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Wesson News

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Graduates
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“Good News You Can Use”

June 9, 2020

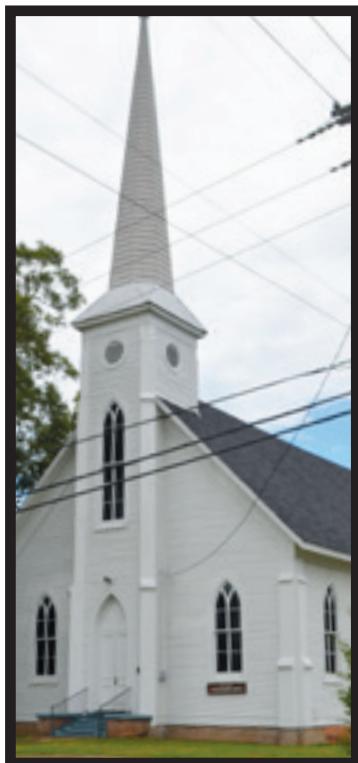
Historic Wesson church gifted Co-Lin

Special to Wesson News

The former Wesson Presbyterian Church has been gifted to Co-Lin by George T. Mercier, Jr., who served as an elder of the church and clerk of the session for the past 45 years.

The Wesson Presbyterian Church was founded in 1871 by Captain William Oliver, a businessman from New Orleans who had moved to Wesson to manage the Mississippi Mills. The construction of the church was completed in 1878, and it held its first worship service on March 24 of that year.

“My mother and father were married here, and I was bap-



Wesson News

tized here, so we have a long relationship with the church,” Mercier said while celebrating his 103rd birthday on May 8 in the church sanctuary with his son, G.T. Mercier III and members of the college’s staff and Board of Trustees.

Throughout the years, the church has seen a rise and decline in attendance and membership; and, during the summer of 2019, the congregation agreed that it could no longer maintain the church.

“Soon after that decision, I was given permission to pursue a potential buyer, and Co-Lin

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Town of Wesson eyes emergency bond bill

Wesson News

Wesson Aldermen have authorized the town to initiate a process that could potentially lead to a bond bill agreement with a bank to assure necessary funds in case of a revenue shortfall stemming from the loss of sales tax monies due the impact of COVID-19 pandemic economic restrictions, shutdowns and other mitigation measures.

In Wesson, many businesses, including Ace Hardware, Family Dollar, Dollar General, Shop 'N Wash, Ashley's 51 and the East End Market, stayed open as sources of essential supplies, while cosmetologists, the Mill Town Mall, Another Time. . . Another Place and the Carpenter Shop shut down, and restaurants severely curbed operations. The biggest economic impact probably related to the loss of customers by open businesses as a result of the drastically curtailed activities of Co-Lin and Wesson Attendance Center.

Mayor Alton Shaw concedes the economic impact of the pandemic measures is not known, but he and the Board of Aldermen decided they wanted to prepare for a significant decline in tax revenues returned to the town by the state.

With the action by the Aldermen at their May meeting, town officials will explore with bankers terms of a bond bill in the \$80,000 range that would be repayable over ten years. The town would be able to tap the funds to meet emergency revenue needs, but do so only if required.

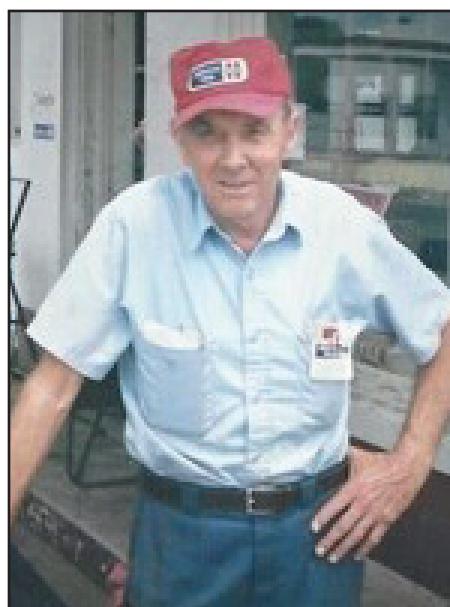
Citizen Kenneth Furr passes at 91

Special to Wesson News

The former Wesson Volunteer Fire Department Chief, who orchestrated the Wesson Flea Market for many years, has died.

Kenneth Furr, 91, a loving husband father, grandfather, great grandfather and beloved friend, passed away May 6, and his life was celebrated at a private graveside service at Wesson Cemetery on May 9.

As a young man, Furr left college following the sudden death of his father to come



Kenneth Furr.

Special to Wesson News

home to run the family business and to help his mother with two younger siblings. He was a vital, active, contributing citizen of Wesson his entire life.

Decell Memorial United Methodist Church was his church. There he was a member of the choir and served as music director for many years. Even when he had to sit on the front pew because he was no longer able to get into the choir loft, he still led the choir and congregation in song.

cont. on page 16

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cont. from page 1

Historic Wesson church gifted Co-Lin

became our first choice. Due to its proximity to the church, the sanctuary could be used as a chapel, and having the church placed on the National Register of Historic Places would be

it for some really special things in the future for both the town and for the college. We're so grateful that the Mercier family looked to Co-Lin and entrusted us with such an important land-

women's Bible study group, as well as hosting various community organizations in the church annex," Mercier said.

"I knew Mrs. Mercier through the Wesson Garden Club and



Special to Wesson News

The former Wesson Presbyterian Church was recently gifted to Co-Lin. In addition to the donation of the church building and property, George Mercier, Jr., and his son G.T. Mercier III established the Dorothy Ragland Mercier Memorial Fund with the Co-Lin Foundation. On hand for the presentation were (front row left to right) Co-Lin Board of Trustees president Tommy Sasser, Co-Lin president Dr. Jane Hulon, George T. Mercier, Jr.; (back row left to right) Co-Lin Board of Trustees member Melton King, and G.T. Mercier III.

a prestigious landmark for the college and the community of Wesson," Mercier said.

On March 15, the Wesson Presbyterian Church officially closed its doors as a church and will now function as a part of Co-Lin. The church elders and congregation approved the transfer of the property to the college, and the gift was unanimously accepted by the Co-Lin Board of Trustees.

"We have a long history between the college and the town of Wesson—a history that we appreciate and hold with tremendous value," Co-Lin president Dr. Jane Hulon said. "We're going to take this gift and nurture

mark of Wesson."

In addition to the donation of the church building and property, George Mercier, Jr. and his son G.T. Mercier III established the Dorothy Ragland Mercier Memorial Fund with the Co-Lin Foundation in memory of Mrs. Mercier, who passed away in December. The fund will be used for the improvement, maintenance, and ongoing expenses of the chapel.

"My wife will always be remembered as a wonderful Christian who served the Church in many capacities -- teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, leading the

thought the world of her," Hulon said. "What a wonderful tribute and way to honor her life. We're thrilled to have this opportunity."

"The Co-Lin Foundation (CLF) is grateful to the Merciers for the gift to be used to enhance and maintain the chapel," executive director of CLF Angela Furr said. "We are honored to celebrate Mrs. Mercier's legacy."

Contributions to the Dorothy Ragland Mercier Memorial Fund can be mailed to the Co-Lin Foundation at P.O. Box 649, Wesson, MS 39191, or made online at www.colin.edu/alumni-foundation/give-now/.



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Think safety to enjoy summer

By Guest Columnist Dr. Stephanie Duguid

June is National Safety Month -- very appropriate for a season focused on water safety, sun safety, dehydration and heat-related illnesses, and helmet safety.



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Children love the hot summer months, because they provide the perfect opportunity to spend lots of time outside. Whether it's swimming in the pool, playing outside, or going for a bike ride, there is something for everyone, no matter how young or old.

At this special time of year, parents need to remember there are potential dangers, and it's important to be aware of what they are. If you know how to prevent illnesses and injuries, it is less likely they will occur:

1 - Water Safety

Adult supervision is of paramount importance. Parents need to focus on their children 100% of the time. No distractions! Be sure to practice "touch supervision" (a term used by the American Academy of Pediatrics). This means that at all times, the supervising adult is within

an arm's length of the child being watched, when near or in the water. Remember, no child or adult is "drown proof." Children can drown in bathtubs, toilets, buckets, baby pools, backyard swimming pools, community pools, streams, creeks, lakes, rivers, oceans and other places. Teach kids to swim. Formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Your CPR skills could save someone's life.

2 - Sun Protection

Avoid sun exposure during peak sun hours (10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) Wear protective clothing and a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses (with 99%-100% UV protection). Sunscreen is a must (on sunny and cloudy days). Look for products with UVA and UVB protection and an SPF of at least 15 (according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Association of Dermatology). Sunscreen should be applied liberally 30 minutes before going out in the sun, and reapplied every two hours or sooner if swim-

ming, sweating or toweling off. Look for shade whenever possible.

3 - Dehydration and Heat-Related Illnesses

Keeping well hydrated is very important. Children (and adults) must remember to drink. Do not wait until a child is thirsty before offering fluids. At this point, he is already dehydrated, so be sure to provide plenty of fluids (water) before going outside, while out in the heat and afterwards. Playing in the hot summer sun means lots

weight, light-colored clothing. Schedule outdoor activities carefully, for morning and evening hours. Stay cool with cool showers or baths. Seek medical care immediate if your child has symptoms of heat-related illness.

4 - Helmet Safety

An appropriate helmet must be worn whenever a child is "on wheels." This means bicycles, scooters, skates, rollerblades, skateboards and more. The helmet must fit properly. Helmets can be lifesaving and can protect a child from serious injury. Be sure the right type of helmet is being used. For example, a bike helmet needs to be used for biking. Moms and dads should wear helmets, as well.

Enjoy the summer, and stay safe!

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.

LIVING +HEALTHY+

of fluid losses, so avoid strenuous activity during peak sun hours. Look for shade and take lots of breaks. Seek medical attention immediately for any signs of heat-related illness. Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open. Dress infants and children in loose, light-



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MSA holding auditions tomorrow



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Special to Wesson News

The Mississippi School of the Arts (MSA) will hold auditions for the Dance, Theatre, Vocal and Media Arts/Filmmaking Departments tomorrow for tenth graders who applied by June 3.

The process for admission to MSA includes the on-line application, and a virtual or on-site audition and interview. Accepted students attend their Junior and Senior years of high school at MSA.

MSA is a great option for local students who may want to still live at home but take advantage of all the educational opportunities offered. Students who live within 25 miles of MSA can commute.

MSA is a public statewide eleventh and twelfth grade residential high school located in Brookhaven on the Historic Whitworth College campus. Annually, MSA enrolls approximately 140 stu-

dents who meet and exceed the traditional Mississippi high school curriculum by receiving intensive instruction in dance, literary arts, theatre, visual arts, vocal music and media arts/filmmaking.

At MSA, students can explore the arts in an extraordinary way. The school also fills a special need for students with demonstrated talent who need a collegiate level learning experience in the arts not widely available across Mississippi.

In addition to MSA students consistently winning awards for their work on the state, regional and national levels, the school has the third highest ACT average in the state, creating significant college scholarship opportunities for graduating seniors.

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WCC chooses Founder's Day Queen



Wesson Founder's Day Queen.

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The 2020-2021 Wesson Chamber of Commerce Founder's Day Queen is Kayla Barfield.

The Wesson High School (WHS) student has been a member of student council, beta club service organization, yearbook staff, and first priority spiritual fellowship. She has also been a cheerleader, baseball team statistician and Nena Smith dancer. Barfield is also an active volunteer, who gives her time to Brookhaven Animal Rescue League (BARL), Socks for Heroes and Stronghope Baptist Church, among other organizations.

Barfield will be a senior at WHS next year and plans to attend Co-Lin and then the University of Southern Mis-

issippi to major in speech pathology.

"Being selected is an incredible honor," she says. "The town of Wesson has always been so welcoming and is where I have made many lifelong friends. Wesson has given so much to me, and being selected provides me an opportunity to give back to my community."

While Wesson did not have a Founder's Day event this year due to COVID-19 pandemic cautions, the event committee decided to keep with tradition of having a Queen. The queen will resume regular duties in the future when COVID-19 restrictions lighten. Her duties include ceremonial ribbon cuttings and appearances at events, such as the Wesson Chamber of Commerce banquet.

Mill Town Mall

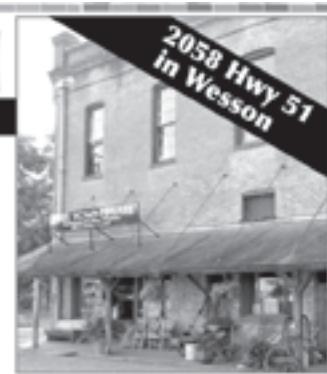
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Covid-19 effect on Co-Lin tennis

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Co-Lin's Lady Wolves were not given an opportunity to defend their 2019 MACJC/NJCAA Region XXIII Championships in tennis due to cancellation of the season over concerns of the novel coronavirus. The men's program had taken several steps in improving at the midway point of the season and were competitive in every match going into spring break before the COVID-19 shutdown. The women finished the short season, 6-3, while the men finished 1-8.

"We were dealing with some injuries and needed spring break to recover; and had we been able to come back, I feel that our women would have finished the season strong and would have been a major contender to repeat as State Champions or at the very least

been in the top three," said Co-Lin men and women's head coach Dana Hale. "Going into this season, we knew the other men's teams this year were very solid at every position. Our goal was to compete in every match that we played; and, despite our record, I believe we did just that. We lost a couple of close matches 5-4 and a couple more at 6-3.

At the midway point of the season, the Lady Wolves had several leaders in the MACJC. Paula Coronado and Susana Patino were undefeated at No. 1 doubles (7-0), while Madison Shows and Mckenzie Shows had lost just one match (8-1) at No. 2 doubles. Both duos would have had a very strong chance in the MACJC state tournament to win the title. Patino was undefeated at

No. 2 singles (9-0) and was dominating nearly every opponent that took the court against her.

"There was great team chemistry on and off the court, and I feel that each player had improved tremendously on our women's team," said Hale. "Overall, I feel our season was a success, but I am very sad that

(6-2). Morey was 5-3 at No. 1 singles, while Toloza was nearly undefeated (7-1) at No. 2 singles.

"I am very pleased that our entire team worked hard each day and got better as the season went on; a few players that really improved were John Ready, Preston Ivy, and Samuel Boutwell," said Hale. "I am thankful for the time I had with each one of these young men, and I wish those that are moving on much success."

Co-Lin has five sophomores that will be graduating in May: Paula Coronado of Bogota, Columbia, Madison Shaws of Mendenhall, Mckenzie Shaws of Mendenhall, Jordi Morey of Barcelona, Spain, and Skylar Rasberry of Wesson.

"Our sophomores will be

cont. on page 17



our season was cut short, especially for our sophomores."

The men had some stand-out players as well: Jordi Morey and Julian Toloza dropped just two matches at No. 1 doubles



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WESSON DINING GUIDE



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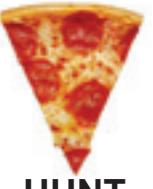
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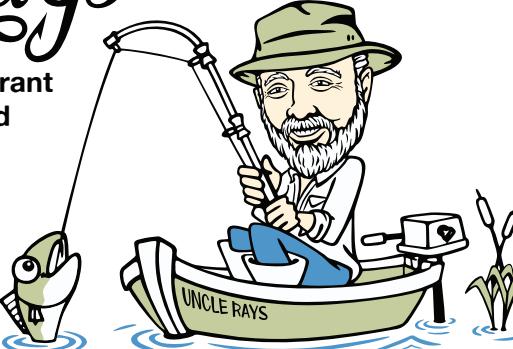
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Dancer since infancy directs Colettes

By Bob Arnold

Kennedy Moore can't remember a time when dancing wasn't part of her life.

Moore tells people it began officially when she was two years old, when her mother, Holly Moore, the owner of Showstoppers Studio of Dance on Industrial Park Road in Brookhaven -- first started bringing her to work regularly. Moore, however, will show you pictures of herself as a baby, many months removed from learning to walk and taking her first dance steps, in a basket carrier at the studio. She has been there ever since, where a career is now blossoming.

She has just joined Co-Lin as the new director of its band program's Colettes dance team.

Moore started dancing as a toddler, perfected her style before her teenage years and taught dance under her mom's tutelage as a young teen and on her own at Showstoppers by the time she graduated from high school. She danced as a Colette at Co-Lin and was captain of the collegiate group in her sophomore year.

"I learned to walk, assisted by the bars on the walls at mom's dance studio, and stayed in a crib in her office," she relates. With that kind of start, Moore was just naturally ready to return to the Colettes as their new director even before officially completing her college studies.

Growing up with her parents only a two-minute ride from her mom's studio, Moore has never been far away from dancing throughout her short life. She went to elementary and junior high school at Brookhaven Academy and completed her secondary education at Brookhaven High School, where she graduated in 2015.

"At Brookhaven Academy, I competed in track, but dance



Special to Wesson News

remained my focus," she recalls. After school, the dancing part of her life continued at her mom's studio. "It was at Brookhaven High School (BHS) that I found people as serious and passionate about dancing as I was," she says.

Once at Co-Lin, she found the Colettes, the encouragement of Juanita Proffitt, the college's director of bands, and more people who had similar interests in dance. She was even

minor in dance. Preferring her dancing life in Brookhaven to the life in Hattiesburg, she has been commuting to her classes and working at Showstoppers. She is considering Master's Degree studies so she can also teach at Co-Lin.

At Co-Lin, Moore will work with fifteen Colettes, possibly a couple more, as the choreographer for their performances at football and basketball games and special events at

pers as the primary teacher of hip hop dance and an assistant instructor for ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary and point dancing.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy working out at the gym, where I can also hang out with friends.

Since I was nine years old, I've been visiting Disney World in Florida -- after dance camps and on family vacations. I've been there 19 times. In 2017, I danced in the Disney World Magic Kingdom parade.

Are you a reader?

I am a listener to podcasts, mostly devotional and spiritual.

Do you enjoy movies or theater?

I really enjoy movies -- those produced by Disney and mysteries. My favorite actor is Liam Neeson. My favorite movies are *High School Musical* and *Breakfast Club*.

I've also become involved in Brookhaven Little Theater -- first as part of the cast of *Newsies*, and subsequently *Little Mermaid* and *Matilda*. I did the choreography for *Frozen* and will play the feather duster in *Beauty and the Beast*. It's a bit of a diversion from dance.

How about music?

I'm eclectic. I will listen to almost anything. I am into 1980s music. I like Whitney Houston a whole lot. My father got me into country music, but I like the modern -- Sam Hunt's music, not the twangy sound.

How would you spend your lottery winnings if you were so lucky.

I am a saver, but I would take a trip to Disneyland in California, and invest some money in expansion of Showstoppers Studio of Dance.

How would you change the world?

People need to understand that they are equal to one another. No one is superior. Everyone has a talent and can make a different contribution.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

able to room in a dorm with her best friend. "I loved Co-Lin," she affirms. When she left Co-Lin, Proffitt told her the school would always be there for her -- an assurance she remembers in the light of her new job.

After Co-Lin, Moore went to the University of Southern Mississippi, where she has completed work on her major in Child Development and will graduate in December after finishing requirements of her

parades, commercial promotions and schools. She directs their regular workouts, and even selects the music for the basketball game performances. Moore wants to continue to raise the Colettes to "a collegiate level," focusing them on the technique foundation of dance, the art of performing and dancing with live music.

Moore isn't leaving her mom, though. She will remain on the staff at Showstop-

Free online workforce courses offered

Special to Wesson News

Co-Lin's Workforce Education program, through a partnership with ed2go, is offering 10 free workplace skills online courses until June 30 that cover topics including customer service, management, internet marketing, communications, and job searching. The public is invited to take advantage of these ed2go courses that can be completed on student schedules from anywhere with internet access.

The Co-Lin Workforce Education's partnership with ed2go, a Cengage company which is the industry leader in online learning, has greatly expanded the college's educational offerings to diverse learners. Ed2go develops innovative, relevant courses that align with job market demands. Its catalog features

a range of courses from career and certification training to personal and professional development, with a focus on teaching transferable skills. The non-college credit courses covering hundreds of topics may be utilized to develop new or upgrade existing skills. Additionally, other courses are available for teacher continuing education credits. They all utilize an intuitive, fully online model designed to meet the needs of adult learners.

"This partnership is a natural fit," Workforce Center Director Stephenie Sullivan says. "We understand the value of career training in today's ever-changing job market and are providing a flexible option to do so. Ed2go has a proven background that helps us best

meet the learning needs in our district."



Special to Wesson News

The Co-Lin training classes valued between \$95 and \$115 contain 24 hours of material. Those interested may view the comprehensive list and register at www.colin.edu/freeworkplaceskills.

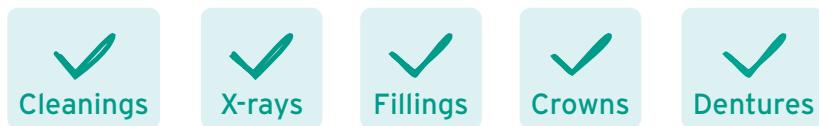
"We believe that having the right skills and knowing how to

utilize them is vital for both job seekers and those who are employed," says Sullivan. "These classes include a mix of skills for today's changing job market."

Ed2go believes that anyone, anywhere can learn. Started in 1997, it provides high quality education the fastest way possible — online. By partnering with academic institutions such as Co-Lin, it reaches life-long learners in all 50 states and in more than 16 countries. Co-Lin's Workforce Education program offers affordable, short-term, non-credit, workforce training classes that provide new or enhanced skills needed to enter a new field or re-enter with upgraded skills. For more information, contact Celeste Williamson at celeste.williamson@colin.edu or visit www.colin.edu/freeworkplaceskills.

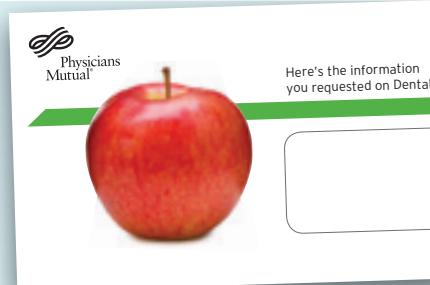
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Wesson Legion women making masks

Special to Wesson News

A small group of Wesson American Legion Auxiliary women are practicing social distancing to keep themselves safe from COVID-19 and making masks while they lay low so health care and public service workers and others who can't avoid crowds can protect themselves as well.

On three mornings a week, three of the women -- Cathy Stroud, Melnee Frazier and Sharon Langley -- meet at the Wesson American Legion hall to sew the masks. Pat McCreary, Dot Jones and Janet Currie are also making masks at their homes.

Since early April, the five women have turned out more than 400 masks.

"We are giving them away," says Langley. "They



Wesson women -- (left to right) Sharon Langley, Cathy Stroud and Melnee Frazier -- meet three days a week at American Legion hall to make COVID-19 protective masks.

are being worn by Wesson police, Brookhaven fire department personnel, staff and truckers at Wal-Mart Distribution Center, emergency room personnel in McComb and people who just pick them up at the Legion hall as needed. Occasionally, we'll see someone not wearing a

mask who should be, and will give one away randomly."

The Legion sewers have sent them to King's Daughters Medical Center, Silver Cross Nursing Home and other area nursing homes, the Compassus Hospice in Brookhaven and the VA

clinic in Natchez.

The sewers use quality cotton material for the masks, which they acquire mostly through donations and some purchasing. They say their biggest frustration has been periodic unavailability of the elastic they use for the mask ear straps.

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A gem worth looking for

All photos Special to Wesson News

By Guest Columnist Shaw Furlow

Mississippi, like every state, has local gems hidden in the most obscure places. A mom and pop store at the crossroads of two county roads. A small diner that serves a rare special. Or a church long abandoned. These places are out there. You just have to look.

Down a road in the Loyd Star community is just such a place. It's a museum of sorts. Because it is a private residence, I'll not give you the location. Suffice it to say it's down a road that could better be described as a path.

Drive through the gates, and you are welcomed by old oil signs and rusted cars. Across the road, two bicycles are suspended to look like ET. Around the last curve is a wall constructed of old television sets.

Our host, Mike Case, meets us in front of a very rustic cabin. He instantly begins showing us around. One of the main attractions on his property is an old stair lift. "This old thing came out of somebody's house," he explains. "A young couple bought a grandma's house and didn't need it. So here it is." The old chair lift leads to a platform where a zip line will take you over a pond. "It takes more time to ride the chair lift up than it does to fly across the pond," says Case. "Then you gotta' walk back. A lot of work for a few seconds of fun."

Another curiosity is a display case housing an Elvis costume originally made for Kenny Cothorn (more about him in a second). If you've ever been to Graceland, you can envision



Wesson News



Mike Case



this display. Next to it stands an old elevator -- you know, the kind with the gate you have to close. It just stands there. No function other than to add to the quirkiness of the place.

Case built two cabins on the property with the help of a couple of friends who wired and plumbed them. The main cabin, which he started in 1992, has two rooms and a bathroom. The other cabin, affectionately known as the love shack, has power but no plumbing or air conditioning. Pretty much storage right now.

Inside the main cabin, the guest room is part of the kitchen. There are pictures throughout, some of family, but most of anything but -- all over the place, even on the ceilings. There are also political posters, concert posters, all kinds of memorabilia pinned to the

walls. And baseball caps all over the place.

I asked Case about a piece of stained glass in his kitchen. "Yeah, Lauderdale did that," he says, making reference to his late friend, Brookhaven artist Bill Lauderdale, who also crafted the windows of The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Brookhaven. That piece really stands out against all the Americana memorabilia. "Yeah...it's really pretty," he admits.

Are there modern conveniences? A few. Yes. There is a window air conditioner that keeps the temperature comfortable. The kitchen, while not glamorous, is functional.

Back outside on the front porch, Case rocks in a chair that has a stuffed buzzard attached to it. "Ya know, we used to have a music festival out

here," he recalls. "The cabins were the venue for The Lincoln County Music Awards for several years." The prizes were old trophies, both found and made. I believe local artist Don Jacobs actually won an award for his first album. Earlier, I mentioned local singer Kenny Cothorn. He wore the customized Elvis suit when he emceed the awards ceremony.

Case implores: "You know what this is?" We were asked that question several times. While I got close to guessing correctly on one item, I missed the others badly. One was a machine that punched out the form that makes cartons for eggs. Another was a piece that helped steer an old Ford. It was just hanging on the fence next to other things I didn't recognize.

If you follow the walkway on the property, you'll see spark plugs, an old police badge, bottle caps, marbles all embedded in the cement. Why? Why not?

The place is a little grown up now. Weed eating it would be a nightmare. There is a lot of stuff crammed into a small space. There are lots of unique places in Mississippi, but this one has to be in the top ten, at least my top ten. Walt Grayson may have another list.

With the COVID-19 pandemic hopefully winding down, things are opening up. Live music, theatre and art shows are just over the curve. Let's play safe. That's it for now. 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.

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Special to Wesson News

By Guest Columnist Gary R. Bachman

One of the landscape views many gardeners ignore is the horizontal plane. Plants that create mats or carpets create a lot of interest and serve an important role in landscapes and gardens.

Cora vinca is one of those perfect landscape plants. It produces loads of color and handles the high heat and dry conditions of our Mississippi summers.

I always recommend Cora vincas, which have dark-green foliage that has a leathery look and texture, making the perfect background to show off a heavy production of colorful flowers. Upright Cora grows to about 14 inches tall with a wider spread, and it has colors of white, lavender, violet, strawberry and red. I like Cora Cascade vinca because of its heavy production of colorful flowers. Cora Cascade produces good-branching plants that spread up to 36 inches wide. It has a trailing

growth habit perfect for displaying its big, showy flowers that come in colors of cherry, lilac, peach blush, polka dot and strawberry.

Purslane is another plant that is perfect for carpeting many places in your garden. Purslane forms a dense mat of drought-resistant color. It also does great in small patches. Purslane is a tough summer plant for our Mississippi heat, and it has become one of my

flowering favorites. The selections Yellow Pazazz and Tan-

gerine Pazazz have a spreading habit that forms a carpet of succulent foliage and bright flowers. Purslane Fairy Tale Cinderella is covered with 1-inch, yellow-petalled flowers with pinkish-orange puffball centers.

Ornamental sweet pota-

toes are perfect for laying a gorgeous carpet of vivid and attractive leaves. They are vigorous plants that produce thick mats of color. The Sweet Caroline series offers a wide selection of heart-shaped and cut-leaf foliage in a variety of colors for the landscape. Foliage colors include purple, red, bronze and light green. Sweet Caroline selections Raven and Bewitched have dramatic black foliage.

Since ornamental sweet potatoes can be vigorous,

they may become unruly and overrun other plants. Simply prune back to keep them in bounds. Ornamental sweet potatoes perform best with consistent moisture. Be sure to water during dry periods to help maintain good plant health.

TENDING YOUR GARDEN

Not all colorful flower carpets are horizontal. Tangerine Beauty cross vine is perfect to create a vertical carpet of color scrambling up and over an arbor or fence. It is simply covered in flowers. Tangerine Beauty cross vine is the well-behaved cousin to its rambunctious relative, trumpet creeper. The flower buds are a pinkish red and open into funnel-shaped orange, salmon and yellow flowers. The flowers bloom on old wood, so prune immediately after flowering if needed.

There's nothing like creating a floral carpet of color to create landscape interest. Now's the time to be planting colorful, summer-season plants that will grow into a beautiful garden mat of color.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Gary Bachman is an Extension and research professor of horticulture at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi.

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cont. from page 6

Citizen Furr dies at 91

Furr operated the Gulf Service Station on Highway 51 in Wesson for more than 70 years following the death of his father. The station became the gathering place of an informal town men's group, which discussed local issues and events most every day.

One of the founders of the Wesson Volunteer Fire Department, he served as its fire chief for many years. In addition to fighting fires for the department, he organized the Wesson Christmas parade and children's time with Santa Claus following the parade and the Wesson Flea Market -- the fire department's major fundraiser, which he continued to bring together for many years even after retiring from the fire department.

An active member of Wesson Lion's Club, he served as its president, led its singing at meetings, and was the "Tail Twister," collecting fines from those members not wearing pins to demonstrate their pride in participating in the club.

Furr was multi-talented. He was an avid gardener with a greenhouse, which gave him a head start every year in growing his flowers and vegetables. He had a beautiful rose garden, and many of those roses found their way into his church.

In his woodworking shop, Furr made tables, chairs, benches and other pieces, which he gave away.

Furr also loved photography, and took his camera with him everywhere to take pictures of unsuspecting individuals. He turned much of his photography into slide presentations, which he shared with church and Lions Club

members, and others.

Furr is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years, Margaret, daughters Amy and Barbara, grandson Blake and wife Nikkie and great grandchildren Lola and Barrett.

Back in the late 1990s, the Wesson Board of Alderman appropriately named the town's volunteer fire station "Kenneth Furr Fire Station."

Furr, along with his buddy Wadell Pettigrew, were Wesson's first fire fighters in 1945, and when fires broke out, responded in an old T Model Ford fire truck, assisted by fellow townsmen, who helped drag the hose. They learned fire fighting as necessity demanded.

Their first real fire truck was a 1942 Dodge army surplus that had been given to Co-Lin by the government.

An organized fire department with sixteen volunteers started in 1968, with Furr continuing in the role of Chief, in which he had served for 23 years up until then. In the early days, Wesson firemen were called to duty by a siren that could be heard throughout the town. Later, each fireman's home phone was equipped with a distinct ring set off from the police department. Today, each fireman is equipped with a 911 pager.

Even after retiring as Fire Chief, Furr long organized the fundraising projects that financed equipment for the fire department, the Wesson Christmas parade, the children's Christmas party and safety programs at schools and churches. The major fundraiser over the years has been the Wesson Flea Market, which Furr helped build into the big event it has become.



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cont. from page 6

Covid-19 effect on Co-Lin tennis

greatly missed and so will their leadership, especially that of McKenzie and Madison Shows," said Hale. "McKenzie was my go-to player, and I leaned to her often in assisting me with various tasks from team communication to practice and match preparation. I really enjoyed getting to know each one of these players and am very happy that Paula has signed and will be transferring to Cumberland University to continue her career."

Moving forward, the Co-Lin tennis program has much to look forward to, including the new tennis facility currently being built near the softball

field on the Wesson campus. Construction will be completed in the near future, with team tryouts expected in July, pending the development of the coronavirus.

"I am looking forward to having much of the team back for next season," said Hale. "I feel we will be able to build on the foundation set by this year's men's team and continue to grow our program. Toloza will be a player to watch as he assumes the No. 1 spot, and we have high hopes for our returning players on the women's team, especially Patino, who will take over the No. 1 singles spot."

State litter education goes online

Special to Wesson News

With in-person meetings on hold for now due to COVID-19, the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) continues to offer online litter prevention programs for children and families.

The "Don't Trash Mississippi" with Myrtle the Turtle education program is designed for school-aged children in kindergarten through fifth grade. It is available at GoMDOT.com/DontTrashMS and on [@MississippiDOT](https://www.facebook.com/MDOT) social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube.

The fun and informative program is presented by Litter Prevention Coordinator Lorrie Redden. While the programs are usually offered in person throughout the state at summer camps and community events, this year the programs will be available digitally. The presentation includes a live actor, animated videos and interactive ques-

tions. There are also reinforcement materials to teach children about the negative impacts of litter pollution.

"Myrtle the Turtle considers all of Mississippi her home and encourages children to take responsibility to keep their home, Mississippi, clean and beautiful for all to enjoy," says Melinda McGrath, P.E., MDOT executive director.

"Even though people are staying home more and traveling less, litter continues to be a problem," Redden said. "In fact, litter removal costs the state over \$3 million a year. By teaching people at an early age about the environmental and societal impacts of litter, we can all work together to keep the Magnolia State clean."

To access the program and more litter prevention information, visit GoMDOT.com/DontTrashMS. See "Myrtle The Turtle Talks About Litter" on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/uj-nL4AFdKw>.

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Reopening, resources & scholarship

By Bob Arnold

Reopened for business. All Mississippi organizations closed under statewide COVID-19 pandemic protections have reopened. The latest to reopen are movie theaters, bowling alleys, indoor amusement places, libraries, and museums under a new executive order by Gov. Tate Reeves. With the reopenings, crowd sizes are limited to 50 indoors and 100 outdoors if social distancing precautions can be implemented, and to 20 indoors and 50 outdoors where they are not possible. The Governor's new order also instructs those in the vulnerable population to continue sheltering in place -- all elderly individuals (age 65 or older) and persons with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised by chemotherapy for cancer or any other condition requiring such therapy. "There will still be health and safety guidelines, but Mississippi will be open for business," Reeves said. "We are facing two ongoing emergencies. One is the public health crisis. That threat is real, dangerous,

and deadly. It is here, and we must face it. We also face an economic crisis the likes of which we have not seen since the great depression. We have to address both."

MSU COVID-19 resources. New resources to help confront challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic are available through Mississippi State University (MSU):

- The Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center has launched a new website with a special COVID-19 resource page specifically to help small communities. Accessible resources include toolkits for business owners to safely welcome customers while promoting brand identity, show simple ways for restaurants to adapt, offer options for helping aging and youth populations, and guide family-friendly activities that can positively impact communities. Founded in 1979 as the university's community design outreach program housed in the College of Architecture, Art and Design, the Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center provides planning and design services across Mississip-

pi. For more information, visit www.smalltowncenter.msstate.edu and follow on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @smalltowncenter.

- The MSU Extension Service has released a publication that breaks down the specifics of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program -- or CFAP -- for row crop, livestock, and dairy producers. The publication also outlines the CFAP application process, eligible commodities and payment rates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture program will provide up to \$16 billion to eligible agricultural producers from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stability Act and the Commodity Credit Corporation. The USDA Farm Service Agency is accepting applications at local FSA offices and working with producers to process applications by phone and using email and online tools.

Aspiring teachers scholarship. Voyager Sopris Learning, a division of Cambium Learning Group, Inc., has launched the 2020 Aspiring Teacher Scholarship contest

for graduating high school seniors in Mississippi and Alabama who will be pursuing a bachelor's degree in education. Eligible students must plan to attend a college or university this fall in the same state where they graduated from high school. The graduating seniors are asked to submit a 500-word essay on why they want to become a teacher. Applying students must also include information about a teacher who helped them advance to where they are today and a letter of recommendation from a teacher or guidance counselor. Originality and creativity are among the review criteria the judging panel will use to base their decisions. One winner from each state will be selected. They will each earn a \$1,000 scholarship. The contest is open now and closes July 21, with the winners to be announced August 3. The 2020 Aspiring Teacher Scholarship is sponsored by LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), Voyager Sopris Learning's landmark professional learning series on the science of reading. For more information and the application, eligible students in Mississippi should visit www.VoyagerSopris.com/info/ms-scholarship.

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George Mercier celebrates 103rd birthday

Special to Wesson News

Wesson native and resident George Mercier celebrated his 103rd birthday last month with the help of friends locally and the Mississippi State House of Representatives.

As he watched from his front porch on the evening of his birthday, May 8, locals driving by honked the horns of their vehicles and waved to acknowledge the special occasion. Becky Currie, the District 92 member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, presented a special proclamation from the legislative body signed by her and Philip Gunn, the House Speaker, that commended and congratulated him on the occasion of his birthday for his "life and heroism" as a "World War II veteran and United States Navy Lieutenant Commander."

Timothy George Mercier was born in Wesson on May 8, 1917, and graduated from Wesson High School, Co-Lin, and Louisiana State University, where he earned a degree in chemical engineering.

The special legislative proclamation called him "an individual of wise counsel," citing his relationships as "a husband, father, son, brother, uncle, friend and veteran" to the people his life has touched.

The proclamation described how, after initially going to work for Baton Rouge-base Ethyl Corporation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, attended Naval Officers' Training School and served in the South Pacific to provide assistance and ordinance for ships and air craft and later

with the Bureau of Ordinance of the Navy Department in Washington, D.C.

For 73 years before her death in 2019, Mercier was married to the former Dorothy Ragland. She returned



Wesson News

George Mercier reviews birthday citation from State Legislature on his front porch as Wesson residents drive by honking horns and waving to him.

with Mercier to his native Wesson in 1972 after he retired following a twenty-year career with Ethyl Corporation for which he worked in Baton Rouge and Houston. Over that span of time, they had five children -- three of them now adult seniors themselves: Tim, 69, Anne, 67, Laurie, 64, Patricia, 57, and Chet, 55.

Mercier and his wife were active and faithful members of Wesson Presbyterian Church.

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Print Issue to Resume in July



Starting in July, we will resume printing the *Wesson News*. But, we have learned how much people love our online issue. We will continue with both a larger online issue and our standard print issue. Free copies will be available in distribution racks at high traffic locations in Brookhaven, Crystal Springs, Hazlehurst and Wesson.

The print issue will be delivered to homes by subscription only.

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Hazlehurst producer receives film award

Special to Wesson News

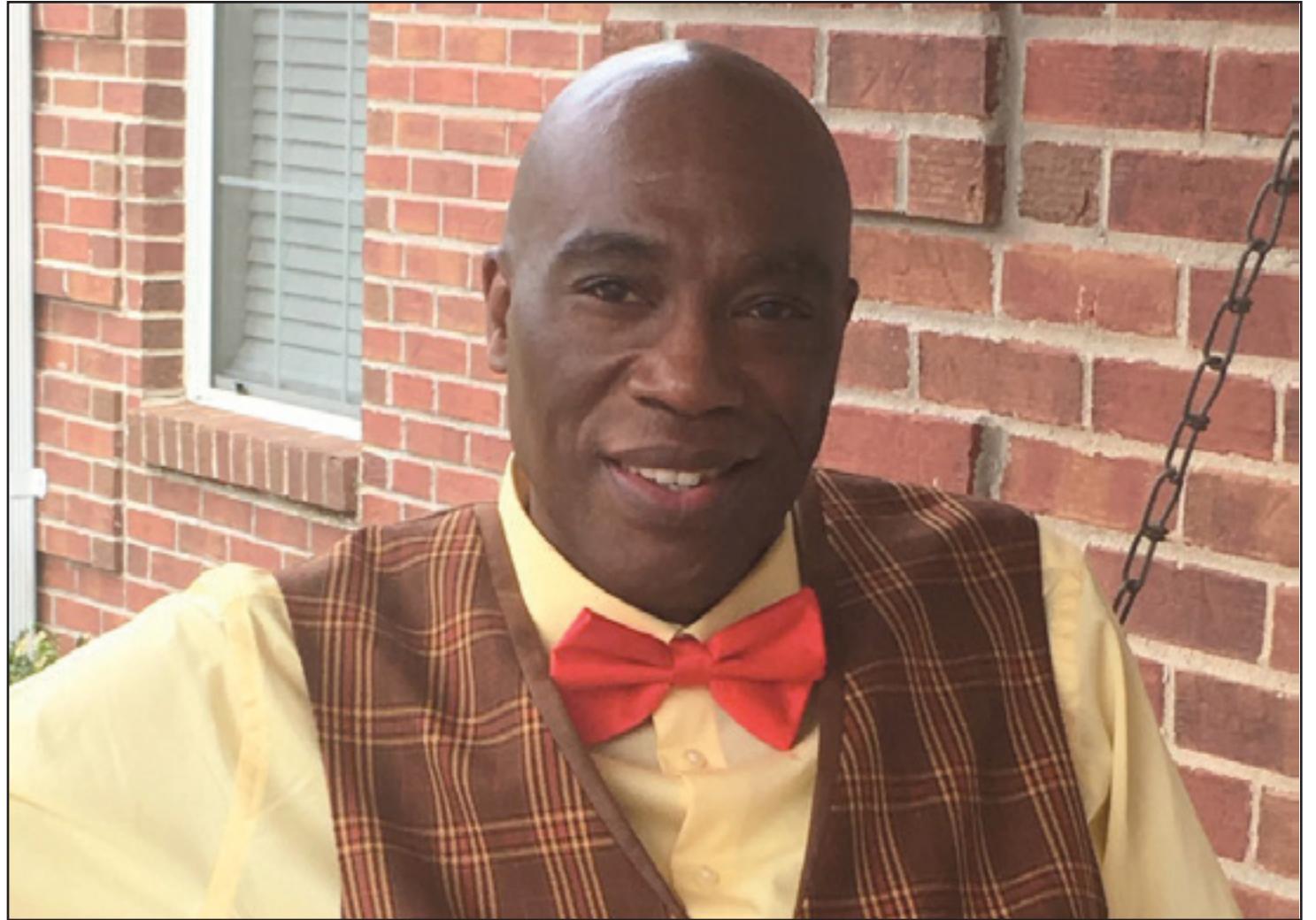
A Hazlehurst film producer has won a prestigious award for a documentary feature about a young boy who mysteriously appeared in the town and predicted a deadly 1969 tornado.

IndieFEST Film Awards presented its special Award of Recognition to SVCC Productions' Steve Collins for *The Boy With The Pop Bottle On His Head*, which brings the 50-year old Mississippi mystery to life. It portrays 10-year-old Jackson model, actor, singer and business owner Terrance LaMont Smith, Jr., as the strange 12-year old boy who appeared with a glass coke bottle on his head out of nowhere in Hazlehurst from parts unknown proclaiming to anyone who would listen that "something bad is gonna happen in this town," apparently foreseeing the historic and deadly tornado that not even meteorologists saw coming. Despite constant threats, beatings and all sorts of torturous acts against him, the bottle remarkably would never fall from his head. Smith, many people say, has many features that characterized the "Boy."

Collins shot the film on location in many parts of Hazlehurst and several scenes in Crystal Springs. It includes many interviews with local people and others in neighboring cities who interacted with the boy.

The documentary also spotlights some of the 1960's civil rights struggles in Hazlehurst, photos of the tornado damage and newspaper articles from that time period.

"I thank God Almighty for IndieFest recognizing my work and presenting me with its outstanding award," Collins says. "My main achievement was to not only just tell this 50-year old story that



Special to Wesson News

some people thought to be a myth, but also find out who this little boy was, where he came from and that he is still alive today. I hope the world sees this documentary and it has a huge impact on the state of Mississippi. I hope it will encourage the city of Hazlehurst to erect a monument to commemorate the lives lost in the January 23, 1969. tornado, and perhaps even a statue of *The Boy With The Pop Bottle On His Head*."

IndieFEST Film Awards recognizes film, television, videography and new media professionals who demonstrate exceptional achievement in craft and creativity, and those who produce stand-out entertainment or contribute to profound social change. Entries are judged by highly qualified professionals in the film and television industry. Information about the IndieFEST and a list of recent winners can be found at www.theindiefest.com.

[theindiefest.com](http://www.theindiefest.com).

In winning an IndieFEST Film Award, Steve Collins and SVCC Productions join the ranks of other high-profile winners of this internationally respected award including, Liam Neeson as the narrator of *Love Thy Nature, A Path Appears* documentary featuring George Clooney and Blake Lively, *Radical Grace*, a searing expose, whose executive producer is Susan Sarandon, *David and Goliath* by Peabody winner Leon Lee, and *Touched with Fire*, starring Katie Holmes.

"It's not easy to win an IndieFEST award," says Rick Prickett, who chairs The IndieFEST Film Awards. "Entries are received from around the world from powerhouse companies to remarkable new talent. The IndieFEST helps set the standard for craft and creativity. The judges were pleased with the exceptional high quality of entries. The

goal of The IndieFEST Film Awards is to help winners achieve the recognition they deserve."

For more information, call Steve Collins at 601-894-3392 or 601-613-7413. The official trailer about the documentary can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aS6TPG_defl.

For more information, visit:

- Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/TheBoyWithThePopBottleOnHisHead/?ref=bookmarks>

- WAPT 16 News.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyNQuoDuwms>

- Clarion Ledger.

<https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2019/01/23/hazlehurst-tornado-boy-prophet-warned-deadly-event-50-years-ago/2515035002/>

- Mid-South Black Film Festival Best Documentary.

<https://www.midsouthblackfilm.com/awards-prizes>

WAC recognizes sixty-four students

Wesson Attendance Center hosted individual graduation ceremonies at which sixty-four seniors were recognized for service, awards for citizenship and character and as scholarship recipients.

WAC principal Marilyn Phillips challenged the Class of 2020 with high expectations for greatness.

Those who were recognized included:

Christian Cole Adams. Graduated with honors. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Ethan Hunter Ainsworth. Graduated with honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence and Cheer Scholarships from Co-Lin. School Service Award from WAC faculty.

Daniel Lee Anderson. Academic and Robotics teams. Beta Club. Blood donor. Outstanding Student and Bulldog Scholarships from Louisiana Tech.

Emma Claire Anderson. Graduated with honors. Beta Club President, Academic and Robotic teams. Student Council. Blood donor. Academic Excellence and Band Scholarships from Co-Lin and Girl's State Scholarship. Shelby Diane Barnett- Graduated with High Honors. Recognized for yearbook, Beta Club, and blood donor. Received Academic Excellence, James Lewis Endowment, and Colette Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Lacie Ann Bates. Beta Club.

Carlos Mauel Bello. Blood donor.

Louis Kenner Bizot IV. Graduated with High Honors. Class of 2020 Hall of Fame. Lindy Callahan Scholar Athlete Nominee. DAR Good Citizen Award. Athletic Cobra Award. Beta Club. Academic Excellence, Pitts Presidential and Baseball Scholarships from Co-Lin. Character Award from WAC faculty.

Abigail McKenzie Boleware. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Natalie Shea Bonds. Graduated with High Honors. Senior Class President. Blood donor. Academic Excellence and Lee Will and Mary Berry Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Tyler Lance Brewer. Graduated with Honors. Academic Excellence and Golf Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Makayla Renee Brister. Blood donor. Scholarship from Co-Lin.

KaDazia Iyana Brown. Graduated with High Honors. Yearbook. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence, Ken and Ruth Patterson Endowment, and Colette Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Olivia Claire Clark. Graduated with Highest Honors. Yearbook. Beta Club Vice-President. Academic Excellence, Ellis and Myrtis Stuart Endowment, and Colette Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Anna Claire Crow. Salutatorian. Graduated with Highest Honors. Yearbook. Senior Class Secretary. Dennis White Commitment to Excellence Award. Beta Club. Academic Excellence and Softball Scholarships from Southwest Mississippi Community College. Citizenship Award from WAC faculty.

Charles Bradley Cunningham III. Academic Excellence and Band Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Arie Kerrington Douglas. NB and Catherine White Endowment and Soccer Scholarships from Co-Lin. James M. Lewis Lions Club Scholarship.

Zoey Elaine Dunaway. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program.

Sidney Blake Dunbar. Robotics team. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Gabriela Flores. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from

Holmes Community College.

Cody DonMikell Gallman. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Blood donor.

Cody Bryant Goodman. John Phillip Sousa Band Award. Beta Club. Academic Excellence and Band Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Molly Michelle Granger. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Academic Excellence, Tom Earl and Ruby Hogg James Endowment, and Band Scholarships from Co-Lin. Westlake Chemical Scholarship.

Kiera Lashun Hemanes. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Cody Hisaw. Blood donor.

Scott Hutt. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin. Colby Porter Memorial Scholarship.

Natassja Jakyra James. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Laney Adelle Jones. Graduated with High Honors. Academic Excellence and Beta Sigma Phi Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Shelbi LeAnn Maxwell. Salutatorian. Graduated with Highest Honors. Co-President of the Student Council. Class of 2020 Hall of Fame. Beta Club. Athletic Cobra Award. Blood donor. Taylor Presidential and Softball Scholarships from Co-Lin. Lions Club Scholarship. Character Award from WAC faculty.

Lillie Grace McLendon. Blood donor.

Mercedes Ann McLendon. Beta Club. Blood donor.

Caylea Beth McManus. Graduated with High Honors. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Katie Scott McSweyn. Graduated with High Honors. Yearbook. Beta Club. Blood donor. Franklin Award and Golf Scholarships from Mississippi University for Women.

Benjamin Adonias Mendez. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club Outreach and Programs Chair. Blood donor. Two-year completion of Teacher Academy Program. School of Music Performance, Helen Hardin Honors College, and Provost ACT Scholarships from University of Memphis.

Justin Michael Miller. Academic and Robotics teams. Academic Excellence and Jewell Knight Memorial Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Robbie Michael Miller. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Aaron Kyle Mooney. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Academic Excellence, James Lowery Endowment, and John McClelland Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Hunter Clayton Moulder. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence, Band, and Noah Cap Wallace Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Brooklyn Danae Nicholson. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Matthew Bryce Oster. Received Academic Excellence and Tennis Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Everett Duane Pierce, Jr. Academic team. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Ashton Elliot Roberson. Graduated with High Honors. Academic team. Beta Club. Star Student. Freshman Academic Excellence, Colvard Future Leader, Study Abroad, and Bagley College of Engineering Excellence Scholarships from Mississippi State University to cover full cost. Citizenship Award from WAC faculty.

Lauren Victoria Robinson. Blood donor.

Madeline Grace Robinson. Blood donor.

Ryleigh Paige Sheppard. Graduated with High Honors. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Academic Excellence and Trustmark Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Jordan Alise Slonaker. Beta Club. Academic Excellence, Colette, and Michael Edward and Susan Lofton Keys Math Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin. Jimmy Hodges Memorial Scholarship from the Lions Club.

Isabella Victoria Smith. Blood donor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from the University of Southern Mississippi. Local Ministerial Alliance Scholarship.

Jaiden Colson Smith. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence and Dennis White Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Riley Virginia Smith. Valedictorian. Graduated with Highest Honors. Academic Excellence and Presidential Leadership Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Brittany Ciera Stapleton. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club.

Braden Hunter Taylor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Camelia Colleen Terrebonne. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Jonathan Taylor Twiner. Dual graduate completing requirements for high school diploma and a Welding Certificate from Co-Lin. To participate in Co-Lin August graduation ceremony.

Christopher Chase Wages-Coghlan. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Amya Michelle Williams. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club. Yearbook Editor. Heritage and Endowment Scholarships from Mississippi.

Caitlyn Marie Williams. Graduated with High Honors. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Blood donor. Beta Club Vice President. Academic Excellence Scholarship from the University of Southern Mississippi. Girl's State Scholarship.

Jaiden Colson Smith. Graduated with High Honors. Beta Club. Blood donor. Academic Excellence and Dennis White Endowment Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Riley Virginia Smith. Valedictorian. Graduated with Highest Honors. Academic Excellence and Presidential Leadership Scholarships from Co-Lin.

Brittany Ciera Stapleton. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club.

Braden Hunter Taylor. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Camelia Colleen Terrebonne. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Jonathan Taylor Twiner. Dual graduate completing requirements for high school diploma and a Welding Certificate from Co-Lin. To participate in Co-Lin August graduation ceremony.

Christopher Chase Wages-Coghlan. Academic Excellence Scholarship from Co-Lin.

Amya Michelle Williams. Graduated with Honors. Beta Club. Yearbook Editor. Heritage and Endowment Scholarships from Mississippi.

Caitlyn Marie Williams. Graduated with High Honors. Two-year completer of Teacher Academy Program. Blood donor. Beta Club Vice President. Academic Excellence Scholarship from the University of Southern Mississippi. Girl's State Scholarship.

Roberson & Martin STAR selections

Special to Wesson News

Wesson High School (WHS) senior Ashton Roberson and Wesson Attendance Center (WAC) teacher Rod Martin are WAC 2020 STAR student and teacher.

The Student Teacher Achievement Recognition (STAR) program honors graduating high school students for academic performance and the teachers they select as exemplary. In Mississippi, the Mississippi Economic Council provides the program leadership with sponsors from the business and educational communities. This year, selection of STAR students was based on their ACT college entrance examination scores.

Roberson is the son of Joey and Barbie Roberson and Leigh Hartsook. He is a member of First Baptist Church of Summit, Mississippi. He played football, has been a French horn play-

er in the WHS Mighty Cobra Band, and participated in Academic Team competition. Roberson is a member of the Senior Beta Club and takes classes at Co-Lin as a dual enrolled student. His classmates voted him Most Likely to Succeed, and he was selected as Senior Most Handsome. He is in the Platinum ACT Club. Roberson is graduating with High Honors and has a full scholarship to Mississippi State University. He will begin his studies in engineering in the fall with early admissions to the Bagley College of Engineering.

Rod Martin, Roberson's choice for STAR Teacher, called him "an exceptional student with a bright future."

Martin has been teaching for the past 23 years. For sixteen of those years, he has taught at Wesson Attendance Center. With primary certifications in English and

history, Martin has taught in grades seven through twelve at the school. In addition, he has served as the coach for the Wesson tennis team for eight years and has sponsored the academic team for



Special to Wesson News
Rod Martin (left) and Ashton Roberson.

all 16 years.

Martin's proudest honor as a teacher, he says, are his five selections as a STAR Teacher by students at Wesson -- an honor he designates as the highest a teacher can receive.

"Wesson has so many outstanding educators who equally deserve recognition for their hard work and

dedication to helping their students learn, so to be chosen from among those worthy ranks by a student of the highest caliber is really something special and never to be taken lightly," he points out. "Students as intellectually and musically gifted as Ashton are exceedingly rare and a joy to teach, so I am absolutely humbled to have been his choice for STAR Teacher. He is an amazing young man with incredible potential and a terrific support system in place, so we all expect great things from him in the future, as well."

Martin is married to the former Penny King, also a teacher at WAC. He resides in the Strong Hope community, is the father of Jessa Martin Greer (24) and Noah Martin (21). He is an active member of Strong Hope Baptist Church, where he serves as video/presentation coordinator and pastoral sidekick.

2020 Wesson High School graduates

Special to Wesson News

Christian Cole Adams
Ethan Hunter Ainsworth
Daniel Lee Anderson
Emma Claire Anderson
Blake Ryan Armstrong
Shelby Diane Barnett
Lacie Ann Bates
Carlos Manuel Bello Silvan
Louis Kenner Bizot IV
Abigail McKenzie Boleware
Natalie Shea Bonds
Tyler Lance Brewer
Makayla Renee Brister
KaDazie Iyana Brown
Olivia Claire Clark
Anna Claire Crow
Charles Bradley Cunningham III
Arie Kerrington Douglas
Sidney Blake Dunbar
Gabriela Flores

Zachary Taylor Franklin
Cody DonMikell Gallman
Darrian Quaveon Gibson
James Glasper
Cody Bryant Goodman
Molly Michelle Granger
Kiera Lashun Hemanes
Cody Lane Hisaw
Scott Austin Hutt
Natassja Jakyra James
Shelby Annadale Jenkins
Laney Adelle Jones
Shelbi LeAnn Maxwell
Lillian Grace McLendon
Mercedes Ann McLendon
Caylea Beth McManus
Katie Scott McSweyn
Benjamin Adonias Mendez
Justin Michael Miller
Robbie Michael Miller
Aaron Kyle Mooney

Hunter Clayton Moulder
Brooklyn Danae Nicholson
Matthew Bryce Oster
Everette Duane Pierce, Jr.
Ashton Elliott Roberson
Lauren Victoria Robinson
Madeline Grace Robinson
Ryleigh Paige Sheppard
Jordan Alise Slonaker
Damien Michael Smith
IsabellaVictoria Smith
Jaiden Colson Smith
Riley Virginia Smith
Brittany Ciera Stapleton
Braden Hunter Taylor
Camelia Colleen Terrebonne
Jonathan Taylor Twiner
Christopher Chase Wages-Coghlan
Amya Michele Williams
Caitlyn Marie Williams
Catherine Grade Wilson

WAC honors four scholars

Special to Wesson News

Wesson Attendance Center selected four outstanding students as 2020 Valedictorian and Salutatorians: Riley Virginia Smith (Valedictorian) and Anna Claire Crow, Shelbi Leann Maxwell and Catherine Grace Wilson as Salutatorians.

Crow is the daughter of Bradley and Becca Crow and Stan and Claire Rasberry. She was chosen by the student body to be the 2019 Homecoming Queen. Crow is an editor of the yearbook staff, is serving as secretary of her senior class, and is a member of the varsity soft-

of the Senior Beta Club and is a dual-enrollment student at Co-Lin, where she has been inducted into Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honor Society. She is on the varsity softball, basketball, cheer and cross country teams. Maxwell is a mem-

where she has been inducted into Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honor Society; is a member of Wesson Baptist Church and serving as a Junior Ambassador for the Wesson Chamber of Commerce. Wilson plans to attend Co-Lin on a softball

All photos Special to Wesson News



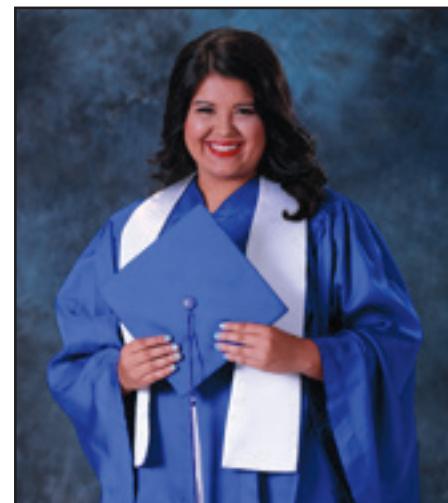
Riley Virginia Smith



Anna Claire Crow



Shelbi Leann Maxwell



Catherine Grace Wilson

Smith is the daughter of Marion and Donna Smith. She was the recipient of the Lincoln County Sale of Champions 2020 Scholarship and Co-Lin Leadership Scholarship. Smith is a member of Lincoln County 4-H, in which she participates in livestock projects and shooting sports. She has been selected to compete in the 2020 MS 4-H Skill-a-thon Invitational, is a member of the ACT Platinum Club at Wesson, is a dual-enrollment student at Copiah Lincoln Community College and has been inducted into the college's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honors Society. Smith attends Sylvarena Baptist Church. She plans to attend Co-Lin, major in agribusiness and further her education at Mississippi State University.

ball teams, the cheer team, and the golf team. She is a dual-enrollment student at Co-Lin and has been inducted into college's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honor Society. Crow is a member of the ACT Silver Club and the Senior Beta Club. She is a member of Little Bahala Baptist Church and is a Junior Ambassador for the Wesson Chamber of Commerce. Crow plans to attend Southwest Mississippi Community College on a softball scholarship, major in accounting, and further her education at the Mississippi State University.

Maxwell is the daughter of Jason and Michelle Berch. She was chosen as Miss Wesson, Senior Class Favorite, Most Athletic, and Senior Most Beautiful. Maxwell is a Superintendent's honor roll student, a member

of the ACT Gold Club, Co-President of the Student Council, a Junior Ambassador for the Wesson Chamber of Commerce and a member of Decell Memorial United Methodist Church. She plans to attend Co-Lin on a softball scholarship and major in nursing.

Wilson is the daughter of Albert and Deona Wilson. She was chosen as Most Popular by her classmates and as the Lindy Callahan Scholarship Nominee for Wesson. Wilson is a member of the varsity softball and the cheer teams, was a student council officer for three years and is currently serving as Co-President. She is editor of the yearbook staff, serving as vice-president of her senior class and is a member of the Senior Beta Club and the ACT Gold Club. Wilson is a dual-enrollment student at Co-Lin,

scholarship, major in accounting and further her education at Mississippi State University.

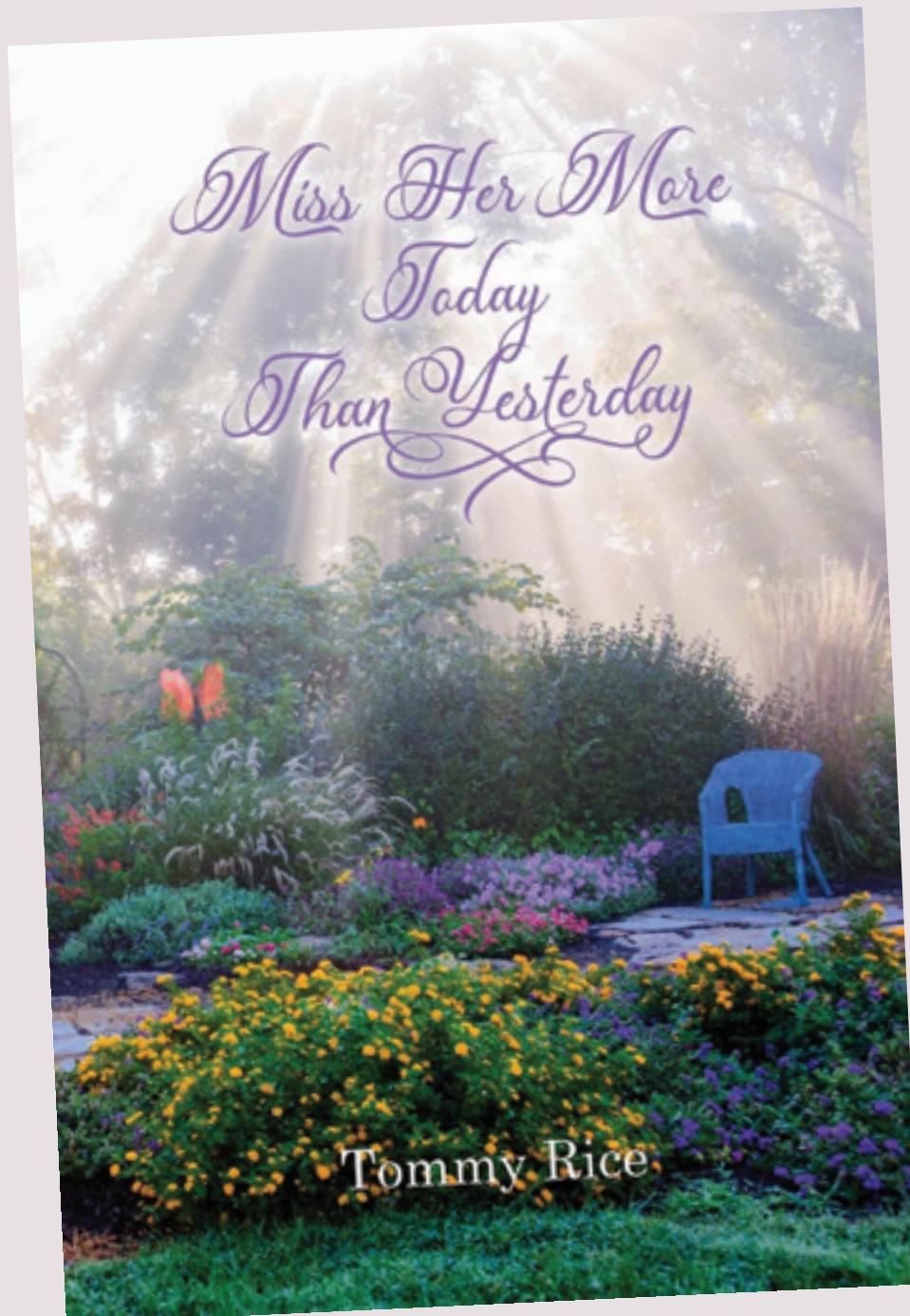
In accepting their honors, the four scholars left behind some words of wisdom in special speeches:

- Smith said in her Valedictorian speech: "Walt Disney once said 'All our dreams can come true, if we just have the courage to pursue them.'"

- Crow said in her Salutatorian speech: "Winnie the Pooh once said 'How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.'"

- Maxwell said in her Salutatorian speech: "I believe the trials we have overcome prove that the Class of 2020 can weather any storm."

- Wilson said in her Salutatorian speech: "We are strong, we are resilient, and we are ready."



Testimonials

“I just finished reading your book and wanted you to know how very proud Deborah would be you...but you already know that! This story expresses your love and devotion to your wife "in sickness and in health" with resounding fervor. It is also a testimony of her love for her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and her loving husband. I know you miss her more than words can express. This book is a treasure, thank you for writing this story to honor her memory, and bring glory to God”

- Rhonda M

“I heartily recommend my friend Tommy Rice’s new book “Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday”. Tommy’s work is an open, honest, compassionate and at times raw look at a loved one’s handling of a spouse’s terminal illness. Tommy writes unapologetically from a Christian point of view. It is a testimony of how one couple of faith handled a devastating personal crisis. In 47 years of pastoral ministry I have witnessed many who have walked by faith “in the valley of death”. “Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday” is a story of one couple’s faith intersecting a terminal illness. Tommy Rice tells that story in literary form.”

- Tommy Jarrett

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A successful entrepreneur for many years, Tommy Rice has flourished in the car business with Tommy Rice Motors in Byram, Mississippi, and also as a real estate broker in Byram (Tommy L. Rice, Real Estate LLC). An accomplished songwriter, he has ties to the music scene in Nashville that go back several decades. An Alabama native, he's a lifelong Crimson Tide fan. Miss Her More Today Than Yesterday is his first book.