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SWRANKIN NEWS

Good News You Can Use

Vol. 8, No. 06 | June 2023

The Pearl News

THE NEWS RICHLAND

THE FLORENCE NEWS

Midtown Pearl Summerfest coming July 15, vendor applications open

Special to The Pearl News

Pearl residents are encouraged to mark their calendars for Saturday, July 15, as Main Street Pearl will host the first Midtown Summerfest. Beginning at 10 a.m., Main Street Pearl will also host the first Town Market, located at the City Hall Complex on Old Brandon Road.

The market will include fine arts, candles, pottery, woodwork, jewelry, holiday décor, bath and body items and fiber, monogram and sewn items, as well as cottage food and produce. Potential vendors are asked to submit a vendor application that provides a brief description of items to be sold. No sale of items that have been commercially produced, offered through pyramid franchises or bought for re-sale will be



allowed. Vendors must specify the number of 10” x 10” booth spaces needed (up to three allowed), with a \$50 vendor fee per booth.

All applicants must submit up to three

photo images labeled with the name of the business and showing general item types to be sold.

The fest will also include lots of fun and games, including a car show hosted

by Legacy Garage, which will be located in front of the Pearl Public Library; a Chicken Wing Challenge, where local restaurants will compete to win the coveted title of Alpha Media’s “King of Wings,” live music and a king-sized kids zone. More information about the day’s agenda will be released as the date of Midtown Pearl Summerfest approaches.

For registration, Main Street Pearl accepts cash, checks and money orders made payable to the City of Pearl. Debit/Credit Card payments will include a 3.5% processing fee.

All interested in participating as a vendor contact Main Street Pearl at packet.MainStreetPearl@CityOfPearl.com or download a Midtown Market vendor application at www.CityOfPearl.com/live/city-events/.

District 5’s James Thompson passes the torch and redefines retirement

By Alexa Haik

For District 5 Alderman James Thompson, retirement does not mean the end of his vocation as a public servant, it is just a readjustment period.

“I am still young; I am not but fifty-five, [and] I got a good report from my cancer doctor, so, I feel like I will be able to go back to work.”

What made Thompson consider retirement? In September of last year, he was diagnosed with cancer and has been on a leave of absence from work since October. Although he felt it was possible to continue as alderman, he couldn’t give it the one hundred percent he had in the past, and he says he was uncertain if he could successfully carry out his duties as a district safety director for a local school district. So, around February of this year, Thomson made the difficult decision to take a step back. “That’s when I turned my paperwork in.”

Since then, Thompson says things have taken a turn for the better. “[The oncologist] put me in what they call partial remission...I will take three more [chemotherapy] treatments, and [then] I’ll have another PET scan. [The doctor] is in hopes then that I will be in full remission and that I will be on what they call maintenance,” Thompson reports. “She doesn’t know what that’s going to look like yet. She doesn’t know if it will



James Thompson with the City of Pearl Board of Aldermen on the day of his retirement announcement.

be one treatment a month or maybe having to take a pill every day, but a very good prognosis.”

In the meantime, Thompson is reconsidering what his future will look like. “I can tell you this retirement ain’t all it’s cracked up to be,” he says. “It’s nice having the free time, ‘cause you can get things done. However, when you have been used to [a full work schedule], you miss that, so that’s why I say it’s not all it’s cracked up to be. You have a lot of free time on your hands, and you try to find stuff to do, and you find yourself making a lot of phone calls.”

Thompson says he anticipates his retirement will look different than he first imagined. “I feel like I will be

able to go back to work. I don’t look to going back full time anywhere, but I am in hopes [and] I am in talks with [the school district I worked for] now about them hiring me back on contract,” he said. “But I am going to stay involved [with the City of Pearl]. I won’t have a vote at the table, but I will always have a voice. And I want things to continue in District 5 like they have been for the past six years - you know, progress.”

See page 3 for “Pearl’s James Thompson: Life-long resident and public servant.”



Dwight Knight was sworn in as the new Alderman for District 5 at a special called Board Meeting on Wednesday, May 24. Alderman Knight is filling the seat vacated by James Thompson.

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City of Richland to host Patriotic Parade June 17

Special to The Richland News

This City of Richland will host a Patriotic Parade on Saturday, June 17, at 10 a.m. in the Town Square located at 380 Scarbrough Street.

As “a community celebration of our nation’s independence,” the City asks that all participants keep the tone and attitude of participation positive, upbeat and celebratory.

Participants are encouraged to “decorate your bike, scooter, trike, golfcart, wagon, stroller...even your dog. Bring your whole family as we parade around The Square!”

The parade line-up is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. next to Richland City Hall, with the parade starting promptly at 10 a.m. Attendees are encouraged to wear patriotic attire, and individuals who have served in the Armed Forces are encouraged to attend in uniform.

The parade route will travel south out of



City Hall and turn left onto Scarbrough Street, walking east to Town Square. It will then turn left onto Town Square and proceed back to Richland City Hall.

Safety protocols for the family-friendly event address motorized vehicles - no

ATVs are allowed, and motorized vehicles are only allowed for children six years of age and under. In addition, parents must accompany all children under the age of nine at all times. Dogs must be on a leash at all times, kept under control

and cleaned up after.

During the parade, participants may hand out items, but nothing may be thrown. All costuming must be geared toward a general audience, and foul or abusive language, nudity and sexually explicit costumes or appearances are not acceptable. In addition, no alcohol or smoking is allowed on the premises.

Although there is no charge for parade registration, applications must be completed and submitted prior to the day of the parade.

Applications may be picked up at Richland City Hall, the Richland Senior Center or downloaded at www.RichlandMS.org. Completed applications should be mailed to: REDA, P.O. Box 180875, Richland, Mississippi, 39218 or delivered to the Richland Senior Center at 371 Scarbrough Street in Richland.

For more information, call 601-487-1186 or email Stephanie Ward at sward@RichlandMS.com.

RCSD's Sharon Patrick places first at MSPRA Conference

By Alexa Haik

Sharon Patrick, a Rankin Chamber Education Committee Member and Rankin County School District's (RCSD) public relations (PR) manager, recently received first place at the 2023 Mississippi School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) Awards of Excellence Conference, an annual event. The MSPRA is the state chapter of the National School Public Relations Association, a network of school PR professionals and education supporters from around the state, offering professional development, networking and support for members.

Patrick, competing against the best of the best in the state, received her award in the Brand/Identity category, a category which encompasses all the ways in which a school district's brand is utilized, including guidelines.



Special to The Richland News

Sharon Patrick

Patrick says that, for her, “branding is so very important. People recognize you by your brand.”

“Branding is a crucial aspect of any successful business or organization,” she continues. “It involves creating a unique and consistent identity that sets your company apart from the competition and resonates with your target audience. A strong brand can help you establish credibility, build trust and increase customer loyalty. Branding encompasses everything from your logo and visual identity to your messaging, tone of voice and overall reputation. It is a long-term strategy that requires careful planning and execution to ensure that your brand remains relevant and memorable over time.”

“By investing in your brand, you can differentiate yourself in a crowded marketplace, attract new customers

and retain existing ones,” Patrick advises. “Overall, branding is a critical component of any business strategy and should be given careful consideration and attention to ensure that your brand effectively communicates your unique value proposition and resonates with your target audience.”

When asked if she was surprised to receive the award, Patrick says, “I was very surprised. We have so many amazing school PR individuals in the state, I can’t imagine being in the same league with them.”

Described as “an integral part in supporting students and educators across Rankin County,” Patrick says she will continue to do what she does best, passionately advocating for the faculty, staff and students in the Rankin County School District.

See page 17 for “Who is Rankin County School District’s Sharon Patrick?”

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Aline Mulligan’s Feast: Nonagenarian discusses life, faith, and love of cooking

By Alexa Haik

“For our little part of the world, our small community, she is a staple. If anyone needs something, if anyone needs answers or a pick me up, it’s aunt Aline,” is how her family describes her.

To celebrate Aline’s ninetieth birthday on April 18, the family approached *The Florence News* with a request for a story, a special birthday surprise for her “...to tell her happy birthday and to make her smile a little brighter.” *The Florence News* never turns down a good story, and Aline Mulligan’s story does not disappoint.

At the age of ninety, Mulligan stays busy. For starters, she cooks every weekend for her family, who visit on the weekend. Family includes three children, eleven grandchildren, thirty-four great grandchildren and six great great grandchildren - so it can turn into quite a crowd.

The menu varies from week to week - but don’t ask for the recipe.

“I make up stuff; I don’t have recipes,” Mulligan says firmly. “I make up and fix different things. I fix jambalaya...normal things that people fix that they love.”

No matter what it is, she is known for her exceptional home-cooked meals. It isn’t just family who enjoy her culinary skills; Mulligan still cooks for her church, as well.

“I cook about a twenty-two-quart boiler full of dumplings when we have dinner up there,” she reports. “I just enjoy doing stuff for people, you know? I have always had a crowd to cook for; I have never had just one or two. I love seeing people eating and enjoying themselves.”

In addition to cooking, Mulligan sews blankets, quilts, scarves, you name it. She is also quite skilled at sewing clothing; however, things have slowed somewhat.

“I can’t sit and sew for very long [any more],” she said. “Even though I [used to make] everything I wore.”

Then, there is the garden – she tends it faithfully every year, planting cucum-



Special to The Florence News
Aline Mulligan at her ninetieth birthday party.

bers, squash, okra, tomatoes, and “just little odds and ends on the rows I got left.” Everyone who has grown up in ru-

ral Mississippi knows how coveted garden-grown fruits and vegetables can be, delicious alternatives to those available at a local grocery store.

Are these all keys to long life, one may ask? What is her secret?

“Well, all I know is that you have to live a good life, trust in the Lord, work, never give up and just be active,” Mulligan advises. “You have got to really be active and take care of yourself.”

“I have always worked hard all my life, and I am still working. I still work my garden, still do my cleaning, do my cooking and don’t have to have no walker,” she said. “They tell me to use a walking stick, ‘cause I am ninety - [and] I do when I go off on a long walking trip. So far, I am real steady on my feet, thank the Lord. And I thank Him every day, because I don’t see many people my age that can do what I do.”

See page 13 for part two of Aline’s story, “The life of Florence’s Aline Mulligan: A slice of rural American history.”

McLaurin’s BETA Club receives National Hall of Fame Service Award

Special to The Florence News

National Beta recently announced that McLaurin High School of Florence were the recipients of the prestigious 2023 Hall of Fame Service Award.

While, collectively, Betas across the nation showed their dedication to service by contributing over 1,462,313 service hours and \$1,239,182 for various organizations, the Senior Beta Club at McLaurin High School truly knocked service out of the park through their project, “Jingle Bell Market.”

After thinking outside the box for a service project to benefit residents of a local nursing home, they decided to bring the joy of holiday shopping to the elderly community. The Club, partnering with their school’s Junior Beta Club, divided into multiple committees designed to coordinate donations, develop a brand and promote the event, facilitate the set-up of shopping and gift wrap stations, and bring holiday magic through caroling.

Residents were able to shop from a wide



Special to The Florence News
The Rankin County School District Board of Education recognized McLaurin High School Beta Club during a recent board meeting. Sponsors Dana Carol Bridges and Kris Morris received the Educators of Excellence Award, and Bridges was also selected as the State Sponsor Elect for Mississippi. Those in attendance included State Senior Secretary Mariyah Moore; National Beta Leadership Representative Kaleb Bullock; Musicology Senior Oral winners Kaleb Bullock, Knight Bridges (who was also the Science Ninth Grade winner), TJ Frazier, and Alison Hughes; Black and White Photography Division I winner Haley-Anna Russell; State Scholarship winner Gracie Smith and Sculpture Division II winner Peyton Hendry.

variety of categories and intentionally choose items for their loved ones while enjoying a fun and energetic environment.

In addition to the joy McLaurin Beta members were able to bring to the nursing home, they say the impact it made on each student and even sponsors will be felt for years to come. They say their perspective shifted from going through the holiday season with a self-centered attitude to a community-focused mindset. In fact, they report that they are already looking at expanding the event to other homes in their area next year.

McLaurin Senior Betas say they were also thrilled to partner with Junior Betas at their school. Sponsor DC Bridges said, “Without them, we would not have been able to make it all work. They provided many ideas and showed up ready to work. They were eager to learn from us and see how we work through the process of our projects. We feel that they understood our intention in finding an underserved group to work for and will use that as they grow in Beta.”

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A white Generac home standby generator with a control panel on the side.

Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories, and the American Hero by Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall

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

Do you know who sculpted the huge bronze Marine Memorial, located in Arlington Military Cemetery in Washington, D.C.? This book, *Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories, and the American Hero*, by Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall, published in 1991, answers that question and others.

The statue is based on the photograph taken by Joe Rosenthal, Associated Press Battle photographer attached to a Marine unit in the Pacific during WWII, on February 23, 1945, on the island of Iwo Jima. The image was delivered by radio to the States and appeared in morning papers a mere eighteen hours later to become the most famous military photograph of World War II.

Totaling 243 pages, not counting fifty-five references pages, the book is epic in scope. Iwo Jima was a vital stop on the way to a planned invasion of Japan; the flag was raised over Mount Suribachi on Day 4 of what would become a 36-day battle for the men of Easy Company.

Authors Marling and Wetenhall diligently researched the battle and all the events of Day 4. Of the six flag-raising Marines shown in the photo, three died in battle before hostilities ended March 26, 1945. The three surviving Marines, Marine Pfc Rene Gagnon, Marine Pfc Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian, and Pharmacist's Mate Second Class John Bradley were sent to the states as "Heroes of Iwo Jima," to raise funds for the war effort.

Each man experienced that war in his own unique way; they resisted being treated as "Hollywood Heroes," hating the hoopla of movie stars, starlets, flag waving parades, celebratory banquets, the empty ballyhoo. War is expensive, and these Marines were willing to help raise those much-needed funds in order to rejoin their comrades fighting to end the war.



Over half the book is about the Marine Corps War Memorial - the sculptor Felix de Weldon, who created the giant memorial, movies about the battle, cartoons, continuing publicity on up to and including the floral representation in the Rose Bowl parade of 1945!

Felix De Weldon was not born in America but, in Vienna, Germany, in 1907. He made his way to America before World War II began. Later, this became an issue with certain groups in the art world, who believed this particular military monument should be the work of a "real" American artist.

De Weldon loved America and wanted to create this monument to show his love and respect for American ideals. He was a talented master sculptor, having studied in Rome, Paris, and Madrid, and holding advanced degrees from the

university of Vienna, before living in London and working on portrait busts of members of royalty in a highly realistic style. He arrived in America via Canada in the 1930s, becoming a U.S. citizen in 1945. During WWII, he enlisted in the Navy as a combat artist at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland.

When De Weldon saw Joe Rosenthal's photo in an American newspaper, he immediately began working on a three-dimensional representation of the scene, mixing soft Johnson's floor wax with hard sealing wax. He worked on several smaller models, one of which is at the entrance to the Marine Base at Quantico, Virginia.

The Marines liked de Weldon's realistic concept and in 1945, the Congress of the United States awarded him the commission. With the help of many sculptors, it took him nine years to finish the statue, which was dedicated on-site on November 10, 1954.

Felix de Weldon died June 3, 2003, at 96 years of age and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, not far from his greatest sculptural work.

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Pearl’s James Thompson: Life-long resident and public servant

By Alexa Haik

The type of intelligence that James Thompson radiates is a social intelligence, which is a fundamental part of who he is and how he became successful as the City of Pearl’s District 5 Alderman.

Thompson was born in Pearl in 1968 and graduated from Pearl High School in 1986, entering the work force directly after high school graduation, initially working at a place called Mississippi Distributors, then eventually signing on with the Pearl Police Department (Pearl PD) as a dispatcher. It was there that he discovered his calling as a public servant, specifically for the youth in the community.

“I worked with Pearl PD as an investigator,” said Thompson. “We handled all juvenile crimes committed by or against children, sex crimes. I was also youth court administrator with Judge Shirley...I was his court administrator, because we had our own youth court at the time. My last eleven years, I was plain clothes as an investigator just handling juvenile crimes, not adult crimes.”

In 2014, Thompson took what he learned as a police officer working with community youth and went to work with the Department of Education as the district safety director for a local school district. It was a



Thompson (center) at the April 18 Board of Aldermen Meeting, where it was announced that that he was stepping down from the Board.

full-time job, with enormous responsibility toward faculty and staff, as well as to the thirteen thousand students and twenty-three school buildings under his care. That said, he still felt the need to continue to serve his hometown in some way.

“I just knew I had a lot more to give to my home town,” said Thompson. “I said, ‘Hey, let me take a shot in the dark,’ and I have never been involved with politics [prior], although I always liked talking the game. I like being in the know – knowing the ins and outs. So, I decided

I would run [in 2017] in the district I live in, which is District 5, as an independent candidate. As a matter of fact, I am the first independent candidate to ever be elected in the City of Pearl.”

Thompson said he was able to pull votes from both Republican and Democratic residents of his district and win the election. His first order of business was to faithfully attend City of Pearl Aldermen meetings the first and third Tuesday of every month as the representative for District 5.

The biggest challenge he faced in the be-

ginning, according to Thompson, was “probably the deficit, as far as money. Financially, Pearl had a lot of issues... in 2017, we were actually in the negative. We came into that administration with a new mayor and three new aldermen, and we were able to make changes as far as the way money was spent.”

“Now that has been turned around,” Thompson said. “The reason for the turnaround was accountability – when you start crossing your Ts and dotting your Is, it turns things around, and you start seeing money that you didn’t know you had.”

On that note, Thompson believes accountability is key as a district representative.

“Pearl keeps Board meeting minutes on the City’s website. [The City] didn’t do that until [the new] administration took office in 2017,” said Thompson. “You have to be transparent with the people that you represent.”

Thompson remained Alderman for District 5 until it was announced on April 18 at a Board of Aldermen meeting that he was stepping down from the Board as he continues his battle with and treatment for cancer. He says he will continue to be part of the Board by providing support and guidance to his successor, Dwight

Continued on page 4



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Pearl’s James Thompson: Life-long resident and public servant

Knight, who was sworn in May 24. Looking back at the progress that has been made in his district since taking office, Thompsons says that his “biggest accomplishment, I believe, would be Old Whitfield Road, which is a main thoroughfare through what they call the Pearson area, [the] main thoroughfare that runs from Pearson Road to Airport Road.” “It was in terrible shape,” recalls Thompson. “Matter-of-a-fact, two buses couldn’t pass on that road, because it was so narrow. So we were able to secure funding through a grant from the State, where the State helped us go in and redo Old Whitfield Road. That has made a tremendous difference within the district.” Thompson goes on to say that, at this point he looks forward to a good prognosis from his oncologist.

“She put me in what they call partial remission. [After I receive] three more treatments, that will put me to twelve; I’ll have another PET scan, and she is in hopes then that I will be in full remission and that I will be on what they call maintenance. She doesn’t know what that’s going to look like yet...but a very good prognosis.” As he reflects on the city where he was born and raised, he considers what it is about current-day Pearl that draws people to it. “I think it is a big city with a small-town attitude, in my opinion. Pearl is the largest city in Rankin County. It is growing leaps and bounds and has for years. It is just a good place to live - the crime rate is low and people feel safe in Pearl. I think that is what keeps them there, and that is what brings them back to Pearl.”



James Thompson during his re-election campaign
Special to SW Rankin News





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Students win awards at National BETA state convention



Richland High School recently recognized National BETA state convention winner Maddison Phillips, who received first place in ninth-grade grade mathematics.

Richland High School recently recognized National BETA state convention winner Chelsey Courtney for placing third in division one speech.



Photos special to SW Rankin News
Richland High School recently recognized National BETA state convention winner Addison Mathis for placing fourth and fifth in division two black and white photography and color photography.

Knight named USM Citizen Scholar

Hill receives pre-law award from MC

Special to SW Rankin News

Olivia Knight of Florence, a nursing major at the University of Southern Mississippi, was recently named as one of only nine recipients of the Citizen Scholar Award, a recognition for students demonstrating significant involvement in community engagement.

The Citizen Scholars program recognizes undergraduate students who have made significant contributions to their communities by incorporating service and community engagement into their academic experience. Students who earn 100+ service hours, participate in a community-engaged learning experience, and complete a reflective exit interview are eligible to be recognized as Citizen Scholars.

Knight completed 202 service hours through volunteer work with Florence High School Future Health Professionals, First Baptist Church of Florence, Letters Against Isolation, and Forrest General Hospital. Knight’s community-engaged learning experience was as coordinator of “Do Good Week” for Delta Gamma, through which students raised awareness for Service for Sight, crafted eyeglass holders, played bingo with retirement



Olivia Knight
Special to SW Rankin News

home residents, and made dog toys for Southern Pines Animal Shelter.

“The Citizen Scholars program recognizes students who show a deep commitment to service and honors the different ways they contribute to the community as student leaders, scholars, researchers, and future professionals,” said Christy Kayser, director of CCE. “We continue to be impressed with their stellar records and the amazing work they do on campus and in the community.”

Special to SW Rankin News

Lauren Hill of Pearl, a pre-law student attending Mississippi College, recently received the Perry Academic Award. This award was established by Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Perry (Marion Walter Perry, '32 and Effie Elaine McDonald Perry, '33) for the purpose of recognizing scholastic achievement at Mississippi College.

Consideration for the awards is with emphasis on academic performance, with all nominees having not less than a 3.5 grade point average. Academic excellence will receive seventy-five percent consideration, with twenty-five percent for qualities of leadership, citizenship, creative ability, activities, and moral character.

Academic Awards, in the form of gold medals, are awarded to seniors from the following majors: biological sciences, business administration and business education, including accounting, computer science, and marketing; chemistry; history; English; languages; mathematics; physics; arts and music; medical technology and nursing; education and psychology; kinesiology and interior design; communication; sociology and social



Lauren Michelle Hill
Special to SW Rankin News

work. Hill received the award this year for political science.

The Mississippi College Department of History and Political Science also announced the 2022-23 academic year award winners. Hill was named the Outstanding Senior in pre-law. This award is presented each spring to a senior who has demonstrated exceptional academic performance and promise in pre-law studies.

Obituaries

| NAME | AGE | CITY | DOD | FUNERAL HOME |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------|------------|---------------|
| James Bridges | 77y | Florence, MS | 04/29/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Sandra Shows | 81y | Florence, MS | 04/30/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Charles Hancock | 67y | Richland, MS | 05/05/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Joey Herrington | 52y | Florence, MS | 05/05/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| David Vaughn | 64y | Richland, MS | 05/05/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Leslie Quarles | 84y | Florence, MS | 05/06/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Rex Minter | 89y | Florence, MS | 05/07/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Wilma Delores Crain | 75y | Florence, MS | 05/10/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Robert Michael Ellett | 47y | Richland, MS | 05/09/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Lacritia Summerlin | 43y | Florence, MS | 05/11/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Linda Quarles | 74y | Brandon, MS | 05/13/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Kenneth Saxton | 77y | Florence, MS | 05/07/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| John Clinton Smith, Jr. | 72y | Florence, MS | 05/18/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Bub "Tippy" Byrd | 74y | Florence, MS | 05/19/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Marc Alan Ash | 59y | Star, MS | 05/21/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Marco Mendoza | 24y | Richland, MS | 05/18/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Gertha Ward | 98y | Florence, MS | 05/25/2023 | Chancellor FH |
| Ruth Ann Howard | 95y | Pearl, MS | 05/28/2023 | Chancellor FH |

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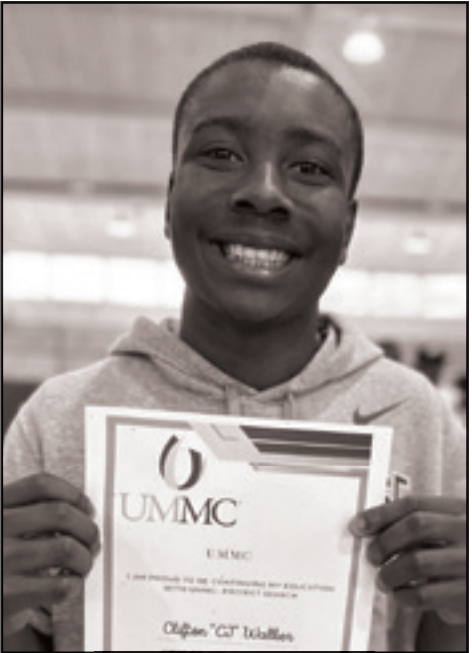
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UMMC accepts two MHS students into coveted internship program

Special to SW Rankin News

Academic Signing Day was recently held for seniors at McLaurin High School (MHS). Tigers for L.I.F.E. (Learning Independence and Furthering Education) students Clifton "CJ" Walker and Logan "Logano" Crane applied and were accepted into the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) Project Search Internship Program.



Clifton "CJ" Walker shows off his UMMC signing document.

A Tigers for L.I.F.E. spokesperson commented that, “These boys have overcome obstacles, and their abilities will help them achieve great success in life! It has been a team effort to bring them to this point - amazing parent support, teacher support, and the transition/post-secondary programs that Rankin County School District and the SPED Department have worked so hard to develop, so our students can grow into successful adults.”



MHS's Tigers for L.I.F.E. 2022 graduate Logan Crane and 2023 graduate Clifton Walker.

June brings entertaining agenda from Pearl Senior Services

Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Senior Services will usher in the last days of spring with several entertaining events and activities for the month of June.

Kicking off the month on Thursday, June 15, at 10 a.m., PSS will host a **Brunch and Learn**, where the guest speaker is Ayana Jones, the cultural resource specialist with the two Museums of Mississippi, Ms. Department of Archives and History, will give a presentation on the history and celebration of Juneteenth. A light brunch will be served.

Following on Tuesday, June 20, at 11:30 a.m., is **BBQ, Blues and Tattoos**. Pearl’s very own resident celebrity, Earl Aldridge, A.K.A., “Big Earl from Pearl,” will be onsite playing Blues as attendees receive a tattoo and eat BBQ. Area seniors are encouraged to come and enjoy the talented singer, musician, and humorist as he shares his southern wit and charm. Tickets are available at \$6 per head, no holds, and space is limited.



On Wednesday, June 21, at 11:45 a.m., PSS will host a **Senior Men’s M-Braves Outing**. The M-Braves will play against the Birmingham Barons beginning at 12:05 p.m. PSS has reserved a climate-controlled suite for all attendees, and lunch will be provided. All must sign up in advance, as space is limited.

On Tuesday, June 27, at 1 p.m. PSS will sponsor monthly **Birthday Bingo**, where “happiness is yelling BINGO and celebrating birthdays with the ones you care about!”

Finally, Thursday, June 29, is a **Community Health Fair** to be



held at the Clyde Muse Center from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m.

Advance registration is required at all Pearl Senior Services events, and space is limited. There are no holds for any of the scheduled events. All residents fifty-five and older are encouraged to attend.

The Pearl Senior Center hours are Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.

For more information, call 601-863-3229, or visit Pearl Senior Adult Programs on Facebook.

Suggested strategies for removing ant colonies from the yard



By Doug Carter, Rankin County Extension Agent

Fire ants are the most common insect pests of home lawns. They occur in practically every lawn in the state! Even if you manage to achieve a totally fire ant-free yard, it probably won’t stay that way long, because newly-mated fire ant queens will quickly recolonize it. And new fire ant colonies thrive especially well in areas that are free of other, competing colonies. Fire ant control is a never-ending battle in the South, but there are steps you can take to keep your lawn and landscape relatively free of these troublesome pests.

The easiest, cheapest, most effective thing you can do to control fire ants is to use baits. Learn to use baits properly and preventively, and you will reduce the number of mounds in your yard by eighty to ninety percent.

The key to success with baits is applying them as broadcast treatments instead of treating individual mounds. You will never win the battle against fire ants by treating individual mounds.

When properly applied, granular fire ant baits are low cost, quick and easy to apply, they are safe for children and pets and give up to eighty-percent control. Baits are “fire ant edible” granules that contain low doses of slow acting insecticides or insect growth disruptors.

In addition to the big mounds, which you can see, there are a lot of little colonies that are just getting started. If you eliminate only the big mounds, the small colonies will grow into big mounds. Broadcast bait treatments target all colonies in the yard, regardless of size.

Early spring is one of the best times to apply fire ant baits, because fire ants are actively foraging for food at this time. If you are going to treat only one time per year, do it in the spring. But you can improve control by treating again in mid-summer and a third time in the fall, especially if you live in a rural area where fire ants are abundant. If you live in a more urban area, you may only need to treat once or twice per year.

We need to be proactive. We need to treat before we see big fire ant mounds in our yard. We can use the holidays – Easter, Independence Day and Labor Day – to remind us when it is time to put out fire

ant bait. It is better to pick a time when it is not likely to rain for a couple of days. This will give the ants time to collect the bait and carry it back to the mound before it is washed away.

Most fire ant baits are applied at a rate of one to two-and-a-half pounds per acre. It is easy to over-apply if we don’t read and follow the directions. Baits are a cheap way to control fire ants if we use the proper rate.

The insecticides used in fire ant baits are slow acting to allow time for the insecticide to spread throughout the colony. A fast-acting insecticide would kill the worker ant before she got back to the colony with the bait granule. Depending on the bait used, it can take two to six weeks to obtain maximum control. Bait works. We just have to be patient.

Baits will give eighty to ninety percent control, when properly applied two or three times per year. To get extra control, we can spot treat any mounds that survive the bait treatments. It is best to wait several days after applying baits, before you treat individual mounds that survive the bait treatment. This allows time for foraging worker ants to carry the baits into colonies and improves your chances

of killing the queen.

You can use baits to treat individual mounds, but they won’t work as fast as other types of mound treatments. However, if you were to use baits on individual mounds, don’t put the bait directly on top of the mound. The ants won’t find it on the roof. Instead, spread the bait on the area around the mound, so the foraging workers can find it readily.

I remember wondering where the entry and exit is to a fire ant mound? I assumed it was in the middle. I have discovered that ants enter and exit through underground tunnels that radiate away from the mound. The entrances to these tunnels are anywhere from five to more than twenty feet away from the mound.

Source material from: Mississippi State University Extension Service, “Control Fire Ants In Your Yard,” Dr. Blake Layton.

The Mississippi State Extension Office in Rankin County is located at 601 Marquette Road in Brandon. For more information or to sign up for the Mississippi State University Rankin County Extension Office (RCEO) Quarterly Digest, contact 4-H Extension Agent III for Rankin County Heather Jennings at 601-825-1462 or heather.jennings@msstate.edu.



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Pittman receives GFWC Award



Special to SW Rankin News

Jeannie Pittman recently received the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) Jennie Award. This award honors one clubwoman from each GFWC region for outstanding commitment to club, community and family. The Mississippi Federation of Women's Clubs (MFWC) Florentine Club of Florence nominated Pittman, and she was named the Mississippi recipient at the April State convention. She will compete in October for national recognition. This award is the only national honor that recognizes individual members for personal excellence and is the highest honor bestowed by General Federation of Women's Clubs. Pictured (l to r) are: MFWC President Elect Dr. Carolyn Tedford, MFWC President Theresa Buntyn and Jennie Award Winner Jeannie Pittman.

Free summer meals for children

Special to SW Rankin News

This summer, the Pearl Public School District (PPSD) is participating in the federally-funded Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which provides free nutritious meals to children eighteen years and under.

Meals will be available Monday through Friday, throughout the month of June at the Pearl High School Commons area. Breakfast may be picked up between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., and lunch will be available for pickup between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Pearl High School is located at 500 Pirate Cove in Pearl.

Meals will be provided on a first come, first serve basis. Children eighteen years of age and under eat free, and adults can purchase breakfast for \$2.25 and lunch for \$3.75.

For more information about the SFSP, including program and discrimination information, disability communication, or contact information, visit www.mdek12.org/OCN/SFSP.



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Richland’s senior athletes sign with local colleges



Richland High School tennis standout Garrett Myers signed a scholarship with Holmes Community College for the 2023-2024 school year. Pictured at the signing (l to r) are, front row: Corey Myers (father), Garrett Myers and Nicole Myers (mother); and back row: Assistant Principal Mr. Corey Yates, Assistant Coach Ross Rodgers, Principal Dr. Marcus Stewart, Assistant Principal Dr. Terrence McEwen, Gavin Myers (brother), Athletic Director Todd Montgomery, Coach Taylor Sutherland and Assistant Principal Dr. Thomas Dudley.



Richland High School baseball standout James Bailey Alexander signed a scholarship with MS Delta Community College for the 2023-2024 school year. Pictured at the signing (l to r) are, front row: Natalie Alexander (sister-in-law), Timothy Alexander II (brother), JB Alexander and Timothy Alexander (father); and back row: Assistant Principal Mr. Corey Yates, Principal Dr. Marcus Stewart, Assistant Athletic Director Katie Allen, Assistant Coach Dylan Scruggs, Head Coach Jonathan Broome, Assistant Principal Dr. Terrence McEwen and Assistant Principal Dr. Thomas Dudley.



Richland High School softball standout Raegan Passons signed a scholarship with Mississippi Delta Community College for the 2023-2024 school year. Pictured at the signing (l to r) are, front row: Brandi Passons (mom), Raegan Passons and Preston Passons (father); and back row: Assistant Principal Dr. Terrence McEwen, Assistant Principal Corey Yates, Coach Katie Allen, Assistant Coach Jocelyn McDavid and Athletic Director Todd Montgomery.

Photos special to SW Rankin News

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SALUTE TO EDUCATION

Rankin County Schools focus on educational excellence



Special to SW Rankin News

Richland and Florence schools are part of the Rankin County School District (RCSD), the third largest school district in the state of Mississippi. In 2022, RCSD had sixteen out of twenty-seven schools rated as “A” schools, and the entire district is an A-rated district and one of the top ten districts in the state. In addition, Florence Elementary School was named a 2022 Blue Ribbon School by the United States Secretary of Education, one of only four Mississippi schools earning the honor.

Last year, RCSD grew its grad-

uation rate, as well as its reading proficiency and growth, math proficiency and growth, history proficiency and the number of students who are getting college credit while in high school. Overall, while the district was already A-rated, it still managed to grow an additional twenty-six points.

RCSD Superintendent Dr. Scott Rimes said the District’s positive gains are “the direct result of tireless efforts from each and every student, staff member, family, and our stakeholders. We have a certain expectation in RCSD, and there is always room for growth as we look ahead for the next testing season.”

Superior education goal of Pearl Public School District



Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Public School District started its existence as a one-room school building constructed on land near Pearson Road donated by Joseph Valentour. The first teacher, Miss Louise Andrews, taught all children in grades one through eight. High-schoolers went to Central High School in Jackson until Pearl High School was constructed. The first seniors graduated from Pearl High School in 1949. In 1976, the Pearl Municipal Separate School District, now known as Pearl Public Schools, was formed.

With a current staff of approximately five hundred, the Pearl Public School District takes pride in its efforts to provide a superior level of education to a diverse population of around

4,000 students. Throughout its history, Pearl's academic and extracurricular programs have received numerous accolades, including being an A-rated district. The District has received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts and has had two schools, Northside Elementary and Pearl High, recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools by the United States Department of Education.

Believing that education is an investment in the future of the community, Pearl citizens have supported bond issues to continually upgrade facilities with new buildings and appropriate renovations.

In addition to five schools serving kindergarten through twelfth grade, Pearl Lower Elementary also includes an ancillary site, funded through Title I funds, for pre-K students.

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SALUTE TO EDUCATION

Pearl high school students receive Steen Scholarship



Special to SW Rankin News

The Rankin County Chamber of Commerce recently awarded the Steen Scholarship to four Pearl High School students. Pictured (l to r) are Mercedes Washington, Skylea Pope, benefactor Mrs. Laquita Steen, Julia Safley and Neely Robertson.

Townsend honored with award



Special to SW Rankin News

The Rankin County Chamber of Commerce recently recognized Dr. Sue Townsend with the Friend of Education Award. Townsend is a former Rankin County School District Superintendent.



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SALUTE TO EDUCATION

Discovery Christian students complete leadership program



Special to SW Rankin News

Discovery Christian School juniors Bella Yates and Peyton Jackson were recently recognized as graduates of the Rankin County Chamber of Commerce's Youth Leadership program. In addition, Jackson was awarded \$2,500 in scholarship money for winning the essay scholarship.

McLaurin representatives recognized



Special to SW Rankin News

Several McLaurin High School students and a teacher were honored recently at the Rankin County Chamber's Salute to Education. Pictured (l to r) Steen Scholarship recipients ZyQuein Wells and Madison Morin, Rankin Youth Leadership graduate Anderson Walker and Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalize Lindsay Pecou.


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Impressive stats from the 2023 Pearl Track and Field Season



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Lady Pirate track athletes recently won the 4x800 meter state championship. Pictured are Katherine Neal, Madeline Moore, Georgia Haralson and Hannah Moore. The girls team finished second overall in 6A.



Pearl High School's boys track team is celebrating their 2023 Class 6A MHSAA Track and Field State Championship. This marks the 60th State Championship in program history and the eighteenth State Track & Field Championship for the boys team.



During the Pearl Public School District May board meeting, the Pearl Junior High School's eighth-grade girls' track team was recognized for winning the 2023 MHSAA Middle School Track State Championship.

PIRATE TRACK AND FIELD
2023 STATS

PIRATE BOYS: 1st Overall
in MileSplit State Rankings

PIRATES BOYS TEAM
SEASON RECORD
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DISTRICT, REGION AND SOUTH
STATE CHAMPIONS

RANKIN COUNTY CHAMPIONS
2023 6A State Track & Field
Champions

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Girls Cross Country: 12
Boys Track & Field: 18
Girls Track & Field: 7

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The life of Florence’s Aline Mulligan: A slice of rural American history

By Alexa Haik

Aline Bennett Mulligan was born on April 18, 1933, in Simpson County, in the middle of America’s Great Depression. She was number four of ten of children. A long-time Florence resident, Mulligan currently lives in the Old Pearl area and has since 1961.

Growing up, when she wasn’t attending Harrisville School, she worked with her family on their farm.

“We always farmed for a living. [My father] had everything from tomatoes pepper corns, string beans, squash, cabbage all kind of food that could be sold.”

Upon reflection, Mulligan says that her formative years are her most cherished.

“Really and truly, that was the best time of our lives. Even though things were hard, it was so much better than it is now,” Mulligan said. “We had a large family, but we always had plenty. We might not always have everything we wanted, but we had everything we needed. And we had plenty of love was the main thing - and my dad and mother always made sure we were in church. My dad would sit down at night and read the Bible to all of us, and then we would go to bed. Every Sunday morning and Sunday night, we would have a service and a Wednesday night service, and most of the time we had to walk to church.”

Travelling any distance during this time was nothing like it is now. For starters, back then, all roads were gravel road.

“We had a wagon, and when we went [anywhere], we had to ride that wagon. It

was just a long thing with a flat bed with wheels on it and it hooked to the mule,” said Mulligan.

Around 1945, Mr. Bennett purchased the family’s first vehicle - a Chevrolet. Shortly after, Mulligan learned how to drive, and has been driving ever since.

“I still drive anything I can get a’holt of,” she laughs.

Of all the things that Mulligan has

and change my life, would I change anything; and I say, no, not even getting married at fifteen. It was hard, but the children at fifteen now [are] nothing like [I] was when I was fifteen,” said Mulligan. “I was more mature at fifteen than some of them [are] at twenty-five now. [James and I] were married fifty years, two months and nineteen days.”

The Mulligans had three children during those fifty-plus years of marriage - two daughters and a son.

everything, and momma would say, ‘you cannot hush laughing and make them laugh, you gotta leave the table.’ So, I would get up and leave the table. And when everybody got through, I would go back and finish eating. I knew when I done it, momma was going to make me leave the table. But they all just loved me to death, because I would make them laugh.”

Mulligan has also faced may ups and downs in her life, not the least of which is two bouts with cancer.

“I had a non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma,” she said. “It’s been sixteen years ago, and I had lung cancer, which wasn’t, thank goodness, in my lung; it was on the top lobe of my lung. I survived both of them.”

One might ask, does Mulligan feel, at ninety years of age, that she has, in fact, seen everything? The answer? An emphatic “NO!”

“Every day, something surprises me,” she says. Most recently, it is the price of groceries.

“I can remember when I paid five cents for a sack of flour. Look what it is now - \$5. There is no reason for that. I mean, if you go to the store this week, [it’s one price]; and, if you go next week, it can go anywhere

from fifteen to twenty-five cents to higher, every week. And that’s just something to think about.”

All along, it has been her simple philosophy on life that helped her through every challenge.

“You have to accept it,” she says. “Then you have to turn it over to the Lord. Then you have to think positive; never think negative.”



Photos special to SW Rankin News
Twelve-year-old Aline Bennett



James and Aline Mulligan

experienced in her life, the announcement that World War II had ended, on September 2, 1945, had the most lasting impact.

“We had a battery radio, and it was only played to hear the news, because we couldn’t afford the batteries. My dad had the radio on and we had heard the war had ended - that was the greatest day of our lives, because I had an uncle that was in the war and he survived. So many got killed over there, and we just felt how fortunate we were that he didn’t.”

Years passed, and Aline Bennett went on to marry a young gentleman by the name of James Mulligan in 1948 - she at the age of fifteen, and he at the age of seventeen.

“Everybody asks me if I had to go back

Mulligan says she never worked a day until her youngest reached ten years of age, when she took a job at a local factory making ballasts for florescent lights.

“I got a job because I knew my oldest daughter, at seventeen, could handle those two.”

Her daughters are now retired, and her son, who is sixty-nine, still drives an eighteen-wheeler. Her faithful husband passed away in 1999.

Looking back, Mulligan says her proudest achievement is taking care of children.

“Our family was a very close family. I always kept [my siblings] laughing and



Pictured (l to r) are Frank Bennett (Aline’s brother), “Big Momma” (Aline’s mother) and Aline.

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Florence Middle School announces May Eagles of the Month



FMS's May Sixth Grade Student of the Month is Kelsey Patterson. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Head Principal Keith Reed, Kelsey Patterson, Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams and Assistant Principal Brock Sistrunk.



FMS's May Seventh Grade Student of the Month is Ryleigh Travelstead. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Head Principal Keith Reed, Ryleigh Travelstead, Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams and Assistant Principal Brock Sistrunk.



FMS's May Eighth Grade Student of the Month is Alivia Haggins. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Head Principal Keith Reed, Alivia Haggins, Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams and Assistant Principal Brock Sistrunk.



Florence Middle School's (FMS) May Teacher of the Month is Kevin Vance. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Head Principal Keith Reed, Kevin Vance, FMS Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams and FMS Assistant Principal Brock Sistrunk.



FMS's May Staff Member of the Quarter is Cathleen Nixon. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Head Principal Keith Reed, Cathleen Nixon, Assistant Principal Kelsey Williams and Assistant Principal Brock Sistrunk.

Photos special to SW Rankin News



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Muse Center hosting 36th annual Mississippi Wildlife Extravaganza

Special to SW Rankin News

The Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MFW) is hosting the 36th Annual Mississippi Wildlife Extravaganza, Mississippi’s oldest and most recognized Outdoor Show, July 28 through 30, at the Clyde Muse Center in Pearl.

Presented by Small Town Hunting Properties & Real Estate, this year’s event will host even more exhibitors, attendees, children’s activities and entertainment.

“We cannot wait to share with Mississippians the biggest and best Wildlife Extravaganza yet,” said Extravaganza Director Robin Carlin. “We loved working with the fine folks at the Clyde Muse Center in Pearl last year as we moved to a new location, and were floored to have the entire city of Pearl’s support, including that of mayor Jake Windham and his staff, in promoting the ‘Ganza.’ We’re confident that we

have the best vendors, entertainers, demonstrations and exhibits in the hunting and fishing industry to help Mississippians kick off this year’s



have the best vendors, entertainers, demonstrations and exhibits in the hunting and fishing industry to help Mississippians kick off this year’s hunting season in a wonderful family-friendly and safe environment.”

“Please don’t be confused with the Mississippi Ag and Outdoor Expo, taking place in downtown Jackson at the Trade Mart, the same week-

end,” said Carlin. “There’s only one Ganza!”

The Extravaganza will play host to many historic crowd-favorite exhibitions, demonstrations, and contests, such as the ever-popular Magnolia Records and Big Buck contest, Jason Reynolds’ famous High-flying Retrievers, Kid’s Handgrabbin’ Catfish tanks, youth BB Gun and Archery Ranges, kayaking fishing demonstrations, hunting dog demonstrations, outdoor hunt-ing and fishing seminars, and much more.

MWF organizers say they are bringing back some of the biggest names in the hunting, fishing and outdoors entertainment world, like stars from the History Channel’s *Swamp People*, *Redneck Adventures TV*, *Real South Hunting*, *Small Town Hunting TV*, and many more. Several new exhibitors and entertainers will also be in attendance this year.

The show will include a dining hall


with grab-and-go, as well as sit-down, dining options, with a host of area restaurants, so that guests can enjoy local vittles, and a bar/lounge area will be available for adults to enjoy a cold beer or alcoholic beverage.

MWF’s Magnolia Records program is the state’s only official deer records program, and a buck taken from any year may be entered for scoring. However, the buck must have been taken last season to be entered into the Big Buck contest to win cash, gift cards and other prizes. All entrants into Magnolia Records and the Big Buck contest will receive free entry to the Extravaganza. Details about scoring categories, requirements and entry times can be found at www.facebook.com/mswildlife.

The Clyde Muse Center is located at 515 Country Place Parkway in Pearl. For more information about show hours and ticket pricing, visit www.MSWildlife.org/Extravaganza-Update/.

Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



The Plight of Man

We are commanded by the Lord to give close attention to His word (Lk.8:18) that we may retain it, for some who may be inattentive hearers will become forgetful hearers. One will either be a wise hearer or a foolish hearer (Matt.7:24-27). *“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.”* (Heb.2:1-3).


There is no subject more fully treated in the Bible than the subject “Salvation”. It is derived from a word, “saved” and implies that man is lost. Man in the state of being lost is helpless and must realize that “salvation belongs to the Lord” (Psm.3:8). The Lord alone is the only one that can save. This salvation that comes as a reward for righteousness is “far from the wicked.” (Psa.119:155). The wicked man in his wickedness cannot reach it, and the longer he persists in sin the farther it will be from him. While it is far from him, damnation is very near. “The Lord standeth....to judge the people” (Isa.3:13).

Before the lost can begin the journey toward the realization of salvation, he must realize he is lost. Before their the Ephesians were described as a people (Eph.2:12), “without God and without hope”. There are many people today that do not know they are lost. Many because of the hardness of their heart think they are already saved when in reality they are lost and alienated from God. (Isa.59:1,2). Conviction is a word that implies knowledge of a condition and is the very first essential to man’s becoming saved. The case of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14) would have been greatly different in its outcome if he had not known that he was a leper. He was big and influential, powerful and mighty, he was the idol of all the people and a terror to his enemies, *“but he was a leper”*. He had no ability to cure the condition of leprosy on his own. At first the described remedy the man of God gave him made him angry. But what would have happened had he not listened to the little maiden about the man of God in her country?

So it is with the sinner. Before he can start in the direction of salvation, he must know beyond doubt that he is lost; that salvation cannot be his as the result of human means; but that he must lean wholly upon the Lord’s mercy and by faith follow wherever He leads. (Rom.10:13-17).

Salvation is “in Christ” and the gospel is the divine medium. (2 Tim.2:10). A similar passage is found in (Eph.1:13). So there can be no salvation out of Christ nor apart from the gospel (Rom.1:16). The destiny of all who are outside of Christ and remain and refuse to obey the gospel forfeits the salvation offered by Christ.

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“Word Seed”

Lead With Courage

“Be of good courage and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do what is good in His sight.”

(2 Samuel 10:12)

Courage has been defined as the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face pain, difficulty, or danger without fear. In reality, courage may be the ability to face pain, problems, difficulty, danger or criticism ***in spite of fear***. Every leader must lead with courage. Joab’s words ring true for every leader: ***“Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God!”*** We MUST be courageous for it is not just about us, it is about those we lead and influence.


It is easy to become discouraged by problems that persist and bring prolonged periods of difficulty. Opposition or apathy among those we lead can drain us of courage. Elijah lost his courage when his life was in danger, and he asked God to kill him. David, the giant-slayer, lost his courage and hid himself in the cave of Adullam. On the night of Jesus’ arrest, Peter, the one to whom Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom, lost his courage, and denied Jesus three times. It is imperative that we maintain our courage!


Courage is based on our *confidence*, not our *competence*. Our confidence is not in ourselves or our ability. Prov. 3:26 says, ***“The Lord will be your confidence”***. Our confidence is not in people, performance, positions, or possessions. Our confidence is in Jehovah God and His unchanging Word: ***“Only be strong and very courageous.... this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate upon it day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”*** (Joshua 1:7-8). ***“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”*** (Romans 8:37).

It takes courage to speak when others are silent. It takes courage to cast vision and step from the known into the unknown. It takes courage for parents to lead their children to walk with God in a world that is running from God. It takes courage to live with convictions and standards based on biblical truths. Courage is required to lead though you may be misjudged and misunderstood, and the winds of opposition blow against you. We can lead with great courage because ***“he himself has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you’, so that WE may BOLDLY say THE LORD IS MY HELPER”*** (Hebrews 13:5-6).


For The Harvest, Bob Wilburn

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Who is Rankin County School District’s Sharon Patrick?

By Alexa Haik

Sharon Patrick, a Rankin Chamber Education Committee member and Rankin County School District’s (RCSD) public relations manager, recently received a first-place award at the 2023 Mississippi School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) annual awards event.

Patrick has been employed with RCSD a total of fourteen years, approximately five of which have been with the communications/PR department. Aside from a robust resume, she remains a passionate advocate of the faculty, staff and students who are part of her district.

Patrick was born and raised in Rankin County and grew up in Brandon, then graduated from McLaurin High School. After high school, she went to Mississippi State University and graduated with a major in communications and public relations.

Patrick says she chose public relations as a vocation because she understands the value of being a voice for institutions of learning,

“I believe that [faculty and staff] pour so much into our students, and no one really sees just how much goes into educating the whole child. Our employees work so hard. From the bus drivers that pick students up in the morning and drop them off in the afternoon, the mechanics that keep those buses on the road, our maintenance department, our cafeteria workers, custodians, MSIS clerks and secretaries - they all play an integral role in the running of our schools daily,” said Patrick. “I wanted to be able to tell their story and be that support piece to our administrators and teachers.”

“We all have a choice on the energy that we bring into a room. Life is about energy; you can influence it, or it will influence you. We must be the voice that is louder than all the others,” she said. “People that are in public relations make a greater contribution to society than anyone else. I just wanted to be part of the contribution.”

Workdays for Patrick are varied, if not frenetic.



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Sharon Patrick receiving the first place award in MSPRA’s Brand/Identity category.

“My days are never the same,” she said. “You definitely have to be ready for anything. On Board meeting days, I coordinate the communications/recognition

tions. After the Board meeting, I finalize any recognitions and add to social media, [things] such as advanced degrees, employees of the month and other recognitions, such as state winners or employee accomplishments. This time of the year, I am making sure that we recognize our ACT Growth winners, writing celebration winners, Spelling Bee, reading fair winners, and all other activities that we may have going on.”

Patrick says her team of coworkers is what makes the difference.

“I have a lot of help; I couldn’t do it without help,” she said. “We have some wonderful people at the district office. Everyone is ready to help, especially when it comes to celebrating our colleagues and students.”

At the end of the day, Patrick says she is simply grateful that she gets to do the work she loves with the people she cares about.

“I am so very blessed to be employed in the RCSD, but, more importantly, I get to celebrate our amazing employees and students.”

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Spring 2023 Pearl Public School District Employees of the Month

Special to SW Rankin News



Pearl Public School District recently honored their Spring 2023 Employees of the Month. The employees of the month are selected from the nominations submitted each month by employees, parents, and community members.



The January 2023 Administrator of the Month is Dennis Philebar of Pearl Junior High School.



The January 2023 Classified Staff of the Month is Keirra Fair of Pearl Lower Elementary.



The January 2023 Certified Staff of the Month is Hope Wood of Northside Elementary.



The February 2023 Administrator of the Month is Ginny Copley of Pearl Upper Elementary.



The February 2023 Classified Staff of the Month is Marcy Boyd of the Early Childhood Education Center.



The February 2023 Certified Staff of the Month is Ashley Gough of Pearl High School.



The March 2023 Administrator of the Month is April Harwell from the Federal Programs.

Photos special to SW Rankin News

Continued on page 19

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Heard runs for Tax Collector

By Stephen C. Heard

My name is Stephen C. Heard, and I am a lifelong resident of Rankin County. I am a graduate of Pearl High School and received a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University. I am a member of McLaurin Heights United Methodist Church, have volunteered with Scouts BSA for twelve years, and have been employed by the Rankin County Tax Assessor's Office as a residential appraiser for the past twenty-two years. I am married to Candace Heard, who has taught in the Rankin County School District for twenty-four years, and we have three beautiful children: Carter, Jake, and Mina. My parents are Marion and Alice Heard, and my mom is also a lifelong resident of Rankin County who served as the Rankin County Tax Collector from 1980 to 2008.

I humbly announce my candidacy for the office of Tax Collector. Watching my mother serve the citizens of Rankin County with integrity and professionalism fostered my desire to work as a public servant. In the past, the offices



of Tax Collector and Tax Assessor not only worked closely but were one office of professionals who worked together to help meet the needs of the citizens of Rankin County. As you go to the polls, I would appreciate your vote: a vote for a conservative public servant with experience, integrity, and a desire to serve the citizens of Rankin County. I look forward to working with you as your next Rankin County Tax Collector.

Spring 2023 Pearl Public School District Employees of the Month



The March 2023 Classified Staff of the Month is Melissa Van Buren of the Finance Office.



The March 2023 Certified Staff of the Month is Susan Ezell of Northside Elementary.



The April 2023 Administrator of the Month is Cedric Graham, the Assistant Superintendent.



The April 2023 Certified Staff of the Month is Debbie Berry of Pearl Junior High School.



The April 2023 Classified Staff of the Month is Melissa Roberts of Northside Elementary.



The May 2023 Certified Staff of the Month is Sharon Dennis of the Early Childhood Education Center.




The May 2023 Administrator of the Month is Dr. Nikki Graham of Northside Elementary.



The May 2023 Classified Staff of the Month is Ivy Spires of Pearl Lower Elementary.

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