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# Wesson News

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### Garden Club Tree Planting

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Volume 10, Number 5

"Good News You Can Use"

May, 2022

## Co-Lin celebrates graduation

Special to Wesson News

Commencement ceremonies to celebrate Co-Lin's 2022 graduates have begun, and former students will soon be part of the workforce or headed for continuing education.

Associate Degree Nursing students already are on their way to jobs or continuing education following a pinning/graduation ceremony on Friday, May 6, in Rea Auditorium on the Wesson Campus.

Academic and Career-Technical Education graduates on the Wesson Campus whose last names begin with A-J will graduate today (May 10) at 9:30 a.m. in Mullen Gymnasium, with those whose last names begin with K-Z graduate at 1:30 p.m. in Mullen Gym. Both graduation ceremonies are being live streamed at [www.colin.edu](http://www.colin.edu).

A new addition to normal graduation festivities on the Wesson Campus is a Graduation Buffet that will be held on May 10 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Thames Conference Center. Tickets for the buffet are \$16 per person, with discounted pricing for children. Tickets will also be sold at the door, and reservations can be made at 601-643-8382.

On Wednesday, May 11, the Simpson County Center will have a ceremony at 10 a.m. at the Boswell Regional Center. Graduation ceremonies will conclude with the Natchez Campus on Thursday, May 12, at 2:00 p.m., at the Natchez Convention Center.

For more information about commencement ceremonies, visit [www.colin.edu](http://www.colin.edu).

## Speakers explore human trafficking

By Bob Arnold

Mississippi State Attorney General (AG) Lynn Fitch challenged her audience at Co-Lin's fourth Grit and Grace Women's Conference to be activists, "giving your time and talent to be a positive influence in the lives of others."

Recalling an old saying, she declared "you tell a man and something will be said; you tell a woman and something will be done."

AG Fitch applauded Mississippi women in pushing the Mississippi Legislature and Governor Tate Reeves to "finally join every other state" in enacting an Equal Pay for Equal Work law to correct the 27 percent difference in female and male wages in the state and flagged child credit and child support legislation as ongoing issues for which they needed to fight.

cont. on page 4



## Wesson out of marijuana program

By Bob Arnold

Wesson has formally opted out of the state's new medical marijuana program by a unanimous vote of its Board of Aldermen, although Mayor Alton Shaw says he cannot envision an organization being able to sell, cultivate or process marijuana within the boundaries of the town under existing ordinances or state law, which prohibits them within 1,500 feet of schools, churches or daycare facilities.

With the action, according to the Mayor, any business or organization that wants to sell, cultivate or process marijuana

for medical purposes would have to bring an acceptable plan to the Board of Aldermen to formally vote Wesson back into the state program following public hearings and any required zoning law changes. A special election called on petition of 1,500 or 20 per cent of Wesson voters could also overturn the action, he pointed out.

The Aldermen made their decision at their April meeting following a public hearing in which some 15 participants expressed fears around selling medical marijuana in the town, with many of the questions and concerns about its resale to addicts or young people, public

intoxication, public safety and its potential for recreational use reflecting misunderstanding about the new state medical marijuana law as intended with limiting regulations which are expected to be strictly enforced by state agencies, although there are uncertainties as the law is being implemented and specific regulations written:

- Medical marijuana patients/users are limited to persons with 22 medical conditions, including cancer and epilepsy, and they must be diagnosed by physicians, certified nurse

cont. on page 3

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# O'Quinn rejoins WPD as Chief



Wesson News

Chad O'Quinn returns as Police Chief.



Wesson News

Michael Stogner leaves law enforcement.

By Bob Arnold

Some things never change.

Yes. The Wesson Police Department (WPD) is moving to a new home, but Chad O'Quinn is coming back to his old desk -- or maybe a new one in the new quarters -- as WPD Chief, with the resignation of Michael Stogner, who became WPD Chief in September.

O'Quinn left the job in August. Now his replacement is leaving law enforcement and his post at WPD for personal reasons.

"The change reflects the pressures on policing today," says Wesson Town Clerk Angela Hester. "Policing isn't easy in today's environment."

O'Quinn started his law enforcement career in 1999 when he was 23 years old as a shift sergeant and deputy at the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, after previously working briefly for his family's trucking company. He came to Wesson by way of Brookhaven in 1990, started going to Wesson Attendance Center in

the ninth grade, and graduated from Wesson High School in 1993 before serving in the U.S. Army from 1994-1998 as a supply specialist.

In his initial Army stint, O'Quinn served one year at Camp Casey in South Korea and two years at Fort Polk, Louisiana. He went back into active service in the military in 2009-2010 as a supply specialist for the Clinton, Mississippi, based National Guard 114th Military Police Company at FOB Marez, Mosul Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom), during Iraqi Enduring Freedom.

Until his honorable discharge from the National Guard in 2012, O'Quinn's law enforcement career evolved simultaneously. He joined the Wesson Police Department in 2002, while continuing to work at the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office until 2004 and then moved to the Copiah County Sheriff's Office, where he was the canine interdiction officer as a patrol captain enforcing drug laws along Interstate 55.

Just before his deployment to Iraq with the National Guard, O'Quinn's biological father, with whom he was developing a relationship, was murdered while working in the Wesson pawn shop he owned and operated.

O'Quinn married his wife Michelle in 1998, and they have two grown children -- Deanna and Brandon, both Wesson High School graduates. O'Quinn has an Associate's Art Degree in criminal justice from Co-Lin.

Stogner, a Natchez native, started working in law enforcement in 2001 with the Hazlehurst Police Department. A graduate of Wilkinson County Christian Academy, Woodville, Mississippi, he worked in a variety of private sector positions before joining the staff at the Copiah County jail. He became a Wesson police officer in December 2007 and also served the Copiah County Sheriff's Office and Co-Lin police force. He and his wife Misty have two children -- Laila and Zachery.



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# Wesson out of marijuana program

practitioners or optometrists who evaluate them in-person with follow-ups every six months. Qualifications are stricter for those aged 18-25.

- Medical marijuana patients/users must present practitioner certifications to the Mississippi Department of Health, registering with the agency, to receive cards that allow them to purchase the drug, cultivated and processed by state-regulated organizations, from state-regulated dispensaries.
- The medical marijuana recipient is limited to three ounces per month, or about 2.8 grams per day.
- Existing county and municipal public intoxication and DUI laws and local ordinances on locations of businesses remain in force and pertain to medical marijuana patients/users.
- Reporting requirements, still being written by state agencies, will apply to cannabis sales, cultivating and processing organizations and practitioners.
- Cannabis organizations (sales, cultivating, processing) cannot be within 1,500 feet of a school, church, or daycare facilities.
- The Mississippi State Department of Health is in charge of issuing cards, as well as promulgating rules regarding packaging and advertising.

In introductory comments before the public hearing, Mayor Shaw said he favored medical, but not recreational, marijuana use, was neutral about Wesson's participation in the state medical marijuana program and would follow the guidance of citizens. In subsequent discussions, the Mayor conceded he had concerns about the medical marijuana program's uncertainties prior to the state law's implementations and the short time-frame facing counties and municipalities to develop systems and revise ordinances related to implementing and enforcing the law. He pointed out that a major law firm in the state is recommending that small towns and counties initially opt out of program participation and opt in later, if they desire, as they can draw on experiences of others.

Mississippi Cities and counties have until the first week of May to decide whether they want medical marijuana dispensaries, cultivators or processing facilities. To date, Pass Christian, Ridgeland, Brandon, Gluckstadt, Flora, Pontotoc, Madison and Clinton are among communities besides Wesson that have opted out of participation in the state medical marijuana program. Locally, a special election looms in Lincoln County, where supervisors voted to opt of the program after a contentious public hearing in which proponents of the program argued against their decision. Brookhaven, Copiah County, Hazlehurst and Crystal Springs so far remain in the program. The Mississippi Cannabis Trade Association has been leading efforts to gather signatures in some of the communities that have voted not to participate in the program.

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cont. from page 1

# Speakers explore human trafficking

The Attorney General, however, joined Ashlee Lucas, Human Traffic Coordinator at the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation (MBI), and Shauna Fletcher from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (CPS), in saving her biggest salvos to rally the Conference's 70 attendees to engage in the battle against human trafficking in harmony with the event's theme, "Breaking the Silence."

Co-Lin presented the program last month at the Thames Center on its Wesson campus. In introducing the Conference, Co-Lin's Dr. Stephen Duguid said it honored and helped women of all ages utilize the special feminine traits of grit and grace -- "resilience and confidence that is the baking batter and elegance and refinement that is the icing."

"Human trafficking is here in Mississippi -- a \$150 billion worldwide business that diminishes the lives and the sanctity of life, and humiliates 40 million victims of all races, nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds, and affects everyone, men, women and children alike, your daughters, sisters and friends," Fitch said.

It is a form of modern day slavery in which people profit from exploitation of others, and one of the fastest growing crimes in Mississippi cities and towns, which the AG Office is fighting through partnerships, public information, training and a trafficking report hotline (888-373-7888), she explained.

"We partner with the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the Mississippi Department of Education, the trucking industry, school bus drivers and others across the state," Fitch said. "We are training law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges to promote understanding of human trafficking and recognition of victims."

A new Mississippi law, Fitch added, allows victims to sue predators and businesses and organizations involved in human trafficking and has established a \$2.5 million assistance fund for victims that helps them address substance abuse and find jobs, among other issues.

"In Mississippi last year, we rescued 100 victims and jailed 30 bad actors," Fitch said. "Still we need more Mississippians to engage, become informed, prepare and be part of the solution."

MBI's Lucas and CPI's Fletcher discussed human trafficking victims.

Victims run away largely from family situations initially to pimps or gangs, are exploited, subjected to force or coercion, and deceived by fraud; and then develop trauma, mental health and substance abuse issues as a result of their experience,

they explained.

"They aren't kidnapping victims, in general," Lucas pointed out. "Trafficking is not about white vans." The challenge, Lucas added, is removing them "on the lower rungs of the ladder" as their victimhood grows.

The answer is not incarceration, she said. "It's a matter of help vs. arrest," Lucas explained.

"Choice is not a factor," Fletcher stressed. "Victims are traumatized by their histories and unable to distinguish and understand the choices before them."

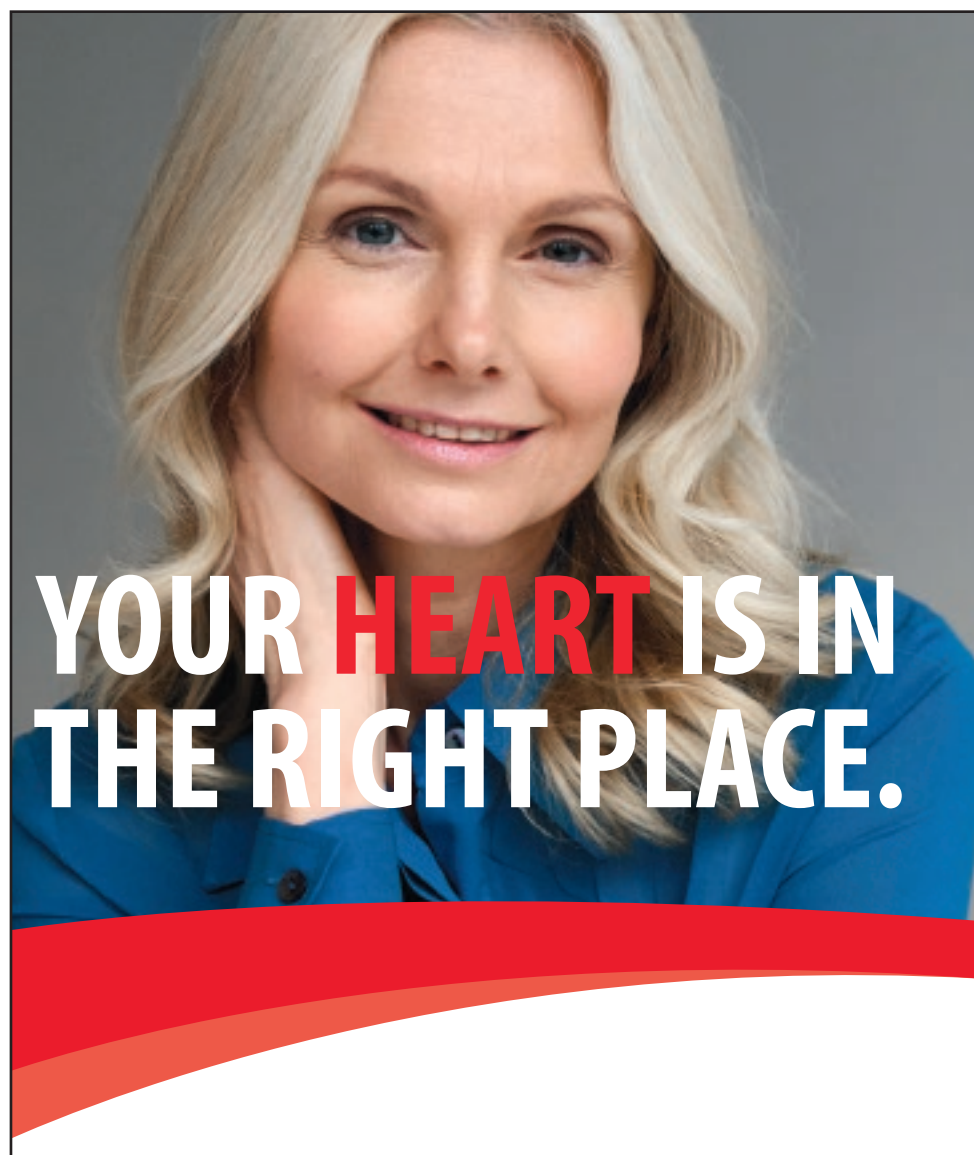
Fitch, Lucas and Fletcher cited these victim vulnerability red flags:

- An unstable living situation;
- A background of sexual abuse, domestic and other forms of violence;
- Have run away or are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare system;
- Are undocumented immigrants;
- Are facing poverty or economic need;
- Have a caregiver or family member with a substance use issue;
- Are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

Fitch, Lucas and Fletcher also pointed to these signs of victimhood:

- A controlling parent, guardian, romantic partner or "sposnor" who monitor their movements, spending or communications; or will not allow them to meet or speak with anyone alone;
- Bruises or other signs of physical abuse;
- Indications of psychological abused;
- Submissiveness or fear;
- Indications they are being controlled;
- Deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities;
- Not allowed to be in public alone, to be freely in contact with friends or family or to socialize or participate in extra-curricular or religious activities.

**If you need help related to human trafficking - or to report possible red flags- CALL 888-373-7888**



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# Scholarship for nursing & medical students

*Special to Wesson News*

The Sandra H. Friedman Liverman Memorial Scholarship was recently endowed with the Copiah-Lincoln Community College Foundation by Liverman's husband, Dr. Steven Liverman of Wesson. The scholarship will benefit a student on the Wesson campus wishing to pursue an education in nursing or medicine.

Sandra Liverman grew up in a "medical family" in which her father was a general practice physician in Wesson for 57 years and her mother and maternal grandmother were nurses. She married Dr. Steven Liverman, a family practice physician who served the Wesson community for 38 years before retiring in December 2021.

Liverman attended Wesson Attendance Center and graduated from Miami Beach Senior High School. She later attended Co-Lin,



Wesson News

*The Sandra H. Friedman Liverman Memorial Scholarship was recently endowed with the Copiah-Lincoln Community College Foundation by Liverman's husband, Dr. Steven Liverman of Wesson. The scholarship will benefit a student on the Wesson campus wishing to pursue an education in nursing or medicine. Pictured from left are Foundation Director Angela Furr and Dr. Steven Liverman.*

Millsaps College and the University of Southern Mississippi where she earned a bachelor's degree in English in 1973. She also attended Jackson State University, New York University, and University of Mississippi School of Nursing

before graduating from Mississippi College with a bachelor's degree in nursing in 1978.

She took great interest in psychiatric nursing, patients' rights, and curbing domestic violence. Liverman was also a

strong advocate for children's rights and welfare, and civil rights. She was a breastfeeding advocate and became a La Leche League Leader in Wesson and Brookhaven.

Always an avid reader with a penchant for books, education, and lifelong learning, Liverman homeschooled her two daughters, Dove Deustachio and Leaf Maggio, now grown with four children.

"We are thrilled to offer this new scholarship to our students in memory of Sandra," Co-Lin Foundation Executive Director Angela Furr says. "The Livermans have such a long legacy of meeting healthcare needs in Wesson, and that will continue through this scholarship."

Contributions to the Sandra H. Friedman Liverman Memorial Scholarship can be mailed to the Co-Lin Foundation at P.O. Box 649, Wesson, MS 39191, or made online at <https://www.colin.edu/alumni-foundation/give-now/>.

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# Golf tourney & diamond seasons



Co-Lin golf team.

By Bob Arnold

The Co-Lin Wolves captured third place in the NJCAA Division II Gulf District Tournament at Kirkwood National Golf Club in Holly Springs. The Wolves shot a final round 312 for a two-day total 615. Mississippi Gulf Coast won the tournament at 594. MACCC State Champion Meridian took second place at 600. The first and second place teams qualified for the NJCAA Division II National Tournament this summer. Rounding out the remaining scores were Northeast Mississippi at 617 and Pearl River at 713.

Individually for Co-Lin, Tanner Harrison (74-78) and Alex Navarro (77-75) tied for ninth place at 152. Navid Mousavi was one shot behind at (74-79) 153 followed by Ty Nelson at (78-83) 161 and Chandler Byrd at (82-80) 162.

"Tanner, Navid and Alex qualified for the NJCAA Division II National Tournament," said Co-Lin head coach Allen Kent. "We pulled to

within four strokes of second place after 10 holes, but we faded down the stretch. I am proud of the team. We battled hard with four freshmen and one sophomore."

**Diamond seasons end.** Co-Lin baseball and softball teams ended their regular with 12-31 and 37-7 records respectively. In the MACCC play, the baseball team finished 7-21 and the softball team was 23-5.

The season record in baseball included wins against Mineral College (9-7, 4-3), Holmes (13-12, 11-1), Mississippi Delta (11-1), Delgado (6-2), Baton Rouge (12-4), Coahoma (14-5), Southwest (8-1), Itawamba (9-7) and Gulf Coast (6-2). The team lost to Dyersburg State (5-2, 11-1), Holmes (3-1), Mississippi Delta (10-2, 3-0), Kaskasia College (5-3, 14-5), Delgado (4-0, 7-1, 8-1), Baton Rouge (12-4, 8-7), Hinds (13-4, 15-10), East Mississippi (11-3, 4-1), Southwest (15-7, 11-5), Meridian

(11-8, 9-1), Itawamba (16-4), Pearl River (15-5, 9-1), East Central (17-9, 9-5), Northeast (15-2, 2-0), Jones (11-3, 2-0), Gulf Coast (13-1) and Northwest (14-2, 14-7).

"We had a tough year with injuries, which kept us from being able to get a consistent lineup on the field and kept several pitchers out for big parts of the season," says Coach Clay Smith. "I am proud of how our guys never stopped working and stuck together through the whole year."

In softball, the Lady Wolves beat Baton Rouge (8-0, 11-0, 14-1, 11-3), Crowder College (8-0), Chatanooga State (6-0), Gulf Coast (5-4, 8-2, 7-2), Coastal Alabama (5-0), Parkland College (5-1), Calhoun Community College (7-2), South Arkansas University Tech (10-3, 7-0), Lansing Community College (5-0), Coahoma (11-0, 18-0), Hinds (4-0, 14-3), East Mississippi (8-0, 11-0), Southwest (5-0, 14-3), Holmes (8-0, 11-8),

Meridian (9-1, 11-0), Itawamba (3-2, 1-0), Pearl River (4-0, 4-2), Mississippi Delta (10-2, 8-0), East Central (11-2), Northeast (7-1) and Northwest (9-0, 5-2). The Lady Wolves lost to Crowder College (11-10), Shelton State (5-4), East Central (8-7), Northeast (3-2), Jones (6-3, 6-5) and Northwest (5-2). The team now heads into tournament play.

"Our sophomore group has been unbelievable over the past two years," says Coach Meleah Howard. "They have won 81% of their games over all and have only lost five home games total over the last two years. They have also only lost nine total conference games in two years, which in this conference is a huge accomplishment. We are going to miss them and their impact so much. But we aren't done! They have some business to attend to over the next couple weeks to try to avenge what happened last year and I have no doubt they will do whatever they have to do and leave it all on the field."



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## Wesson Tennis Cleans up wins district championship



Wesson Attendance Center's Ally Everett finished as the 3A State Runner-Up in Girl's Singles. Sam McInnis finished third overall in 3A Boy's Singles. Kamryn Bridges and Macy Loy finished 5th, while Baylee Newman and Vivian Mccree finished 9th in 3A Girl's Doubles. Coleman Bonds and Connor Brister teamed up to finish 9th overall in 3A Boy's Doubles.

Wesson also won district for the second year in a row.



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# Wesson Garden Club April Honor yards

In April, Wesson Garden Club recognized landscaping efforts of Mrs. Maurice Jacks on 2119 Highway 51, Nena Smith School of Dance at 1041 Grove Street, Terry and Elise Munn at 7096 Sylvarena Road and Bob and Pam Owens at 1107 Sylvarena Road in its Yard of the Month town residential, organizational, rural residential and Spring Special categories. The Yard of the Month awards, based on maintenance principles and elements of landscape design, seek to encourage ongoing beautification and cleanliness of the Wesson area and cultivate a citizenry that values and protects natural resources and assumes responsibility for enhancing the environment. The Garden Club's Yard of the Month awards honor landscapes during the spring, summer and fall.



*Jacks property.*



*Owens property.*



*Munn property.*



*Nena Smith School of Dance property.*

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# May is better sleep month, here's how to get it

By Guest Columnist Stephanie Duguid

The month of May celebrates Better Sleep Month. In most instances, individuals believe that nutrition and exercise are the main components to a healthy lifestyle. A good night's sleep, just like a healthy diet and exercise, is also essential to your mental, emotional and physical well-being.

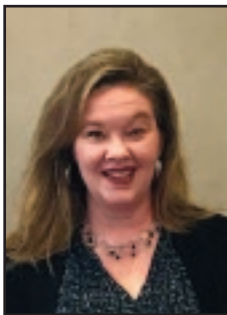
According to the Better Sleep Council, many people do not get the 7 to 8 hours of nightly sleep recommended by sleep experts. You need different amounts of sleep depending on your age; babies (14-17 hours), children ages 3-18 (10-13 hours), 18-60 (7 hours or more), and over 65 (7-9 hours). Let's discuss a few more sleep facts. It may be surprising to hear that an individual spends 600 hours a year dreaming. In fact, individuals who are blind also see images in their dreams. On the other hand, 90 million Americans have sleep disrupted by snoring. Additionally, parents lose about 1,000 hours of sleep in the first year of a baby's life.

Sleep is essential to proper health mentally, physically, and emotionally. When you sleep, your brain recharges, your cells repair themselves, and your body releases important hormones. So, how do you sleep?

Are you groggy and foggy in the mornings? Like most Americans, you're probably not getting enough sleep. The good news is there are solutions to helping you sneak in more sleep. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that Americans are in the middle of a sleep loss epidemic. Nearly eight in 10 Americans say they would feel better and more prepared for the day if they had just one more hour of sleep. Getting that bit of extra sleep may seem impossible to you as you stumble out of bed every morning, but in fact there are secrets to getting more sleep that can add time to your current habits.

Here are several suggestions to assist with getting a good night's sleep according to the Better Sleep Council:

- You can make 8 hours of quality sleep a regular part of your life by **scheduling it**. Make sleep part of your to-do list and plan your bedtime like you would any other appointment. Doing the same things every single night signals to your body that sleep is coming and helps your body and mind relax so sleep comes easily.
- It's tempting to hit the snooze button over and over to squeak out just a little more sleep, but this hurts you more than it helps you. Break this bad habit and **set your alarm for the time you actually need to get up**.
- What you're eating and drinking and when you're enjoying it affects your sleep. **Try to finish eating 2 to 3 hours before bedtime** so your whole system is ready to relax.
- **Exercise** is important to help your body feel ready for sleep, and even just taking a walk can get your blood moving and improve your sleep. It's best to complete your workouts at least 2 hours before you go to bed so your body is ready to rest.
- Taking a nap might seem counter-intuitive to good nighttime sleep, but **short naps of 10 to 30 minutes** actually help you gain extra energy during the day and don't disrupt your sleep. Even a 10-minute nap can improve your alertness for 2-and-a-half hours if you're



sleep-deprived, and you can feel the benefit for up to 4 hours if you are well-rested.

Your environment matters too! If you have ever tried to fall asleep in a hospital or airport, you know that the environment has a tremendous impact. Here are some other helpful hints to a good night's sleep.

- If your bedroom is not a comforting and relaxing place, you're not going to want to spend a lot of time there. **Make adjustments to your bedroom** so that it is dark, quiet, cool and cozy. A bedroom should have a temperature between 65 and 67 degrees for comfortable sleeping. Turn down the thermostat, plug in an air conditioner or open the window to get your room to the right temperature.
- **Your bed** plays one of the biggest roles in determining how long and how well you sleep. Your bed and your body naturally change over time (they're both aging!), so if your mattress is seven years or older, it's probably time to replace it.
- If you're bringing the stress of your job and daily life to bed with you, you're not going to sleep well. Most people say that family issues (23%), personal finances (16%) and current events (2%) are reasons why they don't sleep. Resolve to **keep everything that's stressful out of your bedroom**, so don't bring in work materials, your phone or even allow yourself to think about work while in your bedroom.
- Keeping a television, smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer in your bedroom makes it harder for you to sleep soundly. The lighting from electronics actually stimulates your brain while you're trying to sleep and wakes you up. **Keep your electronics physically separated from you** and in another room. Use a simple alarm clock instead of your phone.



Sleep is a necessity, and it affects every aspect of your life – from your productivity, to your health, and to your mood. While most of us assume that sleep hours cut into our productive hours, we're actually more productive when we get sufficient sleep!

Most people can feel the consequences of insufficient sleep by being irritable, exhausted, easily distracted or making unsound decisions. However, there are other consequences of poor sleep that aren't always as obvious. For example, sleep deprivation can negatively affect your immune system, which can be evident through weight gain, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, bone loss, and depression. Sleep deprivation also can impair learning, memory, alertness, concentration, judgment, problem solving, and reasoning.

But these are only a few of the health issues sleep deprivation creates. According to Eve Van Cauter of the University of Chicago, a "lack of sleep disrupts every physiologic function in the body." To make matters worse, lack of sleep hinders your ability to realize your own performance is impaired, making you think you're functioning well when you probably aren't.

Make a commitment now to review your sleep habits. Better sleep can make for a happier, healthier life! Here is to your health!

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Stephanie Duguid is Dean of Academic Instruction at Co-Lin. She is also an athletic trainer and nutrition specialist and has been teaching courses related to those two areas as well as practicing what she preaches for more than twenty years.*

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# New WPD HQ



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Interior corridor.

*Special to Wesson News*

With interior construction nearly complete and windows that were on backorder being delivered, the new Wesson Police Department headquarters building on Spring Street across from Town Hall should be open for business in July at the latest. The interior will feature a reception area, an array of offices and conference rooms and a kitchen facility. The Town received \$300,000 from the State Legislature's 2019 bond bill for the building project. Because the Town's Public Works Department, under the direction of Brad Turner, handled design and construction rather than outside contractors, which are often required by funding organizations, but is not a requirement to receive the bond monies, the new building cost substantially less than the going rate for similar construction projects. When completed, Turner expects the building cost will be under budget.

# Salaries, broadband & funds for Town

*Special to Wesson News*

**Salary hikes.** The Mississippi governor and many other elected officials are getting substantial pay raises beginning in their next four-year terms. Reeves, who is expected to seek re-election, signed the bill passed by the state legislature and will begin earning \$160,000 -- up from his current salary of \$122,160. Other salary hikes: Attorney general from \$108,960 to \$150,000. Auditor and insurance commissioner: \$90,000 to \$150,000. Secretary of state, treasurer and agriculture commissioner: \$90,000 to \$120,000. Transportation commissioners and public service commissioners: \$78,000 to \$95,000. Lieutenant governor and House speaker: \$60,000 to \$85,000. Other legislators are not receiving pay raises under this plan.

**Voting districts for judges.** Mississippi needs to update its state Supreme Court districts to ensure Black voters have a chance to elect a candidate of their choice, Black plaintiffs say in a lawsuit. Mississippi's three Supreme Court districts are all majority-white, and they were last updated in 1987 over the objection of Black legislators, the lawsuit said.

The suit alleges that the districts violate the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution by diluting Black voting strength. About 38% of Mississippi residents are Black. Eight of the nine current justices are white, and one is Black. The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Mississippi, Southern Poverty Law Center and the New York-based law firm Simpson Thacher & Bartlett filed the lawsuit in federal court in Greenville on behalf of four Black residents of Mississippi.

**Broadband expansion.** Governor Tate Reeves signed into law the "Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi Act" and has appointed Sally Doty -- former Brookhaven state

senator, who served Lincoln and Copiah Counties, and current Public Utilities Staff Director -- to run the new BEAM office. The new office will direct hundreds of millions in federal dollars to expand broadband internet access across Mississippi, where some have estimated 40% of the state lacks access. The new BEAM office, under the state Department of Finance and Administration, will take applications from internet providers and dole out \$162 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act money earmarked for broadband expansion projects. Mississippi also is expected to receive from \$500 million to \$1.1 billion for broadband expansion from the infrastructure bill Congress passed late last year.

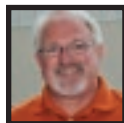
**Retiring artist.** Long-time Co-Lin art instructor Janet Campbell Smith is retiring this month. Smith studied at Mississippi State University and Mississippi College and earned a degree in ceramic art before joining Co-Lin as a part-time teacher and moving into a full-time position after five years. Through more than three decades at Co-Lin, she taught drawing, painting, 2-D and 3-D design, art history and art appreciation. Brookhaven-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce recently named her 2022 Educator of the Year.

**Funds on the way.** Wesson is expecting an inflow of cash that will spare taxpayers the financial burdens of road and water/sewer repairs and upgrades. Mayor Alton Shaw told Aldermen at their April meeting that the Town will receive \$47,000 from federal infrastructure funds for street paving, with more coming from state use tax proceeds that municipalities will share. He said the Town is also looking for some \$435,000 from the State Legislature's \$50 million bond bill for water/sewer departments.

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## Trees planted to honor service work & deceased



Wesson Garden Club members celebrated the return of spring at a social hosted by Dr. Jane Hulon Sims, President of Co-Lin, at her residence on the Wesson campus. Chris McSweyn, the college Master Chef catered the gathering. Front Row left to right: Vickie Martin, JoAnn Miller, Robin Furr, Pam Owens, Sonya Cowen, Jane Hulon Sims, Joy Wesbrook, Denise Jackson and Dixie Thornton. Back Row left to right: Jennifer Peets, Meghan Shepherd, Debbie Hoaglin, Joy Phillips, Romana Smith, Marilyn Britt, Jean Ricks, Debbie Smith, June Owens and Rebecca Harrison.

Special to Wesson News

In special tree dedication and tree planting ceremonies at Wesson municipal park in celebration of National Arbor Day last month, Wesson Garden Club (WGC) honored the service of its members over the past 87 years and the lives of four recently deceased members.

WGC dedicated an established maple tree to honor the memory of its members from 1934 to 2021, designating it as "The Garden Club Tree" to stand as a lasting reminder of WGC members "tireless service and dedication to the Town of Wesson."

In the tree planting, WGC memorialized Lessie Belle Cowen, Beverly Anderson King, Margorie Cox, and Dorothy "Dottie" Mercier.

At the April Wesson Aldermen meeting, WGC's Dixie Thornton also announced three beautification projects in the downtown area:

- Installation of butterfly sculptures in the fountain garden on Highway 51 and the municipal park
- Hanging baskets from poles on Highway 51
- Five and seven-foot flower displays at the four-way stop on Highway 51

Alderman Mike King agreed to work with WGC members on design related to the sculpture installations.

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# Loyd Star's Nix brothers in spotlight

By Guest Columnist R. Shaw Furlow & Bob Arnold

I have written over the years about composers and songwriters. I hold them in high regard. Whether I was conducting a concert piece by Francis McBeth or performing a song by Kris Kristofferson, I tried to honor the composer by playing the piece the way they wanted it played. Without them, we have no music. Pretty simple.



There are good songwriters everywhere, not just in Nashville, New York or Los Angeles, but in Loyd Star and Wesson. You may not have heard of the Nix brothers from Loyd Star yet, but you soon will. I turn my attention to them because I am fascinated by the composition process. At Delta State, I had a professor who every day at 10 a.m. closed his door, turned out the lights, sat at his piano and wrote for an hour and a half. Some days, he sat there

and kept nothing he wrote. Other days, he was more successful. I asked him about the bad days, and he said it was just part of his process. I suspect it's the same way with the Nix brothers. Or maybe there's something in the water at Loyd Star. Let me tell you about them.

Jason, the older of the two, who uses the name Nix professionally, recently received the Country Music Academy award for writing the song of the year, Lainey Wilson's hit *What a Man Should Know*.

Brother Steven is making his name in Nashville, as well. I remember trying to recruit him to become part of the Co-Lin Blue Wave Show Band, but his family moved to Nashville after his junior year. His story there reflects why I am so fascinated by the composition process.

Like every starting artist, Steven had a day job while working on songwriting in the evening. One day, after his shift at Kroger, he decided to go all in, quit his job and started writing songs full time.

He put three songs on a demo tape

and gave it to a friend, who gave it to a friend, who gave it to a friend.

Within seven months, he had a publishing deal with a major Nashville publishing house.

"Man, that deal opened so many doors for me," Steven told me a few days ago. "It put me in touch with a lot of people." It didn't take long before he had a record deal, and his first hit was "The Human Race."

My buddy, song writer Tony Norton, contacted Steven about a song idea he had. Before long, they agreed to co-write a song, and they set a plan in motion. They wrote via FaceTime -- a video and audio communication service of Apple, and the song "Silverado Wobble" resulted from their electronic collaboration after only a couple meetings.

"This song is so not me, but when we sat down, it just sort of came out," Norton says. "It's sort of a dance tune."

After the song was written, they had to get in the studio for Steven to cut the vocals. "From what little I know about Nashville, things don't move fast,"

Norton tells, and it took several months before the record was ready to release.

There's an interesting phenomenon in the music industry today. While air play, downloads and streams mean a lot, the app Tik Tok has a way of finding dance songs. People make thirty second dances, and the song takes off. This is what happened to "Silverado Wobble." You can look at @nixmusic on Tik Tok.

I asked Norton if he and Steven planned to continue their collaboration. Norton's response: "Yeah, maybe. We'll see." Every songwriter I know has a list of titles or hooks on their smart phones. It wouldn't surprise me if Norton and Nix are heard from again.

That's it for this month. Festivals are coming back this summer. I'm looking forward to seeing old friends and hearing good live music. Support the arts, my friends.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Shaw Furlow is a local composer, musician and arts promoter. He produces an internet-based video show -- From the Shadyside -- that spotlights area musical talent and is a consultant to school bands in the region. Bob Arnold is Editor of the Wesson News.*





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# Summer BLT camp shows set



*Special to Wesson News*

Summer is around the corner, and the area's children and youth will be bringing Disney to the stage at Brookhaven Little Theater (BLT).

*Disney's Descendants: The Musical* (June 23-26) and *Disney's Aristocrats Kids* (July 21-22) will be the results of BLT's special summer camps for kids and teens.

At the camps, future actors, actresses and theater personnel learn about dramas and producing plays, rehearse shows and present them to the public.

The Teen Camp for youth in the seventh through twelfth grades is June 1-22, and the Kids Camp for elementary school children in first through sixth grades is July 11-22 at the historic Haven Theater in downtown Brookhaven.

Visit [www.brookhavenlittletheatre.com](http://www.brookhavenlittletheatre.com) for camp information, online registration and to purchase tickets for performances.

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# Curbing abuses of sports officials

By Guest Columnist Yancy Methvien

Unemployment is currently pretty low. There are lots of jobs out there.

One job segment that always seems to be hiring is the service industry, and for good reason: service industry work, especially entry-level jobs, are not all that well paying. And then there's the tendency of the people being served to be a bit rude and sometimes downright ugly to their service providers. The sports world has such jobs. Officiating, for example.

There has been a severe shortage in sports officials across the entire country, and it has only gotten worse over the last several years. But you can see why. This past month in Laurel, Mississippi, fast-pitch softball umpire Kristi Moore was assaulted by an angry parent after a game. Moore was on her way to her vehicle when the mother of a player ambushed her. Her face was very swollen from the attack, but fortunately no other injuries were inflicted. The parent ambushed Moore because she was upset that she had been removed from the playing area for using excessive profanity. She was later arrested, fined less than \$500, and was released that night. Just a few days later, a male umpire in The Colony, Texas, was assaulted on the field by a coach who disagreed with a call at home plate. The umpire needed to be taken to the hospital and treated for a concussion after the coach shoved him in the head and caused him to fall.

These are just two of the most recent national stories involving physical assaults on umpires and referees. Refs and umps have been on the receiving end of heckling since the beginning of time, but what is terrible is just how common verbal abuse and assault of officials at the hands of both fans and coaches has become and just how often it occurs at the youth-sports level. Some of the behavior is absolutely deplorable.

There are many reasons why these incidents occur, and it would take a professional psychologist to unpack them all, but a few of the reasons are obvious. We are just getting together with one another again after being cooped up during a pandemic, and some of us are still not ready mentally. That's on top of the standard stress involved in youth sports and the expenses of travel and practice, with the accompanying pressure parents and coaches feel to develop



their children into winning players. Add the other stresses of their lives, and somewhere in all that they become incapable of relaxing at a ballgame.

The officials aren't there to be the outlet for frustrations, and they aren't there to rig the game for either team. They are certainly not paid enough to take some of the abuse they do. Most officials aren't even in it for the money. While sports officials are compensated above minimum wage, they don't see what could be considered "a living" until they have several years of experience and are good enough and/or lucky enough to get hired to work at the college level. Most officials work youth-level through high-school level as part time work and are people that love the game and what it can do for kids. These are people we need to treat with more respect, so that they will keep providing kids with the best on-field sports experience possible.

Unfortunately, until there are some major policy shifts, we won't see a big improvement. That doesn't mean that we as fans and adults can't have a positive impact by being better examples and policing ourselves before things get out of hand.

The truth is that even good officials occasionally make bad calls. Either they may be new to the job, or they are veteran officials who are overworked. Giving them a ton of abuse for making a mistake or bad call is not going to make them want to come back where they are treated that way. There is a shortage of officials, and there are plenty of other places for them to work. If they leave, chances are their replacements will be even less experienced, and things will only get worse.

Next time you hear someone yell at the ump or ref "I could do a better job," politely remind them that the sign-up sheet is available online, and there is currently a shortage. Also, maybe remind them that nobody shows up at their place of work and gives them abuse every time they jam up the copying machine or spill coffee on a desk. Most of all, remind them that kids playing the game won't really remember the team's won-loss record ten years from now. They will remember whether they had a good time playing or bad memories from it. Behavior towards officials plays into those memories.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Yancy Methvien holds the world's record for the most rounds of golf played in a single year, referees local high school football games and follows all Mississippi sports.*



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# Lions club camp for teen diabetics



Special to Wesson News

Wesson Lions Club, along with other Lions Clubs across Mississippi, are sending teenagers (13-17 years old) with Diabetes (type 1 or 2) or pre-diabetes to a fun weekend camp this summer.

Camp Wilkes, a facility at Biloxi, Mississippi, will welcome the teens from Friday, June 3, through Sunday, June 5, with registration from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the first day.

Camp Wilkes is an 89-acre facility on the Biloxi Bay shoreline, with more than two miles of hiking trails (visti <https://www.campwilkesinc.org>). Planned activities include swimming, hiking, fishing, kayaking, crafts, and a Strides Walk.

Lions Clubs throughout the U.S. provide a variety of camping experiences for the more than 1.1 million children and young adults

living with diabetes. The program, designed to enhance their quality of life, fosters relationships to help participants expand their diabetes management skills and increase their knowledge of the disease.

The camps enable youth to gather and form a supportive network or peers and provide educational and physical activities at a site away from their homes and schools.

The program encompasses day camps, overnight camps and international exchange camps. Lions Clubs across the country support the camps through volunteers, fundraising, camp scholarships and planning and hosting camps.

Call Dr. Carl O. Nehlig at 228-239-8558 or Gene Trussell at 662-574-7552 for information.

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# Home purchase help for teachers

Special to Wesson News

Teachers in the Copiah County School District who are interested in purchasing a house are encouraged to investigate the Mississippi Employer-Assisted Housing Teacher Program.

The program is a special home loan program that is available to licensed teachers who render services in geographical areas of the state that are designated by the State Board of Education as having a critical shortage of teachers. The program is authorized by MS Code §37-159-11 and is administered by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). Mississippi Home Corporation has been chosen as the contractor to provide support for this program. A maximum loan amount of \$6,000 will be available to eligible teachers to assist in paying closing costs associated with the purchase of a house.

Eligible teachers include any employee of a school board of a school district who is required by law to obtain a teacher's license from the State Board of Education and who is assigned to an instructional area of work as defined by the MDE for the equivalent of a minimum of three normal periods per school day.

The teacher's house must be situated in the county in which the school district, or any portion of the school district, is located. The amount loaned to any teacher will be converted to an interest-free grant if the teacher completes three years of employment in a critical shortage area.

More information, as well as a list of the areas approved as Geographical Shortage Areas, can be found at [www.mdek12.org/OSF/AssistedHousingTeacherProgram](http://www.mdek12.org/OSF/AssistedHousingTeacherProgram).



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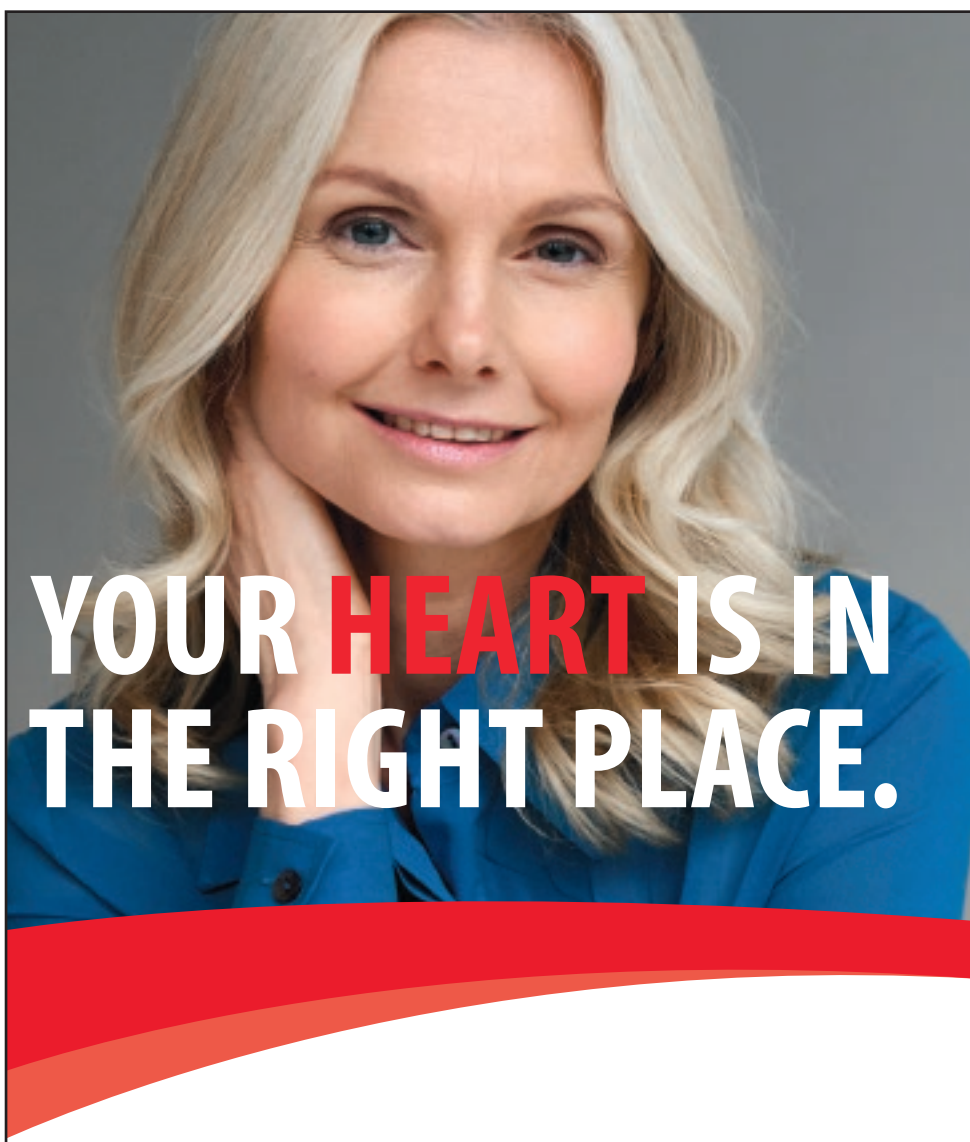
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# Junior High School Math winners



Seventh grade winners (left photo) in Co-Lin's Junior High Math Competition were (left to right) Madelynn Lambert, first place, Brookhaven Academy; Hunter Riley, second place, Mendenhall Junior High; Nolan Barlow, third place, Wesson Attendance Center; Cooper Neely, fourth place, Simpson Central; and Palyn Smith, fifth place, West Lincoln Attendance Center. Eighth grade winners (right photo) were (left to right) Alex Gerald, second place, Bogue Chitto Attendance Center; Abbie Holder, third place, Bogue Chitto Attendance Center; Noah Howell, fourth place, Wesson Attendance Center; and Madison Fortenberry, Simpson Central. Not pictured is Hylan Ludlow, first place, Loyd State Attendance Center.



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If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911.

# COVID-19 booster shots now available

*Special to Wesson News*

COVID-19 booster shots are now available through county health departments.

Appointments can be made through [covidvaccine.umc.edu](https://covidvaccine.umc.edu) or by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 877-978-6453.

Individuals are eligible for a second booster shot of Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccine at MSDH county health department clinics if they are:

- 50 years of age or older and it has been at least four months since their first booster shot of any COVID-19 vaccine,
- Age 12-17 years old with a weakened immune system and it has been at least four months since their first booster shot (Pfizer only for this age group),
- Age 18 years or older with a weakened immune system, and it has been at least four months since their first booster shot, or
- Age 18 years or older and they received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine as both a first shot and a booster shot, and it has been at least four months since their first booster shot.

First, second, third or additional shots (for people with weakened immune systems), and first booster shots for adults and children are also available at county health department clinics. For information about eligibility and to make an appointment for COVID-19 vaccinations or boosters, visit [covidvaccine.umc.edu](https://covidvaccine.umc.edu).

COVID-19 vaccinations are also available at numerous other providers statewide, including pharmacies and clinics. Visit [www.vaccines.gov/search/](https://www.vaccines.gov/search/) to find locations. Bring your COVID-19 vaccination card to your appointment, if available, if you have received prior shots of COVID-19 vaccine.

# Library winners



Isiah Cook and Jessica Breazeale were April Wesson Public Library books giveaway winners. Cook, a Wesson Attendance Center student, received Dave Pilky's *Dog Man* as his prize. Breazeale, a marketing and public relations consultant, proudly displays her prize -- *The Wish* by Nicholas Sparks.



Friends of the Library (FOL) members were on hand at the library for the monthly drawing in the giveaway program designed to build library traffic, including both new and existing users. Pictured from left to right are Susan Hennington, Jacque Coons, Camile Johnson, Violet Correlle, Sharon Langley, Marilyn Britt, Barbara Locke, Sonya Cowen, Alton Shaw and Mildred Twiner. FOL is funding the prize books -- one awarded to an adult and one to a child in drawings every month. Book winners must come to the library to register for the drawings. In the process, they will learn about how the library can meet their needs. FOL is a support organization that conducts fundraisers for the library and assists in its programming through advice and counsel, volunteers, and donations.

# Chaotic session boasts many achievements

*Special to Wesson News*

The Mississippi Legislature adjourned after one of the most consequential yet chaotic sessions in recent years.

Over the course of a few months, lawmakers slashed state taxes, reshaped political power through redistricting and established a medical marijuana program. Despite lawmakers agreeing on most of the issues on their agendas, the session was still marred by political infighting and hardball negotiations. Nevertheless, lawmakers were able to negotiate a historic teacher pay raise plan, create a way to set aside funds for conservation areas and pass an equal pay law:

1. **Income tax cuts.** The fight over cutting the state's individual income tax dominated the legislative session. Infighting even forced the session to be extended by about a week. Despite the frequently bellicose atmosphere, lawmakers were able to reach an agreement that will cut state taxes by an estimated \$525 million over the next four years. Starting in 2023, the 4% income tax bracket will be eliminated. Following three years, the 5% bracket will be reduced to 4%.
2. **Medical marijuana.** Gov. Tate Reeves in early February signed a bill to legalize medical marijuana for people with serious medical conditions. The legislation allows for patients with debilitating medical conditions to receive cannabis if a physical, nurse practitioner or ophthalmologist certifies them for the treatment. Patients are allowed to receive up to 3.5 grams of cannabis per day, or around 3 ounces per month. The action came after voters in November 2020 approved an initiative to legalize medical cannabis, which the state Supreme Court overturned because it was not properly on the ballot.
3. **Teacher pay.** Mississippi public K-12 teachers next year will receive pay raises that average more than \$5,100, and assistant teachers will receive a \$2,000 pay increase. This is the largest teacher pay raise in several years and contains a pay schedule that will bump teacher pay each year to encourage educators to stay in the state long term.
4. **Outdoor stewardship fund and state parks.** Lawmakers set aside millions of dollars in general funds and American Rescue Plan Act dollars to improve the parks system, and approved an outdoor stewardship plan to preserve and enhance outdoor recreation areas, including state parks in the face of reports that state leaders have failed to maintain the state parks system and have not properly marketed them to attract tourists.

What didn't happen:

1. **Restoring the initiative process.** Lawmakers failed to agree on a process to allow voters to place issues directly on a statewide ballot to change the state law. The state Supreme Court invalidated the state's initiative process over technical issues with the state's congressional districts, leaving citizens with no direct way to change state laws. The disagreement between the two legislative chambers arose over the threshold petitioners need to reach in order to place an issue directly on a ballot. The House argued that the number of signatures should be equal to 12% of the people who voted during the last statewide election for governor. The Senate wanted the signatures to be equal to 12% of the registered voters — including those who did not vote — on the day of the last presidential election, which is a much higher threshold.
2. **Extending postpartum Medicaid.** The Senate passed a bill to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage for people who have given birth, but the House leadership killed it without offering the entire House members a chance to vote on it. The state's current policy allows two months of Medicaid coverage for people after they give birth.