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SWRANKIN NEWS

Good News You Can Use

Vol. 6, No. 3 | March 2021

The Pearl News

THE NEWS
RICHLAND

THE FLORENCE
NEWS

Pearl elections: Four of eight positions unopposed

By Alexa Haik

Every four years, cities across Mississippi gear up for municipal elections. For Pearl, that includes the mayoral position, plus aldermen for Wards 1 through 6, and an Alderman-at-Large position.

This year, Pearl primary elections will be held on Tuesday, April 6. For the 2021 elections, only three positions will need to be included in the primary, and only a Republican primary is necessary. Ward 1, Ward 2 and Alderman-at-Large will all have Republican primary races.

Current Pearl mayor Jake Windham has secured his position in office for the next four years, as he is running unopposed for 2021.

Incumbents for Ward 3, Aldermen Johnny Steverson (R); Ward 4, Casey S. Foy (R); and Ward 6, Gavin D. Gill (R) are all unopposed, so they will also

retain their Board seats for the next four years.

There are two qualifying candidates for Ward 1 alderman: incumbent David Luckett (R) and Sammy Williams (R). They will square off in the Republican primary on April 6.

Ward 2 will also be decided in the Republican primary, with three candidates vying for the spot: incumbent Michael Sartor (R), Beau Camardelle (R), and Keith Dennis (R).

In Ward 5, three candidates have qualified for the office, but they represent three different parties, so that race will not have a primary but will be decided in the general election on June 8. The candidates for Ward 5 are incumbent James W. Thompson (I), Gary Spurgeon (R), and Willie Harvey (D).

Candidates for Alderman-at-Large in-

clude incumbent John P. McHenry (R), Barry Carpenter (R) and Willie Moore (I). McHenry and Carpenter will be in the Republican primary, with the winner facing Moore in the general election in June.

The City of Pearl's Board of Aldermen work closely with the mayor, meeting the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. to discuss ongoing business, as well as critical issues that have arisen since the last meeting was adjourned.

Polling locations will open at 7 a.m. and remain open until 7 p.m. for the Republican primaries on Tuesday, April 6.

If necessary, a Republican run-off will be held April 27, and the general election will be June 8.

The voter registration deadline to vote in the Republican primary is March 8,

with absentee voting closing on April 3. Voters have until May 8 to register to vote in the general election. Absentee voting for the general election will be available until June 5.

The City Clerk's office will be open for registration and absentee voting Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., as well as on Saturday, March 27, and Saturday, April 3, from 8 a.m. until noon.

This year the polling place location for Ward 6-1 has moved to McLaurin Heights Methodist, 325 Mary Ann Drive.

For further details about requirements for qualification, visit www.sos.ms.gov to view the 2021 Candidate Qualifying Guide.

To view a current Ward map for the City of Pearl, or to obtain contact information for qualifying candidates, visit www.cityofpearl.com.



Special to The Pearl News

Pearl resident serves as Court of Appeals extern

Special to The Pearl News

Jackson State University (JSU) student Sofia Gongora of Pearl is learning about appellate courts from the inside, as she works as an extern for Court of Appeals Judge Latrice Westbrooks.

Gongora, who grew up in Morton, is a sophomore political science major. "I want to be an immigration lawyer," she said. She is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, JSU Blue Ambassadors and Girls Coalition.

Gongora began her externship in January. Judge Westbrooks offers externships as an opportunity for students to expand their knowledge of the legal system.

"This externship will enhance their knowledge of the judicial system" she said. "It gives them an opportunity to see how the appellate court operates and it prepares them for law school and the (legal) profession."

Law Clerk Alexis Armstrong of Pearl also is a JSU alumni. Armstrong joined Judge Westbrooks' staff in August 2020.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, cum laude, from JSU, where she served as Chief Justice of the



Special to The Pearl News

Pictured (l to r) are: Alexis Armstrong and Sofia Gongora.

Student Government Association. She earned her law degree from Mississippi College School of Law in May 2020.

City of Pearl launches new text service

Special to The Pearl News

The City of Pearl recently announced a new text service that provides two-way communication with residents, visitors and businesses. There are two services available.

The first service will allow the user to receive city alerts. By texting "Pearl" to 91896, push notifications will be sent to the user regarding emergencies, weather threats, road closures, etc...directly from the city.

The second service allows the user to report issues or find answers to questions. To sign up, text "Hi" or any keyword to 601-706-3177.

When reporting an issue to the city, the text will guide the user through a series of steps that allows them to sub-

mit all the necessary info and even allows an upload of a picture.

The city's main categories for reporting and common keywords are: **Report Animals:** dog, cat, animal, alligator, deer, snake, and raccoon; **Report Street:** pothole, road, striping, stop sign, and street sign; **Report Leaks:** leak pipe, puddle, flooding, fountain, and hydrant; **Report Code Enforce:** overgrown grass, and business construction; **Report Ditch;** **Report Street Light;** and **Report Police:** Non-emergency issues like speeding areas, tips, etc...

The report will go directly to the appropriate city department for attention.

The user will receive a reference number once they send the report, so they can follow-up on the issue.



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Richland business woman pitches *Belle Collective*

By Susie A. Wolfe

Lateshia Payton Pearson and Jacoby Magee pitched the idea of female entrepreneurs in Mississippi to OWN, Mississippi native Oprah Winfrey's television station. That idea became *Belle Collective* in February 2020. The nine episodes of the reality series are currently airing on OWN Network.

Pearson, based in Richland, is one of Mississippi's Top Entrepreneurs and one of Mississippi's Top Fifty Under Forty rising stars. She and four other females are featured in the new OWN reality show *Belle Collective*, which she and Magee pitched to producer Carlos King of Kingdom Reine, also the producers of *Housewives of Atlanta*.

Jacoby Magee was working with Pearson's brunches in his event planning business. She said, "He is a visionary assisting me with creating the plat-



Special to The Richland News

Lateshia Pearson is an entrepreneur based in Richland. She is currently part of the reality show *Belle Collective* about Mississippi female entrepreneurs that is airing on the OWN Network.

form 'Cotton and Country.' He developed the idea for the show and is currently serving as its producer."

"I wanted Mississippi to be seen in a different light," said Magee. "The show has sparked conversations to better the area that would not have happened. I believe there is a lot of talent here that goes undiscovered."

After attending Hinds Community College and Belhaven University, where Pearson re-

ceived a certification as a paralegal, she worked for a law firm as a senior paralegal until December 2013. Then, she and her husband, Glen, had a company in Richland providing cartoon characters, which they sold in 2018. She has "following her dreams" as an entrepreneur since 2014 and the birth of her son, Joshua.

Pearson, still based in Rankin County, now works from Richland with Lateshia Pearson Enterprise. She has written a book and does private coaching for entrepreneurs. Visit www.lateshiapearson.com for more information.

"I never thought I would be on television," she said. "It took a lot of prayer and trusting. Filming and working around the show schedule is an adjustment on steroids! But I am grateful for the opportunity. It's about helping others to be the best they can be."

"Rocking Richland" returns for spring break

Special to The Richland News

Rocking Richland, an event that began in the Summer of 2020, is returning for spring break 2021. Richland Economic Development Association (REDA) and Richland Parks and Recreation Department will host Spring Break Rocking Richland, Monday, March 15, thru Friday, March 19.

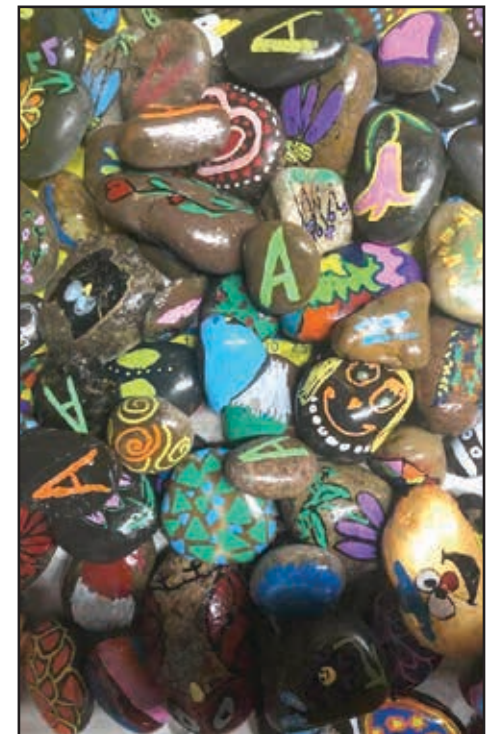
Rocks will be painted and placed at Eastside and Westside Parks each weekday during spring break. There will be one \$20 winner per day, per park. Those rocks will be marked with the day's date, as well as with the word "winner." Participants who locate marked rocks are instructed to bring them to the Richland Community Center between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to receive a prize. Winners are only eligible for one prize to allow the opportunity for multiple winners.

As was the case in past Rocking Rich-

land events, rocks painted by Mississippi artist Cliff Speaks will also be secreted away for lucky treasure-hunters. Each "Speaks" rock is valued at \$25.

Prizes are sponsored by the following local businesses: Engineering Service, Bancorp South, Irby, Rankin First, Yates Construction and Capitol Oil.

Contact the Parks and Recreation for the City of Richland Administrative Assistant, Tammy Morgan, at 601-487-9989 for further details.



Photos special to The Richland News

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Florence's Abygail Buchanan selected by national program

Special to The Florence News

Abygail Buchanan, thirteen, of Florence was named Mississippi's top youth volunteer of 2021 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, America's largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteer service.

As a state honoree, Buchanan will receive a \$2,500 scholarship, a silver medallion and an invitation to the program's virtual national recognition celebration in April, where ten of the 102 state honorees will be named America's top youth volunteers of the year. Those ten national honorees will earn an additional \$5,000 scholarship, a gold medallion, a crystal trophy for their nominating organization and a \$5,000 grant for a nonprofit charitable organization of their choice.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, conducted annually by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), honors students in grades five through twelve for mak-

ing meaningful contributions to their communities through volunteer service.

"We created the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards twenty-six years ago to highlight and support the work of young people taking on the challenges of a changing world – a mission that rings truer than ever given the events of last year," said Charles Lowrey, Prudential's chairman and CEO. "We are proud to celebrate the vision and determination of Spirit of Community's Class of 2021, and all the ways they're making their communities safer, healthier and more equitable places to live."

Buchanan, an eighth-grader at Florence Middle School, helped lead a local drive that collected more than 1,800 toiletries and other personal care items to fill tote bags for veterans experienc-



Special to The Florence News
Abygail (Abbye) Buchanan

ing homelessness. She served as a lead ambassador for the county 4-H participation in the Red Cross's Totes of Hope campaign.

"I have family members that are veterans, and their service means the world to me," she said. "I felt this was a great way to show my support and gratitude to the veterans that have served our country."

As an ambassador, Buchanan joined a team that set up two drive-through sites for community members to drop off donated items, and promoted the collection effort on social media. They then gathered up and sorted the donations – including soap, deodorant, shaving cream, razors, puzzle books and socks – and packaged them in zippered tote bags. In the end, forty-seven "totes of hope" were made available to veterans through VA hospitals or veterans outreach programs.

State honorees in The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards Class of 2021 – the top middle level and high school volunteer from all fifty states and the District of Columbia – were selected for

service initiatives completed, at least in part, between the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2020. Selection was based on criteria including impact, effort, initiative and the personal growth demonstrated over the course of the project.

"It speaks volumes about the character of today's secondary school students that the Spirit of Community program heard from more than 21,000 applicants this fall – most of them stories of young volunteers overcoming the hardships of a global pandemic to support those in need," said Ronn Nozoe, Chief Executive Officer, NASSP. "While we're especially proud to celebrate this year's 102 State Honorees, NASSP applauds every student who's found a way to volunteer this past year. You inspire your peers and adults alike to remember that, even in times of crisis, we all have something to give."

To read the names and stories of all of this year's state honorees, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com>

See page 6 for photo spread.

Florence mayor, aldermen proclaim "Wear Red Days"

Special to The Florence News

Historically, National Wear Red Day brings awareness to women's heart health. National Wear Red Day is celebrated in conjunction with national heart health month. It focuses specifically on raising awareness of women's heart disease and stroke risks. Cardiovascular disease causes one in three deaths in women every year, making it the number one health related killer in women.

The good news is eighty-seven percent of all heart issues are believed to be preventable, making awareness, education, research, and resources vital to the cause this holiday supports.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), The Heart Truth®, as well as many grass-roots organizations throughout the U.S., celebrate annually on the first Friday in February, by wearing their favorite red dresses, shoes, tops,

and accessories. The purpose is to encourage others to take preventative actions for the sake of their heart's health and to bring greater attention to heart disease.

The community of Florence took this initiative one step further. Members of the GFWC-MFWC Florentine Club attended the Florence's Board of Aldermen meeting in February, to accept a proclamation from Mayor Robert "Billy Bob" Morris and the city alderman declaring each Friday in February "Wear Red Day."

The governing body of Florence encouraged all citizens to show their support for women, and the ongoing fight against heart disease and stroke, by wearing red each Friday in February.

For more information about National Wear Red Day, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov.



Special to The Florence News

Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Members of the GFWC-MFWC Florentine Club; and back row: Alderman Brian Grantham, Alderman Todd "Sarge" Norris, Alderman John Banks, Mayor Robert "Billy Bob" Morris, Alderman Trey Gunn and Alderman/Mayor Pro Tem John Helms.

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The courage of a Rankin County family

By Alexa Haik

Amanda and Nick Pitman both hail from Rankin county- she from Brandon, and he, born and raised in Pearl. Both are also loving parents to two young girls: three-year-old Emma Kate and Maddy, who is less than a year old.

Amanda describes her youngest as, "fantastic. That's the one thing everybody compliments her on, because she just goes with the flow."

One might think this is why she has been affectionately named "Miracle Maddy," as not all newborns are blessed with such a copasetic demeanor. However, in this case, the name was inspired by the very unique circumstances in which she entered this life.

On Wednesday, July 15, 2020, Maddy was first diagnosed, at eleven weeks old, with infant leukemia- a very aggressive form of cancer. Things from that point forward moved very fast for her and her family. Upon diagnosis, Maddy was immediately admitted to Blair E. Batson and remained under their care for six days. On Tuesday, July 21, she was airlifted to St. Jude in Memphis, Tennessee, for more specialized and intensive treatment. According to Amanda, St. Jude was the best choice...the only choice, really.



An Amanda Pitman original.

Due to restrictions placed on hospital visitors because of COVID-19, only one care-giver was/is allowed per patient. In this case, Amanda assumed this primary role.

What does a typical day entail, one may ask? According to Amanda, "usually [Maddy] is up and getting her meds starting at 7:30 in the morning. Then, throughout the day, [there are] visitors... from social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech

therapists. Then, sometimes, we will have ultrasounds x-rays, PET scans, CT scans. Sometimes she has procedures that...she has to get sedated for. And then, every day around noon, a team of



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Maddy Pitman

doctors will come through and do their rounds...She usually has three or four different times where she has to get her meds, and feed. So, it is usually a pretty busy day from 7:30 in the morning until about ten at night...[when] things kind of calm down. And then, of course with her being a baby, she's up and down all night."

Fortunately, since July, the hospital has allowed Amanda's mother and grandmother to swap out as the single-family

caregiver, every couple of weeks, providing Amanda "a few hours of relief a day, just to kind of get a little break." Amanda admits, although the breaks are needed, she struggles with having to leave her daughter, as "[it] is always hard to."

This small reprieve allows not only for much needed rest but has also allowed time for a new hobby to flourish - painting. Amanda says her new past-time "has really been a good stress reliever... and very therapeutic."

Father Nick, on the other hand, has maintained a full work schedule, while also caring for their oldest daughter, Emma Kate. He was able to secure employment in north Mississippi and, in November 2020, relocated the family home to Olive Branch, a North Mississippi town located on the outskirts of Tennessee.

Maddy will be receiving the much-needed bone marrow transplant early in 2021. The Pitmans consider it nothing short of a miracle that they were able to locate the one person on the bone marrow registry that was a perfect match. The donor - a young male-agreed to assist the same day they contacted him. Amanda explains that "he agreed to it that day, which they said

continued on page 6

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Obituaries

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Annice Jenkins Porter	2/2/2021	89	Richland, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Roger Velton Oliver	2/3/2021	67	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Jimmie Sue Furlow	2/4/2021	91	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
James William Haley	2/4/2021	71	Jackson, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
James "Jim" Polk	2/7/2021	66	Richland, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Sidney Brumfield	2/10/2021	61	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Edwina Galyean	2/17/2021	71	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Martha Allen	2/17/2021	74	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Faynell Shipp Neely	2/19/2021	88	Richland, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Joseph "Stanley" Ricketson	2/20/2021	64	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Thomas Edward Williams	2/24/2021	72	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Harold "Keith" Sims	2/24/2021	63	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
James "Jim" Harris	2/25/2021	66	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Lewis King	2/26/2021	81	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home
Avis M. Wallace	2/27/2021	94	Florence, MS	Chancellor Funeral Home

Old Truths for Today

By J.T. Morgan



The Words of Jesus




Jesus was no ordinary teacher. The soldiers sent to arrest Him returned empty handed saying, "No man ever spoke like this man" (Jno.7:46). Following the sermon on the mount the multitudes "were astonished...for He taught them as one having authority". (Matt. 7:28-29). When Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth, or taught from an open boat on Galilee, the result was always the same – people were astonished at His teaching. In Capernaum, teaching them on the Sabbaths, the people were "astonished at His teaching for His word was with authority" (Lk. 4:31-32). In the synagogue there was a man possessed with a demon with an unclean spirit. Jesus rebuked the spirit and told him to come out of the man. The people were amazed saying, "What a word is this? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." (Lk. 4:33-37). The reason Christ came from heaven was "to save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). He also declared, "the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." (Lk.19:10). Jesus lived, He taught, He died, He arose all for one purpose: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). He later sent the apostles on a mission; "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:15-16). The apostle Paul later declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). The purpose of Jesus was and continues to be to save sinners. The only means to reach them is the gospel. (2 Thes. 2:13-14). People must be "called of God" (Jno. 6:44) and the only way God calls is by the gospel. (2 Thes. 2:14). James later declared, "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). Some look at the words of Jesus and say, "That is a great message from a great man!" But they are wrong! The words of Jesus were not the words of man, they were the words of God! Jesus declared, "I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (Jno.12:49). The apostles later affirmed that their message was "inspired of God" (2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet.1:20-21). Paul affirmed that the message that they spoke was not in "words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). The words of Jesus and later the words of the apostles was the "word of God." (1 Thes. 2:13). If we had to depend upon ourselves, our own actions, none of could be righteous. But we can come to Christ, be cleansed by His blood when we are baptized into His death and raised to a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:3-6). That is the "word of righteousness" which is the gospel of Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17-21). The people marveled at the preaching of Jesus! When we will live it and preach it as He did, the world will marvel at it today.


Florence Church of Christ

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McCraney appointed new MEMA executive director

Special to SW Rankin News

Governor Tate Reeves appointed Stephen McCraney as the new Executive Director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). McCraney started his new duties as executive director following the governor's announcement in January 2021.

"Stephen McCraney has done exceptional work with MEMA since 2016, and I am proud to elevate him to this new role. His work ethic is second to none. He has a command of Mississippi's emergency infrastructure, and there is no steadier hand in a crisis," says Governor Tate Reeves.

Before assuming the role as Executive Director, McCraney served as the Deputy Director and the Chief of Staff of MEMA since February of 2016. During his tenure, McCraney has worked on fifteen federally declared disasters, six emergency measures declarations and numerous state emergencies.

"I'm deeply honored to take the helm of MEMA. This agency has shown tremendous strength within the last year. I will strive to keep Mississippi and her citizens

ready to handle any manmade or natural disaster that comes our way; and forge an even greater relationship with our county EMA directors to ensure the needs of all Mississippians are met during a disaster. As we remain in the fight against COVID-19 and processing the other seventeen open federally declared disasters, MEMA stands ready to respond to whatever emergency happens next," says McCraney.

McCraney has extensive experience in responding to disasters in Mississippi. While serving for twenty-eight years as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard, McCraney responded to Hurricane Katrina, the Smithville Tornado, Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the Mississippi River Flooding of 2011.

He has been married to Sandra Kaye Champion for thirty-four years, and they have two children.



Special to SW Rankin News
Stephen McCraney

Rankin County 4-H members and volunteers donate time, essentials



Pictured (l to r) are: Abbye Buchanan, Erin Buchanan, Shondra Leary and Madison Anderson. They are pictured with the completed totes that were donated to the veterans "Totes of Hope" program by the Red Cross.



Pictured sorting and packing the toiletries for the totes (l to r) are: Hank Jennings, Dakota Redd, Abbye Buchanan and Madison Anderson.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Pictured taking curbside donations at Marvin United Methodist Church in Florence (l to r) are: Madison Anderson, Abbye Buchanan and Shawn Buchanan. The church was one of the drop off locations for the toiletry drive for Rankin County 4-H.

The courage of a Rankin County family

continued from page 4

that is very rare, but he was very motivated and willing to help out. He is a ten out of ten match, which you can't ask for a better donor. He is on the national registry, so he was that one person out of hundreds of thousands of donors, so we were really blessed that we found him."

As far as plans for the future, the Pitmans remain in a holding pattern.

"We are waiting to see, just because the doctors have told us this could end up taking one to two years of constant doctor visits (three to four visits a week), and so it's definitely going to be for the next year or two that we would have to be here and nearby just in case anything happened, or she gets sick, she's right there by St. Jude."

Through it all, Maddy remains her easy-going self. Amanda admits that "I don't know how I would have done it if she was not as easy a baby as she is. I mean, she even did her CT scan while she was wide awake the other day. She just got in the CT scan machine and looked around, and she was smiling. She

had her paci, and she was happy. She is always smiling, a really sweet baby."

When asked what continued community support is needed at this time, Amanda provides some options. Donations to the bone marrow bank are always welcome. The national bone marrow donor registry URL is www.bethematch.org. Volunteers are able to sign up as donors there. Once signed up, a cheek swab kit is sent to the volunteer...it is as simple as that.

Also, blood or platelet donations are in short supply in the State of Mississippi. For those interested in making a donation, visit any Mississippi Blood Services location or blood drive. Maddy Pitman's code is: DY78.

For those interested in providing monetary aid, three options are available: via Go Fund Me at www.gofundme.com (#FIGHTLIKEMAD); via PayPal at www.paypal.com (account name: ak-pitman15@gmail.com); or via Venmo at www.venmo.com (account name: @amanda-pitman-2).

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What "BAT Mississippi" is all about

By Alexa Haik

Bikers Against Trafficking Mississippi, or "BATMS," as it is commonly known, describes itself as "a motorcycle association made up of riders that believe it's not what you ride that matters, it's what you ride for." Inspired and affiliated with the parent organization Bikers Against Trafficking (BAT), the mission as a non-profit, is to "mobilize members of the motorcycle community (and those like minded) to help eradicate human sex trafficking and restore those impacted through: building awareness; clinical trauma counseling; job placement; housing assistance and mentoring. Bikers Against Trafficking also fight against 'demand' by providing addiction counseling and intervention." Although the subject matter is heavy, the message is one of hope, awareness, guidance and support.

Co-founders, and Florence residents, Nick and Amanda Brown, explain that BATMS is officially designated as an "organization" rather than a typical bike "club."

To join, a prospect is required to go through a minimum three month 'get to know us' period before they qualify as a potential "patched member." Nick says it is critical that the prospective member has a "passion" about the mission. For those interested in a casual way, they are welcome to ride, but are unlikely to become a full patch member.

All that said, BATMS does not work independently of other motorcycle clubs. In fact, partnering with local clubs is quite common. Members of "Hell Fighters," a faith-based motorcycle club, can frequently be seen attending and assisting at BATMS events.

Originally, BATMS started with six members, from there they have since grown to twelve strong. Nick explains that "we expanded all the way down to the coast. We picked up some more from Laurel, we picked up some [locally], so it's growing, and that was in spite of



CMA's (Christian Motorcycle Association) 2020 Central Mississippi Blessing of the Bike in Brandon. Pictured (l to r) are: Kristina McCool (Member and Operations Manager of the Tower), John McCool (Road Captain), Nick Brown (BATMS Founder and President), Amanda Brown (BATMS Founder and Treasurer), Daniel Johnson (Vice President) and Josh Johnson (Captain).

COVID."

BATMS is an established 501(c)3, logging minutes and bylaws at monthly meetings. Since its inception in 2020, the organization has also adopted some Mississippi specific bylaws...because the chapter in Mississippi is very law enforcement heavy. Nick emphasizes that "we [also] have members that aren't [in law enforcement], and that's fine, we don't require that."

BATMS patch members meet once a month on the second Saturday. The discussions range from upcoming pop-up events, fund-raisers, to the introduction of it's newest members. Anyone who is interested may attend a BATMS meeting, member or not. Non-members will not, however, be privy to votes in regards to donations over \$100, but are "welcome to come and sit in and hear what we are about and listed to the plans that we have coming up."

Their premier, main, event in 2020, was held at Spinners in Florence. It featured a bike show, a skating rink, and an appearance from "Black Axes," - a family-owned and operated axe throwing club located in Brandon.

Nick says this event, and every event held by BATMS, is family friendly, in



Photos special to SW Rankin News
BATMS mascot, JimBo, meeting and greeting everyone as they stop by tent at the 2020 Richland Ranger Spring Carnival.

an effort to provide entertainment and information that is accessible to persons of all ages.

"We try to make everything we do family friendly for a lot of reasons...the parents need to know [what we are all about], but the kids also need to know...[so if] they have questions, we can answer it."

In their one year of existence, and due to these fund-raising efforts, BATMS has already made a notable impact in Mississippi. Nick elaborates that, "being able to donate...to The Tower (a local long term care and rehab facility for adult sex trafficking survivors), [and] knowing that money went straight to the victims that needed it [was rewarding]. We were able to assist with not only needs that the victims have, but also their construction project to double that space. We did the tear-down...and now we got a contractor in and he is projected to finish, barring any major blow ups, April 1."

Pleased with the progress made, but never satisfied, Amanda says, "we want to continue to grow and spread awareness and get a conversation started about human trafficking. We want people to know what it actually is versus the things seen on social media...the white van or somebody showing up at every aisle at Walmart. We want people to have accurate information about human trafficking, and we want to be able to help as many people as we can, whether that is raising money and donating it directly to The Tower, or another facility that helps the victims, or, through what we are planning on doing this year with being able to donate directly to what we are calling victims assistance, through someone needing something specific and us being able to fulfill that need."

The next ambitious goal for the fledgling organization is, "to be a big contributing factor, whether it is manpower-wise or monetary, into getting a long term juvenile facility in this state. Because its is insane...the need. I do this every day...both on the state and federal level, the need for a juvenile facility in this state, and the fact that it's not here, not only is it hurting our efforts to fight it, but it is also hurting the victims."

When asked how many juvenile survivors would benefit from this type of facility, Rick explains, "I can tell you right now, my case load, I'm in the double digits, and that's just me in one office working with minors. You start spreading that over the state...easily into the hundreds, if not close to a thousand [new cases] a year."

For those with questions, interested in getting involved, or who merely want to follow the organization's ongoing progress, the BATMS Facebook page is the way to go. Amanda says, "Nick and I have control over the Facebook page, so if you are messaging, one of us will be the one responding to that."

BATMS wants to get their message out to the local community and welcomes all who are interested in learning more.

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MS House Weekly Summary: February 2021

By Barrett Climer, House Information Officer for Mississippi House of Representatives

Week of February 8, 2021

This was the sixth week of the 2021 Legislative Session. The House met as whole throughout the week to discuss bills that made it out of committee and onto the calendar. Thursday, Feb. 11 was the deadline for members to introduce and discuss these general bills. Over 100 bills were brought up and discussed in session this week. Any bills not discussed in session and left on the calendar have died. The bills that were considered dealt with a variety of topics.

The Mississippi Intercollegiate Athletics Compensation Rights Act (House Bill 1030) was a bill introduced late on Thursday. The bill would allow university and college student athletes in Mississippi to receive compensation if their name or likeness is used in advertising. A few amendments were passed without debate. A third amendment was introduced that contained language similar to a bill that passed through the Senate this week (Senate Bill 2536). Proponents of the amendment said that it would protect female sports from male participation, while opponents argued that the language could affect

women who already play male sports and athletes born with both male and female reproductive organs. After a point of order was raised and the original amendment was withdrawn, a fourth amendment was introduced clarifying that biologically male student athletes cannot receive compensation for likeness in sports designated for females. The bill passed the House by a vote of 89-23.

The House Judiciary A Committee introduced House Bill 196, or the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act. The act would elevate the level of care for female inmates by limiting use of restraints on incarcerated inmates giving birth, by providing feminine hygiene products for inmates who are in need and by placing incarcerated mothers within a certain distance to their minor children. The bill passed unanimously by a vote of 116-0 and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

House Bill 852 would raise the salaries of teachers and teacher's assistants around the state. The bill includes a \$1,100 raise to assistants and teachers with less than two years of experience and a \$1,000 raise for other teachers.



The bill passed by a bipartisan vote of 119-2 and will now move through the Senate.

House Bill 1013 would create the Mississippi Medicaid Commission to administer the state's Medicaid program. The bill would also abolish the Division of Medicaid that currently runs the program. The commission would consist of seven members: three appointed by the governor and four appointed by the lieutenant governor. The commission would then appoint an executive director to oversee the program. The bill passed by a vote of 102-25. It was then held on a motion to reconsider, but that motion was later tabled.

One bill that failed to receive a majority this week was House Bill 163. The bill would have created a new circuit court district consisting of Itawamba, Lee, Monroe and Pontotoc Counties. These counties are currently in the First Circuit Court District along with Alcorn, Tishomingo and Prentiss Counties. The bill failed by a vote of 57-58 and was held on a motion to reconsider. After being left on the calendar, the bill died at the end of the week.

House Bill 1136, or the Mississippi Educational Talent Recruitment Act, would create an incentive program for recent college graduates who go into teaching. The program would allow these recent graduates of in-state and out-of-state higher institutions who establish residency in Mississippi to earn a rebate equal to the amount of the individual's state income tax for five years. The bill passed by a vote of 109-10 and will go to the Senate for consideration.

House Bill 413 would establish a "Mississippi Gospel Music Trail" similar to other trails around the state: The Blues Trail, the Country Music Trail, the Writers Trail and the Freedom Trail. Part of the bill would create a Mississippi Gospel Music Commission under the Mississippi Development Authority to plan and promote the program. The bill passed with a bipartisan vote of 119-2 and has been sent to the Senate.

House Bill 633, or the Mississippi Computer Science and Cyber Education Equality Act, would require the Department of Education to implement a computer science curriculum in K-12 public schools. According to the bill, more than half of Mississippi high schools do not currently teach a computer science course. Although some debate occurred regarding the cost of

continued on page 9

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FRL book report for March, a murder mystery

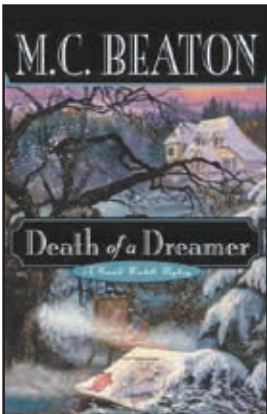
By Beth Woodmansee for the Friends of the Richland Library

M.C. Beaton writes popular cozy mysteries about a red-headed Scottish Police Constable by the name of Hamish Macbeth. Often, he speaks a strong Scottish burr. He's a bachelor living in the village of Lochdubh with a dog named "Lugs" and a wild Scottish cat named "Sonsie." Several ladies would like to change that. Lochdubh is situated at the very north of Scotland, where blizzards blow off the Atlantic. In her book, *Death of a Dreamer*, the dreamer is Effie Garrard, who moved to town months earlier. Forty-something Effie lives inside her dreams. When she first meets the artist, Jock Fleming, she becomes obsessed with him, following him everywhere and making a pest of herself.

While visiting Effie in her cottage, Police Constable Hamish noticed her paint brushes were coated with dried paint and her potter's wheel was dusty. She was selling her pieces to local shops; but, Hamish wondered if Effie really was the artist. Her obsession about Jock Fleming deepens so that she believes he wants to marry her. Nothing could be further from the truth. A few days after meeting Effie, Jock angrily informs Hamish that Effie was, "Mad!" When she showed up at a 'ceilidh' (kay-lee) wearing clown-like garish makeup, Jock tries to disengage from her. Poor Effie buys an engagement ring in another town and tells everyone it was given to her by Jock and they are to be married soon, because she is pregnant.

Then Effie disappeared, and everyone searched for her. Her body was found near "Geordie's Cleft" on the mountain. When Hamish arrived, he noticed a bottle of partially consumed dessert wine. He also saw Effie's ring finger had been cut off, and the ring was missing. Searching her body, he found her finger inside her pocket, along with a typewritten note which may or may not be a suicide message. When his nemesis, Chief Detective Inspector Blair, showed up with his crew and took over the in-

vestigation, Blair decided it was a simple suicide and there was no reason to investigate further, dismissing Hamish's ideas about murder. Three days later, the medical examiner reported that Effie died of exposure and also from consuming the contents of the bottle of wine, which was mostly ethylene glycol, also known as antifreeze, a sweet tasting substance inducing sleepiness, disorientation and death. No fingerprints were found on the bottle.



Special to SW Rankin News

Quite a few attractive women come to Lochdubh; Betty Barnard and Priscilla Halburton-Smythe; Dora Fleming, beautiful ex-wife of Jock Fleming, who came to force Jock to pay more child-care for their children. Caro Garrard saw the news about her sister's death and showed up to find out just what had happened. She told Hamish that Effie was lying when she told everyone she was the artist; it was she herself, not her sister, who was the artist. By this time, most of Lochdubh knew Effie was quite mad.

A day after Effie was killed, an American tourist named Hal Addenfest was found dead on the shore of the loch. He was an unpleasant little man who bragged he knew who murdered Effie. Were the two murders connected? The hunt for the truth was confused by rumors and theories flying around. Which one was correct and would lead to the killer?

The murderer is revealed when Hamish Macbeth finds a diving suit hidden in the basement of the hotel. Faithful Lugs and Sonsie attack the killer and save Hamish. But you won't find the killer's name here. Get the book for yourself at your local library!

MS House Weekly Summary: February 2021

continued from page 8

implementing the program, the bill passed by a vote of 114-4.

Many bills passed the House with overwhelming majority including a bill that would prohibit a new landfill in counties where two or more were located (House Bill 949); two bills expanding broadband access in the state (House Bills 942 and 505) the Sexual Assault Response for College Students Act (House Bill 581); a bill prohibiting state and local law enforcement agencies to implement traffic ticket quotas (House Bill 883); and a bill authorizing libraries to accept debit and credit cards as a form of payment (House Bill 488). The coming weeks will consist of floor discussion of House appropriations and other revenue bills. The deadline for these revenue bills to be sent to the Senate is Wednesday, Feb. 24. The House will then work on bills that originated in the Senate.

Week of February 22, 2021

After dealing with winter weather in Jackson and across the state last week, the House met in person to conduct legislative business. Last week, the House met in session and committees via teleconference, similar to what occurred earlier in the session. Wednesday, Feb. 24 marked the deadline for House appropriations and revenue bills to be introduced and passed.

With general House bills out of the way, representatives began working on House appropriations Bills, which will determine how much money is given to various state agencies.

The House was responsible for looking at the preliminary budgets of about 50 state agencies, including the Depart-

ments of Insurance, Health, Transportation and Education. These bills represent half of the state's budget; the other half is currently being considered by the Senate and will be sent to the House for consideration later in the legislative session.

Budgets include reverse repealers, a clause which ensures that a bill cannot become law before going to a conference committee for further revisions. With reverse repealers in place, many appropriations bills were voted on en bloc to help speed up the process.

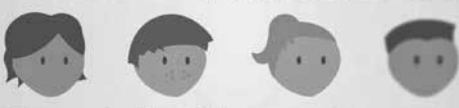
The House Ways and Means committee also took up several bills on the floor this week, most notably House Bill 1439.

House Bill 1439, or the Mississippi Tax Freedom Act of 2021, would make several changes to current Mississippi tax laws including immediately eliminating the state income tax on \$50,000 of individual income and \$100,000 for married couples' income; phasing out the state income tax entirely over a ten-year period; cutting the grocery tax from 7% to 4.5% immediately, then to 3.5% by FY 2027; and increasing the sales tax from 7% to 9.5%. After much debate, HB 1439 passed the House by a vote of 85-34.

The next deadline for House members is next Tuesday, March 2, when all general bills originating in the Senate must be passed out of committee to begin work before the House as a whole. Working on Senate bills will continue until Wednesday, March 10. After this deadline, both houses will have to concur on a bill or go to conference committee to finish working on a bill.


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Colleges secure multiple PHS student-athletes for 2021



Pearl High School (PHS) senior Francesca Clark signed a softball scholarship with Hinds Community College (Hinds CC). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: father Jimmy Clark, Francesca Clark, mother Monica Clark and brother Brendan Clark; and back row: PHS Assistant Principal Dr. Michael Brewer, Athletic Director Richard Smithhart; Coach Jeff Garrett and Coach Matt McMullen.



PHS senior Brady Helms signed a cross country scholarship with Wallace State Community College (WSCC). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: friend Jacob Dedmon, father Rodney Helms, Brady Helms, mother Arien Dwyer and stepfather Jimmy Dwyer; and back row: PHS Assistant Principal Dr. Michael Brewer, PHS Assistant Principal John Craven, Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, Coach George Kersh and Coach Chris Barnett.



PHS senior Leo McIntyre signed to play football at Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: aunt LaJoy Paige, father Leo McIntyre II, Leo McIntyre; mother Priscilla Paige and grandfather Percy Paige Sr.; and back row: Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, Coach Terrence Robinson, PHS Head Football Coach Justin Hunter, sister Cameryn Howard, sister Leondrea McIntyre, sister Akyra McIntyre and brother Leo McIntyre.



PHS senior Daeja Davis signed a cross country and track scholarship with JSU. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: mother Kontessa Davis, sister Briana Linson, Daeja Davis, grandmother Linda Davis and grandfather Sam Davis; and back row: PHS Assistant Principal Dr. Michael Brewer, PHS Assistant Principal John Craven, Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, Coach Chris Barnett and Coach George Kersh.



PHS senior Jalecia Johnson signed to run track at Jackson State University (JSU). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: sister Jada Johnson, mother Lauren Williams, Jalecia Johnson and stepfather Timothy Williams; and back row: Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, Coach George Kersh and Coach Chris Barnett.



PHS senior Austin Green signed a baseball scholarship with East Central Community College (ECCC). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: grandmother Faye Green, father Brett Green, Austin Green, mother Stacey Green, and sister Alaina Green; and back row: Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, Coach Ricky Owens, grandfather Jeff Cannon, grandmother Diane Cannon, PHS Head Baseball Coach Brian Jones and PHS Assistant Principal Dr. Tracy Yates.



PHS senior Malachi Porter signed a football scholarship at NWCC. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Coach Ray Durr, Malachi Porter, Coach Terrance Robinson and friend Amber Bray; and back row: Athletic Director Richard Smithhart, friend Leo McIntyre, aunt Priscilla Paige and PHS Head Football Coach Justin Hunter.



PHS senior Connor McHenry will continue his baseball career at Southwest Community College (SWCC). Pictured (l to r) are, front row: mother Shelley McHenry, Connor McHenry, father John McHenry, and brother Campbell McHenry; and back row: PHS Assistant Principal John Craven, Coach Ricky Owens, PHS Head Baseball Coach Brian Jones and Athletic Director Richard Smithhart.

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Pearl voc rehab specialist serves with empathy

Special to SW Rankin News

Spina bifida never stopped Rebecca Sentell from serving as a strong advocate for other individuals with disabilities.

A lifelong condition, Spina bifida is a birth defect that occurs when the spine or spinal cord doesn't form properly. It's a medical condition that's meant back and feet surgeries for Sentell plus physical therapy. She's spent much of her life in a wheelchair.

Her life skills are off the charts. The 2017 Ms. Mississippi Wheelchair pageant winner, Sentell easily wins over colleagues, clients and friends.

A Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) counselor, Sentell is an encourager and a role model who works well with her clients, other individuals with disabilities. She's serving seventy clients at her Vocational Rehabilitation office in Pearl, where she serves as a Supported Employment Counselor.

Her supervisor, Mary-Stewart Habig, the MDRS District Six manager, praises the daily performance of her colleague. "Rebecca is a wonderful vocational rehabilitation counselor and person," Habig said. "She has a strong work ethic and a caring spirit. She demonstrates that in her relationship with her clients and co-workers."

It's easy to see why Sentell is so well-respected when she's working with clients at her office at 1032 Center Point Boulevard in Pearl. Her spirit and positive outlook on life is contagious, whether in the office or away from the job at MDRS.

"I do love what I do. I know how personally challenging it is to get employment," Sentell said. The Mississippi College graduate submitted 100 applications and went through fifty interviews before a job came her way several years ago.

Assisting clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Sentell seeks to ensure that employment opportunities open up. In November, she joined a client at a University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) job orientation to offer encouragement and calm any fears of a new job.

After finishing a one-year internship at the hospital, her client is now working at UMMC's Ambassador Service program. Duties for the MDRS client included transporting patients to surgeries or to their cars following their release.

Sentell assists clients in MDRS's District Six spanning Madison, Rankin, Attala, Scott, Simpson and Newton counties. There's never a slow day.

"It's a lot of work and a lot of responsibility," Sentell says. "Peoples' livelihoods are in our hands."

At the same time Sentell serves as a counselor, she's getting daily assistance



Rebecca Sentell

Special to SWRankin News

as an MDRS client. "I've been a client with MDRS my whole life, honestly," says the thirty-six-year-old Mississippi native. The Madison Central High graduate feels blessed to receive so much help from the agency based in her hometown in Madison. "I'm very grateful."

Sentell's day begins with help from a personal care attendant at her residence. She assists Sentell with a shower every morning, helps her get dressed and makes sure she gets breakfast.

"If it was not for her, I couldn't go to work," Sentell says. "Everybody needs help."

The MDRS Office of Special Disability supports her use of a personal care attendant. The state agency furnished Sentell with a wheelchair, helped with her van modifications and has assisted with therapy, among other things.

With assistance, Sentell is in a much better position to help others.

Receiving accolades as Ms. Wheelchair Mississippi in March 2017 was quite a milestone.

Winning the pageant, she said, fulfilled a longstanding dream. Sentell credits God for allowing her to win the title, and compete in the national pageant in Pennsylvania.

The Lord "put me in a position where I will be able to make a great impact and change for Mississippians with disabilities," Sentell said.

Her platform was titled "All About the Journey." She strived to educate health-

care professionals on methods to create inclusive facilities for people with disabilities.

Sentell serves as state coordinator for the Ms. Wheelchair Mississippi pageant. She raises funds for the non-profit and books appearances for the titleholder. The COVID-19 pandemic cancelled the event this year. She looks forward to organizing the pageant in 2021.

Allyson Bell calls Sentell an inspiration every step of her journey to win the Ms. Mississippi Wheelchair title in November 2019. "Rebecca is truly an awesome role model and advocate for women living with disabilities." Allyson works with Living Independence for Everyone (L.I.F.E.) of Mississippi.

Mississippi College (MC), Sentell said, deserves credit for giving her the education she needed to pursue her career. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 2010 and a master's in ad-

diction counseling in 2014. MC is where she met her husband, Leland Sentell, and the couple has been married for ten years. The couple loves spending time with their three dogs in Madison. The Sentells are members of Word of Life Church.

From one year to the next, the Mississippian is an activist for people with disabilities as a leader with several organizations. The recipient of the Living Independence for Everyone of Mississippi lifetime achievement award, she's served as treasurer of the LIFE Youth Board of Directors.

Sentell believes individuals with disabilities often make for better employees than people without any physical or mental challenges. "They take the job more seriously because of the challenges to get there," the MDRS counselor said. "If they are given an opportunity, they appreciate it more."

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Doug Craft of Florence: groundskeeper at the U

Special to SW Rankin News

Doug Craft wears a patch that's a by-product of surgery two decades ago that saved his life.

And although his eye doctor has floated the possibility of a procedure that could mean he'd lose the patch, Craft is not interested. "Nobody wants me to do it," he said. "The eye patch has become my identity."

Craft, who supervises the four-man groundskeeping team at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, two years ago became an employee of the hospital he says "played a huge part in extending my life." He was working as a grounds superintendent in the metro Jackson area when he began having excruciating pain in his head and left side of the neck.

"My little finger went numb. I went to an orthopedic surgeon, and she said I was fishing for Workman's Compensation," Craft remembered. "It got so bad that my wife had to take me to the ER." That was twenty-one years ago come July 2021.

Doctors there first thought he had a brain tumor, but then zeroed in on the cause of his pain: a fungal infection in his cranium. They sent him to UMMC. "They tried to treat it with medication, but it kept growing," Craft said. "I ended up having a thirteen-hour surgery."

His medical team gave him less than a five percent chance of surviving the surgery. "My blood pressure dropped. My kidneys failed. I had a stroke," he said of the time in the operating room. "They had to remove my left eye to go into my skull and remove the fungus."

He was told he'd probably be in the hospital until Christmas.

"I stayed in the hospital three and a half weeks, and I went back to work that Oct. 1," Craft said.

The fungus entered his brain through his nose courtesy of a deviated septum. Craft developed after breaking his nose as a boy. "The fungal spores got caught there and began to grow," Craft said. "The deviated septum was repaired during my surgery, so there's no place for it to grow now."

Craft said he feels nothing but gratitude to be back on the campus where he almost died. His team of groundskeepers are both visible and almost invisible as they spread across campus, cleaning

everything from the parking garages and stadium parking lot to treating sidewalks and steps so that no one will slip on ice or snow. "My guys work hard at keeping the grounds beautiful," he said.

"Doug is a joy to work with," said Larry Lineberry, associate director of facilities services in the Division of Physical Facilities.

"He knows his trade and helps me understand what we need to do at each turn in keeping the grounds looking good."

"Doug's knowledge of the many different plants, trees and grass here on campus and

how to care for them is unique and valuable to the University."

"My guys maintain the areas not seen by the general public," said Craft, who was self-employed as a landscaper before coming to the U. "About half of the mowing is done by contractors, and half by us. Pressure washing is a big thing for us right now, but we do a lot behind the scenes."



Special to SWRankin News
Doug Craft is supervisor of grounds at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

A big recent project was preparing the West Street Farmers Market for COVID-19 testing. Recently, "we had to fill in several large potholes there that were interfering with the process," Craft said. "We're on the ready now for ice and snow, and we clean up limbs throughout campus after storms."

His crew, Craft said, does a stellar job, handling situations including providing logistical support for repairs to a water main break in front of the School of Medicine and cleaning graffiti off of a retaining wall. "They look around and find what needs to be done, and they do it," he said. Ditto for Craft, who patrols campus frequently, on the prowl for areas that need attention.

"When I need help with the many special projects that pop up here on campus I reach out to Doug to help complete the task," Lineberry said. "Recently, we had Doug and his team come in very early - 5:30 a.m. - to begin de-icing sidewalks and walkways when we had the snow."

When he's not working, Craft and his wife Shannon enjoy country life outside Florence and caring for their menagerie of pets. "We travel a good bit, and we go to the mountains in Arkansas frequently," said Craft. The Crafts enjoy visiting their four grown children, "and we normally go to several Ole Miss football games each year."



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Richland’s Orr selected to coach "All-Stars"



Special to SW Rankin News

Pictured (l to r) are: are Khary Orr, Angel Lantaron and Dustin Phillips.

Special to SW Rankin News

Richland resident and Forest High School head boys' soccer coach Khary Orr, and assistant coach Dustin Phillips were selected to coach the South

All-Star Boys in the 2021 Mississippi Association of Coaches All-Star Soccer Match. Senior defender Angel Lantaron was also selected. The match was set for February at Brandon High School.

Richland's Thames signs with Holmes



Special to SW Rankin News

Ivan Thames signed his letter of intent to play for Holmes Community College for the 2021-2022 school year. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: mom Yvon Thames and Ivan Thames; and back row: Assistant Principal Corey Yates, Assistant Principal Dr. Thomas Dudley and Coach J.J. Plummer.

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Richland Fire Department seeking new recruits



Richland Fire Department

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Special to SW Rankin News

Richland Fire Department (RFD) is seeking applications for the position of Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technician. Pay will depend on experience but will range, annually, from \$29,000 to \$37,500.

The City of Richland Fire Department serves approximately 7,000 residents in an area of 12.2 square miles. RFD responds from two stations that protect residential as well as industrial property. The Department was originally "The Richland Volunteer Fire Department" and was developed in the late 1950s and progressed into a paid professional department in 1976.

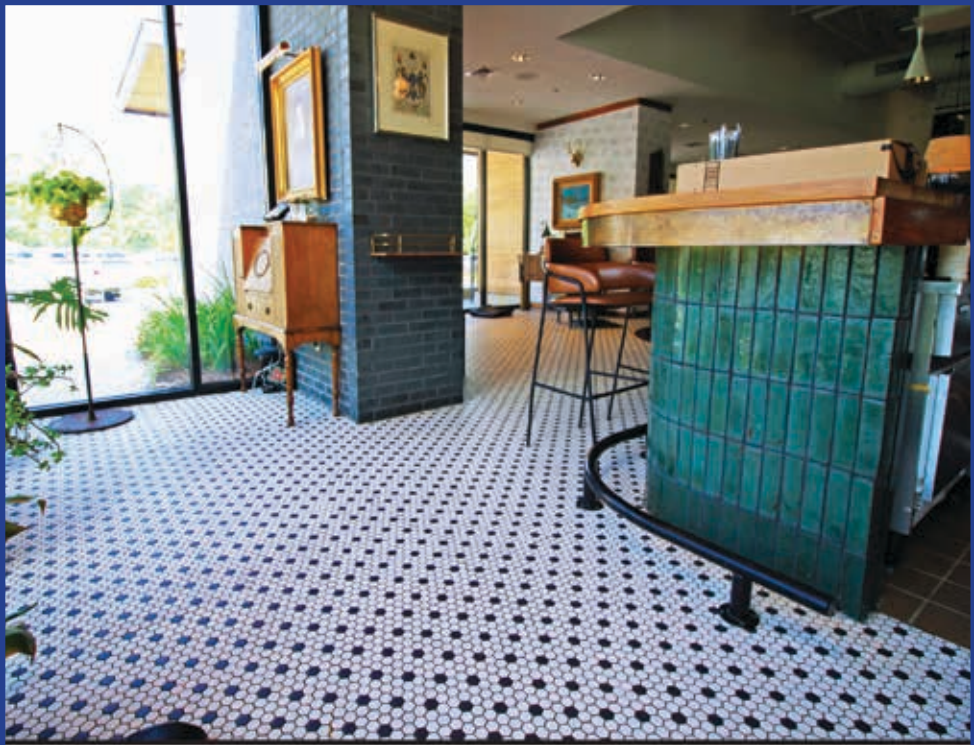
The Department is a thirty-three member paid department. Station one, which

is located at 566 Old Hwy 49 South, houses a Ladder Company, Engine Company, and the Fire Marshall. Station two, which is located at 152 Brandon Avenue, houses an Engine Company, Chief, Deputy Chief, and Battalion Chief.

The Richland Fire Department provides services which include fire suppression, fire prevention, fire inspections, rescue and emergency medical services.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, applications will be accepted by email only, and not be available for pick-up at the RFD fire stations. Interested candidates may send application requests via email to bweems@richlandms.com.

For further information call Station two at 601-939-1936 and ask for Chief Sanford or Chief Weems.



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FHS athletes sign with Hinds CC



Florence High School's (FHS) Ben Duncan signed recently with Hinds Community College (Hinds CC) as the special teams/kicker, on National Signing Day. Pictured (l to r) are: Head Coach Rod Davis, Ben Duncan and Greg Nickles.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Florence High School (FHS) senior Cameron Courtney recently signed a letter of intent to play collegiate tennis and continue his education at Hinds CC. Courtney is a member of the FHS Eagles Varsity Tennis team. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: father Troy Courtney, Cameron Courtney, mother Patti Lynn Courtney; and back row: FHS Assistant Principal Keith Reed, FHS Tennis Assistant Coach Joe Tuccio, FHS Tennis Coach Julia Johnston and FHS Principal Tony Martin.

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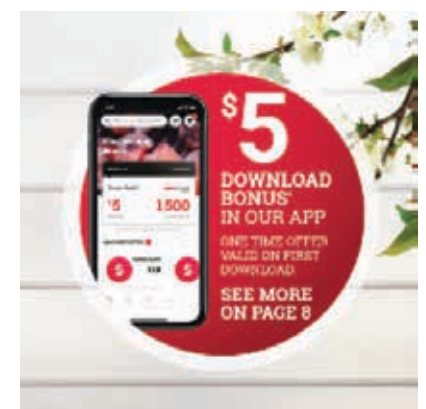
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