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SWRANKIN NEWS

Good News You Can Use

Vol. 7, No. 2 | February 2022

The Pearl News

THE RICHLAND NEWS

THE FLORENCE NEWS

Thomasson makes history as PPD's first female assistant chief

Special to The Pearl News

The Pearl Police Department (PPD) recently announced an historic day for their department, as Captain Amanda Thomasson was promoted to Assistant Chief of Police. While Chief Thomasson becomes the first woman in the position, her colleagues say she has earned it through hard work and perseverance. Thomasson says she is humbled by the promotion and promises two things: to continue the great protection of the people in Pearl and to have the back of each and every officer.

Thomasson also recently celebrated her twenty-year anniversary at PPD. She is a native



Special to The Pearl News

Pictured (l to r) are Mayor Jake Windham, Asst. Chief Amanda Thomasson and Police Chief Dean Scott.

of Pearl, a 1997 Pearl High School graduate and studied at Hinds Community College. She began her career with PPD in 2001 as a dispatcher and graduated from Southern Regional Public Safety Institute in September 2006. She went on to work as a Patrol Officer, then was promoted to Patrol Sergeant in 2011, to Investigator in Juvenile in 2014, to Lieutenant in Juvenile Investigations in 2017 and to Admin Lieutenant in January 2019. Most recently, Thomasson was promoted to Captain in January 2020.

See page 7 for companion article, *The making of an assistant police chief: Amanda Thomasson's story.*

When PPSD calls, Joe Sherman delivers

By Alexa Haik

Recently, local Pearl Dunkin' franchisee Joe Sherman provided donuts and coffee for educators at the Pearl Public School District's spring kick-off. Instructional staff gathered at the William Dodson Performing Arts Center at Pearl High School for the State of the Schools update from Superintendent Dr. Raymond Morgigno. Sherman supplied the breakfast for educators as they geared up for another semester, a small way of saying thanks to local heroes for their service to Pearl schools.

The relationship with PPSD began, interestingly enough, while Sherman was having a routine haircut. Making the usual conversation one has with their hair dresser, the topic of community was brought up.

"It's a funny story. The girl that cuts my hair is from Pearl. We were sitting talking...and I said I would like to get more of the community involved. She gave me the name of the assistant superintendent for the district. I got in

touch; and, ever since then, it's just been, they call, I deliver."

The year was 2017. The Pearl football team was poised to win the 6A championship and Sherman was on his way to the Pearl store when he had a sudden inspiration.

He called a yard sign business to request a sign that read "Congratulations Pearl Pirates 6A State Champs." Then he had to wait until about 10 p.m. that night to discover the final results of the game.

As expected, Pearl clinched the championship, and, at first light the following morning, the requested sign was on display in Sherman's front yard. This tradition has grown to include posting



Special to The Pearl News

Pictured (l to r) are Assistant Superintendent Kim LaFontaine, Joe Sherman, Assistant Superintendent Cedric Graham and Superintendent Dr. Ray Morgigno.

signs for the girls' basketball team, the boys' cross country, and the list goes on. It has now become such a common sight "that when we don't do it, somebody will call to [remind me]; and, before long, a sign is in the yard," he ex-

plains.

The tables turned for Sherman at PPSD's spring kick-off when PPSD presented him with the Blue and Gold Award, given to individuals or businesses for their partnership and support of Pearl Public School District students, staff and community.

When asked if the award came as a surprise, Sherman says, "A surprise is an understatement. Assistant Superintendent Kim Fontaine had called and said 'we are going to have 400 [attendees]...can you serve breakfast?' She also asked, 'Can you come to the Pearl Performing Arts center for a few minutes at 8:30 a.m.?' I said 'sure,' and I still didn't know what was going on."

Once he received the award, Sherman was given to the opportunity to express his gratitude.

"It was my privilege to serve these teachers...and a true honor to be recognized by them."

For this Pearl businessman, it's all part of supporting the community in which he serves.

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Richland's new rec center now open for business

By Alexa Haik

The City of Richland recently celebrated the opening of their new Parks and Recreation Center. According to the City's Parks and Recreation Director Cole Smith, the two-year project has been an unequivocal success.

Originally broken down into two phases, construction of the facility had been planned to cover only phase one, which consisted of a gym, office space and the outdoor covered basketball court area, along with the two multipurpose fields. However, as things progressed, it was discovered there was enough funding to not only complete phase one but also to begin phase two.

Because of this good fortune a small splash pad, a fully ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible playground for ages six months to twelve years of age, an adult fitness course, a senior adult fitness course area and two

competition-style sand volleyball courts are now available.

The indoor recreation area includes one basketball court that runs east and west, with a two-volleyball court overlay, running north and south, with a center divider. This first-floor



Photos special to The Richland News

area also includes a three-lane walking track that runs the circumference of the courts.

As far as programs being offered, Richland Parks and Rec employees say they are taking things slowly. Right now, the City has partnered with a local Coqui Volleyball Club and basketball



The City of Richland's recent ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Parks and Recreation Center.

program who share the use of the courts in the evenings.

During the daytime, the Parks and Rec facility is available free of charge to local residents of Richland, includ-

ing all students of Richland schools. There is a membership sign-up process, and, once membership is established, visitors have access to all the facility currently has to offer.

With the receipt of a non-resident membership fee, the center is also available to those living outside the city limits.

The Parks and Rec department does have hope for future expansion to include an upstairs area set aside for eSports, after school programs and summer camps, as well as an additional walking trail. Smith says these additions are possible, but any future expansion is tentative as of now, based on how the current facilities are utilized.

The City of Richland's Parks and Recreation Center is located at 460 East Harper Street in Richland. For current information and updates, follow them on Facebook or visit www.richlandms.org. For questions, call 601-487-9989.

RCSD looking to hire in February

Special to Richland News

Rankin County School District (RCSD) recently announced employment opportunities now available within the City of Richland. These opportunities include the position of cafeteria worker at Richland Elementary School. Open as of February 2022, the rate of pay is \$10.05 per hour and includes health insurance and a retirement plan.

Other open positions in the City of Richland include: Richland Elementary School Elementary/Teacher Special Education (available 8/1/2022); Richland High School Secondary/Teacher Secondary (available 8/1/2022); Richland High School Secondary/Teacher/Coach Secondary (available 8/1/2022); and Richland Upper Elementary School Elementary/Teacher Elementary (two positions, available 8/1/2022).



RCSD requires that applications be submitted online by visiting www.rcsd.ms, then clicking on the "employment" tab at the top right corner of the screen.

All principals and district hiring managers use this platform to search, interview, and hire applicants.

In order for an application to be considered, job seekers must obtain all the required supporting documents, including references and verification of previous employment.

All application responses are saved, allowing job seekers the opportunity to easily apply for additional positions in the future.

RCSD does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, color, national origin, age, or handicap. For questions or complications completing the application, contact the RCSD Human Resource Department at 601-825-5590.

Sponsor a spay or neuter for Valentine's Day



Special to The Richland News

Special to Richland News

This Valentine's Day, Mississippi Spay and Neuter (MS SPAN) is hosting a one-of-a-kind Valentine's Day fundraiser.

By submitting a \$30 donation, participants may sponsor a single spay or neuter surgery, and MS SPAN will send a personalized Valentine's Day message to someone special. Each participant also has the option of making a contribution in honor of a loved one. All donations are tax-deductible.

The goal is to secure sponsorships for fifty animals this Valentine's Day, preventing hundreds of puppies and kittens

being born unwanted this spring, and countless more in the future.

Visit <https://givebutter.com/vdayspay> to participate.

Sponsorship is not a voucher or coupon for spay/neuter and does not apply to a specific animal of choice.

MS SPAN is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization and is dedicated to ending the homelessness, suffering and euthanasia of cats and dogs in Central Mississippi by providing affordable and accessible spay and neuter services. MS SPAN is located at 657 Hwy 49 in Richland. Visit www.msspan.org for more information.

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Animals of Florence provides tips on cold weather pet care

By Alexa Haik

As the seasonal extreme cold sets in, pet owners scramble to care for their outdoor pets, sometimes developing unique ways to keep animals warm and sheltered during winter months. Recently *The Florence News* reached out to the Animals of Florence (AOF) Facebook group to ask for recommendations on cold weather pet care. This large and widely diverse group provided a number of tips and suggestions for animals, big and small.

The most common recommendation by AOF members is to use hay or pine straw as bedding. Blankets as bedding is discouraged, as they can hold moisture and draw body heat away from the animals. Bedding may be placed in a Styrofoam cooler and/or a plastic container with holes cut in them to allow pets easy access.

AOF also recommends being mindful

of sheltering pets from wind, either by



tarps hung as a barrier and/or by making certain that the outdoor shelter's entry-way is facing away from the north wind.

Heat lamps are discouraged, as they pose a serious fire hazard. As one member pointed out, "many barns are lost every year due to them." They do recommend heat plates, hard plastic ones, that are much safer.

One AOF member provided a detailed step-by-step description of their outdoor



Photos special to The Florence News

pet enclosure as inspiration.

"Place screens on top of a kennel, place pine straw on top of the screens, hang tarps or shower curtain liners along the sides, place the kennels on top of pallets

so they are off the cold ground and put pine shavings and pine straw in the bottom of the kennels."

As far as drinking water, AOF recommends checking outdoor water bowls frequently to make sure the water has not frozen. One tip suggests letting the outdoor faucet trickle water into the bowl for the dual purpose of preventing pipes from freezing while keeping the water bowl supplied with fresh water. AOF also highly recommends feeding pets well during winter months, as they expend excess energy in the cold.

Finally, AOF always recommends that whatever the setup is for an outdoor pet, owners should check on them frequently when weather is extreme.

A thanks goes out to all of the members of Animals of Florence for their contributions to this story.

Stay tuned for more specifics on dog, cat, horse, pig and chicken care in the March issue of *The Florence News*.

Florence Dream girls celebrate stellar year

By Florence Dream Coach Thelissa Norwood

The Florence Dream is a recreational basketball team made up of girls and boys fifth-through eighth-grade. We focus on Florence kids, but we open our team up to all kids.

We started in 2019 just trying to develop a basketball team for my daughter to play on. Up until that time, we had Upward Bound basketball in Florence, but no one continued to do it after that. We started out with one team, and now, in 2022, we have six teams. We have grown tremendously over the last three years. My dream one day is to have a rec center in Florence to develop these kids in the game of basketball to be ready for organized sports.

The Florence Dream has had an amazing year. With the addition of the Dream Boys, we now have four teams. We have two fifth/sixth-grade girls teams, a seventh-grade girls team and an eighth-grade team. Last year, we were limited because of COVID, but, this year, we are back in action. Our boys team is currently in first

place in the MS Play Sports Winter League, put on yearly by Director of MS Play Sports and Club Director of MBA Bobcats Eddie Young, and girls teams are in third place. We will wrap up the winter league in February and go right into the Spring/Summer League in April.

The Dream Platinum, which consists of our eighth-grade girls, participated in the "Winter Showcase" this January and plans to travel to Ruston, Louisiana, in March to compete in the Elite girls tournament, "She Got Next."

The Florence Dream has turned into something so great; I could have never imagined that my dream of teaching young kids the game of basketball would become this big.

I could not do this without my great coaching staff, parents, and awesome community support. We plan on becoming even bigger this year with the addition of an AAU team.

If anyone would like more information on joining The Florence Dream or helping us grow through sponsorship, contact Coach Thelissa Norwood at 779-233-7965 or thelissan@gmail.com.



Special to The Florence News

Florence Dream girls celebrated the end of the season with a banquet.

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MS House Weekly Summaries: January 2022

Special to the SW Rankin News

On **January 4, 2022**, the Mississippi State Legislature began the third session in its four-year term. Though it is early in the session, there were a few items taken up and passed on the House floor.

House Bill 384 was introduced on Thursday morning. The bill contains the new Magnolia 1 Plan for congressional redistricting as proposed by the Joint Redistricting Committee. The plan would most notably extend Congressman Bennie Thompson's District 2 into Adams, Amite, Franklin and Wilkinson Counties in the southwest corner of the state. Representative Robert Johnson (D-Natchez), the House Democratic Caucus Leader, introduced Amendment 1 to HB 384, which proposed a different plan giving District 2 all of Hinds County and a portion of Madison County, while leaving the southwest four counties in District 3. After much debate, the amendment was defeated 43-76, and HB 384 passed by a vote of 75-44 with the Magnolia 1 plan.

House Bill 1413, the 2021 appropriations bill for the Mississippi Department of Transportation, was reintroduced on Wednesday after receiving a partial veto from Governor Tate Reeves. It has been re-referred to committee.

Next Wednesday, January 12, is the

deadline to request legislation, and Monday, January 17, is the deadline for filing bills. More than 500 House bills have already been filed and referred to committees.

For the first time since March 2020, junior pages have returned to the House of Representatives. Pages are junior high and high school students from around the state who are sponsored by House members and staff.

Week of January 10, 2022

This is the second week of the 2022 Legislative Session. Even though it is early in the session, two monumental pieces of legislation were passed out of committee and were debated on the House floor.

House Bill 530, or the Strategically Accelerating the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers (START) Act of 2022, was introduced to the House on Wednesday. The START Act would raise the average starting salary of a Mississippi teacher to \$43,000 – a \$6,000 increase. This would make the average starting salary of teachers higher than both the national and southeastern averages. It

would also give every teacher a pay raise between \$4,000 and \$6,000, effective at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, and give teachers' assistants a salary bump of \$2,000. The bill passed with a bipartisan vote of 114-6, and it has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

The Mississippi Tax Freedom Act of 2022 (House Bill 531) was also introduced on Wednesday. It is similar

to last year's proposal but has some key differences. The bill would eliminate the state income tax, making Mississippi the tenth state in the United States to do so. It would also raise sales tax from 7% to 8.5%, lower grocery tax from 7% to 4%, and cut car tag prices by 50%. HB 531 passed by a vote of 97-12.

Week of January 17, 2022

This is the third week of the 2022 Legislative Session. The deadline for introducing general bills and constitutional amendments was on Monday night, and committees will now begin discussing these bills in meetings. Although most work is still happening in committees, several pieces of legislation reached the

House floor this week.

Senate Bill 2095, or the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act, was introduced to the House on Wednesday. The bill is a follow-up to Initiative 65, which was passed by Mississippi voters in November 2020 but was struck down by the Mississippi Supreme Court over a technicality in the ballot initiative process. SB 2095 outlines a medical marijuana program that will treat conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's Disease, ALS, Crohn's Disease, glaucoma and seizures, to name a few. After a committee amendment was adopted by the House, the program will be overseen by the Department of Health, and eligible patients with a registry ID card will be able to purchase no more than six Medical Cannabis Equivalency Units (MCEUs) a week and no more than twenty-eight MCEUs a month. Several House members introduced amendments to SB 2095, but all except the committee amendment failed. The final bill passed by a bipartisan vote of 105-14, and the bill has been returned to the Senate.

On Thursday, House Bill 770, or the Mississippi Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, was introduced to the House. The bill would require employers to pay employees the same amount for the same work done regardless of sex or gender. Equal

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Publisher

Clay Mansell
claymansell@SWRankinNews.com

Editor in Chief

Stephanie Tracy

Managing Editor

Alexa Haik
news@swrankinnews.com

Sales Representatives

Clay Mansell
claymansell@SWRankinNews.com

City Beat Writer

Kerri Roberts
kerri@swrankinnews.com

Graphic Designer

Katie White
designer@SWRankinNews.com

Office Manager

Doris Bynum

Distribution

Ben Barnett

For submission information, email
news@SWRankinNews.com.

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EXTRA Xs and Os – We all need love

By Guest Columnist Mika Hartman

My husband and I have been married over 24 years. Celebrating us today is as important as it was our first Valentine's Day. The first one, CJ came to my work and left perfume on my windshield. "Tommy Girl" perfume became my new favorite; I can still smell it. Not because it was the most wonderful smell out there, but because it smelled of love - his love for me. No, I don't still wear "Tommy Girl," but I can't forget how this little box made me feel. We hadn't known each other very long... and 24 years later, I remember that day perfectly.

CJ and I have three children together. Our hopes and daily prayers consist of the exact same thing for all three children, even though they all have a decade between them: True love, passion for life, determination, and success at a level they feel successful (all up to each of them to decide what these are to them) - all with God as the priority. This list is the same for many parents, including mine.

For my two older children, these are achievable milestones, as they should be. They will be on a path of their choosing, and all doors are open to them. They can dream big and do whatever their determination level goes for. It is up to them to achieve the life they desire. I don't have to advocate or change laws to see them reach their full potential or to walk through life with someone they love. Just prayers are needed.

My youngest child, Hudson, has roadblocks set up that many have no idea about. I didn't know all of them until his arrival. He's only 3, and, while the laws may be improving, there is still so much that dictates the life he can have. Hudson was born with Down syndrome, a large hole in his heart and transient leukemia.

It's "Love Day" month - did you know many people with disabilities are unable to be married because of the penalties that they would face?

If two persons with Down syndrome fall in love and want to walk in this world together, they are penalized if they officially wed. The Federal Government says that they (the persons living with Down syndrome) will lose needed benefits if they marry, punishing them for seeking love at a deeper level. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid would deem incomes as joint, making the couple ineligible. And all cash gifts to the couple have to be reported as income, as well.

Other helpful programs, like Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), would be affected because of the parent connection that automatically goes away upon marriage.

As it stands today for our friends: You can fall in love, but you can't get married. Or, you can get married, and face your challenges with no help. That's not American.

Love is a powerful gift, but it is not so powerful that your medical needs vanish.

When I asked for guidance on this issue, I was told by a good friend that he has a friend who is calling her wedding ceremony "fake" in order not to lose their benefits. How awful to need to lessen or degrade the most important day in your life as "fake." Heartbreaking. But the person with Down syndrome recognizes that needed benefits trump a real ceremony.

It's also unknown that our friends with Down syndrome can be paid "subminimum" wage.... It's not even a real word, but it happens all over. This program was originally created to help open employment doors for people with disabilities. It was intended to help integrate the disability community and provide income that wouldn't disrupt any health services already provided.

But it worked against them, and it gave society the opportunity to devalue a person based on their disability. We are valued in life by our worth, productivity, opportunity and abilities. When a person is paid as little as 20 cents per hour, the message becomes that they are only worth that. Many states are making changes to this, but Mississippi hasn't yet.

Now, we don't pay 20 cents an hour that I am aware of, but how often do you see a person with a disability like Down syndrome working in your community? I live on the Coast, and I personally know of only one. You read that right! Many families find themselves in this very situation and either choose to keep their adult child at home or create an opportunity for the family to open a business.

Now let's put these two big dreams I have for my children together: Hayden and Henley can get married with a ceremony and a celebration of love; Hudson can't, not legally, at least, and still maintain the benefits he needs. My older children can

do whatever job they seek and be valued and earn raises/have new opportunities; Hudson will be devalued by society and paid under minimum wage for doing his job, or I will have to create him real opportunity.

This is the first time I've typed this, and my heart is skipping beats.

Hudson's diagnosis is Down syndrome. He has a life expectancy of greater than 65 years old. He has a strong will, and he CAN do big things. Every other person in life gets to choose a path. Why can't Hudson? I also want to add this: God gave Hudson

his extra chromosome. Hudson didn't ask for it. He was created this way. And he's wonderful. Different isn't bad; his different is beautiful. The world needs the love he gives.

Some will argue that raising the pay to minimum wage across the board for all will lead to unintended consequences; not all good intentions play out as all good. I have heard this one already several times on my path to bringing the needed change. If you force employers to pay more, then they may not hire at all a person with Down syndrome.

And that is the problem.

It is embedded in us that they (people with Down syndrome) don't deserve better and fair wages. If a person has the heart to hire based only on the bottom line, they missed the mark. This wasn't created to make a bottom line better. It was designed to integrate wonderful, loving, happy people into the workplace and provide opportunities for them to grow and learn as active and productive citizens in our communities.

Some will argue that marriage isn't important, either, or that it is not a reasonable request. I disagree. Having someone you love to walk through this world with and be your best friend on the deepest level possible is everything!

Now let's put these two together: Marriage and a great job that values your contributions... the dream for all of us, right?

Now the money part. Better wages and two incomes becoming possible for our friends may deem that all the extra assistance isn't needed. But I want to ask you to think about it this way: a

person living with Down syndrome has many health challenges, ones you'll never face, and the cost of healthcare is very expensive.

Hudson was born with a large hole in his heart that will require multiple surgeries, transient leukemia, hypothyroidism, missing tear ducts, and more. All require medical attention. He also eats by a g-tube. His feeding equipment is over \$2,000 per month. I've recently been denied a wheelchair for Hudson. The cost is thousands for his chair. Hearing that items on a wheelchair are "a luxury" is ridiculous. I need it for his safety on long walks, trips, and doctors' visits, because of his low muscle tone. His adaptive bike was \$9,000. My point in sharing is that even with fair wages and two incomes through marriage, the necessary medical expenses that would no longer be covered by benefits if a couple marries can reach astronomical proportions, and a couple should not have to choose between medical care and love.

Love comes in many forms. It comes in a hand holding yours as you walk; it comes in a smile that cheers you up just when you need it; it comes in looking to the future with that special person.

Love can also be found in a mom moving mountains. I love Hudson so much, I will move these mountains; I have to. My dreams for my children will remain, though my prayers are different for Hudson. I pray I can be the voice he needs. I pray that he won't know all the discrimination that is out there when I am done. I pray he gets the life he deserves. I pray that life gives him the love in return that he gives. With God, all things are possible. Any help moving these mountains is truly appreciated.

February is Congenital Heart Defect (CHD) Awareness Month. Hudson is a CHD Warrior! Celebrate all our little fighters with me; they are heroes!

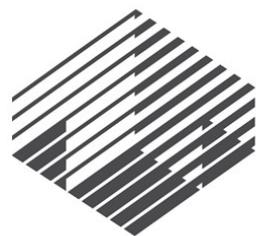
To help, please contact your local Down Syndrome organizations to find out how to get involved. If you'd like, you can follow Hudson's journey on Instagram at Team-HudsonTheStrong.

Extra hugs and extra kisses this February. Remember that love conquers all.

EDITOR'S NOTE: CJ and Mika Hartman are personal friends of Southwest Rankin News' publisher, Clay Mansell. We wanted to use our publication to share Mika's journey as she works to change laws, perceptions and anything else she chooses to tackle to make our state a better, more inclusive one. Her son, Hudson, has Down Syndrome, and she will share his journey and hers as she works with lawmakers to make Mississippi a better place to live for everyone. Please visit our website to view her blog and important information on how we can all help make Mississippi better.



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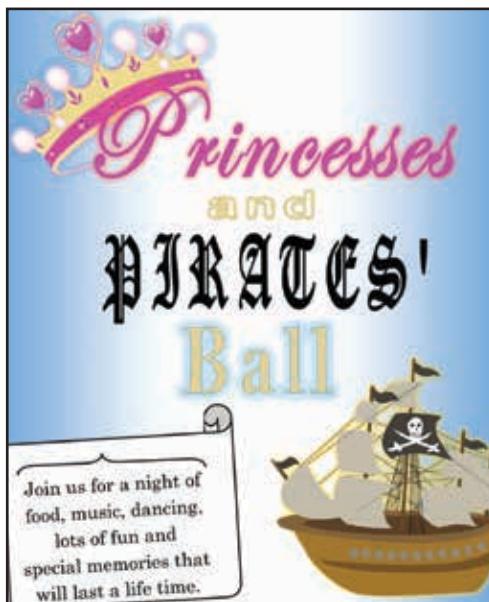
Special to the SW Rankin News

An event once known as the "Richland Father-Daughter Cinderella Ball,"

designed exclusively as a special night between fathers and daughters, has now been expanded to include mothers and sons. The newly titled "2022 Princess and Pirates Ball" will be held Saturday, February 26, at the Community Center in Richland.

The three-hour event will host girls and boys ages four through thirteen. Girls are invited to attend

with their fathers (including stepdads, uncles or grandfathers), and boys are now invited to attend with their mothers (including stepmoms, aunts or grandmothers). The evening begins at 5 p.m. with the opening of the dance floor. All



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activities are scheduled to wind down around 8 p.m.

There will be food, beverages, music and dancing. Entertainment will be provided by Enchanting Memories Entertainment, with special guest appearances from princesses and pirates.

Tickets are \$35 per couple and \$10 for each additional child. The deadline to purchase tickets is Friday, February 18, and space is limited. Payments may be made by cash or check only, and tickets may be purchased at the center.

The Richland Community Center is located at 410 East Harper Street in Richland. For more information about the event, contact Community Center Coordinator Kristina Jordan at 601-420-3400.

McLaurin High School celebrates academic accomplishments of Gracie Smith



Special to SW Rankin News

Gracie Smith, an eleventh-grader at McLaurin High School (MHS), has been accepted into the Early College program at the University of Alabama. She has earned a spot on the Director's List and has been invited to join the UA Early College Honor Society.

Local Churches

Old Truths for Today

How To Study Your Bible

J.T. Morgan



"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". (2 Tim.2:15). "Search the scriptures..." (Jno.5:39). Those in Thessalonica; "...searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11). Read also: 1 Pet.3:15; 4:11; 1 Cor.4:6; 1 Thess.5:21; 2 Tim.3:16-17; 2 Pet.1:3-11; 2 Jno.9-11; Rom.1:16-17.

The Old Testament was written to give us a history of how God dealt with man until the coming of Christ. Here we find the history of creation, the beginning of all things. Sin makes its advent into the world and God began to reveal His remedy in the personality of Christ and His work on earth. We have the promise of Christ, His Gospel, the promise to build His church and salvation, His Priesthood and His reign. Luke 24:27,44; Gen.3:14; 12:1-4; 49:10; Isa.2:1-4; 28:13-16; 40:1-3; Isa. 53; Psm.110:1-5; Mal.3:1; 4:5-6; Acts 10:43; Gal.3:16,19; Heb.10:9-10; 9:16-17; Matt.17:5; Heb.1:1-3; 2:1-4.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written to tell us of the coming of Christ and believing in Him as the Son of God. (Luke 1:1-4; Matt. 1; Jno.1; 20: 30-31). Study these books carefully and you will believe in Christ. You will see Him as God's Son and man's Savior. In addition, read: Jno.3:3-5; Matt. 7:21-23; Gal.3:26-27; Rom 6:3-4; 16-18.

The book of Acts is written to tell men who believe in Christ how to get into Him or what must one do to be saved and the beginning of His church as promised in Matthew 16. There are ten cases of conversion recorded in the book. Men ask the question: "What must we do?" and in simple language are told what they must do. (Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 8:12-13; 9:6; 22:16; 16:30-35; 18:8). Within the book of Acts you will find what men had to do to be saved and as they were baptized into Christ they were added to His church (Acts 2:41,47).

There are twenty-one letters, Romans to Jude, written to tell men in Christ how to continue "in Christ" and how to live the Christian life. The laws that govern God's children are given by the Holy Spirit and His faithful children obey them.

The final book of the Bible is the book of Revelation. It was written by the apostle John and gives us in type and symbol the struggles of the early church and Christians and how they would become victorious. Those who obey Christ's gospel will be saved and those who keep His royal law will be approved and those who die in Christ will live with Him in eternity. (Rev.1:1-11; chapters 2-3; 20:11-15; 22:18-19).

Florence Church of Christ, P.O. Box 277, 220 White Street
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Visitors are always welcome!

The making of an assistant police chief: Amanda Thomasson's story

By Alexa Haik

Amanda Thomasson is more than just a little surprised about the attention her promotion to assistant police chief has garnered since the Pearl Police Department made the initial announcement.

"I never expected it to blow up like that," she said. When asked if law enforcement had been a life-long dream of hers or if it ran in the family, the surprising answer is, no.

"I was a biology nerd going to school for marine biology," she said. In fact, she comes from a "big science family." With an uncle as a biologist and a cousin who is now a botany major, she figured science was in her blood.

Thomasson says that an interesting opportunity arose when she was in between school semesters.

"Some guys I went to high school with who worked for the fire department [said], 'Hey, they've got a dispatch job at Pearl, you would be good at it.' I was like, 'Yeah, sure, why not?'"

The year was 2001.

Things started to progress from there, when, in addition to her dispatching duties, she began participating in ride-

alongs, just to see what the police life was like. Her interest was piqued.

That said, the transition from biology major to law enforcement officer was not immediate.

"It took probably about two years before it really started getting me," Thomasson said. "You get your first really big call and you handle it, feel all proud of yourself, and I am like, 'Hey, I can do this.'"

As her career aspirations in law enforcement progressed, her parents had varied reactions.

"My dad wasn't surprised; I think he half expected it, but my mom was terrified," said Thomasson. "She did not want me to be in the police."

Twenty plus years into her vocation, Thomasson reflects on the aspects of the job she enjoys the most.

Primarily, for her, it is about the honor of being able to wear that badge. But, she says, there's another very valuable aspect of the job - "getting out into the community and trying to make a difference."

"We see people at their worst," said Thomasson. "So we can show up and try to make it just a little bit better...[and] try



Special to SW Rankin News

Asst. Chief Amanda Thomasson

to make a negative a positive."

So far it has been a smooth transition from Captain to Assistant Chief, says Thomasson.

"I had already started as the operations captain. I had already started easing that way. And when the assistant chief retired, I just took his bundle in with mine."

When asked what words of advice she has for young women curious about a

career in law enforcement, Thomasson said, "It's not easy, as a woman. You are going to have to prove yourself twice as much as the guys; but, if it is something that you truly strive to do, it's achievable. The main thing is you have got to win the trust of these guys and let them know that you are not going to cower, you are going to stand firm with them, arm in arm, going in, and doing what needs to be done."

"You gotta have a thick skin," she continued. "You can't let the naysayers get to you; you are going to have to be committed to push yourself...these guys are hard, they are hard on you, they are not gonna cut you a break just [be]cause you are a girl. But it is definitely within reach. Just come to work and try to be better than you were the day before. It worked for me."

Are there other career goals for Thomasson at this point? She says, yes and no.

"I had a goal. I wanted to be an administrator at the City of Pearl, wanted to go as far as they would let me...but I am content that I accomplished the goal I set out to do. I wanted to be the first female."

And so, she is.

MS House Weekly Summaries: January 2022

continued from page 4

pay is currently protected under federal law, but HB 770 would allow someone to file a suit in state court instead of going through the federal court. Mississippi is currently the only state without an equal pay law on the books. The bill passed overwhelmingly by 114-6 and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

House Bill 813 would create the Mississippi Study on the Affordability of Insulin. Under the bill, the State Health Officer of the Department of Health would be required to conduct a study about the affordability of insulin for diabetes patients in the state and report the findings of the study to the Legislature by December 31, 2022. After adopting a committee amend-

ment, the bill passed by a bipartisan vote of 113-5 and has been sent to the Senate.

Week of January 24, 2022

One of the bills that reached the House floor this week was House Bill 1509. The bill would prohibit state and local officials from imposing a COVID-19 vaccine mandate. After much debate, HB 1509 passed the House by a vote of 75-41. The bill was then held on a motion to reconsider.

House Bill 607, or Parker's Law, would create the crime of unlawful delivery of a controlled substance that results in death. In the original bill, a person who sells a controlled substance that directly leads to the user's death could be charged

with first-degree murder. After the introduction of Parker's Law, a debate ensued regarding controlled substances and the prevalence of fentanyl in these drug-related incidents. An amendment was brought forth changing all of the mentions of "controlled substances" to "fentanyl," and Amendment 2 passed overwhelmingly by voice vote. HB 607 passed the House by a vote of 102-7 and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

House Bill 169 would add athletic umpires and referees to the list of people for which the act of simple assault is elevated to aggravated assault. Under Mississippi law, simple assault carries a penalty of up to five years in prison and a \$1,000 fine,

while a person charged with aggravated assault could face a penalty of one to twenty years in prison and up to a \$5,000 fine. After many questions and debate, HB 169 was laid on the table subject to call and remains on the House calendar.

Many other bills were passed with topics including subpoenas, allowing organ donor indication on hunting and fishing licenses, the correctional system, county affairs and municipalities.

The conference report on Senate Bill 2095 (Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act) was adopted by both the House and Senate this week. The final version of the bill has been sent to Governor Tate Reeves, where he can either sign or veto the bill.

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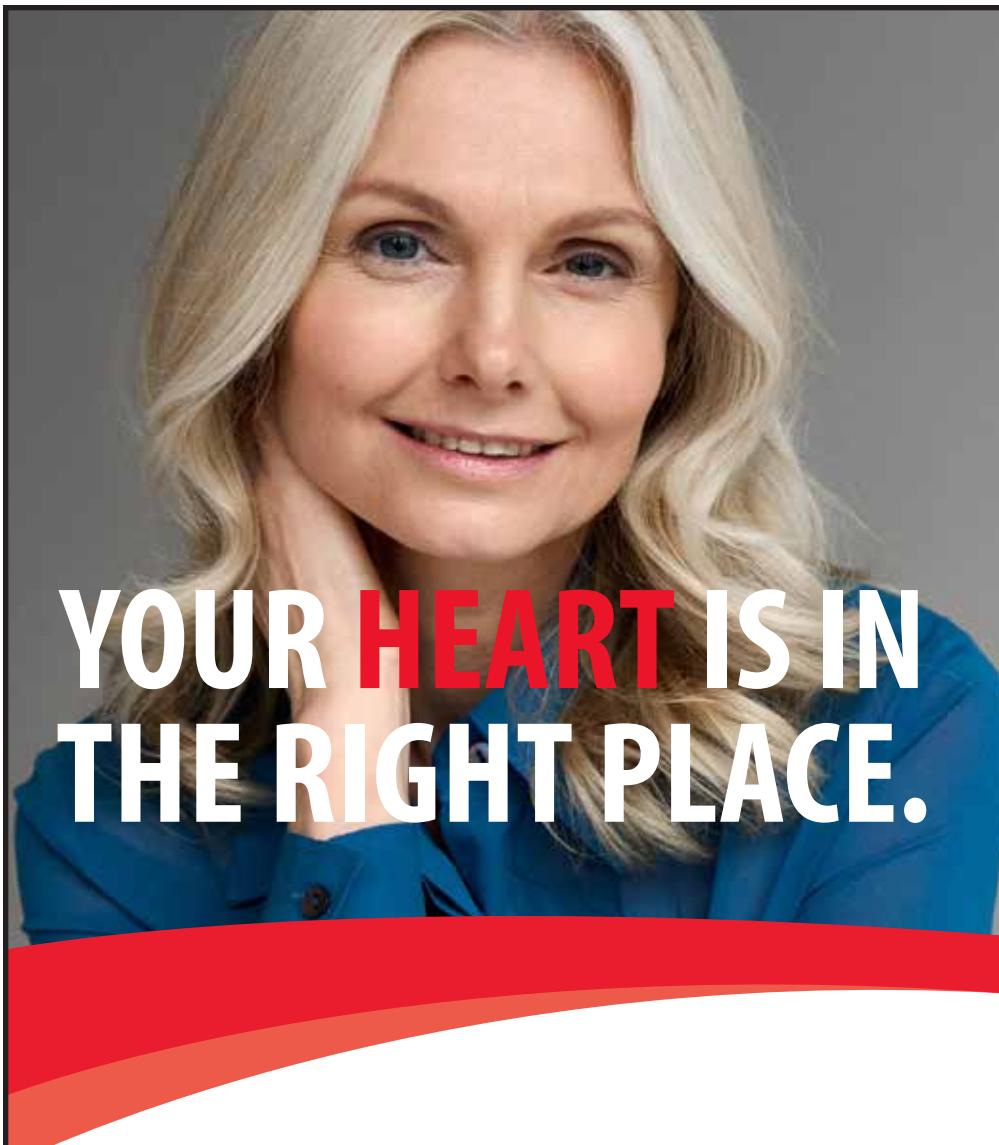
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Richland High School honors their Top Rangers



Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland High School Top Ranger Award is given to students who have shown exemplary behavior in and out of the classroom. Students receiving this award have been standout students and have continually worked hard at their coursework. Students awarded this accolade receive free lunch at Mazzio's in Richland. Pictured (l to r) are the Top Rangers for November, front row: Ayla Tolbert, Denci Ramos, Debra Liner, Skylar Reel, Mattie Robinson, Savanna Hughes, Brianna Sanchez; and back row: Matthew Denham, Yesi Baltazar, Joey Rodriguez, Mason Chapman, Joshua Jackson, Jordan Osborne, Gavin Lovorn, Jeremy Thomas, Alex Martinez, Tyler Caviness, Jordan Minor, Logan Weber and Marcus Ramos.



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Krewe De Roux returns in February



Photo and Image special to SW Rankin News

Special to SW Rankin News

Rankin County Chamber (RCC) and the City of Brandon are getting ready to present the Third Annual Krewe de Roux Festival. On Friday, February 25, from 6:30 p.m. until 10 p.m., there will be a block party and parade in historic downtown Brandon. The final route is to be determined.

On Saturday, February 26, from 11 a.m. until noon, RCC will host "Krewe De Roux GUMBO FEST," a Gumbo Cook-Off with teams cooking fresh gumbo and live entertainment throughout the day. The event benefits the Rankin Chamber Youth Leadership Program each year.

Classic car/truck registration is also being accepted for the "Krewe De Roux Car Show," happening on Saturday Feb-

ruary 26, at the Brandon amphitheater. The car show will feature classic automobiles. The entry fee is \$30 in advance or \$35 at the gate. Entry to the car show comes with two Festival wristbands. Categories for prizes include: RAT Rod, Best Truck, Car Classic 1955-1979, Car Classic 1979-Current and Miscellaneous.

Parade rules and entry forms, gumbo cook-off registration, car show registration and more information about all events may be found at www.rankinchamber.com.

All entry forms must be submitted by Monday, February 14.

Rules and regulation questions may be directed to Lori Farrar at lfarrar@brandonms.org or by calling Edward Means at 601-941-5312.

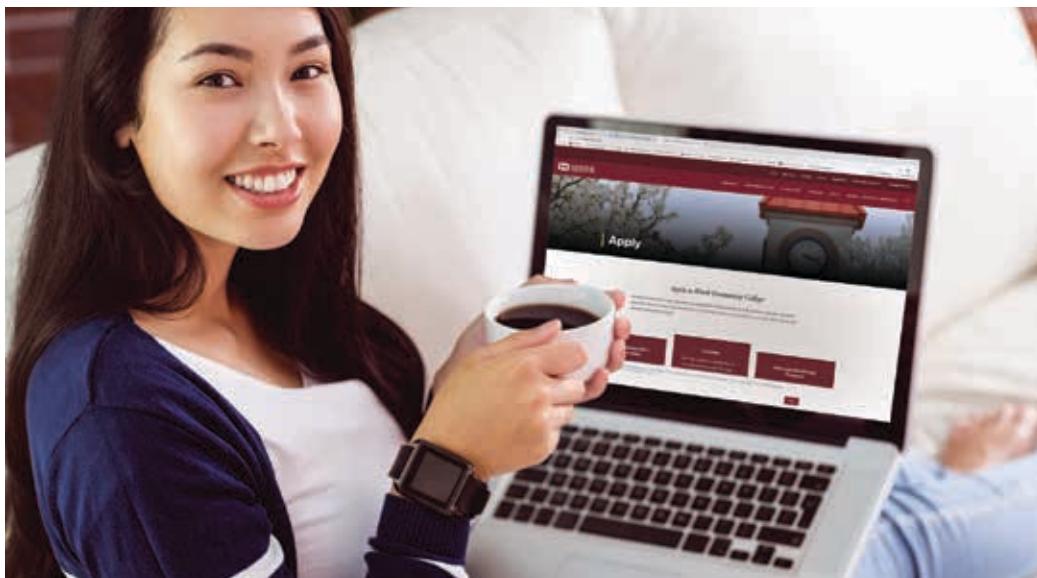
Rankin County School District honors Lee as Elementary Certified Employee



Special to SW Rankin News

Rankin County School District (RCSD) recently honored the Elementary Certified Employee for December, Emily Lee, from Richland Elementary School. Lee oversees the special education self-contained classroom.

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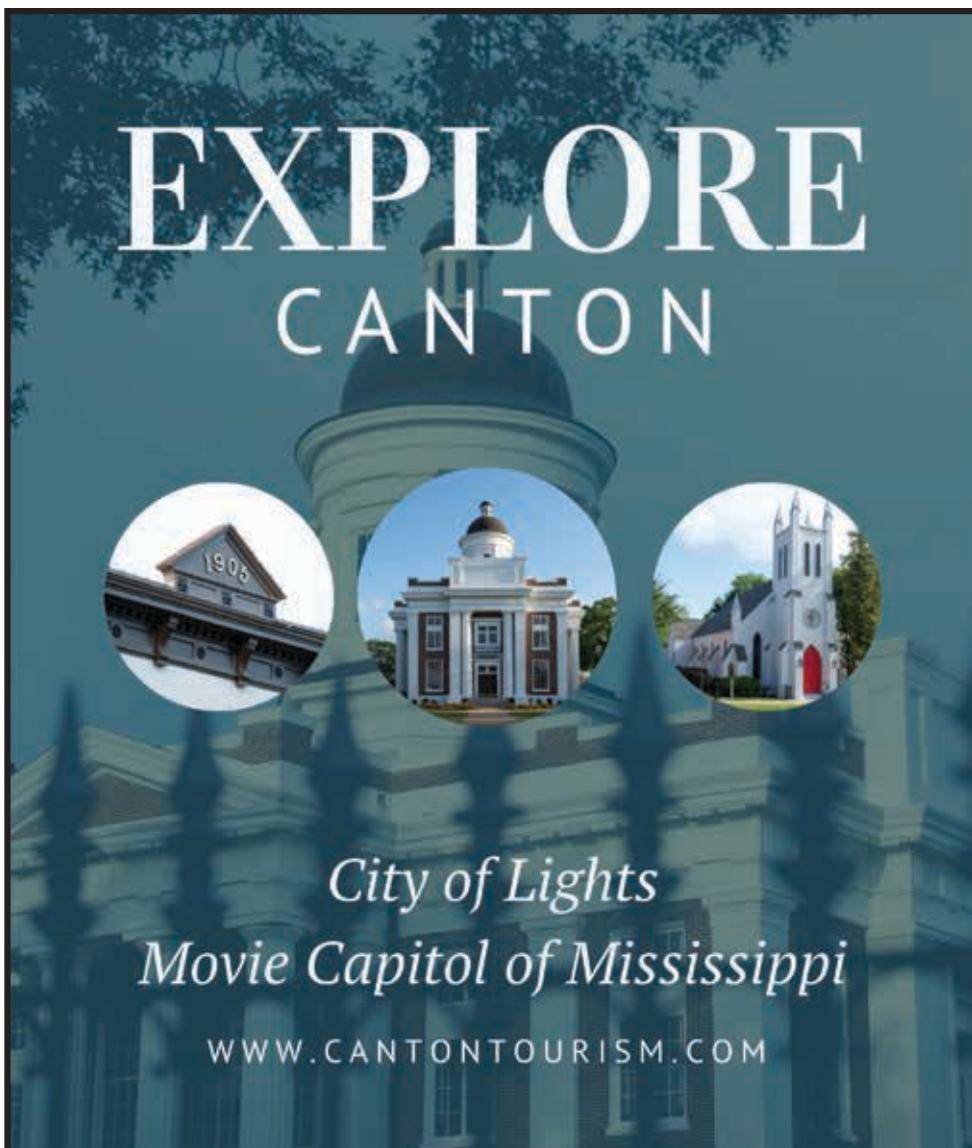
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Florence bowling team competes against Clinton



Special to SW Rankin News

Florence Middle School students represented the Florence High School bowling team at a recent competition against Clinton. Pictured (l to r) are Hadyn Lawrence, Wyatt Baker, Kamden Michel and Andy Barnett.



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Pearl Chamber of Commerce requests donations for local family

Special to the SW Rankin News

Luke and Caroline Puckett are the children of Katie and Adam Puckett of Pearl. Caroline was born with a serious heart condition which has required numerous surgeries, and she also has cerebral palsy. Caroline is in the eighth grade at Pearl Junior High School. Luke was born with Spina Bifida and is wheelchair bound. He is in the third grade at Northside Elementary. Luke and Caroline both enjoy playing in the local wheelchair basketball league, and they are on the Wheel Cats team. They are in need of new adaptive sports wheelchairs. They have outgrown the ones that they have had for the last three years. The chairs cost approximately \$3,100 each, and Pearl Chamber of Commerce is reaching out to the community to ask for donations. Donations may be made directly to Fairland Ard, Katie Puckett's mother, at her place of work, Andy Eaton Insurance Agency in Pearl, or via PayPal at mrs.puckett11@gmail.com.



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The Puckett Family

Pearl Public School District 2021-2022 Parents of the Year



Sharon Bennett



Nisha Patel



Terri Lynn Giramonti



Kristen Chappell



Photos special to SW Rankin News
Justin Boykin

Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Public School District participates annually in the Parent of the Year program sponsored by the Mississippi

Department of Education. Each school selects one parent as its Parent of the Year for the contributions he/she has made to the educational program of the school.

The Parents of the Year for each school are: Sharon Bennett, Pearl Lower Elementary; Nisha Patel, Northside Elementary; Terri Lynn Giramonti, Pearl Upper Elementary; Kristen Chappell,

Pearl Junior High School; and Justin Boykin, Pearl High School. From among these dedicated parents, a committee will select one to represent the district in the state program.



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Richland's Orr coaches soccer teams to victory



2021-2022 Forest Bearcats



Photos special to SW Rankin News

2021-2022 Forest Lady Bearcats

Special to the SW Rankin News

On Thursday, January 20, the Forest Bearcats and Lady Bearcats soc-

cer teams, coached by Richland resident Khary Orr and Rankin County resident Anjan Karmacharya, captured the Division 4, Class I cham-

ampionship at Pisgah High School.

The girls' team finished the regular season with a record of 16-4, and the boys' team finished the reg-

ular season with a record of 17-3. Both teams competed in the MH-SAA Class I playoffs on January 25.

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Latest news and activities from Pearl Junior High School



Sixth-grade students in Vashti Graham's art fundamentals classes created sugar skull masks after studying the origin and history of the Day of the Dead. They learned that the Day of the Dead is a holiday that celebrates the lives of loved ones who have passed away, and they made the sugar skulls in honor of lost loved ones.



Pearl Junior High School (PJHS) counselors sponsored an essay contest as a part of Red Ribbon Week. The topics included drug awareness, drug prevention, and anti-bullying. Pictured (l to r) are: first place winner Danasia Ross; sixth-grade counselor Brigit Nelson, eighth-grade counselor Lauren King, seventh-grade counselor Jana Watts, second place winner Hannah Dosunmu and third place winner Rhyanna James.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

PJHS students in Heather Barnes' creative projects classes recently completed a month-long unit on the game of chess. They ended the unit with a chess tournament, and the top three players received medals. Winners of the tournament pictured (l to r) are: Tristan Gaines, second place winner; Sevin Crump, first place winner; and Jalein Fields, third place winner.

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Florence High School Medical Science Program to host 5K night run

By Florence High School Health Science Instructor Kira Berch

You may run, walk or crawl; but, either way, it's a great time for community gathering.

Just in time for spring fever, the initiative of "Get FIT Florence" is still in full effect, this time in the theme of "Let's Glow Florence."

A 5K walk/run and fun run is planned for March 12 at 6 p.m. at Florence High School, near the football field. Each registration will be supporting both the Medical/Health Science Academies of Florence and McLaurin High Schools.

Each person who registers will receive a custom event t-shirt, glow-in-the-dark necklaces and bracelets and accurate timing provided by Mississippi

RaceTiming, a professional timing organization. We encourage all runners to dress in bright, neon clothes to stand out! Medals will be given to each of the top three walkers and top runners in each age group, along with the race's top male and female participant.

For the convenience of the 5K participants, you won't need to worry about your child's safety. Academy students will be entertaining them in the football common area with corn hole and other glow-in-the-dark activities while waiting for the start of the fun run.

As for the detailed route, stay tuned to local social media posts. The official start and end will be located at the back entrance of Florence High School. As the official route is published, we are encouraging homes within the neighborhood to join in on the glow fun. Bring out those Christmas lights, flashlights and even cheer for your favorite participant.

To make this event happen, we owe a special thank you to the City of Florence Board of Alderman and Florence Police Department for their support in allowing this great community event to be hosted within the city of Florence. Also, a huge thank you to our premier sponsor, Mississippi Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Center.

To make the event successful, we are joined by a variety of community businesses, so look out for the official race flyers posted throughout Florence.

We are excited to bring something unique to Florence, as spring is near, and the weather is getting good. We encourage anyone around the Jackson metro area to join us. Please register at <https://raceroster.com/events/2022/57255/lets-glow-florence> or www.msracetiming.com.

Any questions about the event can be directed to Kira Berch at kira.berch@rbsd.ms.



Special to SW Rankin News

2022 State Legislative Session attended by FMS



Special to SW Rankin News

Three Florence Middle School (FMS) students recently served with State Representative Tom Weathersby at the 2022 State Legislative Session. Pictured (l to r) are: Representative Weathersby, Braxton Byrd, Morgan Weathersby, Ava Fennell and Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives Philip Gunn.



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Pearl student selected for Mississippi Public Broadcasting Student Council

Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Junior High School student Jack Durr has been selected as one of Mississippi Public Broadcasting's (MPB's) inaugural members of the new MPB Student Council – a group of eight middle and high school students from across the state who will gain insight from MPB on college and career readiness and serve as liaisons for their peers to MPB.

MPB's Education Department is leading the effort to ensure the council's success. Initial meetings and an intense orientation have been held. Goals include gaining perspectives on various state and national issues from the council, pairing students with mentors for hands-on career training, helping students create a podcast, planning projects, and increasing students' social



Jack Durr

Special to SW Rankin News

skills. MPB Student Council representatives can earn community service hours for participation. Their one-year terms begin each September. However, a student can decide to stay with the council for multiple years. New students will be selected annually through an application process. "I hope to meet new people, become better at communicating, leading a team, and have a good time," said Jack Durr of Pearl Junior High School. "I learned that MPB provides educational programs through many forms such as television, radio, podcasts, special events, and more."

For more information on the MPB Student Council, contact Jasmine Harvey, MPB Student Engagement Specialist, at jasmine.harvey@mpbonline.org or visit education.mpbonline.org.

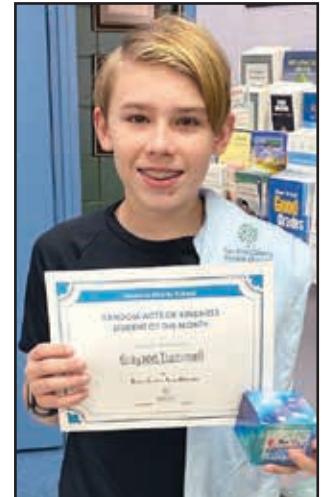
FMS congratulates Character Trait Students of the Month



Florence Middle School (FMS) recently honored the October Character Trait Student of the Month, Zoey Perez. The trait for October was individuality.



Lake Christensen was chosen as FMS's November Character Trait Student of the Month. The trait for November was contentment.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Seventh-grader Grayson Trammell was recently chosen as Florence Middle School's (FMS) December Character Trait Student of the Month for demonstrating the trait of service.

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Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s by Frederick Lewis Allen

By Beth Woodmansee for The Friends of the Richland Library

Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s, by Frederick Lewis Allen, was first printed in 1931, again in 1959, and reprinted in 1997. For Allen, the 1920s truly were “only yesterday.” This interesting, well-written book of 255 pages is filled with details of societal changes during the twenties, and advancements in technology making life in America very unlike it was before World War I.

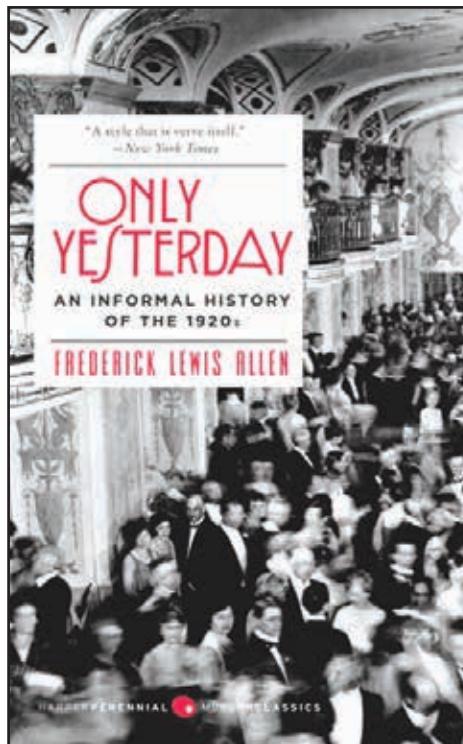
In the "Prelude: May, 1919," Allen introduces the reader to a fictional married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith wears her hair long and wouldn't dream of having it cut short. Before the decade is out, she will embrace the new short hair bobs and will leave her long skirts in the closet to don the daring new short hemlines. In 1919, she would not be welcome inside a drinking establishment and would not smoke cigarettes. This, too, will change in only a few short years.

There will be new clothing styles for Mr. Smith in his closet and, while reading the morning paper, he will learn about the increasingly popular sport

of golf and tennis. He cannot imagine the lure of hitting a small ball around a large field. He reads about one unexciting homerun made by a young man, Babe Ruth, a pitcher with the Boston Red Sox. In 1919, veteran Ty Cobb led the American League in batting, and few knew of Babe Ruth. By 1921, "The Babe" raised his homerun record to fifty-nine to become the most famous man in baseball for many years.

Over their morning coffee, the Smiths talk about the high cost of living and the new "Wartime Prohibition Law," which will take effect on July 1. Not overly concerned about giving up alcohol personally, they cannot yet conceive how this one change in the nation's Constitution will rapidly expand criminal activity in America and provide thirsty Americans with as much illegal alcohol as they could ever want - and all those other evils which come with it.

It's all there in the chapter, "Alcohol and Al Capone," one of the thirteen chapters, into which the book is separated. A few of them include "The Big Red Scare," (Bolsheviks in Russia AND the USA!), which threatens to split the country in two; and "Harding and the



Special to SW Rankin News

presidency in that chapter. You'll learn about "Coolidge Prosperity," as well as the well-documented Florida real estate boom in "Home, Sweet Florida." After a mere two years of phenomenal growth, two hurricanes brought it all to a standstill. All those beautiful homes and communities, some of which had actually been built, were just trash and debris scattered about.

My favorite chapter, "America Convalescent," introduces us to the birth of the radio. The first radio broadcasting station, KDKA, operated by the Westinghouse Company, was opened in east Pittsburgh on November 2, 1920, reporting on the Harding-Cox election returns. A year later, during the winter of 1921-1922, everyone was talking about radio. Americans obsessed about boxing, horse racing and bathing beauty contests, after the first one was held July, 1919, at Washington's bathing beach on the Potomac.

The Twenties were very much like life in America today—a society in flux. Request a copy of *Only Yesterday*, by Frederick Lewis Allen, from Richland Library and settle down for a history lesson that is as interesting as any Alfred Hitchcock movie could be.

Scandals" reveals political scandals threatening America's government due to the greed and graft of politicians during President Warren G. Harding's term in office. Read about the "Teapot Dome Scandal" and others during his

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FES selects Staff and Teacher of the Month



Jennifer Colson, librarian at Florence Elementary (FES), was recently selected as Teacher of the Month for December 2021.



Cafeteria Manager Mary McLaurin was selected as Staff of the Month for December 2021 at FES.

Photos special to SW Rankin News



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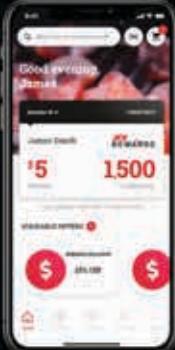
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