



THE CANTON NEWS

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P.O. Box 1163, Canton, MS 39046

Our Daily Bread food ministry is still feeding souls

By Lori Lycette

Our Daily Bread is a ministry that began with the sole purpose of glorifying God through feeding Madison County residents, not only physically, but also spiritually.

Jackson Stewpot had been in operation for many years, but there was an urgent need in Madison County, specifically Canton, for its residents to have access to a nutritious, daily meal. Canton resident Jud Medders had the initial idea to start a food ministry in town and reached out to Reverend Frank Spencer, the director of Jackson Stewpot at that time. Medders, Spencer, Sister Mary Anne Poeschl (Holy Child Jesus Catholic Church), Alice Scott, Bill Franklin and several others met to brainstorm about what they could do in Madison County.

As a result, Madison County Stewpot was born in 2002, with Daphne Cain as the director. They originally worked out of St. Paul AME Zion Church in Canton. After five years of being a subunit of Stewpot, they branched out to become a standalone nonprofit organization, which was named Our Daily Bread Ministries. They still partner with Jackson Stewpot in the fight against hunger but are no longer directly affiliated.

Our Daily Bread was eventually moved to the gym at Holy Child Jesus, which needed repairs and an industrial kitchen installed, so fundraisers were held to bring the building up to par. Holy Child sold the school and gym, and the new owner allowed the food ministry to remain for about a year.

Reverend Beth Foose of Grace Episcopal Church graciously of-



Mississippi College students volunteering at Our Daily Bread.

Special to The Canton News

fered their parish hall, making the necessary accommodations to allow for smooth functioning and allowing them to stay as long as needed.

The ministry remained at Grace until three families, who prefer to remain anonymous, came togeth-

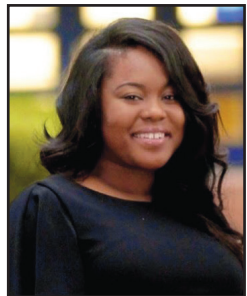
er in April 2017 to purchase the building where Our Daily Bread currently resides. A kitchen and food storage area were both added to accommodate the large volume of food necessary to prepare and serve over 60,000 meals annually.

photos cont. on page 2

Canton teacher serves on Washington, D.C., panel

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The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) recently gathered state chiefs, experts in reading and others for a national summit at the Hilton in Washington, D.C., focusing on effective approaches to improving literacy skills for all students and the important role states must play. A Canton Public School District (CPSD) teacher who had a 100% 3rd Grade Gate Pass Rate for first-time test-takers in 2017-2018 and a 96% rate in 2018-2019 served on the panel.



Kara Paige

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Kara Paige, a McNeal Elementary School Reading teacher, spoke on a panel with literacy experts and national partners in order to enhance collective understanding of strategies proven to improve literacy skills for students and begin to identify action steps state leaders can take to improve reading outcomes for all students. Paige has elaborated on how CPSD has taken strides to improve literacy by implementing the Phonics First Program, among using other strategies and the gains that its elementary schools have made over the last few years.

Leaders developed strategies for students whose reading ability is below their grade level. The latest results from the Nation's Report Card show that many of our nation's young people are struggling in the area of literacy. Improving

literacy levels requires a multi-prong approach, and through robust roundtable discussions, the summit will explore the need for high-quality instructional materials and aligned professional learning, alignment with early childhood education, as well as the need to support effective teacher preparation programs.

"State education leaders recognize the urgency of improving literacy for all kids. This convening will bring forward the strong existing research-base on the issue and surface effective approaches underway in states to find ways to bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice and drive positive change," said Carissa Moffat Miller, CCSSO's executive director, in preparation for the event.

The one-day event was the beginning of a concentrated effort

for CCSSO, with continued discussions at CCSSO's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., this spring, and the ultimate goal of creating a playbook outlining the most important state levers to engage to lead to meaningful gains from students. State chiefs from Wyoming, Mississippi, District of Columbia, Nebraska, South Carolina, North Dakota, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Rhode Island participated in the discussion along with national literacy experts and other education advocates.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of

cont. on page 5

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cont. from front page

Our Daily Bread food ministry is still feeding souls

In November 2014, Daphne Cain stepped down as director to be with her family, but her blood, sweat and tears had paved the way for Shavetta Leflore to fill her shoes.

"I had been a schoolteacher and assistant band director and was working very long hours. I asked God to show me my gifts and strengths. I had always been drawn to underprivileged people and had a passion for helping people. I've had to find balance between work and family. I know it was God who led me here," said Leflore of her calling to this ministry.

"We serve everybody, but we primarily serve the black community. We provide a free noon meal to low-income families, senior citizens, disabled and homeless individuals in Madison County, most of whom live in the Canton area. We serve lunch to at least 200 people a day, many more during the summer when the children are out of school, and that includes 129 on the daily route to elderly and disabled," added Leflore.

"Sometimes it is devastating to know that we survive solely on

donations. It puts us in a bind because we aren't federally funded. We depend on local churches and businesses," said Leflore. "The food cost runs about \$100,000 a year, so we partner with different businesses. Nissan and Canton Discount Drugs are some of our biggest monetary donors, just to name a few."

Leflore also said they hold three annual fundraisers...the "Hawaiian Breeze Draw-down" and silent auction; also a 5k color walk/run, which is held each November; and the Christmas Drive for the elderly and disabled, which is held in October through December.

"In March of 2018, Nissan blessed us with a brand new 2018 cargo van to deliver meals and to pick up donations. During Christmas-time, Puckett Machinery in Jack-

son provides a Christmas dinner. The owner, Richard Puckett, along with many of his employees, provide the food, cook it on site and serve," said Leflore.

She added that every Christmas, Chapel of the Cross of Madison donates over 700 turkeys and boxes of food for residents to prepare at home.

"My main two goals are to bring awareness to food hunger in the hopes of helping our community with our feeding program and to continue this ministry for years to come. We hope to do that

through fundraising and speaking engagements and inviting others to come in and see what we actually do here," said Leflore. "We're still here by the grace of God, and we hope we don't go anywhere anytime soon. We depend on the

public to keep us going, and if it wasn't for the local businesses, churches and other organizations, we probably wouldn't have made it this long."

From day one, the mission of Our Daily Bread has been to bring awareness to healthy eating and to aid in hunger relief in the local communities through God, good works and deeds. And to this day, Leflore, with the help of her staff, board members, donors and volunteers, strives to keep the original vision and mission of being the hands and feet of Jesus very much alive.

Our Daily Bread is a 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. For questions about volunteering or making a donation, call 601-859-9211 or email ourdailybreadms@att.net. Food donations in the form of industrial sized canned goods are always needed. Monetary donations are always welcome and may be dropped off at 313 West Franklin Street, mailed to P.O. Box 1021, Canton, MS 39046 or on the website ourdailybreadms.org and click donate.



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Juanita Credle (left) of Canton United Methodist Church with Our Daily Bread Director Shavetta Leflore (right).

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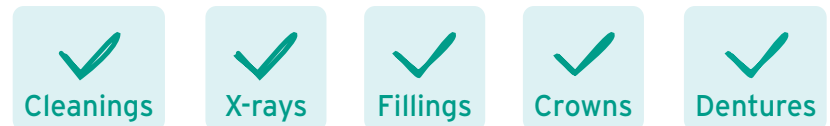


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20/20 Vision Girls Group has meeting

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The Canton Library has partnered with the 20/20 Vision Girls Group, which consists of girls, ranging in age from eleven to seventeen. The group was founded by Kathy Amos of SafeHouse Ministries, who is the reigning Mrs. Black America Sr., CEO of Business Empowered Mississippi, an author, certified coach, speaker and trainer. Amos co-hosted this event with Sue Magee-Davis, a certified coach and CEO of Empowered Youth Marketplace and who is also the mother of New Orleans Saints linebacker Demario Davis.

The mission of 20/20 Vision Girls Group is to bring girls into an awareness of their passions and purpose. The group teaches them to practice daily to dream and set goals using a scrapbook and



20/20 Vision Girls Group meeting at the Canton Library

Special to The Canton News

journal to track their journey. The group meets the second Saturday of each month at the library and is open for new girls to participate. The next meeting is Saturday, February 8, where they will cover spir-

itual life and career. If you have a girl aged eleven to seventeen, who you would like to join the group or are interested in starting a group in your area, email safehouseinquiry@gmail.com.

Mental health consults offered by UMMC

Special to The Canton News

Children in central Mississippi and the Mississippi Delta in need of mental or behavioral health services can quickly benefit from a telehealth program offered through the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC).

In conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, UMMC is offering the federally funded program CHAMP, or Child Access to Mental Health and Psychiatry. Primary care providers and pediatricians, especially those in areas with few or no psychiatric providers, can take advantage of the service via a phone line.

When a primary care provider calls the CHAMP phone number, a UMMC mental health professional will be available to assist them and provide them with a consultation, or if needed, schedule a consultation with the appropriate provider. The goal is to help the provider

be more equipped to address their pediatric patient's mental health needs.

"Instead of a family having to wait for an appointment with a mental health professional, and then travel for what could be hours for some families in the Delta, the child's primary care provider can call us," said Dr. Dustin Sarver, associate professor of pediatrics and a clinical child psychologist.

Consultations will be offered with an educational focus and will be provided by child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners or a licensed professional counselor, depending on the need and request of the provider. The team also includes a resource coordinator and,

through a partnership with Families as Allies, a family partner to assist in advocating for the child and their family.

The CHAMP team will assist the provider with screening information, medication management, diagnosis, resources and referrals when needed. That expert assistance will enable the local physician or caregiver to provide patients with better treatment for issues such as behavioral problems, mood disorders and other conditions – meaning more families will have access to children's mental health services without leaving their community.

The CHAMP consultation line is open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Primary care providers can call 601-984-2080 to reach a member of the CHAMP team.



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NGA wins SMG/Stock Market Game competition

Special to The Canton News

The Stock Market Game (SMG) simulation is one of the most effective learning tools available about the free enterprise system for students in grades four through twelve. The program enables teams of students to invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in the stock market over a thirteen-week period. Winners are determined on the percentage return above or below S&P 500 growth.

Out of 100 teams, students from the Canton Ninth Grade Academy (NGA), coached by Teena Ruth, were named first and second place winners from Region 3 in the fall high school division of the Mississippi Stock Market Game. The first place team members were Jamiah Smith, Shemar Porter and Amira Morment. They had a return that was 5.75% above the S&P 500, and the portfolio grew to \$110,285. The second place team members were Ariana Dunbar, Tyrese Payton-Murry and A'bryionah Waters. They had a return of 5.3% above the S&P

500, and their portfolio grew to \$109,834.

MCEE will award prizes to each first and second place team in each region from each division to be presented at the school's local awards ceremony this spring.

Teachers have consistently remarked about the positive influence the SMG has had on their students, from better attendance and increased engagement and participation in class to higher test scores and improved academic performance. A study confirms these anecdotes that the Stock Market Game engages students and improves academic performance, financial knowledge, and saving and investing habits.

The curriculum used in the SMG is correlated with Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards and meets the criteria of a STEM program. Teachers report that math scores increase when the SMG is used in the classroom.

The SMG is made possible by the support of more than 600 securities firms, combined with grass-roots support in schools and



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Pictured (l to r) are, seated: A'bryionah Waters, Tyrese Payton-Murry, and Ariana Dunbar; and standing: Mrs. Teena Ruth, Jamiah Smith, Amira Morment, and Shemar Porter.

communities. It is the only stock market simulation supported by the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq Stock Market.

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Branch scores 30 on ACT



Photo by Lori Lycette

Canton High School senior JaMichael Branch took the ACT as a junior and scored a 30, the highest score that a junior has ever made in the history of the Canton Public School District. He is also a High Honor/Honor Roll Scholar, an AP Scholar, president of the Student Government Association and a Dual Enrollment student with Holmes Community College. Branch's plans after high school are to complete an HVAC program and one day own an HVAC enterprise. His parents are Tamara and Johnny McNulty. Shown with Branch is Canton High School Principal Dr. Pamela Self.

cont. from front page

Canton teacher serves on Washington, D.C., panel

Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educa-

tional issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress and the public.

K. Rhodes receives award



Photo by Lori Lycette

Huey Porter Middle School seventh grader Kristen Rhodes was recently awarded for being an exemplary student and for scoring a 27 on the ACT as a sixth grader. She plans to continue to take the test in hopes of increasing her score. Pictured receiving the award from Canton Mayor William Truly and the Board of Aldermen is Rhodes (center) with her family.

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MCEDA continues to uphold their original vision

By Guest Columnist Joy Foy



Special to The Canton News

Joy Foy

In the past few months, our present county economic developer Joey Deason and his staff invited some of the first economic developers to come and share with the Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA) the Madison County story of economic development. John Wallace was one of those invited, and who better to tell that story, because he has been looking out for the interest of Madison County since Canton Municipal Utilities hired him away from Entergy back in 1977. One of John's talents is that he is a visionary, and his track record proves he is a good leader in accomplishing visions.

In the world of economic development, we are taught that location is of the upmost importance

when recruiting industry.

Along with the other complex parts of economic development, like roads, rail, ports, workforce and developed property, my experience has shown that the need for a vision of what a community wants to accomplish is as vital as location. When I began working at MCEDA in 1996, John was Chairman of the Board. The office staff spent hours under John's leadership, with the board members and county mayors taking part in visioning sessions discussing what could be. Time and time again, John would encourage us to dream BIG. MCEDA looked at workforce development in partnership with Holmes Community College and the high school leaders. We worked with land use planners to determine the highest and best use of each parcel of property owned by MCEDA. We studied wage rates with the Metro economic developers. Even with all the planning and charting what would put Madison County ahead of other industrial sites in the Metro area, it was still hard not

to take economic projects as they came our way.

For example, there was a General Motors' project that offered lots of good paying jobs, however John cautioned us against this project because they had strong union activity in their plants. He also guided us away from a pipe distribution company because the wages were not at the level MCEDA has set for our targeted industry.

As a staff member of MCEDA, John's advice, and his requirement that we stick to the set guidelines, didn't always look like sound advice. Especially if the project of the day met some of the other criteria that we were seeking for Madison County.

Today, looking back over those trials of recruiting for Madison County, I can plainly see that John was right in holding us to the adopted vision...a vision that called for the higher paying jobs and not selling our industrial property just to fill the space and notch our belts with another project landed. Both the union activity and the lack of

available property would have excluded our Madison County site when Nissan was a project.

John's vision for Madison County and his dedicated leadership has laid a solid foundation for economic development. His insight into the crafting of a county-wide economic development organization like MCEDA and the authority the MCEDA Board has in order to make decisions was wise in its day, and the wisdom is still serving us well in this new decade. Just being in the right location was not, and never will be, enough. The right location, along with visionary leaders that will stick to the vision, will make good things happen.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Joy Foy is married to James Foy and is a retired Economic Developer with the Mississippi Development Authority. Foy is an active participant in the community of Canton. She is a member of the Lions Club and on the Keep Canton Beautiful Committee.

 canton academy come join us.



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#topnine2019



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COME AND JOIN US

Canton Academy recognizes good character



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Canton Academy Caring Character recipients, front row (l to r) are: Autumn Martin, 1st grade; Sadie Stewart, K5; Axton Hamilton, K4; and Macon Parks, K3; Back row: Ashton Teer, 2nd grade; Blake Bitner, 5th grade; Knox Davidson, 6th grade; Addison Penn, 3rd grade; and Shelby Corcoran, 4th grade.



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Canton Academy Positive Behavior recipients, front row (l to r) are: Jolene Belote, 1st grade; James Bodine, K5; Kendall Middleton, K3; Nealie Turner, K4; Trustworthiness recipients: Brayden Bitner, 4th grade; and back row: Ava Hughes, 3rd grade; Positive Behavior: Ellyson Bodine, 2nd grade; Trustworthiness: Lila Thomas, 6th grade; and Krish Desai, 5th grade.

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City of Canton employees shown appreciation



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Turning Point Community Development Corporation of Mississippi and Canton churches have partnered to host the City of Canton Appreciation Luncheon for the past eleven years, feeding over 100 employees every July and December. At the December luncheon at City Hall, Turning Point honored and awarded City of Canton employees Deputy City Clerk Human Resources Debra Brown and Building Code Enforcement Director Jimmy Smith with the Community Leadership Award for outstanding leadership as employees. Retiring Assistant Police Chief Eddie Brown also received special recognition for thirty-one years of service as an employee of the City of Canton.

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Givens named Merit Health Madison Employee of '19

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Sheree Givens

Kelly Spell of Flora, director of health information management, was named Non-Clinical Manager of the Year, and Darrell Emerson of Livingston, director of respiratory, was named Clinical Manager of the Year. Merit Health Madison Chief Executive Officer Brit Phelps said the awards are the highest annual honor bestowed on outstanding employees. "Sheree, Kelly and Darrell exemplify the high caliber of professionalism that is evident throughout Merit Health Madison," said Phelps. "I am delighted that their many contributions to our hospital and more importantly, to our patients, have been recognized with this prestigious award."

[illegible]

Canton Lions win award, new officers named



Lions' 2019 Canton Christmas Parade float

Special to The Canton News

Special to The Canton News

Lisa Champion and Rilanda Watts from Canton Parks and Recreation recently presented the Lions with the first-place trophy for best float in the

2019 Canton Christmas Parade. They also won first place in 2018.

Mr. Tom Corlett recently resigned from the Lions Club, leaving his position as secretary/treasurer open. Al Salmi



Special to The Canton News

Lisa Champion (left) and Rilanda Watts (right) presenting 1st Place trophy to Lions President Mark Hopkins (center) for parade float.

has been named the new secretary, and Danny Murphy is the new treasurer. President Mark Hopkins said, "The Lions thank Tom Corlett for his years of dedicated service and invite him back to visit any Wednes-

day for the weekly meeting at Penn's."

The Canton Lions invite and welcome anyone interested in civic duty to join their club and become a part of eyesight and community projects.

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CMSC plans 2020 events

Special to The Canton News

The Canton Music Study Club (CMSC) recently met at First United Methodist Church. Following the club ritual, a brief business meeting was held. The group discussed the success of its annual Community Carol Sing held last December. The date for the 2020 event will be December 6 at Grace Episcopal Church. The Canton club will be host club for the annual state convention of the Mississippi Federation of



Jennifer Lariviere

Music Clubs, on May 1-2 at First United Methodist Church, where the Friday evening banquet will be held in The Rose Room of the Trolio Hotel. District IV Junior Festivals will be held in Canton on February 29 with Grace Episcopal

Church, First Baptist Church and First United Methodist Churches as host sites.

The Founders Day program was led by Jennifer Lariviere. Mrs. Lariviere shared an interesting historical account of the origin of the National Federation of Music Clubs, the Mississippi Federation of Music Clubs and the Canton Music Study Club. Club members were reminded that the mission of the club is to find and foster young musical

talent, to aid and encourage music education and to develop and maintain high musical standards in our community, state and nation. Hostesses for the evening were Marian Durfey and Kathy Hammack.

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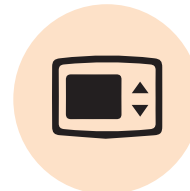


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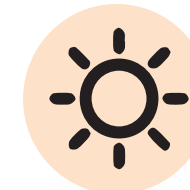
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Burks scores opening TD Canton government news



Special to The Canton News

Five-year-old Raylan Burks, who suffers from X-linked myotubular myopathy, a disease that affects this skeletal muscles and movement, was given the chance to score the opening touchdown at the recent Mississippi Youth Bowl Championship, which was put together by Mr. James Davis. The organization and Davis reached out to Burks' mother, Rayven Burks, about making this a dream come true for her son, and they made it happen. Burks attends Reuben B. Myers Canton School of Arts and Sciences.

Special to The Canton News

The City of Canton is working on a plan to alleviate future flooding, but in the meantime, has made a large sand pile available to all residents to make sandbags in the event of heavy rains and rising water. The sand is located in an open barn, just west of the Canton Police Department, behind the community center.

The construction of a brand-new splash pad at Saab Park is located just north of the community center and should be completed by April.



Special to The Canton News

Canton Public Works is planning to begin publishing the pickup schedule for large items, such as limbs over a certain length, mat-

tresses, etc., so the items can be placed on the street the night before or early that day.

The city has plans to replace one HVAC unit at the community center and repair the other one.

They are also in the process of installing a new security system at City Hall.

The Canton City Council meets the first and third Monday of every month for a work session and the first and third Tuesday of the month for a board meeting,

both taking place in the courtroom at City Hall. Both sessions are open to the public and begin at 4:30 p.m.

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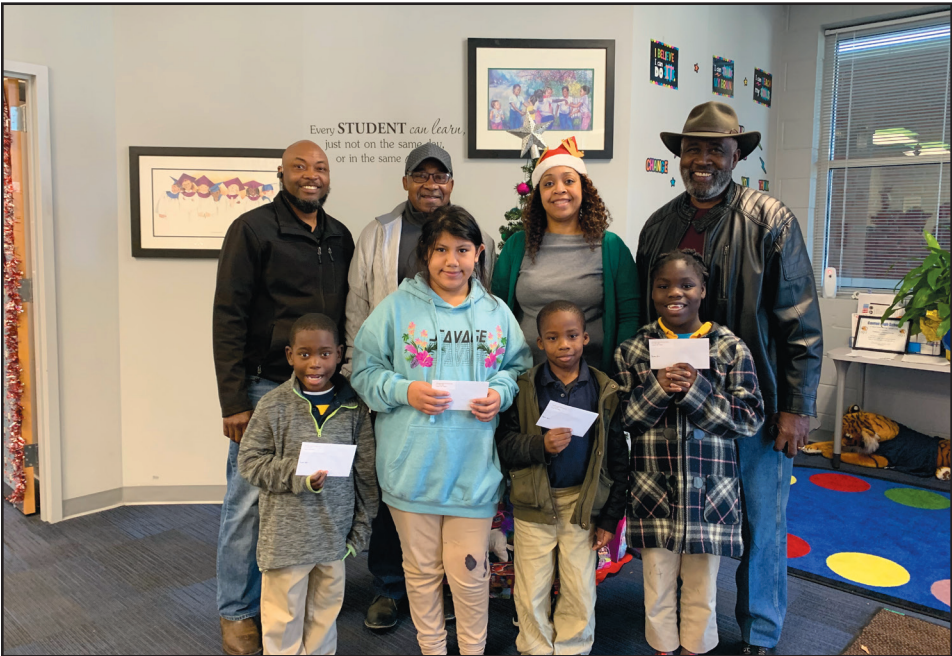
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100 Black Men of Canton, MS spread Christmas joy



The Canton chapter of 100 Black Men of America, Inc., recently helped to make Christmas a little merrier for some of their mentees and other students at area schools, including Canton Elementary (top photo), Luther Branson Elementary (middle photo), McNeal Elementary (bottom photo), Reuben B. Myers School of Arts and Sciences, Nichols Middle School and also Camden Elementary in Camden.



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Spivey to serve as Senate page at MS State Capitol



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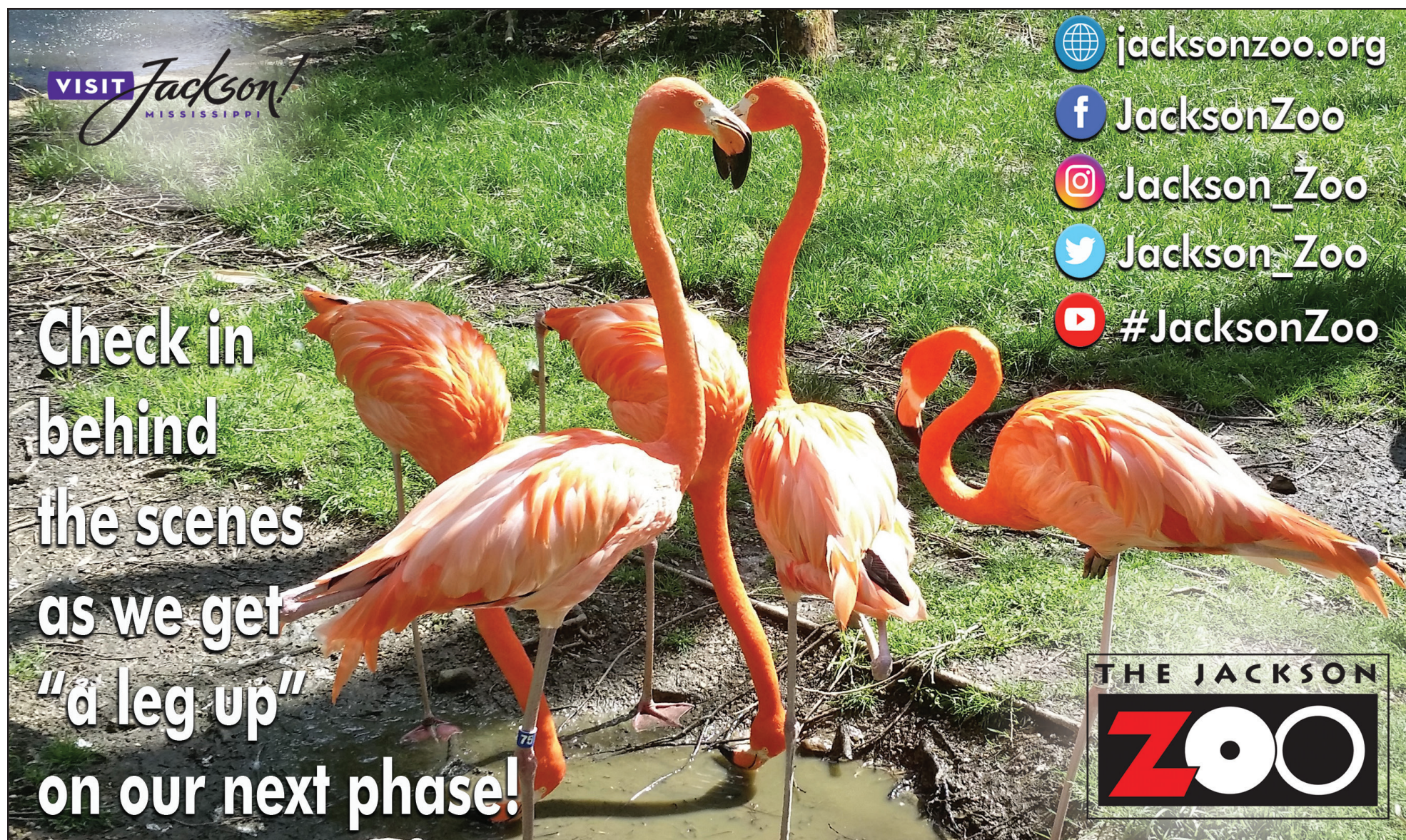
Canton Academy sophomore Cole Spivey has been selected as a junior page for the Mississippi Senate. Spivey will work during this year's legislative session at the state Capitol in Jackson. He will have the opportunity to see the legislative process in action while learning more about state government. Only a select number of students are chosen each year for this opportunity.

Canton Elks make donations



Photo by Lori Lycette

Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty (MadCAAP) and Our Daily Bread each received a donation in the amount of \$1,250 from the Canton Elks Lodge 458. The funds were made available through a grant provided by the Elks National Foundation's Community Investment Program (CIP). Since the CIP began in 2005, the foundation has funded more than 27,000 grants to help local lodges build stronger communities. Pictured (l to r) are: Scott Evans, Canton Elks vice president; Karen Robison, MadCAAP executive director; Fred Shaw, Canton Elks president; Sister Mary Anne Poeschl, Our Daily Bread board member; and Troy Peters, Canton Elks member.



Check in behind the scenes as we get "a leg up" on our next phase!

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Canton Jaguars youth football and cheer finish well



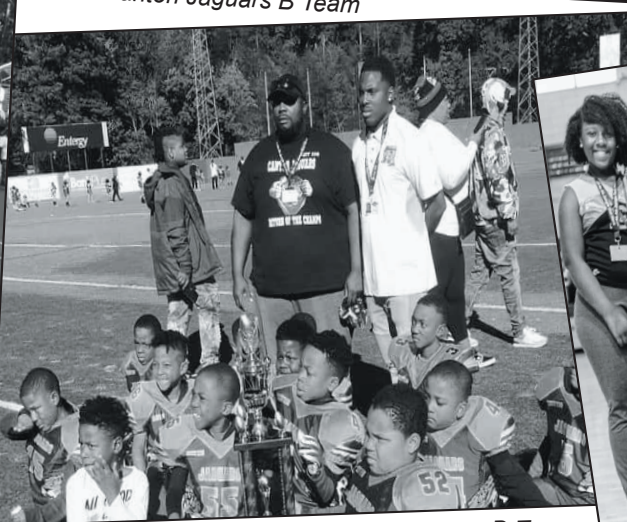
Canton Jaguars A Team



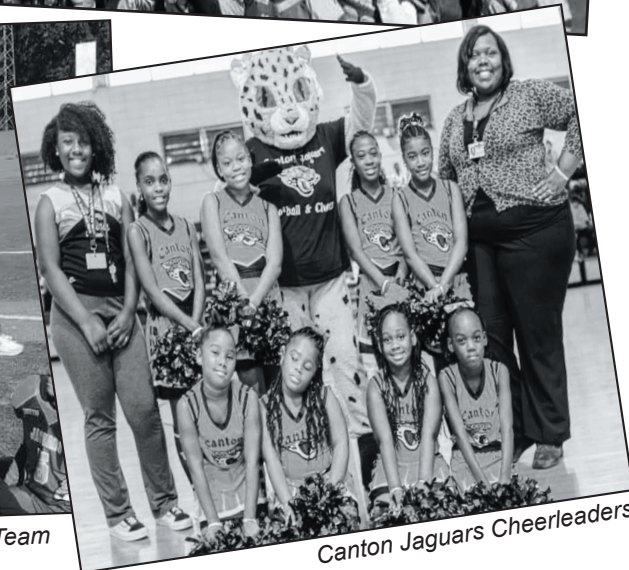
Canton Jaguars B Team



Canton Jaguars C Team



Canton Jaguars D Team



Canton Jaguars Cheerleaders

All photos Special to The Canton News

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The Canton Jaguars Youth Football and Cheer Organization recently completed a successful season. Children between the ages of five and twelve are welcome to be a part of this organization. This is the second year under the name of Canton Jaguars, and the coaches say they are hoping for many more years to come.

The A Team, consisting of eleven and twelve-year-olds, is coached by Damenon Gill and his staff. They worked very hard all year, finishing the regular season with only one loss. They placed second in the league championship game and participated in the BCS tournament.

The B Team, consisting of nine- and ten-year-olds, finished the season undefeated and won first place in the league championship game and the BCS tournament. Head coach DeAndre Johnson and his coaching staff had a very successful season with this year's players. Many of the B Team players were selected to travel to Naples, Florida, to participate in a nationwide tournament.

The C team, consisting of seven-

and eight-year-olds, had a very successful season this year. They finished the season undefeated, won first place in the league championship game and finished second place in the BCS Tournament. Some of the C team players were selected to be a part of the Canton Jaguars Elite All-Star team, which finished in second place. Head coach Amos Varnado and his coaching staff put in a lot of work with them this season.

The D team, also known as the "Baby Jags," consists of five- and six-year-olds. These players are not as familiar with football as the older ones, so their coaches are teaching them the technique of football. They finished this season 3-1 and won second place in the league championship game.

The teams' #1 supporters are their very own cheerleaders. They cheered them on at every game, including the championship and super-bowl games. Whether it was hot, raining or freezing cold, they were there. Coaches Mrs. Kimberly Archie and Zi Archie made sure the cheerleaders looked very presentable. The cheer team won third place in the

League Cheer Competition.

It is now open registration for the 2020 season. If you would like for your child to be a part of this organization, contact Coach

Amos Varnado at 601-842-1856 or Coach Damenon Gill at 601-497-0613 for football or Kimberly Archie at 769-798-6828 for cheer.

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What is unity in the body of believers in Christ?

By Guest Columnist
Sheryl Washington



Sheryl Washington

Special to The Canton News

As a Christian in America there are so many liberties, so many freedoms. In our society, being a Christian varies from person to person, and so does the word unity. Even though Christ calls for unity, it is very clear that many Christians don't see unity as Christ sees it.

All through God's Word, He has provided a road map as to how we should live. He gave Christians the Bible as our book of reference and instruction. It has been said that the acronym for B.I.B.L.E. is "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." So, if we've been given a road map, if we've been given an instruction manual that requires unity, why is there such a lack of unity in the Body of Christ?

Let's look into the scriptures and get an idea of how God sees unity. What is Unity?

The definition of unity is the state of being united or joined as a whole. Two of the keywords that stick out to me in this definition are "united" and "whole." To have unity, we must be united. To have unity, we must be whole.

Genesis 11:1-9 talks about the building of the tower of Babel, and we see a picture of how God sees unity. Verse 4: And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." In verses 5 and 6, we see God's response: But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one, and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." In these passages, we see that God sees unity as the power to get things done. God knew because the people were unified, they could achieve anything, even if it was for the wrong purpose.

God instructs unity in the Body of Christ because he knows that unity is the only way that we can

fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You see, Jesus has a dream, and His dream is for His body to be one. Unity in the body of Christ is essential if we are going to accomplish the task of spreading the Gospel all over the world.

So many Christians today say that they believe in unity, but their definition of unity is not Christ's definition of unity. Most Christians will only pursue unity if they, like the people

building the tower, can make a name for themselves. Most Christians will only unify with other Christians if they can lead and be out front. Most Christians can only unify with other believers if their ideals and their desires are at the forefront.

Bringing true unity to the body of Christ will require true humility. So many Christians today think that their titles, their accomplishments, their possessions, their positions will make them acceptable to God, when in fact, God is most concerned about us fulfilling the Great Commission, which requires unity. Of course, God wants us to have a close, personal relationship with Him and make Him the head of our lives. God wants us to embrace His Word, obey His Word, and believe His Word.

The Word of God should be a unifying force in the body of Christ, not a catalyst for division and pet-

ty arguments. Do you know that too much of the body of Christ is divided over the Bible, instead of being unified over the Bible? God never intended for His body to be divided over doctrines, denomination, race, class, gender, and the list goes on. God intended for the body of Christ to be unified, loving what He loves and hating what He hates. How hard is that?

If Jesus did it and walked in it, then we should too. After all, there is a passage of scripture in John 14:12 where Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these

shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

As Christians, we all have a responsibility to promote unity in the body of Christ. Not when it's just centered around us, our church, our ideals, our organizations, our titles or our positions. We should seek to humble ourselves and seek unity for the glory of God and God only. In Psalm 133:1, the scripture talks about how good and pleasant it is for brethren or believers to

dwell together in unity! The same passage declares in verse 3 that when brethren dwell together in unity, it is there that the Lord has already commanded the blessing.

Unity is a powerful force, but only when it's done God's way. When unity becomes about making a name for oneself or becomes centered around a person, or a thing or an agenda, then the blessing will not be there. The true blessing of God is much more than material possessions. The true blessing of God is when we can truly be like Christ and unify with other believers without jealousy, without envy, without competition, without comparing ourselves and feeling that we're superior to one another, for whatever reason.

Sometimes instead of leading, God may ask us to follow; sometimes instead of receiving, God may ask us to give; sometimes instead of talking, God may ask us to listen; sometimes instead of judging, God may ask us to have compassion; sometimes instead of knowing it all, God may ask for us to be teachable and learn things about Him that we do not know; and sometimes instead of making it all about us and our interest, God may be asking us to make it all about Him and His interest.

There is no way to have true Biblical unity without having true Biblical humility. Let's all examine ourselves and ask ourselves the question: Do we believe in the unity of the Bible, or do we have our own definition of unity? What are we doing to promote true unity in the body of Christ?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sheryl Washington co-pastors Dunamis Power Ministries in Canton with her husband Pastor Dexter Washington, Sr. They are the parents of six children and reside in the community of Sharon.



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Rotarian and Canton pharmacy owner Randall Strong sponsored several speakers from Canton Academy (CA) for a recent Rotary Club meeting. Head of School Ron Jurney spoke about the success of his students and staff, as well as the future of Canton Academy. He told of his desire for school enrollment to be at the optimum level of 275 to 300 students, to keep staff turnover to a minimum and to have corporate support of the academy. Assistant Head of School Trey Earnhart spoke on educating the whole student to be able to speak in public, problem solve, be a team member in business and use critical thinking, not just for ACT Testing. Director of Admissions and Alumni Relations Ginny Wadford touched on Nurtured Hearts and challenge minds in a Christian environment. A couple of CA students were also in attendance and have been able to hear several presentations during the month.

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MCYL class participates in Career Day of 2020



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Madison County Youth Leadership (MCYL) class recently participated in Career Day, which is a day for the students to learn about the many careers and businesses that Madison County has to offer. Adjutant General Durr Boyles; Board of Nursing Director Phyllis Johnson; and Dr. Chris Powe, with GTI/Telehealth One, gave presentations on their careers and what led them into their respective fields. The students also toured Mad Genius and Pirouline Cookie Factory in Madison County.

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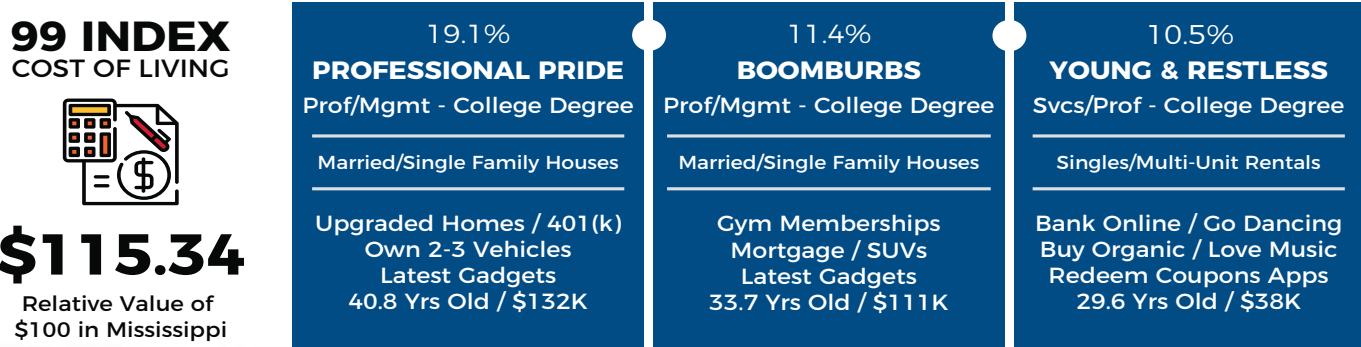
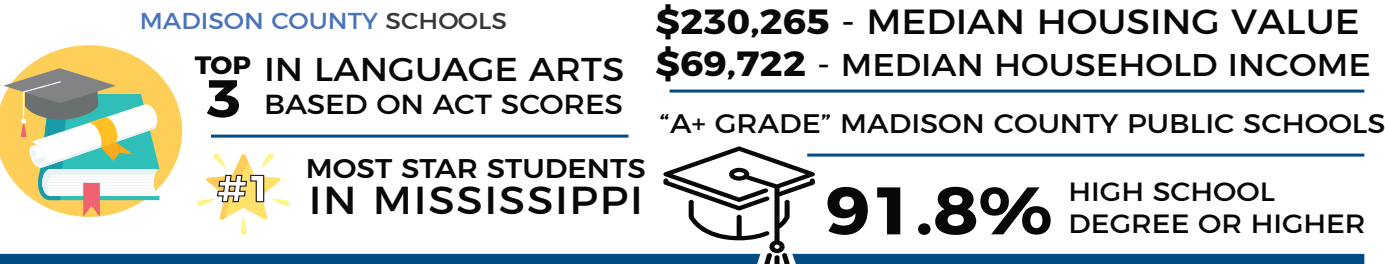


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Transportation breakfast hosted by MCBL&F committee



Special to The Canton News

The Madison County Business League & Foundation (MCBL&F) Transportation and Government Affairs Committee recently hosted a transportation breakfast. Guest panelists included Mississippi Central District Transportation Commissioner Willie Simmons; Mississippi Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Senator Joey Fillingane; Mississippi House Transportation Committee Chairman Representative Charles Busby; and Madison County Engineer Timothy Bryan. Pictured (l to r) are: Timothy Bryan, Jan Collins, Ray Balentine, Representative Charles Busby, Commissioner Willie Simmons, Senator Joey Fillingane, and Phil Buffington.

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