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# SWRANKIN NEWS

## Good News You Can Use

Vol. 9, No. 1 | January 2024

The Pearl News

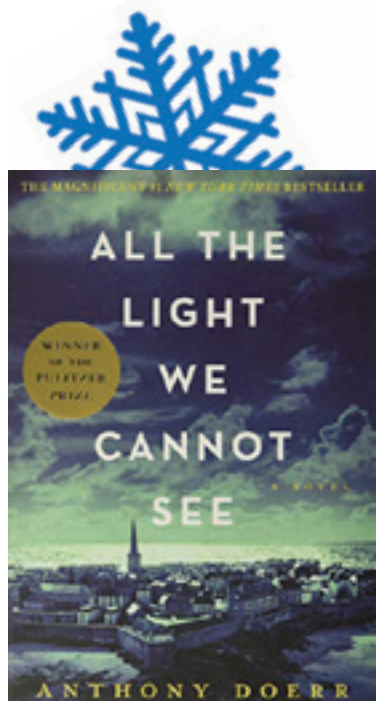
THE NEWS RICHLAND

THE FLORENCE NEWS

# NEW YEAR, NEW BOOKS, NEW YOU

By Guest Columnist Taylor McKay Hathorn

We all make New Year's Resolutions: the gym, healthier eating, working less. However, all of our biggest changes start from within – by changing how we think, we slowly become more able to make those changes that affect how we behave. These books can help you change your mindset, get you out of a rut, or just plain motivate you to finally motivate yourself to keep those resolutions.



• **All the Light We Cannot See** by Anthony Doerr: If you always wanted to read more but need a book to remind you how much fun picking up a novel can be, Doerr's double-narrative about a French girl living in Nazi-occupied Paris and a German boy living as an orphan in a mining town is poignant, elegantly written, and will keep you reading until the very last page – and you can reward yourself by watching the TV adaptation that's available on Netflix!

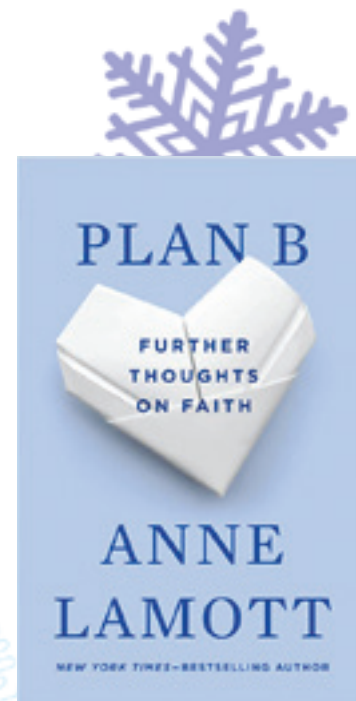
• **Feed These People** by Jen Hatmaker: If your goal is to spend more time in the kitchen in the new year, then Jen Hatmaker's cookbook is the perfect addition to your reading repertoire. Hatmaker, a devoted Texan, fills her cookbook with "food for real people," as her recipes call for ingredients all Mississippians are sure to have on hand: hot sauce, ranch dressing, gravies of every variety. Her funny, down-to-earth instructions make her recipes approachable for any cook, whether novice or expert.



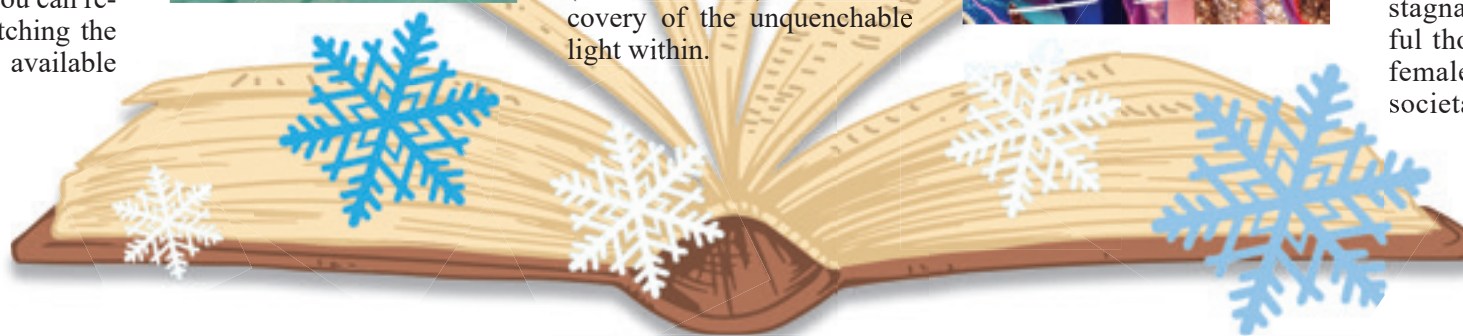
• **Learning to Walk in the Dark** by Barbara Brown Taylor: When Barbara Brown Taylor, a lapsed Episcopal priest, began to struggle with feelings of darkness and loneliness, she began taking very literal "walks in the dark" to learn more about the nature of physical darkness: she ventured into caves and into forests around her home, seeking the connection between the darkness she felt within and the darkness that was an inevitable part of the natural world, guiding herself (and her readers) into the discovery of the unquenchable light within.



• **Plan B** by Anne Lamott: So many of us end up on our "Plan B" for our lives (or plan C, D, E...), and Lamott's faith-based memoir recounts the way the author dealt with her own carefully-laid plans having gone awry, as she copes with a terminally-ill friend, single motherhood, and addiction recovery. Lamott's advice is practical and down-to-earth, and she adds levity to the gravity of her topics with humor and a keen eye for observing the underside of life.



• **Untamed** by Glennon Doyle: A trip to the zoo led famous "mommy-blogger" Glennon Doyle to write this fiery memoir, inspired by her horror at watching a majestic cheetah stalk an enclosure for which it was far too large. Untamed is Melton's raw challenge to herself and her readers to find the places in their life that reduce them and to "untame" themselves out of stagnant marriages, unhelpful thought patterns, and the female desire to shrink to fit societal expectations.



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# Traffic cameras being used to verify insurance

Special to SW Rankin News

To increase public safety for all motorists, the City of Pearl has begun using traffic safety cameras to read license plates and verify if a vehicle has insurance.

Through a partnership with Securix Mississippi, the City is using existing safety cameras in the effort. Potential violations will be verified by a Pearl police officer, and a ticket will be mailed to any offenders.

The Pearl Board of Aldermen approved the program, which started December 1, 2023.

“Our goal is to protect drivers in our city, including making sure every vehicle has auto insurance, which is what our State law requires,” said Pearl Mayor Jake Windham. “Our police officers respond to accidents every day that involve an uninsured driver. Uninsured drivers are placing an undue burden on people following the law and lead to higher insurance rates for everyone.”

Since 2001, Mississippi law has required all automobile owners to have, at a minimum, liability insur-



Special to SW Rankin News

ance. Currently, 29.4% of Mississippi drivers are uninsured, which places the state at the top of the list of the highest percentage of uninsured drivers in the United States.

State law provides stiff penalties for uninsured driving, including hefty

fines and driver's license suspension until proof of insurance is provided. City leaders say the new initiative in Pearl brings an innovative, respectful solution to ensuring drivers are compliant with insurance laws by providing a diversion program option,

allowing an offender to take an on-line course, pay a reduced fine, avoid suspension of their driver's license and keep the citation off their driving record.

If it is verified by a Pearl police officer that a vehicle is uninsured, the owner of that vehicle will receive a citation in the mail. At that point, the owner of the vehicle can address the citation by agreeing to the diversion program, appearing in court to challenging the citation or providing proof that the vehicle was insured on the date the citation was issued.

In the event the citation was made in error and the vehicle was indeed properly insured, the Police Department will void the citation and make sure insurance lists are updated to reflect that it is an insured vehicle.

The City of Pearl is committed to making streets safer and protecting all drivers. City officials say this initiative to address the uninsured motorist problem is a modern, less punitive approach to solving a prolonged problem across the state of Mississippi.

## SWRANKIN NEWS

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## Richland Recreational Center adds ages requirement policy



Special to SW Rankin News

Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland Board of Aldermen recently approved an Age Requirement Policy regarding usage of the Richland Recreational Center.

Everyone attending the Richland Recreational Center must have an identification card issued by the Center to enter or utilize the Center's facilities. Anyone under the age of fifteen must be accompanied by a responsible adult aged eighteen or older for the entire duration of their stay at the Center.

Rec Center staff will be enforcing the new policy with zero exceptions, with a goal of providing a fun and safe place for citizens of all ages to enjoy.

The Rec Center, located at 460 East Harper Street, includes, among other things, multi-purpose indoor and outdoor basketball and volleyball courts, meeting rooms, a gaming room, an indoor walking track, a Splash Pad, horse shoe pits, playgrounds, a workout area, and an exercise area.

For more information, contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 601-487-9989.

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# Florence High School dance team named state champs

Special to SW Rankin News

The Florence High School dance team was recently named 3A-5A State Champions in hip hop, the first state championship in Florence High School history for the dance team.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

## Moonlit Masquerade Ball set for Feb. 3

Special to SW Rankin News

Local residents are invited to join Main Street Pearl at their first-ever Mardi Gras Moonlit Masquerade Ball on Saturday, February 3. The Ball will feature live music from the Southern Komfort Brass Band as the headlining entertainment.

Tickets, which are being sold in advance, are \$50 per person and include dinner and two drink (beer or wine) tickets. In addition to dinner and the dance, there will also be a silent auction. If tickets are still available, they will also be sold at the door. Dinner will be catered by Aha Cajun Bistro, and a photographer will be present to take photos.

The Ball is set for 7 until 10 p.m. at the Pearl Community Center at 2420 Old Brandon Road, and attendees are asked to “dress to impress.”

To purchase a ticket, visit [square.link/u/wOljSSwU](https://www.square.link/u/wOljSSwU). For more information, call 601-932-3503.



## Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



### Traveling Down A New Road

In 1519 the Spanish explore Hernando Cortes led an expedition of 600 men to conquer southern Mexico. One by one he had his eleven ships scuttled and sunk, till only one was left. When his men found out they loudly upbraided Cortes. He asked his men what kind of man would need the ships, except cowards. If any man was so cowardly, he could board the last ship and leave. Cheers drowned the complaints, and he then suggested that they sink the last ship. By that single action he committed himself and his force to either succeed or die trying for they had nothing to go back to.

We are traveling in a new Year, 2024, and there is nothing to go back to. You cannot undo a single action or take back a single word. Before you lies a new year – full of hope and promise if you so desire.

*“I am the New Year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time. I am your next chance at the art of living.*

*“I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned during the last year about life.*

*“All that you sought the past year and failed to find is hidden in me; I’m waiting for you to search it out again and with more determination.*

*“All the good that you tried to do for others and didn’t achieve last year is mine to grant – providing you have fewer selfish and conflicting desires.*

*“In me lies the potential of all that you dreamed but didn’t dare to do, all that you hoped but didn’t perform, all you prayed for but did not experience.*

*“These dreams slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of an enduring purpose.”*

*“I am the New Year!” (Author unknown).*

We are entering a New Year – We have not passed this way before. Let’s keep our eye on God and His word. We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. Life is uncertain as James mentions. (James 4:13-16). Moses taught his people to number their days. (Psa. 90:1-12).

If you ask a ship captain what his next destination is, he will tell you in one sentence. He knows where he is going, how to get there, and how long it will take. We need to set goals so that we know where we are going in life. Our long-range goal is heaven. How are we going to get there? (Phil. 3:12-14; Heb. 12:1-2). God’s word is that roadmap to reach that ultimate goal if we will only follow the directions He has given us.

Many people have customs for welcoming a new year. Putting away the past and starting fresh with resolutions for the New Year is a great way to start anew. The Bible encourages Christians to such renewal. (Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 4:6-9). May you make 2024 the best year of your life. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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# Florence students learn how to be prepared

Special to SW Rankin News

The Florence High School Medical Science Academy students have been learning the importance of emergency preparedness through Mississippi State University's Mississippi Youth Preparedness Initiative (MyPI), where students gain training to become Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certified and can help their family and neighbors become self-sufficient in a time of crisis.

The overall goal of the course is to create a new national standard of youth preparedness, in order to reduce the fear, anxiety and losses that accompany disasters, whether they be natural, technological or through terrorism.

During the month of September, students learned how government resources are strained with a limited number of manpower and resources during the first hours/days of any catastrophic event. During these points of strain, it is important that members of the community know how they can reduce the strain of response by taking care of themselves and their neighbor until help arrives.

Throughout the course, students learn about creating emergency plans, American Heart Association Basic Life Support, first aid, light search and rescue procedures, fire safety, utility control, terrorism/active shooter preparedness and disaster psychology response.

During the month of October, twenty students were active in the Florence community, working with six families plus their own to promote the importance of developing a plan of action

if/when there is a need to "shelter in place" or to evacuate. The area of conversation with families included topics such as having planned evacuation routes; establishing an out-of-state contact; securing important documents like birth certificates, insurances, Social Security documents; and having basic daily supplies on hand that can sustain a household for three days. The students asked families to gather and store emergency water, non-perishable foods, a weather radio, dust masks, pliers, emergency document forms, first aid kits, emergency funds and more - all to sustain a family until help can arrive.

With the MyPI initiative, students are learning that emergencies are not planned, and, during the aftermath, the lack of preparation creates hardships. As an example, between March and June of 2020, the COVID pandemic pushed for sheltering in place; and basic necessities, such as food, gas and toilet paper were hard to find and sometimes not even safe to go out and get. Another example of a devastating emergency happened to those in north Mississippi this past March, due to a large tornado outbreak.


Students are reminded that the community of Florence is not immune to being a risk for a disaster. Over the past few years, Florence has experienced boil water notices, floods and tornadoes. Students and residents alike are encouraged to become emergency prepared. To help jumpstart an emergency preparedness journey, visit <https://www.msema.org/make-a-plan/>.



Photos special to SW Rankin News



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# RHS's Keen signs with Hinds



Special to SW Rankin News

Richland High School baseball standout Ethan Keen has signed a scholarship with Hinds Community College for the 2024-2025 school year. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Brian Keen (father), Ethan Keen, and Jessica Shores (mother); and back row: Assistant Coach Chad Wooten, Britney Keen (step mom), Assistant Coach Jordan McGowan, Athletic Director Todd Montgomery, Coach Jonathan Broome, Briana Shores (sister), Caitlin Whitehorn, Dianne Keen (grandmother) and Principal Dr. Marcus Stewart.

# Adams honored for service



Special to SW Rankin News

Corey Adams was recently recognized at the City of Richland Board of Aldermen meeting for completing five years of service with the Richland Fire Department. Pictured with Corey Adams as he receives his service pin are (l to r) Crissy Adams, Clyde Adams and Alderman A. J. Shields.



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# Schoolwide spelling bee held at Pearl Upper Elementary



Students who won a spelling bee in their classroom in order to qualify for the schoolwide spelling bee included (l to r), front row: Sophie Mitchell, Rhys Gaines, Leo Ngo, Kennedy Reynolds, JT Bentley, Marlee Hunter, Jasmine Norng, Grover Chesney and Sarah Woods; middle row: Mackenzie Granados, Harmony Vaughns, Allyson Gonzalez Solis, Jireh Holden, Alyssa Taylor, Aiden Finkelstein, Liam Smith, Joseph Lemus Mayorga, Allyanna Cirino, and Carlos Madrigal-Perez; and back row: Calder Givens, Trystyn Wolbrecht, Marlie Stafford, Javien Banks, Addison Bynum, Eli Hankins, Jason Walker, Elizabeth Walker, Elizabeth Roblero and Rosa Zapata-Esparza.

Photos special to SW Rankin News

Winners of the spelling bee included runner-up Marlee Hunter (left) and champion Allyson Gonzalez Solis (right).

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# Discovery Christian Class of 2023 donates statue to school

Special to SW Rankin News

The Discovery Christian School (DCS) Class of 2023 raised money and purchased a lion statue for the school as their class's Legacy Project. The lion was recently delivered and set up at his new home by the DCS flag pole to remind students and staff of God's strength, protection and love.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

# Obituaries (November/reprint)

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	FUNERAL HOME
James "Sam" Simmons	92y	Florence, MS	10/26/2023	Chancellor FH
Oscar Quimby	76y	Florence, MS	11/01/2023	Chancellor FH
Seisel "Doug" Campbell	85y	Florence, MS	11/03/2023	Chancellor FH
Etta Rae Courtney	82y	Florence, MS	11/03/2023	Chancellor FH
Merle Nelson Jr.	71y	Florence, MS	11/06/2023	Chancellor FH
Bobby Dent	79y	Brandon, MS	11/08/2023	Chancellor FH
Terrance Hall	54y	Richland, MS	11/11/2023	Chancellor FH
Gene Hooks	78y	Florence, MS	11/14/2023	Chancellor FH
Michael Higgins Sr.	63y	Richland, MS	11/14/2023	Chancellor FH
Elaine Figuero	73y	New Orleans, LA	11/14/2023	Chancellor FH
Harold Lloyd Green	96y	Florence, MS	11/17/2023	Chancellor FH
Arvindkumar I. Patel	96y	Richland, MS	11/18/2023	Chancellor FH
Vivian Powell	85y	Florence, MS	11/21/2023	Chancellor FH
Ansel Pierce	85y	Florence, MS	11/22/2023	Chancellor FH
Griffin Mangum	18y	Brandon, MS	11/23/2023	Chancellor FH
Ella Mae Carson	6 weeks	Richland, MS	11/20/2023	Chancellor FH

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# Obituaries (December)

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	FUNERAL HOME
Becky Chandler	77y	Richland, MS	12/03/2023	Chancellor FH
Bobbie Sue Loper	96y	Florence, MS	12/04/2023	Chancellor FH
Ronald Johnson	66y	Richland, MS	12/04/2023	Chancellor FH
Chantay Steen	62y	Camden, MS	12/04/2023	Chancellor FH
Brenda Clark	70y	Florence, MS	12/06/2023	Chancellor FH
William "Bud" Singletary	97y	Florence, MS	12/07/2023	Chancellor FH
Michael Brooks	16y	Florence, MS	12/07/2023	Chancellor FH
Selma Davis	80y	Brandon, MS	12/09/2023	Chancellor FH
Phillip Sandifer	59y	Florence, MS	12/09/2023	Chancellor FH
Virginia Nugent	75y	Pearl, MS	12/10/2023	Chancellor FH
Jackie Traylor	44y	Florence, MS	12/11/2023	Chancellor FH
Kaushik Patel	78y	Florence, MS	12/14/2023	Chancellor FH
Harry Reynolds	78y	Greenwood, MS	12/17/2023	Chancellor FH
Robert Downey Jr.	58y	Florence, MS	12/16/2023	Chancellor FH
O'Neal Jack Quick	92y	Florence, MS	12/18/2023	Chancellor FH
Jeanette Smith	73y	Florence, MS	12/24/2023	Chancellor FH
Charles Griffin	84y	Florence, MS	12/24/2023	Chancellor FH
Georgia Tackett	89y	Florence, MS	12/26/2023	Chancellor FH
Audrey Gregory	80y	Harrisville, MS	12/26/2023	Chancellor FH

# City of Pearl begins work on new fire station

Special to SW Rankin News

Work has started in Pearl on the new Fire Station #5 off Greenfield Road on Community College Boulevard.

“This is going to be a game changer for our residents and businesses on the east side of the city,” said Pearl Fire Chief Todd Burkes. “Our response times will be so much faster, and we will be able to provide life-saving service in a quicker time frame. It will also improve the City’s fire rating, which should lead to lower insurance rates.”

The City of Pearl is investing close to nine million dollars on the new Station #5 and a new Central Station, which will be located between Highway 80 and Old Brandon Road, where the old library used to be. Construction of a new Central Station is necessary, because the current location has experienced significant foundation issues. Project completion dates for both stations is slated for February to March of 2025.

The City of Pearl Fire Department currently utilizes four fire stations, which are fully operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Ambulance service in Pearl is provided by Pafford Medical Services. The ambulances are co-located at the Pearl fire stations to expedite response times.



Photos special to SW Rankin News



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## Richland Public Library January book report: *The Snow Goose* by Paul Gallico

A book report by Beth Woodmansee for *The Friends of the Richland Library*

In May of 1944, British troops were seriously defeated by the Germans at a place called Dunkirk, in the north of France at the Belgian-French border. Hundreds of thousands of British soldiers were trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk, with no hope of escaping. Shallow waters kept battle ships and troop transports from moving in close to rescue them. What happened here came to be called “The Miracle of Dunkirk.” Paul Gallico’s little book begins some years before that event.

Philip Rhayader was an artist living in an abandoned lighthouse on the southeast tip of England, a marshy area home to many birds. He bought this land because it was a lonely place, which suited Rhayader, who preferred keeping his distance from others, for he had a hump on his back, and one arm and claw-like hand were disfigured and useless. Most thought him ugly. His only contact with people was when he sailed his little boat to pick up supplies every two weeks.

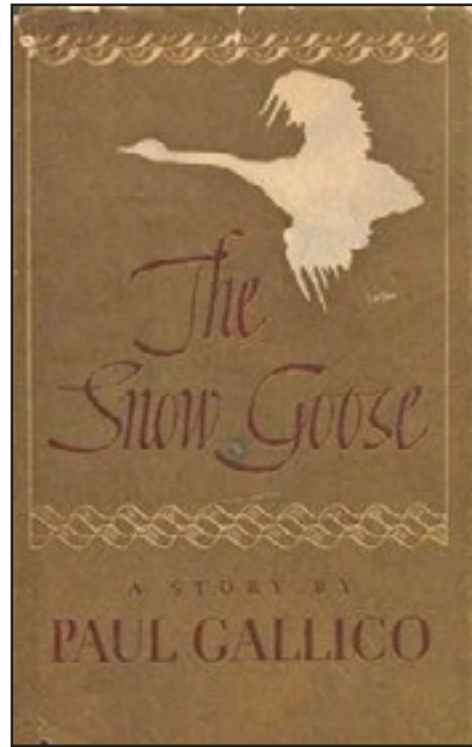
When not painting the country and birds, Rhayader healed many of them of their injuries. Many could no longer fly; he fed them, keeping them safe from fowlers and hunters.

One day, a shy young girl, about twelve, knocked on the door to the lighthouse. She was holding a large, white wild goose, which had been shot. The child had heard of Rhayader’s skills with hurt birds and wanted him to help the beautiful snow goose.

Rhayader tended the broken wing and leg of the beautiful snow goose, telling the child, Fritha, that it had been blown all the way from Canada in a strong storm. Every summer, Fritha came to help him when the birds migrated. Overcoming her fear of him, she knew him to be a kind, gentle man, in spite of his appearance.

Rhayader called the goose “La Princess Perdue,” the lost princess. Rhayader was a wonderful artist; the only painting he did of the snow goose was the one he painted from memory of Fritha as a child holding the goose in her arms that first day.

Following the defeat at Dunkirk, a



the men trapped on the beaches. He told her he had learned of the need for men with boats to sail towards Dunkirk to rescue the soldiers.

She wanted to go; but he told her that, if she came, one man per trip would have to remain on the beach, because he had only room for six besides himself. This, he said, was his chance to act as a man.

The snow goose flew past her and stayed over Rhayader’s boat. She watched sail and white bird until they were out of sight, praying for the bird to watch over Philip Rhayader, speaking in her Saxon way, “I love ‘ee, Philip.”

Paul Gallico learned the rest of the tale from men who had been saved by Rhayader and about the white bird, which became something of a legend. The snow goose never left Rhayader, until that last time, when his body was found in his little boat. She would not let the soldiers check his body. When the boat sank, she flew away, back to the lighthouse to signal to Fritha, letting her know she would never see her Philip Rhayader again.

call went out to all private citizens who had boats small enough to reach the beaches to transport waiting men to larger ships off-shore. Fritha, now a young woman, had not visited in some time. That last day, she found Rhayader at his dock, loading his boat with all kinds of supplies for

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# SW Rankin News welcomes new team member

Special to SW Rankin News

The *Southwest Rankin News* would like to welcome its newest team member, James Osborne. Osborne will be the managing editor and an ad sales representative.

Osborne is a native of Brandon, Mississippi and a 2005 graduate of Brandon High School. He is an alumnus of Hinds Community College, where he received his Associate of Liberal Arts in 2008, and an alumnus of Mississippi College, where he received his bachelor's in communication with a minor in marketing in 2015. While at Mississippi College, he worked at the school radio station, Star 93.5, and, throughout his time at MC, he worked as a writer and then as the news editor for the student paper, the *MC Collegian*. While at MC, Osborne interned as a writer at the *Northside Sun* newspaper in Jackson. He also wrote for the *Student Printz* while attending a semester at the University of Southern Mississippi.

For the last seven years, he was an ad sales representative for *Rankin County News* and also worked

briefly for Trailhead Media.

"Growing up, I never thought about working in sales," said Osborne, "but I've found that it can be a rewarding and fun career while using the skills and experience I've gained in college and life."

Osborne has been described by customers "pleasantly persistent" in his sales approach. "To me, sales and business shouldn't just be numbers-focused. It should be customer-focused first, with good customer service. I try to lead with a service mindset, thinking about how I can best help the customer bring in more business through advertising. And, if a customer doesn't think they need print advertising at the moment, that's okay. I'm not a pushy salesperson. But I encourage business owners to do some type of marketing and advertising. And a community paper like the *Southwest Rankin News* is a great way to do that. No advertising has a guaranteed return, but it is an investment that business owners shouldn't overlook."



Special to SW Rankin News

James Osborne

Osborne enjoys the creative side of advertising, working with the business owner and graphic designers to get the best ad possible for the customer.

"I love meeting new people, hearing

their stories, and staying up to date on what is happening in the community," said Osborne. "As someone who has thought about being a business owner myself, I can empathize with local business owners, and I want to really help them and their businesses succeed and do the best they can. When local businesses do well, the whole community does well. And we have so many great businesses and a great community here in Rankin County."

Osborne also says that, as someone who is solution-minded, as well as interested in marketing and finding unique ways for businesses to stand out and grow in the marketplace, he enjoys talking with business owners and helping them find solutions for their business to thrive.

"I am excited to start the new year with this new opportunity," said Osborne. "And I will work hard to serve every customer the best I can and to do the best I can to help inform readers about what is going on in the community."

Welcome to the team, James Osborne!

## Mississippi State Legislature starts 2024 session

By Clay Mansell

On January 2, 2024, the Mississippi State Legislature began the first session of the new four-year term.

Per the Constitution of the State of Mississippi, the first session of every term is scheduled to last 125 days, as opposed to 90 days. This is to accommodate inaugurations, new committee assignments and procedural matters, like choosing parking spaces and offices.

House members took the oath of office on the first day before the election of Speaker of the House and Speaker Pro Tempore. As part of the House Rules, both positions and the House Clerk are elected by the members and are sworn into office on the first day of session. Representative Jason White (R – West) was elected Speaker of the House, after previously serving as Speaker Pro Tempore. Former Local and Private Chairman Manly Barton (R – Moss Point) was chosen as Speaker Pro Tempore. Andrew Ketchings was re-elected as House Clerk for his fourth term.

Members also had to elect fellow representatives to serve on both the Management and Rules committees.

All members split into the four Mississippi congressional districts and nominate members to serve on these committees. Both committees are composed of two members from each of the congressional districts, as well as the Speaker and the Pro Tempore.

Speaker Jason White announced several new House committees, including a major change to Appropriations. There will be four new standing committees within Appropriations (Appropriations B, Appropriations C, Appropriations D and Appropriations E), and these will each be composed of eight members from the main Appropriations Committee. The Chairman of Appropriations will also serve as an ex officio voting member of the four committees. Each committee will be tasked with a portion of the State budget. Other new committees include Business and Commerce,



Special to SW Rankin News

Clay Mansell

Housing and State Affairs.

Six statewide elected officials were sworn into office by Chief Justice Michael Randolph before a joint session of the House and Senate on Thursday, January 4. The joint session also re-elected Steven Parks as state librarian.

The inauguration ceremony of Governor Tate Reeves is scheduled for next Tuesday, January 9, at 10:30 a.m. before a joint session of the House and Senate.

Early Wednesday morning, officials received a bomb threat to the Capitol, and the building was evacuated. The Mississippi Department of Public Safety conducted a thorough sweep of the premises and gave the all-clear around 11 a.m. A similar threat was made on Thursday morning to the Capitol, Mississippi Supreme Court and some Hinds County buildings. Mississippi was one of several states that received a bomb threat, and the FBI announced these were all hoaxes.

The Capitol was overflowing with guests this week, due to inaugurations. Visitors to the Capitol are always welcome to meet with their legislators and witness the legislative process.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Clay Mansell is the State Representative for House District 56. He is also the owner of the *Southwest Rankin News*, *The Pearl News*, *The Florence News* and *The Richland News*.

## McLaurin High School DECA team members advance to state



Special to SW Rankin News

McLaurin High School's DECA recently attended a regional competition, competing against four other schools. Eleven members made it to the state competition, which will take place later this year. Kelly Aycock took home fifth place in business service management, Jordan Edwards won third place in entrepreneurship individual series, Knight Bridges and Lily McInnis placed second in hospitality services team decision making, Valerie Rodgers took home second place in principles of marketing, Knox Bridges won second place in sports and entertainment, Keniah Cannon placed fifth in sports and entertainment, Hannah Harper placed fourth in principles of hospitality and tourism, Brooke Hankins won third place in business management company, Jarius Hayes won second place in retail management series, and Juliet Arnold took fifth place in retail management series.

## Students taste test Turkish delight

Special to SW Rankin News

Mrs. Gordon's ELA students at Florence Elementary School recently enjoyed taste testing Turkish delight from the book study they have been doing in class, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

### *"First Words"*



*"And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand.."* (Exodus 33:21)

The old year has passed and the New Year has come. What was the future, has now become the present. Inventories are taken. Assessments are made. Goals are set. Plans are made and at a rapid pace we start down the path of 2024.

How we begin determines much about how we finish. If this year is like others, the days will be full, time will be short and the challenges will be many. If we are not careful the work will control the worker and the demands of the natural will override the needs of the spiritual.

The Lord told Moses: *"there is a place by me"*. In that place... there is friendship, fellowship and sweet communion with the One who longs for our attention, our worship, and our praise. In that place... there is strength, wisdom, comfort, correction, and protection. Somehow with all of our appointments, schedules and plans we must make and keep our day-to-day appointment with God in prayer and in His Word. The times we live in require a determined and relentless walk with God.

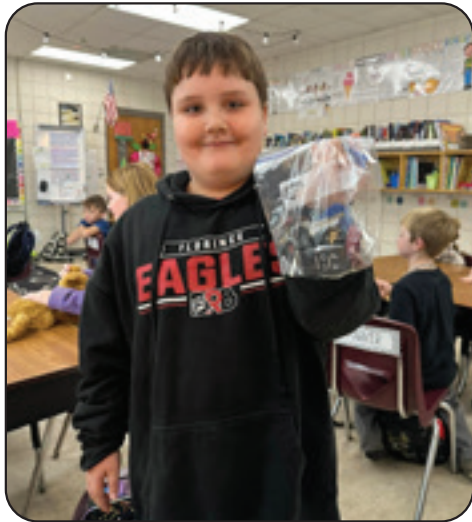
The Lord said that He would put Moses in the cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand! What a place to be! No doubt our journey through this year will be met with ominous obstacles and perplexing problems. What a difference it makes when we've found that place by Him and His Hand is covering us! Make it a priority every day to get alone with God, meditate in His Word and allow Him to speak into your spirit.

**For The Harvest,  
Bob Wilburn**

# Florence Elementary students celebrate perfect attendance

Special to SW Rankin News

Third-grade students in Ms. Long's classroom at Florence Elementary School recently celebrated reaching twenty days of perfect attendance with a show and tell.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

# Richland High School holds career fair for students

Special to SW Rankin News

Richland High School recently hosted a career fair. Representatives from over thirty companies and industries talked with students about potential career paths.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

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### McCoy wins first in poster contest



Special to SW Rankin News


Steen's Creek Elementary School student Colton McCoy recently won first place in the Rankin County School District's Bullying Poster Contest in category preK to second grade.

### Pearl Singers chosen for Honor Choir




Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Singers' Elizabeth Sudduth, Madeline Cannon and Chad Bryant were recently selected for the 2024 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Southern Division Honor Choir. They will perform with students from across the Southeast in February in Louisville, Kentucky. ACDA's purpose is to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations.

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# History Channel's *American Pickers* coming to film in Mississippi

Special to SW Rankin News

The American Pickers will be in Mississippi in February to film episodes of their television series.

*American Pickers* is a documentary series on The History Channel that explores the world of antique "picking." The show follows skilled pickers in the business as they hunt for America's most valuable antiques. They are always excited to find historically significant or rare items, in addition to meeting unforgettable characters and seeing their collections.

As they hit the back roads from coast to coast, the Pickers are on a mission to recycle and rescue forgotten relics. Along the way, they want to meet individuals with amazing stories and fun items. They hope to give historically significant objects a new lease on life, while learning a thing or two about America's past along the way and perhaps discover something they've never seen before.

The show is looking for Mississippians who have unique items, specifically



Special to SW Rankin News

large and rare collections. They prefer owners who have a story to tell and who are ready to sell. They do not pick stores, flea markets, auction businesses, museums or any venue that is open to the public.

Individuals who are interested in selling an item are encouraged to submit their name, phone number, town and state, location of the collection, as well as a description and photos of the item/collection, to [AmericanPickers@Cineflix.com](mailto:AmericanPickers@Cineflix.com). For more information, call 646-493-2184.

# Villarreal named Officer of Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Detective Naomi Villarreal was recently named the Pearl Police Department (PD) Officer of the Month. Det. Villarreal began her career with Pearl PD in July 2018 and graduated from the Mississippi Law Enforcement Training Academy the next month. She was then assigned to the Patrol Division. Her management says that, due to her great work as an officer, she was assigned to Special Operations in the Criminal Investigation Division. Sgt. Miles and Lt. Hudson say that the entire department shares their gratitude for the extraordinarily high level of service and cooperation that she gives each and every day, representing Pearl's law enforcement's desire to exhibit community connection and commitment of service to the citizens of Pearl.

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# Southwest Rankin residents participate in All Star game

Special to SW Rankin News

Florence High School senior striker Xzavion Quick, Pearl High School senior linebacker Taccofah Lewis, and Pearl High School coach Justin Hunter recently participated in the Mississippi Association of Coaches All Star Football game in Milner Stadium in Gulfport, Mississippi. They represented the South Team in the contest.



Coach Justin Hunter



Xzavion Quick



Taccofah Lewis

Photos special to SW Rankin News

# Mancil runs for Richland Mayor

By Scot Mancil

As I write this announcement about me running for Mayor of the City of Richland, I think back to about 3 years ago when I talked to my parents, Billy and Clara Nell Mancil about my intention to run for this office. They were so excited and asked for my promise to run for the position. I lost both of them since then, but I hope they would be proud that I am keeping my promise. Now, more than ever, I can hear them clearly whispering in my ear with Dad saying for me to always give it 100% and Mom saying to listen to the people and always do what is best for the City of Richland.

Although I am not a lifelong government employee and have never held a political position, what I do bring to the table is many years of business success and business ownership, right here in Richland. My years in the finance business have afforded me the opportunity to work with hundreds of business owners and help them with



their financial needs to grow and expand for the future. Living in Richland all my adult life and owning businesses right here in the city also have given me the opportunities to know, help and work with so many of the citizens of Richland.

If elected, I will use this business experience to ensure success with the two main

parts of my platform (1) Economic Development: Bringing in more businesses to keep the tax burden off the individual citizens while properly managing the growth of the City of Richland. (2) A strong Pro-Police stance and 1st Responder support to protect and serve our citizens, businesses, and visitors, while keeping the nearby ever-growing crime at bay.

I ask for your prayers, support and VOTE in February 2024 and I look forward to the opportunity to serve as your next Mayor of the City of Richland.

*Paid for by Scot Mancil for Richland Mayor Campaign.*

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# Florence native trains future U.S. Marine Corps Warfighters

Special to SW Rankin News

Marines are some of the most highly-trained people on the planet, according to military officials, and this training requires highly-dedicated instructors.

Sgt. Andrew Walling, a native of Florence, plays an important role as an instructor assigned to Marine Aviation Training Support Squadron 1 (MATSS-1), located at Naval Air Station Meridian, providing the fleet with Marines who possess the basic technical knowledge and skills necessary for Marine Corps service.

Instructors teach Marines to be combat-ready warfighters while providing the tools and opportunities for continuous learning and development.

"I enjoy being an instructor, so I can pass on all the knowledge and wisdom that was poured into me," said Walling. "I have the privilege to instruct and mentor the next generation of Marines to be proficient in their service in the field of aviation logistics."

Walling, a 2017 homeschool graduate, joined the Marine Corps five years ago.

"After obtaining an associate degree at Hinds Community College, I found myself uncertain about which career path to pursue," said Walling. "The fear

of wasting time and resources was a significant concern. Recognizing the Marine Corps as an environment that nurtures personal growth and paves the way for success as a leader, it was definitely the right choice for me to join."

The skills and values needed to succeed in the Marine Corps are similar to those found in Florence.

"The most significant lesson I learned from my community is the importance of pursuing a purpose beyond oneself," said Walling. "A life centered on self-indulgence ultimately results in great dissatisfaction. Conversely, dedicating one's life to serving a higher purpose brings enduring happiness and leaves a meaningful legacy. Ultimately, the void in people's hearts is often a result of not pursuing their ultimate creator, Jesus Christ."

MATSS-1 Meridian is committed to developing dedicated and motivated Marines. Following boot camp, they provide entry-level "A" school training to students in administration and supply occupational specialties.

With ninety percent of global commerce traveling by sea and access to the internet relying on the security of un-



Special to SW Rankin News

Sgt. Andrew Walling

dersea fiber optic cables, Navy officials continue to emphasize that the prosperity of the United States is directly linked to trained sailors and a strong Navy.

Serving in the Marine Corps means Walling is part of a team that is taking on new importance in America's focus on rebuilding military readiness, strengthening alliances and reforming business practices in support of the National

Defense Strategy.

Walling has many opportunities to achieve accomplishments during military service.

"Thanks to the Marine Corps, I have been taking classes in computer science," said Walling. "I was able to apply what I have learned to build a program written in a specific computer language for the command to use. The commanding officer just approved it for our daily use."

As Walling and other Marines continue to perform missions, they take pride in serving their country in the United States Marine Corps.

"Serving in the Marine Corps exhorts Marines to be in a constant state of personal growth, learning from experienced mentors and embracing the opportunity to pass on knowledge for the betterment of the next generation," said Walling.

Walling says he is grateful to others for helping make a career possible in the Marine Corps.

"I would like to thank my parents, Andrew and Karen Walling, for shaping, equipping and preparing me for this journey," added Walling. "I would also like to thank my bride and best friend, Samantha Walling, for her encouragement and giving me wisdom."

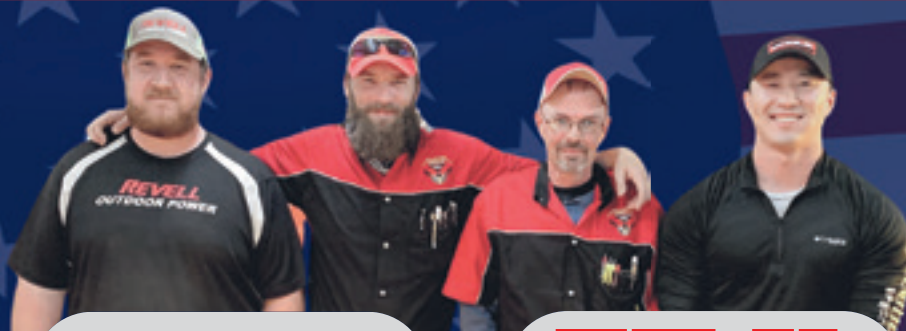
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