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Volume 13, Number 4

"Good News You Can Use"

April, 2025

Chamber honors Wesson servants

By Bob Arnold

A business, not-for-profit organization and seven individuals received recognition and accepted honors for their contributions and service to Wesson last month.

At a special awards banquet at the Co-Lin Thames Center, the Wesson Chamber of Commerce presented:

- Organization of the Year Award to Friends of the Library for its work in supporting Wesson Public Library through special programs and promotions that encourage use of its resources and funds to expand those resources. It assists with programs targeted for children and youth and National Library Week, and conducts promotions to build user
- Citizens of the Year Awards to Dixie Hutson Thornton and Michael R. King.

Thornton has served the Wesson community through volunteer leadership in the American Legion Auxiliary in which she served as president of District 7 and is the historian and member of the local executive committee. As president of the Wesson Garden Club, she helped it achieve state and regional recognition for its programs. She is active in Sylvarena Baptist Church and serves on the Southern Baptist Region 6 Women's Missionary Union Board of Directors.

In 2014, she worked with the Wesson Chamber of Commerce and Town to set up a museum to help celebrate Wesson's 150th anniversary – a temporary facility that will soon return to become a permanent part of the town's life through the work of Friends of the Library.

Thornton is a 44-year Army wife, mother of one daughter and a granddaughter.

King serves as Wesson Ward 4 Alderman and is President and CEO of Summerwind Consultants, Inc., which develops antiterrorism and risk management decision-support software tools. He spearheaded development of the Wesson Veterans Memorial.

A Brookhaven native, he graduated from Florida State University and started a law enforcement career with the Brookhaven Police Department, which he continued as a military policeman after being commissioned as a U.S. Marine Corps officer in 1983. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and U.S. Army Command and Staff College, holding a

Three speakers, who have helped Wesson in their unique roles in the community, lauded the more than one hundred town leaders, including citizens, government officials and representatives of businesses and not-for-profit organizations on hand at the Chamber of Commerce

"It's amazing what you do," affirmed Representative Becky Currie, who serves the community in the State Legislature.

"The Biblical injunction to help "the least of these" guides me to do what I do to make the community the best," she said. "Fixing what needs to be fixed – the Old School, police station, roads, Wesson Attendance Center; supporting Co-Lin, getting funds for you."

Dr. Jackie Martin, vice president of the Co-Lin Wesson campus, said the local college is seek-

ing to grow with the town.

She cited "student success" as its top priority reflected in Co-Lin's graduation rate, which is the highest among colleges and universities in Mississippi.

The college is also renovating buildings, improving its athletic facilities and reaching out to local high school students to continue studies at the institution, she said.

Wesson Mayor Alton Shaw said the town is all about "people helping each other" and pointed to its government activity as a years for that homeoning.

to its government activity as a venue for that happening.

He said the town operates on a \$2 million budget with grant funding that keeps taxes at a minimum in maintaining a Class 7 fire department with volunteers, recent upgrading of police department facilities, and providing a municipal park with a playground. On the horizon for the town, he said, are road repairs, location of a pharmacy, and opening of a new convenience store. "We have a lot going on and to be happy about," Shaw summarized.



Wesson Chamber of Commerce President Terri Bath (right) with librarian Marilyn Britt (immediate left) and members of Friends of the Library (FOL) at Chamber's awards ceremony. FOL was named Organization of the Year.

Master of Military Art and Science. He received the Legion of Merit Award, Defense Meritorious Service Medal and the Presidential Service Badge and retired as Lieutenant Colonel before founding his consulting firm.

- Educator of the Year Dr. Barbara Roberson, Wesson High School principal. Wesson Attendance Center Principal Tommy Clopton commended her for "creativity in developing individualized plans for students according to their needs, "pulling all students up and finding the right path for each one." Roberson has been an educator for 28 years, 14 years at Wesson Attendance Center as a teacher and counselor.
- Policeman of the Year Tim Stevens, Wesson Police Department (WPD) assistant chief. WPD Police Chief Chad O'Quinn called Stevens "a leader and mentor" who exemplifies the force. "We're peacemakers who are confident in our public service, loving what we do," Q'Quinn said.
- Fireman of the Year Sean Riley. Wesson Fire Department is small on funds, but big on volunteers like Riley, Chief Ken Carraway said. "We're responsible for 72 square miles," he said. "Each of us brings 800 training hours to the job, including 120 hours for certification and 12 hours refresher training every year. We're prepared for the worst, trained for what we never want to happen." Riley, Carraway said, "started as a kid as a junior firefighter, has a kind serving heart and responds to most of our calls.
- Business of the Year to Copiah Bank. "Wesson is a small town, but has two banks -Trustmark and Copiah - that are solidly committed to its growth with assets," Chamber President Teri Bath said. Bath noted new business openings in Wesson encouraged by the presence of the town's banks: Spray Foam Solutions with eight to nine new jobs, Fire House Barbeque with seven new jobs, Skidworks, a property maintenance company started by Steven Ashley related to his real estate organization, and Park Place

In addition to the award winners, the Chamber also honored two recently retired owners of long-time Wesson businesses: Gerri Bland, who operated Miss Gerri's Beauty Salon, and Nena Smith, who operated a dance studios.

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Pastor identifies with Jonah

Wesson News

Around town, folk know Ken Dale Sullivan as a former mortician who brought his specialized skills to the public and private sectors, a politician who sought local and state elected offices and a restaurateur.

Sullivan, who says he identifies with Jonah, the Biblical character who ran away from God's call and was swallowed by a whale, is now serving Union Hall Baptist Church in Brookhaven as its pastor and looks on his past career life as an attempt to run away from God's call to his new ministry.

Born in 1976, Sullivan grew up in the New Zion community outside Crystal Springs, a rural area where he learned to hunt and fish and went to kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools.

Baseball was a sports passion in his childhood and youth, but he was a better musician than an athlete, and went to Co-Lin on a band scholarship after graduating from Crystal Springs High School in 1995.

"I studied pre-med at Co-Lin, but interrupted my education there to take a job at Stringer's Funeral Home in Hazlehurst, where I was fascinated by the work," he says. "I returned to Co-Lin, went on to Southern Mississippi University, where I earned a degree in business administration in 2000, and then studied mortuary science at Gulf Coast Community College."

Sullivan started 15 years in mortuary jobs at Moore Funeral Service in Hattiesburg, moving to the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) in 2006 as the anatomical materials specialist working with surgical students, teachers and researchers in using cadavers. From 2006-2017, Sullivan also operated Clean Scene, a small business that remediated crime scenes for law enforcement agencies throughout Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

In 2017, UMMC made Sullivan Associate Director of Environmental Services to oversee 63 workers in its janitorial division, a short-lived job, as it turned out, because UMMC contracted out the division's work to a private organization later that year.

"I was offered a job by the private contractor, but I grew up in a family that enjoyed cooking good food and had always dreamed of operating a restaurant," Sullivan says. Things fell into place in 2018, and he opened Dump's Barbeque in the old Newman's Liquor Store in Wesson.

Sullivan also ran away from God's call, pursuing public office twice in elections for the state legislature and Copiah County supervisors.

Five and one-half years after opening Dump's, however, he finally yielded to God's call when Union Hall Baptist Church asked him to become its interim pastor.

"I knew as a child that I was called to be a pastor," Sullivan recalls. "I even preached a sermon on Jonah and the whale when I was three or four years old at New Zion Baptist Church. I continued Dump's while serving as an interim pastor at Union Hall, but closed the doors there in May 2024 for the last time when the church called me to serve

The same day he closed Dump's, Sullivan learned another would-be Wesson restaurateur was ready to take over the building –

full time.'

"another sign I made the right decision to pursue the ministry," he says.

At Union Hall, Sullivan says he found a "loving congregation" and "I have worked with it to become a praying congregation." The response to his pastorate has been marked with Sunday worship services now drawing 70 to 80 persons compared to 30 when he came on board as the interim pastor.



Special to Wesson News

Pastor Ken Dale Sullivan with children at Union Hall Baptist Church.

Sullivan calls his wife, the former Kris Santa Ana, his "partner in ministry." He met the sister of Nelson Santa Ana, former pastor at Wesson Baptist Church, in 2012 and married her the same year – "one of my best blessings," Sullivan says. She is now a counselor at Utica Elementary School and a former journalist, salesperson and teacher. They have two daughters – Kenzie, 23, who is married and lives in Colorado, and Mary Grace, 20, a third-year education student at Ole Miss.

What are your hobbies?

I like spending time with family, working on a 1972 Cadillac, fishing and cooking

Are you a reader?

I read the Bible and commentaries. For pleasure, I read biographies to learn about real people. Understanding people is what being a pastor is all about. I recently completed reading *Cornbread Mafia* – a story about people.

How about music?

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

When I was in a band, my instrument was the trombone. I can play the guitar a little bit. I love to sing, and I enjoy listening to all kinds of music – Christian, country, rock. I am also an Elvis fan.

Do you go to the theater or movies?

I like ballet. I enjoy the old gangster movies. If sports events are theater, I am looking forward to rooting for a new Jackson minor league team following the departure elsewhere of the Mississippi Braves. I also follow the New York Yankees.

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

The one thing I wouldn't do, unlike many people, is

quit my job. I might buy some land with a pond, where I can fish

How would you change the world?

That's what we're trying to do at Union Hall Baptist Church. Showing the love of Christ, helping people understand the blood of Christ through which God changes people.



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A time to celebrate libraries

Wesson News

From books and digital resources to programming for their patrons, libraries are essential to communities – and not just a place to check out books.

National Library Week 2025, observed in Wesson from April 7 - 10, was a time to celebrate the many ways libraries bring people together,

spark imagination, and support lifelong learning, to discover Wesson Public Library for the first time or rediscover how it supports the community.

First celebrated in 1958, National Library Week is a yearly national observance sponsored by the American Library Association.

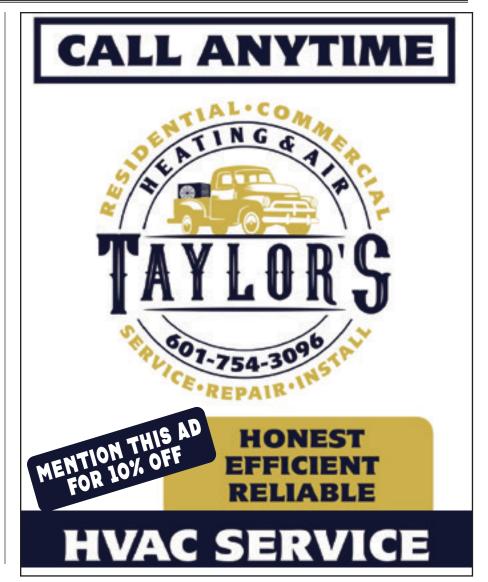
Wesson Friends of the Library (FOL) invited locals to come visit the Wesson Public Library during its regular hours to explore all it has to offer, including the book collection for children and



Wesson News

adults, large print book collection, DVDs, local newspapers, magazines, computer access and online availability, and copying and fax services.

The library has something for everyone, whether they are preparing for a career change, launching a business, raising a family, or enjoying retirement. Wesson Public Library is here to support their journey, and FOL is here to support the library. Wesson FOL assists the library in providing programming throughout the year, such as the Children's Summer Reading Program, provides help with other projects, such as Halloween and Christmas open houses, and sponsors traveling informational exhibits, membership drives and book sales.





KING'S DAUGHTERS NEWS

Education Classes Available

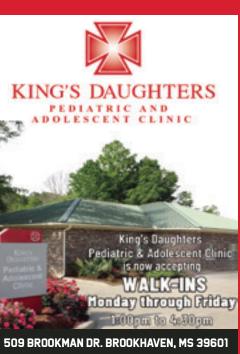
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Don't become an internet victim

By Bob Arnold

For anyone who uses computers, cybersecurity needs to become a habit, Bobby Freeman, director of the cyber unit of Mississippi Homeland Security, told a Co-Lin Institute of Learning in Retirement (ILR) luncheon audience.

The bad guys are out to get you with malware, phishing, and ransomware, he said. Malware is intrusive software developed by cybercriminals (often called

hackers) to steal data and damage or destroy computers and computer systems. When cyber-criminals send you scam emails to lure you to a website that contains malware, they are phishing (smishing if they use text messages and vishing if they use fraudulent telephone calls to trick you into revealing personal information or sending money). Ransomware is a type of malware that encrypts data and demands a ransom payment for its decryption, often delivered through phishing emails

Freeman said you can avoid becoming a cyber victim by:

- Improving password security. Passwords are one of the most vulnerable cyber defenses.
- Using secure networks.
- Keeping your personal electronic device software current.
- Being suspicious of unexpected emails.

He offered these specifics:

Passwords. "Create strong passwords for your email, your personal website

and those you visit and apps," Freeman advised. "Use different passwords for each one." Freeman suggested making strong, memorable passwords by using a favorite phrase or saying as the foundation, i.e., "Birds of a feather flock together." Use the first letter of each word or a symbol for a letter (i.e., "@" for "a'). Flank the foundation letters with the numbers of a meaningful year, i.e. "1963," the year you were born. Your password would be: 19Bo@ftt63.

"Keep your passwords private," Freeman added. "Don't share or post them."

Privacy. On personal devices, social media accounts and other places you visit in the cyber sphere, use privacy settings, if they are available, Freeman counseled. "Limit your communication on the internet to friends and known contacts," he said.

Updates. System and app updates often revolve around fixing security vulnerabilities, Freeman noted. "Add updates as soon as you get them," he stressed.

Communications. Cautiously communicate on the internet, Freeman warned. "Be wary of email messages from unknown sources," he said. "Check before you respond to or even opening suspicious messages. Go to websites directly rather than using links that are provided in suspicious emails. Hackers can create emails that look like they have be been sent by respected sources. Bad grammar and misspellings are red flags. Think before you share or post internet messages. The app you're using may say it deletes old messages, but the internet never forgets."

Parental controls. A special concern for parents and grandparents, Freeman said, is cyberbullying -- sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else that causes embarrassment or humiliation over cell phones, computers, and tablets through SMS, text, and apps, or social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. A starting point for addressing this concern are the parental controls on digital devices, he pointed out.



Bobby Freeman



ABOUT ALTON!

- \bigstar He is a former Paramedic and Firefighter, currently working as Certified Nurse Practitioner
- ★ Earned a Master's Degree from University of Southern Mississippi
- ★ Founder of Life View Ministries, a Christian non-profit which raises awareness for and helps combat human trafficking
- ★ Previous recipient of MS Business Journal Top 40 Under 40 Leaders in MS
- ★ Past President and current Executive Committee Member of MS Municipal League
- ★ Completed and continue to expand our first municipal park with splash pad and other amenities
- ★ Restored and preserved the Old Wesson School
- ★ Helped bring new businesses and jobs to Wesson, including Dollar General and Family Dollar
- ★ Renovated and expanded public library and built new police department
- ★ Graduate and former adjunct faculty at Copiah- Lincoln Community College
- ★ Established veterans memorial and have broken ground on upcoming pickleball courts
- ★ Revitalized downtown with new sidewalks, signage, green space and more

I have lived in Wesson nearly 40 years and Mayor for 22 of those years. Your trust in me has led to great things for our community. Together, we completed and continue to expand our first municipal park, revitalized our downtown, helped secure over \$8 million in grants to improve our infrastructure, and much more. I am humbly asking for your support on June 3, so we can keep this progress going.

Preparing to do caregiving

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid



Recently, Dr. Chelsea B. Crittle talked to Mississippi Health Ambassadors about "Planning for the Caregiver," pointing to the many people who care for older adults and the help that is available to them in Mississippi.

Dr. Crittle shared a powerful quote from former First Lady Rosalynn Carter: "There are only four kinds of people in this world—those who have been caregivers, those who are caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers." Her words dramatize how caregiving

affects all of us.

The government has updated the definition of a "family caregiver" to encompass not just family, but also friends, neighbors, and partners who care for older adults or people with memory problems.

In Mississippi, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) offer help for these caregivers. These local offices provide services like meals, rides to doctor visits, and time off for caregivers who need a break.

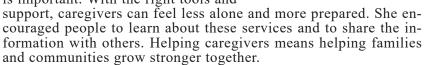
One helpful program Dr. Crittle talked about is called TCARE. It helps caregivers figure out what they need and creates a special plan just for them. This plan is made with the help of a trained worker who checks in often and makes sure caregivers have the right support. This kind of personalized care is important because every caregiver's situation is different.

Dr. Crittle also talked about MAC Centers (Mississippi Access to Care). These are places people can go or call to get help with long-term care, learn about Medicaid, and find ways to move from a hospital or nursing home back home. Other programs help caregivers of people with dementia and offer breaks so they can rest. There are even programs that pay older adults to do part-time jobs, which help them stay active and involved in the community.

Many caregivers do not know these programs exist, and they try to do everything by themselves. But asking for help is a smart and

strong choice. Caregivers need to take care of themselves, too. These programs can help with food, safety tools like grab bars, health insurance questions, and even find someone with whom to talk when things get tough.

Dr. Crittle reminded everyone that being a caregiver is not easy, but it is important. With the right tools and



Caregiver tips:

- 1. Find out if you qualify. Most programs are for people aged 60 and older.
- 2. Contact your local AAA or MAC Center. They can tell you about helpful programs.
- 3. Do not try to do it alone. Use respite care to get a break when needed.
- 4. Plan early for changes. There is help for moving someone home from a hospital or nursing home.
- 5. Join a support group. Talking to others can really help.

Need help or more information? Call the MAC Center at 1-844-822-4MAC (4622) or visit www.mississippiaccesstocare.org. Also visit www.cmpdd.org.

Caregiving can be hard, but you do not have to do it alone. Mississippi has many programs to help support you.

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).



April, 2025





Fentanyl - the scariest drug around

Wesson News

Fentanyl is the scariest drug among the array of choices of substance abusers, according to an authority who works with communities to curb its use.

"Doctors administer fentanyl in a relatively safe form to relieve pain, but the illicit form that can be manufactured in homes and which drug dealers mix with other drugs to increase their addictive power is deadly," Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist Ashley Washington told attendees at a Co-Lin Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) workshop.

Washington, who works for the Region 8 Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Treatment program, said fentanyl, which is a 50 times more powerful addictive drug than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine, is responsible for 60 percent of drug overdose deaths – some 250,000 in 2024

When inhaled, she explained, it attaches to opiate receptors in the brain and slows breathing and heart rate, producing a deep relaxed and euphoric state.

"Two milligrams of fentanyl can be lethal," Washington said. "To get an idea of how small an amount that is, consider a small packet that sweetens your coffee or tea contains 1,000 milligrams of sugar."

Because of the small amount needed, drug dealers can easily mix it with other drugs, such as marijuana, heroin and cocaine to keep their addict customer coming back for more, or even contaminate patches, IVs and pills, Washington added. "It's easy to consume and hard to detect," she pointed out

Withdrawal from fentanyl is intense and painful, affecting the user both physically and mentally, Washington said.

Washington said safe, healthy homes should keep Narcan kits in the medicine cabinets as a norm, like first aid kits. Narcan, administered by injection or as a nasal spray, is a fentanyl antidote that can save someone who has overdosed – all too often a youth who is experimenting with drugs.

FOUNDERS DAY 2025

May 3, 2025

This event will move from HWY 51 to the Wesson City Park.
Starts at 8:00am-4:00pm.

MAY 2ND

5:00 P.M. - GOSPEL MUSIC @WESSON PARK

MAY 3RD

8:00 A.M. - FUN RUN & VENDOR BOOTHS OPEN
17:00 A.M. - QUEEN CROWNING
8:00 A.M. - 9:30 P.M. - MUSIC PLAYING
2:00 P.M. - DOGGIE PALOOZA
4:00 P.M. - VENDOR BOOTHS CLOSE
8:00 P.M. - STREET DANCE AT THE PARK
8:00 A.M. - 9:00P.M. - FOODCOURT
9:00 P.M - FIREWORKS
END OF FOUNDER'S DAY

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Town museum moves forward

Wesson News

Rehabilitation of the former electric building and later the venue for the local Boy Scouts program is progressing towards creation of a town museum, Marilyn Britt, Librarian at Wesson Public Library, reported to Town Alderman.

Funded by a \$9,500 Home Depot grant, Friends of the Library

(FOL) is spearheading the project. The initial work includes moisture-proofing the building, installation of climate control equipment, a thorough cleaning repairs to doors and floor. A second phase of the work will require more funding, including support being sought from other donors, and include installation of a new window, ramp for disabled persons, dehu-

midifier and other HVAC equipment, and upgrading of plumbing and electrical systems.

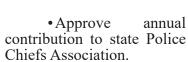
The Alderman also heard reports on:

 March Wesson police activity presented by Chief Chad O'Quinn: 69 tickets and citations related to driving, vehicular, dog ordinance and open container violations; three misdemeanor and two felony arrests and response to a domestic violence simple assault, four animal calls and three disturbances among other incidents. In total, WPD handled 235 phone and walk-in complaints and conducted 238 business checks.

• Progress of new water meter installations, including discovery of a variety of errant readings by old meters.

The Alderman also voted to:

• Authorize participation of Police Chief O'Quinn and Assistant Police Chief Tim Stevens in state Chief training.



- Send the Deputy Town Clerk for election training at Ridgeland, Mississippi.
- Adopt the water department's annual assessment and readopt its emergency response plan.



Special to Wesson News
Marilyn Britt told Aldermen
about town museum's progress.







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COMMUNITY FOCUSED

l am dedicated to listening to and addressing the concerns of our residents, ensuring that every voice is heard and that our policies reflect the needs and aspirations of our community.



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Committed to bringing fresh ideas and innovative solutions to the table, I aim to tackle our city's challenges with creativity and forwardthinking strategies to foster growth and development.

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FDIC

Founders' Day to Celebrate Wesson

Wesson News

A 5K run/walk, musicians, vendors with an array of arts and crafts; snacks, refreshments and meals; the crowning of a new Queen, and fireworks will highlight the Wesson Founders' Day celebration on Friday, May 2, and Saturday, May 3.

The Wesson Chamber of Commerce is the primary sponsor of the event, with additional support committed so far by Copiah Bank and Salmon Point Development.

The center of activity will move from Highway 51 this year to the municipal park.

The festivities start on Friday evening with gospel music in the municipal park at 5 p.m.

Walkers and runners will start a 5K Fun Run a 8 a.m. at the municipal park, with signs along the way directing them through Wesson and the Co-Lin campus and ending at their starting point. Overall run/walk winners and those finishing first, second and third place in four age categories -- under 20, 21-35, 36-50 and 51 and over -- will be recognized. Last year, more than 60 adults and youth participated, and larger numbers are expected this year.

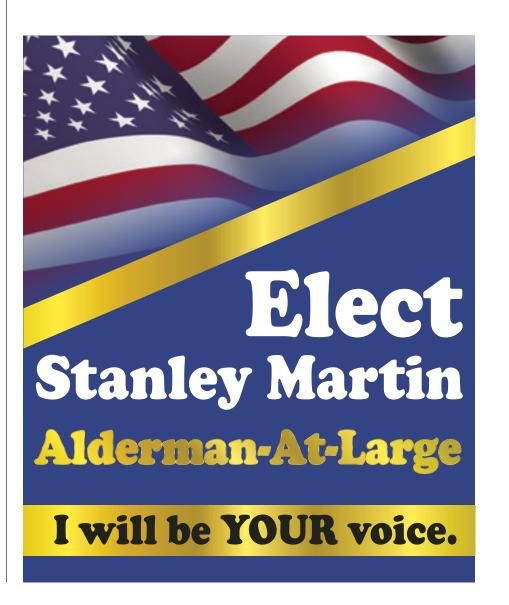
On Saturday, the Chamber will Crown a new Founder's Day Queen and celebrate the reign of the outgoing 2024-25 Queen, who has represented the Chamber at various events throughout the year.

Throughout the day, soloists and bands now being lined up by Chamber President Teri Bath will take the Spring Street stage with an assortment of gospel, rock and country music, dance and crowd-pleasing performances. Shoppers will browse vendor booths and bargain for clothing, jewelry, arts and crafts. An abundance of food, snacks and drinks will be available to satisfy the hunger needs of visitors. There will be dancing in the park from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., when a fireworks display concludes the day.

More specifics about the 5K run/walk and other events will be shared in the coming weeks on the Wesson Chamber Happenings Facebook page.







Wesson woman is lung cancer advocate

Special to Wesson News

In celebration of a decade of powerful advocacy and progress, Wesson resident and

lung cancer advocate Kim Whittington participated in the American Lung Association's 2025 Lung Force Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C., on April 9.

The event marked 10 years of amplifying the voices of lung cancer survivors, caregivers, and advocates from across the U.S. who have shared their personal stories with lawmakers to drive lifesaving change.

Whittington is driven by the memory of her husband, Harry, who passed from lung cancer 11 years ago. Like many veterans, he began smoking while serving in the U.S. Air Force. After retiring from the service, he had annual check-ups with his primary care provider, but did not receive any lung scans. He was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer during tests for a stroke. The cancer had metastasized to his brain. He passed eight months after his diagnosis.

"As a member of the U.S. Air Force, Harry saw many conflicts and danger, but little did he know the thing that would end his life was hanging from his fingers," says Whittington. "He told me cigarettes were passed out in the military just like MREs. Lung cancer screening should be a part of yearly check-ups, especially for patients with smoking history. I believe if his lung cancer had been caught earlier, Harry would still be here."

During Advocacy Day, Whittington spoke with the Mississippi Congressional Delegation and their staff to share her personal experience with lung cancer and explain why protecting access to quality and affordable healthcare through Medicaid, and protecting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health are vital for people with or at risk for lung cancer.

Lung Force was launched in 2014, with its first advocacy in 2016. Since its inception, Lung Force has played a pivotal role in transforming the landscape of lung cancer research, treatment and awareness. Over the past 10 years, the American Lung Association has:

 Shared the inspiring stories of more than 1,000 individuals affected by lung cancer with lawmakers, putting a human face to the nation's leading cause of cancer death.

- Increased annual lung cancer research funding through the National Institutes of Health by 142%, surpassing \$500 million annually.
 - Contributed to a remarkable 44% increase in the five-year lung cancer survival rate, providing hope to countless patients and families.
 - Paved the way for 67 new lung cancer therapies approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, expanding treatment options and improving outcomes.

To help celebrate the tenth anniversary of Lung Foce Advocacy Day and support Kim Whittington, the Lung Association invited Mississippi residents to join the movement by visiting LUNGFORCE.org/AdvocacyDay and:

- Calling Senators and Representatives to echo the voices of LUNG FORCE Heroes.
- Sending an email to Congress to advocate for continued support of lung cancer research and healthcare access.
- Engaging with lawmakers on social media to raise awareness and inspire action.

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to champion clean air for all; to improve the quality of life for those with lung disease and their families; and to create a tobac-



co-free future.

For more information about the American Lung Association, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: Lung.org.

WESSON AREA DINING GUIDE







Breazeale named Woman of Distinction

Jessica Breazeale of Wesson was named an honoree at the Connecting the Dots Foundation annual March banquet for National Women's History Month, which was thematically framed as "Moving Forward Together! Celebrating Women Who Teach and Inspire Generations.'

The board of directors of the Connecting the Dots Foundation selected Breazeale as one of nine women to honor at the event held last month at the Jackson Convention Complex.

Maggie Wade Dixon of WLBT 3 and Walt Grayson of WJTV 12 were emcees at the black-tie event. During the event,15 college students were also each presented \$1,000 scholarships. Carter Jewelers, America's third oldest registered jewelry store, gave each Woman of Distinction a special

Special guests at the event were Miss Mississippi, Miss Mississippi Teen, Miss Black Mississippi, Miss Juneteenth Mississippi, Miss Sweetheart World, and Ms. Black Mississippi. Ballet Magnificat staged several performances. Special videos featured Governor Tate Reeves, Congressman Bennie Thompson, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, among others, congratulating honorees.

"It was such a lovely and inspiring night," Breazeale said. "We laughed. We cried. We listened to amazing music from a saxophonist from Rochester, New York. It was a special night. One that I'll always remember.

Also honored as Women of Distinction were Dr. Erica Webber Jones, President of the Mississippi Association of Educators; Gabrielle Hyde, elementary teacher; the late Misha Mck, actress and activist; Kristen Stephenson, educator; Dr. Kimberly Hilliard, President/CEO of the Center for Social Entrepreneurship and engineer; Dr. Nia Day, a catalyst for nursing service, leadership and advocacy; and Dr. Jennifer Young Wallace, tenured associate professor of k12 PhD program at Jackson State

"I didn't know they would ask me to speak," said Breazeale. "As I stepped up to the podium, I earnestly asked if 'they were sure they got the right person.' I'm not even in the same ballpark as the other Honorees."

Breazeale's 17 years in ministry and eclectic experience in education and non-profits were behind her nomination and selection by the Connecting the Dots Foundation board.

"Ministry is hard," said Breazeale. "Sometimes gut-wrenching. But I don't do it because it's easy or always fun. I do it because I'm called to effect change. I see a lot of things that need to be changed. If not me, then who? If not now, then when? So I keep powering on by God's grace."

Connecting the Dots Foundation inspires, empowers, and connects community service organizations by helping them realize their dreams and accomplish their goals through the development of activities, education, and financial support. CEO Dr. Marilyn Johnson-Luckett of Jackson leads the foundation.



Jessica Breazeale



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Keep citrus growing in containers

By Guest Columnist Eddie Smith

Growing citrus in containers has been a rewarding experience for me and some of my friends, and it might be something you should consider for your own landscape.

The long growing season and mild winters in South Mississippi and along the Gulf Coast make it possible to grow a variety of citrus trees. Cold-hardy options like satsumas and kumquats thrive in the ground, but others require protection.

For those of us who live north of the Coast and experience occasional freezes, growing citrus in containers has been an excellent solution. This allows us to move trees to a protected space when needed.

Selecting the right citrus variety has been key to my success. I've found that dwarf and semi-dwarf varieties work best



Special to Wesson News

in containers because they stay manageable while still producing full-sized fruit

One of my favorite varieties is the Improved Meyer Lemon, a cross between a lemon and a sweet orange. It has a wonderfully mild, slightly sweet flavor and is incredibly productive, often flowering and fruiting multiple times throughout the year.

To keep my citrus trees healthy and thriving, I make sure they receive plenty of sunlight, which means at least 6-8 hours of direct sun daily. When growing them in containers, I place the trees in the sunniest spot I can find, usually a south-facing patio or deck.

I also use a well-draining citrus potting mix to prevent root rot and ensure the trees have the right nutrients.

Watering is another important factor. I keep the soil for my citrus consistently moist but not soggy, watering deeply when the top inch feels dry. During the summer, my container-grown trees need more frequent wa-

tering to prevent them from drying out.

Fertilization plays a big role in keeping my citrus trees strong and productive. I use a balanced, slow-release citrus fertilizer that includes important micronutrients like iron, mag-



nesium and zinc. Apply fertilizer regularly throughout the growing season from spring to early fall.

I keep pruning to a minimum. Only remove dead or crossing branches and any suckers that grow below the graft union, which is where the citrus variety is connected to the rootstock.

One of my favorite things about growing citrus is their fragrant white blossoms that appear throughout the year. Their sweet scent attracts pollinators, and since citrus trees are self-pollinating, I don't have to worry about planting multiple trees for fruit production.

Seeing flowers and fruit at different stages of development on the same tree is one of the joys of growing citrus.

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.

The Co-Lin Foundation inducted nine new members into its Hall of Fame at a banquet held March 20 at the Thames Center on the college's Wesson Campus. Members of the 2024 class pictured were (from left) Keith Thomas, represented by his sister-in-law Glenna Morgan, Janice and Randy Ainsworth, Dr. William Smith, Bob Arnold, and Elise and Terry Munn.

Wesson News

The Co-Lin Foundation inducted nine new members into its Hall of Fame at a banquet last

month at the Thames Center on the college's Wesson Campus.

Those inducted were Mr. and Mrs. Randall Ainsworth of Magee, Bob and Julia Arnold of Wesson, Mr. and Mrs. Terry Munn of Wesson, Dr. William Smith of Brandon, Keith Thomas of The Woodlands, Texas, and the Mississippi Department of Archives & History.

Nine Hall of Fame members were also recognized for reaching new giving levels. Peoples Bank of Magee and Puckett Machinery were elevated to Visionary. Dr. Dennis Granberry of Hattiesburg, the Nathan Steele Foundation and PriorityOne Bank of Magee were elevated to Ambassador. Dr. Billy Thames of Madison, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Wojcik of Brookhaven, and the Silver Cross Foundation were elevated to Benefactor.

Mr. and Mrs. Randall Ainsworth were honored for their contributions to the Willie and Rice Ainsworth Memorial Scholarship. Both are 1977 Co-Lin graduates. Randy studied electronics technology, and Janice studied liberal arts. They completed their studies at the University of Southern Mississippi.

After 36 years in telecommunications and engineering, Randy retired. Janice worked in business before earning a master's degree in teaching from the Mississippi University for Women. She went on to enjoy a second career in elementary education. They now reside on the Ainsworth family farm in Magee, where they are members of Goodwater Baptist Church. They have two children: a daughter, Rachel of Magee, and a late son, Adam.

Bob & Julia Arnold were honored for their contributions to the Robert & Julia Arnold Journalism & Communications Studies Scholarship. A graduate of the West Virginia University School of Journalism, Bob started his work in communications as the national and international editor of the Morgantown Dominion News, and then spent 40 years in New York City, where he served as editor of Marketing Times, a business journal published by Sales and Marketing Executives International. He also managed communications programs for many organizations as a public relations practitioner, and developed training programs for religious community disaster response ministries at Church World Service.

Bob is accredited by the Public Relations Society of America. He has a master's degree in social research from the New School and a PhD in disaster management from St. Regis University. Julia attended New York University and graduated from City University of New York. She

worked for 40 years in accounting and office management positions in New York City, beginning with Newsweek and then varied public relations and advertising agencies. The Arnolds retired to Wesson in 2013, where they live on a 30-acre non-working farm. Bob currently is the editor of

Mr. and Mrs. Terry Munn were honored for their contributions to the Back the Pack Capital Campaign. Terry is a graduate of the commercial truck driving program at Co-Lin and has been the instructor for the program for 22 years. Prior to teaching, he had a driving career and also operated a farm. At Co-Lin, he has received the High Performance and Outstanding Faculty & Staff awards. He has also received the Educator of the Year award from the Wesson Chamber of Commerce and was named Wesson Volunteer of the Year for his contributions to youth sports. He has served on the Copiah County School Board for 12 years and as its president for the last 11 years. He is a third-party tester for commercial driver's licenses for the Mississippi Department of Public Safety.

Elise B. Munn is a partner at Berry & Munn, P.A. in Hazlehurst. She is a graduate of Co-Lin ('88), the University of Southern Mississippi ('90), and the University of Mississippi School of Law ('93). In addition to her private practice, she is the county prosecutor and the attorney for

the Board of Supervisors in Copiah County. She is a member of the Mississippi Prosecutors' Association and the Mississippi Association of County Board Attorneys, on which she has served as its president and is currently is a member of the Board of Trustees. She has also served on the board of directors of the Southwest Mississippi Child Advocacy Center and is the vice president of the Co-Lin Foundation's Board of Directors. She is also a commissioner of the Mississippi Bar. The Munns have been married since 1993. They have two children: Quentin Munn ('15) and

Mary Beth Munn Smith ('19). They are expecting their first grandchild this year.

Dr. William Smith was honored for his contributions to the Noah "Cap" Wallace Scholarship. Smith, a Wesson native, attended both Co-Lin High School and the College, where he was named to the Co-Lin Hall of Fame in 1974. He attended Millsaps College and graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Medicine in 1979. He had a brief stint in private practice in Texas, but returned to Mississippi to join the internal medicine staff at the Jackson Veterans Administration Medical Center in 1983, where he was awarded the title of Fellow of the American College of Physicians. He was also promoted to assistant professor of medicine at UMMC and went on to practice Nephrology at Central Nephrology Clinic serving St. Dominic Memorial Hospital until his retirement in 2016.

Smith is married to Camille Brock Nelson and is the father of four children: Mark, Desiree. Diana and Mary-Emma. He also has three stepchildren: Benjamin, AnnaLyn and Leslie, and 11

Keith Thomas was honored for his contributions to the Carolyn Collums Thomas Scholarship, established in memory of his wife.

Carolyn grew up in Brookhaven, where she graduated from Brookhaven High School and the University of Mississippi. She also earned an MBA from Louisiana State University Shreveport. She worked for Pennzoil in research and development and later as a project manager.

Keith was raised in Tishomingo, Oklahoma where he attended Tishomingo schools and obtained an associate of science degree at Murray State College. He graduated from Oklahoma State University with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. He spent most of his career with Pennzoil in research and development, refinery economics, and planning. Keith and Carolyn were married for 47 years until she passed away in 2023.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was honored for its contributions to the Natchez Literary & Cinema Celebration.

Founded in 1902, MDAH is the second-oldest state department of archives and history in the United States. The department collects, preserves, and provides access to the archival resources of the state, and oversees statewide programs for historic preservation, state and local government records management, and publications

MDAH oversees the Museum of Mississippi History, Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Eudora Welty House & Garden, Manship House Museum, Old Capitol Museum, and the historic section of the Mississippi Governor's Mansion in Jackson; the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians in Natchez; Historic Jefferson College in Washington, and Winterville Mounds in Greenville. The department also supports projects throughout that state that help preserve Mississippi's diverse historic resources and share them with people around the world.

The Co-Lin Foundation Hall of Fame includes individuals and businesses who have donated more than \$10,000 to the efforts of the Foundation. The level of Visionary honors donors who have donated more than \$25,0000. The Ambassador level includes those who have donated more than \$50,000, and Benefactor level, those who have donated more than \$100,000. Contributions can be made to the Co-Lin Foundation at P.O. Box 649, Wesson, MS 39191, by telephone at (601) 643-8313, or online at www.colin.edu/alumni-foundation.

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Helping hands for state park

By Bob Arnold

A group of volunteers from throughout the area has come together to help Lake Lincoln State Park address its maintenance needs and assist in planning and implementing its special events.

Friends of Lake Lincoln State Park joins at least two other friends groups in Mississippi working with state parks.

Among the state's 24 state parks, Friends of Tishomingo State Park has been active in repairing structures, signage and hiking trails; and helping with trail runs, Easter egg hunts and Kids in the Parks. Friends of Legion State Park raises money and works on helping the park improve and be successful.

Initially, the Lake Lincoln State Park friends group includes 11 volunteer members, but Jeana James, its president, says it is open to anyone who wants to support the park and it has no size limits.

"We welcome children with adult helpers and families with skills like carpentry, landscaping, or just people with general enthusiasm for the park," James said.

In addition to James, its current volunteers are Sherry Brown (vice pres-



Special to Wesson News

Friends of Lake Lincoln State Park will provide volunteer assistance.

ident), Kelsey Rutledge (secretary), Claudia Hoffman (treasurer), Terry Hoffman, Missy Brown, Charles Fortson, who owns Uncle Ray's bait shop, convenience store and eatery across from the park entrance on Sunset Drive, Bob Arnold, Richard McInnis, Becky McInnis and Anita Schmidt.

Following the group's organizational meeting last month, it rolled out with work days on April 5 and 12.

"The park has only one maintenance

person, and we will provide help as needed," James noted. Its work days include varied tasks -- painting, trash pickup, assistance with landscaping, carpentry, tree-trimming, planting flowers and other maintenance and beautification activities.

The group's big project for the month is an Easter egg hunt in partnership with Wesson Baptist Church during the afternoon on Saturday, April 19, the day before Easter Sunday. In connection with event, the group is also selling raffle tickets for \$5 each, with an Easter basket as the prize. Proceeds will fund landscaping work at the entrance to the park. The drawing for the raffle winner will be on April 19.

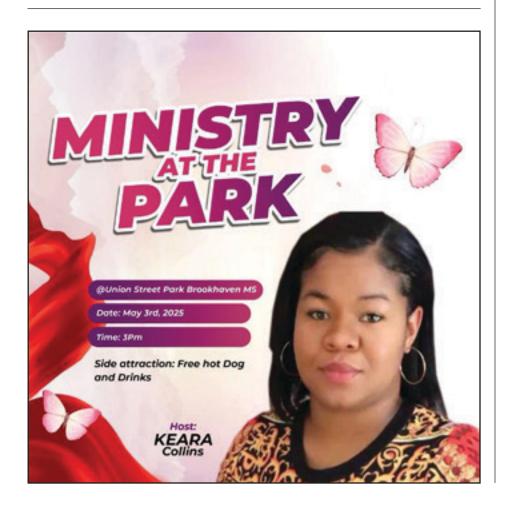
Future projects will include other fundraising events.

The park's major feature is its 550acre lake stocked with brim, largemouth and striped bass, white perch, and catfish for fishermen who come year-round, and which offers a 1 ½-acre swimming beach and sections for boating and water and jet skiing. The park also has nature trails for hiking, volleyball sand courts, playgrounds with swings and other equipment for kids and a 200-foot walk bridge where fishermen cast their lines. There is even an 18-hole disk golf course where players hurl frisbees towards baskets, rather that hit small balls towards holes.

Nestled in the shade of towering hardwood trees are the picnic areas with grills, tables, shelters and two group pavilions; two rebuilt fishing piers, a water skiing pier, a boat dock, laundry facilities, bath houses and the Magnolia Arbor chapel for worship services and weddings, as well as the camping and lodging options.









National #ArborDay 2025 is rapidly approaching...the date is set for April 25.

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https://www.arborday.org

Wesson High - big tennis news



Congratulations to Coach Taylor Burke and the Wesson High Cobra tennis team for qualifying for Individual and Team State!

Individual State Qualifiers & District Rankings:

Macy Loy – Girls Singles (1st)

Christian Cayax-Marin – Boys Singles (1st)

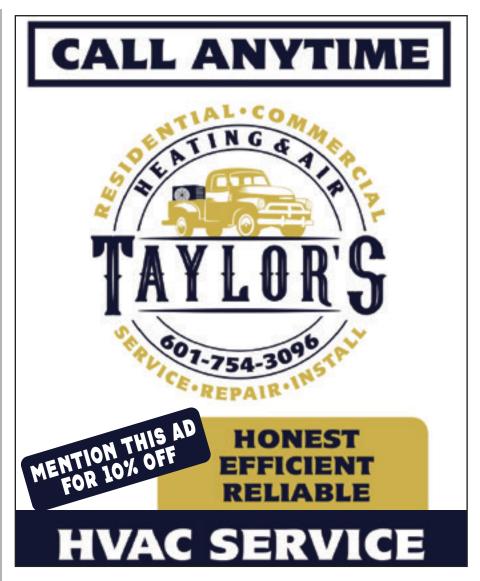
Laney Kate Earls & Allison Hamilton – Girls Doubles (2nd)

Ben McKenzie & Brendon Duguid – Boys Doubles (1st)

Mary Gwyn Hynum & Cole Gipson – Mixed Doubles (2nd)

The WHS Varsity tennis team also qualified for the second round of team playoffs at St. Patrick









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Send the Sawdawgs to hone their craft in Wyoming



By Guest Columinsts Renea Smith and Kristie Jones

To our local industry professionals and business:

We are thrilled to announce that 5 students from the Franklin County Carpentry Program have been selected to attend the prestigious Sunrise Wyoming Skilled Trades Camp in Sunrise, Wyoming.

This once-in-a lifetime opportunity allows our students to work alongside skilled tradesmen as they help rebuild the oldest YMCA in this historic ghost town. With only 25 students nationwide accepted, this is a tremendous honor for our FC Saw-Dawgs!

Carpentry instructor Kriste Jones and chaperone Ricky Wilson will accompany the students as they represent Franklin County on this remarkable journey. While the camp's founders are generously covering lodging and project costs, we need your help to fund the round-trip airfare and travel meals for our group of seven.

We humbly ask for your support in helping these talented students achieve this incredible opportunity. Donations can be made directly to the FC SawDawg Booster Club at the Bank of Franklin or by mailing a check made out to the FC Saw-

Dawgs to Kristie Jones at 129 VoTech Lane, Meadville, MS 39653. You can also contact Kristie to come pick your donation up directly. Checks need to be received no later than April 14 in order to secure the best pricing on flights.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact Kristie Jones at 601-248-0869 or kristieleigh75@yahoo.com. Your generosity will make a lasting impact on our students as they gain hands-on experience and represent our community on the national stage.

Thank you for considering this request and for supporting the future of skilled trades in Franklin County.

Sincerely, Renea Smith FC SawDawgs Booster Club President

Kristie Jones FC SawDawgs Carpentry Instructor





Another Sucessful G.O.A.T. camp

Special to Wesson News

Over 200 campers and volunteers recently participated in God Over All Things (G.O.A.T) Camp from April 1-3 at the Brookhaven Exchange Club Park's small ballfield at 250 Hartman Street.

On the first night of camp, campers played kickball, had crafts with the American Legion Auxiliary Wesson's Post #79, and the guest speaker was Copiah-Lincoln Community College's (Co-Lin) running back Kenyon Armstrong of Brandon.

On the second night of camp, campers enjoyed football hosted by Brookhaven High football team members, baseball hosted by former Major Leaguer John Lindsey of Hattiesburg, and the guest speakers were three members of Co-Lin Wolfpack Team, Quarterback Jaylen Pettway of Jacksonville, Florida; wide receiver Kannon Cato of Lawrence County; and running back Dezmond Ray of Itta Bena.

On the last night of the three-day camp, campers played kickball, had

fun with Co-Lin cheerleaders and enjoyed arts and crafts with Miss Teen USA and Lawrence County's own Addie Carver. The guest speaker was Bryce Johnson of Crystal Springs and Co-Lin Baptist Student Union.

Dinner was provided each night by Guy and Kristi Orr of Brookhaven. The countless community volunteers that gave of their time and resources made camp possible. Without needed volunteers, free community and gospel-centered camps would not be possible.

G.O.A.T Camps were started by Ricky and Jessica Breazeale of Wesson, who saw a huge need in that particular area to offer positive, free activities to kids and teens. The response has been tremendous since the camp's inception nearly four years ago.

The next G.O.A.T camp is slated for October 7-9. More information can be obtained at the camp's Facebook page called "GOAT CAMPS". Reach out for individual or community group volunteerism at the next free camp.



Co-Lin football players Cato, Pettway and Ray pose with a group of young campers



Co-Lin running back Kenyon Armstrong gathered with some campers and volunteers



Pettway, Ray, Jessica Breazeale, and Cato



Former MLB player John Lindsey poses with a group of campers after playing wiffle ball and talking to them about true sportsmanship conduct.



Co-Lin student Ladarra Newsome offers face painting at camp.



Camper Mackenzie, and Volunteers Sharon Langley and Kim Whittington of Wesson's Legion Auxiliary







Armstrong with a group of young campers.



Campers having fun playing kickball



Concession stand volunteers Jody White, Dana Pyeatt, Ki Long – all of Bogue Chitto from Mr. Moriah Impact Group.



Miss Teen USA Addie Carver of Lawrence County speaking to a group of campers



Volunteers and campers gathered around participating in arts and crafts







Cheerleader with first-time camper



Cheerleaders sharing the gospel



Main speaker on final night, Bryce Johnson of Crystal Springs and Co-Lin BSU

New hotline begins for expectant mothers

Special to Wesson News

Mississippi has the lowest ranking in the nation for women's health and care during pregnancy. Many factors make it hard for mothers and their babies to stay healthy. The state also has one of the highest rates of

Mississippi Syphilis Awareness

and Prevention Program

sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Some STIs, like syphilis, can pass from a mother to her baby and cause serious health problems. Because of this, there are important health issues for parents and newborns in Mississippi.

To help, the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities connects pregnant women and new mothers to resources and services throughout the state.

Expectant mothers who have questions about prenatal care or #syphilis testing, are encouraged to contact the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute at 601-815-MEWI (6394). The team is ready to help with information and support predad for a healthy prography and a healthy prography and a healthy prography and a healthy prography.

needed for a healthy pregnancy and a happy baby.

Dedicated to the prevention & awareness on the impact of Syphilis on Mississippians, with a focus on educating university & college students across the state.

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"Don't change who you are to fit in. You are who you are for a reason."



By Guest Columinst Misty Strieff Prine

"Can you remember who you were before the world told you who you should be?" – Unknown

Today's times are something else. I thought when I was younger, the world was a tough place to "fit in," but, goodness gracious, now that I am older, both young people and adults alike lose their own identities to try to be someone they are not to be accepted. Bullying, peer pressure, trying to achieve social statuses, sensitivity to certain situations that force people into hard situations, and simply just trying to fit in often can cause people to change who they are to appease others. If not careful, you can change yourself so much along the way that you will forget who you truly are, and you will lose your true identity along the way. You cannot let that happen. If you have, please let this be a wake-up call. We all need this reminder today.

Examine your life right now. The things you have right now, are they things you yourself wanted or are they things you acquired because someone else had them and you wanted the same things to please others or get attention? In making those decisions, are you happy about those decisions on the outside around others, but, when you get home, are those same decisions causing you stress financially? Are they causing you stress in your family or just in your life itself behind closed doors? What about how you treat others? Do you talk over others in conversations to dominate and draw attention to yourself, or do you talk about your friends to others when they are not there because of who you have chosen to be in a circle with? This happens way too often, I'm afraid. Do you treat others differently based on opinions someone else has formed for you? You see, so many times we allow the things and people around us to change us into someone we are not for the sake of being accepted.

Life is what you make of it. You can either change who you are to gain approval that way, or you can stay true to yourself and gain self-confidence and humbleness knowing you made it to where you are today by remaining, well...you! It's okay to be different. It makes you humble. It's okay to be rejected and to not fit in...it defines you and builds your character. Strength grows from difficult situations. Just remember to use that strength to help others. Remind yourself and those you love that we do not gain anything from changing ourselves in order to impress others. I promise you this. People will LOVE you the most when they truly know you are a genuine, trustworthy person who does not mold themselves to fit in to crowds they know you don't belong in. That is a proven fact. The only person's opinion that matters is Jesus Christ. That's it. He is the ONLY one worth changing your life for.

**For daily devotionals, you can follow me on Facebook at The Upward Way or on Instagram at the upward way.