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Wesson News

SPOTLIGHT

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Volume 13, Number 2

"Good News You Can Use"

February, 2025

Institute for Learning in Retirement spring semester begins

By Bob Arnold

Five computer workshops led by Margaret Britt are highlighting the adult learning programs scheduled during the spring semester in Co-Lin's Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR).

Workshops focusing on the basics of computers and the Microsoft Word application started last month (Monday, January 27) and continued on Mondays, February 3 and 10 (Introduction to Computer Part 2 and Word Basics Part 1), with Word Basics Part 2 and PowerPoint Part 1 and Part 2 scheduled on Mondays, February 17 and 24 and March 3 at 1:30 p.m. at the Co-Lin Thames Center.

ILR, a Co-Lin-sponsored membership organization, provides continuing education experiences for retired and semi-retired older adults. In ILR, participants define their own informal educational goals and pursue them at their own pace, based on their own choices and talents. Members, who design the group's program, come from wide ranging backgrounds and bring varied experiences to the organization. Co-Lin staff administers ILR and the college provides facilities for the organization, which is fully funded by member dues.

Through May, the ILR spring se-

mester also features weekly chair yoga classes, three luncheon programs, one day trip and a three-day/two-night trip to Waco, Texas and six additional workshops, including painting and golf lessons.

Every Wednesday.

Cheryl Myers will lead one-hour chair yoga classes. \$10 per class. 10:30 a.m. Thames Center. Contact Cheryl Myers at (601)-757-2133.

February 13.

Luncheon prepared and served by the college's culinary students. Presentation by Mississippi Health Ambassadors. \$10. 11 a.m. Anderson Building on Co-Lin campus.

February 20.

Day trip to Farmer's Table Cooking School at Livingston, Mississippi. \$100. Cooking classes provide a unique, memorable and hands-on experience, which connects participants with the school's eatlocal philosophy as they work alongside the chef to prepare a delicious meal. Take-home recipes are provided to participants.

February 27.

Co-Lin art instructor Carisa Mitchell leads painting class. \$45. 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Smith Building (Room 112).

March 5.

Cooking demo led by Co-Lin Chef Chris McSweyn. Participants will learn cooking secrets as McSweyn prepares a meal for them. \$25. Co-Lin Thames Center.

March 12 & 19.

Golf Lesson for Beginners taught by Co-Lin Golf Coach De'Jone "D" Lee at Wolf Hollow Golf Course. Maximum of five persons per group lesson. \$20 per person. If March 19 group lesson fills up, there will be a March 12 class.

March 18.

Luncheon prepared by Co-Lin Chef Chris McSweyn. Presentation by Bobby Freeman on cyber security. \$14. 11 a.m. Co-Lin Thames Center.

April 3.

Fentanyl and Narcan: Saving Lives Through Awareness and Action. Workshop conducted by Ashley Washington, Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist. 10:30 a.m. Co-Lin Thames Center.

April 10.

Luncheon prepared and served by the college's culinary students. Musical entertainment presented by Co-Lin student William Stephens. \$10. 11 a.m. Ander-

son Building on Co-Lin campus.

April 14.

Managing Medications and Preventing Medication Misuse. Workshop conducted by Ashley Washington, Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist. 10:30 a.m. Co-Lin Thames Center.

April 22.

Dowsing Graves. A membership-led workshop with Janet Wallace will visit local cemeteries for a demonstration. Time: TBA.

May 6-8.

Discover Waco, a three-day, two-night trip to Waco, Texas, with visits to Magnolia Markets & Silos, Dr. Pepper Museum, Balcones Distillery (whiskey tour and tasting), The Brasserie Restaurant@Hotel 1928, Waco Mammoth National Monument & Museum, Homestead Craft Village, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame & Museum and Brazos Landing. Triple package \$795, double package \$870 and single package \$1,080.

May 15.

Brunch prepared by Co-Lin Chef Chris McSweyn to close out ILR second semester program. \$14. Thames Center.

For information, contact Co-Lin Program Coordinator and Events Coordinator Erin Johnson at (601)-643-8702 and erin.johnson@colin.edu.



Wesson Aldermen authorize buying fire truck

Special to Wesson News

The Town Board of Aldermen authorized purchase of a fire truck at its February meeting for \$55,000.

The 2001 truck has pumps, tanks and other equipment for fighting fires and rescue operations.

In other actions, the Aldermen:

- Authorized \$900,000 for street paving and repairs and approved advertising for bids on the work. The 2024 Mississippi Legislature allocated \$750,000 in its bond bill for Wesson streets, and the Town had another \$150,000 available.

- Approved payments of \$4,500 each to Lowery Payn & Leggett and Lance Moak for an audit and preliminary financial preparation covering the Town's 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years.



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Louisiana migrant settles in Mississippi



Special to Wesson News

By Bob Arnold

Over the years, Southwestern Mississippi has been a settling ground for Louisiana migrants heading north when opportunities presented themselves to leave the threat of storms and less affordable living costs.

In the process, they have gradually impacted the culture in their new home, with their religion and its values, the foods they favor, festivals that provided unique fun times in their old home and preferences for sports teams, among other things. In Mississippi, Louisiana Roman Catholics have blended with Southern Baptists, Louisiana gumbo and Cajun meals are now on the menu in restaurants, towns, increasingly, celebrate Louisiana-style Mardi Gras and Louisiana State University athletic teams have a fan base that roots along side Ole Miss and Mississippi State partisans.

In Copiah and Lincoln counties, small communities, like one that surrounds Lake Lincoln State Park and another near a Martinsville hunting camp, have grown up due to the influx of Louisianans.

Ketti Breaux is one of those Louisiana immigrants.

In 2021, on the eve of Hurricane Ida's wrath in Louisiana, Breaux and her husband Bernie settled in Copiah County's Martinsville area near the hunting camp, where he follows his passion in retirement.

Born Ketti Babin in 1959, she grew up in Houma, Louisiana, and spent her work life and reared two sons there.

In the 1960s and 1970s before an oil boom made it a city, Houma was a rural community with unpaved rocky country roads and sugar cane crops cultivated by local farmers. In her childhood, Breaux enjoyed being a Girl Scout and becoming an accomplished swimmer, foregoing service as a life guard in her teen years to work instead in a small store, she recalls.

Breaux attended elementary, junior high and high school in Houma. After receiving her diploma from Terrebonne High School in 1977, she studied accounting at Nicholls State University at Thibodaux, Louisiana, and embarked on a career encompassing 31 years with state agencies after graduating in 1981.

She started her professional work life with the City of Houma as an accountant and then joined the State of Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation before becoming Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in the State Hospital System with Chabert Medical Center. After serving as CFO at Fletcher Technical Community College, she returned to Louisiana state agencies, where she completed her career.

Breaux met her husband, a workers compensation insurance claims adjuster before his retirement, at Nicholls State University. They have two sons – Justin, 40, who works with Proctor & Gamble in forklift operations at Alexandria, Louisiana, and Jared, 37, who works with Louisiana fire departments at Houma and Folsom. Between their sons, they also have five granddaughters, twins, age 18, and three others, 12, 16 and 15.

While pursuing her career and rearing her sons, Breaux also found time – “one night class a semester” – to renew her studies at Nicholls State University and earn a Masters of

Business Administration degree.

In retirement, Breaux and her husband considered going elsewhere, but not very long.

“Mississippi was the right place,” she affirms. “My husband hunted deer in the Wesson-Hazlehurst area and had insurance clients in Mississippi. So when an old house on 27 acres at Martinsville became available, we didn't hesitate. Since coming here, we've discovered a community of fellow Louisianans – a man in my high school graduating class with whom I had lost contact and friends of friends back in Houma.”

What are your hobbies?

In Louisiana, gardening was a passion. I was a Master Gardener and member of a the local garden club. My activities have expanded in Mississippi. Here I am active in the Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR), work out at the gym, practice chair yoga and take golf and line dancing lessons.

My husband does a lot of traveling. We go back and forth at least once a month to Louisiana to visit family and see our grandchildren in their band and sports functions. My husband will soon travel to Africa. I travelled with friends to Ireland, and am planning a trip with friends to Amish country near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Together, my husband and I went on a Panama Canal bus/river tour, fishing off a catamaran. We visited Paris, with a river tour to Normandy and Omaha Beach. Often our trips allow hunting time for my husband.

We travelled to the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone. We are rescheduling a trip to the Canadian Rockies cancelled because of a wildfire. We're looking forward to a trip that will encompass New Zealand and Australia. There are also

the local and regional travels offered by ILR.

Are you a reader?

My reading is eclectic. I am currently reading *Duck Dynasty*. I enjoy love stories and mysteries and follow daily devotionals.

How about music?

Again, I am eclectic. At the gym, I have even gotten into rap to accompany exercises. I like country music, too. I am a listener. I don't sing or play an instrument.

Do you go to the theater or movies?

In Houma, I attended La Petite Theater – the town's little theater. I watch television, but have no favorite shows.

If you won a lot of money in the lottery, how would you spend it?

I would use it for travel and donate it to people in need, particularly those who need help for cancer treatments. St. Jude Hospital is a favorite charity.

How would you change the world?

People need to get along with each other – to live in peace and harmony.



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Volume 13, Number 2

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Wesson News is published on the second Tuesday of every month in Wesson, Mississippi.

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Lake Lincoln's Randy Chance retires

By Bob Arnold

After 10 years, Randy Chance has left Lake Lincoln State Park to begin a new life in retirement.

Chance, who grew up in the Lake Lincoln area and watched the park evolve from the start of its construction in 1979, joined the staff at the facility, which had become part of the state park system in 1996, to help address its maintenance issues in 2014. He leaves the park as Grounds Supervisor Team Leader ("all I have to do is look in a mirror to see my team," he jokes) responsible for cleaning its physical facilities, general maintenance, electrical and plumbing systems, delimiting and other landscaping, among other needs.

As part of a logging family, Chance's work life started at a tender age during the summers, but while he was cutting down trees for the family business between 11 and 19 years old, he also found time to play baseball on the field he remembers was on the current location of the Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) gymnasium and earn the Eagle rank in the Wesson Boy Scout Troop guided by then Co-Lin basketball Coach Alton Ricks.

He went to elementary school through the eighth grade in the initial building on the site of what became WAC after the addition of the ninth through twelfth grade facility. He graduated from the high school housed at Co-Lin in 1979.

After high school, Chance stayed around the area for a few years – first as a carpenter for Troy Pitts at the former Timberlane camp grounds and the company doing construction at the new Lake Lincoln Park next door, then as a delivery man for Georgetown Furniture.



Randy Chance

Soon, however, he was off to the offshore oil fields and living in Leesville, Louisiana, and moving on to do oil exploration as a seismograph operation for Jackson-based GFS from Lafayette, Louisiana. With Goss Fire Protection headquartered in Forest, Mississippi, from 1984-1996, Chance was dispatched throughout the continental United States to install sprinkler fire protection systems in airplane hangars.

In 1996, Chance returned to his boyhood home on Mission Hill Road and started working with his mother, who was the recipient of 20 sewing machines from the retiring owner of T's Apparel at Crystal Springs, to produce and sell their own line of t-shirts. "We changed the name of the company to Chance Apparel and made specialty t-shirts for organizations and events such as the New Orleans Jazz Festival," he says. "Mom did the sewing with employees as needed, and I was a cutter, boxer and shipper."

Chance worked as he was able at the apparel manufacturer, but devoted most of his time to his ailing father from 2006 to 2014, hunting and fishing with him and caring for him as needed. After his father died, Lake Lincoln State Park hired him.

In his retirement, Chance will continue to live where he grew up -- a house built by his parents, Gerald and Bonnie Chance, on ten acres of 100 acres in which he now shares ownership with his brother Greg Chance, also a retiree, and his sister Pam Stamps, a Brookhaven accountant. At age five, Chance came to the old home on Mission Hill Road next to the Baptist Church, which shares the name of the back country byway. There he is planning a future in which he enjoys his hunting and fishing pastimes and "working on stuff," including the old house and his truck.

Wesson News



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Event matches job-seekers, employers



Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin will host its 35th annual Job Fair on Thursday, February 27, at the Thames Conference Center.

The free event open to the entire community starts at 10 a.m. and continues until 1 p.m., offering job-seekers of all experience levels opportunities to connect with leading employers from across the region.

"We're pleased to bring job seekers and employers together for this important event," says Dr. Geanell Adams, Dean of Workforce Education. "With a variety of companies attending, it's a great opportunity to network, showcase your skills, and explore new career paths."

Adams offered these tips for job-seekers who want to make the most of their participation in the event:

- **Update Your Resume:** Make sure your resume is current, highlighting your most relevant skills and experiences. Print several copies to distribute to potential employers.
- **Dress Professionally:** First impressions matter. Dress in professional attire, even if the job fair has a more casual atmosphere.
- **Practice Your Introduction:** Prepare a short, clear introduction of who you are, what you do, and what you're looking for in your next job. Keep it brief but impactful.
- **Attend Prep Events:** Prepare for success with the help of Co-Lin's free Job Fair Prep Consultations, to refine resumes, sharpen interview skills and enhance networking techniques. Consultations are available at the Brookhaven WIN Job Center on Tuesdays from 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. and at the Wesson Campus on Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Visit www.colin.edu/jobfair for dates and registration details.

The Job Fair is part of the Co-Lin's mission to strengthen the business community by supporting employment and training opportunities for the area's current and future workforce.

Visit the Co-Lin Job Fair website at www.colin.edu/jobfair for details on participating employers, sponsors, and event updates.



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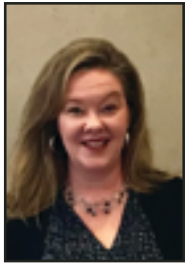
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Improving heart health in state

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid



The mental health of children and teenagers is at a crossroads in Mississippi, with alarming statistics highlighting the urgency of the situation.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, the number of adolescents reporting at least one major depressive episode in the past year has increased by nearly 90%. Shockingly, three million young people nationwide have had serious thoughts of suicide, and nearly three-quarters of youth in distress are not

receiving the care they need. These numbers are a wake-up call for families, educators, and communities to act.

Canopy Children's Solutions talked to Mississippi Health Ambassadors Initiative last month about the state's challenges, which it is stepping up to address. A nonprofit organization with over 110 years of service, Canopy provides innovative behavioral health, educational, and family support solutions.

Among Mississippi's challenges is a severe shortage of school-based mental health professionals. For example, the current ratio of social workers to students in Mississippi is 1:4,956 -- 20 times higher than the recommended 1:250. Addressing this gap alone would require over \$223 million in additional funding for staffing and training.

Canopy programs, however, provide scalable, cost-effective solutions that make a difference right now.



Each year, Canopy reaches nearly 8,000 children and their families across all 82 counties of Mississippi. Their programs, such as CARES Schools and Behavioral Health Clinics, aim to meet children where they are and provide crucial support.

Canopy Anywhere, a tech-enabled mental health solution, is one of the organization's standout programs that screens, educates, and engages youth and families based on specific needs, offering a pathway to hope. Hope, as Canopy emphasizes, is the belief that the future can be better and that individuals have the power to make it so. It has been shown to be a critical factor in academic success, emotional well-being, and recovery from mental illness.

Families can take simple steps to support their children's mental health:

- **Open communication is vital** -- listen without judgment and encourage children to share their feelings.
- **Create a structured yet flexible routine to reduce stress.**
- **Familiarize yourself with local resources like Canopy Children's Solutions**, which offer counseling, crisis intervention, and other mental health services.

Together, we can make a brighter future for Mississippi's youth.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stephanie Duguid is the owner of Do Good ProHealth (CPR classes) and Do Good Leadership (motivational speaking, and leadership and success coaching).



Coca-Cola scholar at Co-Lin

Special to Wesson News

Mary Berry, Co-Lin Simpson County Center student, is one of 210 Phi Theta Kappa members named a 2024 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholar, and will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

The Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship Program helps new Phi Theta Kappa members defray educational expenses while enrolled in associate degree programs. Scholars are encouraged to assume leadership roles by participating in Society programs and are selected based on scholastic achievement, community service, and leadership potential. Nearly 1,500 applications were received.

Berry is a sophomore at Co-Lin majoring in psychology from Silver Creek, Mississippi. She is an active member of the Beta Xi Psi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at the college's Simpson County Center. After Co-Lin, Berry plans to attend Mississippi State University and work towards a Master's degree in psychology with plans to become a child psychologist specializing in children with PTSD.

A total of \$210,000 will be awarded this year through the Leaders of Promise Scholarship Program. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation provides \$200,000 in funding for the scholarships, with \$25,000 set aside for members who are veterans or active members

of the United States military. The remaining amount is supported by donations to the Phi Theta Kappa Foundation, which provides multiple Global Leaders of Promise Scholarships earmarked for international students.

"The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation has a long history of providing financial assistance to outstanding students at community colleges," said Jane Hale Hopkins, President of the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation. "We are proud to partner with Phi Theta Kappa to make it possible for more deserving students to achieve their educational goals and support tomorrow's leaders of the global community."

The funds provided by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation not only aid college completion but also give students the opportunity to engage in Society programs and develop leadership skills to become future leaders in their communities.

"Research shows that Phi Theta Kappa members are four times more likely to complete a college degree than their peers," said Dr. Monica Marlowe, Executive Director of the Phi Theta Kappa Foundation. "The Leaders of Promise Scholarships recognize students for what they have achieved already and assure that financial need isn't an obstacle to achieving their academic goals."

Phi Theta Kappa is the first honor society recognizing the academic achievement of students at associate degree-granting colleges and helping them to grow as scholars and leaders. The Society is made up of more than 4.3 million members and nearly 1,300 chapters in 11 countries, with approximately 240,000 active members in the nation's colleges. Learn more at ptk.org.



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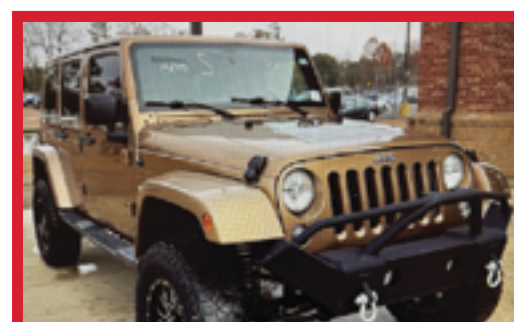


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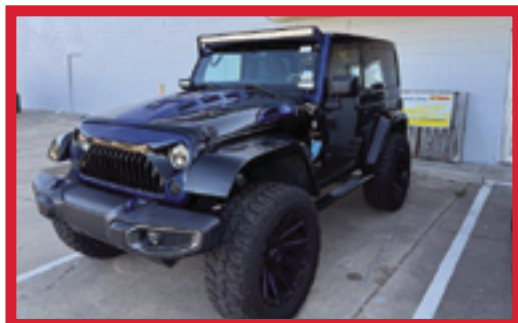


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Mr. & Miss Co-Lin chosen



Wesson News

Clifton Jernigan of Eupora and Reagan Newman of Wesson have been elected as Mr. and Miss Co-Lin by their peers.

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin sophomores Clifton Jernigan of Eupora and Reagan Newman of Wesson have been elected as Mr. and Miss Co-Lin by their peers on the college's Wesson Campus.

Jernigan is the son of Bubba and Rande Jernigan of Eupora. He is a Co-Lin Pitts Presidential Scholar and serves as President of Phi Theta Kappa, President of the Trailblazers student recruitment team and President of the Co-Lin C.A.R.E.S Club. He is Vice President of the Student Government Association and is on the leadership team at the Baptist Student Union, where he serves in the praise band.

He is a member of the Alpha Omega Science Club, Mu Alpha Theta, Wolf Tales and the Co-Lin Honors College. Jernigan was a member of the Wolves Tennis team his freshman year on which he was named MACCC All-Academic First Team. He was named Phi Theta Kappa Officer of the Year and Most Distinguished Regional Member for MS/LA. He is also on the Co-Lin Cheerlead-

ing team serving as the college's mascot, Mr. Wolf. A pre-med major, he plans to attend Mississippi State University after Co-Lin and eventually medical school to become a pediatric physician.

Newman is the daughter of Cliff and Tammy Newman of Wesson. She serves as Vice President of Scholarship for Phi Theta Kappa and is on the college's dance team, the Colettes. She is on the leadership team at the Baptist Student Union serving as co-bible study leader and handling communications for the BSU. She is a member of Mu Alpha Theta, the Trailblazers, and the Art Students League.

She was selected as Co-Lin's Most Beautiful 2024 during the college's annual Trillium Beauty Pageant, was a homecoming maid her freshman year, and was selected to Who's Who at Copiah-Lincoln Community College. She received numerous scholarships including the Co-Lin Leadership Scholarship and Foundation scholarships. After Co-Lin, Newman plans to continue her education at Mississippi State University to complete her degree in Architecture.

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Cancer concerns drive Medicaid advocates



Wesson News

Kim Whittington (left) and daughter Jessica Breazeale from Wesson inside the state capitol at Jackson advocate for those in the Medicaid coverage gap on Patient Advocacy Day.

Special to Wesson News

Nearly 100 cancer patients, survivors and caregivers from across the state traveled to the State Capitol in Jackson last month to tell Mississippi lawmakers to make fighting cancer a priority by expanding Medicaid.

In Mississippi, 18,000 people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer this year, and nearly 8,000 will die from the disease, they explained in linking cancer-fighting steps to Medicaid expansion as a priority. Their visit was part of the annual American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) Cancer Action Day event.

“As a cancer advocate, I let my lawmakers know if we’re going to eliminate cancer as a major health problem in Mississippi, Medicaid expansion must be their priority goal,” said Jessica Breazeale of Wesson. “By making Medicaid expansion a priority, we can ensure ongoing progress in reducing suffering and death from cancer. Our elected leaders must understand they are representatives of each one of the 18,000 people who are estimated to be diagnosed with cancer this year in Mississippi.”

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) advocates for evidence-based public policies to reduce the cancer burden for everyone. The network engages volunteers across the country to make their voices heard by policymakers at every level of government. ACS CAN believes everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer.

Since 2001, as the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN has successfully advocated for billions of dollars in cancer research funding, expanded access to quality affordable health care and advanced proven tobacco control measures. Its volunteers work to make cancer a top priority for policymakers in cities, states and the nation’s capital. Join the fight by visiting www.fightcancer.org.

Brookhaven to celebrate Mardi Gras

Special to Wesson News

With its annual Downtown Jazzed Up, the Brookhaven/Lincoln County Chamber (BLCCC) will bring a taste of a New Orleans style Mardi Gras festival to the Brookhaven downtown area on Saturday, February 22.



An array of entertainment and fun, including live music, bounce houses, a 360 photo booth and face painting, will highlight the event from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

A second line parade will start at 4:45 p.m. at the downtown log cabin, and follow a route that winds around the downtown area: east over the railroad tracks,

left onto South Railroad Avenue for two blocks to Monticello Street and left onto South Whitworth, ending at the Railroad Park stage.

Called a "second line" parade because spectators – walkers, moms with infants in strollers, bikers and others join the parade, falling into a second line behind the parade leader, which will be the Brookhaven High School Ole Brook Mardi Gras band. Locals sometimes call it a "pet pawrade" because many second liners are pet owners with their animal friends.

Even in inclement weather, the downtown festival goes indoors with the musical entertainment and fun events. Business specials with Mardi Gras themes also continue: stores with discounts on merchandise and special treats, like King Cakes, the Betty's Eat Shop Happy Hour, a Magnolia Blues BBQ Company brunch, Mississippi Ice Daquiri Shop 20-oz. King Cake daiquiris, Tortilla Soup's 2-for-1 top shelf margaritas and queso or guacamole specials.

If Mardi Gras fun isn't your thing, BLCCC's next big event is Goin' to Town Car Show on March 1. Last year's show featured 299 vehicles in parking lots along Railroad Avenue and on Cherokee Street. \$10 pre-registration. \$15 same-day registration. For information: 601-233-8620/601-833-1411.

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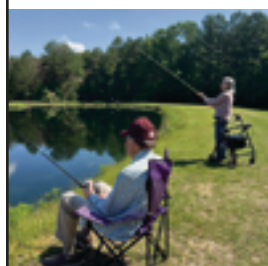
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First Pitch dinner, sports betting

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin kicked off the baseball season with a First Pitch Dinner last month (January 28) at the Thames Conference Center.

Players, parents and fans gathered to hear guest speaker Matt Riser, who heads the University of Memphis baseball program.

Riser explained the recent and upcoming changes to the game as well as the challenges that accompany it. He said his team does not recruit on skill level alone, as most of the athletes they see are on the same "playing field" in terms of talent.

Riser said his staff looks at success on and off the field -- a well-rounded player that does well in class.

In his first season at the helm of the University of Memphis Tigers, Riser was recognized by *Baseball America* as one the nation's top coaches under the age of 40. He previously coached at Southeastern University at 29 years old – one of the youngest Division One baseball coaches in history.

"The most important principle I live by is my faith," he said. "My family has been so supportive, but there's no way I could get anywhere without my faith," said Riser.

Riser received his degree in bio-

medical engineering from Tulane University in 2007. He and his wife Jeanette are the parents of three sons, Xander, Jace and Jameson.

The Co-Lin Baseball Team is led again this year by returning coach Adam Chamblee of Winona. This marks his third year coaching the Wolfpack. He previously coached at



Nicholls State University, Meridian Community College and East Central.

Sports betting. A panel of Mississippi lawmakers approved a bill that would permit mobile sports betting, a move proponents say would satisfy strong consumer demand and produce millions in new tax revenue.

House Gaming Chairman Rep. Casey Eure, R-Saucier, is trying again to pass legislation after lawmakers couldn't agree on a final proposal in 2024. Sports wagering has been permitted in the state for years,



Matt Riser

Special to Wesson News

and casino gambling for decades. But online betting has remained illegal amid fears the move could harm the bottom line of the state's casinos — a concern Eure acknowledged in committee.

"I would like to start by saying I'm committed to the bricks-and-mortar casinos, and this bill mandates that all sports betting is tethered to bricks-and-mortar casinos," Eure said.

The House Gaming Committee approved a new version of the Mississippi Mobile Sports Wagering

Act, which Eure said was reworked to address concerns raised by the Senate last year.

The bill requires betting companies, such as DraftKings or FanDuel, to contract with brick-and-mortar establishments. The platforms would go live on Dec. 8, 2025.

Last year, some lawmakers raised concerns that gambling platforms would have no incentive to partner with smaller casinos, and most of the money would instead flow to the Mississippi Gulf Coast's already bustling larger casinos.

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Eudora Welty's English teacher

Special to Wesson News

Flo Hampton Scott Holt, an author from Crystal Springs, was named for well-known Southern newspaper writer Flo Field, and wrote poetry and short stories.

Known as Flo Field Hampton before her marriages, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Versecraft* published her poems, and her short stories won prizes throughout Mississippi. She received recognition for two stories -- "That Passing Laughter" in 1962 and "Ghost with Southern Accents" in 1969.

A member of the Magnolia Chapter DAR, Hampton enjoyed giving presentations to organizations about her books and telling stories of interest. Mississippi College for Women (MUW), where she studied English and history, honored her at its centennial tribute among other notable women alumni, including Eudora Welty.



Hampton also studied at the University of Chicago, George Peabody College for Teachers and the University of Colorado and became head of the English department at Jackson's Central High School, where she taught Eudora Welty, encouraged her writing and worked with nationally known composer Harry L. Alford and Welty on "Mosquito," a

musical piece for which she wrote the words. During summer months, she also taught at Millsaps College.

In 1928, Hampton married Charles Christopher Scott, a lawyer who helped found Southern Building and Loan Association, forerunner of the First Federal Savings and Loan, where he was CEO at his death. In 1977, then Flo Hampton Scott married Ben Ford Holt, an auditor with Shell Oil Company.

Hampton was born in 1905 to William Judson and Mary Cornelia (Mollie) Miller Hampton and died as Flo Hampton Scott Holt in 1998 at 99 years old.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Reprinted from A Shared History: Copiah County, Mississippi 1823-1823, including articles written by Paul C. Cartwright, Tricia Nelson and Gene Horton compiled and edited by Paul C. Cartwright.



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Fall prevention is therapy focus

By Bob Arnold

A new Brookhaven-based therapy venue is helping people improve their health by addressing balance and foot issues and making them better walkers.

At a Wesson Lions Club meeting, Richard Barker explained the unique work he and his colleagues, Mike Griffith and Andy Biggs, are doing at TRI Therapy (TRIT) through its Gait Balance and Feet program.

“Our whole idea is preventing falls,” Barker said.

Barker said his group started shifting its focus a few years ago to fall prevention after receiving referrals for gait and balance issues. Their patients now include older persons, amputees, those with multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injuries, people who have suffered strokes and sustained head injuries and others who have had knee and hip replacements and feet and ankle surgeries.

“One in four people over 65 years old fall every year, with one in twelve of them seeking medical care and one in five of those who have consulted a doctor requiring a procedure,” Barker said. “Complications from falls are a leading cause of death among older persons.”

The problems start with feet, which play a big role in pain and muscle strength, and TRIT begins with measuring pressure on patients’ feet, Barker explained. As people age, he said, feet are the first part of the human body to lose strength. Once the feet go, ankles, knees and hips are next.

For its program, TRIT invested in computerized Tekscan devices -- the Tekscan balance system, which evaluates the stability of feet to bear weight, and the Tekscan Mobilemat to capture important data. While four different people can have four different observations of a person’s foot pressure, the Tekscan devices produce biomedical data which can inform decisions on helping patients, Barker pointed out.

Based on the data, TRIT customizes exercise plans for patients to maintain strength and motion that are lost with age.

“Older people, in particular, need fall prevention,” Barker noted. “It’s an



Special to Wesson News

ongoing need. We help them stay independent. That is our mission and our goal and what we are trying to achieve. We are bound to help them so they can do things safely and for themselves.”

TRI Therapy does not need physician referrals, although they may be required for insurance coverage. The TRI Therapy Gait Balance and Feet program is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 509 Brookway Boulevard.

UMMC awards 19 scholarships

Special to Wesson News

The School of Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) has awarded one-year cost-of-attendance scholarships to 19 medical students who plan to practice primary care in a rural and underserved Mississippi community.

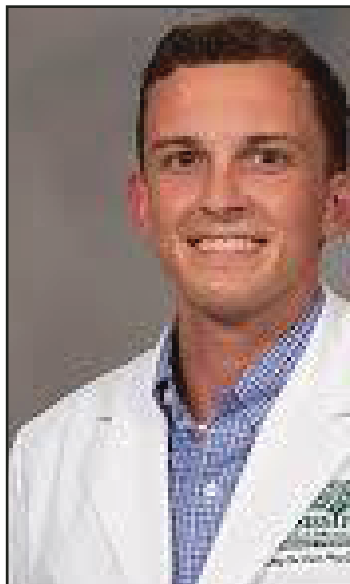
Caleb McCreary of Brookhaven, a grandson of Robert McCreary of Wesson, was one of the 19 most recent scholarship winners.

The scholarships were presented as part of the two-day Rural Medicine Education Symposium, a forum for physicians, administrators, educators and trainees to examine issues affecting the care of patients in rural communities and to discuss best practices for the various medical educational programs statewide.

Each scholarship is worth up to \$83,000 and will be applied to the 2025-2026 academic year.

The awards were made available through the Improved Primary Care for the Rural Community through Medical Education (IMPACT the RACE) Rural Track Program, created to improve access to health care in underserved areas by enhancing rural medical education for students.

“The students receiving scholarships this year have demonstrated a commitment and genuine interest in rural medicine as well as primary care,” said Dr. Loretta Jack-



Special to Wesson News

Caleb McCreary

son-Williams, vice dean for medical education at UMMC. “We hope that the support of this scholarship encourages them to come back as practicing physicians so we can witness their impact on our rural communities.

“It’s exciting that we’re beginning to see graduates of our program who are previous scholarship recipients return to the state to practice in these areas.”

The award does not require a rural service commitment, but students who expressed an interest in rural primary care were given preference during the selection process. Each awardee is either a second- or third-year medical student, is in good academic standing and was recommended by a physician preceptor.

As the state’s only academic medical center, UMMC seeks to improve the health of Mississippi’s population and eliminate health disparities through education, research and patient care.

UMMC encompasses six health science schools of medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry, graduate studies and population health. The Medical Center includes the state’s only Level I trauma center, only children’s hospital, only organ and bone marrow transplant program and the only Telehealth Center of Excellence, one of two in the nation.

For more information, visit www.umc.edu.

AI, elections, schools & air safety

By Bob Arnold

AI executive order. The Mississippi Department of Internet Technology Services will evaluate how state agencies use or plan to use artificial intelligence and will create policy recommendations for using AI in the public and private sectors under an executive order Gov. Tate Reeves issued that states “AI policy recommendations must be fair, innovative, secure, safe, transparent, accountable, accessible, valid, reliable and provide privacy.” The order requires state agencies to cooperate with ITS’s examination of AI practices. Agencies must designate a staff member to lead the AI coordination efforts under the order. It says AI is a “machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations or decisions influencing real or virtual environments.” Reeves’ executive order is the first legal action regarding AI in the state.

Special elections. Some Mississippians around the state will have the chance to participate in at least three special elections to fill vacancies in the state Legislature — and there could be more in the future. Since the special elections will take place in the spring, the areas will be without representation at the Capitol for much of the 2025 legislative session. Municipal elections are also taking place this year, and there could be even more special elections to fill vacant legislative seats.

Private school funding. A bill that would send taxpayer money from public to private schools is moving forward in the Mississippi Legislature, reflecting a yearlong push of private school advocates that has prompted concern among Democrats that the legislation could undermine public schools serving some of the state’s neediest students. House Education Chairman Rob Roberson acknowledged the bill faces a tough road ahead in the Legislature before it would have a chance of becoming law, but he said lawmakers needed to discuss solutions for students in disadvantaged areas who aren’t getting a quality education. Taylor Spillman, a spokesperson for House Speaker Jason White, said the bill is part of a package of education proposals that align with President

Donald Trump’s executive order promoting “school choice.” Roberson’s legislation would allow students who have been enrolled in a district rated D or F within the past five years to use the state portion of their base student cost — money that would normally go to their local public school — for private school tuition. The money from each child’s base student cost would be placed in an education scholarship account, a provision that will likely face legal challenge.

Safety in the air. Aircraft safety has come under scrutiny following devastating crashes on the East coast recently, but most Mississippi plane crashes rarely report injuries and only minor injuries when they do occur. Since 2020, there have been two crashes at Madison in Jackson metro, and neither had injuries. The deadliest crash during the period was in 2021 at Hattiesburg in which two died and four others were injured. From 2002 to 2022, 796 people died during U.S. air travel -- 27 percent during scheduled commercial flights and 73% involved on-demand air taxis. In contrast, passenger car and truck accidents accounted for 552,009 deaths on highways during that timeframe, an average of 26,286 fatalities per year.

Hospital changes. In a report to the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors, King’s Daughters Medical Center (KDMC) Chief Executive Officer Scott Christensen ticked off a list of planned capital improvements: a new MRI machine, renovation of the delivery and labor unit, expanding behavioral and mental health service. He said the hospital is recruiting new doctors for its OB-GYN unit, a dermatologist, an ENT physician and a urologist.

Healthy jobs report. Mississippi enjoyed a 3.5 percent jobless rate at year-end, better than the 3.8 percent national rate, with Lincoln and Copiah Counties at 3.6 percent and 3.9 percent respectively. Jefferson County had the highest jobless rate in the state at 13.3 percent, while Lafayette and Union Counties had the lowest unemployment rate at 2.5 percent. Issaquena County, with 20 unemployed persons, had the fewest jobless in the state, but a 5.5 percent jobless rate, with a labor pool of only 310 persons.

NEWS NUGGETS

Sweet potato new state veggie?

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi lawmakers are considering naming a state vegetable. House Bill 287 aims to make it the sweet potato.

If the Mississippi Senate approves it, the tubers will be the state vegetable starting July 1, joining a long list of state icons ranging from state drinks, fruits and varied animals to shells, stones and soil. The state does not yet have a state vegetable, though.

Sweet potatoes only contribute \$92 million to the economy, compared to the \$1.56 billion the state gets from soybeans or the \$675.5 million from corn, but people love them as chips, fries and as a Thanksgiving side.

Actually, economic contributions mean little in becoming a Magnolia State icon. Along with soybeans and corn, the

top state agricultural economic contributors, according to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture, are poultry/eggs (\$3.52 billion), forestry: (1.48 billion, cattle/calves (\$406 million), cotton (\$397 million), catfish ((\$252 million), hay (\$180 million), rice (\$135 million), horticultural crops, including Christmas trees, other vegetables, melons, potatoes, tree nuts, berries and other fruit or plants grown in nurseries and greenhouses (\$113 million). Then come sweet potatoes followed by hogs (\$86 million), wheat (\$36.2 million), peanuts (\$20.2 million) and milk (\$17 million), which, by the way, is the state drink.

The state fruit is the blueberry, tracked for its economic contributions as part of horticultural crops.

Most state icons, however, aren’t even tracked for their economic value: The Southern magnolia featured on the state flag is the state flower. The state wildflower is Coreopsis. The largemouth or black bass and mockingbird, nominated for the Legislature’s approval in 1944, are the state fish and state bird. The honeybee and spicebush swallowtail are the state insect and state butterfly. Among animals, the state water mammal, state waterfowl and state reptile are the bottlenosed dolphin, wood duck and American Alligator. There are two state land mammals – the white-tailed deer and the red fox. The state shell, fossil, stone and soil are the Oyster Shell, Prehistoric Whale, Petrified Wood and Natchez Silt Loam.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Excerpted from Jackson Clarion Ledger article.



Special to Wesson News

Scholar program now recruiting

By Guest Columnist Bonnie Coblentz

Mississippi high school juniors have a summer opportunity to learn about medical and science careers while earning 3 hours of college credit at Mississippi State University.

The Rural Medical and Science Scholars (RMSS), program will be held in Starkville June 8-20 this year. It is designed to introduce academically qualified students to careers in health or science/technology/engineering/math (STEM) fields. Students must apply by April 14. Only Mississippi residents are eligible.

Jasmine Harris-Speight, RMSS director, said the residential program allows students to take a college-level health science course, tour the University of Mississippi Medical Center and make friends with peers who have similar career interests and goals.

“This unique program is designed to help students explore health-related careers and STEM fields,” Harris-Speight said. “They will hear robust lectures and attend engaging workshops exploring public health and its connection to careers in health or science.”

“They will have opportunities to network with peers and professionals as part of this experience that prepares them for their future academic and career goals.”

Since the RMSS program began in 1998, 515 students have participated in the program and 70% of participants have pursued STEM-related careers. This has helped address Mississippi’s



need for more health care providers in rural areas of the state.

“Our goal is to give students the tools they need to explore, innovate and make a difference in the world,” Harris-Speight said.

The \$2,600 fee for the program includes the \$100 application fee. Scholarships up to 100% of the cost are available on an as-needed basis. The cost covers tuition, housing, textbooks, workshop materials and some food during the program.

Find more information and the application form at <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/application-form>.

MSU is an equal opportunity institution. For disability accommodation or other information, contact Harris-Speight at 662-325-6640 or jrh667@msstate.edu.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Bonnie Coblentz writes for the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Seafood pasta for Southern palates



By Guest Cooking Columnist Charles Fortson, Jr.

Shrimp season is almost here, and time to think about how to use these creatures of the sea to turn almost anything you cook into a meal worthy of a culinary award..

Pasta and shrimp with creamy sauce prepared like you would make Southern gravy is a favorite of mine.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Charles Fortson, Jr., is proprietor-chef at Uncle Ray's across from Lake Lincoln State Park. He makes lunches and dinners to take out or for table service, while also operating a convenience store and bait shop at his Sunset Road location. Follow his cooking tips on Uncle Ray's Facebook page or call 601-643-0174 to check on his daily specials.



Ingredients:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 lb. of thin spaghetti
(or rice if your prefer) | 1 quart Half & Half
whipping cream |
| 1 large onion (chopped) | White flour |
| 1 green onion bunch (chopped) | Salt and pepper |
| 2 tablespoons of minced garlic | Butter |
| 2 tablespoons of parsley | Olive oil |
| 2 pounds of small shrimp or
crawfish | Velveeta Cheese |
| 3 caps of crab oil | Shredded mild cheddar
cheese |
| 1 can Rotel tomatoes & pepper
(drained) | |

Directions:

1. Pre-cook onions and garlic until tender in mix of one tablespoon of butter and one tablespoon of olive oil heated on medium to low fire.
2. Pre-boil shrimp or crawfish to flavor it. Boil one quart of water and three caps of crab oil with one tablespoon of butter and one tablespoon of salt in a two-quart sauce pan. Add the shrimp or crawfish and bring to a boil again. Drain and cool.
3. Prepare spaghetti or your favorite pasta. Boil two quarts of water with one tablespoon of butter and one tablespoon of salt in a large pot. Add broken spaghetti, bring to a second boil, reduce heat and cook for 20 minutes or until tender. Drain water and add Rotel tomatoes and pepper, pre-cooked onions and garlic, and parsley.
4. Prepare creamy sauce. Stir white flour into the whipping cream over low heat to make a thick gravy. Add Velveeta Cheese and the shredded cheddar cheese until the gravy has the thickness your desire.
5. Combine the prepared spaghetti, creamy sauce and shrimp or crawfish. Keep warm and serve with garlic bread. Serves eight.

Firespike is a garden beauty

By Guest Columnist Eddie Smith

This time of year, my Firespike is putting on a show in my garden. This herbaceous perennial is known for its large, dramatic spikes of bright red, tubular flowers.

Each spike features densely packed clusters of 3-inch-long blooms that emerge in a striking, fiery red color, which can deepen to a rich crimson at the tips. The tubular flowers have a unique, slightly curved shape that resembles a trumpet, with a smooth, slightly glossy texture that catches the light beautifully.

As the flowers mature, they can exhibit subtle variations in hue, ranging from vibrant red to a deeper, almost orange-red.

Known scientifically as *Odontonema strictum*, Firespike plants reach a height of 4 to 6 feet, and their tall, vertical flower spikes create a spectacular display. The intense color of the flowers contrasts sharply with the plants' dark green, glossy foliage. The foliage is large and lush, providing a dramatic backdrop that enhances the brightness of the blooms.

The combination of the vivid flower spikes and the glossy leaves makes Firespike a standout feature in gardens, particularly when massed together at the back of a garden bed.

Firespike is particularly effective at drawing in pollinators. The tubular flowers are perfectly shaped for hummingbirds, which enjoy the nectar-rich blooms. Butterflies are also frequent visitors. The plant's ability to attract these pollinators adds movement and life to the garden and supports the local ecosystem.

I find that Firespike performs best in full sun, although it can tolerate part shade or part sun. Once established, it becomes moderately drought-tolerant, but I make sure my plant receives regular water during dry periods to keep it healthy.

Firespike grows in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant-hardiness zones 8-10. A hard freeze will kill the above-ground growth. After freezing temperatures, I cut the plant back to the ground in spring. This encourages fresh, vigorous growth from the base and clears away any dead material.

I have found it easy to propagate through cuttings when I want to expand my garden. Over the years, I have shared many cuttings with friends and family members. My original plant was actually given to me as a passalong plant by



Special to Wesson News

Firespike is a herbaceous perennial known for its large, dramatic spikes of bright red, tubular flowers.

my dear friend Josh Rivero.

If the plant becomes too tall, I prune it several times throughout the growing season to maintain its shape and prevent it from becoming too leggy. To ensure robust growth, apply a general-purpose, slow-release fertilizer in the spring and maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch around the base. This mulch helps retain soil moisture and protects the root ball from drying out.

With its vibrant red blooms, lush foliage and ability to attract pollinators, Firespike adds a dynamic and colorful presence to my garden in the late summer and fall.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Eddie Smith is a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. He is also host of the popular Southern Gardening television program. Locate Southern Gardening products online at <http://extension.msstate.edu/shows/southern-gardening>.

College chapel



Special to Wesson News

Chapel is a regular event on the calendar of many Co-Lin students. Baptist Student Union hosts services at the college's campus landmark on Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. Madison Slay of Crystal Springs (above), a campus resident, spoke at a service on "The Great Commission."

State eggs and poultry safe

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi residents are becoming increasingly wary of buying eggs and poultry products since the detection of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the state during December.

The presence of the virus has raised concerns for consumers across the state as more and more cases are reported and egg prices skyrocket.

Is poultry safe to eat?

Yes, poultry and eggs available for retail sale in Mississippi remain safe to consume. The Mississippi Board of Animal Safety assures consumers that eggs and poultry are safe to eat when handled and cooked properly. Birds are inspected for signs of illness before being processed, and only healthy birds enter the food supply chain.

Consumers should opt for pasteurized dairy products, as pasteurization is proven to kill harmful bacteria and viruses, including highly pathogenic avian influenza. Cook all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165°F.

Why are prices of eggs and chicken going up?

Josh Maples, an agricultural economist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service says "fewer laying hens has led to fewer eggs produced and tighter supplies for egg consumers." The USDA also reports 94 confirmed cases nationwide in the past month, affecting over 11 million birds. Increased demand, coupled with reduced supply, is putting additional pressure on prices. Some retailers may implement purchase limits on eggs due to shortages. High demand for processed food products also stretched the egg supply.

The Mississippi Board of Animal Health (MBAH) has taken several measures to address the recent outbreak: The affected areas where the disease was detected are quarantined. State officials have depopulated some of the chickens in the affected flock. The Mississippi State Veterinary Research & Diagnostic Laboratory is conducting tests on samples from suspected cases. The state is maintaining an up-to-date website with the latest information on the avian influenza situation in Mississippi.

While the risk to public health is low, it is important for consumers to take precautions: Continue to cook poultry products thoroughly. Stay informed about any food recalls. Be aware that egg prices may fluctuate due to the outbreak. Mississippi's poultry industry is a cornerstone of the state's economy, contributing significantly to both local and global markets, so instances of cross-contamination could prove detrimental in many ways.