

Wolves softball to play full schedule

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The Co-Lin gridders will play a full schedule again this year.

After last year's altered schedule due to COVID-19, in which the Wolves played three of six South Division opponents, Co-Lin football will return to normal with a nine-game schedule, including six division games and three non-division games.

The Wolves will open the season with two away games - the first at Northwest Mississippi in Senatobia on September 2 at 7 p.m., followed by Itawamba in Fulton on September 9 at 6:30 p.m.

Co-Lin will host Southwest in its home opener on Thursday, September 16, at 6:30 p.m. and hit the road again on September 23. when it faces Pearl River at Poplarville at 7 p.m. On Thursday, October 7, the Wolves return to Stone Stadium for a meeting with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Bulldogs at 6:30 p.m. The Wolves will travel to Decatur



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on October 17 to take on East Central at 6:30 p.m.

The last two games of the season will be at home, as the Wolves host East Mississippi on October 21 and Jones College on October 28 for homecoming.

Both games will start at 6:30 p.m. The entire Wolves' schedule can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3xFFusX>.

All four home games will be streamed live on the Co-Lin athletic website at www.colinathletics.com, courtesy of

the Co-Lin electronics, technology and sports information departments.

For more information on Co-Lin's athletic teams, follow @colinathletics on Twitter, [facebook.com/colinathletics](https://www.facebook.com/colinathletics), or visit colinathletics.com.

Amtrak pushing for Gulf Coast passenger route

Special to Wesson News

Amtrak has gained some access to the freight-owned tracks it needs to begin a Gulf Coast passenger route, but whether Amtrak's desired January 1 start date will go on as planned is still unclear.

Despite an ongoing battle through a federal transportation board, freight operators have given Amtrak limited access to their properties on the Gulf Coast. The agreement, outlined in letters given to the board, allows Amtrak workers on freight-owned property to survey and prepare for the possible Gulf Coast route.

But the parties are still far from agreeing to operate a passenger service that connects Mobile to New Orleans with four Mississippi stops. Amtrak filed a petition with the U.S. Surface Transportation Board in March, asking the board to step in after years of failed negotiations over the route.

Recently, Amtrak again pushed the



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board to speed up its decision making so it can begin the route in 2022.

“Amtrak respectfully renews its request for expedited treatment of its

application,” Amtrak wrote in a filing dated July 6.

In that filing, Amtrak gave the board an update about the access agreement.

Amtrak also included copies of correspondence between itself and freight operator CSX Transportation.


Per the agreement, Amtrak now can access CSX property and personnel to survey what's needed to add a layover track in Mobile and repair stations in Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, Pascagoula and Mobile.

In its response to Amtrak, CSX still emphasized another study is needed about whether the route can handle the mix of passenger and freight traffic.

The necessity for more studies is one of many disputes between Amtrak and the freight companies that the transportation board will have to tackle in its decision. But when that decision may come is unknown.

A spokesman for the Surface Transportation Board said it does not comment on timeframes for decisions.


As of July 8, the transportation board had 65 separate filings from stakeholders, public officials and the railways to sift through.



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Wesson Garden Club announces honor yards for July



City Hall.

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Cilburn property.

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In July, Wesson Garden Club recognized landscaping efforts in four categories, honoring Ricky and Addie Erwin at 10923 Church Street (town residential), Danny and Julie Lowery at 4147 Highway 51 North (rural residential), David and Amanda Cliburn at 1024 Case Road (rural residential), City Hall at 1011 Spring Street (organizational), Hank and Paula Smith at 1034 Church Street (patriotic special) and Mike and Nancy King at 10041 Sylvarena Road (patriotic design). The awards, based on maintenance principles and elements of landscape design, seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry that values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor landscapes during the spring, summer and fall.



Erwin property.

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King property.

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Lowery property.

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Smith property.

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P.O. Box 1028
Wesson, MS 39191
601-990-3003
ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

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Publisher/Owner
Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

Editor

Bob Arnold

BobArnold@WessonNews.com

Designer

Brad Henderson

Designer@WessonNews.com

Special Contributors

Dr. Stephanie Duguid

Healthy Living

R. Shaw Furlow

Area Arts

Rebecca Bates

Tending Your Garden

Sales

Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

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ClayMansell@WessonNews.com

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Wesson Garden Club hosts Butterbean Day Camp

Special to Wesson News

After a year of isolation and "butterbeaning" only in their imaginations, Wesson's Youth Garden Club (The Butterbeans) kicked off summer with an exciting, action-packed day of learning and garden goodness. The Wesson Garden Club (WGC) hosted the butterbeans on June 17 at the Old Wesson School.

WGC Vice President Denise Jackson kicked off the morning with all things Bromeliads, specifically air plants. The leaves are spiky, no need for soil, and can be grown in a variety of locations. The Butterbeans planted their Bromeliads, a hardy plant requiring little attention, in their choice of a cow bone, cedar round or sea shell.

The Garden Club of Mississippi's Youth Coordinator, Allison Ashmore, led the Butterbean's next activity, creating nature banners by gluing, painting and drawing silhouettes of the beauty found in nature. The activity allowed the Butterbeans



Special to Wesson News

The Wesson Garden Club hosted a Butterbean Day Camp for area children.

to be expressive within their own creative minds.

During lunch, WGC member Robin Furr led the group's story time. *Nowhere Hair* by Sue Gladner and *Backyard Birding for Kids* by Fran Lee were then presented to the Wesson Public Library on behalf of the Wesson Garden Club.

Mississippi State University

Extension Service 4H Coordinator Melissa Morgan supplied each Butterbean with a clay pot, paint of all colors, and the liberty to get crafty. Instead of watching paint dry, Morgan engaged the Butterbeans with healthy snacking. She brought strawberry plants to demonstrate how strawberries grow and then made strawberry smoothies for

the Butterbeans to enjoy.

To wrap up the afternoon, each junior gardener planted flowers in their pots to take home.

Planting seeds within the children of the community is one mission of the Wesson Garden Club.

Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc. and The National Garden Clubs, Inc.



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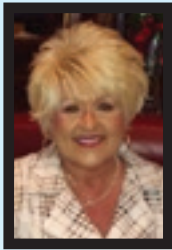


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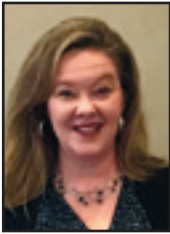
New school year challenges and opportunities to increase energy

By Guest Columnist Dr. Stephanie Duguid

August marks the time that school at every level is getting back into full swing. There can be several challenges and opportunities that arise during the first few weeks, especially on the heels of a pandemic. We will look at a few common challenges that most individuals involved in the schools (either as a parent, student or teacher) will experience which can create exhaustion. We will also discuss how a few changes in your daily routine can help you get more energy to be successful.

As the school year begins, remembering everything from school supplies, to back to school events, arranging drop off and pick up, and remembering lunches or lunch money can be a challenge, all while considering school safety and security. In fact, getting back into routine yourself takes a while, especially when you must learn a new schedule. We must get used to the early alarms, packing school bags, finishing homework, and getting to school on time with the right supplies, devices, and safety precautions.

Once the first day and week of excitement is over, kids realize they are back in the groove of school and find it even harder to get up and get ready each day, particularly as things adjust. There may be complaints that good friends are now separated in different classes, or that homework is a challenge. Finally, once school is over for the day, there are still difficulties with scheduling and



managing after school events and family responsibilities. All of this together can get extremely exhausting. The limitation is time and energy.

So, what can we do to recharge ourselves?

According to Consumer Reports on health, there are several things we can do throughout the day to help get all-day energy, not only today, but every day. Small changes throughout the day can boost your energy levels even after just a few weeks.

Stay hydrated. Dehydration, even in its mildest forms can zap energy, memory, and attention, according to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

In addition, dehydration can be confused for hunger. To compensate, make a point to drink water at regular intervals throughout the day beginning in the morning. Water is essential in most of our body functions! Focus on water rather than sugary drinks, energy drinks, and other quick fixes.

In the afternoon, **get moving!** Physical activity is a powerful antidote for fatigue and can get the endorphins flowing. Even twenty minutes of low intensity aerobic exercise three times a week can reduce fatigue by sixty-five percent over a period of six

weeks. Take the stairs rather than the elevator, park farther away from the building, and take a walk around campus at lunch for starters.

In the morning, **let the sunshine in.** The brain makes melatonin, the hormone that



causes sleepiness, when it is dark. Morning light helps stop the production of melatonin.

Exposing yourself to light during the day can keep your sleep-wake cycle synchronized and helps combat daytime sleepiness. This will help everyone wake up each morning. In addition, exposure to sunlight helps make Vitamin D, which is essential for boosting your immune system. However, be sure to protect

yourself from excessive skin exposure by using sun screen or sun protected clothing.

Avoid sipping caffeinated coffee and tea in the afternoon and focus on decaffeinated versions. Most people feel they need a pick-me-up later

in the afternoons. However, consuming a stimulant late in the afternoon can disrupt sleep when consumed even six hours before bedtime. Please also avoid quick boosts of caffeine from other sources, including “energy shots” and energy drinks. These can be very dangerous over time, leading to high blood pressure, heart issues, dehydration, kidney challenges, and anxiety.

Eat more mini-meals. Eating smaller meals throughout the day will keep your energy up. Focus on natural, unprocessed foods and drinks rather than processed and packaged food, sodas and sugary beverages. Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables, Greek yogurt with berries, and drink plenty of water.

Finally, **take a tech break.** During the day, walk away from technology for a few minutes at a time. Even a small break will recharge your mind. In the evening, try to power down. This means dim the lights, turn off the TV, and put away the smartphones, computers, and other electronic devices at least one hour before bedtime to help your brain trigger the production of melatonin. Your brain will not shut down unless you prepare it to do so. Ideally, you should avoid having televisions in bedrooms or places of rest. You will find the quality of your sleep will improve over time with this practice.

Simple steps and a few changes to our daily routine can help combat exhaustion not only for you, but for those around you. I encourage you to review your daily habits to see what positive changes you can make. Here's to a great year!



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Kyzar named Col-Lin sports information coordinator



Kevin Kyzar

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Kevin Kyzar has been named Copiah-Lincoln Community College's sports information coordinator. Kyzar will assist with the overall operation of the sports information department, promoting all ten sponsored sports that compete in the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges (MACJC) and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). In addition, he will assist in production of media guides, planning annual press and media relations goals, writing and distribution of press/media releases, writing feature stories, handling all media requests to the department, collaborating with coaches on all information requests, and compiling records and statistics for all sports.

"I am excited to have someone with Kevin's knowledge and experience join my staff," said Director of Public Relations and sports Information Natalie Davis. "He will be an asset to myself and our coaches."

An Ellisville native, Kyzar is a graduate of the University of Southern

Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in mass communication and journalism with an emphasis in broadcast journalism. He also holds a master's degree in Sports Administration from Belhaven University and an associate's degree from Jones College.

Prior to coming to Co-Lin, Kyzar worked as a graduate assistant at Belhaven University in the athletics communication office where he was responsible for assisting with the day-to-day operations.

During his time at Jones, Kyzar was the statistician for the Bobcats baseball team. He was a member of the student government association, Baptist Student Union, and a member of the Maroon Typhoon Marching Band. He also served in a leadership position within the Baptist Student Union at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Kyzar received sportswriting awards in during his time with the *Laurel-Leader Call* and has worked in various sport media outlets including newspaper, radio, and websites throughout the Pine Belt area.

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Co-Lin Lady Wolves named the NJCAA All-Academic Team of the Year



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The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) recently announced the 2020-21 Co-Lin women's tennis team has earned NJCAA All-Academic Team of the Year honors. The Lady Wolves posted the highest team grade point average of 3.9 and share the title with Mohawk Valley Community College (New York).

"I am extremely proud of this team for achieving much success on and off the court," said Co-Lin head coach Dana Hale. "Our tennis program focuses on a well-rounded student-athlete, and I feel that each of our players contributed to our team's remarkable stats."

Members of the women's tennis team are Britany Barnett, Meagan Poole, Morgyn Brister, Paige Shedd and Gracee Warren, all of Brookhaven; Susana Patino of Bogota, Colombia; Gracie Phillips from Crystal Springs; Madison Shows of Mendenhall; and Isabella Chella of Pretoria, South Africa.

"It was a great job in the classroom and on the court for this group," said Co-Lin athletic director Bryan Nobile. "To compete in the national tournament and have the nation's highest team GPA tells you what a special group Coach Hale put together this season."

The Lady Wolves finished the 2021 season in third place in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Region 23 Tournament which qualified the team for a spot in the NJCAA Division I Women's Tennis Championship held in Mesa, Arizona.

In addition, Co-Lin had seven teams to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Those teams include softball (3.68 GPA), men's tennis (3.55 GPA), women's soccer (3.4 GPA), men's soccer (3.31 GPA), baseball (3.21 GPA), golf (3.2 GPA) and women's basketball (3.19 GPA).

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MDOT introduces “The Extra Mile” podcast

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The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) recently introduced “The Extra Mile” podcast. This podcast is aimed at taking Mississippi’s traveling public behind the scenes of transportation infrastructure in the state.

“There is so much that happens here at MDOT, especially behind the scenes, that many people never hear about; our agency has so many moving parts, from project planning and bidding, intermodal, traffic control, our digital messaging signs, and they all work together in different ways to keep the traveling public safe and moving,” said MDOT Executive Director Brad White. “We believe this podcast will answer many transportation questions and help Mississippians better understand how MDOT works.”

“The Extra Mile” focuses on ongoing projects happening throughout the state, MDOT’s role in severe weather, travel resources available for the public, technology’s role in transportation, work zone safety and much more. There will also be interviews with MDOT employees and leaders, and transportation infrastructure stakeholders outside of the agency.

MDOT Executive Director Brad White is the first guest on

the podcast.

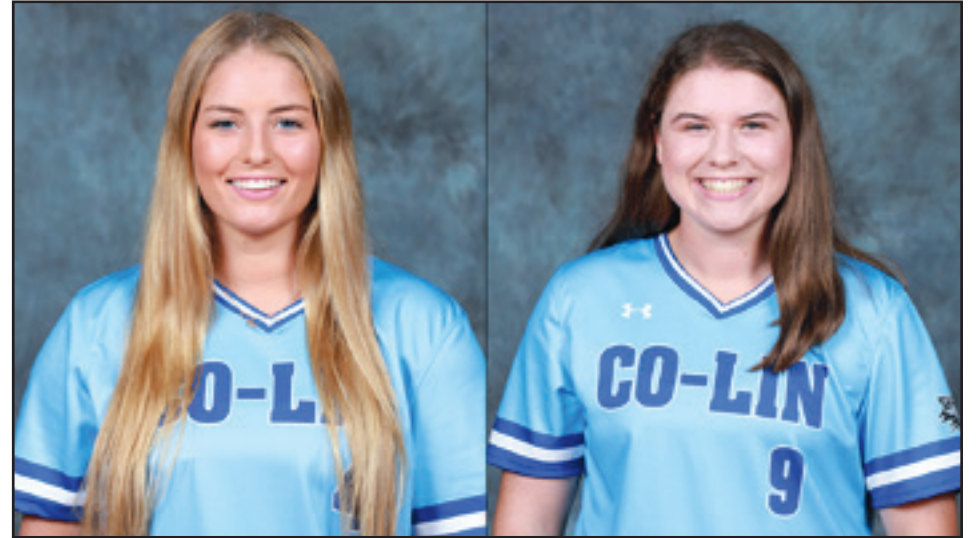
“The Extra Mile” is available for subscription and/or download wherever



podcasts can be found. For more information on “The Extra Mile” visit www.extramilepodcast.transistor.fm

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) is responsible for providing a safe intermodal transportation network that is planned, designed, constructed and maintained in an effective, cost-efficient and environmentally sensitive manner. MDOT’s objective is to maximize taxpayer’s dollars by providing a safe, efficient multimodal network that enhances economic stability and growth. For more information, visit GoMDOT.com.

Co-Lin players named softball All-Americans.



Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin’s Carlon Brabham, left, and Cera Blanchard, right, were named NJCAA Division II Second Team All-Americans.

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin’s Carlon Brabham and Cera Blanchard continue to receive postseason honors. The pair have been named 2021 National Junior College Athletic Association’s (NJCAA) Division II Second Team All-Americans.

Brabham, a sophomore from Amite, Louisiana, led the team in batting average (.449), home runs (18), RBIs (63), hits (61), slugging percentage (.912) and on base percentage (.506). The Lady Wolves third baseman was second on the team with nine doubles and 20 walks. Brabham was named Mississippi Association of Community College Conference (MACCC) First Team All-Conference, National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-South Region First Team, and NJCAA All-Region 23.

Blanchard, a freshman pitcher from Metairie, Louisiana, was third in the NJCAA with a 1.55 ERA. She was 15-4 on the season with 16 complete games, 140.1 innings pitched, 138 strikeouts, and 47 walks. At the plate, Blanchard was second on the team with a .470 on base percentage. She batted .367 with three home runs, 40 hits, eight doubles and .541 slugging percentage. Blanchard was also named Mississippi Association of Community College Conference (MACCC) First Team All-Conference and National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-South Region Second Team, and NJCAA All-Region 23.

The Lady Wolves, coached by Meleah Howard, finished the 2021 season with a 32-11 overall record and a 22-6 conference record.

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Garden Club members attend workshop



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Pictured (l to r) are, seated: Jennifer Peets and Denise Jackson; and standing: Debbie Hoaglin, Debbie Smith, Dixie Thornton, Natchez Trace District Director, Carla Stringer and Jean Ricks.

Special to Wesson News

The Garden Club of Jackson recently hosted the Natchez Trace District spring workshop at the Country Club of Jackson. In attendance on behalf of Wesson Garden Club (WGC) were Denise Jackson, Debbie Hoaglin, Jennifer Peets, Jean Ricks, Debbie Smith and Dixie Thornton.

The ladies of Wesson Garden Club enjoyed a luncheon and attended several informative presentations. The Garden Clubs of Mississippi President, Pat Young, and Executive Secretary, Angelia Wade, held workshops for those in attendance. Additionally, workshops were presented by members of The Garden Club of Jackson.

Wesson Garden Club is a member of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc. and The National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Wesson News

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Mississippi makes improvements in access to justice

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi has made great improvements in providing legal access for the poor in civil disputes, yet there is still much work to do, leaders of the Access to Justice Commission said at the Commission's Fifteenth Anniversary celebration held recently.

Mississippi moved from last in the nation in 2016 to thirty-fourth out of fifty-two jurisdictions on the Justice Index survey which was released in May. An even greater gain was rising to fourteenth in how the state assists self-represented litigants – up from next to last only four years ago. The improvements ranked the state as seventh in the nation for overall progress, said Access to Justice Executive Director Nicole McLaughlin of Tupelo. The survey, conducted by the National Center for Access to Justice at Fordham Law School, is a measure of 163 access to justice best practices in the fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

McLaughlin said, "If we are moving up in the survey, we are helping people."



Special to Wesson News

Chancellor and Access to Justice Commission Co-Chair Jacqueline Mask pictured second from left.

NCAJ National Center for Access to Justice

Chancellor Jacqueline Mask of Tupelo, Access to Justice Commission Co-Chair, said. "It surely is encouraging to see the numbers. I believe we are truly making a difference in the lives of so many people. We have to continue to move forward."

Co-Chair Rodger Wilder of Gulfport said fifteen years of work is beginning

to show progress. "This is a great achievement for the Commission. I am proud of what we have done."

Chief Justice Mike Randolph of Hattiesburg read from the Supreme Court's En Banc order of June 28, 2006, which created the Access to Justice Commission: "This Court is committed to the principle that justice should be available to

all persons without regard to economic status."

Chief Justice Randolph thanked current and former Commission members. "Today we are recognizing you all for doing something about it," he said.

Justice Dawn Beam of Sumrall, a member of the Access to Justice Commission, said it's easy to be numbed to a last place ranking. "We get so used to being fiftieth that it doesn't even move us." One in four Mississippians lives in poverty, forty-five percent of Black children live in poverty, and 22.9 percent of children are food deprived. At some point, they are hungry. "That should move all of us not just to tears, but to action," she said. "We cannot be satisfied with where we are. We have to move onward."

The National Center for Access to Justice ranked states in four civil justice policy areas: attorney access, self-help, language access and disability access. The 2021 Justice Index also included for the first time a separate criminal justice ranking dedicated to curbing excessive reliance on fines and fees.

MPA to hold annual convention in Florida

Special to Wesson News

The Eighty-fourth Annual Mississippi Poultry Association Convention is just around the corner, and the Mississippi Poultry Association (MPA) invites all to join them at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa on the Emerald Coast of Destin, Florida.

The yearly event kicks-off Thursday, September 16, and runs through Sunday, September 19. On the agenda are multiple industry speakers, business sessions, a golf tournament and a fishing tournament, as well as a special ladies program with guest speaker Jackson television personality and author Barbie Bassett.

MPA was formed in 1937 to promote the health of the state's poultry flock. Mississippi produces about 750 million birds per year. The poultry industry in Mississippi has grown to be the fifth largest in

the nation and exports about twenty percent of its production to more than seventy countries around the globe. Poultry is Mississippi's largest agricultural industry and the MPA represents all aspects of the industry.

The association offers educational seminars for its members and seeks to educate the public and government officials about the value of the industry to Mississippi. Even as the Mississippi Poultry industry has grown to have a global impact, the concerns remain, bird health, producing a healthful product and ensuring a vibrant industry.

With \$3 billion paid to growers and direct employment of 28,500 people, the industry has a total impact on Mississippi's economy of \$20 billion, according to the National Chicken Council and the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association.

That same report estimates the industry pays \$1.5 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

In addition to the 1,700 family-



run poultry farms around the state, Mississippi has fifty processing plants, hatcheries, feed mills and egg farms. These businesses interact with banks, real estate firms, insurance agencies, farm supply stores, grain farmers, plant and poultry house equipment

manufacturers who are allied members of the association.

Registration fees are broken down into three categories: the Formula/Allied member's single or couple registration fee at \$375; the non-member single or couple registration fee at \$475; and the MPA grower member's single or couple fee at \$50. MPA accepts Master Card, Visa, American Express and Discover credit cards. A \$100 late registration fee will be charged on registrations received after

August 31, 2021.

Visit MPA 2021 Conference Registration, www.mspoultry.org/registrations/index.cfm, to learn more, register or donate.

MPA is located at 110 Airport Road, Suite C, in Pearl. To contact MPA, call 601-932-7560.

ARM begins twenty-third year of supporting students

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi's young students are building a strong foundation for future educational success with the help of America Reads—Mississippi (ARM) AmeriCorps members, who in turn receive scholarships to help them pursue their own degrees. AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteering and national service, recently announced continued funding for the America Reads Mississippi program, which will soon enter its twenty-third year of helping Mississippi children get their education off to a strong start and helping AmeriCorps members complete their educational goals of completing a bachelor's degree.

"This grant represents an investment in the success of our state's students along the P-twenty continuum and builds community connections among the universities, local kindergarten through twelfth grade schools, tutors and students," said Dr. Alfred Rankins Jr., Commissioner of Higher Education. "Additionally, many of the AmeriCorps members go on to become certified kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers in Mississippi classrooms, which aids in addressing current teacher shortage."

Managed by the Institutions of Higher Learning staff, America Reads—Mississippi has demonstrated educational service collaboration between universities, local elementary schools and districts, and community organizations. Their work is coordinated through four regional university offices, including Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, The University of Southern Mississippi and Delta State University, which is returning as a regional office this year.

Since 1998, more than 4,900 AmeriCorps members have given at least one year of service and served more than 63,000 kindergarten through third grade students, tutoring them during the school day and in after-school programs. AmeriCorps members have received approximately \$17.4 million in education award scholarships, which have allowed them to achieve their dreams of earning a degree, during that time. Many of the scholarship recipients have utilized these funds to gain the credentials necessary to become certified teachers.

"The ability to read by third grade is critical to a child's success in school, life-

long learning potential, and their ability to contribute to the state's economy," said Dr. Casey Prestwood, Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs. "America Reads—Mississippi provides kindergarten through third grade students with a key to their future by focusing on improving their literacy skills. ARM also provides a great opportunity for Mississippians to pursue higher education while serving as literacy tutors. This is a great service to Mississippi and the future of our state."

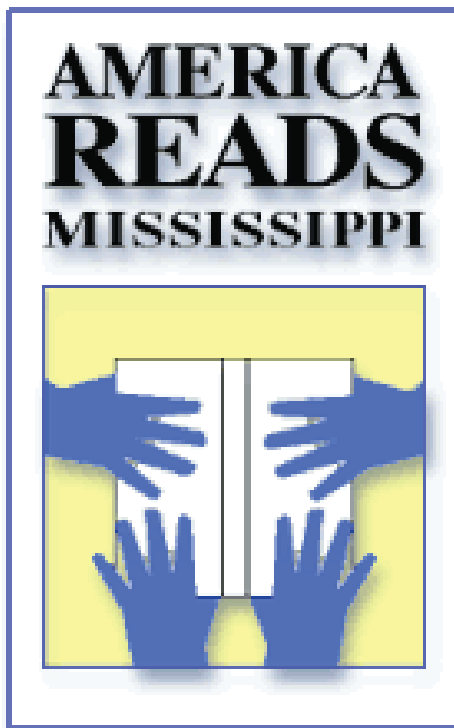
On the horizon of reaching its twenty-fifth year of service in 2023, America Reads—Mississippi will expand its efforts over the next two years to reconnect with more than 4,900 AmeriCorps alumni, determine the number of members who have become certified teachers or work in education-related fields; and conduct an impact evaluation to measure program effectiveness on improving the literacy skills of students and on increasing the educational and professional skills of AmeriCorps members for future pursuits.

"In the end, we only regret the chances we don't take," said Antoinette Nicholas, An AmeriCorps member, 2019-2021. "AmeriCorps took a chance on me and gave me the greatest gift I could have ever imagined: A chance to give freely and unconditionally for two years as an AmeriCorps member and now as a certified teacher. I am thankful."

The Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning governs the public universities in Mississippi, including Alcorn State University; Delta State University; Jackson State University; Mississippi State University including the Mississippi State University Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine; Mississippi University for Women; Mississippi Valley State University; the University of Mississippi including the University of Mississippi Medical Center; and the University of Southern Mississippi.

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteering, brings people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges. Learn more at AmeriCorps.gov.

For more information about Volunteer Mississippi and all of its programs, visit www.volunteermississippi.org.



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Golf bridge built at Wolf Hollow



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Pictured are Co-Lin Board of Trustees member Tommy Sasser, Board of Trustees Secretary Barry Tyson, Chairman of the Board Melton King, Wolf Hollow Golf Course Director Bradley Boykin, Co-Lin President Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, Board of Trustee Vice Chairman Dr. Troy Stewart, and Foundation Board Member Bradley Smith.

Special to Wesson News

Through a joint effort, the number six hole at Wolf Hollow Golf Course has a new bridge. Years of erosion and weather damage caused the need for a completely new concrete bridge, built to withstand the elements. The costly project was funded by multiple college entities partnering to produce the funds. The Co-Lin Foundation donated all proceeds from their annual golf classic to the bridge replacement project, which totaled \$18,000. In response to that generous contribution, Wolf Hollow Golf Course matched their donation and put another \$18,000 towards the project. The Lincoln County Board of Supervisors also provided project assistance. Wolf Hollow Golf Course is an 18-hole course situated on the Wesson Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College. For more information or to book a tee time, visit www.wolfhollowgolfclub.com or call 601-648-8379.

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MSDH: Forty years of progress fighting HIV epidemic

Special to Wesson News

The United States recently recognized the fortieth anniversary of the first reported cases of HIV in the country, marking four decades of understanding the disease and transforming detection, prevention and treatment.

According to the CDC, in 2018, more than 15,800 Americans, including 228 Mississippians, still died from HIV. Fortunately, through advancements in medical technology and treatment options, as well as a focus on prevention, HIV is no longer a death sentence and can now be viewed as a manageable chronic disease. There are currently 10,205 Mississippians living with HIV, according to data from the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) Office of STD/HIV.

"The earlier it's detected, the earlier successful treatment is possible, which can lead to a long and productive life," said MSDH State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs. "We also have far better preventive tools than we had in years past. We know how this disease is spread and how to control it now – there is no mystery and fear of the unknown like there was forty years ago."

To help with early detection of HIV, confidential, private HIV testing is available at all MSDH county health department clinics. The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of thirteen and sixty-four get tested for HIV as part of routine health care and that people at high risk be tested more often. To find a testing location near you, text your zip code to KNOWIT (566948) or visit www.HealthyMS.com/locations.

In Mississippi, the burden of HIV is disproportionately higher for

men who have sex with men. Young adults aged twenty to twenty-nine represented the leading age group (forty percent) of newly diagnosed cases in 2018. African Americans account for seventy-three percent of the newly diagnosed cases with African American men specifically accounting for fifty-eight percent of those cases. Also at higher risk are those with multiple sex partners and injection drug users.

The MSDH also offers virtual HIV consultation services through Crossroads Clinic in the Jackson Medical Mall. Through the virtual clinic, patients can start and receive treatment for STDs at no cost, and learn what preventive approaches work best for them.

In 2019, there were 480 new HIV infections reported in Mississippi, but sixty-six percent of those were linked to treatment within thirty days.

"With the introduction of PrEP several years ago, we took preventing the spread of HIV to an entirely new level," said Dr. Dobbs. "When taken as prescribed, PrEP reduces the risk of getting infected with HIV from sex by ninety-nine percent. It is also incredibly effective at preventing HIV infection from injection drug use."

The Crossroads Virtual Clinic also focuses on TelePrEP and PEP programs throughout the state. Patients can set up a virtual consultation online with a medical provider and speak with a PrEP Navigator to determine whether a preventive plan such as PrEP or PEP is right for them. To schedule a virtual clinic appointment, call 601-432-3066.

For more information about HIV, visit the MSDH website at www.HealthyMS.com/std.

Follow MSDH by e-mail and social media at HealthyMS.com/connect.

MSDH partners to offer cancer survivors free help

Special to Wesson News

A new twelve-week health coaching program is intended to benefit individuals following the completion of their primary cancer therapy and focuses on life and health beyond treatment. The program prioritizes topics that are most important to cancer survivors, such as physical, financial, emotional and social needs.

"The Mississippi Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (MCCCP) is excited to partner with Pack Health to offer free health coaching to Mississippi cancer survivors. We hope this program will empower and promote health and wellbeing in our citizens," said Brad Martin, Director of the Mississippi Comprehensive Cancer Control Program at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH).

Upon enrollment, members are matched with a personal health advisor who provides one-on-one support. Over the duration of the program, members learn practical methods to improve their health behaviors and develop long-term strategies that lead to a healthier life.

For more information or to enroll in the Survivorship Program today,

visit www.packhealth.com/MCCCP, or call 855-375-5715.

The Mississippi's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program was established in 2002 when MSDH received funding from the CDC. Continued funding has enabled MSDH to strengthen comprehensive cancer control efforts in the state. The MCCCP addresses the entirety of cancer control, from prevention and detection, to treatment, survivorship and end-of-life care.

For more information about the Mississippi's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, visit the MSDH website at www.HealthyMS.com/cancer or call 601-206-1559.

The Crossroads Virtual Clinic also focuses on TelePrEP and PEP programs throughout the state.

Patients can set up a virtual consultation online with a medical provider and speak with a PrEP Navigator to determine whether a preventive plan such as PrEP or PEP is right for them. To schedule a virtual clinic appointment, call 601-432-3066.

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MSU Extension agents use mental health training to help communities

By Guest Columnist Erica Hensley, MSU Extension Service

Jim McAdory wears many hats. On any given day, the Mississippi State University Extension Service agent fields calls from local cattle farmers, teaches kids about the importance of daily nutrition, and tests soil to diagnose front yard and garden harvest problems - all before lunch.

Based in Winston County, McAdory recently gained an additional role: Mental Health First Aid instructor.

MSU Extension's PROMISE initiative, short for "PReventing Opioid Misuse In the SouthEast," trains Extension agents in Mental Health First Aid, so they can recognize signs of mental health crisis or substance use disorder in their communities.

Since the program started in 2017, nearly every Extension agent in all 82 counties has been trained in Mental Health First Aid. According to program data, three out of four agents reported increased confidence in helping connect people with mental health support. Fifteen percent of agents reported using their training in a mental health crisis, including incidents of community members confiding to them that they had thoughts of harming themselves or others.

The new role does not change McAdory's daily routine. It does give him new tools to recognize and help if a community member is in distress when he's out on the job. As with his agricultural agent activities, the new role leverages his relationships with the community. Like farming, mental health maintenance is not one-size-fits-all, McAdory said. Winston County's diverse agricultural landscape means both his ag and community knowledge must run a wide gamut.

"Our watermelon growers are different from our poultry producers, who are different from our sweet potato farmers," McAdory said, adding that he not only has to be able to contribute technical knowledge to assist with each type of farming, but he also must be able to relate to the diverse farmers, too.

For McAdory, that process means listening and using new Mental Health First Aid training to recognize signs of distress, whether that includes grief, financial troubles or substance use disorders.

"PROMISE opened up a whole new ballgame for me," he said. "Mental health is something Extension agents need to be aware of. We work with hundreds of people in a month, and this training helps us recognize trauma and cues us when to listen differently than before."

In recent years, rural overdoses outpaced urban rates, particularly among rural residents with opioid use disorder. During the pandemic, opioid overdose deaths exploded. Across the U.S., the total number of overdose deaths increased by 33% during the first eight months of 2020, compared to the same period of 2019. Mississippi saw an even higher jump - 37% - according to data from the Commonwealth Fund.

Three in four farmers say opioids are easily attainable, but only a third say the same of mental health or substance use treatment.

As community members themselves, agents like McAdory are vital in recognizing mental health needs and connecting farmers with mental health resources that are often scarce in rural communities. Experts point out that the services are there, but it often takes a trusted community member to guide those who need them.

"Because Extension agents work with farmers across the state every day, they are well-positioned to build on those relationships to normalize conversations about mental health and to connect those who are struggling to find resources that can help," said



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Since the Mississippi State University Extension Service PROMISE Initiative began in 2017, an Extension agent has been trained in Mental Health First Aid. Jim McAdory, an Extension agent in Winston County, is among them.

MSU Extension health specialist David Buys, adding that the newly trained Extension agents create a mental health support network across Mississippi.

Extension agents have long understood the constant difficulties farmers face, but the PROMISE initiative has enabled them to fully appreciate the deeper toll on farmers' mental health. Buys said that naming and destigmatizing the psychological toll of farming is a first step, and Extension agents are equipped and ready to help.

"Stigma around mental health is one of the biggest barriers to getting folks to care, and by training agents on the background related to mental health and why farmers struggle sometimes, we are chipping away at the stigma," Buys said. "Always keeping in view that while we are not the end of the care continuum, we serve as an important connector to care."

McAdory and his Extension colleagues have taken Mental Health First Aid further into their communities by training local officials, police officers and school staff members to help local leaders understand signs of mental health issues, which can manifest as disruptive behavior.

Being an Extension agent means being in the community, no matter the different needs, McAdory said.

"Not everybody has a yard, but everyone has health," he added.

To access the Crisis Text Line 24/7, text TALK to 741-741, and find more resources from the Farm Bureau at <https://msfb.org/mental-health/>.

To learn more about MSU PROMISE, visit <http://extension.msstate.edu/the-promise-initiative>.



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PSC commissioner announces funding for broadband expansion

Special to Wesson News

Central District Public Service Commissioner (PSC) Brent Bailey announced the final approval for federal funds to Aristotle Unified Communications LLC and Windstream Communications LLC to support the deployment of high-speed internet service to customers across six counties in the Central District.

The Commission conducted a special open meeting last month. Following a unanimous vote by the Commission, Windstream Communications, LLC was approved to receive funds through the Federal Communications Commission's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Phase 1 Auction. Aristotle Unified Communications, LLC was approved by the Commission at a later date.

Within the Central District, Aristotle Unified Communications will receive \$1,484,976.08 to distribute to 4,347 locations in three counties - Issaquena, Sharkey and Yazoo. Windstream Communications will receive a total of \$9,426,300, with some of those

funds covering costs to provide service in Copiah, Hinds and Rankin counties, which are also located within the Central District.

"I am excited to join my fellow Commissioners in closing the broadband divide we have had for too long across much of rural Mississippi," Commissioner Bailey said. "With these funds, these companies will have the ability to provide reliable, good quality service at just, reasonable and affordable rates for those who are unserved or underserved. I am thrilled to be a part of the enormous steps we as a Commission have been taking over the last year with the common goal of bringing connectivity to all Mississippians."

Overall, Mississippi had a total of twenty-four winning bidders of RDOF funds who will potentially receive a collective total of \$495,725,799.60. Mississippi received the second highest amount of funds in the country, following California. More information on the RDOF Phase I auction is available at <https://www.fcc.gov/auction/904>, including complete auction results and a map of winning bids.

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Strong online security practices urged

Special to Wesson News

Following a recent increase in the frequency and scale of ransomware attacks around the globe, Mississippi Attorney General Fitch is joining attorneys general across the country in urging businesses and public entities to assess their current data security practices and take appropriate steps to protect operations and consumer data.

“Cybercrime and cyber-enabled threats exploit vulnerabilities in information systems to extract customer-rich data, information, and money,” said Fitch. “To counter the increased risk and potential consequences of cyber threats, it is critical to implement and execute strong security practices to protect consumer data and vital systems infrastructure nationwide.”

Ransomware is a form of malware designed to encrypt files on a device, rendering any files and the systems that rely on them unusable. Cybercriminals demand ransom in exchange for decryption, often threatening to sell or leak exfiltrated information if the ransom is not paid. Ransomware is a growing threat, generating billions of dollars in payments to cybercriminals and inflicting significant damage on businesses and government entities alike.

Just before the July Fourth holiday,

REvil, a Russian-linked cybercrime gang, perpetrated the single largest global ransomware attack on record against the software company Kaseya, infecting thousands of client systems in at least 17 countries. REvil demanded \$70 million in cryptocurrency in exchange for decrypting all affected machines. This is REvil’s second high-profile attack in recent weeks—having extorted \$11 million from JBS Foods, the world’s largest meat-processor, a month earlier.

Fitch serves on the National Association of Attorneys’ General’s Internet Safety / Cyber Privacy and Security Committee, which issued a joint advisory discussing the pressing threat that ransomware attacks pose to American businesses and government entities and recommending several best practices to respond to the threat, including:

First, backup data, system images, and configurations, regularly test them, and keep the backups offline. Ensure that backups are regularly tested and that they are not connected to the business network, as many ransomware variants try to find and encrypt or delete accessible backups. Maintaining current backups offline is critical, because, if network data is encrypted with ransomware, an organization can restore systems.

Secondly, update and patch systems promptly. This includes maintaining the security of operating systems, applications and firmware in a timely manner. Consider using a centralized patch management system. Use a risk-based assessment strategy to drive the patch management program.

Thirdly, test the incident response plan. There is nothing that shows the gaps in plans more than testing them. Run through some core questions, and use those to build an incident response plan: Are you able to sustain business operations without access to certain systems? For how long? Would you turn off your manufacturing operations if business systems such as billing were offline?

Fourthly, check the security team’s work. Use a third-party penetration tester to test the security of systems and the organization’s ability to defend against a sophisticated attack. Many ransomware criminals are aggressive and sophisticated and will find the equivalent of unlocked doors.

Finally, segment the organization’s networks. There has been a recent shift in ransomware attacks—from stealing data to disrupting operations. It is critically important that corporate business functions and manufacturing/production operations are separated and that the organization can carefully

filter and limit internet access to operational networks, identify links between these networks, and develop workarounds or manual controls to ensure industrial control system (ICS) networks can be isolated and continue operating if the corporate network is compromised. Regularly test contingency plans, such as manual controls, so that safety critical functions can be maintained during a cyber incident.

A variety of resources are available for organizations of all types. The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) offers guidance at www.cisa.gov/stopransomware.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) offers guidance at www.nist.gov/cyberframework.

CISA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have also issued specific guidance for managed service providers (MSPs) and their customers affected by the Kaseya ransomware attack. This guidance can be found at us-cert.cisa.gov.

Victims of ransomware should report it immediately to CISA, a local FBI Field Office, or Secret Service Field Office. Victims should also file a report online through the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).

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