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April
2023
Volume 12
Issue 4
Pelahatchie, MS

PHS Star Student and Teacher announced

Special to Pelahatchie News

Maley Johnson, a senior at Pelahatchie High School (PHS), has been named STAR Student for the 2022-2023 school year by the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) M. B. Swayze Foundation, sponsor of the Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) program. Established by the Mississippi Economic Council in 1965, the purpose of the STAR program is to recognize outstanding students and teachers in Mississippi through its Education Celebration. The theme this year is The Pursuit of Excellence.

Johnson will be honored during the annual Education Celebration on April 13, 2023, at the Clyde Muse Center, 515 Country Place Parkway in Pearl. The Education Celebration will start at 9:30 a.m. Star Students are selected on the basis of academic excellence. Both American

College Test scores and scholastic averages are compared to determine the school's STAR Student, explained Vickie Powell of Jackson, Senior Vice President of Foundations.

"The STAR program encourages and promotes academic achievement among Mississippi's high school seniors," she said. Each STAR Student is asked to designate a STAR Teacher, the teacher who has made the greatest contribution to the student's scholastic achievement.

Angela Skinner, a PHS teacher in Junior High and High School, was designated as STAR Teacher. Over 600 STAR Students and STAR Teachers will receive recognition from MEC's M.B. Swayze Foundation at the Celebration. The top 20 STAR Students –The ALL-STAR Scholars – will receive scholarships and their STAR Teachers will receive awards provided by the Kelly



Special to Pelahatchie News
PHS STAR Student Maley Johnson and PHS STAR Teacher Angela Skinner

Gene Cook, Sr. Charitable Foundation. The highlight of the Education Celebration will be the naming of the Mississippi ALL-STAR Scholar for 2022-2023 school year, winner of the coveted \$24,000 Cook Foundation Scholarship.

Hop over to the Pelahatchie Easter Egg Hunt

Special to Pelahatchie News

The Town of Pelahatchie, Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department, and Pelahatchie Baptist Church are hosting the Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8, at 10 a.m.

The Easter Egg Hunt has been held for many years. In 2022, the egg hunt was on a rainy day, but that didn't stop Pelahatchie from having fun indoors at Pelahatchie Baptist Church. There will be eggs to hunt for children aged zero months to sixth grade, and there will also be games and prizes. The Easter Bunny will be there, too. Plus, it's free for everyone.

The Easter Egg Hunt will be held at Muscadine Park, located at 714 2nd Street.



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Beauty and Beau Pageant at Pelahatchie Schools

On February 24, 2023, Pelahatchie School students grades K4 - 6th and 7th -12th participated in the school's Beauty and Beau Pageant. The awards were divided in the following six categories: Elementary Pageant Division One, Two, Three and Four; and Junior High and High School Division One and Two. *Continued on page 3*



Photos courtesy of Bruckner's Photography

Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) Pageant Division One winners, pictured (l to r) are: Runner Up, Collins Key; Most Handsome, Hutson Barnett; Most Beautiful, Anna Kate Denton; and Runner Up, Sawyer Harper.



Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) Elementary Division Two winners, pictured (l to r) are: Third Runner up, Olivia Key; Most Beautiful, Ramzey Beechem; First Runner Up, Khloe Conger; 2nd Runner Up, Oaklee Goldman.



Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) Elementary Division Three winners, pictured (l to r) are: 3rd Runner Up, Alley Hudson; First Runner Up, Demi Ward; Most Handsome, Chandler Allen; Most Beautiful, Emalynn Atkinson; Runner Up Beau, Liam Harper; and Second Runner Up, Hadley Taylor.



Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) Elementary Division Four winners, pictured (l to r) are: Runner Up, Brayden McCurdy; Third Runner Up, Peyton Matthews; Most Handsome, Ridgeland McMillan; Most Beautiful, Madison Charleston; First Runner Up, Evelyn Surkin; and Second Runner Up, Caiden Gray.



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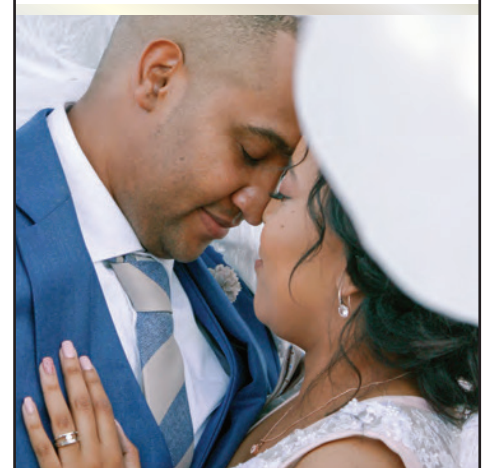
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Continued from page 2

Beauty and Beau Pageant at Pelahatchie Schools



Pelahatchie Junior High and Ninth grade High School Division One winners, pictured (l to r) are: Third Runner Up, Aliyah Butler; Most Beautiful and Best Dressed, Katie Belle Herrington; Second Runner Up, Danilynn Ward; First Runner Up, Sarah Brooks Hopson, and Miss Congeniality, Brelyn Burnham.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Pelahatchie High School 10th- 12th grade Division Two winners, pictured (l to r) are: 2nd Runner Up, Aliya Ward; Most Handsome, Jacob Rainer; Most Beautiful, Madi Holmes; and First Runner Up and Best Dressed, Macey Bowman.

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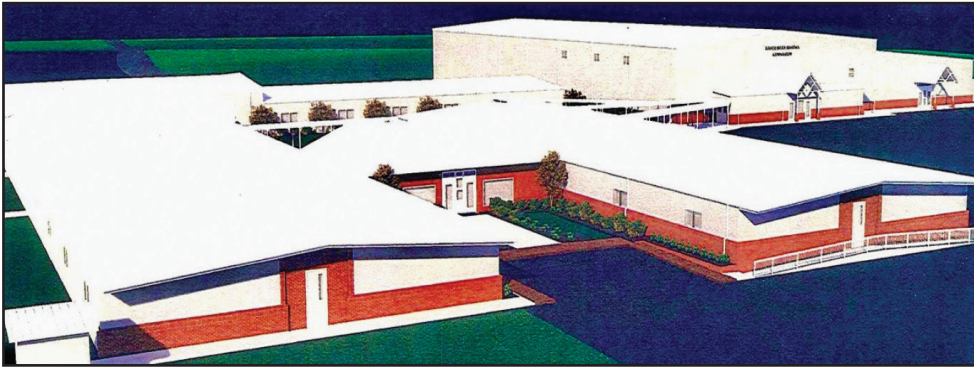
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East Rankin Academy enhancements and plans



Images special to Pelahatchie News

Overall exterior enhancements

By Katie White

East Rankin Academy (ERA) is currently renovating the school's look with planned enhancements, and still has further to go. The project is dubbed the "Patriot Challenge Building Campaign." Part of the school's renovation project is funded by donations - donations already made and donations the school still hopes to receive.

ERA school officials hope that the project will "enhance our academic and athletic facilities so that our ERA students and school family may use their talents and abilities to bring greater honor to God as we endeavor to grow academically, athletically, emotionally, socially and most all, spiritually."

The exterior enhancements that are planned include:

- Brick
- Exterior Finishing Installation Systems (EFIS) stucco
- New paint on all buildings

A preschool plan has also been imagined, which includes:

- Four classrooms
- Indoor play center

- Carpool drop-off pavilion

Plans include an Alumni courtyard, which will, if possible, create an inviting look:

- New planters
- Outdoor seating areas

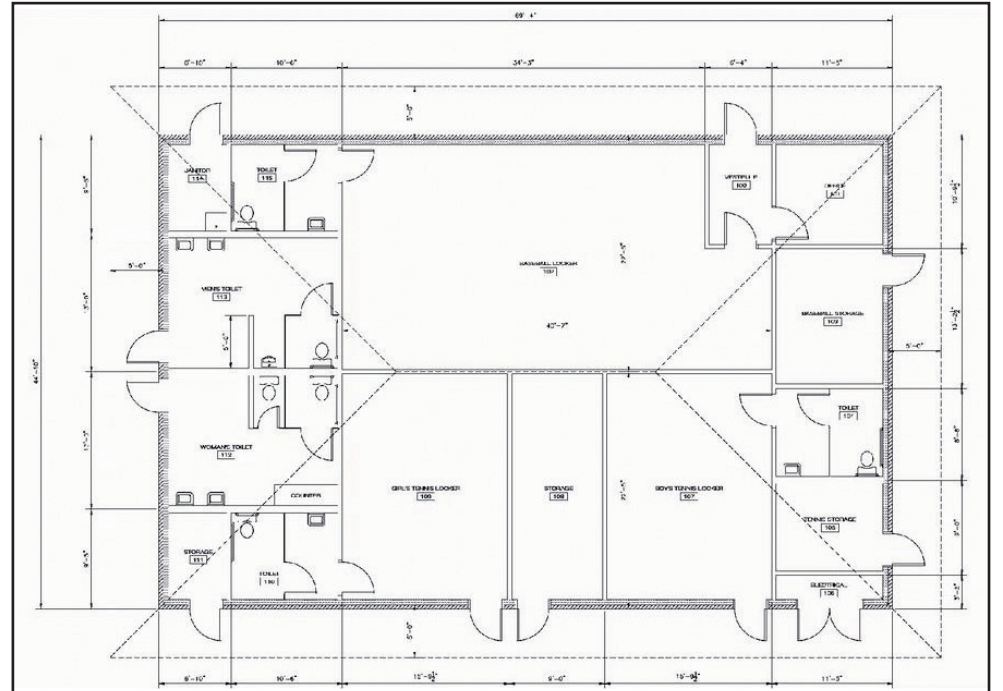
An East Campus Sports Center is also a part of the expansive plan, and includes:

- Baseball locker rooms
- Tennis locker rooms
- Public restrooms
- Storage for track, tennis and baseball

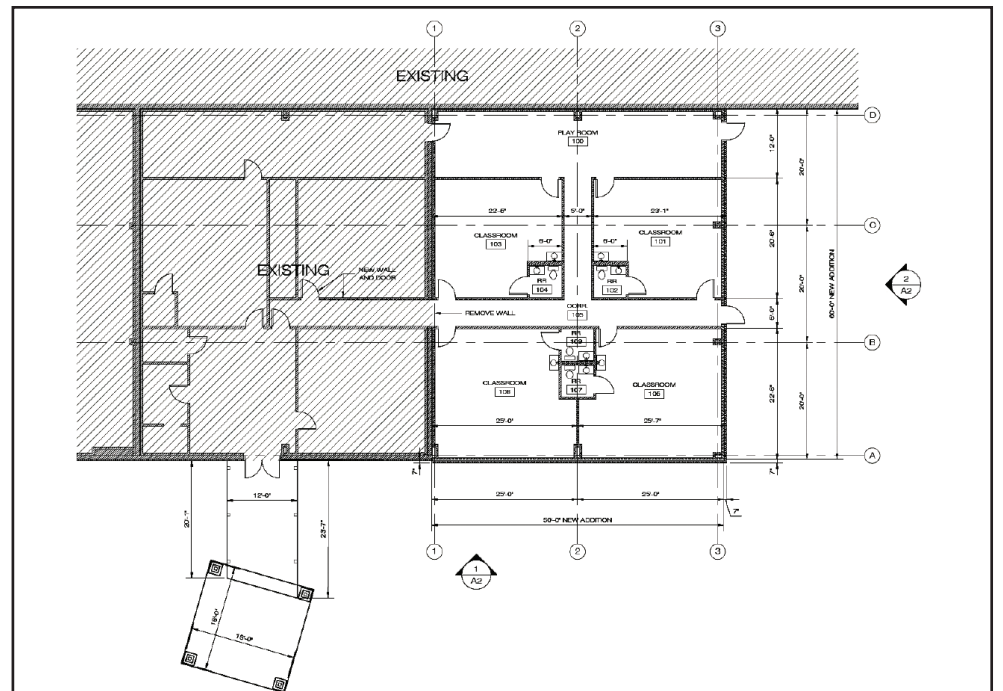
ERA plans to also enhance their school drop-off zone with two lanes. An illustrated image displaying the front door visually displays a more adequate area for student drop-off to occur - especially for younger aged children.

More extensive information on the school's renovations and the support they need to meet the school's "Patriot Challenge Building Campaign" can be found on the school's Facebook page. For more information about ERA, visit www.eastrankin.com. They can also be reached at eastrank@earthlink.net or by phone at 601-854-5691.

Continued on page 5



East Campus Sports Center renovation floor plan



Preschool expansion floor plan

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East Rankin Academy enhancements and plans



Artist's rendering of plans for the East Campus Sports Center

Images special to Pelahatchie News



Artist's rendering of plans for the Alumni courtyard



Artist's rendering of close-ups planned to enhance ERA's exterior



Artist's rendering of plans for the Alumni courtyard



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that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life. John 3:16

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Pelahatchie Library events and news

Special to Pelahatchie News

A **Senior Games Social** will be held on Tuesday, April 11 and 25, 11 a.m. -12 p.m. The social will be held at the Pelahatchie Public Library meeting room. Age groups include 18-55 years and senior adults 56 and up.

National Library Week is April 10-15. The library invites all to guess what novel is in the bottle. They will also have trial blackout poetry.

Attention all book lovers, the **Adult Book Club** will meet on April 19, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.. The club will meet at



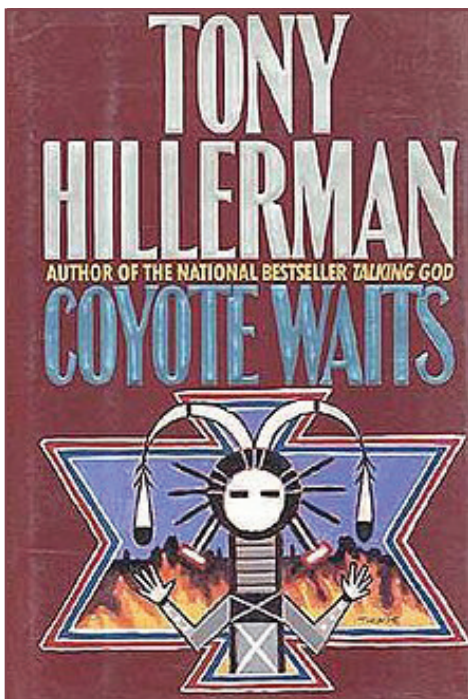
Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Tuesday, March 28, Police Chief Robert Mahaffey spoke to the senior citizens.

the Pelahatchie Public Library meeting room. Registration is open. The Pelahatchie Library will be discussing Tony Hillerman's gripping novel, *Coyote Waits*.

They will delve into the mystery and suspense of this thrilling novel. *Coyote Waits* follows the Navajo tribal police as they investigate the murder of a medicine man, and the mysterious events that follow.

Whether having read the book before or reading it for the first time, all are welcome to join in the discussion. Share your thoughts, opinions, and interpretations of the story with fellow book club members.



Coyote Waits cover



Regional Library System

ERCO Love Out Loud 2023 at Yogi Bear Park

Special to Pelahatchie News



The Ever Reaching Community Outreach (ERCO) is hosting Love Out Loud at Yogi on the Lake and they invite everyone to "join the fun." The event will take place on Saturday, April 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

ERCO extends an invitation to stay for lunch, also. It will be provided at no charge. All activities and lunch are free! Activities for young participants include bounce houses, games, face-painting and more.

ERCO is a faith-based nonprofit that serves as a Mississippi Food Network food pantry; a donation center (with clothes, housewares, furniture and more); a network resource center

working together with other ministries to meet needs; and a provider of hope sharing the message of hope and faith in Jesus Christ. (James 1:22).

The non-profit serves in multiple Mississippi counties by providing monthly food assistance, and by providing clothes, baby items, housewares, furniture and appliances to those in need. Our mission is to show Christ's love and be "doers of the Word and not hearers only."

Contact 601-665-5720 or visit ER-CO's website at ERCO@everreaching.net for more information. Yogi on the Lake is located at 143 Campground Rd, Pelahatchie, MS.

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IRS Jackson Taxpayer Assistance Center Opens

Special to Pelahatchie News

The IRS opened the Jackson Taxpayer Assistance Center on Saturday, March 11. The center is located at 100 West Capitol St. in Jackson. The special opening is part of its efforts to improve service this tax season.

During the special Saturday opening, taxpayers can receive face-to-face help from IRS employees without an appointment.

Normally, these centers are open during the week and people should have appointments to receive services. But during these Saturday hours, walk-ins will be accepted for all services routinely offered at an office, except for making cash payments. Tax return preparation is not a service provided at IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs).

Services provided

The IRS's Contact Your Local Office web page, www.irs.gov/help/contact-your-local-irs-office, lists all services provided at specific TACs.

If someone has questions about a tax bill, an IRS audit or they need help resolving a tax problem, they'll receive assistance from IRS employees specializing in those services. If these employees aren't available, the individual will receive a referral for additional help on these services. IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service employees may also be available to help with some issues. Visit www.taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/ for contact information.

Professional foreign language interpreta-

tion will be available in many languages through an over-the-phone translation service. For deaf or hard of hearing individuals who need sign language interpreter services, IRS staff will schedule appointments for a later date. Alternatively, these individuals can call TTY/TDD 800-829-4059 to make an appointment.

For more information on the special Saturday openings, visit at www.irs.gov/help/irs-face-to-face-saturday-help. For a summary of the most requested customer service topics, see www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p5136.pdf.

Come prepared

Individuals should bring the following documents with them:

- Current government-issued photo identification
- Social Security cards or ITINs for themselves and all members of their household including their spouse and dependents (if applicable)
- Any IRS letters or notices received and related documents
- For identity verification services, two forms of identification and, if filed, a copy of the tax return for the year in question.

During the visit, IRS staff may also request the following information:

- A current mailing address
- Proof of bank account information included on a tax return to receive

payments or refunds by direct deposit Tax return preparation options

While tax return preparation is not a service offered at IRS TACs, information will be shared about available local free tax preparation options. Help is also available using the following services:

1. Eligible individuals or families can get free help preparing their tax return at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites at www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers. To find the closest free tax return preparation help, use the VITA Locator Tool at irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/ or call 800-906-9887.
2. To find an AARP Tax-Aide site, use the AARP Site Locator Tool at www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations.html or call 1-888-227-7669.
3. Any individual or family earning \$73,000 or less in 2022 can use tax software through IRS Free File at www.irs.gov/filing/e-file-options at no cost. There are products in English and Spanish.
4. MilTax at www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/tax-resource-center/miltax-military-tax-service, a Department of Defense program, offers free return preparation software and electronic filing for federal tax returns and up to three state income tax returns. It's available



for all military members, and some veterans, with no income limit.

Help available 24/7 at IRS.gov

The IRS encourages people to explore IRS.gov before traveling to an office. It's the fastest and easiest way for people to get the help they need.

They can learn about the many self-service tools and resources available to resolve common tax concerns online. Some include IRS identity protection services, requesting Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN), refunds, transcripts and payment options.

- Go to www.irs.gov for more information. Available resources include:
- Where's My Refund?, check refund status and estimated delivery date.
- Direct Pay, make tax payments or estimated tax payments for free from a checking or savings account.
- Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, individuals or businesses can make all types of federal tax payments.
- Online Payment Agreement, set up installment payments to pay taxes owed.
- Where's My Amended Return, track the status of an amended return.
- Interactive Tax Assistant and FAQs, get answers to many tax law questions.
- All IRS Forms and Publications, find and download current tax forms, instructions and publications. Those without access to the internet can call 800-829-3676 to order tax forms by mail.

Windham runs for Rankin County District 1 Supervisor

By Mike Windham

My name is Mike Windham, and I'm humbly excited to announce I have qualified to run for Rankin County District 1 Supervisor. My family moved to Florence, MS in 1970, it would be an honor to support my constituents, the people of District 1. I'm a graduate of Florence High School. My family and I are proud members of First Baptist Church of Florence. My wife, Jamie Windham, and I have been married 22 years and live in Florence. We have three beautiful daughters, son-in-law and a grandson, Lindsey (Windham) Myers, Robert Myers (son-in-law), Luke Windham (grandson), Micah Windham and Maddie Jae Windham.

I am an Electrical Contractor and owner of MW Electric, LLC based in Florence, MS for 8 years. I worked for Trustmark Bank for 26 years as a Facilities Services Manager where I gained invaluable skills and knowledge manag-



ing and overseeing major jobs.

Managed over 50 locations South Mississippi and Central Alabama for Trustmark Bank. I developed budgets for each of the locations I managed. Worked with city officials, developers and contractors on numerous projects. I was also part of the hurricane disaster relief team.

My wife, Jamie, has owned and operated Shear Shack Salon in Florence for 19 years. Beyond the workforce, I have had the honor of serving as a softball coach for the past 20 years for our local community recreational park.

I formally served as the President for MS Junior High Rodeo Association and Director for MS at the National level of the Junior High Rodeo Association.

I graciously ask for your prayers, support and vote on August 8, 2023. I'm very thankful for this opportunity and will strive to help our county reach its highest potential structurally, economically, recreationally and beyond.

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It's the season to think about garden soil



By Doug Carter, Rankin County Extension Agent

The ideal garden soil is deep, loose, fertile, and well drained (internally, as well as on the surface). The ideal soil has plenty of organic matter and is free of weeds and diseases.

These soils can sometimes be difficult to find, but less than ideal soils can be just as productive with proper preparation and management.

Water will move quickly through well-drained soil and never completely shut off air movement. Drainage is important, because the roots cannot develop, live and function without a constant oxygen supply. Clay soils dry slowly after a rain because their pores are small, and water moves through them slowly. Sandy soils, on the other hand, have many spaces and dry out quickly.

Clay and sandy soils can be amended by adding organic matter. Increasing the organic matter in clay soil improves the tilth, making it easier to work, and it also improves drainage. Adding organic matter to sandy soil increases the water-holding capacity and improves its fertility.



Special to Pelahatchie News

Soil and soil conditions affect the way vegetable plants grow and look. When soils are cold, wet, crusty or cloddy, the seedlings are slow to emerge, and some may not survive. Root rot diseases may take a heavy toll on seedlings, especially beans. Other soil-related plant symptoms are stunted plants, slow growth, poor col-

or and shallow, malformed roots. Signs of poor soil structure are crusts, hard soil layers below the surface known as hardpans or fragipans, standing water and erosion.

We can increase the soil's organic matter content by adding manure, composted leaves, sawdust, bark or peat moss. Also,

turn under plant residues like sweet corn stalks and green manure crops (soybeans, rye, southern pea plants and others) after harvest. Plant residues should be free of diseases if they are to be added to the garden soil. Cover plants can be planted in the fall to prevent erosion and leaching of plant nutrients. They also provide organic matter and nitrogen when turned under in the spring.

Manures vary in nutrient level, and the amount of straw, age, exposure to weather, and degree of composting changes their composition. Be careful not to over fertilize when applying chicken litter to a garden. Use no more than 200 pounds per 1,000 square feet of garden space. Cow and horse manure is lower in nutrient content than poultry litter and can be applied at 250 to 300 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Overuse of manures can add so much fertilizer to the soil that plant growth is harmed. Most organic materials release some nutrients quickly and the rest over time. Test the soil every year or two and make adjustments.

Source: "Mississippi Vegetable Gardener's Guide," Mississippi State University Extension, Publication 3616



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Spring Fish Fry Fundraiser at Walters Volunteer Fire Dept.

Special to Pelahatchie News

Walters Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) will be holding its Spring Fish Fry Fundraiser on April 29, from 4-7 p.m. The fish fry pick up location is at their station located at 125 Walters Road, Pelahatchie.

Farm-raised catfish, hush puppies, fries, and cole slaw will be served. Guests may eat in and visit, or they may carry it out. Each plate is \$13.

WVFD was incorporated in the fall of 1991 as a non-profit organization. Station 1 is their primary station, and it is located in the Walters community. They have two additional stations, one located on Hwy. 43 South at Antioch, and one on Shiloh Road. The WVFD relies on fundraisers such as the fish fry as a primary source of operating revenue.

WVFD meets the first and third



Image by Pelahatchie News

Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. They need additional members and encourage anyone that would like to help serve their community to attend a meeting to learn more about the department. No experience is necessary. They will provide the training.

Pelahatchie Elementary PurpleUP! Day to support military children



Special to Pelahatchie News

By Guest Columnist
Robin Sanders, Principal,
Pelahatchie Elementary

Pelahatchie Elementary invites you to join us on PurpleUP! Day, April 19, by wearing or displaying purple to support and recognize

the sacrifices and challenges military children face. This day is celebrated in the month of April, which is considered the Month of the Military Child.

Our school is honored to serve and support military families and has developed a section on our website dedicated to our current and potential military families. The section provides information and links to help families with moving to our school, social and emotional support, our Chief Champion team that is ready to help new students become familiar



with our school, and academic support for military families. The information can be located at <https://pes.rcsd.ms/resources/military-families>.

We are always looking for ways to show our appreciation for the military and conduct different events throughout the school year. If you know of certain missions, deployments, or are a military member or veteran that we can support, we would love to show our gratitude. Please contact Rebecca Nelson, our military point of contact, at reb503@rcsd.ms.

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PHS Beta students participate in 2023 State Beta Convention

Special to Pelahatchie News

Pelahatchie High School (PHS) seniors participated in the Mississippi Senior Beta Club Convention on February 26-28, 2023. The Beta convention was held at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center located in Biloxi. Pelahatchie senior Beta students

brought home the following awards from the State's Beta Convention:

- Living Lit Champions
- Agriscience
- Solo, Duo, Trio Vocalists
- Sculpture
- 3D Design
- Social Studies, and
- Increased Attendance Growth



Special to Pelahatchie News

The PHS Beta Club received a growth award for increased attendance from last year.



Special to Pelahatchie News

PHS Beta are the champions of the Living Lit competition.



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Carson Conn, freshman, won 4th place in Social Studies.

Continued on page 11



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Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	ARRANGEMENTS
"Hal" Howell Milo Robinson, III	65	Pelahatchie	3/03/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Bobby Carl Porter	85	Forest	3/13/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Ruthie Harper	60	Morton	3/16/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Jimmy Lee King, Jr.	53	Morton	3/16/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Tyeasha Leighann Denson	40	Morton	3/22/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Maudis Marene Minor	86	Morton	3/25/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Douglas Michael "Mike" Courtney	55	Richland	3/25/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Brittany Nicole Johnson	28	Morton	3/25/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Steven "Dusty" Bates	40	Morton	3/28/2023	Wolf Funeral Services
Janice McDonald		Morton	3/29/2023	Wolf Funeral Services

Continued from page 10

PHS Beta students participate in 2023 State Beta Convention



Eli Boyer, senior, won 3rd place in Sculpture, Division II.



Maddie Grace Walters, senior, won 3rd place in 3D Design.



Madi Holmes, senior, won 5th place in Solo, Duo, Trio Vocalists.

Photos special to Pelahatchie News



Tyler Johns, junior, won 3rd place in Agriscience.

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Pelahatchie schools earn Military Star School designation

Special to Pelahatchie News

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.



Special to Pelahatchie News

"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

Special to Pelahatchie News

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



Special to Pelahatchie News

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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Pastor's Perspective: What is the meaning of Revival?



Special to
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By Guest Columnist
Spencer Sullivan, Pastor,
Pelahatchie Baptist

My wife, Melanie, our kids, and I spent 12 years living overseas. The last 7 of those were spent in the country of Cyprus. Cyprus is an island in the far eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, near the Middle East. It is just south of Turkey and just west of Syria and Lebanon. Though Cyprus is its own country, it is heavily influenced by Greek culture. The Cypriot people speak the Greek language, they eat Greek food, and the official religion is Greek Orthodox Christianity.

Because of the Greek Orthodox culture, Easter is the biggest, most celebrated holiday on the island...even more than Christmas! For example, in Cyprus, Easter break from school is two weeks compared to the two days students typically get here in the U.S.!

Some traditions are similar to those we are familiar with here in the U.S., such as eggs and candy and pastel-colored decorations. Some are unique to the island or the Greek Orthodox Church, such as the

burning of Judas. I'll let you Google that one on your own. The point is, Easter is a big deal in Cyprus and in many other European countries.

For some, Easter is a big deal here in the U.S. as well. But, our experience in Cyprus revealed that the traditional celebrations had become the center, rather than the origins of why they celebrate in the first place. Our culture here isn't so different, is it?

So, why do we celebrate Easter? I am sure most could answer this question and point out the origins of the celebration, which of course is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, at risk of asking what may seem like another obvious question, why is that a big deal?

Before Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead Himself, Jesus had another famous encounter involving a resurrection. Like you and me, Jesus had close friends. I love that He can relate to us in every way! Some of his closest friends were Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha.

Lazarus had become seriously ill, so naturally, Mary and Martha sent word to



Visual of the empty tomb

Special to Pelahatchie News

Jesus. However, by the time Jesus and His disciples arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Though Jesus knew what He was about to do, the emotion of the scene brought Him not to just a few tears, but to weeping. Again, He understands us!

In her grief, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Jesus later responded, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha did believe! And I am sure her belief only skyrocketed when she then heard Jesus say, "Lazarus, come out!" and she saw her brother come out of the tomb alive and well! In this encounter from John 11, we see Jesus both as a friend we can relate to and as the Son of God whose power was greater than death itself!

A few weeks later, Jesus would hang on a cross, not because He was guilty of anything, but for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). You and I are the joy that kept Him on the cross!

Three days later, death could not contain the One who was the Resurrection and the Life! And according to Him, those that believe...shall live and never die! That is why it is a big deal! Because Jesus is alive today, and those that believe get to live forever with Him!

So, this weekend, enjoy the traditions. Enjoy the egg hunts! Enjoy the candy! (Sweetarts jelly beans are my favorite!) But throughout the weekend, remember the One who was once in a tomb, but is alive today! And I encourage you to join one of the wonderful churches in our town Sunday morning to worship the risen King!

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Mississippi drug intervention courts reach milestone of 10,000 graduates

Special to Pelahatchie News

Drug intervention courts in Mississippi marked a milestone of 10,000 graduates in March 2023 after years of offering life-changing programs for people struggling with drug addiction.

"Intervention courts work to help participants succeed," said State Director of Intervention Courts Pam Holmes. "It takes teamwork. It takes a dedicated drug intervention court team working together and working with the community. It takes committed judges, coordinators, case managers and field officers."

The Legislature in recent years has given intervention courts additional resources to make a difference in the lives of people who struggle with addiction. The Legislature funded five pilot mental health courts which began operations this year. Those programs use a treatment approach in lieu of more traditional court procedures for non-violent offenders who have been screened and diagnosed with mental illnesses. The program includes screening, clinical assessment, education, referral for treatment, counseling and rehabilitative care, service coordination and case management.

Holmes said, "The Legislature recognizes the measurable value of drug intervention and now, mental health treatment courts and the role these courts play in saving lives in all counties throughout

the state. The 10,000 graduate milestone reinforces the ongoing legislative commitment to appropriate annual funds to financially support these court programs. The state's annual investment in drug intervention courts helps save the lives of participants in active addiction.

Participation in drug court and successful completion represents significant savings in the millions of dollars each year and is the return on investment the state seeks."

Intervention courts are an alternative to incarceration. Taxpayers get the benefit of not paying to incarcerate people who can in turn earn a living for themselves and support their families. Avoided incarceration costs for intervention court participants amounted to a savings of \$57.6 million during the 2022 fiscal year. Since FY 2006, intervention courts have saved Mississippi taxpayers more than \$1 billion. With requirements that participants pay all their fines and fees, intervention courts also return money to the counties. Total fines collected for FY2022 was \$1,387,715, and the total fees collected was \$1,832,758. The cost to society to care for each baby born to a drug-addicted mother is minimally \$750,000. Babies born drug-free saved

taxpayers an estimated \$701.25 million since 2006.

Intervention courts give offenders whose non-violent crimes are rooted in drug addiction an opportunity to put their lives in order and become productive and self-supporting. People who were alienated from their families often reunite with their loved ones. Some are able to regain custody of their children.

People who struggle with addiction receive access to a variety of resources to help them recover, including access to in-patient and out-patient treatment and counseling. The average participant will spend three years in the program. They are required to abstain from drug and alcohol use. If they don't comply, they will be imprisoned.

Intervention courts equip participants with job skills, education and life skills that will enable them to support themselves and their families. Participants are required to get and keep a job. Before participating in drug intervention court, many spent years focused only on getting their next drug fix. Intervention courts provide the framework of discipline to help participants learn to go to work, on time, every day.

Business and industry play a vital role

in the success of intervention programs when employers are willing to hire people who have made mistakes. Employers provide job skills and training and help instill a work ethic. Employers receive the benefit of workers who are under the supervision of a probation officer and are drug-tested as often as twice a week.

Intervention courts require participants to seek a high school equivalency degree if they dropped out of school. With the help and encouragement of intervention courts, 881 people have earned a high school equivalency degree, 774 attended vocational schools and 1,550 attended post-secondary schools since 2015.

Intervention court participants also are required to do community service. Their work ranges from picking up litter to helping at a local food pantry. The community benefits from their efforts. Participants who have gotten a second chance gain an understanding of the need to give back. Intervention court participants performed more than 21,000 hours of community service during FY 2022.

Mississippi's adult felony drug intervention courts had a recidivism rate of 2.9 percent, compared to a recidivism rate of 35.4 percent for people who go to prison and are released.

In addition to getting a second chance, many intervention court participants qualify to have their records expunged.



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Pelahatchie School faculty awards and recognitions



Kayla Boyles was named the Rankin County School District March 2023 McLaurin and Pelahatchie Elementary gifted teacher. The school congratulated Boyles and said, "Thank you for all you do for our students!!"



Jessica Shamburger was selected as PES Rankin County Chamber Teacher of the Year for 2022-2023. Pelahatchie Elementary administration writes, "We are so proud of her continued dedication to our school and community."



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

In March, Robin Sanders was named as the RCSD Elementary Administrator of the Month. Sanders began teaching at Pelahatchie Elementary in 1998. She began her role as Pelahatchie Elementary Principal in 2020. Sanders has worked for the school for 25 years in total. "We try to keep teachers and students mindful that all progress takes place outside our comfort zone. We support each other along the way and support each other as we grow and learn," said Sanders.



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*character interactions *jumping pillow *egg decorating
*space jump *glow ride *karaoke
*scavenger hunt *outdoor movie

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Wild West Weekend
April 15th
*Mechanical Bull
*Pony Rides
*Root Beer Social \$
*Karaoke
*Hoedown Glow Ride
*Character Appearances
*Waterpark

MUDBUG
APRIL 29TH
*CRAWFISH PLATE
*CONCERT IN THE PARK
*FULL DAY OF ACTIVITIES
*WATERPARK
*CHARACTER APPEARANCES

LOVE OUT LOUD/EARTH DAY WEEKEND
April 22nd
Community Outreach with ERCCO located at the park entrance is FREE!!
GAMES, MUSIC, FELLOWSHIP, AND FUN!!
(Park entrance fee for April 22nd \$10 per person 9am-10pm)

Yogi Bear TM, Cindy Bear TM, and Boo Boo TM, would like to welcome you to Jellystone Park TM Pelahatchie, MS.

Legislative Update: Mental Health Reform bill headed to the Governor's Desk

By Guest Columnist Rep. Tom Miles, State Representative from House District #75



Special to Pelahatchie News

This was the eleventh week of the 2023 Legislative Session. Because it is late in the session, much of the week was spent deciding whether to concur with any changes made to House bills by the Senate or to invite conference on those bills. In conference committees, we work together to finalize the details of each bill before they are sent to the governor. Included in the bills being sent to conference are most of the revenue and appropriations bills from the House and Senate, which will decide the state's budget.

I'm so excited to see **House Bill 1222**, a bill I sponsored and have worked on, the Mississippi Collaborative Response to Mental Health Act, headed to the Governor's desk for his signature. This is a bill that we have worked on for the last two years to help address the mental health crisis in our state. After over fifty meetings, public hearings and getting input from everyone in this field, we have passed a transformative piece of legislation. This, when signed into law, will provide funding, training for

law enforcement officers, more beds for mental health patients, and a host of other things to help improve mental health. This bill is transformative and will have a significant impact on our state for generations to come to help with mental health issues in our state.

Both the House and Senate agreed this week on passing **HB 4**. This is a bill that would ban the sale of tianeptine, commonly known as "gas station heroin." Tianeptine can have similar effects to opioids and can be sold in convenience stores. Those sales could soon stop in Mississippi when it becomes law. The bill is now in the hands of Gov. Tate Reeves.

Other legislative bills passed this week included:

- **House Bill 549** exempts certain businesses from paying sales tax on property transported from Mississippi and first used in another state.
- **House Bill 1723** authorizes up to \$1 million in tax credits for certain organizations supporting community food pantries or soup kitchens.
- **House Bill 1561** amends current law to allow tax exemption eligibility



Special to Pelahatchie News

Pictured (l to r) are, Speaker Pro Tem Jason White, Representative Tom Miles, and Rev. Timothy Bobo Phillipson.

to "controlled environment agriculture enterprises meeting minimum criteria established by the Mississippi Development Authority."

• **Senate Bill 2449** amends existing law to allow taxation of certain computer software. "Sales of computer software, computer software services, specified digital products, or other products delivered electronically, including, but not limited to, music, games, reading materials or ringtones, shall be taxed as provided in other

sections of this chapter."

We were proud to see the Governor sign these 3 bill this week to help our military families:

1. **SB 2649** will streamline the process for any named beneficiaries of insurance policies for service members or veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.
2. **SB 2700** will exempt any qualified homeowners from property taxes on their primary residence if their spouse served in the military or was killed on active duty, including training.
3. **HB 49**, makes it easier for the children of active-duty service members born in the state to receive a sportsman hunting and fishing license for their lifetime. This ultimately does away with the usual 18 consecutive month residency requirement if they have moved due to their parents' service. It also reduces the fee by roughly 33 percent.

When the session resumed the week of March 20, it was expected that we would spend much of our time in conference committees ironing out the final details of bills that were sent to the conference. These conference committees will then have to file reports before the end of session.



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April 2023

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THE BRANCH

PHS Class Favorites and Who's Who election results

Special to Pelahatchie News

In March, Pelahatchie High School (PHS) students held elections for 2022-2023 Who's Who and Class Favorites.

Class Favorites that were elected are: 7th Grade: Mallarie Adams, Chase Parker; 8th grade: Jernmya Johnson, DaMarion Snow; 9th Grade: Skyylar Ousby, Tate Hopson; 10th Grade: Ava Till, Mickey Jennings; 11th Grade: JaLeah Ford, Jimmy Holifield; 12th Grade: Holly White, JT Magee.

Seniors, class of 2023, were chosen for Who's Who, and with some fun and unique character trait titles. Those students and titles are: **Best Smile:** Airanna Beeman, Tyler Bayliss; **Highway Hazard:** Leah Carter, Jabari Hodges; **Future Soccer Mom and Dad:** Hunter Cain, Holly White; **Teacher's Pet:** Eli Boyer, Airanna Beeman; **Best Dressed:** Madi Holmes, Jadan Boyd; **Most Athletic:** Symon Stringer, Maddie Grace Walters; **Most Likely to Be Late to Graduation:** Devan Sinclair, Alisha Cooper; **Most School Spirit:** Madi Holmes, Tyler Bayliss; **Most Intellectual:** Maley Johnson,



Hart Adams; **Senioritis:** William Cummins, Destinee Purvis; **Most Likely to Lose a Winning Lottery Ticket:** Mackenzie White, Eli Boyer; **Future Frat Boy / Sorority Girl:** Colton Bierman, Holly White; **Most Likely to Succeed:** Haley Adams, Hunter Cain; **Mr. PHS:** JT Magee; **Miss PHS:** Maddie Grace Walters.