. The Jacksonville, Florida, native led the team in receiving yards with 507, yards per game at 42.3 and touchdowns with four, while sharing the team lead in receptions at 39. Smith was sixth in the MACCC in receiving yards and seventh in receptions. He earned two spots on the MACCC All-South Teams taking first team receiver honors and honorable mention honors as a returner.

The 2023 Co-Lin Football team had a season for the record books finishing 10-2 overall, 5-1 in MACCC South Division play and winning ten games for just the second time in program history. The Wolves started the season with two wins, including an upset of East Mississippi, then ranked eighth nationally, for Head Coach Glenn Davis' 100th career win at Co-Lin. The Wolves then lost on the road at Jones and rattled off seven straight wins, including a road upset of Mississippi Gulf Coast, then ranked fourth nationally. The Wolves beat Northwest Mississippi, ranked tenth nationally, in the MACCC semifinals before falling to East Mississippi, ranked sixth in the nation at the time, in the MACCC Championship game. The Wolves capped the season with a win over Navarro, ranked tenth nationally, in the Heart of Texas Bowl.