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Your Community. Your News. Your Paper.

SW RANKIN NEWS

Vol. 11, No. 11 | November 2026

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"I am proud to work alongside the Mississippi Congressional Delegation to secure over $56 million in federal funding for the Pearl-Brandon Connector project. This infrastructure improvement will support economic growth, reliability, safety, and will improve our transportation system. Improving infrastructure continues to be a top priority for our federal delegation, and this is a great example of what we can accomplish when we work together on behalf of the people of Mississippi," said U.S. Congressman Michael Guest.

"For the people who use Highway 18 every day, this is about safety, reliability and quality of life," said Brad Calhoun, a member of the Rankin County Board of Supervisors. "We have families trying to get their children to school, people trying to get to work and emergency responders who need dependable access. No community should have to live with an at-grade railroad crossing that blocks traffic and impedes public safety. This bridge will eliminate this troublesome crossing for good and our community will benefit greatly."

Lights, Camera, Action! ushers in Christmas in Southwest Rankin

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Pearl "Stars, Stripes and Christmas Lights!" Christmas activities on December 5 include the Tree Lighting at Pearl City Hall Complex at 6 p.m., the Christmas parade starting at Bright Shopping Center at 6:30 p.m., and a Community Social at City Hall at 7:30 p.m.

The Pearl Christmas parade's theme honors America's 250th anniversary with patriotic holiday flair. Entry forms are available at bit.ly/3VLZD1v. All entries must be decorated with lights. Entries will be judged, and awards will be presented for Most Christmas Spirit, Best "Stars, Stripes & Christmas Lights" Spirit, Brightest Lights, Best Marching Unit and Best Overall. For more information, call 601-863-3229.

The annual Florence parade is set for December 5. The theme is "A Merry Movie Christmas Parade." The Florence Volunteer Fire Department reported that the route will begin at the Florence Middle School at 6 p.m., with lineup starting at 4 p.m. Entries are open, and everyone is welcome to participate, including floats, vehicles, horses, tractors and other creative ideas. Floats will be judged, and prizes will be awarded. For more information, contact City Hall at 601-845-3542.

The City of Richland has a whole day of Christmas fun, community and holiday cheer planned in the heart of Richland on Saturday, December 12. This year's theme is "Favorite Christmas Movie."

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

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RUNOFF ELECTION
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR CONTESTS AND CANDIDATE NAMES.
RANKINCOUNTYMS.ORG

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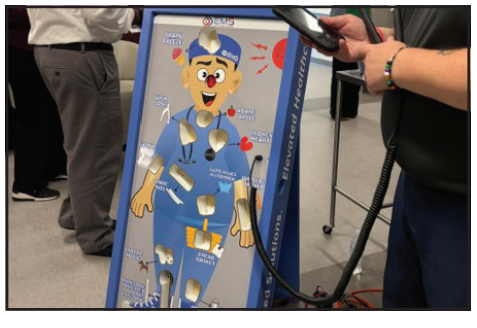
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HCC Health Sciences Education consolidates at Rankin campus

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Hinds Community College (HCC) officially dedicated its new Health Sciences Complex on October 7 on the Rankin Campus in Pearl. The event celebrated the completion and opening of the college's new flagship facility for training the region's nursing and allied health professionals.



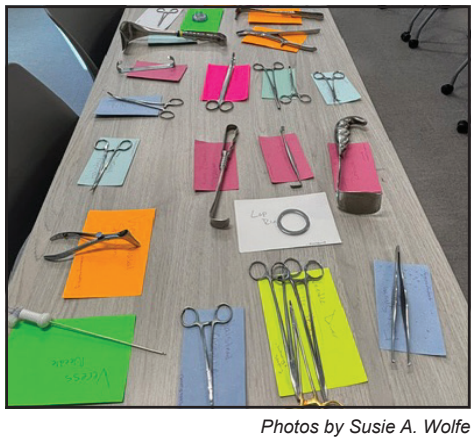
College officials say the $64 million, 160,000-square-foot Health Sciences Complex represents a major investment in the future of health care education and workforce development in Mississippi. The facility is expected to serve generations of students while helping address the growing demand for skilled health care professionals throughout the state and region.



After blessing the new building and its students, HCC staff gave tours of the facility, which faces the Muse Center in the back of the Rankin campus.

The nursing programs include the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN), Practical Nursing (PN) and nurse aide/health care assistant. The Allied Health and Medical Technology Departments are dental assisting technology, diagnostic medical sonography, emergency medical sciences (EMS); health information technology (HIT); medical assisting, medical laboratory technology (MLT), phlebotomy, physical therapist assistant (PTA), radiologic technology, respiratory care technology and surgical technology.

"This is not just a teaching facility. This is an economic engine," said Dr. Stephen Vacik, president of Hinds Community College. "Central Mississippi and Rankin County rely on health care to help drive this economy, and we want to be the ones who put the professionals to work in those facilities."



Photos by Susie A. Wolfe

Students have opportunities to practice skills, work through realistic patient scenarios, collaborate with students from other health care disciplines, solve problems, make decisions, communicate as members of a healthcare team, and develop confidence before they ever encounter those situations with an actual patient, said Katharine Elliott, Hinds Dean of Health Sciences.

"Today we celebrate a beautiful new building but, more importantly, we celebrate what will happen inside this building for generations to come," said Elliott. "What we have created here will have an impact far beyond this campus."

Pearl Mayor Jake Windham said, "Congratulations to Hinds Community College on opening the new Health Sciences Complex in Pearl! This impressive building will help students learn the skills they need to care for people and fill important health care jobs. We're proud to have a facility that will help our community for many years."



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Publisher
Clay Mansell
claymansell@SWRankinNews.com

Editor in Chief
Susie Wolfe
news@SWRankinNews.com
601-706-9237, ext. 3

Managing Editor
Daniel Skipper
Skip@swrankinnews.com

Sales Representatives
Jason Greer
Jason@SWRankinNews.com
Clay Mansell
claymansell@SWRankinNews.com
Susie Wolfe
news@SWRankinNews.com
601-706-9237, ext. 3

Graphic Designer
Holly Embry
designer@SWRankinNews.com

Distribution
Martin Tucker
Martin@SWRankinNews.com

Office Manager
Doris Bynum

For submission information, email news@SWRankinNews.com.
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ISSN: 3069-8391

RCSD recognizes successful Richland Zone EL students



Special to SW Rankin News

Thirty-four English Learner students in the Richland Zone successfully completed the program and were recognized at the October RCSD Board Meeting held in Richland.

Special to SW Rankin News

At the October 28 Rankin County School District (RCSD) Board Meeting, the School Board recognized students from Richland Elementary, Richland Upper Elementary and Richland High School who have successfully exited the English Learner (EL) program. Officials say the milestone reflects their hard work, growth and dedication to learning.

Richland Elementary School students who were recognized include Darwin Acosta Sauceda, David Arrevalo, Fatima Lopez Gomez, Michelle Mosqueda, Juan Trochez Castro and Lawrence Stephen Conde Reyes.

Richland Upper Elementary School students who were recognized include Yeimy Blancas, Britany Michelle Bustamante Amaya, Henry Ho, Victoria Helen Luna, Sophia Martinez Iriarte, Isaias Tadeo Navarro Martinez, Jacob Sanchez, Rafael Martinez Zarate, Jacob Alexander Espino Linan, Daniel Hernandez, Melvin Lagos Chavez, Victor Anibal Martinez Pineda, Anyi Rivera, Emanuel Lopez Bonilla, Daniela Duran Bravo, Carlos Josue Pena Ramirez, Max Montoya Vasquez, Gregorio Garcia Nunez, Camila Martinez, Perla Catherine Villanueva Duran and Jose Alexander Villeda Lagos.

Richland High School students who were recognized include Angelli Bolanos, Ottman Chun, Britka Dominguez, Luis Laureano, Paradise Meke, Jafeth Rojas and Carlos Zuñiga.

RCSD Superintendent of Education Shane Sanders said, "Congratulations to all of these students! We are proud to celebrate your achievements and look forward to seeing you continue to succeed."

City of Pearl announces Highway 80 Lighting Project Phase II

Special to SW Rankin News

Building on the City of Pearl's ongoing commitment to public safety, infrastructure improvement and economic revitalization, City leadership recently announced the Highway 80 Lighting Project Phase II. Described as a milestone initiative, the project will extend state-of-the-art modern roadway illumination along U.S. Highway 80, spanning from Concourse Drive all the way to Pearl's eastern city limits.

Enhancing Safety and Infrastructure

Highway 80 serves as one of Pearl's primary commercial and transit corridors from Concourse Drive to the city's eastern city limit border. By increasing visibility along this busy stretch of highway, Phase II aims to significantly improve night-time safety for drivers, emergency responders, and pedestrians alike.

Key benefits of the project include:

• **Improved Traffic Safety:** High-efficiency illumination reduces nighttime collisions and improves reaction times at key intersections and turn lanes.

• **Modern Energy-Efficient Technology:** The installation will utilize energy-efficient LED fixtures designed to deliver maximum illumination while reducing municipal energy costs and minimizing light trespass into surrounding properties.

• **Support for Local Businesses:** Better lighting along commercial corridors enhances visibility and security for shoppers, patronage and local businesses operating during evening hours.

Continuing Progress Across the City

The launch of Phase II marks another step forward following previous infrastructure and corridor enhancements along Highway 80 and the surrounding business district. By extending coverage to the eastern city limits, the city ensures a cohesive, well-lit gateway welcoming residents and visitors into Pearl.



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

The lighting initiative will extend state-of-the-art modern roadway illumination along U.S. Highway 80, spanning from Concourse Drive all the way to Pearl's eastern city limits.

The City's goal is to make sure every corridor in Pearl is safe and accessible. City officials say that Phase II of the Highway 80 Lighting Project reflects its continued investment in essential infrastructure that serves the community every day.

Construction and Traffic Updates

Bids for construction are expected to be opened November 17, 2026. Officials anticipate construction to start two to three months after construction is awarded due to ordering of materials for the project. Once all materials are on hand, the project will take approximately five months to complete.

Further updates regarding project timelines, progress and lane closures will be posted on the official City of Pearl website at CityOfPearl.com.





Old Truths for Today

J.T. Morgan



THANKSGIVING

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

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

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

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

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

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

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

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

PEARSON Foundation celebrates 25th year; County, City help purchase used van

By Susie A. Wolfe

For twenty-five years, the PEARSON Foundation has pursued transformation - internal, external and eternal - through the power of God's unfailing love. With deep intentionality, the 501c(3) Christian organization focuses on the Pearson, Carver, Oak Grove and Greenfield communities of Pearl where there is a high concentration of low-income households. PEARSON stands for "People Employing Available Resources to Strengthen Our Neighborhoods."

From a building on Old Whitfield Road in Pearl, the non-profit also serves other communities in Rankin, Hinds, and Madison counties that are navigating complex challenges, including substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school disengagement; but they hold immense potential for renewal through education, mentorship and spiritual growth.

"We are a Christian faith-based organization which, through a Prayer-Care-Share approach, provides programs and activities that add value to people's lives," said PEARSON

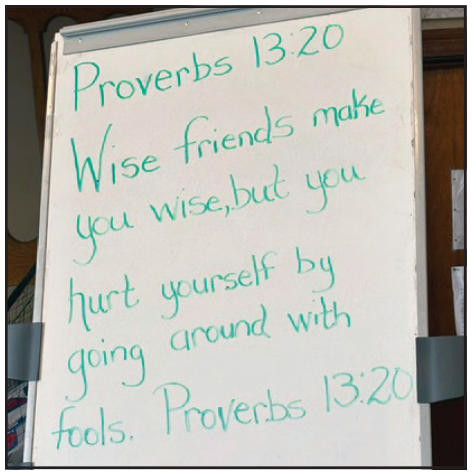


PEARSON Foundation Director Jarvis Ward is shown by the van that the Rankin County Board of Supervisors and the City of Pearl Board of Aldermen helped purchase. The County donated $20,000, and the City donated $5,000 to help the Foundation transport children to local resources.

Foundation Director Jarvis Ward, "so that entire neighborhoods are wholistically transformed."

Ward recently accepted a twenty-thousand-dollar donation from the Rankin County Board of Supervisors, as well as five thousand dollars from the City of Pearl Board of Aldermen to help purchase a used van for $39,000. What he had been using all of the long, hot summer of 2026 was a 2005 unairconditioned van to transport two hundred students to pickleball at Pearl City Park, one hundred fifty students to golf, and two hundred students to play chess.

According to Ward, the PEARSON Foundation serves fifty to one hundred K-5 through eighth-grade students in school mentoring and thirty Pearl Upper Elementary students once a week for life skills and positive conduct. They had one hundred fifty students in their Summer Program, which is a "Best Practice



Photos by Susie A. Wolfe

According to Ward, the PEARSON Foundation serves fifty to one hundred K-5 through eighth grade students in school mentoring and thirty Pearl Upper Elementary students once a week for life skills and wisdom.

Model" in the State of Mississippi. They also provide after-school tutoring and youth mentoring.

"Everything we do is a means to an end," said Ward, who has worked on community collaboration with Camp Pioneer, Mission America and Mission Mississippi. "We strive for young people and parents to come to a relationship with Jesus Christ."

The Foundation honored its "25 Years of Changed Lives and Changed Communities" at its 25th Anniversary Celebration held in September, but the milestone is still being celebrated until the end of the year. "Honoring the Heroes" included Chris Chism, Frank Hutton, Bishop Thomas and Rose Jenkins, Chief Nick McLendon and Rep. Zakiya Summers.

The PEARSON Foundation is publicly funded, which means they receive grants and donations from individuals, churches and businesses. Additionally, they are always recruiting volunteers and fundraising to grow and expand services. For more information, visit the organization's website at www.PEARSON39208.org.

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Pearl Board considers $920,000 sewer extension and golf cart fleet

SW Rankin News

The City of Pearl's Mayor and Board of Aldermen convened on Tuesday, October 20, in Council Chambers. Present were Mayor Jake Windham, City Clerk Kelly Scouten and Board members Alderman-at-Large David Stovall, Alderman Sammy Williams of Ward 1, Alderman Keith Dennis of Ward 2, Alderman Gary Broadwater of Ward 3, Alderman Casey Foy of Ward 4, and Alderman Kyle Foster of Ward 6. Alderman Dwight Knight of Ward 5 was absent. The meeting was called to order after roll call, prayer, pledge and acknowledgements.

Sewer Infrastructure and Roadway Naming

Two items carried the City's infrastructure business. The Board approved and authorized a request to the West Rankin Utility Authority for sewer infrastructure improvements for the Project Blue Horizon Sanitary Sewer Extension in the amount of $920,000. It also adopted a resolution naming the new roadway connecting Mississippi Highway 475 to Old Whitfield Road as Omterra Boulevard.

Golf Cart Fleet Financing

The most detailed consent item concerned the City's golf cart fleet. The Board approved and authorized financing for the purchase of fifty 2027 EZGO RXV Kawasaki EFI Gas fleet golf carts from Ben Nelson Golf and Outdoor in the amount of $315,000, with the Mayor or City Clerk authorized to sign any necessary documents. The proposal applies a $125,000 trade value for the current fifty 2024 RXV EX1 Gas golf carts to the balloon payment on the current fleet, with the remaining yearly payment of $44,546 due by January 1, 2027, and authorized a first yearly payment of $59,537.50. The purchase will be financed with one payment of $59,537.50 a year for four years with a balloon payment due by January 1, 2031. The amount will be paid by the trade-in value of the fleet for a new lease or purchase as recommended by the purchasing agent. The purchase itself will not occur until January 2027, but approval in advance was described as necessary to get the order placed to build the new fleet.

Police Department Spending

Several consent items covered the Pearl Police Department. The Board approved police officers named on a proposed part-time work schedule for November 2026 and their use of the official Pearl Police Department uniform and duty weapon in private security work. Other items covered a 12-month renewal of Callyo Plus 3 from Callyo 2009 Corp. for $3,576, ammunition from Pinnacle Precision for $12,320 under state contract, the FY27 camera usage fee for LPR to Insight LPR LLC for $16,050, the FY27 Axon Taser, body camera and dash camera payment to Axon Enterprise Inc. for $223,287.56, and a yearly clothing allowance for Investigator Smiley of $750.

City Funds, Debt and Contracts

Routine financial business made up the rest of the consent calendar. It covered approval and corrections of the minutes of the regular meeting of October 6, 2026, and the special called meeting of October 8, 2026, the claims docket for October 6 through October 20, 2026, and authorization to travel. Senate Bill 2189 funds for the Highway 80 Lighting Phase II Project and the 2026 City Hall Renovation Projects were listed for approval with Mayor Windham to sign the documents. Payments were scheduled for Adcamp Inc. of $5,843.95, United Rentals of $6,134, Keithco Petroleum Inc. of $5,157.43, and Pure Air Consultants of $6,500.00 for air duct cleaning at station 4. Collection of bad debt in the amount of $26,788.84 was also listed, along with a resolution to adjudicate the cost of cleaning of properties and assess those costs against the properties on an attached list.

Public Hearings on Property Condition

Four public hearings were scheduled under Chapter 24 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Pearl. In each, the Board determined whether the owner and a certain parcel of real property were in such a condition or state as to be unsightly and unkempt or otherwise a menace to the public health and safety of the community and therefore prohibited. Chuck Harvey spoke on behalf of the property owned by Charles N. and Charles Rubin Harvey and located at 3953 Highway 80 E. It had burned in June, and Harvey said that it is ninety-five percent cleared, and he is working daily to complete the task. The Board agreed to completion of the project in 45 days.





Rankin Superbowl ends with Brandon win



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

The 76th Rankin County Superbowl, Pearl vs. Brandon, ended in the fiftieth win for Brandon. The weather was a cool sixty-nine degrees for the last game of the 2026 football season.

Hudson graduates from Leaders Academy



Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Police Captain Billy Hudson recently graduated from the Leaders Academy. Pearl Police Chief Nick McLendon said he is proud of Hudson's dedication to leadership, professional growth and service.

Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	FUNERAL HOME
Mytra Windom White	71y	Hazlehurst, MS	10/01/2026	Chancellor FH
Richard Jason Atkins	52y	Brandon, MS	10/10/2026	Chancellor FH
Richard Lawrence Laird	77y	Florence, MS	10/07/2026	Chancellor FH
Jo Ann Beasley	72y	Petal, MS	10/14/2026	Chancellor FH
Etna Jean Saxton	89y	Brandon, MS	10/16/2026	Chancellor FH
Linda Faye Brasher	78y	Florence, MS	10/18/2026	Chancellor FH
Lynita Inez Searcy	63y	Hernando, MS	10/19/2026	Chancellor FH

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From the Florence Boardroom—City receives $300k for water well

SW Rankin News

The City of Florence met in their regularly scheduled meeting set for the first Tuesday in October at City Hall. Present were Mayor Trey Gunn, Aldermen Brian Grantham, Mason Herrin, Kyle Martin and Brent Sistrunk. Alderman John Banks was absent. Mayor Gunn called the meeting to order and Alderman Grantham gave the invocation.

The Board approved the site plan review for Community Bank located at 510 Berry's Blvd, as presented by Community Bank, reviewed and approved by City Engineer Tim Parker. The Motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

The Board approved $331,801.77 to be paid to Thompson Brother Drilling for the 2023 water system improvements for the new water well project.

In order to promote the city in economic development, the Board agreed to place a half page ad in *Hometown Magazine* in the amount of $650.

The Board agreed to hire Gavin Scoggins as a part-time Fire Marshal at $35,000.00 annually starting October 12, 2026; to hire Curtis Raymond Thompson as a water operator at $30.00 per hour starting October 19, 2026.

The Board directed Chief Brad Burns to issue two letters of reprimand for Corporal Peyton Warren and demote him from the position of Corporal to Patrolman effective immediately.

The Board adopted a Municipal Policy regarding overtime for law enforcement personnel for the City. They set a public hearing for November 3, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. to consider making technical corrections to 26-059 section 401.05 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Florence, Mississippi. The Motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

In the October 20 meeting, Present were Mayor Gunn, Aldermen Banks, Grantham, Herrin, Martin and Sistrunk. Mayor Gunn called the Meeting to order and gave the invocation.



Special to SW Rankin News

The State Legislature gave Florence $300,000 to aid in the construction of a new water well for the city.

Upon recommendation of Chief Burns, the Board voted to send Officer Ken Stapleton to Crisis Intervention Training in Brandon, MS October 26-30, 2026, at no cost to the city; to send Officer Chris Rast to the 2026 USPCA Region 26 PD1 Certification seminar in Madison, MS October 26-30, 2026; to send Chief Burns to the Winter Chief's Conference in Starkville, MS December 14-18, 2026.

The Board approved the purchase of a 2027 Ford truck from Woolwine Ford for $53,857.

Upon recommendation of Community Development Director Joel Sims, voted to approve the preliminary site plan review of Aaron Barr for the construction of a 30x40 garage with a 24x24 covered carport located at 404 South Church Street Florence; to conditionally approve the site plan of Scotty Bridges 4-B Construction providing an acceptable ingress/egress which must be approved by the city prior to the final certificate of occupancy being issued.

The Legislature gave Florence $300,000 to aid in the construction of a new water well for the city. The Board also approved FYE September 30, 2026 Budget Amendment #2-Final; plus approved the mid-month claims docket and minutes of October 6, 2026.

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF HINDS COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

KENNETH LAURY - PLAINTIFFS

V.

RONNIE L. HALES - DEFENDANT

CIVIL ACTION NO. 26-1448

ALIAS SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION

THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:
TO: ALIAS 'RONNIE L. HALES

You have been made a Defendant in a lawsuit filed in this Court by Plaintiff Kenneth Laury. Defendants other than you in this action are none.

You are summoned to appear at the County Court of Hinds County in Jackson, Mississippi, on **28th day of January, 2027 at 9:30 a.m.** before the Honorable Judge Yemi Kings. In case you fail to appear at the hearing to defend, service by publication of the summons and complaint on Defendant shall be recognized as properly served by the Court. A judgment will be entered against the Defendant for the money or other things demanded in the Complaint and any additional litigation cost of the undersigned counsel in the matter. You are required to file an answer to the Complaint.

Issued under my hand and the seal of said Court, this 7th day of October 2026.

2026 CIRCUIT CLERK HINDS COUNTY, MS
Seal

ZACK WALLACE, CIRCUIT CLERK
County Clerk of Hinds County, Mississippi

County Clerk of Hinds County, Mississippi

_____, D.C.

Prepared by:
Willie T. Abston, Esq., MSB No. 9935
Post Office Box 320727 | Flowood, MS 39232
Tel. (601)487-8839 | Fax (601)487-8667
Email: willie.abston@abstonlaw.com

Willie T. Abston, Esq., MSB No. 9935
Post Office Box 320727 I Flowood, MS 39232
Tel. (601)487-8839 I Fax (601)487-8667
Email: willie.abston@abstonlaw.com



From the Richland Boardroom

SW Rankin News

The regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Richland was held at 6 p.m. on October 6, 2026, in the City of Richland Board Room, 380 Scarbrough Street, Richland, Mississippi.

Present: Mayor Clay Burns, Alderman John Hamilton, Alderman Scot Mancil, Alderman Matthew Quick, Alderman Beth Sanford and Alderman A.J. Shields. Also, present were Karen Jackson, City Clerk; Parker Berry, City Attorney; Trey Porch, Fire Chief; Jason Sutphin, Public Works Director; Todd Whatley, Assistant Public Works Director; Shea Thames, Senior Services Director; Matt Hopkins, Parks and Recreation Director; Melissa Lovorn, Court Clerk; and Adrian Ready, Police Chief.

Mayor Burns called the meeting to order and Attorney Berry opened the meeting with prayer. The Consent Agenda was presented for approval of September 15, 2026 Minutes; Claims Docket - $3,765,954.24 Total; Docket of Paid Claims #34738 - #34783 - $3,110,100.52; Docket of Unpaid Claims #34784 - #34939 - $655,853.72; Water Refund Check Register - $5,530; $3,477.24 payment to MS Department of Revenue for Sales Tax collected from the Water Department; payments for the monthly health insurance premiums; Payroll: September 18, 2026 - $362,861.13; Refunds: Kimberly Coleman - $1,500.00 — Community Center Rental refund & Robert Bell - $52.75 — Court-ordered refund.

Next, Police Dispatcher Liz Hauck was presented her employee pin for five years of service by Alderman Sanford.

The Board approved Jake Shelby with Engineering Service to advertise for term bids for the period beginning October 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. The Board then approved Summary payment to Bradford Storm Sewer Rehabilitation, Phase I Project for a decrease in contract price of $10,466.00. Next, the Board approved the Final Pay Request of $440,988.00, out of the M.U.T. Fund to Anding Construction; the Detention Pond Rehabilitation Project for a $19,107.92 decrease in contract; and $6,287.10, out of the General Fund to Wilco, Inc. for work performed on the Detention Pond Rehabilitation Project; $72,402.20, out of the General Fund to Gulf Coast Solutions, LLC for stored materials for the Cleary Road Drainage Improvements Project; $124,450.22 from the 2023 M.U.T. Bond Debt Fund to Thornton Construction Co. Inc. for work performed on the 2023 Street Improvements Project; $416,136.88 to Hemphill Construction, Inc. for work performed on the Old Hwy 49 & Carrier Blvd. Intersection Improvements Project; $318,609.96 LPA Official to execute MDOT reimbursement;



Photo by SW Rankin News

Alderwoman Beth Sanford, left, is shown with Liz Hauck of the Richland Police Department. Hauck received her five-year service pin as a Dispatcher at the October 6 Board of Aldermen meeting.

Next, the Board tabled the discussion of the bids received for the Squirrel Branch Stabilization Phase III Project.

A summary of the proceedings of the public hearing and the Board's action for the Re-Zoning Map Change, from R-E (Residential Estate) to R-2 (Moderate Density

Residential); for the owner, Scott May, is available for interested parties at City Hall.

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Pearl holds National Night Out October 6

National Night Out is an annual event that brings together the community and first responders. The City of Pearl event was held on Tuesday, October 6. There was food, games, music and activities for all ages, including Touch-A -Truck, a dunking booth, fake snow and golf swing activities. Captain, the police dog, was also present.



Photos by Susie A. Wolfe

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Florence Day held October 24

The Florence Day Market on the Square was recently held on an autumn Saturday at Earl Clark Drive. There was food, music, family activities, vendor tents and local businesses. Kids enjoyed inflatables, including a bull ride. There were tractor and equipment displays and food trucks.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Bennett named Officer of the Quarter



Special to SW Rankin News

Richland police officer Josh Bennett was recognized for his actions in saving a man's life in August. Pictured (l to r) are Assistant Chief Joseph Martin, Chief Adrian Ready, Officer Joshua Bennett, Lt. Gena Pepper, Detective Ty Branning and Captain Scott Frazier.

Special to SW Rankin News

Last month, police officer Josh Bennett was awarded with the Richland Police Department's Officer of the Quarter.

In August, Officer Bennett tended to a serious medical call occurring on Terry Lane, just outside the city limits of Richland. The medical call involved an adult male with severe cuts to his arms. Bennett was the first responder to arrive on the scene and, after quickly assessing the situation, was able to determine that a tourniquet was needed to stop the blood loss, which led him to quickly apply one to the injured male.

EMS personnel arrived on scene and told Bennett that because of his actions it one hundred percent saved the person's life. Without a quick response and a swift tourniquet application, they said it was very likely that the individual would have been beyond saving. The actions of Bennett allowed EMS to get the injured individual stable enough for transport to the hospital.

"Despite this not being in Richland's jurisdiction, Officer Bennett recognized that he was close enough and had the necessary skills to make a life-saving difference for a stranger," said Police Chief Adrian Ready. "Officer Bennett did not ignore this call or push it onto someone, but instead took it upon himself to give a person another fighting chance."



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THEME:
FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE
LINE UP ON TOWN SQUARE BY 4 PM
MEET & GREET
Santa
AFTER THE PARADE!

Pearl musician Aaron Coker releases debut novel and new album

Special to SW Rankin News

Aaron Coker has spent much of his life telling stories through music. From the first guitar he picked up at age nine to the songs that would eventually earn him state and national recognition, writing has always been at the center of his creative life.

Now, the Pearl native is taking that passion beyond the stage with two new projects: an album titled *Ghosts, Guides & Guitars* and his debut novel, *They Call This The End*. Coker makes his literary debut alongside his older brother and co-author, Kenny Coker, an established independent author with four previously published books.

The projects reflect two sides of an artist whose career has been shaped by Southern rock, blues, country and a lifelong interest in storytelling.

Ghosts, Guides & Guitars brings together eleven songs spanning different periods of Coker's musical career. The collection includes previously released favorites alongside newer material, offering listeners a look at both where his music began and where it has taken him.

Among the featured tracks are "I'll Ride," inspired by a documentary about Arlington National Cemetery and the sacrifices of American military personnel, and "Down in Mississippi," a heartfelt tribute to his wife, the woman who has shared his love of music, embraced the unpredictable rhythm of a musician's life, and stood beside him with unwavering love and support.

Both songs earned Song of the Year honors, with "I'll Ride" recognized at the 2015 Mississippi Music Awards and "Down in Mississippi" at the 2017 Artists Music Guild Heritage Awards.

Coker's music has long reflected a willingness to draw from personal experiences, difficult moments and the people who shape our lives. Those same interests in human relationships and perseverance carry into his newest creative venture.

Released October 27, 2026, *They Call This The End* marks Aaron Coker's debut as a novelist, joining his older brother and established author, Kenny Coker, in bringing the story to life.

The post-apocalyptic thriller begins in November 2027, when a presidential address is abruptly interrupted as coordinated attacks strike America's major cities. The electrical grid collapses, government communication disappears and the country descends into chaos.

Five years later, the surviving population is scattered across a fractured nation where communities struggle to rebuild and dangerous factions control entire territories.

In the pine forests of Mississippi, a former Army radio operator known as Pine Whisper broadcasts messages through the static, secretly guiding families and convoys toward safety. Elsewhere, a National Guard sergeant believed dead by his hometown follows a mysterious trail through the Carolinas, while survivors in Atlanta attempt to rebuild a functioning community.

As their stories converge, the characters face a conflict that threatens what remains of the country.



Special to SW Rankin News

Released October 27, 2026, They Call This The End *marks Pearl native Aaron Coker's debut as a novelist, joining his older brother and established author, Kenny Coker, in bringing the story to life. The post-apocalyptic thriller begins in November 2027.*

At its heart, the novel explores family, loyalty, survival and the determination of ordinary people to rebuild after devastating loss. Its Mississippi setting also gives local readers a familiar point of connection within a fictional world.

Coker's musical career has taken him well beyond his Mississippi roots. He recorded his award-winning song "I'll Ride" at Nashville's renowned Sound Stage Studios and later returned to Nashville to record "The Gallows" and "Alone" with Red Ridge Entertainment. Over the years, he has shared the stage with nationally recognized artists including The Verve Pipe, blues legend Bobby Rush, and Crossin Dixon, and was selected to headline the 2018 Mississippi Music Awards.

His work has earned him fourteen music awards, including six Mississippi Music Awards, five Josie Music Awards, and three Artists Music Guild Heritage Awards, with honors recognizing his achievements as an artist, songwriter, vocalist, and entertainer.

Coker's career has attracted media attention both at home and internationally. *The Jackson Free Press* has featured him on multiple occasions throughout his musical career, highlighting his work and contributions to Mississippi's music scene. His career has also been recognized through interviews with Mississippi Public Broadcasting's Marshall Ramsey, Mississippi Music Foundation's Kurl Jones, WYAB 103.9's Blues and Arts Hour with Jim Thorn, and EZ 87.7 FM's Gear Shift Gary. His international exposure includes a feature in Germany's *Fair Play Country Music Magazine* and an interview with Canadian radio host Joe Crawford of *The Joe Show*.

In 2016, Coker was among seventy-five musicians from across the United States featured in the published collection *The Artist Collection: Every Music Artist Has A Story.* A decade later, he has gone from having his own story told in a book to writing one himself.

The collaboration on *They Call This The End* brings together two Pearl, Mississippi brothers who have followed different creative paths, one through music and the other through literature. With the release of both the novel and *Ghosts, Guides & Guitars,* Aaron Coker continues to build on his creative career while finding new ways to connect with audiences.

For more information on music and book availability, visit https://aaroncokermusic.com.

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PHS graduate Jack Durr named U.S. Presidential Scholar

Special to SW Rankin News

Jack Durr, a 2026 graduate of Pearl High School, is one of only three Mississippi students who have been named 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars. The other two students are Adriana Kroeze of St. Andrew's Episcopal School and Bryson Soffra of Hancock High School. Durr is a former member of the State Superintendent's Student Advisory Council at the Mississippi Department of Education. He graduated as valedictorian of Pearl High School's Class of 2026 and was also a Mississippi STAR student.

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced the selection of the 161 exceptional high school seniors chosen as 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars, recognizing their remarkable achievements in academics, the arts, and career and technical education.

"These students represent the exceptional caliber of character and intellect that our nation's future demands," said U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon. "On behalf of President Trump, I congratulate each scholar who never gave up, the families who believed in them and the communities who guided them. As you forge your next paths, continue to aim higher, leverage your extraordinary talents and boldly assume your responsibilities as leaders."



Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl High School 2026 Valedictorian and STAR Student Jack Durr was named one of three 2026 Mississippi U.S. Presidential Scholars.

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars identifies honorees through a rigorous selection process, evaluating academic excellence, artistic and technical talent, essays, school recommendations and evidence of leadership and community service.

This year, out of 3.9 million graduating high school seniors, more than 6,700 candidates qualified for consideration based on outstanding performance on the College Board SAT or ACT exams or nominations by chief state school officers.

The 2026 class includes one young man and one young woman from every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and U.S. families living abroad, as well as fifteen at-large scholars, twenty scholars in the arts and twenty scholars in career and technical education, as directed by Presidential Executive Order.

Since its inception in 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored approximately 8,800 of America's top-performing students. The program expanded in 1979 to recognize artistic excellence and, in 2015, to celebrate achievements in career and technical education.

Each member of the 2026 class will receive an engraved U.S. Presidential Scholars medallion, symbolizing their extraordinary accomplishments and bright futures.

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Richland Library (Stand)
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Indian Creek Coin Laundry
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The Fitness Plex
The Honey Chicken
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Florence Middle
Florence High
McLaurin Elementary
McLaurin High
Steen's Creek Elementary

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Family Dollar
Fernando's Mexican Restaurant
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Gleason Tire
Hand Wash Laundrymat
Havard Real Estate
Holiday Inn Express by Bass Pro
Holiday Inn Express by Old Pizza Inn
John Deer / AG UP
Jose's
Juicy Seafood
Kobe
Lakeside Express Gas Station
Laundry Basket
Little Willie's BBQ
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Mississippi Wholesale Tire
Moss Creek
Mugshots Airport and Lakeland
Musee Center @ Hinds
Pearl Chamber of Commerce
Pearl Public Library
Pearl Public School District Office
Pearl Senior Center
Police Department
Polk Drugs by Merit
Pure Air Consultants
Ramey's Grocery
Rankin County Chamber Office
Rankin County Co-Op
RCSD Office
Revell Hardware
Revell Outdoor
Richland Wrecker Service
Rivertrust Federal Credit Union
Rose Garden Apartments
Roses
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Thanks for…everything!



Special to SW Rankin News

By Guest Columnist Becky Brown, Little Brown Light Ministries

In a year (2026) that has been terrifically tough for me and my family and lots of people I love, I have been doing all I can to find reasons to be thankful.

Thank goodness, the Lord never leaves us or forsakes us. That's the best thought of all. We can't outlive Him. We can't out-give Him. We can't outsin His mercy-filled grace. We can't get to a place in our lives where we cannot be assured that He loves us and knows all our needs. We may "feel" that He is distant or that, surely, He has stopped caring about what is going on with us in our current tiny-huge crisis.

Never trust your feelings! Rest on your knowings!

This year has included highlights (low-lights?), such as a crippling two-week ice storm, a broken shoulder, the closing of my family home, the relocation of my folks to assisted living, the funeral of my precious father, the homegoings of some very near and dear friends, some difficult health diagnoses for people I love. At present, I am typing with a cast on my left hand nursing a gimpy thumb and I am a praise band guitar player on pause until…?



Special to SW Rankin News

I know how to think that others have lots more issues to deal with than I can even fathom. Their list makes mine look like a trip to the beach. Remember this: God measures and fills up His cup of grace before our trials even materialize. He knows what we are going to need to get through them.

In this end of year holiday/holyday season of thankfulness and giving, I know I will focus on the goodness of God and continue to watch Him bring beauty out of ashes, roses from between the thorns and sunrises that catch away my breath. He will give lessons to learn, provision for every need and a rear-view mirror to teach lessons I never could have learned otherwise.

So, thanks for…Everything!

Beltone gives hearing tests for seniors



Special to SW Rankin News

By Guest Columnist Shea Thames, Director, Richland Senior Center

The Richland Senior Center welcomed Beltone of Mississippi in October for an educational Lunch & Learn and three days of complimentary hearing tests for our seniors.

The Lunch & Learn focused on understanding hearing loss, recognizing changes in hearing and learning how hearing patterns shift throughout different stages of life. The presentation also emphasized the importance of establishing a baseline for hearing health and monitoring changes that may occur gradually over time.

Complimentary hearing tests began the day of the Lunch & Learn presentation, with Beltone returning on two additional dates to accommodate additional appointments. Across all three testing days, more than thirty-five seniors received hearing evaluations, allowing them to gain valuable insight into their hearing health, ask questions and better understand their personal results.

Hearing health plays an important role in everyday life, affecting communication, relationships and overall quality of life. Because hearing loss often develops gradually, individuals may not recognize changes until they begin affecting daily activities.



Special to SW Rankin News

Beltone provided Richland senior adults valuable information, individual attention, and a comfortable, welcoming experience. Pictured during a hearing test are Richland senior Rosemary Scrivner (left) and Beltone Hearing Specialist Jackson Christ (right).

The Richland Senior Center recognizes marketing coordinator Sheri Book, hearing specialists Jackson Christ and Caleb Williams, and the entire Beltone of Mississippi team for their time, expertise and dedication to serving our seniors. Williams owns five Beltone locations throughout Mississippi, demonstrating a continued commitment to making hearing health services accessible.

Their visits provided more than complimentary testing. They offered our seniors valuable information, individual attention and a comfortable, welcoming experience.

Programs like this reflect The Richland Senior Center's continued commitment to providing educational resources and services that promote health, wellness and independence among our senior community.

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Laci Ann, *Flora, MS*

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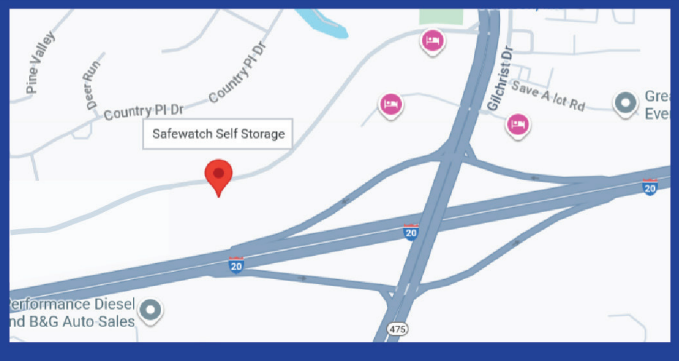
Florence holds National Night Out in October

National Night Out is an annual event that brings together the community and first responders. The City of Florence event was on Thursday, October 15, and included food, inflatables and candy. The Mayor's Youth Council, Boy Scout Troop 85, local police, firemen, EMS and elected officials were also there.



Photos by Susie A. Wolfe

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