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# The Pearl News

Good News  
You Can Use

Vol. 4, No. 10 | October 2019

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

## Pearl School District earns 'A' rating

Special to The Pearl News

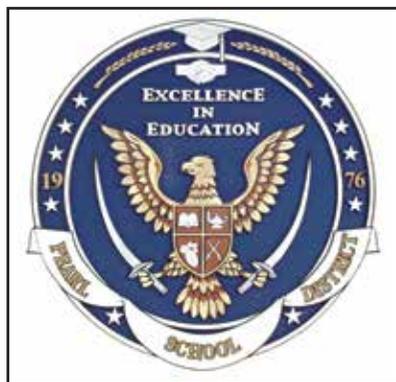
When the Mississippi State Board of Education approved accountability grades in September, Pearl Public School District earned an A rating for the 2018-2019 school year.

"We are very excited and proud of our performance. This success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our students, teachers, principals, and entire staff," stated Dr. Raymond Morgigno, Superintendent of Schools. "Being an A-rated district is a big honor for our students, staff, and the entire community."

In addition to receiving an A rating as a district, Pearl Lower Elementary earned an A rating. Northside Elementary, Pearl Upper Elementary, Pearl Junior High, and Pearl High earned B ratings.

"It's an exciting time, with one school an A and the others within striking distance of earning an A," said Dr. Morgigno.

Each year, Mississippi's districts and schools receive a letter grade based on how well students perform on state tests included in the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP). The percentage of Pearl students scoring proficient on the reading, mathematics, and United States history tests has increased for the last three years, with science proficiency remaining strong each year at nearly 80 percent.



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Also included in the state's accountability model is the district's graduation rate. In 2019, Pearl Public School District boasted the 7th highest graduation rate in the state at 94.1%. This all-time-high marks a 14.9% increase in the district's graduation rate over the last six years. While not included in the accountability model, the dropout rate is another area in which Pearl ranks among the best. Its 3.3% dropout rate for 2019 was the 7th

lowest in the state. Over the past two years, the graduation and dropout rates for Pearl Public School District have been the best in the metro area.

Since the cut scores for the state's grading scale were changed in 2017, the district has earned an A rating for two of the last three years, and all schools in the district have been classified as High Performing with either an A or B rating.

School Board President Andy Eaton expressed the board's pleasure with the performance of the district saying "the rating is a reflection of the commitment and dedication of our students, staff, administration, and parents." He continued, "Great things, such as this, can be achieved when everyone works together to strive for excellence."

Dr. Morgigno pointed out, "As a district, we did great. However, we can never become complacent. There are always areas that can be improved. We will continue to work hard to ensure that our students are getting our best effort every day."

## Jingle Bell Market accepting vendor applications

Special to The Pearl News

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce is currently accepting vendor applications for the 2019 Jingle Bell Market, which is scheduled for Saturday, December 14, at The Clyde Muse Center in Pearl.

Vendor applicants must provide a list of all items that will be sold at the event, as placement of vendor booths is based on the type of merchandise on display. In addition to the list, a print photo or link to an electronic image of all items is also required for registration. No home party merchandise will be accepted, such as Avon, Mary Key, LuLaRoe, Color Street Nails, Tupperware, etc.

Potential vendors are encouraged to submit applications for merchandise that is unique and special. Items that have proved to be popular in the past

include hand-made Christmas ornaments, decorations and yard art, as well as a variety of locally made edibles. Anything that showcases a personal touch is a potential candidate for the market.

Applicants are asked to specify the number of booths they will need, not to exceed two booth spaces per merchant.

Vendors may use racks, pegboards and/or shelving units to display merchandise, but tents or tent frames are not allowed inside the Muse Center.



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The cost for each booth is \$125, with a \$25 discount for returning vendors and current Pearl Chamber of Commerce members. Vendors' fees cover the cost of a red skirted 6' table with two chairs and an eight foot by ten foot booth.

There will be an additional cost of \$50 for any vendor requiring access to electricity.

Applications should be mailed to the Pearl Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 54125 Pearl, Mississippi, 39288. The Chamber will contact each applicant directly via email if their vendor application has been approved.

Participants can begin merchandise set-up Friday, December 13, after lunchtime until 6 p.m. that evening.

Saturday, December 14, the doors will open at 9 a.m., with activities winding down around 4 p.m.

The Muse Center is located on the Rankin Campus of Hinds Community College at 515 Country Place Pkwy, Pearl, Mississippi 39208.

For more information, contact the Pearl Chamber of Commerce at 601-939-3338.

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Rankin County Extension to host a course in holiday decoration - pg. 7

# THE NEWS RICHLAND

## Good News You Can Use

Vol. 4, No. 10 | October 2019

The Richland News is a subsidiary of **SW RANKIN NEWS**

## Rankin County Schools named top ten in Mississippi

Special to The Richland News

The Rankin County School District (RCSD) again received honors when the Mississippi Department of Education released its annual accountability ratings.

"Congratulations to all of our students, parents, educators, school board, and each community for our schools' test scores. The RCSD is an A-rated school district again, and we are one of the TOP TEN districts in the state of Mississippi! Our students are continuing our 'tradition of excellence!'" said Dr. Sue Townsend, RCSD Superintendent of Education.

The Mississippi Department of Education released letter grade ratings recently for the public school districts in the state, with an A as the highest possible academic rating. RCDD's overall score is 707, up 17 points over last year's total of 690. The minimum score districts

must reach for A-status is 668. Of nearly 145 school districts in Mississippi, only 31 received an "A" rating.

RCSD's graduation rate grew from 88.9 percent to 90.3 percent. Reading proficiency grew from 53.1 to 55.4, and math proficiency grew from 58.2 to 62.7, with math growth of lowest performing students growing from 59.7 to 61.8. History proficiency grew from 70.8 to 72.3

Students who are getting college credit with dual credit or Advanced Placement courses is measured as acceleration, and acceleration grew from 69.9 to 71.4.

While the district as a whole maintained its A rating, some school ratings were below that level. Richland High School is a B-rated school, and Richland Upper Elementary and Richland Elementary are both C-rated schools.

The accountability formula includes a requirement for growth as a significant factor in the formula. Students are scored

on a five-point scale on state tests, with 3 considered a passing score. But schools



Special to Richland News

don't get growth points for students who score 3 one year and then score 3 the following year. Only students scoring 4 or 5 meet growth by maintaining their current levels.

"We are very proud of all our accomplishments, but the test scores also showed a decrease of 6.2 points in English Language Arts Low Performing Growth. We will increase our intentional

focus even more on this group to help them move to the next level," shared Dr. Townsend.

"While we all know the RCSD has a multitude of 'non-tested' accomplishments to celebrate daily, we also know that academic achievement and accountability are important and are used as a measuring stick for our schools," elaborated Dr. Townsend, "Our mission each day is to intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential in all areas. Our students continue to set high goals, and they strive to reach those goals."

As the third largest school district in Mississippi, seven out of eight zones are A and B zones. One zone (Richland) is a B and C zone.

All eleven of the RCSD high schools and middle schools are As and Bs, while eleven elementary schools are As, three are Bs, and two are Cs.

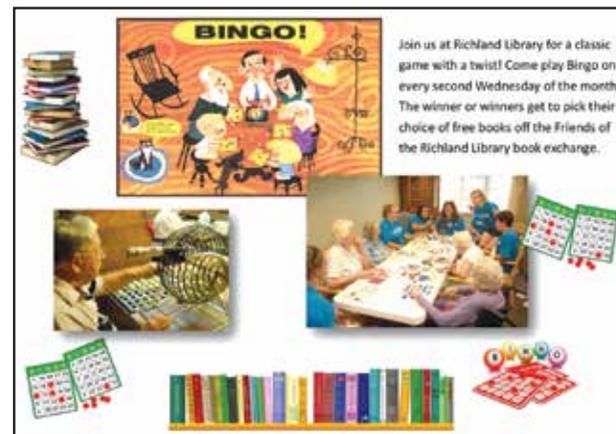
## Richland library offers slate of October events, closed on Oct. 14

Special to The Richland News

Starting this month, Preschool Story Time will be held every Monday at 10:30 a.m. The program includes books, songs and a craft designed for children birth to preschool age. The October 21 theme is It's Pumpkin Time, and the October 28 theme is Ahhh! Spiders!

Teens are encouraged to visit the library for Blackout Poetry on Thursday, October 10, at 6 p.m. Teens will use pages from old books and markers to mark out the original text to create new poetry.

The Richland Writer's Group will meet on October 21 at 6 p.m. The Richland Writer's Group is a group of local writers who meet and discuss the craft of writing. All skill levels are welcomed, and the group meets monthly on the first and third Mondays.



Special to SW Rankin News

Bingo for Books will be on Wednesday, October 9, at 3 p.m. Adults, including seniors, are encouraged to come and play bingo at library every second Wednesday of the month. The winner or winners will get to pick their choice of free books off the Friends of the Li-

brary book exchange.

Color and Conversation will be on Thursday, October 10, at 6 p.m., an informal coloring group that meets on the second Thursday of each month. Materials are provided, or attendees can bring their own.

The Coffee and Books Book Club will meet on Tuesday, October 15, at 10:30 a.m. Every month on the third Thursday, the group discusses their current

book selection and votes on the next book. Newcomers are welcome to join at any time.

The Friends of the Library Ice Cream Social will be on Thursday, October 24, at 6 p.m. and is open to everyone. The Richland Friends of the Library will be

renewing current memberships and accepting new memberships. All new and renewing members will receive perks to be used throughout the membership year, including five free black and white copies and five free color copies, as well as a \$5 off of fines coupon. Library Friends make much needed materials, equipment, and activities possible by sponsoring, coordinating, and conducting programs for adults, teens, and children; by sponsoring National Library Week and Summer Library Programs; and by being an advocate for the library in the community.

The Richland Library, as well as all Central Mississippi Regional libraries, will be closed Monday, October 14, for Columbus Day. Regular library hours will resume on Tuesday, October 15.

The Richland Public Library is located at 370 Scarbrough Street. For more information, call 601-932-1846.

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Rankin County Extension to host a course in holiday decoration - pg. 7

Cozy Florence house reports paranormal activity - pg. 9

# THE FLORENCE NEWS

Good News  
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Vol. 4, No. 10 | October 2019

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# Florence Day to kick off fall activities

Special to The Florence News

Hemphill Park will be bustling with activity on Saturday, October 19, as the City of Florence hosts its annual Florence Day, complete with family fun, entertainment, contests and food. Gates will open at 9 a.m.

Admission to the event is free, and attendees can enjoy a car show, a market, a corn hole tournament, a kids zone and local musical acts, as well.

**FOR A FULL SPREAD  
OF INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE EVENT,  
SEE PAGE 4.**



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**Florence Day 2019**

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# Florence schools earn high marks, RCSD in top ten MS districts

Special to The Florence News

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overall score is 707, up 17 points over last year's total of 690. The minimum score districts must reach for A-status is 668. Of nearly 145 school districts in Mississippi, only 31 received an "A" rating.

Florence Elementary, Steen's Creek Elementary and McLaurin Elementary are all A-rated schools. Florence and McLaurin High Schools are both B-rated schools, as is Florence Middle School.

The accountability formula includes a requirement for growth as a significant factor in the formula. Students are scored on a five-point scale on state tests, with 3 considered a passing score. But schools don't get growth points for students who score 3 one year and then score 3 the following year. Only students scoring 4 or 5 meet growth by maintaining their current

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## Local returns to hometown for music video, Oktoberfest

By Kobee Vance

The musical duo Stace and Cassie recently released a new music video, *When We Grow Old*. Not only is member Stace Shook from Florence, but the video was filmed over Labor Day Weekend in the Florence Middle School Auditorium.

"This song is about... marriage...being there through the end of it. It's about staying, even when things get in the way. It's our love song to each other that nothing will get in the way as we get old," says Stace.

Stace grew up in Florence, and recalled his moments from sixth grade as he graduated on the same stage he stood for his video. He and his now wife and musical partner, Cassie, live in Brandon, but still hold a spot for Florence in their heart. The song discusses the struggle of time and growth between themselves as a couple, and they thought, "What better way to pay tribute to your past than to go back to where you grew up?" It took

a few phone calls to get in touch with the right person, and Stace used some personal connections to call on an old family friend and Assistant Principal Jason Thomas to get their foot in the door. He said the location was exactly what they were looking for, and it matched the feel for the video they needed.



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*When We Grow Old*, directed by JB Lawrence, is a love song between Stace and Cassie, where the two break down their journey together through

visual and lyrical metaphors. The style of the video is broken down into distinct segments of life that display troubles and reunions that a couple may encounter, and combine elements of film that bring in a heavy emotional role for the audience.

Stace and Cassie have been working together on stage since 2012. Both artists have an extensive background in the entertainment industry; however, they each have their own talents and inspirations that help strike a balance in their creative process. As the two have grown closer to one another, they have learned to lean on each other's strengths for their own weaknesses. Cassie, being a strong vocalist, has found her part writing lyrics; while Stace sees his calling in the instrumental side of the writing process.

"If she comes up with something, I help hone it out," said Stace.

The two are currently on tour, and plan to continue to release singles and work towards another album in the future. Stace and Cassie will be musical performance guests at the upcoming Oktoberfest at Hemphill Park in Florence on October 26.

For more information, visit their website at [www.StaceAndCassie.com](http://www.StaceAndCassie.com).

## Oktoberfest, Oct. 26

Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Florence will hold the Florence Oktoberfest on Saturday, October 26. The event will be held at Hemphill Park from 4 until 8 p.m.

This is the first Florence Oktoberfest, and organizers plan to make it an annual event. Admission is \$1 per person, and children ages twelve and under will be admitted for free. Live music will be provided by Miles Flatt, and food and drink vendors will be onsite. Beer will be available for sale to persons aged twenty-one and over who purchase an armband for \$1.

The opening act will be Stace and Cassie

No outside food, drinks or coolers are allowed. Attendees are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets. Proceeds will benefit Hemphill Park, which is located at 411 South Church Street.

For more information, visit [www.CityOfFlorenceMS.com](http://www.CityOfFlorenceMS.com) or call Mayor Bob Morris at 769-798-0364.

### SWRANKIN NEWS

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**Obituaries**

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	Funeral Home
Margaret Anthony	82	Florence, MS	9/30/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Eric Applewhite	63	Florence, MS	9/27/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Dorothy Hancock Arnold	90	Florence, MS	7/11/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Shawn Fondren	47	Florence, MS	8/31/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Danny Ford	71	Richland, MS	9/8/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Peggy Marie Martin	76	Florence, MS	9/21/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Kathy Phillips	61	Jackson, MS	9/7/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Ellaree "Ree" Scruggs	75	Florence, MS	9/27/19	Chancellor Funeral Home
Clarice Eileen Sorrow	87	Florence, MS	9/14/19	Chancellor Funeral Home

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**Old Truths for Today**

By J.T. Morgan



**Religious Indifference**

One of the greatest hinderances to the progress of the gospel is religious indifference. The masses of the people seem not to care whether the gospel is true or false. They seem to show little or no interest in what the Bible teaches. They do not seem to care if family or friends or even themselves are saved. Though the Bible says, "All have sinned," (Rom.3:23), and the whole world is wicked and lost they don't seem to care.

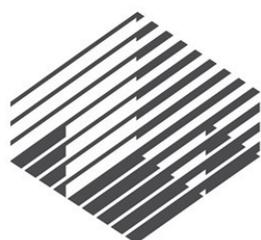
Even among those claiming to be Christians, it seems many are indifferent. There is little concern whether the gospel is preached to the lost or not. They seem to care very little that the church is made the light of the world or is looked on with reproach in the community. (Matt.5:13-16; Phil.2:15). Many are like the church at Laodicea (Rev.3:14-19), neither "hot nor cold" but only "lukewarm". Many never attend Bible study or any work in the community. About one-fourth of those claiming to be Christians are not dependable. They fail to realize that if "you are not for Me you are against Me" said Christ. (Matt.12:30).

Infidelity and general unbelief are causes of indifference. Modernism and socialism are influencing the very heart of our nation. The wild assertions of modernists and the extreme left and all their high sounding claims are bearing fruit....evil fruit! They are attacking the inspiration of the Bible and religion in general while some even deny the Sonship of Jesus Christ. The forces of evil and unbelief stand ready to block any progress of Christianity!

Religious divisions and denominationalism cause indifference and unbelief. Jesus knew this would be true and before His crucifixion prayed for "unity". (Jon.17:20-22). Humanly devised churches are a hinderance to our Lord's prayer. Because of all the conflicting doctrines that cause division in the denominational world many become indifferent to what the Bible teaches. Various denominations have taught the masses that one does not have to belong to their churches to be a Christian while he lives, nor to go to heaven when he dies. Regardless of what the Bible says on any subject, they have heard some "smart" man explain it all away. (Gal.1:6-9).

There are many ingredients that make up the remedy for indifference but cannot be removed without plain Bible study. The "gospel is the power" to save. (Rom.1:16). We need more to stand for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! Speaking only where the Bible speaks and silent where it is silent!

**Florence Church of Christ, P.O. Box 277, Florence, Ms 39073**  
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# Florence Day festivities set for October 19



Special to SW Rankin News

By Kobbie Vance

Florence's calendar will be busy this fall, with the headlining event being Florence Day on Saturday, October 19, followed by Octoberfest on October 26, then the unveiling of a new statue on November 9. Mayor Bob Morris expressed his excitement for Florence Day and some of the surrounding city-wide events coming soon.

"My favorite thing about it is that people get to meet each other... it's connecting a community," said Morris.

Vendor spots for Florence Day are still available, and they will be representing small business and craftsmen from around the city.

Gates for Florence Day will open at 9 a.m. at Hemphill Park. The event will include a market, musical acts from the area, a car show, and contests, and organizers say the food will be some of the best in town. There will be two live performances, with local Christian band Coram Deo open with live music

from 10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., followed by Georgetown Band from noon until 2 p.m.

Children can join in on the fun with the activities, rides and attractions in the soccer fields at Hemphill Park. Families can enjoy a car show, corn-hole tournaments, a chili cook-off, an eating contest, a kids zone, and art in the park.

Town leaders are hoping that Florence Day continues to branch out to new ideas and engage the community in many ways.

City Clerk Carley Moore said, "Last year, we had about fifty [vendors]. We would love to see that number grow."

Morris said the limitations for the huge event have always been money and manpower, and he says he hopes to raise money through this year to build even larger and stronger foundations for years to come.

Arts and crafts/business booths are \$75. A limited number of electrical hookups are available for an additional

\$10. Vendors will need to supply their own tables, chairs, tents, extension cords, and the like. Generators will be allowed, but must be muffled to eliminate noise. Booth space for both types of booths is 10' wide by 12' deep.

Vendor setup will be Friday from 5 until 7 p.m. and Saturday morning from 6:30 until 8:30 a.m. The market opens at 9 a.m. A parking area will be designated for vendors, as no vehicles will be allowed to stay in the booth area.

Business booths may hand out pens, pencils, key chains, notepads, magnets and other business-related items, but no food may be given away or sold, including bottled water. Food and drinks may only be sold by approved food vendors.

Food booth registration is \$175 per booth. Food booth spaces are 24' wide by 12' deep.

Florence-based non-profit organizations may apply for a free booth. Free booths must be approved by the mayor.

All booth applications will be accepted and spaces assigned on a "first come, first served" basis.

Hemphill Park is located at 411 South Church Street.

The town will also be holding other community events the following weeks. On October 26, there will be an Oktoberfest at Hemphill Park to raise money for town activities. Morris said the day will be full of fun bids, ranging from an all-you-can-eat frenzy to a pie-the-mayor booth.

A couple of weeks later, Morris and the Town of Florence will be unveiling a new monument.

Morris said "Blue Monument" will be dedicated to the veterans who fight to keep the country safe and will stand as a landmark to all the brave men and women from Florence and the United States who put their lives on the line. The unveiling is set for November 9.

For additional information about Florence Day or other events, call 601-845-5858.

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## Boyd promotes to Jun Shodan



Special to SW Rankin News

Skylar Boyd, who studies at Chatan Dojo USE School of Karate in Richland, was recently promoted to Jun Shodan, his junior black belt. Boyd (right) is pictured with Sensei Shelby Kenney, school owner and seventh degree black belt in the Okinawan Shohei Ryu karate system.



### BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Brantley Rogers and Allison Sonnenberg of Richland, Mississippi, announce the arrival of their daughter, **Dolly Kae Rogers**, born July 24, 2019, at 8:35 a.m. She weighed 7 pounds and was 18 3/4" long. Maternal grandparents are Mark and Christy Sonnenberg, and paternal grandparents are Richard and Robin Rogers, all of Richland, Mississippi.



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## Local Iwo Jima survivor raising funds to attend 75th anniversary commemoration

Special to SW Rankin News

The battle of Iwo Jima is recognized around the world as one of the most brutal struggles in the most costly war in history. For thirty-six days, over 70,000 U.S. Marines and Sailors, aided by tens of thousands of Airmen and Sailors at sea, fought a tooth and nail battle against the 22,000 entrenched Japanese defenders led by Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi. This titanic struggle, waged on eight square miles of volcanic soil and hellish terrain, has captured the imagination of generations since the battle.

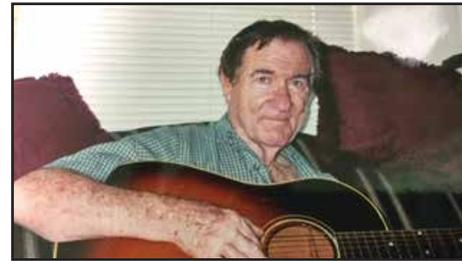
The Iwo Jima Association of America (IJAA) and their tour partner, Military Historical Tours (MHT), are returning veterans to Iwo Jima for a 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the battle. Corporal William "Billy" Byrd, a local Iwo Jima survivor and a companion, Lieutenant Colonel Ed Jones, have been given the opportunity to attend the commemoration, which is scheduled for March 2020 on Iwo Jima.

Cpl. Byrd is a member of the Marine

Corps League General Louis H. Wilson, Detachment in Pearl. They meet every third Thursday at Simply Southern Restaurant at noon. IJAA is providing funding for Cpl. Byrd, now age 93, to attend, but they require a companion to accompany him. The detachment is raising funds for Cpl. Byrd's companion expenses.

There will be a Joint Ceremony with the Japanese at the Memorial above Red Beach. Visits to Mt. Suribachi and the Landing Beaches to walk the "Black Sands" are scheduled. MHT is the tour partner of the IJAA and, in cooperation with United Airlines, has chartered jets for the day-long visit to walk the battlefields of this epic clash in the Pacific during World War II. Guam will again be the base of operations for the IJAA Battle Symposium and 75th Anniversary Banquet.

Early in the morning, the IJAA tour will depart Guam for a day-long memorial tour and observance on Iwo Jima. Upon



Special to SW Rankin News

arrival, attendees will be met by the official U.S. and Japanese Government delegation consisting of representatives from the Armed Services. The group will land on the site of Motoyama airfield #2. After visiting Mt. Suribachi and the scene of the famed flag raising captured by Joe Rosenthal on February 23, 1945, Veterans and their families will gather near the landing beaches to conduct memorial services at the anniversary monument. These services, attended by dignitaries

and veterans of the United States and Japan, will remember and memorialize those young men who gave their lives during the savage campaign for the island. The group will then tour the island and the landing beaches. The day will conclude with a return to the airfield for a gathering of friendship and camaraderie on the sacred soil of Iwo Jima.

Cpl. Byrd retired from the City of Jackson in 1987. He was first hired as a tax collector and then worked his way up to sanitation supervisor. His parents were share croppers and traveled all through southern Mississippi. Cpl. Byrd is known for his song writing and guitar playing and was on the WRBC radio show "Home Towner" in the 50s and 60s. He played for the Willie Jordan band and then started his own band, writing many of his own songs. He still plays his Gibson guitar. In addition, Cpl. Byrd wrote a short book, *By the Dawn's Early Light*, on his Iwo Jima experiences. He participates annually in the Trail of Honor event.

The public is asked to offer assistance to help Cpl. Byrd return to the Iwo Jima battlefield. Donations can be mailed to: Gen. Louis H Wilson, Det. 173, 854 Andrew Chapel RD, Brandon, MS 39042. For more information, call 601-260-4806.



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# Rankin County Extension to host a course in holiday decoration

Special to SW Rankin News

Rankin County Extension will present a program dedicated to making holiday decorations from greenery found in the yard or garden. Dr. Jim DelPrince, the state leader of the Mississippi State University Extension Master Floral Designer program, will be on hand to demonstrate the use of vegetation native to the state of Mississippi in designing stunning floral arrangements and holiday decorations.

Plant materials to be used during the presentation will be arizona and leland cypress, holly, cedar, nandina, pine (cones and needle branches), magnolia (leaves, branch swags and seed pods), green or gold leaf arborvitae, blue or lime-green juniper swaths, rosemary, elaeagnus switches, grape vines, sumac and ornamental grass seed heads, dried hydrangea mopheads, sweetgum balls and homegrown mistletoe.

The program is scheduled for Thursday, October 10, at 10 a.m., and is free of charge, but seating is limited to eighty people. Consequently, those interesting in attending are encourage to register in advance. Contact Rankin



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County Extension at 601-825-1462 to register or receive further information. Their office is located at located at 601 Marquette Road in Brandon.

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## 2019 Richland homecoming court presented



The Richland High School homecoming parade was held Thursday, October 3, at 6 p.m., followed by their 2019 Homecoming game Friday, October 4. The homecoming court was presented during half-time. Senior maids included (l to r), front row: Joely Miller, London Hobbs and Mosie Everett; and back row: Chelsea Green, Breanna Cook, Jessica Moudy and Emily Adams.



Junior maids included (l to r), front row: Ariana McCoy and Tiara Jackson; and back row: Tamora Hayman and Katie Beth Holmes.



Sophomore maids included (l to r), front row: Sydney Ragsdale and Erna Roland; and back row: Bayleigh Harris and Laila Anderson.



Freshman maids included (l to r), front row: Alainah Alexander and Samaria Thompson; and back row: Emily Bridges and Ciera Johnson.



Eighth grade maids were Cierra Sheppard (left) and Isabel Alvarado (right).



Seventh grade maids were Mattie Tagert (left) and Chrislee Mobley (right).

Photos special to SW Rankin News

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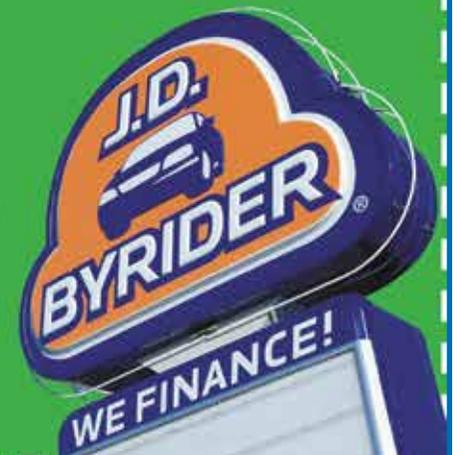
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# Cozy Florence house reports paranormal activity

By John David Harrison

To see the house from the outside, one would not suspect anything strange about it. The quaint A-frame house, painted autumn red and set back from the road in the shade of oak trees, appears to be a more-than-comfortable, normal place to raise a family. For homeowner Alice Jackson, however, the past twenty-nine years have been anything but normal.

Built in 1990, the house had strange happenings even during its construction. Builders would complain about missing tools or lumber, only to have the items reappear at the jobsite days later.

"If anything, there was more activity back then," says Jackson. "It's like we stirred up the dirt or something." After settling in, Jackson and her family began experiencing more peculiar episodes. Doors would open and slam shut by themselves; lights would turn on and off; objects would move on their own, including a candle Jackson kept on the coffee table.

"I had a candle, and we'd go somewhere and come back, and the candle would be over there or there," says Jackson, pointing around her living room, "I

remember thinking, 'That's the strangest thing, I know I put it there;' and I come back, and it's on the floor. One time my daughter, Ashley, her grandmother and I were in here talking, and the candle just got up and went over by the fireplace."

Things became even more unusual when Jackson started seeing small balls of light and other anomalies around the house. One night after getting home from a nursing shift, Jackson quickly prepared for bed, and, while saying a prayer with her eyes closed, she could tell a light had come on in the bedroom.

"I opened my eyes, and there was this tunnel of light, about three feet in diameter, and it reached from the ceiling to the floor. I knew I had to get up and go to work in the morning, so I just covered up my head and stayed in the bed. Before daylight, I pulled the covers down and looked out, and there were three buttons of light down there."

For years, Jackson kept quiet about the strange activity happening in her home. She finally told neighbor Mark Smith, even though she was afraid he would think she was crazy. Smith laughed and admitted to knowing that the house was haunted, he and his daughter Erin hav-



Photo by John David Harrison

ing already had weird experiences of their own.

Since childhood, Erin Brown has witnessed countless phenomenon, including light anomalies, shadow figures, curtains and blinds moving with no air-flow in the room. Her most unnerving experience occurred one day while she was mowing the lawn. Having passed onto Jackson's property, Brown happened to glance up and was stunned to see a man standing in the laundry room window.

"I was coming around on the lawnmower, and he was standing right here on the inside of the glass,"

Later, while researching the history of Florence, Brown discovered a 19th century photograph of Rev. Henry Steen, one of the town's forefathers, and be-

lieves him to be the man she saw in the window.

"So I know this is Henry's hangout spot," Brown says with a chuckle.

Since 2011, Jackson has had multiple paranormal teams investigate her house, including Jackson metro locals John Bullard and Brad Cooney. Bullard and Cooney currently have cameras and other video equipment set up in the house, documenting any disturbances which may occur, 24 hours a day. They've captured plenty of evidence, from inanimate objects moving to electronic voice phenomena.

"I heard a full fledged chatter conversation in the upstairs bedroom one evening, followed by what sounded like a WWE wrestling match. It sounded like someone was rummaging through furniture." Cooney says.

But with all that, Jackson and the other witnesses have never felt anything dark or negative about the place. Instead, the ghost or ghosts that allegedly haunt the cozy little house seem to be friendly, intelligent, and just eager to reach out to people.

For Jackson, that still doesn't completely keep the willies away.

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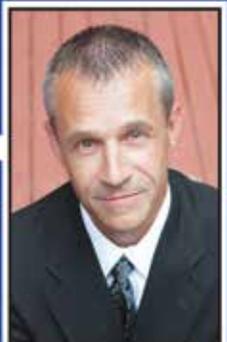
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# Richland cheer squad receives multiple honors

Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland High School (RHS) varsity cheer squad has had a busy summer and fall. Just prior to the beginning of the school year, the squad attended the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) Summer Camp in Gulf Shores, Alabama. They had a great showing, with five All-Americans selected from the squad, including Joely Miller, Katie Beth Holmes, Breanna Cook, Jenna McKlemurry and Mallory Chapman. Three RHS cheerleaders, Emily Adams, Breanna Cook and Jenna McKlemurry, were also chosen for the Pin-It-Forward award by demonstrating leadership, spirit, commitment, kindness and motivation.

Additionally, the cheer squad was selected to participate this fall in the 2019 Varsity Spirit's National Across the Field program. The criteria for selection included growth in the development of their cheer program, attendance at varsity branded camps, a display of group leadership as well as personifying school spirit every day in practice, at football games, at pep rallies and in their community.



Photo special to SW Rankin News

Pictured (l to r) are the Richland High School Varsity Cheer Squad members for 2019/20, front row: Mackenzie Ferguson, Kendall Freeman, Coach Terri Sullivan, Jenna McKlemurry, Chesney Stanley, Katie Beth Holmes, Brooklyn Longo and Lola Crozier; and back row: Sydney Ragsdale, Captain Breanna Cook, Emily Adams, Co-Captain Joely Miller, Mallory Chapman, Ema Roland and Alyssa Grantham.

The RHS cheer squad will initiate the 2019 program by signing and composing inspirational messages on a megaphone provided by Across the Field. The megaphone will then transfer to the Pis-

gah High School Varsity Cheerleaders for them to reciprocate, and so on. The journey of the megaphone from team to team will be documented via social media and, once completed, a summa-

ry of the megaphone's journey will be published showing the total number of schools and cheerleaders participating in the national initiative.

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# Pearl High School Lady Pirates participate in team camp at MC



Special to SW Rankin News

Several Pearl High School ninth grade Lady Pirates took part in the 2019 Mississippi College team camp at the A.E. Wood Coliseum at Mississippi College. Lady Choctaws head coach Paul Duke and assistant coach Jalessa Taylor oversee the camp each year on the Clinton campus.

# Richland-Florence Garden Club inaugural meeting held



Special to SW Rankin News

The Richland-Florence Garden Club held their first monthly meeting at the Richland Community Center. The speaker was Garden Clubs of Mississippi [GCM] Flower Show Judge May Hall. She explained the rules and guidelines associated with GCM flower shows. The hostesses for the meeting were Shannon Laseter, Beverly Hemphill and Beth Sanford. The focus for the month of September was reading and donating the book *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin to the Steen's Creek Elementary and the Richland Lower Elementary schools.

# McLaurin High takes part in "Start with Hello" week



Photos special to SW Rankin News

McLaurin High School students kicked off "Start with Hello" week recently by welcoming students as they came into the building. Students also invited students to sit with them at lunch as part of "No one sits alone" day. "Start with Hello" week is a program started by the SAVE Promise club that promotes inclusivity within schools and communities.



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## Florence High homecoming court selected for 2019



Special to SW Rankin News

Florence High School students were recently selected by their classmates to represent their respective graduating classes for the 2019 FHS Homecoming Court. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: senior maid Dendra Young, 2019 Homecoming Queen and senior Brooke Stogner, senior maid Alyssa Armstrong, 2019 Football Maid and senior Jordan Patrick, senior maid Jana Withrow and senior maid Anna Edwards; second row: junior maid Maecy Kate Reed, junior maid Grayson Weathersby, junior maid Maggy Greer, junior maid Sara Grace Jackson and junior maid Sadie Woods; third row: sophomore maid Gracie McGowan, sophomore maid Shaelyn Quick, sophomore maid Sydney Leavitt, sophomore maid Jada McGee and sophomore maid Katie Board; and back row: freshmen maid Karley Woods, freshman maid Jada Barnes, freshman maid Christina Guzman, freshman maid Skylar Ingram and freshman maid Brooklyn Robinson. Not pictured is senior maid Emily Sebren.

## Trick or Treat Street set for October 26

Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl Parks and Recreation Department will host Trick or Treat Street on Saturday, October 26, at Henry F. Shepherd Field at 2402 Old Brandon Road behind City Hall.

Children are encouraged to dress in costume to visit booths, where games and candy will be available. The public is invited to attend from 6 until 8 p.m.

Gates will open at 3 p.m. for setup, and organizations must provide their own tables and tents, as well as individually wrapped candy or treats for at least 1,000 children. All setup must be complete by 5:30 p.m.

Booth hosts should complete an application, available at the Pearl Parks and Recreation Department webpage, and plan to decorate their booth in a Halloween or fall theme. All themes should be child-friendly. Booth hosts are encouraged to include a game or activity in their booth design and to dress in costume, but neither are required.

There is no fee to host a booth, but booths cannot sell items.



Special to SW Rankin News

Attendees are encouraged to bring canned food items to support local food pantries, as the event is free.

The deadline to register to host a booth is Friday, October 18, at 4 p.m. For more information, call 601-932-3541.

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# Local vets to be honored

Special to SW Rankin News

Florence High School's (FHS) Junior ROTC will host a veteran's and first responder's recognition program on Friday, November 1. The special program will take place during half time of the Florence/Richland football game. Entry to the game is free to all veterans and first responders. All honorees are invited to attend the pregame tailgate at 6 p.m. on the FHS practice field, followed by kick-off at 7 p.m. The Richland-Florence Garden Club



and the Florentine Clubs of Florence will host a Blue Star Memorial Ceremony on Saturday, November 9, at 10:45 a.m. The memorial program will honor all men and women who have served, are serving or will serve the country in the armed forces. All veterans, active military personnel and their guests are invited to attend. The ceremony will be held at the Florence City Hall located at 203 College Street. Registration begins at 10:15 a.m.

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# Mooney named PPD Officer of the Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Sgt. Mark Mooney (center) was recently named the Pearl Police Department Officer of the Month. Mooney is a graduate of Pearl High School and Hinds Community College. He began as a reserve officer in 2000 and became a full-time officer in 2001. Mooney's colleagues laud him as a great leader and supervisor for the department, and say he uses his years of experience to shape young officers into leaders like himself who represent the best part of law enforcement, community connection and commitment of service to the citizens of Pearl. Mooney was presented with gift certificates from area businesses, meals and other gifts. Mooney and his wife, Penny, have one son, Mason.

## Richland seniors paint aprons at Community Center



Photos special to SW Rankin News

The Richland Community Center's Coffee and Crafts recently painted aprons. For more information about Richland Community Center offerings, call 601-420-3400.



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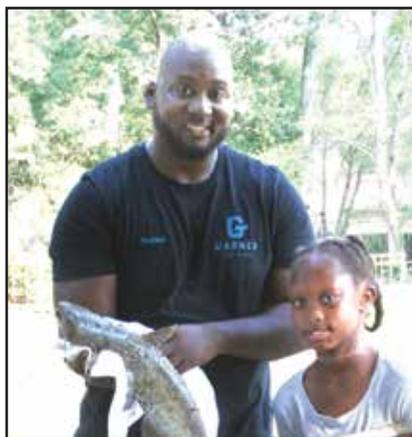
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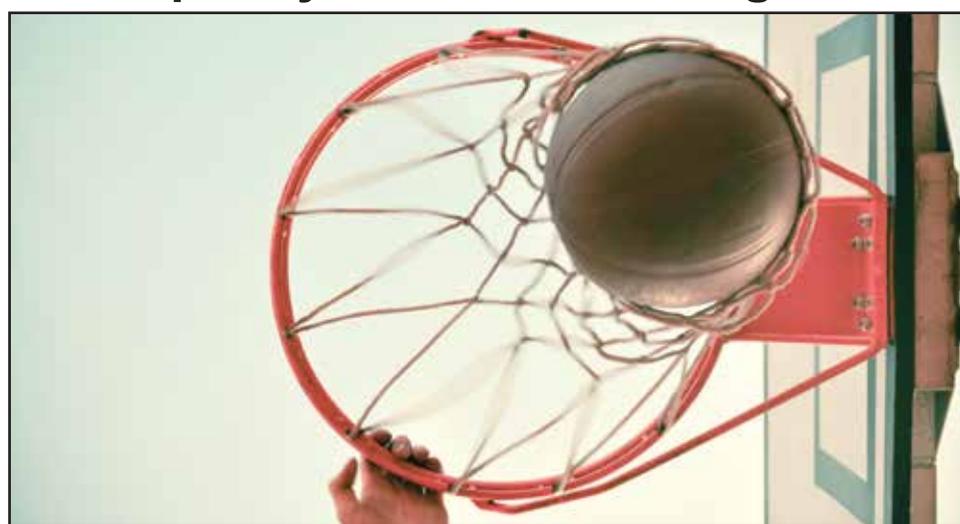
## 2019 Youth Fishing Rodeo held at Bright Park



Photos special to SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl Parks and Recreation Department recently held their 2019 Youth Fishing Rodeo at Bright Park. For more information about Pearl Parks and Rec events, call 601-932-3451.

## Pearl opens youth basketball registration



Special to SW Rankin News

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Parks and Recreation Department has opened registration for its youth basketball league. Registration can be completed online or in person. Online registration is available at [www.PearlParksandRec.com](http://www.PearlParksandRec.com) through November 2.

In-person registration is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. at 320 City Center Drive, as well as on Saturday, November 2, from 10 a.m. until noon.

The registration fee is \$75 per child, and league divisions will be co-ed from boys ages five and six and girls ages five through seven. Junior girls will be ages eight through ten, and senior girls will be ages ten through thirteen. Rookie boys will be ages seven and eight, with junior boys being ages nine and ten, and senior boys ages eleven and twelve.

All ages will be as of August 31, 2019.

For more information, contact Holly Haralson at 601-932-3541.

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