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SWRANKIN NEWS

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Vol. 11, No. 03 | March 2026

The Pearl News

THE NEWS RICHLAND

THE FLORENCE NEWS

Two firefighter units recognized for dedication

Special to The Pearl News

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Firefighter of the Month Awards.

"We have the best fire department in the state, and they are always going above and beyond and making it easy to celebrate their hard work and numerous accomplishments," said Chamber Director Kathy Deer.

In February, the Chamber honored six firefighters who exhibited high moral character and dedication. On January 5, 2026, Engine One received a call that an individual had fallen out of his wheelchair into a drainage ditch. Upon arrival, the subject was uninjured but soaking wet from being in the water. The gentleman was unable to verbally communicate with the crew but could communicate by writing. The crew could not obtain a definite place of residence and was left to assume that he did not have a place to stay.

Lieutenant Jimmy Marciel, Firefighter Malachi Adams, and Firefighter Justin Graves of Engine One Crew took it upon themselves to check with many local shelters in an attempt to locate a place for the individual to stay. They provided him with food, water, clothing, a reflective vest, a Bible and a duffel bag to store his belongings; all purchased with their own money.



Special to The Pearl News

Lieutenant Jimmy Marciel, Firefighter Malachi Adams, and Firefighter Justin Graves of Engine One Crew, along with Captain BJ Wells, Lieutenant Brad Phillips and Firefighter Braeden Brantley of Engine Two Crew seek to help those in need in Pearl. Photo shows both crews.

In a separate incident, Truck Two, which consisted of Captain BJ Wells, Lieutenant Brad Phillips and Firefighter Braeden Brantley, was called to the area of Huey Magoo's on Bass Pro Drive. The caller stated that there was an individual in a wheelchair who was in danger of being hit by oncoming traffic.

Upon arriving, they found a male who turned out to be the same individual that Engine One responded to

on January 5. The individual was not injured and wanted to be transported to the Flying J Truck Stop. They considered having an Uber take him to a homeless shelter in Jackson, but, in the interest of the man's safety, decided against that idea.

Truck Two then made arrangements for the individual to be transported to the Flying J and followed him there to assure that he was safe. They provided him with food, drinks, a notepad so that he could communicate, and an umbrella, due to the good chance of rain that evening. Again, these firefighters provided whatever was needed out of their own pockets.

"These firefighters went way beyond the call of duty to show compassion to someone in need. It is an honor to have these firefighters at the Pearl Fire Department and in the City of Pearl," said Deer.

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce presented each firefighter with a framed certificate, a \$50 Walmart gift card, a \$10 Frisco Deli gift certificate and a bag of goodies. Sam's Club donated a set of dual powered flashlights and a 2-pack of rechargeable handwarmers. Revell Ace Hardware-Pearl donated a camo stainless steel tumbler and Firehouse Subs in Pearl donated \$10 gift cards to each of the firefighters.

Groundbreaking for Commons funded by tax increase, State



Special to The Pearl News

Hinds Community College (HCC) will hold a groundbreaking ceremony on March 16 for its planned Rankin dorms at The Commons. See page 8 for more information.

Pearl School's Odom named MSBA President

Special to SW Rankin News

The Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) recently announced its executive officers and directors for the 2025-26 term. New members were elected last November by the MSBA Delegate Assembly, a group representing school board members from across Mississippi. Sondra Odom from the Pearl Public School District School Board was elected Board President.

"It is an honor being elected to serve as President of the Mississippi School Board Association," said Odom. "Over the years, MSBA has served a vital role in training and educating school board members to effectively lead their districts to be successful in the ever-changing world of public education. I am excited for the privilege to represent other board members in this role and to be a



Special to SW Rankin News

Sondra Odom has been named Board President for the Mississippi School Boards Association for its 2025-26 term.

part of this organization."

The MSBA Board of Directors consists of twenty members. Together, they

provide strategic direction for MSBA, champion school board training and development, and advocate for policies that support student success.

"The MSBA Board of Directors plays a vital role in guiding the vision and work of the association," said Dr. Denotris R. Jackson, MSBA Executive Director. "Their leadership and dedication to public education will help ensure we continue to meet the needs of our members and strengthen Mississippi's public schools."

The Mississippi School Boards Association provides leadership development, policy guidance, and advocacy to school boards and their members. As a trusted partner in education, MSBA is committed to ensuring that every student in Mississippi has access to a high-quality education. For more information, visit www.msbaonline.org.

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Richland improving roadways around town

By Susie A. Wolfe

Richland Public Works Director Jason Sutphin said the City is working on a number of road projects to help make traffic easier for residents.

The Richland Circle Project is about a couple of months to completion, according to Sutphin. It will widen the road behind the high school from a car and a half to two full lanes of traffic, which will make it easier and safer for cars and buses to maneuver through the area.



Special to The Richland News

Richland Public Works Director Jason Sutphin said the City is working on a number of road projects to help make traffic easier for residents. The Richland Circle project is currently underway to widen the road behind the high school from a car and a half to two full lanes of traffic.

“We widened the road behind the high school by about four feet to allow two lanes of traffic and a sidewalk,” said Sutphin. “Also, part of the same project is widening the intersection at Old Highway 49 at McBride. The construction crews almost have the drainage in and will then add asphalt and striping.”

In another projects, the County is currently overlaying Old Highway 49 up to Cleary Road, and the City is working on the ditch at Squirrel Branch behind Walmart and the Community Center. Once that is completed, the sidewalk will be repaved.

Sutphin said the next project, expected to proceed around the middle of March, is widening the intersection of Old Highway 49 and Carrier Boulevard. They will also add a traffic light.

From the Richland Boardroom: February Business



By Susie A. Wolfe

The Richland Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in regular meetings on February 3 and February 17. After the Call to Order and Prayer, the Board of Aldermen approved the Consent Agenda.

Employee service pins were given to Ricky Lichte with the Street Department for five years of service, Kevin Grantham with the fire department for ten years of service, Reed Hawthorne with engineering services for ten years of service, and Allison McDonald with the Richland Police Department for twenty years of service.

Aldermen approved the purchase of ten thirty-gallon drums of Permasease UC 20-20 mosquito spray and four (4) thirty-gallon drums of ReMoa Tri mosquito spray from Adapco, LLC in the total amount of \$81,200 for the Street Department. They also approved the use and implementation of TimeClock Plus Software to aid with and provide an audit trail for the City's payroll with the initial one-time investment of \$11,029.67, and the annual investment of \$6,012.48.

Also approved was a new mower for the Parks and Recreation Department in the amount of \$10,959.

Part of the Consent Agenda approved by the Board included the M.U.T. Bond Debt Fund. They approved payment of Invoice No. 74338 in the amount of \$17,936, out of the 2023 M.U.T. Bond Debt Fund to Engineering Service for work completed, as approved in the Engineering Agreement on November 7, 2023, for the 2023 Street Improvement Project.

For engineering service, the Board approved Pay Request No. 2 in the amount of \$186,973.36, to Thornton Construction Company, Inc. for work performed on the 2023 Street Improvements Project.

Three quotes were received for the purchase of decorative seasonal banners to be paid out of 3% Hotel/Motel Tax Fund, and a bid from One Way was accepted for \$10,940.

The Board authorized the Mayor to sign the Annual Stormwater Report.

The hire of Scott Summers was approved as a maintenance worker in the Street Department at Level 1/Step 1, effective February 18, 2026, contingent upon passage of drug screening.

Two quotes were received for the purchase of two sewer pumps for the Water Department: Cooper

per Electric \$14,305.26 Fluid Process and Pumps, LLC \$13,970.00. Cooper was accepted.

The Board authorized a new summer basketball program through the Parks and Recreation Department on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights during the month of June, set the fee at \$50 per player, and authorized payment of the officials.

The Form of Contract with BIG Construction was approved for Fire Station 2 Addition and Remodel Project.

The Board also authorized the acceptance of the 2025-26 LEO Grant No. 2025045, for Toughbook set-ups and the docking stations for twenty police cars in the reimbursable grant amount of \$34,269.80, which is half of the purchase price of same of \$68,539.60.



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

Allison McDonald has been with the Richland Police Department for twenty years. Pictured (l to r) are: Mayor Clay Burns with McDonald awarding her with her 20-year pin.

The payment of \$20,000 out of the Court Administrative (special) Fund and \$48,539.60 out of Cleared Drug Seizure Fund was approved for the LEO Grant with the reimbursement by the 2025-26 LEO Grant No. 2025045, in the amount of \$34,269.80, going back into the Cleared Drug Seizure Fund.

The Richland Board of Aldermen meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 6 p.m. in the municipal courtroom at 305 Monroe Street. All meetings are open to the public.



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FHS Lady Eagles soccer team wins 2026 5A North State Championship

Special to The Florence News

The Lady Eagles of Florence High School recently completed a fantastic 19-3 season, capping it off with a 4-1 win over East Central in the 2025-2026 5A State Championship game.

Jordyn Quick began the scoring, while Mary Elise Taylor added the second goal. Quick found the net again for third goal just before halftime and then assisted eighth-grader Brelynn Grice on the fourth goal.

This is the seventh championship in the program's history, and fifth for Coach Bill Hood. Hood says that the Florence community and southwest Rankin County area was very supportive throughout the winning season.

Previous championships were 2012 and 2013 with coach Gray Massey, and 2018, 2021, 2022, 2024 - and now



Photo by Martin Tucker

Saturday, February 21, 2026, was a good day for the Florence High School (FHS) Lady Eagle's soccer program. They won the state championship against East Central at Germantown High School.

2026 - with Coach Hood. The Lady Eagles finished as state runner up in 2019, 2020 and 2025.

Seniors this year were Kylee Clo-

er, Mary Elise Taylor, Kendal Patterson, Syndey O'Hair and Wendy Manchame'. Hood noted that school administrators and the athletic

department were supportive, including FHS principal Jason Thomas, athletic director Rod Davis, trainers Kira Berch and Danielle Traylor, and student trainer Harvest Hall.

The Lady Eagles roster includes Kylie Reynolds, Addison Grantham, Mylee Mangum, Delaney Cannon, McKala Williamson, Emerson Walsh, Brelynn Grice, Kadie Carroll, Regina Guzman, Raeleigh Statham, Brooke Bridges, Kylee Cloer, Harper Paige, Ella Grace Sanford, Emma Marchant, Emmalyn Thomas, Mallory Jackson, Sydney O'Hair, Harleigh Short, Lilly Banks, Kendal Patterson, Mary Elise Taylor, Wendy Manchame', Jordyn Quick, Mary Grace Tomlinson, Mackenzie

Lilley and Makayla Stephens. Joshua Cavanaugh is the assistant coach, and Bill Hood is head coach.

Mississippi's newest town: A Star is born

By Susie A. Wolfe

Star is set to become Mississippi's newest town. Known as the home of Faith Hill and immortalized in her country songs, the community, seventeen miles south of Jackson on Highway 49, pleaded their cases on February 17, 2026, before Rankin County Chancery Court Judge Haydn Roberts.

There were 462 votes (76%) on the petition to incorporate, which is more than enough, according to the planner and attorney.

The effort to incorporate Star isn't new. Earlier attempts in 2008 didn't succeed. This time, organizers scaled down the proposed area to focus on what local planners considered a sustainable core. With no opposition in court, the judge granted the incorporation, marking a major milestone for the community.

A previous hearing on February 10, 2026, took place to hear the ruling regarding Star incorporation versus Florence annexation. Florence had annexed Highway 49 to the county line, according to Star resident John Lee, an insurance broker who has been proposed as the town's first mayor, but Flor-



Star native John Lee, an insurance broker, is the proposed mayor who will be sworn in along with the Board of Aldermen in March.



Photos special to The Florence News

Dora Jean Mangum (right), who served as Star's Postmistress for forty years, was very involved in early attempts seeking to incorporate Star. Kathy Mangum (left), Dora Jean's daughter, helped to continue to efforts.

ence rescinded the annexation and supported the incorporation.

Star's Postmistress for forty years, Dora Jean Mangum, was very involved in the original efforts seeking to incorporate Star. In 2008, it was determined that the area was too large, and the effort never got to a point

of petition signing. Dora Jean passed away in 2022.

This time, Kathy Mangum, Dora Jean's daughter, decided to carry the torch across the finish line. The area was shrunk, and the organizing group, the Star Civic Incorporation Group, focused just on that core area of what could be called the Village of Star.

This recent drive to incorporate all started with a petition in October 2025. After gaining enough signatures supporting the incorporation and providing evidence showing it could be self-sufficient, a group generated community support and got signatures for the petition.

"The City Limits will start just before Donna's #6 on Highway 49 to the county line," said Lee. "We will be able to govern ourselves, claim our identity, and be our own destination. We are looking to create a police department, so we have our own local law enforcement and other things for the growth of our area, but we have to crawl before we can walk."

Star's aldermen, who will be appointed for their first term, include David Byrd, Cal Mangum, Mallory Shows, Walter Stewart and David Dyess.

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Legislature looks at more education issues, proposes tax relief for agriculture



By Senator Brian Rhodes,
State Senator, Mississippi
District 36

As the 2026 Legislative Session continues, several House bills have crossed over to the Senate for review and consideration. Many of these measures address issues that directly affect families, schools, farmers and communities across Mississippi. At this stage in the process, most House bills have passed the House of Representatives and now await action in the Senate. The Senate may pass them as written, amend or edit the language and send them back to the House for concurrence, or decline to advance them. If both chambers agree on final language, the legislation will then be sent to the Governor for consideration.

One of the most talked about measures this session was **House Bill 2**, the large school choice proposal that would have created

education savings style accounts and expanded public school transfer options. After review, **House Bill 2** failed in the Senate Education Committee on a unanimous no vote and will not move forward this session.

House Bill 1126 focuses on teacher pay and education workforce enhancements. The bill includes significant teacher salary increases along with supplemental pay for certain specialized positions. Given the continued effort to recruit and retain quality educators, this measure has generated considerable attention.

House Bill 1578 addresses student safety by requiring public schools to implement policies educating students about the risks associated with social media and online activity. With growing

concerns about digital safety and mental health, this proposal has prompted meaningful discussion.

House Bill 1626 seeks to strengthen oversight of online courses used in public schools and restrict public funding for non-accredited programs, emphasizing accountability and quality standards in digital learning.

In addition to education measures, several other House bills are now before the Senate.

House Bill 4060 provides tax relief for agricultural producers by offering sales tax exemptions or reductions on certain farm related materials and inputs. For our rural communities and producers, this could provide meaningful cost savings.

House Bill 1034 establishes a framework allowing certain termi-

nally ill patients to access medical cannabis in hospitals or care facilities under defined conditions, continuing the broader conversation surrounding medical cannabis implementation in Mississippi.

House Bill 1059 strengthens penalties and clarifies sentencing provisions related to felony child abuse, reflecting ongoing efforts to protect children and enhance public safety.

Several of these bills have already successfully passed through their respective Senate committees and are now awaiting action on the Senate floor. As they come up for debate and possible amendment, I will continue reviewing each one carefully with a focus on what best serves our district and the state.

I encourage anyone with questions or concerns about these measures to reach out to me. Your input is important as we work through the legislative process. My contact email is brhodes@senate.ms.gov.



SWRANKIN NEWS

P.O. Box 5963, Pearl, MS 39208
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Volume 11, Issue 03 | Circulation - 15,000

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Southwest Rankin News is published
on the second Tuesday of every month.



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Spring Lake Garden Club beautifies Pearl

Special to SW Rankin News

Those driving around Pearl are encouraged to notice the flower gardens around town. Established in 2011, the Spring Lake Garden Club currently has twenty-seven members that maintain various gardens located in Pearl, including the “Plant It Pink Garden” in front of City of Pearl City Hall. Other gardens are the Blue/Gold Star Memorial Garden in front of City of Pearl Community Center, the Children’s Learning Garden behind City of Pearl Library, the flower bed located at Bright Park, and containers located in front of the City’s Senior Center.

According to Garden Club member Angelia Wade, another group project includes maintaining the display case at the City of Pearl Library. The display case is changed to garden ideas for the current gardening season. The members also recycle washing powder pods with flower arrangements, and they are placed in various locations in the city.

Recent activities had several ladies participating in Read Across America and reading to students at Northside Elementary. Members



Special to SW Rankin News



read books about trees. Also, over twelve trees have been planted in City of Pearl in honor of Arbor Day.

The Garden Club also maintains Bright Park’s Arboretum and helps decorate of the City of Pearl Senior Center for various holidays.

Monthly programs are held on the second Thursday of each month. Various topics about gardening are presented. Contact Brenda Vernamonti vernamo@bellsouth.net if interested in membership.

Pearl Pirates sign to play football at MS community colleges



Special to SW Rankin News

National Signing Day was celebrated in January with four Pearl Pirate seniors who are continuing their football careers at the next level. Jack Durr and Zell McKenzie will be playing at Holmes Community College, and Reed Taylor and Evan Williams signed with East Mississippi Community College.





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Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



The View of Athens by Paul

Text: Acts 17:16-34

Nearly every day the news networks are involved in showing the troubles that many of our cities are having. Stores have been looted, cars burned and many times the law enforcement stands by and watches. There are battles between protesters and Federal law enforcement while the leaders of the states and cities lend no helping hand. Perhaps it would be good to look at a city through the eyes of Paul.

Jews from Thessalonica had followed Paul to Berea and stirred up the people against Paul. He fled from Berea and went to Athens. Here he was waiting for Silas and Timothy. In Acts 17:16-17 we see the city of Athens as viewed by Paul.

He saw a city without God, but not without gods. They were given over to idolatry. This is true in many of our schools today. God has been rejected not only in schools but in religion as a whole. While men may not build idols like those in Athens, they have made gods of their own. The question in Athens is not whether they would have a god, but whether they would have the true and living God, or substitute a god of their own making. Many today are faced with the same question. Many think that we have outgrown the old-fashioned idea of needing the God of the Bible. Paul finds the city of Athens full of idolatry. Any city will be full of something. If it is not filled with the fulness of God it will be filled with all kinds of substitutes for God. The problem is idols cannot satisfy. Just look at the cities where the problems exist and you can see and feel the emptiness that exists. We see cities filled with prosperity and poverty at the same time along with corruption by the leaders and streets filled with crime.

Paul saw a city of intellectual learning and culture. While no longer had its notables such as Socrates and Plato, it still had its intellectuals. But with all the culture and learning, it had its idols and one to "an unknown god". Athens was very religious, but it was an agnostic religion. Their religion was the "God is dead" kind. Their intellectual learning and culture had carried them only to a dead end.

Paul saw a city in need of a divine revelation. Because Paul was an inspired man, with an inspired revelation, he could declare unto them the God that they needed (Acts 17:23,30). Paul was able to start where all the intellectuals of Athens had to stop. This was because Paul could offer to them the true and living God that came only through revelation. All the learning of Athens had not been able to find the one true God that Paul knew and preached. What was true of Athens then is true of our cities today where multitudes are trying to rid of our one means of knowing God. The intellectuals of our day try to discredit the Bible and the result is what we see on the news feeds of our day.

Here is the heart of our problem today: men reject the Bible, God and Christ because they do not want to submit to the moral pressure exerted in the Bible. Today we find watered down preaching, Bible perversions, and religion that is no more than a social club. The progress of our day has simply carried us back to Athens, a city of learning and ignorance.

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Pearl's Tony Thornton named to 2026 AFA Hall of Fame

By Susie A. Wolfe

Tony Thornton turned working for Jefcoat Fence Company in Pearl, Mississippi, at fifteen into being inducted into the 2026 American Fence Association (AFA) Hall of Fame.

“To be recognized by an organization that has meant so much to our industry—and to me personally—is incredibly humbling,” said Thornton, a 50+ year veteran of the fencing industry with a vast level of experience as a contractor, distributor and with manufacturing. “The fence industry has given me so much, and I am proud to have been a small part of helping it move forward. Thank you for this meaningful recognition.”

His humble beginning into the fence industry happened at age fifteen when a neighbor and family friend stopped by and was told to “get in the truck, done talked to your dad, we going to build a fence.” That day started his career. That neighbor was Mr. Jere Jefcoat, and every summer between junior high, high school and even college, Thornton worked for Jefcoat Fence Company.

Thornton Fence Consulting Group was established in 2022. While working with others and owning his own companies,

Thornton gained experience in sales, operations, installation and project management and began developing efficiency methods that streamlined the processes that highlighted the importance of profitability.

He worked with Jefcoat Fence Company for fourteen years and was the operations manager for nine years before branching out on his own. He has worked and managed companies ranging from one to over one hundred employees, and his strengths are evident in the development of efficiency procedures for all size companies.

At age twenty-nine, Thornton started his own business in the gate automation installation area of the industry. This company grew exponentially, and he expanded into one of the largest gate operator and access control distributors in the country. Through this experience, his passion for training and education began as UL and ASTM standards were introduced into the industry. He believes his knowledge of these standards and unique method of delivery through education has always been one of the many strengths he brings to this next chapter for consulting.

After selling the distribution company in the early 2000s, Thornton worked for DKS (Doorking) as a regional sales



Special to SW Rankin News

Thornton Fence Consulting Group was established in 2022 by founder and visionary Tony Thornton, who grew up in Pearl and still considers it home. He said the honor of being inducted into the AFA Hall of Fame reflects the many great people he has worked alongside over the years. Tony is pictured with his wife, Tammy, also from Pearl.

manager for nine plus years and was responsible for multiple states. He was also heavily involved with in-house and regional training events throughout the country. His passion for education and supporting the fence and gate industry

continued to grow, and his background as a contractor and distributor provided a wealth of knowledge to the gate automation industry.

For the years 2014 to 2022, Thornton served as the Executive Director for AFA, then started Thornton Fence Consulting Group, which he still owns. In 2023, he started his current position as Association Director for the Canadian Fence Association.

A 1979 graduate of Pearl High School (PHS), he married his high school sweetheart, Tammy Mayo. Their children, Brittany and Aaron, who both also graduated from Pearl High School, have three children each. Both Tony's and Tammy's dads, Rueben (Pop) Thornton and Thomas (Tommy) Mayo still live in Pearl, as well as sisters and their families. Thornton's sister, Rena, joined his dad and the immediate family at the 2026 induction ceremony in Colorado.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author attended Pearl High School with Thornton and his wife, Tammy. Tony graduated in 1979, and the students' names are immortalized on the listing of class members outside Pearl City Hall and on the class photo collage in the hallway.

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From the Florence Boardroom: February Business

Special to The Florence News

The City of Florence met in their regularly scheduled meeting, set for the first Tuesday in February, February 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall located at 203 College Street in Florence. Present were Mayor Trey Gunn, along with Aldermen Mason Herrin, Kyle Martin and Brent Sistrunk. Aldermen John Banks and Brian Grantham were absent. Mayor Gunn called the meeting to order and announced a quorum. Mayor Gunn gave the invocation.

Upon recommendation of Public Works Operator Billy Russell, a motion was made to approve the quote of Consolidated Pipe and Supply Co., Inc. in the amount of \$9,760 for the installation of two shield panel assemblies and two adjustable spreader assemblies for the public works department, the lowest and best of two quotes received.

Billy Russell also asked the

Board to approve the quote of Consolidated Pipe and Supply Co., Inc. in the amount of \$13,300 for the purchase of a push cam P50B Camera System for the Public Works Department, the lowest and best of two quotes received.



Special to SW Rankin News

The Florence Board of Aldermen offered congratulations at their recent Board meeting to the Florence High School Lady Eagles soccer team for being 5A North State champions.

Community Development Director Joel Sims recommended signage for Eagle Post Convenience Store located at 131 Hwy 469 East as presented by Budget

Signs. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

City Engineer Tim Parker will direct City personnel and Engineering Service to perform a final inspection prior to placement of final surface asphalt for Waverly Subdivision-Phase I, and, upon completion of satisfactory final inspection, will allow the developer to install the required final surface asphalt on Phase I streets, and to require the developer to provide a two-year warranty letter on Waverly Drive Phase II and a one-year warranty letter on the remaining Phase I streets. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

Minutes of January 20, 2026 were approved.

The Aldermen went into executive session to discuss a personnel matter in the Street Department involving the position of laborer



and assistant street director.

The Board will hire Patrick James as a street maintenance employee at \$15 per hour with a (90) day probation period starting February 9, 2026, pending a successful background check and drug and alcohol testing.

Street Director David Myers recommended promoting street employee Tyler Hayes to Assistant Street Director with an increase to his hourly salary of \$1.25 per hour, effective immediately.



“Don’t wait, get your Valentine Orders in early!”

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Tuten named Florence ES Rankin Chamber Teacher of the Year



Special to SW Rankin News

Jordan Tuten was named Florence Elementary School (FES)’s Rankin County Chamber Teacher of the Year. Each year, the Rankin County Chamber of Commerce honors a teacher from every school who demonstrates excellence, leadership and a heart for students. Tuten is pictured holding her award surrounded by students she teaches.

Rock bands Daughtry and Hinder to entertain at Pearl Day 2026

Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl recently announced that multi-platinum rock band Daughtry will headline the 2026 Pearl Day Concert on Saturday, April 25, at Trustmark Park North Parking Lot. The free community concert will begin with special guest Hinder at 7 p.m., followed by Daughtry taking the stage at 8:45 p.m.

“We hope to have more than the ten thousand-person crowd we had last year,” said Mayor Jake Windham. “These nationally recognized rock bands will deliver a concert experience you’d typically only find in major markets, and we’re proud to provide it free for our residents and guests.”

One of the most visible and best-selling rock bands of the twenty-first century, *Daughtry* has sold out concerts across the globe. Their self-titled debut album, *Daughtry*, was the top-selling album of 2007 and the fastest-selling rock debut in Soundscan history. The album earned four GRAMMY® nominations and won four American Music Awards, along with seven Billboard Music Awards, including Album of the Year.

The band’s subsequent albums, *Leave This*

PEARL DAY
SATURDAY, APRIL 25 — TRUSTMARK PARK

DAUGHTRY
FEATURING HINDER — FREE CONCERT

GATES OPEN — 5:30PM
HINDER — 7PM
DAUGHTRY — 8:45PM

LOCATED IN THE NORTH PARKING LOT

BRING A CHAIR | NO OUTSIDE FOOD OR DRINKS

Special to SW Rankin News

The free Pearl Day community concert will begin with rock band Hinder at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, followed by rock band Daughtry at 8:45 p.m. in the Trustmark Park North Parking Lot.

Town, *Break The Spell*, and *Baptized*, all achieved Platinum status, while *Cage To Rattle* was certified Gold. In 2021, Daughtry released *Dearly Beloved*, producing multiple Top 10 singles. Their 2023 smash cover of “Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)” featuring Lzzy Hale marked another Top 10 success, followed by their return to rock roots with “Artificial,” their first No. 1 single in the Active Rock format, and the follow-up No. 1 hit, “Pieces.” Their newest EP, *Shock to the System (Part One)*, is available now on all platforms.

Joining the lineup is multi-platinum American rock band Hinder, whose debut album *Extreme Behavior* climbed to No. 6 on the Billboard 200 and has since been certified 3x Platinum. Their follow-up album, *Take It To The Limit*, peaked at No. 4 on the Billboard 200 and solidified the band’s presence on the global rock stage. Hinder’s latest album, *Back To Life*, continues to build momentum, with their single “Bring Me Back To Life” climbing active rock charts worldwide.

The Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast, held in conjunction with Pearl Day, will take place the Saturday before, April 17, in the Pearl Community Room.

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Miss Mississippi speaks at 2026 Pearl Chamber Awards

Special to The Pearl News

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet recognized many of Pearl's businesses on February 26, 2026, at Pearl Community Center. Miss Mississippi Anna Leah Jolly shared her testimony on defining success. Her story, from being an adopted child from Ukraine to becoming Miss Mississippi, was inspiring and deeply meaningful to the crowd.



Miss Mississippi Anna Leah Jolly spoke at the Chamber's annual banquet, including the journey of her being an adopted child from Ukraine to becoming Miss Mississippi.

Two true Pearl icons were recognized: Sondra Odom was honored with the Pillar of the Community Award, a recognition of her lasting impact and service, and State Senator and Senate Pro-Tem Dean Kirby received the President's Distinguished Service Award for his continued dedication and leadership in Pearl and Rankin County.

Mayor Jake Windham said it best when he said it's the businesses and the hardworking individuals behind them that make Pearl so special."

Michelle Adcock, Rankin County Circuit Clerk, said, "The event was filled with an amazing group of business leaders, community supporters and dedicated citizens who are helping move Pearl forward. I am so proud of Rankin County and the growth we continue to experience.

Also, as part of the presentation, local schools recognized parents and administrators. Pearl Public School District and Park Place Christian Academy honored their Parent of the Year and Administrators of the Year. The Mississippi Mud Monsters



Photos special to The Pearl News

The Mississippi Mud Monsters were named Large Business of the Year by the Pearl Chamber of Commerce.



At banquet, Gene Newman (center) announced that Director Kathy Deer (far right) was retiring after serving twenty years for the Chamber of Commerce, and Deer received a standing ovation. Pictured with them is Troy Jones from Revell Hardware (left).

than a year, the community rallied around a brand-new team and helped turn Trustmark Park into a year-round destination, from baseball to The Southern Lights, creating moments that bring people together long after the final out. Mud Monsters representatives said the award belongs to "our city, our fans, and everyone who chose to build something new with us."

were named Large Business of the Year by the Pearl Chamber of Commerce; and it was noted that, in less

Chamber Director Kathy Deer also received a standing ovation when State Rep. Gene Newman announced she was retiring after serving twenty years for the Chamber of Commerce.

More details are available on The Pearl News Facebook page.

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Groundbreaking planned for HCC Rankin dorms, funded in part by tax increase

Special to SW Rankin News

Plans are moving forward for a new student residence hall at Hinds Community College's (HCC) Rankin campus following a 2024 vote by the Rankin County Board of Supervisors to increase property taxes to help support the project.

Supervisors approved a 1.5-mil increase in county property taxes as part of the funding for the construction of a new dormitory and related facilities at the campus in Pearl.

The dormitory is part of a larger campus development project often referred to as "The Commons." Plans for the project include a three-story student housing building, along with additional campus facilities such as dining and wellness space designed to support student life.

The Rankin campus has historically operated primarily as a commuter campus, serving students who travel to Pearl for classes and return home each day. The addition of student housing would mark

a significant change for the campus by creating the opportunity for students to live on campus for the first time. There are also plans to bring some athletic programs to campus - volleyball is already in the works.

While Rankin County taxpayers will help support the project through the millage increase, the dormitory and related improvements are not funded entirely through local taxes. State funding has also been allocated toward the project as part of broader support for Mississippi's community college system.

HCC is the largest community college in Mississippi, serving students across multiple campuses in central Mississippi, including locations in Raymond, Utica, Jackson, Vicksburg and Pearl.

The planned expansion at the Rankin campus is intended to enhance the student experience and expand campus amenities as enrollment and program offerings continue to grow in Rankin

County and the surrounding area.

The construction project also comes as community colleges across Mississippi have continued to raise concerns about funding needed to maintain and repair existing facilities across their campuses. College leaders have noted in recent years that many buildings within the state's community college system are aging and require ongoing maintenance.

As new construction projects move forward, officials say balancing expansion with maintenance of existing facilities remains an important consideration for colleges across the state.

Additional details about the construction timeline and capacity of the new residence hall are expected to be announced as the project progresses.

A groundbreaking ceremony for "The Commons," which will face the Irl Dean Roads Administrative Building off Highway 80, is set for March 16 at 11:30 a.m. The public is invited to attend.



Architectural renderings of Hinds Community College's new dorm and facilities on its Rankin campus/Special to SW Rankin News

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Seniors enjoy Mardi Gras in New Orleans



By Guest Columnist Amy Matthews, Richland Senior Services Activities Coordinator

Special to SW Rankin News

Seniors from Richland Senior Center and Community Bank's senior program gathered together for an overnight trip to New Orleans for Lundy Gras and Mardi Gras festivities. Directed by Trek Travel and Mardi Gras Made Easy, our seniors had an amazing "bucket list" Mardi Gras experience.

Our buses delivered us to the beautiful Hilton Riverside, where we unpacked before heading uptown with a VIP escort to our Lundy Gras headquarters. Our hosts provided a beautiful banquet room with floor-to-ceiling windows and a full balcony from which to enjoy two beautiful parades. The balcony was the perfect spot to watch the fun below, but for the more adventurous, we were given access to a private, gated area right on the street, where you could stand or have a seat on bleachers. Though many float riders were able to make the toss of beads to our second story balcony, the street access put you in arms-length of the action.

Seniors enjoyed catching beads, cups, and coins from the Krewe of Proteus, the oldest continuously parading Old Line Krewe, and the Krewe of Orpheus, with Harry Connick, Jr., leading the parade down St. Charles.

Also included that night was a New Orleans buffet full of fried catfish, wings, mac and cheese, jambalaya, and shrimp and grits. Of course, dessert was the traditional Mardi Gras sweet- King Cakes! - one on every table!



Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland Senior Trip to Mardi Gras had two buses full. Pictured (l to r), front row, are: Amy Matthews and Charlie Matthews; and back row: Muriel Brinston, Roosevelt Knight, Carolyn Everett, Gaylyn Pleasant and Babs Shook.

After a good night's rest, we headed to the world-famous Café Du Monde for beignets and coffee. Though most of the French Quarter shops were closed for Mardi Gras, we were able to pick up some fun and unique gifts from the vendors at the French Market Flea Market.

Because of road closures, our bus was routed through a beautiful neighborhood just as they were beginning their own marching parade. The joy of the

participants marching past in their colorful, home-made costumes, pulling decorated strollers and wagons full of children and pets, was a highlight of the trip. What a fabulous side quest!

After arriving on Canal Street, we made our way to the Zulu Parade. Not only did the generous Krewe shower parade goers with beads, coins, cups, basketballs, footballs, and a menagerie of other throws, they were also handing out book bags full of school supplies to lucky children along the route. A couple of Zulus' coconuts- the most coveted of all parade throws- were also caught by our seniors!

As we made our way back to the bus, we were also able to watch the Krewe of Rex Parade and their artful floats, as we reached for that final string of beads. We boarded our bus and headed out of New Orleans, leaving the remainder of the celebrations in other hands.

A stop at Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune for the last of their amazing King Cakes crowned our VIP trip. Great weather, great food, great friends! Check this one off the bucket list!

The Richland Senior Center is located at 371 Scarbrough Street in Richland and is open to senior citizens ages 55 and up, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Day-to-day operations and activities are managed by Director Shea Thames, Activities Coordinator Amy Matthews, and Administrative Receptionist Pam Gregory. The City of Richland funds the Senior Services Program. There is no city or residential requirement to participate in Richland Senior Center activities and events.



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Youth Leaders visit State Capitol



Special to SW Rankin News

The 2025-26 Rankin County Chamber Youth Leadership students visited the Capitol in February to meet with legislators and attend sessions. This group will graduate in April.

By Susie A. Wolfe

The Rankin Chamber Youth Leadership Program helps young leaders develop responsible community leadership roles and impact the future of Rankin County. The students familiarize themselves with community opportunities, needs, problems and resources. The program encourages them to have effective dialogue and establish friendships among participants and community leaders. The students also learn advanced leadership and management skills, such as goal setting, effective communication, decision making, team building, motivation and organization, and work ethic development.

After a fun kick-off retreat in August, the Youth Leadership Program consists of six monthly full-day sessions from September through March with a graduation following in April. Members of the 2025-26 group include Ann Elise Walker, Caleigh Berch, Addison Grantham, Mary Yates, Christian Anderson, Knox Bridges, Rob Horner, Garrett Gilbert, Brayden Card, Elizabeth Thrash, Anna Chamblee Goodwin, Mary Taylor Nutt, Kaylan Massey, Lillyanna Alford, Addy Cowan, Collin McIntyre, Jaida Bennet; Sydney Garner, Evelyn Maeda-Sirin, Issac Dearing, DaMarion Snow, Sammy Sebren, Ethan Franklin, Blade Sabins, Brennon Sandifer and Liam Polk.

Riley Robison named PPCA February Athlete of the Week



Special to SW Rankin News

Riley Robison was named Park Place Christian Academy's (PPCA) Athlete of the Week for February. Coach Miguel said Robison is the anchor of the boys' soccer team, and his leadership has played a huge role in getting the team to where they are in the playoffs. Robison has been a part of the Park Place family since the fifth grade, and the coach says his dedication truly shows on and off the field. Robison says his favorite Bible verse is Deuteronomy 31:6, which says "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you." He says his favorite thing about PPCA is playing soccer, and Coach Miguel is his favorite coach.



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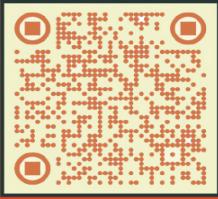
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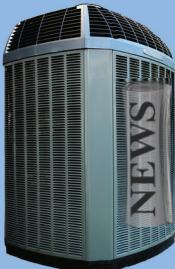
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Two Richland firemen honored for ten years of service



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Kevin Grantham, right, was pinned by Richland Alderman John Hamilton, left, for ten years of service to the Richland Fire Department at the February 3, 2026, Board Meeting.



Reed Hawthorne was recognized for ten years of service to the Richland Fire Department at the February 3 Board of Aldermen's meeting. Shown (l to r) are: Hannah and Reed Hawthorne, with children Rhys (two) and Rowan (six).

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McLaurin Elementary names January Students of the Month

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2 - 6TH GRADE: BRYNN STINGLEY, OMAR GONZALEZ, QUINN COATS AND JAXSON JORDAN (NOT PICTURED)

3 - PRE-K: ELLA GRACE PATTON

4 - KINDERGARTEN: ERYN PENDLETON, BOBBY JOE SKIPPER, HONESTY MCGEE AND DALLAS KERN

5 - 1ST GRADE: DANIEL MOONEY, DAXTON CLARK AND HAILEY JO VARNER

6 - 3RD GRADE: LANDON AINSWORTH, ELIJAH FRANCOIS, LONDON BELVIN, AMBERLEE SMITH AND AMELIA WYNN

7 - 5TH GRADE: MARILEY HICKS, DAWSON COLE AND ZARIAH ROBINSON

8 - 4TH GRADE: KAILEY EASTERLING, MELISSA GARCIA, KENDELL WATSON AND ELIZABETH LOWERY

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FHS bridge request results in \$603,000 award to build new bridge

Special to SW Rankin News

On March 7, 2023, two members of the Florence High School (FHS) HOSA Community Awareness Team took civic engagement beyond the classroom. Representing their school at a City Board Meeting in Florence, they formally proposed the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting Florence High School to the Butler Creek, Roxbury and Copper Ridge subdivisions.

As a result, the City of Florence has been awarded \$603,000 through the Mississippi Transportation Alternative Program to build a new walking bridge and sidewalk across the creek along Williams Road behind Florence High School, according to Mayor Trey Gunn.

“We’re proud to see this investment coming to Florence,” said Mayor Gunn. “Thank you to MDOT and Central District Transportation Commissioner Simmons for helping to make this project possible!”

“This project will provide a much safer route for students who walk to school each day from neighborhoods along Williams Road and help better connect our community,” said FHS HOSA advisor Kira Berch. “The bridge will also eventually tie into the existing bike trail along Eagle Post Road and connect to the future park planned at the corner of Williams Road and East Eagle Post Road, creating safer and more accessible options for walking and recreation in this area.”

At Florence High School, CTE programs include agriculture, work-based learning, family and consumer sciences, medical science, and computer science and engineering—each providing students with practical skills, industry knowledge and leadership opportunities that prepare them for careers and higher education.

Working in collaboration with the school’s transportation director, the students conducted a needs assessment. Their findings revealed that nearly sixty students lived in those subdivisions. Of those students, only eighteen utilized bus transportation, while an average of eleven students walked home each day. These students even explored the narrow zone between the edge line and the bridge wall at the time and the speeding that occurs coming down



Special to SW Rankin News

Pictured are Florence High School students Joseph Dunlap and Allie Mitchell presenting the benefits on the inset photo to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in 2023.

the hill from the water tower. This data highlighted a clear safety concern for students traveling along heavily-trafficked roadways.

The students supported their proposal with national data, citing research from the Transportation Research Board indicating that approximately one hundred students die each year while walking to and from school, and nearly twenty thousand are injured. Additional studies suggest that pedestrian bridges can reduce accidents by up to ninety percent. Beyond safety, the students emphasized broader public health benefits, noting that safer walkable routes encourage physical activity, improved energy levels, increased vitamin D exposure, stress reduction and better sleep. Finally, the students led a petition drive, leading many members of the Florence community to sign in support.

In 2026, during a City Board meeting, officials reported that approximately twenty-two students are currently walking home from school, a number expected to increase with the development of the Waverly subdivision and the future construction of a public athletic park at the corner of Williams Road and Eagle Post Road.

On February 17, 2026, the Mississippi Trans-

portation Commission approved \$603,000 in funding for the construction of a new walking bridge and sidewalk across the creek along Williams Road—turning student advocacy into tangible progress. This project is expected to take a couple of years.

The former 2022–23 HOSA President, who led the original project, reflected:

“After nearly forgetting about this project, I am incredibly thankful that our concerns and words were not overlooked. A great deal of research and effort went into our proposal. When we presented it, we were told it was a ‘great idea,’ but there were challenges beyond what we could fundraise for. When we walked away, we did not fully understand the long-term impact we might make. We recognized the dangers and simply wanted to protect students and families in our community. I hope this inspires other students to identify an issue, conduct research, develop a plan and use their voice. Leadership and persistence truly matter.”

Under the leadership of Dr. Traylor and Kira Berch at the Florence High School medical science program, current HOSA officers gathered to hear remarks from Mayor Gunn. He emphasized that professional dialogue and well-researched solutions do not go unheard. While solutions are not always immediate and may not satisfy every concern, they are evaluated carefully and taken seriously in Florence.

School officials say this milestone reflects the power of student leadership, research-based advocacy, and collaboration between schools and local government. A safer Florence is no longer just a proposal—it is becoming a reality.

While attending the City Board meeting, Mayor Gunn also recognized the outstanding work being done across all programs at Florence High School. In honor of February as Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, he presented a City Proclamation acknowledging the contributions of students preparing to enter Mississippi’s future industries and highlighting the positive impact on the Florence community similarly to this project, noting that this is only one of the many things coming out of Florence High Schools students.

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From the Pearl Boardroom: February Business

By Susie A. Wolfe

In February business, in a Special Called Meeting, the Pearl Board of Aldermen went into executive session to consider location, relocation or expansion of a business.

The February 3 regular Board meeting's business included approval of the Consent Agenda items: All items under this heading were considered to be approved with one motion and one vote. If further discussion had been desired on any item, it would automatically be removed from the consent agenda and considered as a general business item. The Consent Agenda approvals included approval/corrections of Minutes of the Regular Meeting, January 20, 2026; approval of the claims docket for January 20, 2026, to February 3, 2026; approval of applications; approval of authorization to travel; and approval of wage increases.

The Board approved and authorized the purchase of forty Glock 17 handguns with the Aimpoint COA Red Dot Optic and to authorize the trade-in of forty Glock 17 handguns in the amount of \$22,025.20 after trade-in value.

The Board approved and authorized the Memorandum of Understanding between the Pearl Police Department and the Department of Homeland Se-

curity and authorized Chief McLendon to sign the same.

The Police Department approved repairs to PD2208 by Patriot Auto Body in the amount of \$5,921.73.

Other approvals included payment to the Pickering Firm in the amount of \$10,121.98 for the Concourse Drive Extension project; payment to Lexipol in the amount of \$4,974.00 for the master service agreement between Lexipol and Pearl Fire Department; payment to Harcros Chemicals, Inc. in the amount of \$8,370.00 for chlorine for Public Works; and payment to Eagle One Investments, LLC, for \$32,866.76, for the Urban Renewal Projects.

The Board adopted a Resolution finding the items identified on the IT and Communications list as surplus, and approved the disposal and/or sale of each item as required by law.

At the February 17 Board Meeting, a representative of Belle Properties, LLC met the Board to discuss the property located at 247 Reynolds Street, Pearl, Rankin County, Mississippi 39208. They will have it cleaned up within 40 days, or the City will clean it up at their expense.

The Board set several public hearings to determine whether or not certain parcels of real property are in such a condition or state as to be unsightly and



Special to SW Rankin News

Kim Steinbrink was named the City of Pearl Employee of the Month for February. She works in the IT department.

un-kept or otherwise a menace to the public health and safety of the community, and therefore prohibited, pursuant to Chapter 24 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Pearl, Mississippi and Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as Amended.

A public hearing on April 7 at 6 p.m. will address property owned by The Sethi Group, LLC. and located at 2303 Highway 80 E, Pearl, Rankin County, Mississippi 39208; as well as several parcels of property owned by Pearl Development, LLC. and located at 436 Riverwind Drive, Pearl, need to be designated as un-kept.

A public hearing was set for March 17, 2026, to determine whether or not a Conditional Use permit should be granted to Jasamine Fenderson to continue operating an existing hair salon located at 100 N. Bierdeman Road, Ste B.

The Board approved and authorized the purchase of one John Deere ProGator 2020A Utility Truckster with a John Deere HD200 Sprayer from Beard Equipment Company in the total amount of \$53,798.12.

The Police and Fire Department will participate in "National Night Out" to be held on October 6.

The annual Easter Egg Hunt event will be held on April 4, and the Board authorized the purchase of Easter Eggs and other prizes to be distributed during the event.

Payment was authorized to Thornton Construction in the amount of \$117,403.81 for the Southeast Sanitary Sewer Phase II project for pay application #9, and payments were approved to Pickering Firm in the amount of \$14,100 for the Citywide Sewer Rehabilitation project and \$10,655 for the Sewer II project.

The Board had a request by Wild Woods Properties, Inc. to rezone the property located at 5447 Highway 80 E from C-2 (General Commercial District) to R-1 (Single Family Residential District).

Kim Steinbrink of the City of Pearl IT Department was named the City of Pearl Employee of the Month for February.

The group entered executive session to discuss personnel matters in Parks and Rec.

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Discovery Christian football player the first to play at collegiate level



Special to SW Rankin News

Lane Kitchens signed to play football at Belhaven University, becoming the first player in Discovery Christian School history to sign at the collegiate level. Kitchens was part of the very first football team at DCS.

Special to SW Rankin News

Discovery Christian School (DCS) celebrated a milestone that belongs to a student who school officials say has poured his heart into every step of the journey.

Lane Kitchens signed to play football at Belhaven University, becoming the first player in school history to sign at the collegiate level. Kitchens was part of the very first football team at DCS, and now he is helping write the next chapter of the private school's story.

At DCS, they say they celebrate

milestones because they reflect the character behind the accomplishment.

"Lane's drive, relentless pursuit of his goals and strong faith have shaped him into the leader he is today," said DCS Principal Kelsey Jernigan. "His success is not just about football. It is about perseverance, commitment and trusting God with the process."

"We are proud of you, Lane. Your journey inspires the students walking these halls today, and we are grateful to celebrate this moment together as a school family," said Jernigan.

February proclaimed National Career, Technical Education Month



By Susie A. Wolfe

Mayor Trey Gunn and the Board of Aldermen honored the FHS educators and community partners for the difference they make every day. Pictured (l to r) front row, are: HOSA Advisor Kira Berch, Avery Clark, Mayor Trey Gunn, Eliza Glissen, Hailey Stewart and HOSA Advisor Daniel Traylor; and back row: Alderman Kyle Martin, Alderman Mason Herrin, Alderman Brent Sistrunk and FHS Assistant Principal Thomas Dudley.

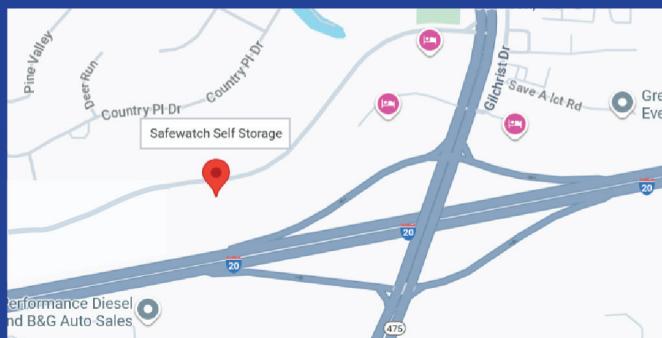
By Susie A. Wolfe

On February 17, 2026, the City of Florence officially proclaimed February as National Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, and Florence High School's CTE teachers were recognized at the City Board meeting for the impact they make.

The CTE programs provide hands-on, real-world learning experiences that prepare students for high-demand careers and lifelong success. From health sciences to business and skilled trades, officials say these teachers are helping build Florence's future workforce.

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Bridges named Coca-Cola Scholar

Special to SW Rankin News

Knight Bridges, a McLaurin High School Health Science student, was named a Coca-Cola Scholar, one of the most prestigious honors in the nation.

Bridges was selected as one of only one hundred and fifty scholars from more than one hundred and seven thousand applicants nationwide, making him the only student chosen in the state of Mississippi, with an acceptance rate of just 0.14%.

This achievement comes with a \$20,000 scholarship that can be used over the course of ten years to support his educational journey. Bridges will also attend the Coca-Cola Scholars Weekend in Atlanta, Georgia, in April, where he will join a distinguished community of more than seventy-one hundred Coca-Cola Scholar alumni.

The Class of 2026 scholarship recipients are recognized for their commitment to making a significant impact on their schools and communities. It is sponsored by the Coca-Cola Scholarship Foundation.



Special to SW Rankin News

McLaurin High School Health Science student Knight Bridges will get a \$20,000 scholarship for being named Mississippi's only Coca-Cola Scholar.

Davis and Clark represent FHS as Secretary of State Ambassadors



Special to SW Rankin News

Abby Davis (left) and Avery Clark (right) represented Florence High School (FHS) as Secretary of State Ambassadors for 2025-26. In February, they attended the Spring Summit in Jackson. Throughout this experience, they say they learned about many of the incredible opportunities and initiatives happening across Mississippi. The program also provides a valuable chance to network and connect with individuals who can support students' future career goals. Davis and Clark encourage all current juniors to apply for the opportunity. Pictured with Davis and Clark is Secretary of State Michael Watson (center).

Ellis named Northside asst. principal



Special to SW Rankin News

Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, Jason Ellis will serve as an assistant principal at Northside Elementary in Pearl. Ellis brings fifteen years of experience in public education, having spent eleven years serving the Northside community as a special services teacher before most recently serving as an assistant principal at Pearl Lower Elementary.

Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	FUNERAL HOME
Patricia Lynne Miller	68y	Jackson, MS	01/29/2026	Chancellor FH
James Wesley Trigg	84y	Star, MS	02/02/2026	Chancellor FH
Priscilla Borczyk Lewis	77y	Florence, MS	02/04/2026	Chancellor FH
James Jones	75y	Florence, MS	02/16/2026	Chancellor FH
Bobby Clarence Nicholson, Jr.	79y	Richland, MS	02/18/2026	Chancellor FH
Sandra Nell Vore	69y	Florence, MS	02/19/2026	Chancellor FH
Shane "Bear" Talmage Taylor	44y	Florence, MS	02/25/2026	Chancellor FH

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