

Pelahatchie schools earn Military Star School designation

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The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) recently named sixty-one of the state's schools as Mississippi's first Military Star Schools. The designation recognizes schools that have made a significant commitment to supporting military families and children of service members.

Included in the honor were Pelahatchie Elementary School and Pelahatchie High School.

The Military Star School program was established in February of last year through Executive Order 1561, making Mississippi one of thirty-one states with a formal program to recognize schools that support military families.

Military Star Schools must meet specific requirements that address the unique needs of military students and families. Requirements include appointing a dedicated school liaison for military families, providing student-led transition services and peer support, ensuring professional development for staff to respond to the needs of military students and families, and publicly recognizing service members and their families.



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"As a member of a military family, I understand the crucial role our schools play in supporting military-connected students," said Dr. Robert Taylor, state superintendent of education. "The teachers, staff and leaders of Mississippi's Military Star Schools have demonstrated their commitment to their students and our nation. I am incredibly proud of the work they do every day to support the children of service members."

The Military Star School program is designed to help schools respond to the educational and social-emotional challenges military-connected children face during their transition to a new school and keep them on track to be college, workforce and life-ready. Military-connected refers to children of service members on active duty and in the National Guard and Reserves.

The Military Star School designation remains in effect for two years. Schools can reapply to maintain the designation. New schools can apply to receive the designation in 2024.

For more information or to view a list of all of Mississippi's 2023 Military Star Schools, visit www.MDEK12.org/MilitaryStarSchool.

Merit Health Medical Group adds orthopedics to local Clinic

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Merit Health Medical Group is pleased to announce that Donald Baker, MD and Michelle Vinchwater, CFNP will now be offering orthopedic services in Brandon.

The orthopedic clinic, located at 2841 Highway 18 in Brandon, joins Merit Health's newest primary clinic, which opened in October of 2022. "Brandon continues to see unprecedented growth, and we are proud to be able to offer primary and specialty care close to home for so many in the community," says Heather Sistrunk, CEO of Merit Health Rankin and Merit Health Woman's Hospital.

Donald Baker, MD has been with Merit Health since 2014 and Michelle Vinchwater, CFNP joined in 2016. They specialize in the treatment and prevention of joint and arthritis pain, musculoskeletal trauma, sprains, strains, and sports injuries.

Dr. Baker has particular expertise in shoulder and knee arthroscopy, as well



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as hip and knee replacement, and Michelle offers patients musculoskeletal health testing including Vitamin D and osteoporosis, splinting, casting, and patient education regarding surgery and in-office procedures. The clinic provides on site imaging, casting and lab, and same day appointments are often available. "I'm looking forward to serving patients, both new and established, in this brand new space in Brandon," Baker says.

To schedule an appointment or for more information, call 601-376-2818 or visit MyMeritDoctor.com.

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