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Your Community. Your News. Your Paper.

SW RANKIN NEWS

The Pearl News | The Richland News | The Florence News

Vol. 11, No. 10 | October 2026

PPCA cheerleaders named grand champions times two

Special to The Pearl News

The Park Place Christian Academy (PPCA) varsity cheerleaders made school history on September 9 at the MAIS State Cheer Competition, returning home as two-time Grand Champions.

Competing in both the Small Non-Tumbling and Small Game Day divisions, the team earned first place in each division, securing two state championships in one day.

School officials say the finishes were the result of countless hours of preparation, early mornings, long days and a season filled with hard work, dedication and perseverance. Throughout the year, the cheerleaders continued to show up, push themselves and work to improve both individually and as a team.

Their commitment paid off in a historic way, said squad leaders.

With their two championship victories, the team became the first cheerleading team in Park Place Christian Academy history to bring home two Grand Championships.

The team's success was also made possible through the leadership and dedication of its coaching staff. The cheerleaders are coached by Head Coaches Ashley Stegall and Casidee Westbrook, with Assistant Coaches Kim Brasher and Caryn Fitzgerald.

For the cheerleaders, the state championships represent more than two first-place trophies. They are a reflection of the countless hours of practice, the challenges overcome and the determination to keep working toward a common goal.



Special to The Pearl News

The Park Place Christian Academy varsity cheerleaders made school history on September 9 at the MAIS State Cheer Competition, returning home as two-time Grand Champions. They earned first place in the Small Non-Tumbling and Small Game Day divisions.

Pearl Chamber seeking new executive director

Special to The Pearl News

The Pearl Chamber of Commerce is seeking a new executive director, with current Director Kathy Deer retiring at the end of the year after twenty-one years of service.

The Chamber Board stated, "For over two decades, Kathy Deer has generously given her time, leadership and heart to our organization. We are deeply grateful for her unwavering dedication and the countless contributions she has made throughout the years. Her leadership and impact will be felt for many years to come, and we sincerely appreciate all she has done to help strengthen and shape our organization."

The Pearl Chamber posted that they are committed to a thoughtful, systematic and organized process to identify the right individual to lead the organization into the future.

The Chamber's primary functions include promoting Pearl businesses and encouraging residents to shop locally; connecting business owners through networking events and community activities; helping new and existing businesses gain visibility through directories, promotions, grand openings and ribbon-cutting ceremonies; supporting economic development and a business-friendly environment; organizing events such as the annual banquet and community markets; recognizing business and community leaders; and promoting Pearl as a desirable place to live, work, visit and invest.



Special to The Pearl News

Kathy Deer has been with the Pearl Chamber of Commerce for twenty-one years. She will retire at the end of this year.

The executive director profile outlines the qualities, experience and leadership characteristics the organization is seeking at www.pearlms.org/recruitment-profile-executive-director. Those who are interested in the opportunity may send a resume/CV to daniel@logandevgroup.com.

ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3
SAMPLE BALLOTS AVAILABLE
RANKINCOUNTYMS.ORG
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Monday – Friday
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OPEN SATURDAYS
October 24 & October 31
8 AM – 12 NOON
Michelle Adcock, Circuit Clerk
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Brandon, MS 39042
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Line Dance Social brings disco to Richland Senior Center

By Guest Columnist Shea Thames

Line dancing is a weekly favorite at the Richland Senior Center, but once each month, the Wednesday afternoon class takes on a different look. In September, that meant stepping back into the disco era for an afternoon of music, dancing, themed attire and friendly competition.

The Center's monthly Line Dance Social builds on its regular Wednesday classes, led by Carolyn and Buddy Ham, by giving seniors another way to enjoy the dances they have learned while adding food, games and a new theme. September's social included disco trivia and a Best Dressed competition, with plenty of participants arriving dressed for the occasion.

Charlene was selected as the Sponsor's Choice for Best Dressed by Shelby Rogers with Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA). Donna received the City of Richland selection, chosen by Mayor Clay Burns and Administrative Assistant Taylor Hulett.



Photos special to The Richland News

The Center's monthly Line Dance Social builds on its regular Wednesday classes, led by Carolyn and Buddy Ham, by giving seniors another way to enjoy the dances they have learned while adding food, games and a new theme.



Organizers and sponsors pictured (l to r) are: Amy Matthews, Shelby Rogers and Shea Thames.



Prize winners

AMBA sponsored the September social, providing food, dessert and prizes, while seniors contributed side dishes to the afternoon menu. Deep South Nutrition also provided a HomeGoods gift card for one of the Best Dressed prizes.

Regular Line Dance classes are held Wednesdays at 2 p.m., with the themed social taking its place on the third Wednesday of each month. September may have belonged to disco, but October will bring a Halloween theme to the dance floor.

The Richland Senior Center, a City of Richland Senior Services program, is located at 371 Scarbrough Street in Richland and serves senior adults ages 55 and older through fitness, recreational, educational and social programming. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Shea Thames serves as the director of the Richland Senior Center.

RHS' Megan Rushing featured in *Art in Movement Magazine*



Photos special to The Richland News

Special to The Pearl News

Megan Rushing, a tenth grader at Richland High School (RHS), is featured in the 2026 edition of *Art in Movement Magazine*. The fifteen-year-old Rushing traveled this summer to Baton Rouge to participate in a photo shoot with Alisha Hudman, photographer and editor/creator of the magazine.

Rushing has been dancing at Lindsey Claire Dance Company since she was four and has been on the competition team since age five. She has played roles in recitals such as young Simba, young Anna, HeiHei, Firefly Ray, the Lion in Oz, the Snow Queen and ballerina doll in the *Nutcracker*. She has won scholarships in ballet and contemporary. Her friends and competition team at Lindsey Clarie's have many first-place overall wins and placements, as well as are National Champions in the Showstoppers dance competition.

Rushing also maintains a 4.0 grade point average in high school.



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Community Bank breaks ground on new Florence location

Special to The Florence News

Community Bank held the groundbreaking of its newest office location in Florence on September 11. Bank officials say the company has been proudly headquartered in Rankin County and has long been committed to supporting the communities that make Central Mississippi a great place to live and work. The Florence office represents an investment in the area's continued growth and the bank's dedication to providing exceptional service close to home.

As Florence continues to grow, Community Bank is expanding its presence in one of Mississippi's fastest-growing communities. Representatives say the 4,600-square-foot office will combine modern conveniences with the personalized service Community Bank is known for, creating a welcoming environment for customers across Rankin County.



Special to The Florence News

Community Bank is expanding its presence in Florence, one of Mississippi's fastest-growing communities. Construction on the 4,600-square-foot office is expected to be completed by early 2028. The groundbreaking was held on September 11, 2026.

"We are excited to continue investing in Florence and the surrounding communities," said Tim Pickett, president of Community Bank's Rankin County Division. "Florence is experiencing tremendous growth, and this new office reflects our commitment to being a long-term part of that growth. We look forward to serving the families, businesses and community leaders who are helping shape the future of Rankin County."

Located at 510 Berry's Boulevard, the new office will provide deposit services in both the drive-through and lobby, an exterior ATM, and safe deposit boxes. Loan services will include home mortgages, personal and business loans and construction lending. Financial planning and trust services will also be available. Construction is expected to be completed by early 2028.

For more than 120 years, Community Bank has been committed to helping communities thrive. As the only bank headquartered in Rankin County, Community Bank says it is honored to continue investing in the place it calls home, and says the Florence office will help strengthen local relationships and support the families, businesses and community leaders who are shaping the future of the area.

FHS senior Dawson Bishop named National Merit Semifinalist

Special to The Florence News

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®) recently announced that Dawson Bishop, a senior at Florence High School (FHS), has been named as National Merit Semifinalists in the 72nd annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Bishop is in the one percent of high school students across the country to be recognized as National Merit Semifinalists. He is among less than 150 students in Mississippi to earn the designation.

Bishop has the opportunity to continue in the competition for about 6,700 National Merit Scholarships worth approximately $24 million that will be offered next spring.

About ninety-five percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and more than half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar® title. To advance to the Finalist level and to be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award, Semifinalists must fulfill additional requirements, including proving they have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, being endorsed and recommended by a high school official, writing an essay and earning SAT® or ACT® scores that confirm their earlier performance on the qualifying test. School officials must provide information about the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received.

Over 1.2 million juniors in about 20,000 high schools entered the 2027 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2025 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.



Special to The Florence News

Dawson Bishop, a senior at Florence High School, has been named as National Merit Semifinalists in the 72nd annual National Merit Scholarship Program. He is among less than 150 students in Mississippi to earn the designation.

The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

From over 16,000 Semifinalists, more than 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation. All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of Finalists.

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Absentee voting underway in Rankin County

Special to SW Rankin News

The early numbers are in and show that absentee voting is both popular and effective in the voting process. As the November 3 General Election approaches, the Rankin County Circuit Clerk's office has been busy helping people cast early ballots.

Rankin County Circuit Clerk Michelle Adcock and her staff first opened the absentee voting process in their office on Monday, September 21, which will remain open through Saturday, October 31, at noon. The Rankin County Circuit Clerk's Office will also be open on Saturday, October 24, from 8 a.m. to noon to facilitate absentee voting.

Between 8 a.m. on the first Monday and 5 p.m. that Friday, Adcock indicated that 237 people had cast absentee ballots for the general election. Adcock added that they were averaging approximately 50 voters a day and expects that number to increase in the coming weeks as the October 31 deadline approaches.

"Absentee voting provides an important opportunity for eligible voters to participate in elections when circumstances prevent them from casting a ballot in person on election day," said Adcock. "For many registered voters, absentee voting offers them a way to fulfill their civic responsibility despite work schedules, travel commitments, disabilities or other qualifying circumstances."

Absentee voting is not available to every voter for every reason. Mississippi law establishes specific eligibility requirements, and voters should contact the Rankin County Circuit Clerk's Office to determine which options are available to them.

Adcock said that **voters who meet one of five basic requirements can come into their office and vote by absentee ballot.** First, absentee ballot voting is available for **anyone aged 65 or older.** Also, it is available to **anyone who has a disability.**

If the voter is **traveling out of the area at the time of the election** or is **a college student who may be away at school,** absentee ballot voting is available. Finally, if a voter is **on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces**, they can vote by absentee ballot.

Ultimately, absentee voting provides an additional way for eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote. It can help people overcome scheduling, travel and accessibility challenges while allowing them to participate in elections that will ultimately affect the community.



Adcock said that their office had received requests for absentee ballot voting from Mississippians across the state and the United States. In fact, the office had received requests from Thailand, Japan, Canada, France, New Zealand, Australia, Kenya and the United Kingdom. The clerk pointed to this as proof that absentee ballot voting is not just popular but helps voters connect the dots to get their votes cast in elections.

"There are 97,841 active voters in Rankin County, which is the fourth-largest count in Mississippi," stated Adcock. When asked what percentage of those people will cast a vote on November 3, Adcock reflected on the 2022 General Election, when only 37% of the active voters in Rankin County showed up at the polls.

"It all depends on the races and the opponents who are running," said Adcock. "In 2022, there really wasn't a huge turnout, because it was a school board race," Adcock emphasized the importance of the 2026 General Election and the offices that are at stake.

Adcock was adamant about the importance of people getting to the polls and making their voice count.

"Every election is important, but the Circuit Court Judge and Chancery Court Judge races are very important," said Adcock. "Citizens really need to know that these are the positions in Rankin County that affect everyday life."

Adcock went on to explain that Circuit Court makes important decisions related to crime deterrence and prevention, and public safety. Adcock added that the Chancery Court is there to make decisions that solve Civil disputes, such as land and title cases, but also makes very important decisions when it comes to things like child custody cases.

"Citizens should really put forth the effort to find out as much as they can about the candidates and the offices they're seeking," stated Adcock. "These are offices that make a huge impact in our daily lives and community."

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Library system launches reading initiative with $10K grant

Special to SW Rankin News

Central Mississippi Regional Library System (CMRLS) has been awarded a $10,000 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Big Read grant to present "*The Great Gatsby:* Stories of Us — Mississippi Voices and the American Dream," a community-wide reading and cultural initiative serving Rankin, Scott, Simpson and Smith counties.

Centered on F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the initiative will invite Central Mississippians to explore the American Dream—its promises, challenges and changing meaning—through literature, history, art and community conversation. Themes of ambition, wealth, class, reinvention and belonging will encourage participants to consider how the ideas presented in the novel continue to resonate in Mississippi communities today.

"We are honored to bring the NEA Big Read to Central Mississippi," said Mara Villa Polk, CMRLS Director. "This initiative gives our communities an opportunity not only to read together, but also to share their own stories, explore what the American Dream means to them, and connect through meaningful conversations and creative experiences."

Throughout the initiative, CMRLS will offer programs and activities at libraries and community locations across its four-county service area. Planned



Special to SW Rankin News

NEA Big Read with CMRLS: Stories of Us – Gatsby's Glass and Glamour was held at the Richland Public Library on Saturday, October 10, bringing a little Roaring '20s glamour to craft night. Groups transformed ordinary plastic champagne glasses into The Great Gatsby*-inspired decorative pieces using glitter, embellishments, metallic accents and Art Deco-inspired designs.*

opportunities include free book giveaways, community book discussions, history and heritage programs, creative activities, public presentations and special events inspired by the themes of *The Great Gatsby*.

The initiative will also feature Our Mississippi Dreams, a community art project inviting residents to express their own hopes, experiences and aspirations through artwork, writing or photography. The project will culminate in a traveling exhibit representing the voices and perspectives of communities throughout Central Mississippi.

Programming will connect with the commemoration of America's 250th anniversary, encouraging participants to explore how the idea of the American Dream has evolved throughout the nation's history while reflecting on the many voices and experiences that continue to shape the American story.

CMRLS will work alongside schools, civic organizations, local governments, cultural organizations, artists, historians and other community partners to bring programming to residents throughout the four counties.

CMRLS kicked off the initiative in September with special programs throughout the library system. Community members are invited to begin exploring the themes of *The Great Gatsby:* Stories of Us through programs featuring literature, history, creativity and conversation. This initiative will continue throughout December.

These October events are just the beginning. Additional NEA Big Read with CMRLS: Stories of Us programs will be offered throughout the initiative, providing opportunities for residents of all ages to read, create, learn and connect.

For the most current dates, times, locations and program information, visit the CMRLS Events Calendar at www.cmrls.lib.ms.us/events/ and search "NEA Big Read with CMRLS: Stories of Us."

Kerr named General Manger of MS Mud Monsters

Special to The Pearl News

The Mississippi Mud Monsters recently announced that David Kerr has been named general manager of the organization after serving as assistant general manager since the club's launch.

Kerr was formally introduced in his new role during a news conference at Trustmark Park on September 8.

"David has been right in the middle of building the Mud Monsters from the beginning," said Joe Eng, owner and CEO of the Mississippi Mud Monsters.



Special to The SW Rankin News

At the news conference announcing his promotion, David Kerr is shown with members of the Pearl Chamber of Commerce. Pictured (l to r) are: Kathy Deer, Pearl Chamber Executive Director; Kerr; State Rep. Gene Newman, past president of the Chamber's Executive Committee; and Carrie Frierdich, Membership Director.

"We've seen firsthand how much he cares about this organization, this community and the people who support it. He understands where we've been, but, more importantly, he has a clear vision for where we can go. We believe he's the right person to lead the Mud Monsters into what comes next."

According to officials, Kerr brings more than a decade of experience in professional baseball across independent and affiliated baseball. He has also been part of both the final chapter of the Mississippi Braves and the beginning of the Mississippi Mud Monsters at Trustmark Park.





Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



"What Is Your Life?"

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.". James 4:13-16

"Come now" is a phrase that is designed to gain attention, and simply means, "See!", "Behold", "Listen". The Greek word is often used in connection with the purpose of gaining a hearing. The implication is that there is something seriously wrong and those addressed should give careful heed to what James is saying. By his address to those "who say" shows that they were not idle thinkers, but their plans were laid out, after much planning. Their sin was not in their planning but in planning without regard for God the realizing that all plans are dependent on His will for success.

Notice their presumption. The time when they will begin their journey is of their own choosing. It may be today or tomorrow and spend maybe a year there. They will also select the city to where they will be going. They will be doing business and from their activity will gain a profit. They are assuming that all that they have decided is in their own hands.

Life is uncertain. Regardless of what one plans for tomorrow, next week, next year or even years from now, life is uncertain. We are not guaranteed past the moment we now live. How many people have died while reading this article that did not plan on dying at that moment? How many plans have been cancelled because of the sudden death of someone? James describes life as a vapor, something that is not solid, seen only for a moment then it is gone.

Walk through a cemetery and look at the grave markers. Look at the line that gives the date of birth and the date of death. These two dates are not as important as the – (dash) between the dates. What this dash represents is your life, what happened from birth to death.

Solomon had everything he wanted – almost. He was not happy. As he looked back on his life he remarked, "All is vanity!" (Ecc.12:8), then in conclusion he said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecc.12:13-14 NKJV).

I remember an old saying that said, "I will see you next week if the Lord's willing and the creek don't rise." The Hebrew writer states, "It is appointed for men once to die and then the judgment" (Heb.9:27). This is an appointment that all of will make, whether it is planned or not, there is no choice.

To the faithful Christian death is a gain (Phil.1:21), and is precious in the eyes of God (Psm.116:15). There is also tragedy of being eternally separated from God (2 Thess.1:9).

"What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (Jas.4:14).

Florence Church of Christ-220 White Street -Florence, MS 39073
Mailing Address: 219 Morrison Road
You are invited to come worship with us.

City of Richland unveils new emblem



Special to SW Rankin News

The City of Richland got a new logo added at City Hall recently. The Public Works team put up the emblem in September. City leaders sat it adds a special touch to the front of City Hall and proudly represents the City of Richland and the community.

Fourth Annual Pet Parade held September 26

Special to SW Rankin News

The Florentine Evening Club's 4th Annual Pet Parade and Cow Paddy Plop was held from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 26, on Earl Clark Drive. All-sizes of dogs and a tortoise were present.

Prizes included Biggest Dog, Smartest Dog and Best Behaved.

Events included local vendor booths, a puppy playground, a K-9 handler demo, a photo booth, Blessing of the Pets, raffles, and the Cow Patty Plop Contest hosted by the Our Neck of the Woods 4H Club.

There was music, food trucks, dessert/snow cone trucks, and pup cups.







Photo by Amelia Patterson

Keller Patterson and his mother, Amelia, brought their family dog, Ladybird Clover, to the Pet Parade, where she won Best Behaved.



Photos by Susie A. Wolfe unless otherwise named.

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Florence Eagles remain 5A Region 2 District Champions

Special to The Pearl News



Special to SW Rankin News

The Lady Eagles Volleyball team is District Champions again with an undefeated season going into the playoffs in October. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Addison Huskey, Alyssa Arnold, Alexis Smith, Brelynn Grice and Callie Anderson; middle row: Parker Hearn, Paisley Wilder, Skylar Shoemaker, Karsyn Holcomb, Allie Dale, Scarlett Ellis, Brylee Brown and Ella Williams; and back row: Assistant Coach Sara Tabor, Brooklee Taylor, Anna Kate Dudley, Kendall Wilder, Mylee Mangum, Sophie Joyner, Dailah Lightle, Brikiyah Barnes, Aniston Collette and Head Coach Kirby Cloe. Not pictured is Daylyn Hodges.

The Florence High School (FHS) Lady Eagles volleyball program has had a great 2026 season. They won the district championship last year, losing only one set throughout district play. This year, they were able to take another step forward and finished undefeated in district play, according to second-year Head Coach Kirby Cloer.

The volleyball team has twenty-two players between the varsity and JV teams, ranging from ninth through twelfth grade. The season began at the end of July and runs through early October, with playoffs continuing into October. Sara Tabor is Assistant Coach.

"We are proud of that accomplishment, but winning district is not where our goals end," said Cloer. "We will host the first round of playoffs [in early October] and our focus now is on continuing to improve and seeing how far we can take this team. Both coaches are extremely proud of how much our players have grown, both on and off the court."

"There are three graduating seniors this year. They have each contributed something special to our program, and it has been rewarding to watch them grow throughout their high school careers. As coaches, one of the hardest parts is knowing that your seniors' time with you is coming to an end, but we are excited to celebrate them and everything they have brought to the Lady Eagles," Cloer said.

Cloer said the most important things about the team is the culture they are building.

"We talk a lot about being a team sport, not a "me" sport. Whether a player is on the court, the bench, during practice or just cheering on a teammate, she has a role and an impact. We want our girls to understand that success comes from everyone buying into something bigger than themselves. We are proud of what the Lady Eagles have accomplished and are excited about where this program is headed," she said.

Tomlinson awarded JROTC Legion of Valor



Special to SW Rankin News

CDT/MAJ Mary Grace "MG" Tomlinson was recognized by the City of Florence Mayor and Board of Aldermen during the September Board meeting. Tomlinson has been awarded the JROTC Legion of Valor Award, which serves as the highest award available for JROTC Cadets. She was one of only twenty-six JROTC Cadets nationwide to receive the award for the 2026-27 school year. Tomlinson officially received her award at the October 2 Florence High School (FHS) football pep rally.





Pearl's Annual Fishing Rodeo held September 26 at Bright Park

It was perfect weather for the City of Pearl's Annual Kids Fishing Rodeo on Saturday, September 26. The kids reeled in a bunch of nice fish and took home several prizes. Pearl Parks and Rec put on the event with the help of the Fire Department grilling hot dogs to keep everyone fed, and many other volunteers that had a hand in made the morning successful. As the days go by, the fishing tales are getting bigger and bigger!



Photos special to SW Rankin News





Hamilton honored for RPD years' service



Special to SW Rankin News

At the September 15 Richland Board of Alderman Meeting, Alderman John Hamilton (center) pinned his son, Coty Hamilton, for twenty years' service to the Richland Police Department. Coty's son, Bryson, 12, is looking on.

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Pearl Band excels at first competition of the year



Special to SW Rankin News

At the first competition of the season, the Pearl Pirate Band placed first in Class IV; Best in Class Music, Visual, Percussion, and Color Guard; and Overall Highest Score.

MHS celebrates Homecoming with Mayor of Star as Grand Marshal



Special to SW Rankin News

John Lee, Mayor of Star and McLaurin High School alumnus, served as Grand Marshal of the MHS Homecoming Parade on September 17.

Special to SW Rankin News

John Lee said it was truly an honor to be invited by McLaurin High School (MHS) to serve as Grand Marshal for their Homecoming celebration in mid-September. The parade was Thursday, the game against West Lincoln was Friday, and the dance was Saturday.

"As Mayor of Star," he said, "It was a special privilege to represent our community, but this invitation meant even more to me, because McLaurin is also my alma mater. To come back to the school that played a part in shaping who I am today and be able to participate in such a special tradition brought back a lot of great memories."

The 2026 McLaurin Homecoming Court included seventh graders Savannah Rymer and Stokeleigh Lowe; eighth graders Natileigh Cole and Olive Smicker; freshmen Keaton Benton, Shyanne Hickson and Zoey Rodriquez; sophomores Alexus Tillman, Kali Meloling and Khloe Belk; juniors Brooklyn Irby, Lyndsey Bridgers and Maddie Dewease; and seniors Isabella McCann, Kami Howell, Kenia Valencia, Samantha Adams and Skylee McMahon.





From the Florence Boardroom

SW Rankin News

At the regular Meeting of the Mayor and Board, September 1, 2026, present were Mayor Trey Gunn, Alderman John Banks, Brian Grantham, Mason Herrin, Kyle Martin and Brent Sistrunk.

The first motion approved by all was that the General Fund Florence tax levy for 2027 is 31.2 mills, of which 11.69% will be allocated for debt served.

A public hearing was held to give the general public an opportunity to comment on the proposed budget of revenues and expenses and tax levies for the 2027 fiscal year. Being that no one was present desiring to speak for or against the above referenced public hearing, Mayor Gunn closed the public hearing and returned to regular session.

Upon recommendation of Police Chief Brad Burns, the request of



Special to SW Rankin News

Discovery Christian School to hold their annual homecoming parade on Friday September 25, 2026, at 9 a.m. using the established parade route was Board approved.

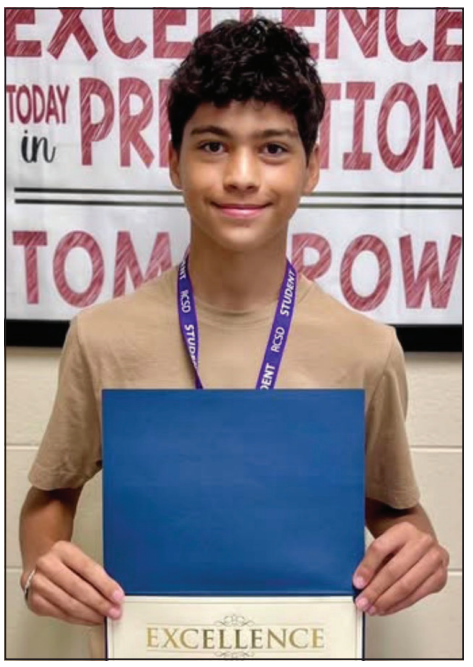
Community Development Director Joel Sims asked the Board to approve signage for Dollar General Corporation located at 2998 Hwy. 49 South Florence as presented by Image Signs and Neon, Inc. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

City Engineer Tim Parker asked the Board to approve the final plat for Waverly Subdivision, phase 2, contingent upon receipt of final approvals from MDEQ and BOH, acceptance of Letter of Credit which the city will hold until the final wearing surface and any other incomplete work covered by the LOC is complete and accepted. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

Parker also asked the Board to sign off on the 2026 Elevated Tanks Rehab Contract for a Rehab Project. It was approved and has a start date of September 14, 2026. Thompson Brothers Drilling, Inc. is requesting to run two 12-hour crews to work around the clock unless there are issues with overnight work that cannot be resolved. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

Upon recommendation of City Clerk Linda Wigley, travel was approved to send Melissa McCue to mandatory court clerk training in Biloxi, expenses funded by MS Judicial Collage; plus, to send City Clerk Wigley and Deputy City Clerk Dana Vaughn to a clerks training seminar in Hattiesburg.

Farmer named RCSD Student of the Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Florence Middle School (FMS) eighth grader Calvin Farmer was named the Rankin County School District (RCSD) Secondary Student of the Month for August. School officials said Farmer represents FMS well in all he does as a member of the football team, reciting the pledge in the mornings, and always volunteering to help the faculty and staff with various tasks. They said they are so proud of Farmer and his well-deserved recognition.

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From the Pearl Boardroom

SW Rankin News

At the September Board Meetings, 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.

At the September 1 meeting, the Board approved the Consent Agenda and adjourned.

On September 15, Zach Phillips, comptroller, was named the Employee of the Month, and William Evans was named the Police Officer of the Month. Upon the retirement of Captain Henry Ball after twenty-nine years of service, two promotions were honored: Captain Jimmy Marcel and Jeffery Davis (JD).

On September 15, the Board passed the Consent Agenda and the request for Wendy Ochoa for a conditional use permit to allow her to operate an ice cream and snack shop at 422 Riverwind Drive, Suite D.

A public hearing was set for October 6, 2026, to determine whether or not a variance should be granted to Pritesh Patel to allow him to have a 24-foot rear setback instead of the required 50-foot and also to allow him to have a 60-foot building height instead of the allowed 35-foot height at May Drive.

Pearl Kiwanis Club holds annual Officer Induction Ceremony



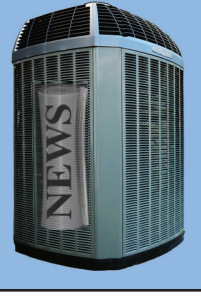
Special to SW Rankin News

The Kiwanis Club of Pearl held the annual Officer Induction Ceremony in September at the Holiday Inn. Michael Brewer was presented with a plaque for his service as the 2025-26 president and was given a Kiwanis Past President's pin. John McHenry was installed as the 2026-27 President; Paige Bromen was installed as President Elect; Mitch Childre was installed as the Secretary-Treasurer; Carrie Frierdich, David Kerr and Laurin Bailey were all installed as officers on the Board of Directors. Other officers currently serving are Derek Harris, Donna Ryals and Tonya McCrory. Donna Ryals was presented with the Kiwanis Club of Pearl "Kiwanian of the Year Award." Pictured (l to r) are: Tonya McCrory, Carrie Frierdich, Paige Broman, Michael Brewer, John McHenry (center), Laurin Bailey, David Kerr, Donna Ryals, Mitch Childre and Derek Harris.

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From the Richland Boardroom

SW Rankin News

The regular Richland Board of Alderman September meetings were held on September 1 and 15 at City Hall. Present were the Mayor Clay Burns and Aldermen John Hamilton, Scot Mancil, Matthew Quick, Beth Sanford, and A.J. Shields.

On September 1, Mayor Burns called the meeting to order, and Alderman Hamilton opened the meeting with prayer. In addition to the approval of the Consent Agenda and monthly payments, the Board approved travel requests that included Karen Jackson to attend the 2026 Winter Municipal Clerk Conference in Flowood on December 9-11, 2026; Joesph McGinty to attend Leadership of Surface Transportation Incidents in Pueblo, Colorado, on October 10-24, 2026, at no cost to the city; and Travis Martin and Corey Adams to attend Leadership of Surface Transportation Incidents in Pueblo, Colorado, on October 18-24, 2026, at no cost to the city.

The Board of Aldermen also approved Engineering Service for $138,303.85, to Thornton Construction Co. for work performed on the Recreation Center Parking Improvements Project.

A Public Hearing was set for a Variance Request by Total Transportation at 125 Riverview Drive, Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance: Provisions for Flood Hazard Reduction. Public Works Director Jason Sutphin explained and stated that the City has no issue with the Variance, since the structure will be flood-proofed. Next, Tom Zylstra with Total Transportation spoke in favor of his request. No one present responded to the Mayor's request for any objections against the Variance. It carried unanimously by all members of the Board of Aldermen.

The City of Richland plans to apply to the Mississippi Department of Transportation for a Transportation Alternatives Program project. On September 1, a resolution was adopted by the Richland Board: to comply with the Federal and State Guidelines for the Mississippi Transportation Alternatives Program; and is certified that no known foreseeable legal impediments exist that would prohibit the completion of the project and that the project complies with all applicable codes, standards, and/or regulations required for completion. The motion having received the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present, the Mayor declared the motion carried and the resolution adopted.

FMS hosts RCSD Board meeting

Florence Middle School (FMS) hosted the Rankin County School District (RCSD) Board Meeting on September 23. Groups participating in the meeting were Student Council, Scout Troop 85 and the FMS Choir, along with FHS Choir representatives.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Special guests pictured (l to r) are: Assistant Superintendent Keith Reed, FMS Principal Brock Sistrunk, FES Principal Amanda Clark, Florence Mayor Trey Gunn, Representative Lance Varner, FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams, Rankin County Emergency Operations Director Brian Grantham, and FMS Assistant Principal Tyler Walters.



Scout Troop 85 was represented by James McDonald, Cooper Thurman and Cullen Armstrong and led by Troop Leader Jason Rideout (not pictured).

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NIGHT OUT AGAINST CRIME
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10 A.M. - 4 P.M.
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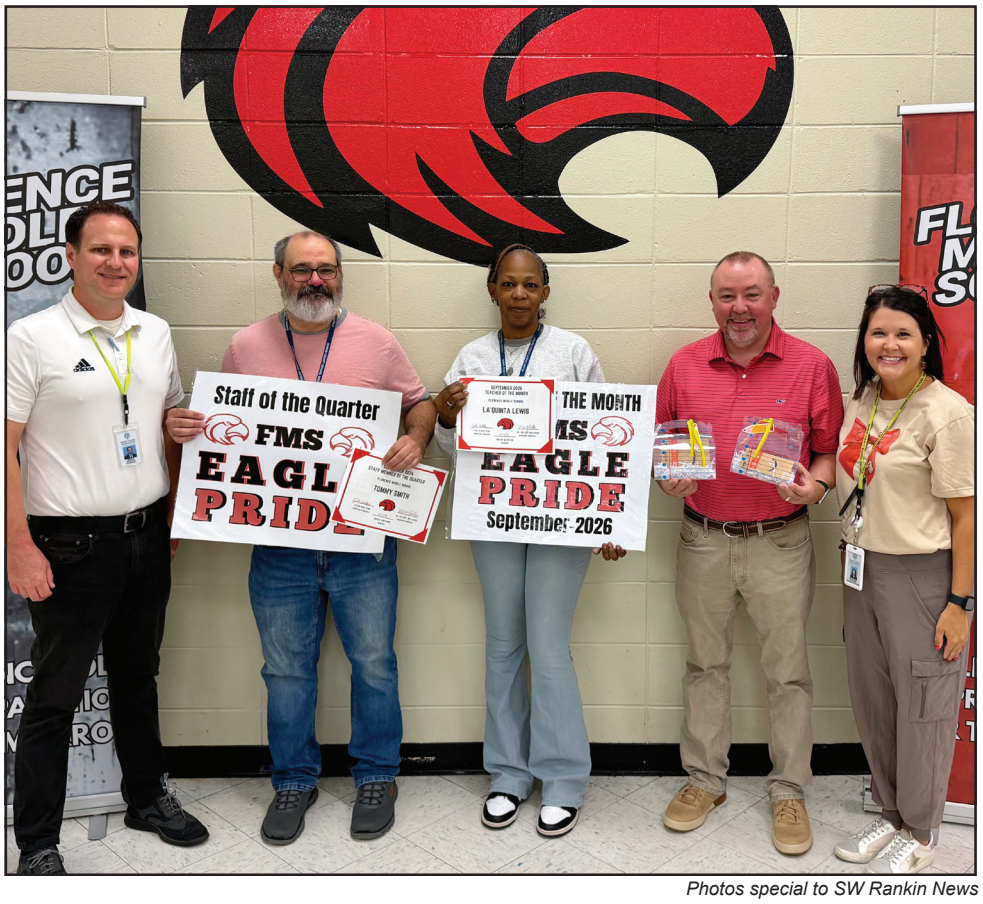
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Florence Middle names September Eagles of the Month





Photos special to SW Rankin News

Florence Middle School (FMS) recently named its Students of the Month for September. Pictured (l to r) are: FMS Principal Brock Sistrunk, Sixth Grade Student of the Month Ariella Silva, Seventh Grade Student of the Month Harlon Vogt, Eighth Grade Student of the Month Mason Marsh, Student of the Month Sponsor Tanner Wilson of Farm Bureau Insurance and FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams.

La'Quinta Lewis has been named the September Florence Middle School Teacher of the Month, and Tommy Smith has been named Staff Member of the Quarter. Pictured (l to r) are FMS Principal Brock Sistrunk, Smith, Lewis, Teacher/Staff Recognition sponsor Representative Lance Varner, and FMS Assistant Principal Dr. Kelsey Williams.

Zachary Phillips named City of Pearl Employee of the Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Mayor Jake Windham presented Zachary Phillips with a certificate of appreciation as Employee of the Month and thanked him for his expertise and dedication.

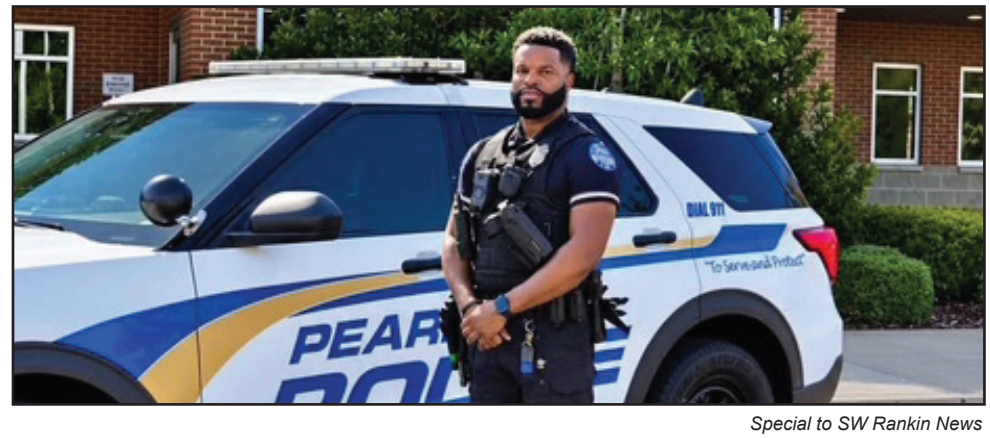
Special to SW Rankin News

Zachary Phillips was selected as the City of Pearl Employee of the Month in September.

Phillips received his bachelor's degree in accounting from Mississippi College and then worked for the State Auditor's office for eight years. He has served as Pearl's City Comptroller for almost two years and has since acquired his CPA license. He manages special projects, internal audit functions and grants.

Mayor Jake Windham presented him with a certificate of appreciation and thanked him for his expertise and dedication. The Pearl Chamber gave him a hundred-dollar Sam's Club gift card, a Burlebo cap and other gifts from Boudreaux's. Revell Ace Hardware-Pearl donated a stainless steel tumbler and the Pearl Municipal Federal Credit Union donated a twenty-five dollar Visa gift card.

Pearl PD names William Evans Officer of the Month



Special to SW Rankin News

Officer William Evans

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl Police Department (PPD) Officer of the Month is William Evans. Evans graduated from Grenada High School and then Hinds Community College before going on to Langston University.

He worked for the state as a corrections officer and detention officer before going to work for the Jackson Police Department in 2020. He began his career at PPD in August 2023 and has proved to be an outstanding officer and respected leader, according to Police Chief Nick McLendon. Evans recently received a letter of accommodation from a citizen for his professionalism and kindness.

"He is a hard worker and dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of our citizens," said the Chief.

Evans also plays the drums in the praise band at his church.

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PHS showcases 2026 Homecoming Maids and hosts 50th PPSD birthday party

Pearl High School (PHS) 2026 Homecoming Activities were held Thursday, October 1, with a Homecoming parade and community pep rally that ran down Pirate Cove to the main PHS parking lot, followed by a Pearl Public School District (PPSD) 50th birthday party at Ray Rogers Stadium, featuring food trucks, community celebrations and a fireworks finale. Friday, October 9, was the Pearl Pirates vs. Meridian Wildcats football game, followed by the "Anchors Away" 2026 Homecoming dance.



The PHS Freshman Maids pictured (l to r) are, front row: Marleigh Drane, Brynn Bennett and Kyleigh Sutton; and back row: Sophie Shelton, Kimora McElroy and Jamyla Carter.



The PHS Junior Maids pictured (l to r) are, front row: Mary Allyn Grissom, Kaylee Williams, Kaylee Barnett and Bailee Wright; and back row: Lucero Gil Cordoba, AnaKathryn Woods, Sophie Scutch, London Wade and Skyla Edwards.



The PHS Sophomore Maids pictured (l to r) are, front row: Makiya Lopez, Myra Gomez, Skyla Dear and Cadence Crenshaw; and back row: Eliana Ashe, Peyton Johnson, Ja'Toya Harris and Carrington Taylor.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

The PHS Senior Maids pictured (l to r) are, front row: Jazmine Hicks, Sydney Garner, Elliott Neal, Lexi Carpenter, Khloe Darby and Jazara Page; and back row: Tamerial Wilson, Aubrey Risher, Jessica Jenkins, Chloe Gomez, Maliyah Seals, Lyric Jones and Destiney Allen.

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Discovery cheerleaders compete in MAIS cheer competition



Special to SW Rankin News

The Discovery Christian School cheerleaders competed in the MAIS Spirit Competition in the Game Day division. Competition season is not over for the squad; they have another competition coming up in November. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Gracelyn Brown, Kate Kelly, Tatum Thibadeaux, Marley Jackson and Reagan Russell; middle row: Makayla Welch, Audrey Stevenson, Bren Baucum, Katy Ray Quick and Karoline Sutphin; and back row: Maria Hungerford, Chloe Finnegan, Sarah Nicholson, Rylee Morris and Gabby Payne.

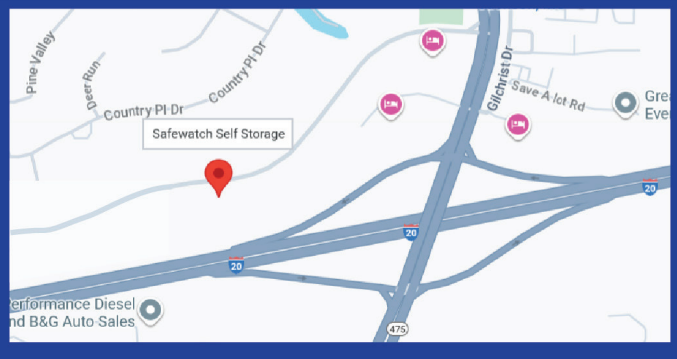
Discovery Christian names Homecoming Maids



Special to SW Rankin News

The 2026 Discovery Christian School Homecoming Maids pictured (l to r) are: Addyson Bullock, Gracelyn Brown, Reagan Russell, Chloe Finnegan, Marley Jackson, Gabby Payne, Katy Rae Quick, Brynn Kelly and Ella Evans.

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