INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Save the dates for SW Rankin holiday events - Page 6

Southern Lights opens Nov. 21 _- Page 18



Vol. 10, No. 11 | November 2025

Pearl News





PPSD Chism named MASA 2025-26 Superintendent of the Year

Special to The Pearl News

Chris Chism, Superintendent of the Pearl Public School District, was named the 2025-26 Superintendent of the Year by the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA). He was honored at the MASA Fall Leadership Conference in October.

Chism has dedicated more than twenty-seven years of his life to public education.

His career includes experience as a class-room teacher, coach, assistant principal and principal. He spent seven years as the principal of Pearl High School, two years as principal of Lafayette Middle School, and two years as assistant principal at New Albany High School.

Chism holds an associate degree from East Mississippi Community College (EMCC) where he also began his collegiate baseball career. After EMCC, he played baseball at the University of Florida (UF) while studying en-



Special to The Pearl New

PPSD Superintendent Chism is shown with Dr. Ray Morgigno, former PPSD Superintendent from 2010 -2022 and current executive director of EMCED, at the MASA Fall Leadership Conference in October.

vironmental engineering. Drafted out of UF, he played one year of professional baseball.

After his athletic career was cut short by injuries, he went on to receive a bachelor of science from Mississippi State University and a Master of Education from the University of Mississippi, where he was part of the Principal Corps. He continued to develop his focus on educational leadership through the National Institute for School Leadership and MASA Superintendent Academy.

Chism actively teaches AI Technology to school systems and business around Pearl, the state and country. He currently serves as president of the Pearl Kiwanis Club and president-elect of the Mississippi Professional Educators Board of Directors.

"Congratulations! He's been doing great things; so glad he's being recognized for all his hard work," stated Michelle Adcock, Rankin County Circuit Clerk.

Pearl completes \$1.5 million Highway 80 lighting project







FIIOLOS DY SUSIE A. WOILE

The City of Pearl has added 141 new lights along Highway 80 from Pirate's Cove Drive to Pearson Road for public safety improvement, according to Pearl Mayor Jake Windham. The \$1.5 million lighting project is part of the plan to clean things up in the Highway 80 corridor, which will eventually extend further, the mayor said. The poles and LED lights are aesthetically positioned 185 feet apart along each side of the roadway for maximum visibility and safety.



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Good News You Can Use

Pearl News





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The Richland News

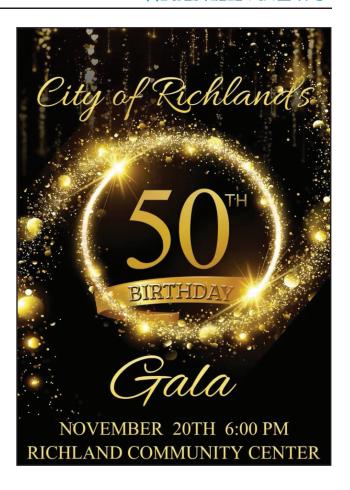
The City of Richland will celebrate fifty years as a city with a special 50th Birthday Gala on November 20.

Slated to take place at the Richland Community Center from 6 until 9 p.m. that Thursday evening, the event offers the opportunity for residents to come together and celebrate a half century of growth, community and hometown pride – and to look forward to the bright future ahead.

The evening's events will include live music from Crescent City Soul Band, food and even a 50th birthday cake. Organizers say a dazzling fireworks show from High-Tech Special Effects, Inc. will close out the celebration.

Tickets to the Gala must be purchased in advance and are \$25 per person. No tickets will be sold at the door. Attendees are encouraged to "dress to impress," with cocktail to formal attire suggested.

The Richland Community Center is located at 410 East Harper Street. For more information or to purchase a ticket, call 601-420-3400.



Former Richland mayor found not guilty by directed verdict

Special to The Richland News

In a mid-September ruling, Rankin County Circuit Judge Bradley Mills granted a directed verdict in a payroll fraud case against former Richland Mayor 'Pat' Sullivan. A 2023 WLBT '3 On Your Side' investigative report of the fraud had resulted in a case against Sullivan, who resigned from office in December of 2023, citing health reasons. A directed verdict is one issued by a trial judge after he/she determines that no legally sufficient evidence exists that would result in a reasonable jury reaching a different conclusion.

The local NBC affiliate reported that the verdict came down minutes before a jury would be allowed to decide Sullivan's fate.

"There's so much wrong with the State's case, I don't know where to begin," said Judge Mills. "The State not only failed to prove intent, they failed to prove fraud; they failed to prove the fraudulent timesheets were submitted. We're not gonna waste this jury's time, not one more second," stated Judge Mills, according to WLBT.

WLBT reports that Mills' decision to grant the defense's motion came after Sullivan's attorney brought it up a second time in the trial.

During the two days of trial before the verdict was granted, it was disclosed that the State Auditor's office had been given different totals for Sullivan's leave balance, documentation WLBT says it specifically requested but never fully received from the county.

WLBT reported that, according to trial testimony, the leave Sullivan had built up actually did cover the leave time he used over several years. Merrida Coxwell, the defense attorney, argued that Sullivan worked remotely, but the State Auditor's investigator did not find any



Special to The Richland News

The case against former Richland Mayor Pat Sullivan, shown, went to trial on September 15 in Rankin County Court. On day two, Judge Bradley Mills issued a directed verdict, stating the State failed to prove its case. Sullivan resigned from office in December 2023, citing health reasons. overwhelming evidence of that.

Timesheets that showed time worked while Sullivan was not at work were among the most substantial evidence obtained by the State. According to Mills' closing remarks, there were two witnesses that said employee timesheets for the assessor's office didn't "mean anything."

Rankin County Board Attorney Craig Slay, another witness, said timesheets help the County control overtime.

"That's why those time sheets exist. They are to help us to watch out for the possibility of violating the overtime laws; so, you don't have to worry about that for management-level employees," stated Slay.

Documents from the state list Sullivan as a non-exempt and hourly employee, but several witnesses said he was considered an exempt, management-level employee.

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Good News You Can Use







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Day brings fun and food downtown Florence

Florence Day was held on an overcast Fall Saturday in October on Earl Clark Drive in downtown Florence. Attendees enjoyed music, food trucks, inflatables, vendors and representation from local businesses. The photos highlight some of the groups handing out candy or brochures, such as the Boy Scouts, Gideons, Friends of the Library, and the Greater Enoch Grove MB Church "Walk for a Cure."



















Photos by Susie A. Wolfe

Florence Middle recognizes 2025-2026 Teachers and Parent of the Year

Special to The Florence News

The Florence Middle School (FMS) 2025-26 Teacher of the Year is Mrs. Alicia Stringer. Mrs. Stringer is in her twelfth year of education, and this is her seventh year in Florence.

According to Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams, "Mrs. Stringer puts her all into everything she does at FMS, including teaching

sixth-grade math as well as leading Beta Club and FCA. FMS is so thankful to have Mrs. Stringer as a part of the FMS family and are thrilled to name her Teacher of the Year!"

The FMS 2025-26 New Teacher of the Year is Mrs. Ellen Alexander. Mrs. Alexander is in her first year of teaching after spending three years as an assistant



FMS 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year is Mrs. Alicia



FMS 2025-2026 New Teacher of the Year is Mrs. Ellen Alexander.



Photos special to The Florence News FMS 2025-2026 Parent of the Year is Mrs. Amy Fontan.

teacher in the Northwest Rankin zone.

Williams said, "She is doing a wonderful job teaching seventh grade ELA at FMS. The FMS team looks forward to seeing Mrs. Alexander's continued success and is proud to name her New Teacher of the Year!"

The FMS 2025-2026 Parent of the Year is Mrs. Amy Fontan. Mrs. Fontan has served as a part of PTO in the Florence zone for thirteen years and currently serves as the FMS PTO president, spending countless hours serving the school.

"The FMS team is so grateful for all that Amy does to support the faculty and staff, students, and community. FMS is proud to name Mrs. Amy Fontan as Parent of the Year," said Williams.

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November book report: The Star and the Shamrock by Jean Grainger

By Guest Columnist Beth Woodmansee, for the Friends of the Richland Library

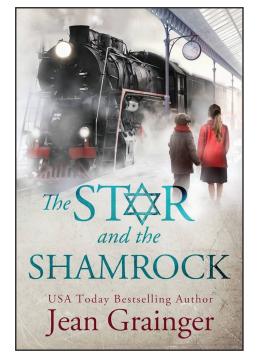
Jean Grainger's The Star and The Shamrock, published in 2022, is inspired by a little-known program set up by Jewish parents to save their children from what they feared would be their fate - Jewish children under the rule of Hitler and his Nazis, who wanted to destroy all Jewish people.

Her story begins with two women in Ireland and Berlin, in 1938. One young woman, named Elizabeth, was the widow of a Jewish soldier, Rudi Klein. Klein briefly served in the British Army during World War I, before he was killed in action on November 11, 1918, Armistice Day. Rudi and Elizabeth had been married less than a year when he died. Elizabeth Bannon Klein, a teacher, lived in their little house in Liverpool, grieving the loss of Rudi, for all those twenty years.

In 1939, in Berlin, Ariella married Peter Bannon, a relative of Elizabeth's family in Ireland. They had two children, a girl, ten-year-old Liesl, and a boy, Erich, who was seven. Five months before this story begins, Peter and a friend had been picked up by police while defending an elderly Jewish woman being abused on the streets by Nazi thugs. Ariella had no idea what happened to Peter. She and the children were harassed for being "Jewish," and Ariella was denied access to make a living as a teacher. Fearing for the safety of her children, she wondered how to feed them.

A friend of her missing husband told her about a program started by Jews between 1938 and 1940, to help families transport their Jewish children by train from Hitler's Nazi Germany to a safe place in Great Britain. Called "Kindertransport," about 10,000 children were saved. Ariella contacted a woman who arranged for Liesl and Erich to escape Germany. The children needed someone in England to foster them, and Ariella wrote a letter to Elizabeth Klein begging her to help Liesl and Erich. Elizabeth agreed to take the children. A few weeks later, Elizabeth met a train in Liverpool and began a new life - as foster parent to two children she came to love as her very own. She encouraged the children to write to Ariella Bannon, but they never had a reply.

One night in Liverpool, German air-



craft bombed Liverpool; nothing was left. Elizabeth and the children moved to Ballycreggan, in County Down, Ireland. Arriving there, Elizabeth and the children found her mother's house perfectly maintained and her own room kept as Elizabeth had left it in

While working on the farm nearby, they met Daniel Lieber, a refugee from Germany, who had been an engineer with his own business until authorities learned he was Jewish. A friend helped him leave Germany. He and Elizabeth developed feelings for one another, but Daniel was arrested as a spy, accused of providing drawings of an RAF base in Ireland to the German authorities. If found guilty, he would be executed.

Elizabeth managed to get permission to visit him in the prison in Belfast. She and the children did not believe he was a Nazi spy; he hated Nazis more than most people did. One day, Elizabeth remembered a young woman, an artist with exceptional skill whom she had seen entering an art gallery in Belfast. The gallery manager told Elizabeth her drawings were not for sale, nor any others by this young woman.

Why not? Armed with this clue, Elizabeth figured out that Daniel had not made the maps of the RAF Base near town. The real spy, the artist, was arrested, and Daniel was freed.

I urge you to find a copy of this book and read it for yourself, the first of several books about The Star and the Shamrock by Jean Grainger.







City of Pearl names Public Safety Complex after Chief William E. Slade

Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl Board of Alderman and Pearl Mayor Jake Windham recently named the Pearl Municipal Public Safety Complex in honor of the late Pearl Police Chief William E. Slade. Officials say the recognition celebrates Slade's commitment to law enforcement in the Pearl community.

Slade's forty-year career in law enforcement began in 1973, when he joined the City of Pearl as a police officer. Rising through the ranks, he was appointed Chief of Police in 1990, a role he held with distinction until his retirement on June 30, 2008. His professional training was extensive, including graduation from the 172nd Session of the FBI Academy.

Pearl leadership says the naming of the Public Safety Complex "stands as a fitting monument to Chief Slade's profound influence on Pearl and Mississippi's law enforcement landscape. It not only commemorates his professional accomplishments, but also his personal integrity and devotion to public service."



Pictured in front of the newly-dedicated building is Chief Slade's wife, Carolyne Slade, daughter Paige Slade and grand-





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Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a special time where families and friends gather, talk about good times and there is always plenty of good food. Thanksgiving is a wonderful holiday for a variety of reasons. The apostle Paul stated, "In everything give thanks;". (1 Thess. 5:18). He commends Christians in Colosse for "abounding in thanksgiving." (Col. 2:7). Basically he is saying we are to have a heart overflowing with gratitude and keep on being thankful. Thanksgiving should be every day!

Under the Law of Moses there were "free will" sacrifices of thanksgiving. (Lev. 22:29). The psalmist said, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name". (Psm. 100:4).

We have so much to be thankful for. When we grow in our ability and capacity to recognize and appreciate God's blessings in our lives, then we will be better equipped to serve Him. We need to be a people of gratitude and filled with thanksgiving to God for His abundant blessings.

Ingratitude is an avenue of attack by the devil. The more one's heart is turned to their own desires, the farther it's turned away from God. The possession of wealth is among our greatest temptations. People never seem to be satisfied with what they have. They desire more, and more. Paul gives warnings "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. 6:9). Again, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with may sorrows." (1 Tim.6:10). The devil wants us to stay focused on the "things" of this world. God wants us to look beyond our desires and lead lives which are characterized by gratitude for what He has given us. (See 1 Jhn. 2:15-17). A grateful heart is fundamental to one's relationship with God. Ingratitude is a mark of the unbeliever. (See 1 Tim. 4:1-5).

Giving thanks points one's mind to the giver (God) and not the gift. To focus on the gift is to focus on one's self. (Read Luke 12:15-21). God calls this man a "fool". Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk. 8:36-37). Look around you, everything you see will cease to exist one day. (2 Pet. 3:10-13). So it would be wise for man to maintain a proper relationship with the giver and not the gift. Gifts will pass away.

It is God who has created all and who distributes what He has created. Therefore, we need to trust Him who is the giver of all blessings. (Read Matt. 6:31-34). Jesus taught us to trust God to provide the things we have need of and put Him first in our lives.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Florence church of Christ-220 White Street Mailing address: 219 Morrison Road Florence, MS 39073

Save the dates for **SW Rankin holiday events**

Special to SW Rankin News

Communities are gearing up for the holidays, with parade registrations open in Florence, Richland and Pearl for the annual Christmas parades. All three will have nighttime parades.

The Florence Christmas parade will be on December 6 at 6 p.m. Line up will begin at 4 p.m. at Florence Middle School. Anyone is welcome to enter a float, vehicle, horse, tractor, etc., but Santa is not allowed to be a part of any entry. The entry fee is \$10, but there will be no charge for school groups such as bands, teams, cheerleaders, school dance teams or JROTC. To sign up to participate, visit https://form. jotform.com/252735484422156.

Pearl's Christmas lineup will also happen on December 6, beginning with the city's Christmas Tree Lighting at 6 p.m. at the City Hall Complex. The parade will roll at 6:30 p.m., and a community social will follow. More information is available on the Main Street Pearl Facebook Page.

Richland events will fill the entire day on December 13, beginning at 9 a.m. with the Totally Locally Christmas Market at the Richland Recreation Center at 460 East Harper Street. Set to run until 4 p.m., the market will offer crafts, clothes, décor, woodworks, gifts, candles, jewelry, food and more. Admission is free. For more information, call 601-420-3400.



After spending the day shopping at the market, holiday enthusiasts can head over to Richland City Hall to take part in Christmas on the Square, which starts at 4 p.m. The afternoon event will include inflatables, crafts, boutiques and food vendors. At 5 p.m., children ages eight and under are invited to meet behind the library for a Candy Cane Hunt; and, at 6 p.m., the annual parade will begin. This year's theme, "A Golden Christmas," honors Richland's 50th birthday. Following the parade, there will be a Meet and Greet with Santa. Parade registration is available on the Richland Parks and Rec Facebook page. For more information, call Kelly Wedgeworth at 601-420-3404.

Outlets of Mississippi to host "7 Days for the Troops" event

Special to SW Rankin News

From November 8-13, the annual "7 Days for the Troops" event will take place at The Outlets of Mississippi in Pearl. Marine Corps Veteran and double amputee Scott Burns will spend an entire week living atop a 15foot tower at the Outlets of Mississippi to raise awareness and funds for disabled Veterans across Mississippi.

"7 Days for the Troops" is a local chapter of Purple Heart Homes, a national nonprofit that builds and adapts homes for service-connected disabled and aging Veterans. Together, they help ensure those who serve can live with dignity and independence.

All proceeds will go toward providing mobility equipment, personal necessities and housing support for Mississippi Veterans. The event helps sustain the mission of 7 Days for the Troops, serving those who served. In past years, the organization has gifted Action Track Chairs, provided meals and housing assistance, partnered with Purple Heart Homes to build a Tiny Home, and supplied more than 46,000 pounds of relief supplies to Veterans impacted by disasters.

This year's event will also feature a special Veteran's Day meal, with Outback Steakhouse donating enough food to feed two hundred Veterans on November 11 from 3–6 p.m.

PHS' Brewer named PPSD Administrator of the Year

Dr. Michael Brewer, principal of Pearl High School, has been named the 2025-26 Pearl Public School District Administrator of the Year. Dr. Brewer will represent the district in the Mississippi Administrator of the Year Program. District officials say the honor is a true reflection of his leadership and commitment to students, staff and

Special to SW Rankin News







Vanputten of HCC is newest apprentice for Continental Tire



Special to SW Rankin News

Pictured (I to r) are Continental Tire Maintenance Manager Augusto Madeiros, Continental Tire Apprentice Matthew Vanputten of Pearl, Hinds Community College President Dr. Stephen Vacik and Brenda Myers, supervisory apprenticeship and training representative for the U.S. Department of Labor. Vanputten is gaining work experience as a production technologist apprentice at Continental while he completes school at Hinds.

Special to SW Rankin News

Matthew Vanputten of Pearl says his decision to attend Hinds Community College to earn a credential in electro-mechanical technology has been life changing. The twenty-four-yearold, who grew up near Continental Tire in Bolton, recently was awarded a one-year production technologist apprenticeship at the plant, where he is working as he continues his education.

"I like the feeling of being able to fix something," Vanputten said, after signing his apprenticeship agreement during a Clinton Chamber of Commerce meeting held at Continental. "I am open to trying different things and learning new things, even if it puts me in a challenging position.'

Hinds President Dr. Stephen Vacik said the apprenticeship program, sponsored by Hinds, is significant because it combines both work and learning opportunities, putting students on a path to their future. The opportunity will provide Vanputten with mentorship, structured training and wages as he progresses through the program.

"When somebody's in our Career Technical program, we want them not only to have the head knowledge, we

want them to understand the practical piece of the trade," Vacik said.

'They're earning while they're learning, which is also significant, because it helps them offset the cost of school and build a living. We want to make sure they've gotten these opportunities.'

Continental Clinton Plant Manager Tobias Hacker said the company likes to hire local young people to keep them in the community. The company part-ners with local high schools and community colleges like Hinds to expose students to the manufacturing environment in hopes that, like Vanputten, they will pursue a career there.

"I always tell the story that at our oldest plant in Mount Vernon, Illinois, the plant manager actually started as a maintenance technician apprentice and is now plant manager," Hacker said. "Hopefully, maybe twenty years from now, one of our apprentices can say that's their career.'

Hinds Director of Talent, Workforce and Economic Development Josh Bower said the apprenticeship program is transforming the lives of Hinds students.

"They are truly invested in the local community, and I want to thank them for that," Bower said.

Neely recognized at HCC Homecoming



Special to SW Rankin News

Hinds Community College recognized high school and college graduates in 1975 and previous years in the annual 50+ reunion held recently as part of Homecoming week festivities. Recognized from the 1950s decade were (I to r): William "Buddy" McKay (1959) of Byram, Charles Stuart Spann (1956) of Raymond, Douglas Moore (1954) of Jackson, Braxtel Neely (1955) of Richland, Margarita Morris Stanford (1958) of Clinton, Martha Gillespie Ferguson (1956) of Raymond, Bob Marble (1957) and Joy Zeringue Marble (1957), both of Little Rock, Arkansas.

HCC names Phi Theta Kappa inductees



Special to SW Rankin News

Hinds Community College's Raymond Campus Gamma Lambda chapter of Phi Theta Kappa recently inducted new fall members. Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society for community and junior college students. Membership in Phi Theta Kappa is extended to students who have a 3.5 cumulative grade point average or above on 12 or more transferable credit hours earned at Hinds. There are more than 1,285 Phi Theta Kappa chapters throughout the United States and abroad. The Gamma Lambda Chapter was chartered on the Raymond Campus in 1936 and works on two large projects each year. This year, members have hosted events introducing students to potential career pathways and explored why voter turnout is low in Mississippi and how Hinds students can have a hand in reversing this trend. Pictured (I to r) are Amy Moore of Florence, Adrian Green of Richland and Haden Hurtt of Florence.

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Florence youth compete at State Fair with Rankin 4-H

Special to SW Rankin News

Rankin County 4-H youth and families were very busy this year at the 2025 Mississippi State Fair participating in livestock shows, 4-H Day, chicken and rabbit shows and more.

Several students from Florence brought home awards from the competitions. The first weekend, in the livestock ring, Landry Varner exhibited Division 1 Champion Market Goat. Layton Varner was Reserve Champion Market Hair Sheep.

The final weekend of the State Fair was the dairy goat and dairy cattle shows. Jimmy Wayne Wilson earned Reserve Champion Pretty Cow. Dakota Redd and Romance were Reserve Senior Best in Show. Lilla Quick earned top honors as the Reserve Champion All Other Purebreds Senior Doe and Champion Recorded Grades Junior Doe.

This year, there were many new 4-H contests that youth competed in. Abigail King participated in the LEGO Build Contest, placing 3rd in the Junior Division. Abbye Buchanan represented Rankin 4-H as a State Ambassador during 4-H Day activities. Additionally, Rankin 4-H had youth represented in the 4-H exhibits displayed at the 4-H Village in the Trademart.

For more information about the Rankin County 4-H, call 601-825-1462.





Landry Varner exhibited Division 1 Champion Market Goat.



Jimmy Wayne Wilson earned Reserve Champion Pretty Cow.



Dakota Redd and Romance were Reserve Senior Best in Show.



Lilla Quick was Reserve Champion All Other Purebreds Senior Doe and Champion Recorded Grades Junior Doe.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Layton Varner of Florence won Reserve Champion Market Hair Sheep.





Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD FU	NERAL HOME
Chellie Gail Kelley	81y	Richland, MS	10/01/2025	Chancellor FH
Evelyn Carlene White-Lewis	91y	Old Pearl, MS	10/01/2025	Chancellor FH
Richard William Pugh	84y	Florence, MS	10/04/2025	Chancellor FH
Shirley "Jo Ann" Nipper	88y	Florence, MS	10/06/2025	Chancellor FH
Charles Henry Hillman	86y	Florence, MS	10/08/2025	Chancellor FH
Gandabhai Ishawardas Patel	88y	Flowood, MS	10/08/2025	Chancellor FH
Stephen Larry Jackson	68y	Byram, MS	10/10/2025	Chancellor FH
Opal Lucille Hammack-Wilson	91y	Florence, MS	10/21/2025	Chancellor FH
Douglas "Doug" Lee Smith	57y	Florence, MS	10/23/2025	Chancellor FH
Jimmy Terry Clark	69y	Florence, MS	10/24/2025	Chancellor FH
Ruby Marie Wedgeworth	87y	Brandon, MS	10/27/2025	Chancellor FH





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Our Neck of the Woods 4-H Club elects new club officers



Special to SW Rankin News

Our Neck of the Woods 4-H Club of Florence has elected new club officers for 2025-26. The new officer team pictured (I to r) are: Vice President Caleigh Berch, Secretary Morgan Delancey, Chaplain Selah Grace Readman, President Dalton Buchanan, Treasurer Landry Smith, and Reporter Keller Patterson. Leaders are Erin Buchanan and Clancy Readman. The group presented the Cow Patty Plop at the Florentine Evening Club Pet Parade on September 27 and plans to work with the Mustard Seed on a community service project on October 18.

McLaurin Beta Club qualifies in every Leadership competition



Special to SW Rankin News

The Mclaurin High School Beta Club was named a 2025-26 Outstanding Leadership Club and recently placed/ qualified in every competition at Leadership. Winning teams and team members included Collaboration Connection: Bailey Owen, Jacobi Petitte, Tsena Love, Raelee Hughes, River May and Faith Hodge; Being Better Betas- Ethical Decision Making: Knight Bridges, Sara Butler, Josie St. Germaine, Tate Cronley and Kenia Valencia; Project Proposal: Isaiah Hughes, Kalia Nickerson, Mia Lopez, Kayden Barnett and Cameron Jefferson; All the World's a Stage: Sara Butler, Cameron Jefferson, Mia Lopez, Kalia Nickerson, Josie St Germaine, Raelee Hughes, Isaiah Hughes, Faith Hodge, Kayden Barnett and Knox Bridges; and MS Leadership Representative: Perla Aban Thingwald.

Dellapanna receives Hinds CC scholarship



The Hinds Community College Foundation recently recognized 2025-26 scholarship recipients, donors and other honorees, including Wesley Dellapanna of Pearl. Pictured (I to r) are, front row: Hinds aviation instructor Brett Oleis; Mandie Williams of Ovett, who received the Mississippi Jets Aviation Technology Endowed Scholarship; Spencer Carlisle of Hernando, who received the KingAir Nation Foundation Scholarship; Walter Turner Rogers of Meridian, who received the Mississippi Jets Aviation Scholarship; Amilcar Antompietri of Brandon, who received the KingAir Nation Foundation Scholarship; James Gerrish of Hurley, who received the Aviation Maintenance Technology Scholarship; and Hinds aviation instructor WP Marsh; and back row: Marshall Carson of Meridian and Wesley Dellapenna of Pearl, both of whom received the Mississippi Jets Aviation Technology Endowed Scholarship; James Cameron of Brandon and Percy Sneed of Jackson, both of whom received the KingAir Nation Foundation Scholarship; Aaron Harvey of Terry, who received the Mississippi Jets Aviation Technology Endowed Scholarship and Makaio Feria of Madison, who received the Mike Dalton-EAA Chapter 276 Scholarship.

Dear named RCSD Employee for August



Florence Middle School's Jessica Dear was named the Rankin County School District (RCSD) Secondary Certified Employee of the Month for August. She was recognized at the September 10 RCSD board meeting. According to Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams, Dear goes above and beyond as she leads the CTE department and serves as Tech Team leader. Her dedication and hard work are appreciated by the entire FMS family.



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LORENCE

Students named officers, inductees into Phi Theta Kappa

The Alpha Omega Chi Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at Hinds Community College's Rankin Campus recently inducted fall chapter members, including several from the southwest Rankin area. Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society for community and junior college students. Membership in Phi Theta Kappa is extended to students who have a 3.5 cumulative grade point average or above on 12 or more transferable credit hours. There are more than 1,285 Phi Theta Kappa chapters throughout the United States and abroad.



New members include (I to r), front row: Jerrica Hughes of Pearl, Alondrea Miller of Vicksburg, Lainey Dotson of Puckett, Ayesha Korin of Richland, Morghan King of Madison, Anna-Kate Reap of Brandon, Zoey Reap of Brandon and Jalyn Davis of Brandon; second row: Macie Morrow of Puckett, Annaleigh Palmer of Flowood, Rachel Smith of Polkville, Avery Richardson of Brandon, Anna Boyd of Brandon, Fallon McAlpin of Harrisville, Annie Coward of Pelahatchie and Myles Martin of Magee; third row: Oliva Johnson of Brandon, Ava Wilson of Pearl, Macey Harrell of Brandon, Kevara Evans of Brandon and Keleigh Westbrook of Brandon; and back row: Jessica Lawson of Florence, Gage Gill of Carthage, Zachariah McGee of Pearl, Rowen Powell of Brandon, Jaxson Brown of Brandon, Pierce Porter of Magee, Koury Nowell of Florence and Will Walenta of Madison.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Officers for the chapter for 2025-26 are (I to r), front row: CJ Davis of Brandon, Martha Ferguson of Kosciusko, Patin Nash of Florence, Constance Olexy of Pearl, Avery Richardson of Brandon and Gavin Thomas of Brandon; and back row: Jaxson Brown of Brandon, Dion Jackson of Pearl, Chandler Nash of Florence, Rowen Powell of Brandon and Gage Gill of Carthage.



In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972 of the Higher Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other applicable Federal and State Acts, Hinds Community College offers equal education and employment opportunities and does not discriminate on the basis of race. color. national origin. religion. sex. age, disability or veteran status in its educational programs and activities. We recognize our responsibility to provide an open and welcoming environment that fosters a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion for employees and students to collaboratively and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability or veteran status in its educational programs and activities. We recognize our responsibility to provide an open and wel

gunes regarding diese pouces.
EEOC Compliance: Office of Campus Culture and Diversity, P.O. Box 1100 Raymond MS 39154; Phone: 601-857-3569 or Email: EEOC@hindscc.edu
Title IX: Associate Vice President Student Services, Title IX Coordinator P.O. Box 1100 Raymond MS 39154; Phone: 601-857-3353 or Email: TitleIX@hindscc.edu

Richland Elementary School names | Morris named Pearl Officer of the Month Staff of the Year winners

Richland Elementary School Staff of the Year winners pictured (I to r) are: Teacher of the Year, Janice Nix: New Teacher of the Year, Heather Williams; and Classified Staff of the Year, Christina Rushing.

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Police Department Officer of the Month is Patrol Officer Erick Morris. Officer Morris has been a valued member of the Pearl Police Department for several years. He graduated from Mississippi Law Enforcement Training Academy in 2021 and became a certified police officer in 2022.

Before joining the Pearl PD ranks, he dedicated over a decade to serving the State of Mississippi as a correctional officer and certified K-9 handler with the Mississippi Department of Correc-

According to Police Chief Nick Mc-

Lendon, "Throughout his career, Officer Morris has consistently exemplified selfless service and an unwavering commitment to public safety. His personnel file includes multiple commendations for going above and beyond the call of duty. Known for his teamwork, professionalism and integrity, Officer Morris is a respected colleague and an outstanding representative of our department. We are honored to have Officer Morris serving the Pearl community, and we thank him for his continued dedication.

The Pearl Chamber and community businesses provided gifts to honor this recognition.



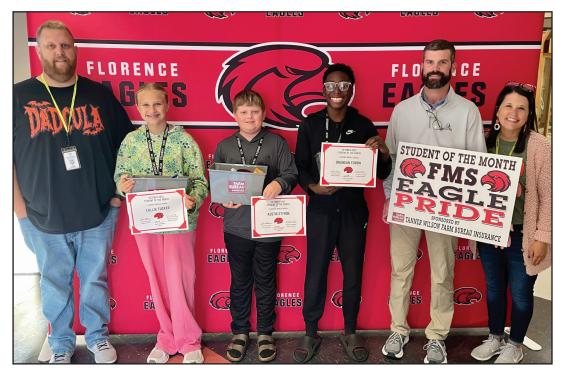
Patrol Officer Erick Morris has been named the Pearl Police Department Officer of the Month.



FREE DELIVERY & SET UP WITHIN 50 MILES



Florence Middle School names October Eagles of the Month



Florence Middle School recently named its October Students of the Month. Pictured (I tor) are FMS Assistant Principal Tyler Walters, Sixth Grade Student of the Month Callie Tucker, Seventh Grade Student of the Month Austin Styron, Eighth Grade Student of the Month Austin Styron, Student of the Month sponsor Tanner Wilson of Farm Bureau Insurance and FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams.



Florence Middle School recently named Jessica Mitchell as its Certified Staff Member of the Month. Pictured (I to r) are FMS Assistant Principal Tyler Walters, Certified Staff Member of the Month Jessica Mitchell, Teacher/Staff Recognition sponsor Representative Lance Varner and FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams.





Mississippi State Hospital's Christmas House accepting donations

Special to SW Rankin News

Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) will open its annual Christmas House on Monday, December 1, inviting community members, churches, civic groups and businesses to donate gifts or make monetary contributions so that every patient and resident on campus receives a gift this holiday season.

The Christmas House, the hub for holiday giving at MSH, was established in the mid-1980s by former Volunteer Services Director, Jerald D. Ball, to ensure Mississippi State Hospital patients were not forgotten during the holiday season.

Staff select items tailored to each individual's interests and needs, and every patient and resident also receives an individual candy bag. Monetary gifts supplement donated items and help purchase one individualized special gift per person, ensuring no one is forgotten at Christmas.

Donations to The Christmas House are used to fill Christmas bags for patients, then on "Santa Day," business leaders, legislators and others dress as Santa Claus and personally deliver the bags to every individual served by the hospital. Gift-bag assembly begins the week of December 8. Santa Day, when gifts are hand-delivered, is scheduled for Monday, December 22, 2025.

Donors who plan to deliver gifts are asked to call ahead at 601-351-8377. Drop-off hours will be December 1-19, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. until



Florence Middle School recently named Jessica Mitchell as its Certified Staff Member of the Month. Pictured (I to r) are FMS Assistant Principal Tyler Walters, Certified Staff Member of the Month Jessica Mitchell, Teacher/Staff Recognition sponsor Representative Lance Varner and FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams.

> 4 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.; and Sunday 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

> Monetary donations may be made by cash, check, or online at www.msh.ms.gov (Click Friends of MSH → Donate). PayPal, Venmo, and credit/debit cards are accepted. Donors are asked to note "Christmas House" in the Comments. Checks should be made payable to Friends of Mississippi State Hospital, Inc.

> Monetary donations can be mailed to Friends of MSH, Inc., Christmas House, Building 71, P.O. Box 75, Whitfield, MS 39193. Package donations can be

mailed to Mississippi State Hospital, 3550 Highway 468 West, Whitfield, MS 39193. Donors are asked to include sender information; all donations are tax-deductible.

Christmas House welcomes new gifts (no used items). For safety, all containers should be plastic and products alcohol-free; donors are asked to avoid games or activities with sharp objects. Personal care items are not accepted.

Popular items include:

- Top requests: crayons/markers/colored pencils; adult coloring books; word search/game books (regular and large print); journals (no spirals); trivia/dominoes/bingo; card games (UNO/playing cards); purses/wallets/billfolds; ladies'/men's watches; movies/sing-along CDs; and portable radios.
- Clothing ideas: socks, underwear (male and female), gloves, non-slip footsies, pajamas/nightgowns, slippers, belts/suspenders, t-shirts, knit hats, light jackets, hoodies, hair bonnets/shower caps, scarves and sweat clothes.

For buildings/units to share: classic board and card games (e.g., Checkers, Chess, UNO, Scrabble, Yahtzee, Connect 4, Family Feud, Bingo), portable DVD players/radios with wireless headphones,

DVDs (no "R" rated), karaoke/sing-along CDs, corn-

hole, ladderball, giant tic-tac-toe and memory/coping

For more information, contact MSH Volunteer Services at info@msh.state.ms.us or 601-351-8377.



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Special to SW Rankin News

Addison Newell was recently named the Pearl Fire Department's Firefighter of the Month.

"This award is a true testament to his commitment and expertise in serving the community," said Pearl Fire Chief Todd Burkes. "Since his hiring in February 2022, Addison has proven himself to be an invaluable asset to the department, demonstrating a remarkable dedication to both his professional growth and the safety of the citizens he serves. With over five hundred hours of training at the Mississippi State Fire Academy, he possesses a strong foundational knowledge in firefighting techniques and emergency response protocols.

In addition to his firefighting skills, Newell attended Holmes Community College to become a certified Paramedic in 2022 and recently completed the Critical Care Paramedic program. Fire department officials say this advanced training enhances the standard of care provided to patients in emergency situations, ensuring that residents receive the highest level of medical support and attention. His dual qualifications as a firefighter and paramedic enable him to address complex emergencies with both efficiency and compassion.

"In addition, Addison's commitment to sharing his knowledge with colleagues within the Pearl Fire Department fos-



Special to SW Rankin News

Patrol Officer Erick Morris has been named the Pearl Police Department Officer of the Month

ters a culture of continued learning and professionalism. His efforts not only enhance the skills of his peers, but also contribute to the overall effectiveness of the department. Through his exemplary service and dedication to growth, Addison embodies the values and mission of the Pearl Fire Department. The City of Pearl Fire Department is thankful to have Addison as a part of our team at Station 5, and we're excited to see what's in store for his future as he continues to grow while serving the citizens in and around Pearl.'

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce presented Newell with a certificate of recognition, gifts and gift cards.

Newell named Firefighter of the Month | St. Joseph Hospice starts ESOP

Special to SW Rankin News

St. Joseph Hospice and Homedica House Calls of Richland recently announced the implementation of an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). By introducing their new ESOP, the companies give employees a direct stake in the organization's success, reinforcing its long-standing mission to

we provide the highest quality of care. At The Carpenter Health Network, we believe that by investing in our employees, we will create a thriving culture where everyone can succeed together."

The Carpenter Health Network began with the formation of St. Joseph Hospice in Baton Rouge in August 2002. Since then, it has expanded throughout Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Mississip-



care for both patients and staff.

"Our dedicated team members now have the opportunity to earn shares of The Carpenter Health Network stock at no cost to them," says Pat Mitchell, President and CEO of TCHN. "This unique approach reflects our commitment to supporting our employees, empowering our caregivers, and ensuring pi, Alabama and Florida.

An ESOP program allows employees to become partial owners of the company they work for by being awarded shares of the company's stock. It serves as an employee benefit plan and encourages employees to contribute to the company's success, as it translates to financial rewards for them.



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OBITUARY

Betty Ann Broadwater Stewart

Betty Ann Broadwater Stewart, 90, passed away October 31, 2025, at her home in Pearl, Mississippi. Hartman-Jones Funeral Home in McComb, MS, oversaw the arrangements.

Viewing was held on Saturday, November 8, 2025, at 11:30, followed by Funeral Services at 1:00 at the funeral home. Dr. David Millican officiated, and a graveside service was held at 2:00 at the Stewart Cemetery on Bean Road in Gillsburg, MS.



Pearl Schools recognize parents and principals for 2025-26 school year

The Pearl Public School District recently recognized parents and principals for the 2025-26 school year.



Pictured from left to right are Pearl Junior High School assistant principal Ashley Hinton, PJHS Parent of the Year Sarah Donald, and principal Dr. Dennis Philebar.



Pictured from left to right are Pearl Lower Elementary assistant principal Michele Cole, principal Dr. Tamekia Stewart, Pearl Lower Parent of the Year Ashley Stephens, and assistant principal Jason Ellis.



Pictured from left to right are Northside Elementary assistant principal Dr. Sheila McKay, principal Dr. Nikki Graham, Northside Parent of the Year Staci Odom, and assistant principal Melissa Lewis.



Pictured from left to right on the back row are Pearl High School assistant athletic director Ty Weems, principal Dr. Michael Brewer, assistant principal Ann Renee Bentley, assistant principal John Craven, assistant principal Joel McCarty. On the front row are assistant principal Tamara Jackson, PHS senior Rylee Reid, PHS Parent of the Year Randi Reid, and assistant principal Angie Mangum.



During the October board meeting, Pearl Public School District principals were recognized in honor of National Principals Month and for their dedication, leadership, and commitment to serving the students and staff of Pearl Public School District. Pictured from left to right on the back row are Pearl Public School District superintendent Chris Chism, Pearl Lower Elementary principal Dr. Tamekia Stewart, Pearl Upper Elementary principal Kim Scutch, and Pearl High School principal Dr. Michael Brewer. On the front row are Pearl Junior High School principal Dr. Dennis Philebar, Northside Elementary principal Dr. Nikki Graham, and Early Childhood Education Center director Stacy Farrar.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Pictured from left to right are Pearl Upper Elementary PTSO president Amber Bullock, principal Kim Scutch, Pearl Upper Parent of the Year Sheleana Taylor, assistant principal Ginny Copley, and assistant principal Austin Wilbanks.



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Football Hall of Fame inducts Class of **Pearl HS**

Special to SW Rankin News

Through forty years of tireless commitment, Mike Garren has captured generations of Pirate pride and preserved the visual history of Pearl football. From the days of 16mm film reels and Saturday mornings spent developing footage at Mississippi College to modern dig-



ital systems, Garren has been a constant presence behind the camera for Pearl Football. His dedication to Pearl athletics was recognized statewide, earning him the "Unsung Hero Award" from the Jackson Touchdown Club in 1998, as well as a Special Service Award from Coach John Perry

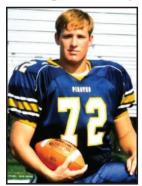
and off the field. After high school, Boone continued his football career at Hinds Community College, where he earned Second Team All-State honors and was selected to the Mississippi Junior College All-Star Team as a middle linebacker. He went on to play Division I football at the University of Cincinnati, majoring in criminal justice while continuing to excel on the field.

"Bell" Shoto earned a reputation as one of the most physical and dependable linemen in Pirate history. A three-year starter under Coach Bruce Merchant, Shoto anchored the offensive line while also excelling in track and field under Coach Woody Barnette. His leadership and toughness earned him multiple honors, including First Team All-Metro, All-District, All-State, and Team Captain distinctions. In

1998, Shoto represented Pearl in the prestigious Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Football Game, starting on the offensive line and proudly showcasing the strength of Pearl's program.

Following his high school success, Shoto continued his football and track career at Hinds Community College, where he was recognized as Most Improved Offensive Lineman, Most Valuable Offensive Lineman, and earned All-JUCO Track and Field honors. He later transferred to Missouri Southern State University, continuing to compete at a high level both athletically and

academically.



Photos special to SW

A model student-athlete and leader, John Tyler McLendon was a threesport standout at Pearl High School, excelling in football, baseball, and powerlifting under Coach John Perry. On the gridiron, McLendon earned First Team All-District honors in both 2008 and

2009, First Team All-State honors in 2009, and was named All-Metro the same year.

Following graduation, McLendon continued his academic and athletic career at Northwestern State University, where he played football and achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA, earning recognition as the 2010 Academic Freshman of the Year and Capital One Academic All-District VI selection.





A Little Brown Light: Restoration



By Guest Columnist Becky Brown

Stir the still waters. Blow a fresh wind right through my soul. Burn in my heart Your refiner's fire. Washing me deep within.

Filling me once again. Oh, Lord, I'm asking you to purify my heart and make it Yours.

Where did I go? Why did I hide all of this pain down deep inside? I wanna be free! Lord, help me to see! I'm seeking Your face and I need Your grace.

There was no place to land. Who would understand? Father, I need Your mighty hand. Flood my soul and let the waters flow. Wherever You lead me, I will go! I need a touch from You and I need a cleansing, too. Lord, I give You every part of me!

- December 1999 Words and Music Brown and Boyanton Little Brown Light Studio New Orleans, Louisiana

As I typed these lyrics early this morning, the 2025 holidays are upon us. November and December are the annual days of drawing near to family and friends in all sorts of settings. My prayer for all of us in these precious but seriously precarious days is that we first make sure we individually draw near to the One who created us for fellowship with Him and with others. We need each other, certainly. More than anything or anyone else, we need HIM! He is the glue that holds the whole universe together. Somehow, He manages to keep me from implosion. Jesus is better than cranberry sauce!!!



Special to SW Rankin News

Southern Lights opens Nov. 21

Special to SW Rankin News

The Southern Lights opens November 21 and runs through early January, 2026, at Trustmark Park in Pearl. Tickets, premium packages and sponsorship opportunities are available now.



Special to SW Rankin News

The wonderland will open on November 21. Tickets are available now.

Trustmark Park will glow brighter than ever before, transformed into a holiday village alive with millions of twinkling lights, radiant tunnels of color, skating under the stars, and fire pits, where the crackle of s'mores mixes with laughter and song.

"This is the day where the magic becomes real," said Mississippi Mud Monsters General Manager Andrew Seymour. "It is the moment families can circle their calendars, make their plans, and know that when the lights turn on in Pearl this November, they will be part of something

unforgettable."

The Southern Lights was designed to be welcoming, wonder- filled, and within reach for every family. Tickets start at just \$15 for advanced; day-of-admission are \$18; train rides are \$3; and skating, \$7.

For those looking to gather around something even more memorable, premium spaces

like the Farm Bureau Grill, party decks, luxury suites, and the exclusive VIP fire pits are waiting to host holiday feasts, laughter and togetherness beneath Mississippi's brightest lights.

For more information, visit thesouthernlightsms.com.

