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SWRANKIN NEWS

Good News You Can Use

Vol. 6, No. 1 | January 2021

The Pearl News

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THE FLORENCE NEWS

The story of PHS's Sign Language Club

By Alexa Haik

"If you build it, he will come" is an oft quoted line from the classic 1989 movie, *Field of Dreams*. The premise of the film is this: a farmer in Iowa is inspired to build a baseball diamond after a voice urges him with these words. Sounds crazy, right?

Well, something eerily similar happened to Pearl High School (PHS) student Kaitlyn Glass.

"Honestly, I was driving home one day and I was like, I should start a club at school." Not just any club - a sign language club. The inspiration, Glass says, is "my parents. Both of my parents are deaf." Glass says she had the unique experience of learning American Sign Language at the same time she learned to talk. So it makes sense that her motivation is equal parts personal and strategic.

"We go to restaurants all the time,

and the people want to know so bad; and they just don't have anyone to teach them." So she started to build it.

Initially, Glass began the pursuit of her dream by asking around PHS. As a result, PHS's Principal Chris Chism sent out a communication, a request, for a sponsor. Ann Case, the human anatomy and physiology and science literacy teacher, responded. Case had a little bit of experience in her past.

"I did some signing when I was in high school and the first little bit of college, and for my church...so this is a refresher course for me, as well."



Special to The Pearl News

Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Lindsay Butler, Kaitlynn Glass, Mrs. Case, Sarah Babb, Mya Carter, Aleyah Mosley, Kimberly Arevalo and Logan Brewer; and back row: Madi Temple, Charlotte Koenig, Ivie Kirkland, Janai Hood and Sabrina Sims.

Discussion of the possible group continued during the 2019-2020 school year, and then the unexpected happened

with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent stay-at-home orders.

This led to a transition from traditional in-person classes to virtual classes for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

"We didn't know when we came back if we would be allowed to host meetings at all, so it took a little while to get started [this year]," Case explains.

Ultimately, as a result of Glass' efforts, Pearl High School teacher Ann Case now sponsors the American Sign Language Club at Pearl High School. Case explains that "technically [I am] the sponsor on paper, but Kaitlyn is actually in charge of the teaching and the lessons that we go through. So, it is basically a student led club."

See "PHS's Sign Language Club: Filling a need in the community" on page 7 for further information.

Pearl resident inspires others with help from MRC

Special to The Pearl News

J. Carmen Arevalo of Pearl experienced a life-changing event this last November, when his left femur bone was severely fractured during routine construction work. From that point forward, needless to say, his life hasn't been the same.

After spending approximately two months in the hospital, he was transferred to Methodist Rehabilitation Center (MRC), where the real work began. Thus set in motion an incredible transformation from amputation, rehabilitation to rebirth, using the latest in technology available to those who have lost a limb.

His isn't a story about unfortunate accidents, it's a story about rising to a challenge, beating the odds, and being an inspiration to others.

See article "Arevalo of Pearl..." on pages 4 and 11 for the full story.



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J. Carmen Arevalo of Pearl practices walking up and down stairs with his prosthesis at Methodist Outpatient Therapy in Flowood.



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RMYC contributes to local food bank

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Annually, the Richland Mayor's Youth Council (RMYC) selects and votes to support one organization for a service project for the month of November.

RMYC collects items requested by the selected organization; the information is then shared online via social media, flyers, etc... to the public; and drop offs are made at Richland City Hall. In years past, the RMYC service projects have been: Blair E Batson Adopt-A-Floor, a local animal shelter, Richland Police and Fire Departments, and Christmas for a local family.

This year, The RMYC members voted as a group to collect canned goods for the local food bank, Grace Harvest, located on Brandon Avenue. Thanks to generous donations from the community, a sizable donation was collected



Pictured (l to r) are: RMYC member Caden Herrington and 2020/2021 RMYC President Everett Patterson.

this year.

The Richland Mayor's Youth Council is made up of students living in Richland or attending Richland High School. In order to join, a student must be in high school (grades ninth through twelfth). Applications are ac-



Picture (l to r) are RMYC members: Austin Hart, Emily Bridges, Cierra Sheppard and Addison Mathis.

cepted each year during the month of March. The 2020/2021 Richland Mayor's Youth Council membership includes: Bryce Adcock, Isabel Alvarado, Ben Bates, Hannah Beggiani; Griffin Bowers, Emily Bridges, Logan Bynum, Mallory Chapman, Ma-

son Chapman, Aydan Courtney, Emma Furini, Jackson Gordon, Aliya Harris, Bayleigh Harris, Austin Hart, Chance Harvey, Janeie Henderson, Caden Herrington, Jonathan Hester, Katie Beth Holmes, Hunter Knight, Chloe Knippers,, Graham Laseter, Gavin Lovorn, Addison Mathis, Jameson Miller, Ashlyn Moorhead, Jasper Moorhead, Jasmine Nguyen, Jai Patel, Krish Patel, Everett Patterson, Anna Riley Payne, Grayson Payne, Lona Quichocho, Alison Ragoyta, Preston Ragsdale, Sydney Ragsdale, Tyler Redmond, Andon Riley, Carson Rimes, Ema Roland, Hagen Russell, Cierra-Lynn Sheppard, Carter Smith, Chase Walter, Andrew Williams, Maria Williams and Ka'Mya Williams-Sayles.

For additional information regarding Grace Harvest, contact Becky Brown of FBC Richland at 601-885-8448.

RHS's Ranger Band receives generous donation

Special to The Richland News

"Its really funny, because there is always a need for funds with band, it's never completed, there's only a set goal, and if we can get to that, that can help us through a certain amount of time [and then] we have to do it all over again," explains band director, Jordan Salvant. Her goal as the head band director is to eventually procure all new equipment, as the instruments that are currently in use by the Richland Ranger Band are either dated and/or in disrepair. Ultimately, for the 2020-21 school year, Salvant's desire is to "get a new tuba, a new sousaphone and two new marching baritones, as well as some other equipment, if possible."

Luckily for The Richland Ranger Band, word spread about their need. A local company, Eutaw Construction, stepped in and generously donated \$500 to the program. Salvant says, "I was so grateful for that, because that is

going to help us pay for some more instruments." Since then, the band has been able to purchase a tuba, and, in addition, Salvant believes they have raised enough money to almost cover the cost of a single baritone.

But the fund-raising work is not over. According to Salvant, the cost of two marching baritones are about \$1,250 each. So, the need for donations continues. Donations of any size can be made by anyone and everyone, and it's greatly appreciated. If so desired, donations may be made anonymously. However, if they would like "a shout out," the



Special to The Richland News

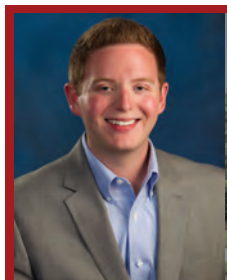
Eutaw Construction makes generous donation to the Richland High School Band.

band is eager to oblige, as thank you cards, and official recognition, when requested, are a top priority.

When asked about a wish list, "I could definitely go on for hours. I made a whole list of what we need to buy for

every year for thirty years in order to receive everything we need, and that's on a \$5,000 [yearly budget]." In the meantime, typical of the determination and passion Salvant has for the band program at RHS, she has begun the process of writing a grant to secure the much coveted funds.

Anyone interested in making a donation, whether large or small, anonymous or officially recognized, may inquire with Richland High School by calling or emailing the Head Principal, Marcus Stewart, at 601-939-5144. They may also contact Band Director Salvant at jor503@rcsd.ms for further info. Salvant wants to be clear that "We'd love to talk to the people who are donating to give a big thank you, because it really is greatly appreciated. I can't express how grateful I was with Eutaw stepping in. I know everyone was kind of holding off on giving anything because of COVID, and so I was just very grateful."



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Unique collaboration leads to a special delivery

By Alexa Haik

Where do the best ideas come from? Often times they come spontaneously, seemingly out of nowhere. In Florence, just such an inspiration took root in the month of June, when three friends, all members of a four-wheeler club/side by sides group, got together and had an idea. Bruno Clark, Stacey Harper and Chris Berch, while working on an ATV, decided that since they were unable to participate in the 2020 St. Paddy's Day Parade, due to COVID-19, they would create their own parade.

Their motivation was personal. UMMC's Children's of Mississippi Hospital seemed to be the most viable candidate. Not only had Berch's son spent time in Children's Hospital, but several members' children had, also. They understood how much it means for patients and family members to receive a donated toy during their hospital stay. Berch says that "with the cancellation of the St. Paddy's Day parade, we knew donations were down, also. We set a minimum of \$300 dollar donations for members of our group. The offer was extended to the general public but had no takers."

If Berch had to guess, a few hundred people donated, as well as a dozen or so local small businesses and companies. This included a partnership with Florence High School Future Health Professionals (HOSA) and Medical Science



Special to The Florence News

Special delivery made on Saturday, December 5, by members Big Boyz Toyz to UMMC's Children's of Mississippi Hospital.

Academy, who donated items as well. All told, Berch says "we were able to donate fifteen UTV's full of toys. We actually ran out of room in the UTVs and had to load toys in a separate SUV. We [also] made a cash donation of \$510 to buy a new gaming system."

On Saturday, December 5, a special procession began along Gallatin Street in Jackson. Originating at Superior Auto and Truck Service (one of the toy drive sponsors and main toy drop off location) located at 916 I-20 Frontage Road

North, the parade made its way north to 2500 North State Street. A police escort was available to lead the procession with a little help from a local law enforcement agency. They provided four cruisers, two SUVs and two motorcycle units.

The destination for the procession was the newest addition to Children's of Mississippi - the Kathy and Joe Sanderson Tower. Anxiously awaiting their arrival was a small group of hospital staff, including Gifts Coordinator Devin

B. Bingham. Although masks were required and social distancing was adhered to, it did not put a damper on the highly anticipated meeting and exchange. The toys were then unloaded, some directly to hospital staff, but the bulk of the delivery was transported to a storage facility on the UMMC campus for future distribution.

To celebrate the success of their first toy drive, members of the motorcade were led to the Iron Horse Grill in downtown Jackson,

where they enjoyed an outdoor meal on the restaurant's new patio.

Because of the success of the event Chris Berch and his crew plan on making future special deliveries to UMMC. They also wanted to take a moment to express gratitude for the first-time event: "The Mud Mafia would like to thank everyone who donated. We felt it was a huge success and was only possible through the generosity of our family, friends and neighbors."

See page 8 for photo spread.

McLaurin High and RCSD salute "Ms. Shirley"

By Alexa Haik

In November of 2020, Shirley Ann Wright, A.K.A. "Ms. Shirley," received the Secondary Classified Employee of the Month designation from Rankin County School District. Wright is one of two custodians employed at Florence's McLaurin High School (MHS). Each month, RCSD asks all the district schools to nominate

someone they feel deserving. Wright was chosen out of all the eligible employees that represented the district, because of her actions, that "truly showed what it means to be moving the district from 'great to best,'" according to head principal Tammy Crosetti.

This will be the first time Wright has received the special designation of employee of the month for the dis-

trict. According to Crosetti, "[Wright] had gone above and beyond what it took to keep [MHS] continuing to be able to function...because our custodians is what keeps us able to stay open...and so I nominated her."

See page 6 for full article.



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Shirley Ann Wright, RCSD's Secondary Classified Employee of the Month.

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Arevalo of Pearl learns to walk with prosthesis

By Carey Miller, Methodist Rehabilitation Center Health and Research News Service

"You do what you have to do."

That's the attitude J. Carmen Arevalo took when he was told his leg needed to be amputated after it was crushed in an on-the-job accident.

And it's the mantra he adhered to as he learned to walk again with an above-the-knee prosthesis from Methodist Orthotics & Prosthetics in Flowood. And one he repeated as he continued to amaze his caregivers at Methodist Outpatient Therapy.

"I've seen very few people at any age with his type of injury do what he can do," said his physical therapist Karen Klein.

At sixty years old, Arevalo has bounced back from his life-changing injury relatively quickly. The accident happened in February, when Arevalo was cutting trees for the construction company he worked for. A tree fell from the equipment they were using to transport it, and it landed on him and fractured his left femur bone.

"I remember lying on the ground and looking at the tree on my leg and saying, 'Somebody call 911!'" Arevalo said. "We always follow safety protocols, but accidents can happen. It was just the day for



J. Carmen Arevalo is glad that his prosthesis allows him to stay active and do things like work in the yard at his home in Pearl.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

With physical therapist Karen Klein, at left, J. Carmen Arevalo worked on complex tasks while using his prosthesis, like stepping side-to-side while throwing and catching a ball, at Methodist Outpatient Therapy in Flowood.

one to happen to me."

Arevalo spent nearly two months in the hospital as doctors tried to save his leg.

"They did everything they could," Arevalo said. "But my leg was pretty badly damaged."

They ended up having to remove most of his leg.

"In the course of trying to salvage his limb, they had to amputate very close to his hip," said Larry Word, a certified orthotist/prosthetist at Methodist O&P. "He's only got between four and five inches of femur left, so he has a very short residual limb."

After his physician cleared him to undergo inpatient rehab, Arevalo came to Methodist Rehabilitation Center in April. There, therapists prepared him to be able to be fitted with a prosthetic de-

vice.

"I worked with him on getting up and moving around using a walker," physical therapist Kaitlin Snyder said. "We concentrated on building up his strength in his arms and strong leg, while working on positioning and stretching his residual limb so he could retain full range of motion with it so he wouldn't have problems down the road when he got his prosthesis."

But Snyder knew right away he was going to do well once he got his prosthesis.

"He's one of the hardest workers I've seen in the six and a half years I've been here," she said. "If I asked him to do 10 sets of something, he'd do 20. He made the most of every minute he had here."

Arevalo says although he was ready

to get home once he was discharged, he was sad to leave Snyder and his other therapists. Since the COVID-19 pandemic had just begun, visitation was very limited, so they had become like his second family.

"Before, my wife had been staying with me all of the time," Arevalo said. "And my brother and his wife and kids visited, too."

"We always had a lot of fun with him," Snyder said. "He's bilingual, so he was teaching us Spanish while he was here - he really wanted us to work on it."

They also did little things for him to make his stay more pleasant.

"I had my birthday while I was there, and all the girls brought me a cake," Arevalo said.

continued on page 11

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Old Truths for Today

By J.T. Morgan

YOU HAVE NOT BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE

In 1519 the Spanish explore Hernando Cortes led an expedition of 600 men to conquer southern Mexico. One by one he had his eleven ships scuttled and sunk, till only one was left. When his men found out they loudly upbraided Cortes. He asked his men what kind of man would need the ships, except cowards. If any man was so cowardly, he could board the last ship and leave. Cheers drowned the complaints, and he then suggested that they sink the last ship. By that single action he committed himself and his force to either succeed or die trying for they had nothing to go back to.

By the time you read this 2020 is behind you – there is nothing to go back to. You cannot undo a single action or take back a single word. Before you lies a new year – full of hope and promise if you so desire.

“I am the New Year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time. I am you next chance at the art of living.

“I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned during the last year about life.

“All that you sought the past year and failed to find is hidden in me; I’m waiting for you to search it out again and with more determination.

“All the good that you tried to do for others and didn’t achieve last year is mine to grant – providing you have fewer selfish and conflicting desires.

“In me lies the potential of all that you dreamed but didn’t dare to do, all that you hoped but didn’t perform, all you prayed for but did not experience.

“These dreams slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of an enduring purpose.”


“I am the New Year!” (Author unknown).

We are entering a New Year – We have not passed this way before. Let’s keep our eye on God and His word. We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. Life is uncertain as James mentions. (James 4:13-16). Moses taught his people to number their days. (Psa. 90:1-12).

If you ask a ship captain what his next destination is, he will tell you in one sentence. He knows where he is going, how to get there, and how long it will take. We need to set goals so that we know where we are going in life. Our long-range goal is heaven. How are we going to get there? (Phil. 3:12-14; Heb. 12:1-2). God’s word is that roadmap to reach that ultimate goal if we will only follow the directions He has given us.

Many people have customs for welcoming a new year. Putting away the past and starting fresh with resolutions for the New Year is a great way to start anew. The Bible encourages Christians to such renewal. (Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 4:6-9). May you make 2021 the best year of your life. **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

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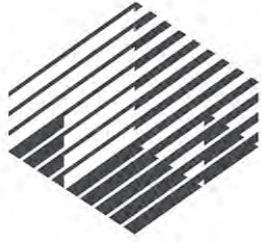
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FYSA-FFC announce spring schedule

Special to SW Rankin News

The Spring 2021 soccer season at Florence Youth Soccer Association (FYSA) begins with registration, which is open until January 17, 2021.

Also, on January 18, at 6:15 p.m., there will be the draft of teams and first meeting for coaches.

FYSA's mission emphasizes instruction, fun, fair play, responsibility, physical fitness, and sportsmanship. Inherent in this is the expectation of behavior to the accepted standards of conduct by

its players, parents, coaches and spectators. The goal is to provide a program that offers local youth the opportunity to learn the importance of character while playing the great sport of soccer.

For registration and scheduling information, visit florencesoccer.com, the FYSA-FFC Facebook page or email florenceyouthsoccerassociation@gmail.com.



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Registration opening soon for Florence youth sports

Special to SW Rankin News

Florence Youth Baseball, Softball and T-Ball is played in the spring and early summer of each year. Registration for the 2021 season will be held at Florence City Hall, 203 College Street, Monday, January 11, through Friday, January 29. Saturday registration day will be January 23 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Registration fees are as follows: T-Ball (ages four through five) is \$45; ages six (coach pitch) is \$45; ages seven through eight (coach pitch) is \$55; ages nine

through twelve \$65; and ages thirteen through fifteen is \$75 per participant.

Florence Youth Baseball and softball follow USSSA rules, which state that for softball, a player must be of age by January 1 of the current year, and for baseball, a player must be of age by May 1 of the current year.

If a child has not played Florence Youth Sports before, a copy of the child's birth certificate is required.

For more information contact the City of Florence Parks Department at 601-845-5858.



Special to SW Rankin News

McLaurin High and RCSD salute "Ms. Shirley"

By Alexa Haik

A Florence native and alumni of Florence High School, Shirley Wright has been with McLaurin High School going on twelve years. Wright is one of two custodians who cover the entire high school campus which, according to head principal Tammy Crosetti, has a student population of approximately 570 students.

Under normal circumstances Wright, and the head of McLaurin High School's custodial services, Jeff Hobson (Mr. Jeff), split their responsibilities in half. Arriving to work at 6 a.m., Wright is tasked daily with cleaning restrooms, sweeping hallways, as well as emptying trash cans for the junior high and the ninth/tenth grade hall. Hobson covers the eleventh and twelfth grade hall as well as the performing arts building section, the out buildings and cafeteria section.

At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, Wright explains that she and Hobson were assigned "a little bit more work." For starters, at each "bell ring," both custodians are tasked with spraying all the door knobs and water fountains with disinfectants.

Crosetti further elaborates that there are additional responsibilities at lunchtime.

"This year, we are feeding our students in their classrooms, so each teacher has a bag that they have to put their trash in. Ms. Shirley goes through every hallway that is her hallway, and she picks up the trash; so that is extra work on her part, you know."

An additional custodial responsibility this year requires that if and when an MHS student, staff or faculty member either tests positive for COVID-19, and/or comes in contact with someone who has, "[the custodians] have to go in and

really super sanitize those classrooms," explains Crosetti.

Despite all of these additional job duties, Wright remains her true self, and according to Crosetti, "everything [is done] with a smile, she has great relationships with our kids, and she loves our kids, she loves her job, she takes pride in what she does."

In November of this year, misfortune occurred when Head Custodian Hobson tested positive and had to subsequently be quarantined. The school then had to look to one individual, Ms. Shirley, as the sole custodian on campus. Crosetti explains that Wright "ran the whole campus pretty much by herself, and she did a great job...she didn't complain, she smiled. She just got in and did everything that needed to be done. And everything was kept clean, everything was sanitized. So, on top of the normal cleaning of the restrooms, sweeping the hallways, emptying trash cans, picking up the trash after they finish lunch, she was still keeping everything sanitized; and I felt like she was the above and beyond employee of the month."

Luckily, in the interim, Hobson recovered from the illness and has since returned to work.

Ms. Crosetti says that, daily at MHS, "[the faculty and staff] still try to be a ray of hope for these that may not think they have a ray of hope...we do try to find the silver lining, even though it may seem dark...we look for the good in things. I say we are a family here, and everybody has pitched in and done what it's taken to continue to keep our schools open...even though we are in a pandemic, you still have to find time and things to smile and laugh about; [and] Ms. Shirley, she always jokes. She keeps us laughing around here."



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Shirley Ann Wright



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PHS's Sign Language Club: Filling a need in the community

By Alexa Haik

Ann Case, the faculty sponsor for Pearl High School's (PHS) Sign Language Club, wasn't sure how many students would respond to the initial announcement seeking membership; and, at first, she received only a "little bit of feedback that people were interested." However, what first began as a small trickle of interest soon turned into a geyser. One day she would receive a number of applications and would think to herself, "that's it, that's all we are going to get, and then I would get some more papers the next day... [eventually] we ran out of [registration] papers, and I had to make an online form... because I couldn't keep up. I just ran completely out of paper."

The overwhelming response has been accompanied by a variety of motivations for membership. Some are interested for vocational reasons, others because they simply think it is "cool." Case says two members' motivations in particular stood out to her: one student signed on because her grandmother is a deaf interpreter, and another student with a cochlear implant has an even more personal motivation - to learn more "just in case anything were to happen...and the cochlear implant ceased to

be effective."

Because of the unusually large numbers, and the limit on space, the group had to be split into two groups that meet on separate days-Group A and Group B. The goal for the school year is to keep the number of members meeting at one time around forty.

PHS junior Kaitlyn Glass, who is fluent in American Sign Language, leads the group and talked a little about how the curriculum came together:

"Since I started thinking about it in the spring, I decided I would go ahead and start gathering everything that I needed to teach, and making lesson plans. Then I would sit down with my parents (both hearing impaired) and say, 'what do you think the first things they need to learn are,' and I



Special to SW Rankin News

would write that down."

As far as the structure of the meetings themselves, the first item on the agenda is a review of the previous week's lessons. The second part is dedicated to teaching the new signs. Glass says, "we'll teach half of the new stuff, and then we'll practice, and then we'll let them practice, and then we review, and then we teach the next new set of signs, then we will practice and then review. Then, at the end of the last five to ten minutes, we review everything." The curriculum, according to Glass, has been planned out and finalized for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

Glass and Case haven't forgotten about the logistics of devising a curriculum for next year. They are already planning for

more meetings, separating groups based on newcomers and returning students. Some "oldtimers" will be tasked with assisting the newest members.

Also in the future is graduation for Glass, who will be a senior next year. Plans are currently being made to make the transition, and her exit as student leader, as smooth as possible.

Further arrangements are being made for taking the skills learned during the meetings and apply them to real life scenarios. Glass says that "when COVID is clear, we want to do a 'sign and dine,' which is basically where you would go out to eat as a group and interpret for the person beside you."

Anybody at PHS is eligible to become members, including faculty and staff. At the moment, the two sign language groups (Group A and B) meet every other week on separate days.

Glass says that her parents "are really proud of me...they're happy because it's not every day that you go somewhere and see someone who knows sign language...you never know, [a sign language club member] will probably be working at Wendy's one day, and my parents are going to need to order food, and they are going to know [how to communicate in sign]. That just makes them so happy."

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Unique collaboration leads to special delivery

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A special delivery was made on Saturday, December 5, by members Big Boyz Toyz to UMMC's Children's of Mississippi Hospital. A few hundred people (including members of Florence High School HOSA and Medical Science Academy) donated, as well as a dozen or so local small businesses and companies. They were able to donate fifteen UTVs full of toys, and actually ran out of room in the UTVs, and had to load toys in a separate SUV. A cash donation of \$510 was also made to go toward the purchase of a new gaming system.



Masks were required, and social distancing was adhered to on the UMMC campus.



Offloading of the special delivery.



Participants in the day's event enjoying downtime at drop-off location.



A special procession began along Gallatin Street in Jackson, originating at Superior Auto and Truck Service (one of the toy drive sponsors and main toy drop off location), located at 916 I-20 Frontage Road North and making its way North to 2500 North State Street.



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f t s i y

Friends of the Richland Library report on "Onion John"

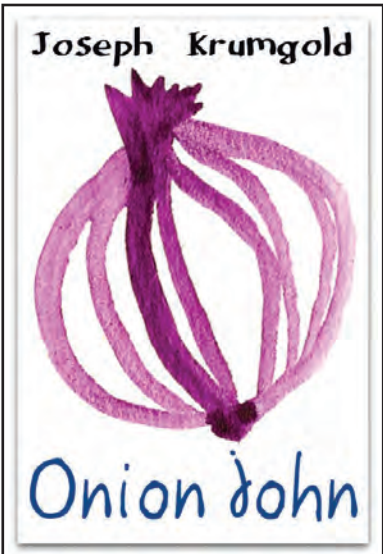
By Beth Woodmansee

Joseph Krumgold's book, *Onion John*, is funny and has a great lesson. Twelve-year old Andy Rusch is an American boy living in the small town of Serenity. Andy's father, Mr. Rusch, owns the town's hardware store. Onion John looks like a tramp, but he owns a house and property. He has lived in the hills behind town for twenty-five years. Everyone likes him, a friendly man who does odd jobs. He also has a garden and sells the celery and onions that he raises. His onions are the best. He eats onions all day long, and that is how he came to be called, "Onion John." However, no one can understand a word he says, except for one phrase, "Well, good day." One day, that all changed.

While standing in the outfield during a baseball game that day, Andy realized he could understand Onion John. All that afternoon, Andy heard more and more of what Onion John said. Onion John was

speaking English, but in an odd way. Andy learned he had to stop trying so hard to understand Onion John. Onion John was excited by this--to have a friend to talk with! He told Andy he was born in the mountains on the other side of Europe. He had wanted two acres of land but there was no land for him there. With help from family and a friend, he immigrated to New York City. There, he learned about land in Serenity. He arrived one day and found two acres up on Hessian Hill, with lots of rocks. No one wanted to settle there; but John dug out the rocks and used them to build his house.

One day, Union John went to Mr. Rus-



Special to SW Rankin News

ch's hardware store to buy a new hinge for the door on his rock house. Mr. Rusch, with Andy's help, understood what Onion John wanted and said he thought John needed a different kind of hinge. They all went up the hill to look at the house and door. That's when the trouble began. Mr. Rusch concluded that Onion John needed a new house more than he needed a new hinge. So, Mr. Rusch began organizing the men of the town. Within weeks, committees were formed, and plans made for a nice new house with all the latest electric appliances, and work commenced. The town ladies added their ideas for interior decoration. One big problem was when

the townspeople wanted to get rid of the four bathtubs in the front room of the rock house; Onion John said, "No." He needed them. They moved the old bathtubs into a back room. John's rock house was torn down, and, when the new house was finished, Onion John moved in.

That very first night, he put newspapers inside the new electric stove and burned the house down. Even before the fire trucks left later, Mr. Rusch and the town began making plans to rebuild the house.

That's when Onion John disappeared. In the days that followed, everyone agreed that, while they were so determined to help Onion John, no one had asked Onion John what he wanted. One day, Andy spotted a plume of smoke rising above the hills. He found Onion John sitting on a log in front of the fire. He was the same happy Onion John he had always been, and they were still friends. The townspeople left Onion John alone to live his life as he wanted to do, and everyone was happy again.

PPSD announces 2020-2021 "Parents of the Year"

Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl Public School District (PPSD) recently announced the 2020-2021 Parents of the Year. The Parents of the Year for each school are Kristen Windham, Pearl Lower Elementary; Amber Cutcliff, Northside Elementary; Dana Grissom, Pearl Upper Elementary; Stephanie Webb, Pearl Junior High School; and Clay Channell, Pearl High School.



Kristen Windham



Amber Cutcliff



Dana Grissom



Stephanie Webb



Photos special to SW Rankin News
Clay Channell



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Arevalo of Pearl learns to walk with prosthesis

continued from page 4

When it was time for Arevalo to be fitted with his prosthesis, Word had some problems to solve.

"Having such a short residual limb poses a lot of biomechanical challenges when your goal is to get someone to walk as well as possible," Word said. "Not just from the length, but the lack of remaining musculature available for them to control a prosthesis."

For Arevalo to even be able to wear one comfortably, he had to come up with a unique solution.

"We often use a silicone locking liner for keeping a prosthesis on," Word said. "We couldn't do that with him, so we used a full suction liner, which is similar but has a sticky, tacky coating. It increases the amount of surface area we could attach the prosthesis to. That worked well for him, but also because of the length of the limb, we needed something to increase his stability. So, we used a power belt, which fits around the waist."

The main component of Arevalo's prosthesis is an Ottobock C-Leg, which contains a microprocessor to adjust itself dynamically. It also features an Endolite Echelon hydraulic foot and ankle system.

"He's got quite a high-quality system," Word said. "I recommend to anyone with some balance issues to have a microprocessor knee. The technology provides the best balance support you can get."

But while Word says he gave him the best possible tools, much of Arevalo's success as a prosthetic user can be attributed to his drive.

"The rest of it was all him," Word said. "Since he had worked in manual labor, he was a very strong guy. And he's had an excellent attitude, which has helped."

While Word was working on fine-tuning his prosthesis, Arevalo began going to outpatient therapy with Klein at MRC's outpatient neurological rehabilitation clinic, which is in the same Flowood facility as Methodist O&P.

"It's good that he's doing his therapy next door," Word said. "It's allowed us

to troubleshoot some things as we go."

"Since he sustained such a terrible injury resulting in a short residual limb, I knew it was going to be very difficult for him to learn to walk with a prosthesis," Klein said. "But the guys next door did an outstanding job making one for him that would make it possible."

Klein, who specializes in working with new prosthetic users, says she knew Arevalo was going to go far when she first evaluated him.

"He was just so in tune with everything, and such a hard worker," she said. "He asked me a lot of good questions and was fully invested in the process. I always focus on starting from day one with prosthetic users taking the best steps so that they don't learn bad habits in the beginning. And he, from day one, wanted to be his best self."

They started with Arevalo using a walker for support, but quickly moved to using forearm crutches for balance and a better gait quality.

"He had the strength and the flexibility," Klein said. "And he was never scared of falling. So, it was all about building confidence in him that his prosthesis would do its job. The computer in his prosthetic knee is so smart, and the prosthetists next door tweaked it to where it would correct any missteps. He quickly learned it wasn't going to fail him. He walks so well with it that you can't tell he is wearing a prosthesis when he has long pants on."

Arevalo continues to go to therapy and has recently transitioned to using a single cane for balance, with an ultimate goal of not needing an assistive device at all.

And although Arevalo won't be returning to the job he had, he's glad to be back to helping his wife around the house and doing chores like yard work. And above all, he's glad to remain independent. And he says it's thanks to his new family at MRC.

"Everyone is so nice and good at their jobs," he said. "They do everything they have to do to make you better."

RJHS basketball wins district championship



Special to SW Rankin News

Richland Junior High (RJHS) Basketball completed the season with a 12-0 record. This is the third consecutive year that the Rangers have been District Champs. The Rangers (l to r) are, front row: Ben Alexander, Darius Thames, Jackie Williams, Austin Myers, Jayvyn Claxton and Everett Arthur; and back row: Coach Thad Bridges, Landon Anderson, Garrett Kennedy, Jayden Houseton, Darrin Davidson, Chayse Young, Garrett Hinton and Jose Millings. Not pictured: Lewis Jones.

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RHS's band director: Overcoming challenges, evoking "affections"

By Alexa Haik

The Richland Ranger band program, currently under the direction of Jordan Salvant and Assistant Director LaDarius Smothers, have undergone quite a few changes in 2020. As the number of band members have grown, challenges for the newly invigorated school band have increased, as well.

"We were very excited about marching band, considering we had made all superiors for the first time in several years. [So] the kids were really upset about the fact that we weren't able to go to state evaluation for marching band," explains Salvant.

Nothing, it seems, has been simple or easy for the Richland Rangers in 2020. As a result, almost every aspect of the band's operations has had to be tweaked, while other activities had to be entirely eliminated. Because of the ongoing issues surrounding COVID-19, the band has only attended at-home games and have adjusted their playing style accordingly - from the traditional "marching band" style where the band is on the field playing the same music throughout football season, to "college band" style where the band is stationary, standing in an arc formation while playing different music each game.

In addition, the annual Christmas



Special to The Richland News

The 2020-2021 Richland Ranger Band playing in a modified formation to adhere to social distancing protocols during pandemic.

concert, scheduled as an outdoor performance on a recent Saturday in December, was also in question because of concerns over the weather. Band Director Salvant said if the weather didn't cooperate, they were uncertain if the band would get to play at all, considering the COVID-19 indoor meeting restrictions. She says she spent the days prior to the performance "watching the weather...aggressively and obsessively check[ing] every day until Friday night, and then I told everyone 'we are having this concert if it kills me.'"

Luckily for all, a small window of mild weather opened up, giving the band the ability to perform safely.

"I just remember seeing some of their faces, and I know they were really glad that we were able to have that concert,

because that was the first concert performance we had had this year...I am glad we were able to get at least one in," explains Salvant.

"Definitely a lot of like hills to walk up and down, but I definitely would do it all again for those kids, because I think they appreciate what we were able to do based on the circumstances."

Creativity was also at play, as the Rangers coped with challenges. Salvant arranged for a few professional musicians to come and play to fill in the spots left vacant from students who had chosen virtual learning for the Fall semester. This meant that band members performed next to a professional musician, including one musician who sometimes plays with the symphony and another who is a college professor

from one of the local colleges. Salvant says she felt the kids really enjoyed this unique experience, to actually observe a professional in action, and so it was.

For the sixteen students who are band members and also virtual students for the Fall 2020 semester, Salvant has to push the creativity even further.

"We will have the [virtual] kids on Zoom, and I will have the [on-site] kids out front...I will just walk around the classroom and do a quick sweep and hear everyone real quick and then come back to them." Salvant says that video recordings are made of the virtual students so that she and Assistant Director Smothers can view, take notes, and then proceed with more guided learning.

One of Salvant's goals is to have the band perform with all members present, which will have to be performed virtually.

"I am currently attending [clinics that] kind of walk us through how to make a video and audio recording using some free software...so hopefully in the springtime my goal is to get the sync license [to record] a virtual performance and get that out to people. That way, they can stay home and watch it safely and maybe possibly show some grandparents who may not live in this state, or some other aunts and uncles and other

continued on page 13



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RHS's band director: Overcoming challenges, evoking "affections"

continued from page 12

relatives [can attend the performance].

Salvant believes her ultimate purpose as band director for the Richland Ranger Band is to impart the love of music to her students.

"We want to give them these feelings, or what is referred to as 'affections.'" Salvant, who is currently studying for her Masters in music, introduced her students to this concept that was first developed in the Baroque Period of music history. According to the website, britannica.com, the "doctrine of the affections...embraced the proposition that music is capable of arousing a variety of specific emotions within the listener." Salvant and Smothers' desire is to provide that chance to others...

"It is because the arts are so [fundamentally] important. Over quarantine, what did we turn to? We turned to TV, we turned to movies, we turned to music we turned to reading and the arts... they are just something that really gives us that [necessary] connection to humans."

SW Rankin students selected as youth leaders



Pictured (l to r) are: Allyse Hayes and Noah Webb.



Pictured (l to r) are: Carson Rimes and Marcus Jackson.

Special to SW Rankin News

Pearl High School's Allyse Hayes and Noah Webb and Richland High School's Carson Rimes and Marcus

Jackson were recently selected as members of Rankin Youth Leadership (RYL). They were four of the twenty-four students in Rankin County selected to participate.

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Richland's McKlemmury signs with MS Delta

A group photograph of eight people standing behind a table. The table is covered with a red cloth and has a "DELTA 1926 TROJANS" logo and a "RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL" banner. The people are dressed in a mix of casual and semi-formal attire.

Special to SW Rankin News

Emily McKlemmury signed her letter of intent to play for Mississippi Delta Community College in 2021. Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Vivian McKlemmury (mom), Emily McKlemmury and Rick McKlemmury (dad); and back row: Principal Marcus Stewart, Athletic Director Todd Montgomery, Assistant Coach Jocelyn McDavid, Coach Katie Allen, Assistant Principal Dr. Thomas Dudley and Assistant Principal Dr. Terrence McEwen.

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RHS's year end "Students of the Month" honored



The November 2020 RHS Students of the Month pictured (l to r) are, front row: Garrison Pilcher, Ben Alexander, and William Guevara; and back row: Principal Marcus Stewart, Kori Edwards, Logan Weber, and Malachi Newell.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

The December 2020 RHS Students of the Month pictured (l to r) are, front row: Anna Lynn Bishop, Abram Yates, and Cierra Sheppard; and back row: Principal Marcus Stewart, Jameson Miller, Mallory Chapman, and Kendall Freeman.

Special to SW Rankin News

Richland High School (RHS) recently named the November and December 2020 Students of the Month. These students are nominated and selected by their teachers for such qualities as

dependability, attitude, leadership, attendance, and class work. Students are awarded a certificate from the Exchange Club, a book donated to the library in honor of the senior from the Exchange Club, a gift card from BancorpSouth, and Mazzio's.

PHS dance, cheer teams win state championships



Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Alyssa Kate Morgigno, Ashton Spell, Emma Leighton Jones, Francesca Clark, Madi Temple and Tori Douglas; middle row: Lindsay Butler, Zamiya Warner, Aleyah Mosley, Allyse Hayes, Saylor Foster, Catherine Roa and Rebekah Rambo; and back row: Naomi Neely, Layton Ward, Kayleigh Tarter, Alaina Green, Jayden Neal and Kaitlyn Richardson.



Photos special to SW Rankin News

Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Mikayla Sills, Braylee Hunt, Summer Hughes, Bayleigh Thompson, Mary Kiley Champion and Madelyn Riley; and back row: Southern Athletics coach LeMike Drake, Hannah Smith-Lyon, Justin Foate, Dani Tompkins, Steven Barrett, Hartley Poe, Tamia Miller, Maddie Gutierrez, Kendall Jones, Kayli Statum, Aliyah Chapman, Kylee McDowell, Alexander Dodson, Raelyn McHenry and Coach Kristin Saxon.

Special to SW Rankin News

The Pearl High School Dance Team won the MHSAA State Championship in the large pom division. This makes a total of ten state championships for the

PHS Dance Team.

The Pearl High School Cheer Team won the MHSAA State Championship in the small co-ed division. This is the second state championship for the PHS Cheer Team.

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