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SWRANKIN NEWS

Vol. 11, No. 08 | August 2026

The Pearl News

THE NEWS
RICHLAND

THE FLORENCE
NEWS

Groundbreaking ceremony held for new Pearl Siemens' manufacturing facility

Special to The Pearl News

Codaray Construction was selected as the general contractor for Siemens Energy's \$300 million high-voltage switchgear manufacturing facility in Pearl. Ground was broken on the project July 17, 2026, marking the start of construction on one of the state's most significant industrial investments in recent years.

"We're honored that Siemens Energy has entrusted Codaray to build a facility that will play such a critical role in strengthening America's electrical grid," said Philip Davis, Codaray executive vice president. "This project reflects the kind of complex, high-stakes industrial construction our team specializes in, and we're proud to bring it to life here in Rankin County alongside a world-class manufacturing partner."

Codaray will manage every phase of the build, from site work through final completion, delivering a campus built to the exacting precision and reliability standards required for critical grid technology manufacturing. Beyond the main production facility, the scope includes a dedicated training center - part of Siemens Energy's push to prepare its workforce for what's next, including the demands of the AI era.

Once complete, the plant will produce high-voltage switchgear, equipment that functions as a safeguard for the power grid by protecting infrastructure, pre-



Special to The Pearl News

Representatives from the Board of Aldermen joined Siemens' leaders and Governor Tate Reeves at a recent groundbreaking ceremony for the new Siemens Energy switchgear manufacturing facility in Pearl. Officials say the project is set to bring three hundred new high paying jobs to the area right away, with strong potential for even more growth and expansion down the road.

venting blackouts and holding the system steady as utilities bring new, more complex energy sources online. Siemens Energy expects the facility to generate up to three hundred jobs for the region.

Company and state leaders framed the investment as a bet on both Mississippi's workforce and the broader push to shore up domestic energy infrastructure.

"As the United States' electrical grid becomes more dynamic and complex, the equipment that we produce here in Mississippi is crucial for safe and reliable energy delivery," said Tim Holt, member of the executive

board for Siemens Energy. "Our increased investment in Mississippi will strengthen the U.S. supply chain and help meet the nation's grid needs."

Governor Tate Reeves echoed that sentiment, calling the project a win for the state's manufacturing base.

"America's economic strength depends on our ability to manufacture products and produce available, affordable and reliable energy here at home," Reeves said. "Siemens Energy's new facility in Rankin County will help strengthen our nation's power grid while creating hundreds of good jobs for Mississippians. In Mississippi, we make stuff; and companies from around the world continue to invest here, because our people know how to get the job done. This is another important win for Mississippi and America."

The Pearl campus adds to a footprint Siemens Energy has built in Mississippi since 1973, including a sister facility in nearby Richland that also produces high-voltage switchgear. It also builds on momentum from earlier this year, when the company committed \$1 billion toward expanding its U.S. manufacturing operations and workforce more broadly.

For Codaray, the project marks another milestone in the kind of large-scale, mission-critical industrial work the company has built its reputation on — and one it expects to carry through to completion over the coming months.

AI-powered robotic dog Atlas is ready for school

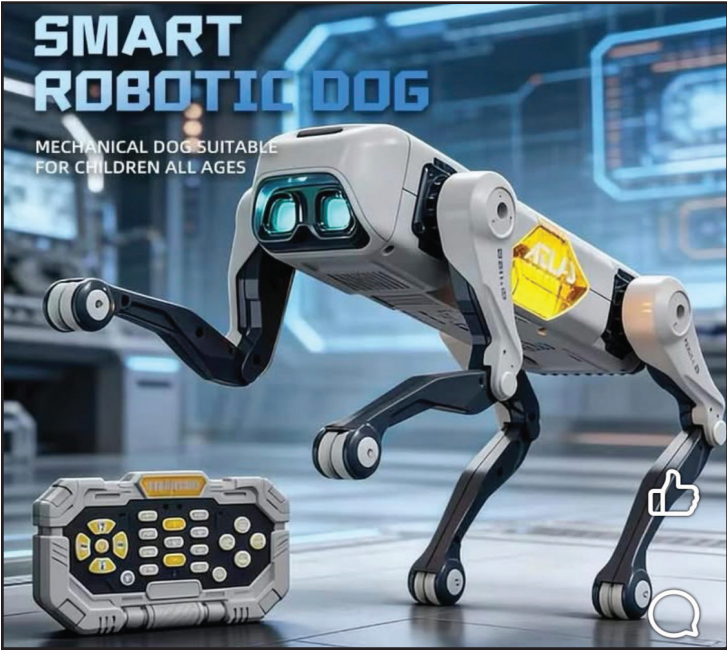
Special to The Pearl News

Pearl Junior High School (PJH) has introduced an AI-powered robotic dog named Atlas for the 2026–27 school year. Funded by a grant, the initiative brings hands-on technology to the tech lab to teach students coding and problem-solving.

Principal Dennis Philebar and Cyberfoundations teacher Sunny Oberto lead the effort to make tech engaging and practical.

Philebar, in a July 28 WAPT Channel 16 interview, said, "[We are] not just consuming technology, but we are creating with it; and it's the chance to give these kids a chance to get in here and create something."

Oberto, in the same WAPT broadcast, said, "Teaching them to use it wisely is probably the most stressful part of my job, because we don't want to give them these tools and



Special to The Pearl News

PJH has an AI-powered dog, like the one shown here. Atlas will teach students coding and problem-solving this school year.

then have them not use them correctly, because it can get them in a lot of trouble."

Monica Christine posted on 16 WAPT Facebook page on July 28, "I know most people are against this, but we have to realize that AI is here and robots are here. It's expanding rapidly, whether we want it to or not. It's better for our children to be educated about it, rather than ignorant. You can't protect yourself against something if you don't understand how it works. The very near future will look much different than the world we currently live in. The more that we can teach our children about robots and AI, the more we can prepare and protect them for all that comes with it."

For a closer look at Atlas and how students are interacting with the new technology in the lab, see the video posted on *The Pearl News* Facebook page on July 30, 2026.



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-Michael Beck



Captain David Cannon retires from Florence PD



Special to The Florence News

Captain David Cannon (center) was recently recognized for his retirement from the Florence Police Department. According to Florence Mayor Trey Gunn, Cannon has dedicated his life to public service, whether volunteering as a reserve deputy, teaching students or serving the citizens of the City of Florence. Throughout his career, he worked in nearly every aspect of the police department. More important than anything, per the Mayor, is that Cannon genuinely cared about Florence and the people who call it home. Officials say his dedication, leadership and servant’s heart have left a lasting impact on the community.

Florence DYW Tomlinson named Top Ten Finalist

Special to The Florence News

Mary Grace Tomlinson of Florence represented Rankin County in the at the Distinguished Young Woman (DYW) of Mississippi State program July 15-18 at the Evangel Temple in Meridian. She was named a Top Ten Finalist, and her dedication to academic excellence earned her the Scholastic Preliminary Award honor along with a five-hundred-dollar scholarship.



Photos special to The Florence News

Mary Grace Tomlinson, the Rankin County DYW, was named a Top Ten Finalist at the Distinguished Young Women of Mississippi State program and was the Scholastic Preliminary Award honoree.

“We are incredibly proud of the hard work, discipline and determination she has demonstrated throughout this journey,” said Jamie Higdon, co-chair of the Rankin County DYW Program. “She earned fourteen hundred dollars in scholarships at the local level and three thousand at the state level.”

Thirty-one high school seniors competed across five categories for over thirty-six thousand dollars in college scholarships. The categories were scholastic achievement, interview, self-expression, talent and fitness. Lauderdale County’s Anna Grace Terry is the Distinguished Young Woman of Mississippi for 2027, alongside category winners Michelle Xie and Avery Kittrell.



Florence Library to hold Old Crow Party

Special to The Florence News

The Florence Library has a new activity for residents. The Old Crow Party will be held Monday, August 17, at 5:30 p.m., introducing the library’s new item-exchange program. Each month will feature a different type of item to swap and share, giving participants a chance to declutter, discover new treasures and connect with others. In August, the group will be exchanging books. For more information, visit the Florence Library at 115 West Main Street, or call 601-845-6032.



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Legislative Update: Youth Court reform - what changed and what's next



By Senator Brian Rhodes,
State Senator, Mississippi
District 36

Special to
SW Rankin News

Earlier this month, the Mississippi Legislature concluded a two-day special session by approving the Mississippi Youth Court Reform Act of 2026 and investing approximately \$29.5 million in reforms to the state's juvenile justice system.

Gov. Tate Reeves called lawmakers back to the Capitol with roughly 24 hours' notice after youth court legislation remained unfinished following the regular session. The abbreviated notice required many legislators to leave family vacations, conferences and other commitments to return to Jackson to complete work on the measure before important legal deadlines expired.

Youth court reform has been studied by the Legislature for several years. While many counties have developed effective youth court systems that serve children and families well, lawmakers also recognized that the administration of youth courts varies across Mississippi. The legislation is intended to provide greater consistency in how youth courts operate while continuing to support the important work already being done in local communities.

The new law makes several significant changes to Mississippi's youth court system. It creates nine full-time, state-funded youth court chancellors, expands youth diversion programs designed to keep appropriate juvenile offenders out of the court system, places



Photos special to The Florence News

History was made during the Special Session when it was held at the Old Mississippi State Capitol. Because the House Chamber in the current State Capitol is undergoing repairs, the Mississippi House of Representatives returned to the Old Capitol to conduct business during the Governor's special session. For the first time since 1902, legislative votes were cast in that historic chamber. Even more incredible, women legislators cast votes there for the very first time in history. It was truly a humbling experience to be part of such a historic moment, said Clay Mansell, State Representative House District 108.

truancy matters under the jurisdiction of youth courts, increases public access to youth court proceedings unless otherwise ordered by a judge, and improves coordination of services available to children and families.

The legislation also provides funding to support these reforms, including \$9 million to establish a statewide youth diversion program, \$12 million to renovate and expand the Oakley Youth Development Center, and

\$10 million to develop additional secure juvenile detention facilities in north and south Mississippi.

Like many pieces of major legislation, this bill was the result of years of discussion, debate and compromise. Lawmakers brought different perspectives to the issue, and not every provision received unanimous support. Even so, there was broad agreement that the issue needed to be addressed before existing court deadlines expired.

One benefit of implementing these changes before the next Regular Session is that lawmakers will have an opportunity to evaluate how the new system works in practice. As judges, court personnel, attorneys, law enforcement officers and local officials begin working under the new framework, their feedback will be important in identifying any areas that may need clarification or adjustment.

I appreciate the many judges, youth court staff, attorneys and local officials who have shared their thoughts throughout this process. Their experience and perspective are invaluable, and I look forward to continuing those conversations as the law is implemented. The Legislature will continue working with those on the front lines to ensure the law accomplishes its intended purpose and to make any needed improvements during the next legislative session.

As with any significant change, the success of this legislation will depend on thoughtful implementation, continued communication with those working in the system each day and a willingness to make adjustments where necessary. Our shared goal is to ensure Mississippi's youth court system continues to serve children, families and communities as effectively as possible.

SW RANKIN NEWS

P.O. Box 5963, Pearl, MS 39208
601-706-9237

Volume 11, Issue 08 | Circulation - 15,000

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For submission information, email
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Southwest Rankin News is published
on the second Tuesday of every month.



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A Little Brown Light: Heart Rock

By Becky Brown

In Psalm 73:26, we read these words, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

In this verse, the word "strength" in the Old Testament language of Hebrew is "tzur," which means "rock." It encourages me to be able to read that verse this way: "God is the ROCK of my heart and my portion forever!"

I would much prefer to stand on a rock than to be crushed by one. Many times, I have had to interrupt my morning walk to remove a small pebble that had managed to jump in and wedge itself inside my shoe. I can't make many laps in that condition. Rocks can sometimes become a hindrance rather than a help.

I remember walking the land of Israel with my dad. There were rocks everywhere! Visitors to the cemeteries in that land do not bring flower memorials. They bring rocks to place on top of the above-ground gravesites as they remove one more "stone" of grief from their heart and leave it there.

Everyday life situations present us with roadblocks and rockslides. Some of these seem insurmountable.

SO...when we find ourselves facing an immovable rock, we need to be reminded that we serve One.



Special to SW Rankin News

Albritton named Pearl police officer



Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Police Department (PPD) welcomed its newest officer, Luke Albritton (center), in July. PPD Chief Nick McClendon said he is look forwarding forward to the dedication and service Albritton will bring to the Pearl community.

Pennypacker becomes a paramedic



Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Fire Department recently recognized Brandon Pennypacker on successfully passing the National Registry and becoming their newest paramedic. Department representatives say it is a tremendous accomplishment, and they are proud to have him as part of their team of firefighters serving Pearl.



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Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



Is The Bible a Book of Myths?

In academic circles these days, it is not unusual to hear a person suggest the events recorded in the Bible are myths. The word “myth” is commonly understood to mean that the person or event being discussed is imaginary and not real. This, the listener or reader is led to believe that the stories in the Bible do not have a historical basis. This allegation, however, is completely incorrect.

First, the Bible has been proven to be the most accurate, historically, verifiable ancient book that has ever been produced. Years of archaeological finds have unearthed enough evidence verifying the Bible’s accuracy to bury the claim of “myth” a thousand times over. Second, not a single, legitimate contradiction has been found that would suggest that the biblical writers falsified information. The list of other evidences that silence the allegation of “myth” could get quite lengthy. Such aspects as the scientific foreknowledge of the Bible, its predictive prophecy, and its unity over hundreds of years of writing are just a few of these powerful evidences.

Along with these various evidences the testimony of the writers themselves must be added. The Bible writers insisted that their writings were not based on imaginary people and events, but were instead grounded in solid historical facts. The apostle Peter in his second epistle, wrote: “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (1:16; 2 John 7). The apostle John wrote that he actually touched, saw, and heard Jesus in the physical world (1 John 1:1-3).

When Luke penned his account of the Gospel of Christ he specifically crafted his introduction to ensure that his readers understood that his report was historical and factual: “Inasmuch as many have taken I hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:1-4).

The claim that the Bible is filled with myths cannot be reasonably maintained. The evidence is overwhelming that the Bible writers testified that their information was accurate and factual. Their claim of factual accuracy has been verified by archaeology as well as by refutation of alleged contradictions between their writings and history. The Bible is not a book of myths. It is a book of inspired, factual, historically accurate information that deserves its rightful place in the annals of history as the most amazing book ever written.

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Carruth named director of Mississippi State Hospital

Special to SW Rankin News

For more than fourteen years, Amy N. Carruth has worked behind the scenes helping Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) improve the way it serves patients, supports employees and prepares for the future. On July 1, she stepped into the hospital's highest leadership role.

Carruth has been named the next director of Mississippi State Hospital, succeeding James G. "Bo" Chastain, who recently retired after more than three decades of leadership. Carruth officially assumed the position after serving in several key leadership roles, including Deputy Hospital Administrator and Director of Quality Assurance, where she helped guide many of the hospital's operational and quality improvement initiatives.

While her new title marks a significant milestone, much of Carruth's work has already left a lasting impact across the hospital.

Throughout her career at MSH, Carruth has helped lead policy development, strategic planning and organization-wide quality im-

provement efforts. She has championed lean process improvement initiatives, modernized workflows and helped establish systems that allow hospital leadership to make informed, data-driven decisions focused on improving patient care. Her work developing performance dashboards and evidence-based program standards has strengthened accountability while helping departments measure progress and continuously improve.

One area where her leadership has become especially well known is accreditation and quality assurance. Widely recognized for her expertise in Joint Commission standards, Carruth has guided Mississippi State Hospital through multiple Joint Commission surveys while helping maintain the high standards expected of one of the nation's largest public behavioral health hospitals.

Her leadership was also instrumental during one of the most challenging periods in the hospital's history.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Carruth worked daily alongside hospital leadership to coordinate infec-



Special to SW Rankin News

Amy Carruth has been named the next director of Mississippi State Hospital, succeeding James G. "Bo" Chastain, who recently retired after more than three decades of leadership. Carruth officially assumed the position on July 1, after serving in several key leadership roles for more than fourteen years.

tion prevention efforts, develop new record-keeping procedures, implement evolving safety standards, and assist with the rollout of vaccines for employees. Those efforts helped Mississippi State Hospital navigate rapidly changing circumstances while continuing to care for patients safely.

In addition to her hospital leader-

ship responsibilities, Carruth has served as the Designated Institutional Official for the Mississippi State Hospital Psychiatry Residency Program, overseeing graduate medical education and supporting the development of future psychiatrists. She also currently serves as chair of the Joint Commission Resources CSR Program Advisory Committee for a four-state region, sharing her expertise with healthcare organizations beyond Mississippi.

Carruth's professional background extends well beyond MSH. Before joining the hospital in 2012, she held leadership positions with the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi, and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, building extensive experience in public administration, strategic planning and organizational leadership.

She has also continued investing in professional development throughout her career. Carruth was selected to participate in the Mississippi Hospital Association's Emerging

Cont. on page 5

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Cont. from page 4

Carruth new director MS State Hospital

Leaders Program and is pursuing fellowship status with the American College of Healthcare Executives, reflecting her commitment to lifelong learning and excellence in healthcare leadership.

For Carruth, however, the mission has always been about the people served by Mississippi State Hospital.

"At the core of Mississippi State Hospital's mission is the belief that every person served here deserves compassionate, high-quality care," Carruth said. "I'm proud to be a part of this agency and our mission, and I look forward to continuing the legacy of providing hope, safety and recovery to Mississippians in need."

Department of Mental Health Executive Director Wendy Bailey said Carruth's career has consistently reflected a commitment to continuous improvement.

"Though we are sad to say goodbye, we are also excited to welcome Amy N. Carruth into this role," Bailey said. "Her career at Mississippi State Hospital has been defined by efforts at continuous improvement, and she shares her expertise both throughout the hospital and with partners throughout our state and beyond. We look forward to Amy building on the strong foundation and advancements that have been established under [James G. "Bo" Chastain]."

From the Florence Boardroom

SW Rankin News

The City of Florence Board of Aldermen met in their regularly scheduled meeting set for the first Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at City Hall. Present were Mayor Trey Gunn, Aldermen John Banks, Brian Grantham, Mason Herrin, Kyle Martin and Brent Sistrunk.

Mayor Gunn presented retiree Captain David Cannon with a life-time service award, and Cannon was able to purchase his service weapon for one dollar.

The Board approved Performance Therapy's Get Fit Florence 5-K Run and Fun route set for August 15, at 7:30 a.m., ending around 9:30 a.m. and using the same race route from past events.

The Board approved Public Works Operator Billy Russell's emergency request to purchase for \$5,950 a Hydro Vacuum Regulator, to help with water service to the community. The Board also approved \$6,496.79 for emergency repair to the lift station located at Polk's Drugs, with the repair being deemed an emergency, due to the public safety and welfare of the community due to the possibility of raw sewage leakage in the area.

Upon recommendation of Street Director David Myers, the Board approved the quote of John Deere



for the purchase of a Z970R ZT mower for the Park Department, for \$16,760.59 under state contract pricing.

On one vote, the Board unanimously approved as follows: appoint Brian Grantham as Mayor Pro-Tem; appoint Engineering Service as City Engineer; appoint Windham & Lacey, PLLC as Municipal Auditors; appoint Linda Wigley as City Clerk; appoint Melissa McCue as Court Clerk; appoint Kevin Stewart as Municipal Judge; appoint Witney Adams as Judge Pro-Tem; appoint Greg Hemphill as Indigent Attorney Annual; and re-appoint Robert F. Lingold, Jr. as City Attorney and Prosecutor, with same terms and conditions as the current term. The Board also approved the meeting minutes of June 16, 2026.

A Motion made by Alderman Banks was approved, and the group went into executive session to discuss possibility of pending litigation, leasing of equipment and a personnel matter in the Police Department involving the position of patrolman and inmate litter control. Upon recommendation of Chief Burns, the following activities will take place: Kuawai Brown is to receive a signed memorandum outlining the duties and responsibilities as the Inmate Supervisor for the City of Florence; City to accept the resignation of Officer Terrance Redmond effective July 17, 2026; the FPD is to hire Keith Brown as a full-time patrolman starting July 22, 2026.

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From the Pearl Boardroom



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

SW Rankin News

At the July 7 Pearl Board of Aldermen Meeting, Aldermen present were David Stovall, Alderman-at-Large; Sammy Williams, Alderman Ward One; Keith Dennis, Alderman Ward Two; Gary Broadwater, Alderman Ward Three; Casey Foy, Alderman Ward Four; Dwight Knight, Alderman Ward Five; and Kyle Foster, Alderman Ward Six.

The Board approved the annual re-appointment of Brendan Sartin as City Attorney and Prosecutor.

They adopted a resolution declaring eleven Axon Tasers to be surplus property and to authorize the inter-governmental transfer to City of Port Gibson Police Department.

The Board set a public hearings for August 18, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider adoption of a Comprehensive Plan. A second public hearing was set for August 18, 2026, to determine whether or not a Conditional Use Permit should be granted to allow Austin Minton to operate a medical cannabis dispensary at 5311 Highway 80.

On the July 21, 2026 Agenda, the Board authorized a contract on behalf of the Pearl Chamber of Commerce with Logan Search Group LLC for consulting and recruiting services; payment to Neel Schaffer concerning the Highway 80 Lighting Project Phase II totaling 20,387.50; payment to Pickering Firm concerning the Concourse Drive Extension Project totaling \$10,192.50; payment to Pickering Firm concerning the Riverwind Phase II project totaling \$11,927.50; payment to Pickering Firm concerning the Pearl Richland Intermodal Phase II Project totaling 8,062.01; payment to Pickering Firm concerning the Southeast Sanitary Sewer Phase II project totaling \$28,287.50; and payment to Thornton Construction concerning the Southeast Sani-

tary Sewer Phase II Project totaling \$54,571.80.

The Board approved the Project Activation for the 2026 MPO STBG Grant Awards for the Bierdeman Road, Childre Road and Flynn Drive Overlay Projects.

The Board chose the Pickering Firm from the recommendation of the Selection Committee for the Pine Park Drainage Project.

The purchase of sixteen gas masks from Southern Connection was approved for \$11,999.84.

It was approved to enter into agreement with the MS Office of Highway Safety for the FY27 Police DUI Service Grant in the amount of \$10,000.

The collection of uncollectable debt in the amount of \$27,414.93 by Public Works was approved.

A public hearing was set for August 18, 2026, to determine whether or not a conditional use permit should be granted to Manjinder Singh to allow him to develop a convenience store with automobile and commercial truck fueling facilities on the Parcel No. F08-49-50.

Another public hearing was set for August 18, 2026, to accept the preliminary plat for The Plains of Pearl Subdivision, with a variance for lots 1, 5, 33, 34, 57, 58, 64-68 to use the setbacks as outlined in the zoning ordinance for R-3 Patio Homes and not be required to provide the 30-foot buffer from the current R-1 zoned property.

The Board adopted a Resolution to Adjudicate the cost of cleaning of properties and assess the costs against said properties on the list attached and made a part hereof.

The Board approved an agreement with Quality Foods Concessions for the operation of concession facilities, upon final approval by Pickering Firm the city attorney.

Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	FUNERAL HOME
Pamela Ann Grantham	72y	Florence, MS	06/29/2026	Chancellor FH
Jason Randal Harrison	49y	Ellisville, MS	07/01/2026	Chancellor FH
Randy Darnell Blair	68y	Florence, MS	07/07/2026	Chancellor FH
Anthony Bennett	75y	Florence, MS	07/19/2026	Chancellor FH
Neil Joseph Minton	74y	Florence, MS	07/21/2026	Chancellor FH
Debra Lynn Griffin	64y	Harrisville, MS	07/30/2026	Chancellor FH



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McKinnon named Pearl PD Officer of the Month

Special to SW Rankin News

Detective Sergeant Megan McKinnon was named the Pearl Police Department Officer of the Month. She is originally from Greenville, Mississippi, and she attended Washington School, where she excelled in athletics and was inducted into the school’s Athletics Hall of Fame. McKinnon attended Mississippi Delta Community College and then pursued a career in law enforcement in Greenwood, Mississippi. She graduated from Mississippi Law Enforcement Training Academy in 2018.

Sergeant McKinnon began her career with the Greenwood Police Department, where she advanced from patrol officer to criminal investigator and ultimately to Detective Sergeant. During her five years with the department, she developed extensive experience investigating crimes against persons, property crimes, narcotics offenses, juvenile cases and other complex criminal matters. She also served as a member of the department’s SWAT Team and gained valuable experience operat-

ing in specialized and high-pressure law-enforcement environments.

In 2023, McKinnon joined the Pearl Police Department as a patrol officer. In June 2024, she was assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division, where she quickly established herself as a capable and dependable investigator. She handled a wide range of complex criminal cases and became a trusted resource within the division. Officials say her professionalism, investigative ability and commitment to duty earned her recognition as the Pearl Police Department’s Investigator of the Year for 2025.

In 2026, McKinnon was promoted to Detective Sergeant within the Criminal Investigations Division. As the division’s first-line supervisor, she holds a critical position in the CID chain of command. She provides direct supervision, guidance and accountability to investigators; assists in coordinating major and complex investigations; reviews investigative progress and case direction; and helps ensure that the division maintains high standards of professionalism, case management



Special to SW Rankin News

Detective Sergeant Megan McKinnon has been named the Pearl Police Department’s Investigator of the Year for 2025. She is a certified Human Trafficking Investigator and has additional specialized experience through the Crisis Intervention Team, the Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

and investigative integrity.

Throughout her career, Sergeant McKinnon has continued to expand her professional capabilities through specialized training and assignments. She is a certified Human Trafficking Investigator and has additional specialized experience through the Crisis Intervention

Team, the Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support, and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. Officials note that these qualifications, combined with her background in patrol, major criminal investigations, narcotics investigations, tactical operations and supervision, provide her with a broad and well-rounded law-enforcement foundation.

Sergeant McKinnon was recently off duty and shopping at the local Ulta at the Outlets of Mississippi when she noticed a woman who had a felony warrant actively shoplifting. Even though she was on vacation and in plain clothes, McKinnon followed the suspect outside the store after calling for assistance. The woman was accompanied by a male accomplice, who was also well known to law enforcement. They had thousands of dollars’ worth of merchandise in their vehicle. Sergeant McKinnon acted on instinct, and a professional shoplifter was apprehended and arrested.

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce presented her with a certificate and gifts of appreciation.

November 3, 2026

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From the Richland Boardroom

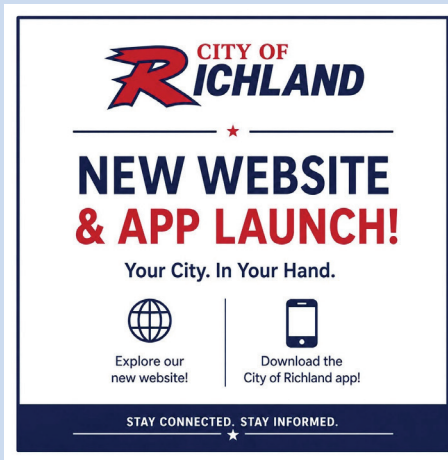
SW Rankin News

The regular Board of Alderman July meeting was held on July 7 at City Hall. Present were Mayor Clay Burns and Aldermen John Hamilton, Scot Mancil, Matthew Quick, Beth Sanford and A.J. Shields.

The Mayor recognized the Mayor's Youth Council for their "Operation Wish List" program winning a Youth in Action MML Award.

Next, the Board approved the Consent Agenda, Minutes, and Claims Docket. Also, it was approved to pay the MS Department of Revenue \$2,880.90 for Sales Tax collected from the Water Department.

The Board approved payment to Hemphill Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$818,651.50, out of the M.U.T. Fund, for work performed on the Old Hwy 49 and Carrier Boulevard Intersection Improvements Project and authorize the LPA Official to execute MDOT



Special to SW Rankin News

Reimbursement in the amount of \$472,526.12.

It was also approved to pay the final payment out of the General Fund to AJ Construction for a total amount of \$518,731.77; to Thornton Construction in the amount of \$50,990.30, for work performed on the 2023 Street Improvements Project to be paid out of the 2023 M.U.T. Bond Debt Fund.

On the consideration of fluoridation of the City water, a motion was made by Alderman Sanford,



seconded by Alderman Mancil and carried unanimously by all members of the Board of Aldermen present to discontinue fluoridation of the City of Richland's water.

The Board authorized the final payment of \$5,178.43 to the City of Pearl for the Pearl-Richland Intermodal Connector Phase II Project.

Next, the Board approved the 2026 Rankin County Unit System Semi Annual Joint Asphalt Bid through the existing Interlocal Agreement for a 6-month term from July 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026.

The Board approved the three-year Lease-Purchase Agreement between the City and Trustmark for \$127,014.12, for the Kubota Tractor for the Street Department.

Payment to Insurance Mart for City Buildings for \$137,177.00 effective July 25, 2026 – July 25, 2027, was approved.

All members of the Board approved the yearly contract with Butler Snow as the City Attorney for July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027.

The Board approved the hire of Colin Ramage as maintenance worker in the Water Department at Level 1/Step 1 effective July 8, 2026.

Senior Services invoices for the Snowflake Ball were approved by the Board.

Fire Chief Porch asked the Board to approve the transfer from part-time to full-time of Heath Clark in the Fire Department effective July 8, 2026.

A motion was made by Alderman Quick, seconded by Alderman Sanford and carried unanimously by all members of the Board of Aldermen present to terminate the current \$83,113, four-year service contract, approved March 3, 2026, for the City Streets Mowing Project to Rotolo Consultants, Inc., authorizing Engineer Jake Shelby to send notice of the same per the contract.

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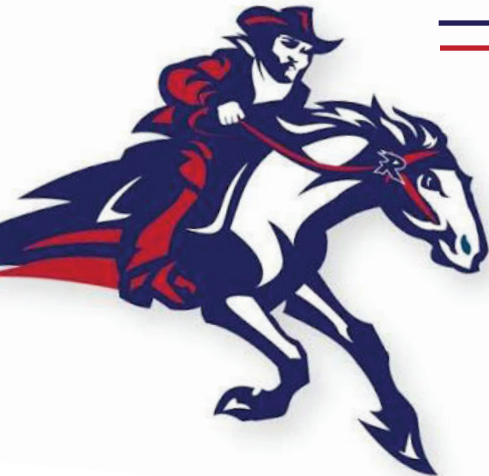
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FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

2026 - 2027

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MCLAURIN

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
21-AUG	CANTON	HOME
27-AUG	MADISON CENTRAL	HOME
4-SEP	WARREN CENTRAL	AWAY
11-SEP	FLORENCE	AWAY
18-SEP	CLINTON	HOME
25-SEP	GERMANTOWN	AWAY
2-OCT	TERRY	HOME
9-OCT	MERIDIAN	HOME
16-OCT	NORTHWEST RANKIN	AWAY
23-OCT	PETAL	HOME
30-OCT	BRANDON	AWAY
5-NOV	OAK GROVE	HOME
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
21-AUG	KOSCIUSKO	HOME
28-AUG	FLORENCE	HOME
4-SEP	VANCELEAVE	AWAY
11-SEP	McLAURIN	AWAY
18-SEP	PELAHATCHIE	HOME
25-SEP	PISGAH	HOME
2-OCT	MORTON	HOME
16-OCT	MENDENHALL	AWAY
23-OCT	FOREST	HOME
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
21-AUG	PELAHATCHIE	HOME
28-AUG	SALEM	AWAY
4-SEP	PUCKETT	AWAY
11-SEP	RICHLAND	HOME
18-SEP	W. LINCOLN	HOME
25-SEP	ST. ANDREWS	HOME
2-OCT	RALEIGH	AWAY
9-OCT	MAGEE	HOME
16-OCT	SEMINARY	AWAY
23-OCT	JEFFERSON D.	HOME
30-OCT	PARK PLACE	AWAY
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		

DISCOVERY CHRISTIAN

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
14-AUG	TENSAS ACADEMY	HOME
21-AUG	KEMPER ACADEMY	AWAY
28-AUG	HERITAGE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	AWAY
11-SEP	NEWTON COUNTY ACADEMY	HOME
18-SEP	PRAIRIE VIEW ACADEMY	AWAY
25-SEP	PRENTISS CHRISTIAN	HOME
2-OCT	BEN'S FORD CHRISTIAN	AWAY
16-OCT	SYLVA BAY ACADEMY	AWAY
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
28-AUG	RICHLAND	AWAY
4-SEP	KOSCIUSKO	HOME
11-SEP	PEARL	HOME
18-SEP	MENDENHALL	HOME
25-SEP	JIM HILL	AWAY
2-OCT	VICKSBURG	HOME
9-OCT	LEAKE CENTRAL	HOME
16-OCT	CLEVELAND CENTRAL	AWAY
23-OCT	LANIER	AWAY
30-OCT	PROVINE	HOME
5-NOV	HOLMES COUNTY CENTRAL	AWAY
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		

	OPPONENT	LOCATION
21-AUG	Mt. Zion	HOME
28-AUG	OPEN	OPEN
4-SEP	AMITE	AWAY
11-SEP	STRINGER	AWAY
18-SEP	MANCHESTER	HOME
25-SEP	EAST RANKIN	HOME
2-OCT	BOGUE CHITTO	AWAY
9-OCT	CHEF (LA)	AWAY
16-OCT	CHRISTIAN CA - HOCO	HOME
29-OCT	McLAURIN (SENIOR NIGHT)	HOME
ALL GAMES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.		



FLORENCE



PARK PLACE

Back to School time in SW Rankin County

SW Rankin News

Nearly three thousand Rankin County School District (RCSD) employees came together under one roof for their annual Convocation, united by a shared commitment to serving close to eighteen thousand students across Rankin County.

It took seventy-four buses to transport employees from schools and departments across the district to this event, a powerful reminder of the size, strength and unity of the Rankin County School District.

This year's Convocation centered on one of District's highest priorities: student safety. From creating secure learning environments to building strong relationships and ensuring every student feels seen, supported and protected, the RCSD team stated they are committed to making safety the foundation for student success.

There are nine Rankin County School District schools in Florence and Richland.



Jalen Burris, Briana McDonald, and Kentleigh McKinney represented the Florence School Zone in a Rankin County School District Mass Choir rendition of the National Anthem at the convocation.



The Rankin County School District (RCSD) kicked off its 2026-27 school year with a district-wide Back to School Convocation of three thousand RCSD employees hosted by Mississippi Christian University in Clinton.

Richland Upper Elementary staff grabbed a group photo as they prepared to start the school year.

Photos special to SW Rankin News



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Pearl Public School District kicks off start of 50th year

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Public School District (PPSD) recently held its 2026-27 opening convocation, marking the official return of all staff and kicking off the district's fiftieth anniversary year. Damon West was the keynote speaker, sharing his inspiring "Coffee Bean" message.

PPSD contains five schools and 4,190 students.

Photos special to SW Rankin News

Lizeth Estevane, president of the Northside Elementary PTSO, recently applied for and received a grant from Walmart and Crayola. The funds allowed for a complete remodel of the teacher's lounge, and the PRSO also received a check for a thousand dollars to be used for gift cards. Sam's Club in Pearl also donated two slushy machines.



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Richland Senior Center celebrates 250 Years of American independence



By Guest Columnist
Shea Thames, Richland
Senior Services Director

The Richland Senior Center proudly commemorated the 250th Anniversary of American independence with a patriotic celebration that brought together history, gratitude and community. Sponsored by Visiting Angels – Jackson, the event provided an opportunity for seniors to reflect on the nation's rich heritage while enjoying an afternoon filled with fellowship, entertainment and appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy.

The program opened with an inspiring prayer offered by Rev. Barbara Taylor of First Methodist Church of Richland, setting the tone for a meaningful day. Boy Scouts James McDonald and Cullen Armstrong of Florence Troop 85 then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance, reminding everyone of the values that unite our nation. Members of the Mississippi Highway Patrol Honor Guard Association also joined the celebration, sharing the history and traditions of the organization while highlighting the commitment and ser-



Honor Guards assisted seniors in celebrating America's 250th Anniversary. Pictured (l to r) are: MHP Honor Guard Sergeant Daniel Tucker; Visiting Angels-Jackson owner Audrey Henry; and MHP Honor Guard Master Sergeant Kervin Stewart.



Refreshments for the celebration included a cake by Ramey's and three cookie cakes by Whipped and Frosted.

vice represented by the Honor Guard. Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by Country Pleasin', followed by a beautifully decorated American flag cake from Brandon's Ramey's Supermarket and patriotic cookie cakes created by Leah Means, owner of



Boy Scouts James McDonald (left) and Cullen Armstrong (right) of Florence Troop 85 led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Whipped and Frosted. Every table featured festive patriotic tin can centerpieces handcrafted by The Richland Senior Center Senior Crafts Class, adding a personal touch to the celebration.

Entertainment throughout the afternoon included patriotic games, door prizes and a lively Statue of Liberty dress-up competition that brought smiles and laughter to everyone in attendance. One of the highlights of the day was a special performance by The Richland Senior Center Line Dancing Class, led by Carolyn and Buddy Ham, who presented two patriotic routines that were warmly received by the audience.

Special appreciation is extended to Visiting Angels – Jackson, G8 Nutrition, LLC., Scott Womack, and Rankin County Chancery Judge Keri H. Carroll for their generous prize donations supporting the 250th Icon Challenge, Left-Right Game and Statue of Liberty contest. Their contributions, along with the efforts of many volunteers and community partners, helped create a memorable celebration honoring America's past while celebrating the friendships and spirit that make The Richland Senior Center such a special place.

The

Pearl News

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Seniors learn AI



Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Seniors had a Lunch and Learn on July 30 on "AI Made Simple." It was sponsored by Leslie Leonard of Senior Helpers, shown right with Mary Rose, left, the door prize winner. Shirley Perry, the owner of E & S Ranch Catering, provided the meal.

PPCA football team takes Nat. Guard Challenge



Photos special to SW Rankin News

The Park Place Christian Academy (PPCA) football team participated in the drill sergeant challenge with the Mississippi Army National Guard. The challenge was led by special forces soldiers. Coaches said it was a great opportunity for team building, strength training and endurance and offered special thanks to Chaplain Col. Gregg Puckett and retired veteran (33.5 years of service) Myron Vanlandingham for helping chaperone the team.

Spring Lake Garden Club names rock event winners



Special to SW Rankin News

Special to SW Rankin News

Members of Spring Lake Garden Club (SLGC) of Pearl announced the winners of their recent "Patriotic Rock" community event. Over forty rocks were hidden in the City of Pearl in high traffic areas, such as the local city parks, playgrounds, community gardens and local businesses. Members of SLGC were on hand at the Pearl Public Library on Saturday, July 11, to award the prizes.

Ellie Steverson was the grand prize winner. She found fifteen rocks and the prize Eagle Rock, painted by member Bonnie George. Harlee Medina and Mason Slay also received prizes.

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Pearl Police SWAT team helps children in shelters



Pictured are Sgt. Brandon Jordan and Ofc. Justin Harper assisting children in and out of the trucks.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Pictured (l to r) are: Inv. Tim Pierce, Ofc. Ken Richmond, Ofc. Jadonn Wallace, Inv. Cole Morgan, Lt. Greg Jones, Ofc. Cole Gaines and Ofc. Jayla Holloway.

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Police Department SWAT team recently stopped by the Center for Violence Prevention for a community outreach day. Center leaders say opportunities like this allow the children at shelters to bridge the gap from fear to trust, learning first-hand that local police are safe and friendly heroes they can count on in an emergency.

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