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The Pearl News

Good News You Can Use

Vol. 5, No. 1 | January 2020

The Pearl News is a subsidiary of **SWRANKIN NEWS**

PPSD Teacher of the Year announced for 2019-20

Special to The Pearl News

Pearl Lower Elementary kindergarten teacher Sharley Speed has been selected as the 2019-2020 Pearl Public School District (PPSD) Teacher of the Year.

She will represent PPSD in the Mississippi Teacher of the Year Program, which recognizes exemplary teachers in the state.

Speed spent her formative years in the public school systems throughout the State of Mississippi, first in Hattiesburg, attending the local public schools for grades five through eight, and then completing her high school education in Long Beach.

She attended the University of Southern Mississippi, receiving a Bachelor of Education certified in Reading and Social Studies K-12. She went on to receive a Master of Education from Belhaven University with an emphasis in



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Pictured (l to r) are: Pearl Public School District (PPSD) Assistant Superintendent Kim LaFontaine, Pearl Lower Elementary (PLE) Assistant Principal Dr. Tamekia Stewart, PPSD Superintendent Dr. Raymond Morgigno, Sharley Speed, PLE Principal Canda Jackson, PLE Curriculum Specialist Missy Jones and PPSD Assistant Superintendent Cedric Graham.

elementary education.

Her career in education began in 2007, as a first-grade teacher at Pearl Lower Elementary. In 2011, and over the following six years, she worked as an

educator in Augusta, Georgia, as well as Birmingham, Alabama. She eventually returned to Jackson in December 2017, where she says she was "fortunate enough" to return to Pearl Lower

Elementary to teach kindergarten. She is currently in the thirteenth year of her professional career as an educator.

When asked what inspired her to pursue a degree in education, Speed says it was the lasting impact of her childhood teachers who provided the academic, as well as emotional, support she needed to succeed. It is her belief that a child's early school experience profoundly affects their ongoing educational development, and her main goal, as a kindergarten teacher at Pearl Lower Elementary, is to provide the very best environment for her students to flourish.

Speed's family of six includes: husband Josh, son Lawson, daughter Hadley Mills, as well as their two beloved dogs - Lady and Ellie. In her spare time, Speed enjoys the moments spent with family, traveling, eating Chick-fil-a, holding movie nights with lots of popcorn and M&Ms and watching New Orleans Saints' football games.

PSS hosts Louisiana trip to celebrate Mardi Gras

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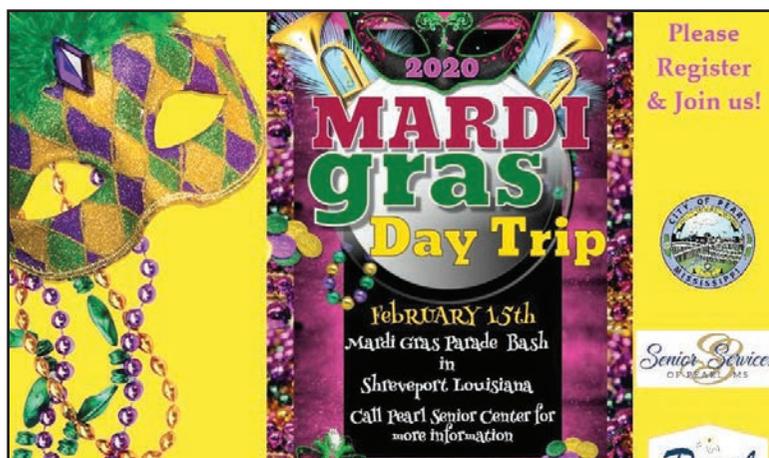
On Saturday, February 15, Pearl Senior Services (PSS) will host a day trip for senior travelers to Shreveport, Louisiana, in celebration of Fat Tuesday. PSS has chartered a luxury motor-coach that will depart from the Pearl Senior Center at 8:45 a.m. Rest stops will be made en route.

Upon arrival in the Shreveport - Bossier, Louisiana, area, the first stop on the itinerary will be Tubbs Cajun Gifts & Hardware Store, where everyone will have the opportunity to purchase souvenirs, such as Mardi Gras gifts and beads, local cajun seasonings, sauce mixes, cookbooks and cast iron cookware.

The next stop will be a reserved area for the "Rockin' Tent Party," where lunch will be provided. The menu will

include the following local specialties: red beans & rice, chicken & sausage gumbo, crawfish etouffee, fried catfish fillets, creole grilled chicken, soft drinks, iced tea and Mardi Gras king cake for dessert. During mealtime, a live zydeco and cajun music band will provide the entertainment. There will also be a complimentary shuttle to travel the parade route for sight-seeing during this time.

At 4:30 p.m., the group will relocate to a seated area, reserved especially for the Pearl Senior Services group. The



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reserved area will provide an up-close view of all the floats and costumes of the Mardi Gras "Krewe of Centaur"

Parade, with prime opportunity to catch beads, trinkets and give-a-ways.

Following the last parade float, the group will load the motor-coach and begin the return trip to Pearl. There will again be rest stops en route, and everyone should arrive back at the Pearl Senior Center no later than 10 p.m.

Senior residents, ages fifty-five and up, are welcome to participate. The cost of the trip is \$149 per person, based on forty paying passengers, with full payment due by Friday, January 17. All participants will receive complimentary Mardi Gras gift bags, as well as a custom t-shirt from the Shreveport Convention & Tourist Bureau.

For more information, contact Angela Jones or Keisha Love with Pearl Senior Services at 601-863-3229.



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THE NEWS RICHLAND

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Richland Futbol Club: Fostering local talent

Special to The Richland News

Richland Futbol Club, so called to draw interest to a more competitive side of soccer, was established in 2017 by local athlete and sports enthusiast Virginia Miller.

Miller had played, assisted, and coached recreational sports (softball, cheer, and soccer) in her hometown as a child, teen, and adult and, consequently, has always had a desire to create a sports-centered organization that fostered athletic abilities in local talent. After she had run a club in a separate community for a few years, she returned to Richland, and with the help of other enthusiastic parents, formed Richland Futbol Club (RFC). The environment and time was ripe for just such an organization, as participation in the year-long sport of soccer in Richland - much like Richland itself - was growing rapidly.

The purpose of the club is two-fold: first, to encourage a love of recreational soccer and secondly, to offer specific opportunities for further training and healthy competition at a more ad-



Special to The Richland News

vanced level for those who show a real gift for the sport.

So far, in the two years' since the club's establishment, RFC not only brought home their first recreational win with the U16 Admiral Cup, but also took great pride in Richland High School's first ever State Championship this past year. The win included several of those same players that grew up in the recreational program as it shifted to the more competitive side.

RFC offers a chance to play soccer for Richland to anyone who has an interest, as long as numbers allow. The club offers something for everyone, from U4, U5, U6, U8, U10 to U12, U14, U16, U19 (and beyond).

Volunteers are welcome to apply for a coaching position, which will require the completion of a KidSafe background check as well as acquiring proper certification through Mississippi Soccer Association (MSA). RFC covers yearly coaching courses as well as offers assisted coaching sessions to help new and veteran coaches learn techniques and strategies for reaching players of all ages. For those who may not feel confident in their coaching abilities, RFC wants to get the word

out that they are always looking for eager coaches, no matter the skill-set.

The club also hosts an annual "RFC Opening Ceremonies," as well as a yearly "Kick or Treat Soccer Tournament" that has drawn an ever increasing number of participants each year. These events offer multiple opportunities for the community to participate as well as Richland High School seniors a chance to earn volunteer hours from helping with fundraising, games, parking, etc.

For those who are not able to afford to pay registration fees, the board offers a few scholarships for those that qualify. The RecME (Recreation, Mentoring, and Education) scholarship program was created as an offshoot of the club's establishment, and another byproduct of its ongoing positive impact to the Richland community. Virginia Miller initiated the scholarship in partnership with Chris Bridges, Millie Cook, Erica Sutphin, and Wal-Mart's Store Manager Carson Risenhoover. It not only assists in providing athletic gear and/or registration fees for those in need, but also offers two seniors an opportunity to "pay it forward" through recreational sports.

Qualifying candidates include: seniors who do not qualify for academic and/or athletic scholarships, but maintain at least a 2.5 GPA; have played a minimum of two years in local a recreational program and volunteered at least twenty hours in recreational activities - especially first-generation college students. After completing the application process, including documented hours and past experience, one male and one female are selected by a panel of non-biased judges. Recipients must commit to twenty future hours of community service through recreation, education, and/or mentoring, and will receive a \$250-\$500 (as funds allow) scholarship to be sent directly to each student's college of choice. This year will be the first class to receive the scholarship, and while it is open to all who meet the requirements, it started with RFC.

Currently the Richland Futbol Club Board is comprised of the following members: President Virginia Miller, Vice-President/Director of Coaching/Tournament Director Chris Bridges, Secretary/Treasurer Erica Sutphin, Representative Andy Pepper, Master Scheduler Melodie Patrick, Representative Parrish Patrick, Representative Alfonso Gonzalez, Uniform Coordinator Emily Chance, Mini Kickers Coordinator Kim Harrell and Social Media/PR Representative Renee Moha.

For more information about the Richland Futbol Club, contact President Virginia Miller at rfc_president@yahoo.com or Vice-President/Director of Coaching/Tournament Director Chris Bridges at 601-906-1459. Online, visit richlandfutbolclub.com or their Facebook @RFCsoccer2017, Twitter at [richland_fc](https://twitter.com/richland_fc), and Instagram at [richlandfutbolclub](https://www.instagram.com/richlandfutbolclub).

Visit page 12 for full photo spread and list of RFC wins for 2019.

CORRECTION: Advantage Capital Invests in Richland's Capital City Trucking

In the December 2019 issue of *The Richland News*, the front page story, Advantage Capital Invests in Richland's Capital City Trucking, erroneously included the company logo from Capital Transport, Inc., instead of Capital City Trucking, both of which are trucking companies located in Richland, Mississippi.



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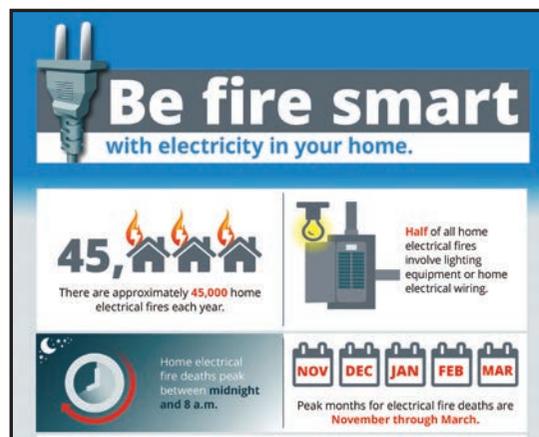
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Increased fire hazards in winter, cautions SWRFD

Special to The Florence News

Southwest Rankin Fire Department (SWRFD) of Florence wants to get the word out about potential fire hazards in the home - especially in the winter season - as they are peak months for heating-related fires. Winter storms can cause dangerous and sometimes life-threatening conditions, i.e., extreme cold, icy roads, downed trees and power lines and any combination of these can contribute to dangerous and potentially fatal situations.

Home fires in particular occur more in the winter than in any other season, and heating equipment is involved in one of every five home fire-related deaths. Space heaters are the type of equipment most often involved, but electrical dis-



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tribution or lighting equipment contribute to roughly half of all home fires, while the other half often-times involve other known types of equipment, such as: washer or dryer fans and portable or

stationary space heaters.

Home-owners should exercise extra caution when using portable generators during power outages, as improper use is not only a potential fire hazard, but can also pose serious health risks, including: carbon monoxide poisoning as well as electrical shock or electrocution. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuels such as gasoline, wood, coal, propane, etc. do not burn completely. Residents are encouraged to be on the lookout for heating and cooking equipment that burns fuel to operate, as they are potential sources of CO. According to a 2013 Consumer Product Safety Commission report, half of the genera-

tor-related deaths happened in the four coldest months of the year, November through February.

It is highly recommended that each home-owner consider the following options for their home, and choose the best options for their particular circumstances: install, and test regularly, household smoke alarm(s); invest in a home fire sprinkler system; purchase a fire extinguisher to have on-hand; consider installing a carbon monoxide alarm (especially if the home runs on a gas-generated heating system), and make sure to create and practice a fire escape plan.

With proper preparation, Florence residents can avoid many potential fire and heating related hazards this winter. For further information, visit www.nfpa.org.

McLaurin's McCray chosen as Elementary Administrator of the Year

Special to The Florence News

Rankin County School District recently announced Dr. Melissa McCray, principal at McLaurin Elementary School, as the 2019-20 Elementary Administrator of the Year.

McCray completed her undergraduate work in Elementary Education at Belhaven University, attained a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Mississippi College and completed her education with a Doctorate Degree in Elementary, Middle and Secondary School Administration from Mississippi State University.

She began her professional career as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher and remained in that role for nine years before becoming a principal. She spent the next fourteen years as a principal of an inner-city Title I school. Under her leadership as principal there, the

school was named a Title I Distinguished School twice, as well as an Exceed School. The following two years were spent as an administrative coach and professional development provider for a consulting firm. In total, McCray has spent twenty-eight years in educational service.

She is currently in her third year as principal of McLaurin Elementary School. Under her leadership, and within a two-year period, McLaurin has moved from a C school to an A school.

Her belief is that every student is capable of learning at high levels and that through consistent collaboration with parents and staff, children can reach the highest levels of academic achievement and thrive socially. She has worked diligently with staff to align instruction with student data, create literacy rich classrooms, im-



Special to The Florence News

plement interventions with fidelity, establish school-wide behavior expectations and create a school culture in which everyone thrives.

Dr. McCray is convinced that a school culture rooted in strong relationships, and fostered by courageous conversations among all stakeholders, cultivates an environment where the educational community flourishes and where each student has the best opportunity to meet their greatest academic potential.

Originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, McCray currently resides in Brandon, with her husband of twenty-five years, Albert McCray. The McCrays have three children: Andrew, Matthew and Ida. They also have one grandson, Christian. She enjoys reading, listening to music and traveling with her family.

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PPSD selects Bailey as Administrator of the Year

Special to SW Rankin News

Laurin Bailey, an assistant principal at Northside Elementary, has been selected as the 2019-2020 Pearl Public School District Administrator of the Year. Mrs. Bailey is in her thirteenth year of service, with eight years in PPSD and the last three years as assistant principal. She will represent PPSD in the Mississippi Administrator of the Year Program. This program recognizes exemplary administrators in the state.

Born and raised in Pearl, Mississippi, Bailey graduated from Pearl High School in 2003. She explains that "[b]eing from, and living in, Pearl my entire life has had a significant impact on how I perform my job. As a product of Pearl Public School District, I strive daily to ensure the students of my school receive a top-quality education and educational experience just as I did."

Bailey received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Mississippi State University in 2007, followed by a master's degree in Elementary Education from Mississippi College as well as a specialist degree in Instructional Leadership from William Carey University in 2017. She is currently



Pictured (l to r) are: Pearl Public School District (PPSD) Assistant Superintendent Kim LaFontaine, Northside Principal Dr. Nikki Graham, Laurin Bailey, Northside Assistant Principal Stacy Farrar, PPSD Superintendent Dr. Raymond Morgigno, and PPSD Assistant Superintendent Cedric Graham.

working on her doctoral degree and plans to graduate in 2021.

Bailey began her career as a student teacher in Rankin County School District followed by five years as a third-grade teacher at Northshore Elementary. She continued her career as an educator teaching first-grade at Pearl Lower Elementary for the following two years, then served as a Curriculum Specialist for Pearl Public School District for three years. Currently, she is in her third year as assistant principal at Northside Elementary in Pearl. She has a total of

thirteen years experience as an educator.

Bailey believes that she makes a positive impact through her daily interactions with staff and students. She describes herself as a very positive, dependable and competent person who wants her staff to know how much she appreciates them and all they do. She works hard to help make the day-to-day actions of the school run as smoothly as possible for all involved.

Over the course of her tenure as assistant principal, she has successfully implemented several programs to rec-

ognize and celebrate accomplishments at Northside for students and teachers, and has consequently received positive responses from parents, students as well as staff.

Her primary goal as assistant principal is to provide support to her staff. Bailey says that, "[a]s an instructional leader, my goal is to be a support system, listening ear and guide when needed. Working together, we help students be the best they can be and achieve success! At the end of the day, I want my staff to know that I am there to help and will do anything I can for each of them."

Bailey concludes by saying "As a lifetime resident of Pearl, I feel that I have a vested interest in playing my part in assuring that my community and school continues to be a wonderful place to live with a school system that assists students in reaching their utmost potential."

Bailey has been married for twelve years to husband Ryan, and they have one daughter, nine-year-old Kaitlyn Grace. In her spare time, Bailey enjoys watching Mississippi State University football games, helping lead her daughter's Girl Scout Troop and spending time with family and friends.

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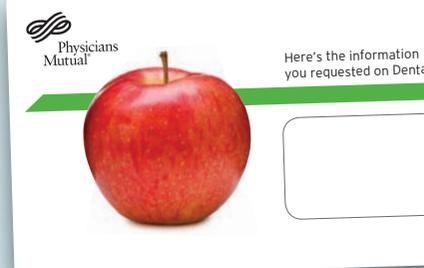


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Local garden club hosts Christmas party



Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland-Florence Garden Club met for their annual Christmas party at the home of Elizabeth Hawthorne. Shannon Laseter presented a door hanging made entirely from things found in the yard, and Joan Benton provided Cinderella bags for club members to fill with personal toiletries for victims of human trafficking. Over twenty bags were collected for donation. The Richland-Florence Garden Club is federated with the Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc., a member of the National Garden Clubs, Inc., and the Natchez Trace District.

Local Churches



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Old Truths for Today

By J.T. Morgan



YOU HAVE NOT BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE

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.

For all practical purposes 2019 is behind you – 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 2020 the best year of your life. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Florence Church of Christ, P.O. Box 277, 220 White Street, Florence, Ms 39073

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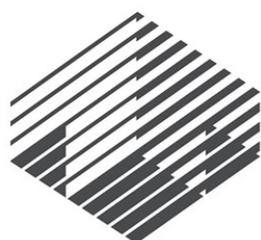
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Florence community celebrates the holiday season



Photos by Circle X Imagery

2019 Florence Christmas Parade. For more photos visit The Florence News Facebook page.

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Richland's three days of Christmas in pictures



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Richland Christmas 2019. Visit The Richland News Facebook page for more photos.

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Southwest Rankin brings holiday cheer to MSH

Special to SW Rankin News

Volunteers from multiple southwest Rankin County organizations hosted holiday celebrations during the month of December with patients and residents at Mississippi State Hospital (MSH).

More than eighty groups from Mississippi provided parties and activities for over six-hundred patients and residents at the hospital this holiday season.

"We appreciate the generosity of all of our volunteer groups and the happiness they bring to the patients and residents during the holidays," said Sheila Shows, Volunteer Services Director for the hospital.

Holiday festivities at MSH culminated on Santa Day, Friday, December 20. An annual tradition, Santa Day is a day when community volunteers and leaders gather at the hospital dressed as Santa and deliver gift bags to each patient and resident.



Volunteers from Morning Star Baptist Church of Florence



Volunteers from National Alliance of Postal & Federal Employees of Florence



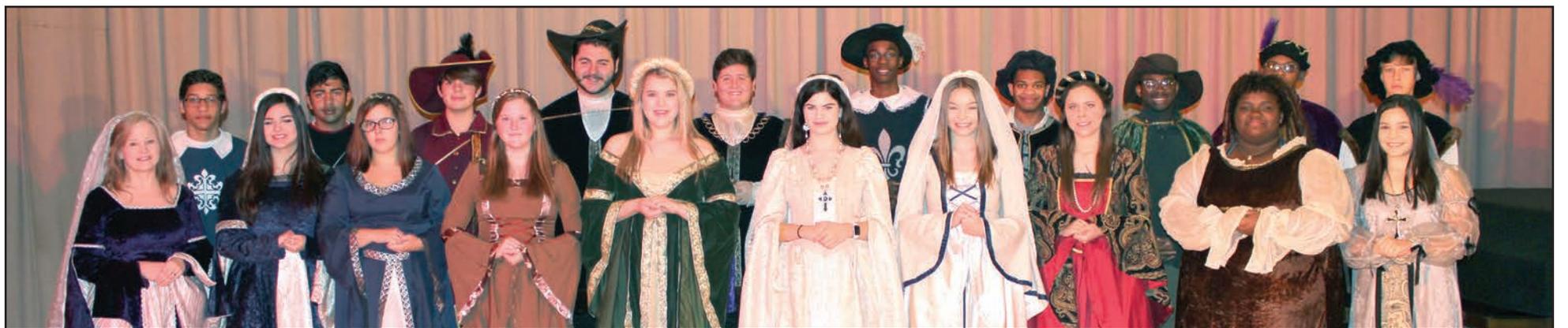
Volunteers from Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church of Florence



Volunteers from Griffith Memorial Baptist Church of Pearl



Volunteers from Mt. Elam Missionary Baptist Church of Pearl



Pearl High School Chamber Choir



Volunteers from Grandview Baptist Church of Pearl

Photos special to SW Rankin News

UMMC, MDRS and RCSD join forces for SPED students

By Alexa Haik

For parents with a special needs child, there are concerns that come and go as the child grows, and are addressed on an as-needed basis. However, the concern that remains, the one that keeps them up at night, is this - how their child will be able to gain independence once they reach adulthood. In Rankin County, three organizations have joined forces and stepped in to fill that void - Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Rankin County School District (RCSD) and University of Mississippi Medical Services (UMMC). This is their story.

In 2015, a seminal partnership between the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) took place. Now known as Project SEARCH Forrest General, the success of this collaboration encouraged those involved to expand the program to other locations within the state of Mississippi.

According to the national Project SEARCH website, the original program began as an idea of a Cincinnati, Ohio hospital administrator. Erin Rieh-



Photo by RCSD and MDRS

2019 class pictured (l to r) are, front row: Kyla McGloster, Trinity Ambrose, Natalie Davis, Jaelyn Sayles and Caleb Byrd; and back row: Trettson Burgess, Daniel Davis, Carrie McDaniel and Ariel Williams.

le, the Director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Department at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, decided that her work environment - a hospital that served children with

disabilities - provided an idea opportunity "to fill some of the high-turnover, entry-level positions in her department" with candidates from local special education programs. She presented her idea

to a local special education (SPED) director, Susie Rutkowski of Great Oaks Career Campuses, also in Cincinnati. A partnership was born, and the first iteration of Project SEARCH was established in 1996. As with any good idea, the program has since spread worldwide, and the primary goal, and connecting thread of each, continues to be "to secure competitive employment for people with disabilities."

After routinely speaking with their counterparts across the nation, MDRS learned how the Project SEARCH model was profoundly changing the lives of young adults with disabilities.

Project SEARCH University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) is the result of this strategic collaboration of public and private partners that was initiated by MDRS under the direction of the Executive Director, Chris Howard.

Faye Culpepper, Coordinator of Project SEARCH Mississippi for MDRS, explains that Rankin County School District came to their attention as a viable participant in a pilot program because "they currently have a coffee shop, 'Gathering Grounds,' that teaches students work-based learning skills, job

continued on page 10

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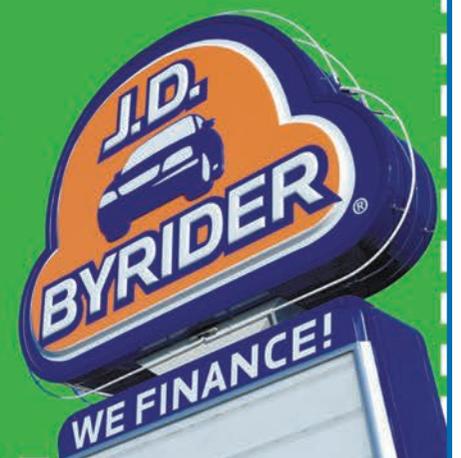
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Jackson Zoo visits Northside Elementary



Special to SW Rankin News

Ginger Morrison from the Jackson Zoo visited with students at Northside Elementary in Pearl. During her discussion, Morrison spoke on her responsibilities as a zookeeper and displayed a few zoo animals for the students. Pictured (l to r) are: Kayden Thompson, Anthony Banks and Ginger Morrison.

New Year's resolutions? CMRLS has them covered

Special to SW Rankin News

Whether it's diet, exercise, health, education, travel or something else entirely, CMRLS (Central Mississippi Regional Library System) libraries provide multiple resources to support any New Year's resolution.

If it is a resolution for weight-loss or simply cultivating a healthier lifestyle, CMRLS libraries can provide what you need to get started: fitness kits from swivel boards to Golds gym kettlebells, as well as aerobic steppers, each adult (over 18 years of age) can check out two fitness kits per library card and can keep them out for four weeks. Literature, databases, as well as internet resources specializing in healthy lifestyles, are also available - the CMRLS Virtual Reference Collection as well as MAGNOLIA - a large collection of databases consisting of journals, periodicals, newspapers, reference books, etc. provide an abundance of online resources.

If traveling to a new locale is on the itinerary for 2020, mobile travel guides and video documentaries covering details on trips to any des-

tinuation, national or international, are available upon request.

For those interested in pursuing educational and/or vocational goals this year, a LearningExpress Library features online tutorials, practice tests and e-books to provide assistance to those in need. It also offers job search and workplace skills improvement, skill building in reading, writing, math, and basic science, career certification and licensure exam prep, college and grad school entrance test prep, GED® test prep, and more. Free online resources for ACT prep and others and study guides in CMRLS Libraries: for GMAT, SAT, PRAXIS, NCLEX-RN, MCAT, ACT and GED are available to check out.

With the support of a local library, New Year's resolutions can become more than just an item on a to-do list.

To inquire about resources available locally, contact: Florence Public Library, 115 West Main Street, Florence, 601-845-6032; Richland Public Library, 370 Scarbrough Street, Richland, 601-932-1846 or Pearl Public Library, 2416 Old Brandon Road, Pearl, 601-932-2562.



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continued from page 8

UMMC, MDRS and RCSD join forces for SPED students

exploration and self-advocacy."

Chris Howard, Executive Director of MDRS, further explains that UMMC was selected as a potential participant because "Project SEARCH partners have traditionally been health care providers, and partnering with a large facility like UMMC provides many internship opportunities for the young adults to gain a variety of work experiences. We are hoping to eventually expand our work sites to include other industries."

In 2017, MDRS officially reached out to Rankin County School District as well as UMMC and presented the idea of a potential collaboration using the Project SEARCH model.

As a result of this meeting: a proposal to host business and school district was made; licensure agreements were signed by MDRS/Project SEARCH; a Memorandum of Understanding outlining all parties responsibilities was distributed; the process of identifying potential interns was initiated with interviews and selection of interns was made; internship development sites at host business were made available and a "Meet and Greet" was scheduled to kick off the program.

In August of 2018, all the details of the collaboration were solidified, including the names of the students selected as first participants. Project SEARCH UMMC would consist of the following: Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation would provide job coaches, training curriculum, business development liaisons and financial support, UMMC would provide the classroom space and work experience opportunities and RCSD would provide the teacher, the students and transportation to and from the site.

The Project SEARCH UMMC program runs for one school year and follows the school calendar set by the Rankin County School District. It is designed to accommodate twelve interns

with the ultimate goal of each receiving competitive employment as well as becoming productive and independent citizens. The participating students are those students of RCSD, eighteen and older, who are in special education, who qualify for MDRS services and are not expected to graduate with a diploma. The UMMC internship allows the students to explore viable career options and provides vocational training that ultimately prepares them to seek and secure employment once they age out of the public school system. In addition to the career/vocational training, this program provides the students the opportunity to gain many social skills through working with their peers, working with the public and working with other UMMC employees.

In summary, Howard explains that "MDRS loves the Project SEARCH model and the opportunity it provides to so many of the young adults with disabilities across our state who are in their last year of high school. It is our mission to grow this program by compounding the number of schools/businesses each year.

According to Josh Woodward, Director of the MDRS Office of Business Development, the program will continue to run indefinitely, or until the hospital or school no longer wants the program."

So far, of the first Project SEARCH UMMC class (2018-2019), all nine found employment-most of which remained at UMMC.

For further information about Project SEARCH UMMC, Contact Amy Bullock, the SPED director with RCSD at 601.825.5590 or amy.bullock@rcsd.ms.

If a school district or a large employer is interested in partnering with MDRS to provide a Project SEARCH site in their respective area, please contact Faye Culpepper at 601-853-5344.

The Great Gatspay: MSSPAN's annual "Spaytacular" is here

Special to SW Rankin News

Each year, Mississippi Spay and Neuter (MSSPAN) of Pearl holds a fund-raiser designed to defray the daily expenses of running the non-profit organization whose primary goal is to provide low cost spay and neuter services across the state of Mississippi. Known as the annual "Spaytacular," the theme of the seventh annual celebration is "The Great Gatspay."

Activities will kick-off at 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 15, and run until

For those who are interested in participating but are unable to attend the event itself, 50/50 raffle tickets are available to anyone, at a cost of \$5 per ticket. The winner will receive half of the funds collected, and will be chosen the night of Spaytacular 2020. If not in attendance, the winner will be notified by Sunday, February 16.

Local businesses are encouraged to participate by considering sponsorship. MS SPAN is looking for businesses that desire a mutually beneficial partnership with a common goal



Special to SW Rankin News

9 p.m. The venue for the event this year will be Table 100, a casual - euro american bistro located in the heart of Flowood at 100 Ridge Way. Participants are encouraged to wear the costume of their choice.

The cost for early bird registration is \$50 per person, and covers dinner, drinks, dessert and a silent auction. For groups of eight, VIP Table registration is available for \$600 per table, and includes dinner and 2 drink tickets for each guest. For attendees who purchased VIP tables at the \$500 level in the past, the rate will be grandfathered.

of enriching the lives of Mississippi's families and pets, while drastically reducing the number of animals euthanized in shelters and abandoned on the streets. Previous event sponsors' contributions have provided resources which ensured that families are able to access spay/neuter services at affordable prices and that no one is ever turned away based on their ability to pay.

For more information contact Shelby at shelby@msspan.org or 769-257-0277. To purchase tickets visit msspan.org/spaytacular_2020_tickets.



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SW RANKIN NEWS

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RCSD honors Meredith as Student of the Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Pictured is the Rankin County School District (RCSD) student of the month for December, Avery Meredith, from Florence Middle School.

Florence Lions Club celebrates fund-raiser



Special to SW Rankin News

The final meeting of the Florence Lions Club for 2019 was held in December, celebrating their pecan fund raiser.

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2020 baseball and softball registration open in Pearl

Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl's Parks and Recreation Department is currently accepting registration for the 2020 softball and baseball programs. The deadline to submit is Saturday, February 8.

The programs open for registration include: softball tee ball for ages four through five (age as of December 31, 2019); fast-pitch for ages six through fourteen (age as of December 31, 2019); four-year-old baseball tee ball (age as of February 8, 2020) and baseball for ages five through fifteen (age as of Feb-



ruary 8, 2020).

The cost for registration for each is: \$45 for softball tee ball, \$85 for fast-pitch softball, \$45 for baseball tee ball and \$85 for baseball.

Those interested may register online at pearlparksandrec.com or may register on site at the following days/times: Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday, February 8, from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. The Pearl Parks and Recreation building is located at 320 Center City Drive in Pearl. For more information, call 601-932-3541 or email hharalson@cityofpearl.com.

Florence resident joins Methodist Rehab staff

Special to SW Rankin News

Sara Yates of Florence has joined Methodist Rehabilitation Center in Jackson as the director of human resources. She oversees all human resource functions, including talent acquisition, benefits administration, employee engagement and performance management.

Prior to joining MRC, Yates served in human resource leadership roles at Peterbilt of Mississippi and Horne LLP. She attended Mississippi State University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in communication.

Yates serves on the board of directors for the Capital Area Human Resource Association and is a member of the business advisory boards for the business and office technology programs



Special to SW Rankin News

Sara Yates

at both Hinds Community College and Pearl River Community College.

WLBT's Dave Roberts attends Northside Elementary career day



Special to SW Rankin News

Northside Elementary in Pearl invited people of various professions to speak to students on Career Day. Pictured (l to r) are: music teacher Lauren Hennes, meteorologist Dave Roberts, and Quest teacher Shea Hennessy.

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HCC hosts annual "District Legislative Luncheon"

Special to SW Rankin News

Fifteen Mississippi legislators, including five of the eight new legislators elected since fall 2018, were among those attending the recent District Legislative Luncheon at Hinds Community College (HCC).

The topic of discussion included, "more per student (FTE) funding for community colleges in Mississippi, faculty raises and capital improvements top the list of community college needs," Hinds President Dr. Clyde Muse said.

He emphasized the three main priorities in two-year colleges' \$245.9 million request of lawmakers for the 2021 fiscal year, "this will enable us to keep our tuition down where students can afford to come to school. The increase in tuition has been significantly more than the increase in



Attending the Hinds Community College District Legislative Luncheon were, (l to r): Hinds President Dr. Clyde Muse, executive director of the Hinds Community College Foundation and new legislator Jackie Granberry, and Rankin County Representative Gene Newman. Granberry and Newman were classmates at Pearl High School.



Photos by Hinds Community College/April Garon

Among the attendees of Hinds Community College's District Legislative Luncheon were, (l to r): Hinds Community College Foundation Executive Director Jackie Granberry, Rankin County legislative delegation member Representative Tom Weathersby, Rankin County legislative delegation member Senator Dean Kirby, Rankin County legislative delegation member Representative Gene Newman, Rankin County legislative delegation member Representative Fred Shanks and math instructor and sponsor of the Student VOICES group Jeff Hughes of Richland.

funding on the state or local level."

Colleen Hartfield, executive assistant to the president for special projects, coordinates the annual function.

"Our primary goal is to help legislators understand how their support makes a tremendous difference in the lives of our students, our employees and the communities in our district," she said.

As Mississippi's largest community college, HCC is a comprehensive institution offering quality, affordable educational opportunities with academic programs of study leading to seamless university transfer and career and technical programs teaching job-ready skills. With six locations in central Mississippi, Hinds enrolls about 12,000 students each fall semester. To learn more, visit hindscc.edu or call 1.800.HindsCC.

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