

# PROGRESS

A SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE ★ FALL 2019



## DANA MCLEAN

Past is prologue as the representative-elect prepares for Jackson

grade



in  
patient  
safety



## Mississippi's leading hospital for patient safety



LEAPFROG  
HOSPITAL  
SAFETY  
GRADE

Since 2012, Baptist Golden Triangle in Columbus has earned an "A" in patient safety from The Leapfrog Group, making us the only hospital in Mississippi with Straight As since 2012. Today, we are one of only 41 hospitals in the nation to earn this distinction.

We have developed a culture of safety that exists in every part of our hospital—and in every conversation. Our leading-edge technology, consistent quality standards and committed team members keep patients connected and safe. Get better with Baptist.



**BAPTIST**<sup>®</sup>

[baptistonline.org/goldentriangle](http://baptistonline.org/goldentriangle)

**Get Better.**



# Savor *your* Best South

HISTORIC  
**STARKVILLE**  
MISSISSIPPI'S COLLEGE TOWN

Across Mississippi, folks come to **savor their best Southern experiences** in Mississippi's College Town! A vibrant university town with unique creative enterprise, eclectic shopping, a world-class farm-to-table culinary culture and year-round thriving community experiences... Whether you're here to stay, eat, play, or learn, in **STARKVILLE**, you'll LIVE the best of the Authentic New South.



**EAT . SHOP . PLAY . LEARN . LIVE the Authentic NEW SOUTH!**

[starkville.org](http://starkville.org)

# WHEN THE PAST HINTS AT THE FUTURE

The University of Missouri has one of the best journalism schools in the nation, and thanks to a close relationship with a Mizzou professor, we often do our summer intern recruiting there. Typically these are rising seniors or recent graduates, and for two or three months The Dispatch gets not only a capable journalist but also a strong dose of youthful energy. (On their last day, this year's two interns left a 6-foot-long poster in our hallway with the message, "Thanks for tolerating us! (And for a memorable and rewarding summer.)")

Some Dispatch interns have gone on to work at massive publications such as The New York Times and POLITICO; others, recognizing a love for community journalism, have taken jobs at other community papers; more than one has stayed on as an employee here; and one went on to co-found a magazine.

I'd like to think it's a healthy relationship in both directions. They benefit by working in an all-hands-on-deck newsroom in which they cover a wide range of stories and in which they get a front row seat to how news decisions are made; we benefit by having a freshly- and well-trained journalist who brings with them a healthy curiosity and, often, perspectives that challenge our staff.



Texas native and Mizzou student Victoria Cheyne, one of our two interns this year, did each of the newspaper's Monday Profiles during her tenure here. She did an excellent job profiling people in our community so when representative-elect Dana McLean agreed to be featured as this issue's cover story, I asked Victoria if she would be willing to write a profile on McLean.

That profile appears on page 34. As I read that story, I noticed a theme that repeated itself in several other pieces in this issue, and that's the idea of the past serving as a preview for the future.

For McLean it was growing up in Columbus as a child, moving away and then returning with a child of her own. For Bill Henry, featured as one of Our Readers, the discipline he learned working on a farm with his father prepared him for military service and later for a professional life. For one Caledonia woman, a pioneering medical procedure in the 1970s helped her face with confidence that same procedure 40 years later. And for one locally-owned bank, its small town roots are guiding the company's way as it grows into a regional player.

We never know how decisions made today will affect us in the future, but looking back on the past can often reveal fascinating stories.

Thanks for reading.

---

DESIGNED, WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY

## THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

*When Caring Counts...*

*Lowndes County's leading funeral and cremation provider.*



Voted 2019  
Best Funeral Home  
in the Golden Triangle



**LOWNDES  
FUNERAL HOME  
& CREMATORY**

1131 North Lehmborg Road  
Columbus, MS • 328-1808  
[www.lowndesfuneralhome.net](http://www.lowndesfuneralhome.net)

*We welcome existing burial policies  
and pre-arranged funeral plans from  
other funeral homes.*

- Modern, Spacious Facility
- Abundant Parking
- Personalized Funeral & Memorial Services
- Family Owned & Operated
- Funeral Webcasting
- Only On-Site Crematory

**TEL T. E. LOTT & COMPANY**  
CPAs and Business Advisors since 1926

Quality, Integrity,  
Service & Professionalism

Audits, Reviews &  
Compilations

Tax Planning & Preparation

Payroll Services

Estate & Trust Tax Preparation

Management Advisory  
Services

Pension & Profit Sharing  
Services

Quickbooks Advisors

Accounting & Bookkeeping  
Services

Business Valuation

Technology Consulting



**COLUMBUS OFFICE**  
221 7th Street North  
(662) 328-5387

**STARKVILLE OFFICE**  
106B South Washington Street  
(662) 323-1234

**TUSCALOOSA OFFICE**  
6834 Highway 69 South  
(205) 759-4195

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

**SOLD**

**COLDWELL  
BANKER**

**WEST REALTY  
COMPANY**

662-328-7500

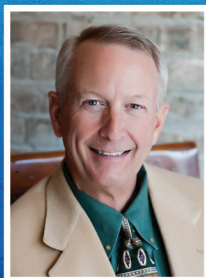
[www.westrealtycompany.com](http://www.westrealtycompany.com)

**READY TO SELL?**

OUR AGENTS HAVE BUYERS THAT  
ARE LOOKING TO BUY NOW!

WE ARE READY TO PUT A SIGN IN  
YOUR YARD TODAY!

*Coldwell Banker is  
your Golden Triangle  
Connection for all your  
Real Estate Needs.*



**Don West**  
Broker/Owner  
662.386.2891



*"Go West for the Best"*

2500 Military Rd. Suite 1 - Columbus, MS  
[www.westrealtycompany.com](http://www.westrealtycompany.com)



# CONTENTS



8

## THREE INSPIRED PEOPLE



14

## LOWNDES COUNTY

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Golden Triangle is a lifeline for so many youth who often feel like they aren't seen at home or at school or in other spaces. The Club is a place where every kid gets to feel important and that they belong. It is always our goal to build positive relationships with our members so they know when they go out into the world that there's a community that supports them and has high



18

## IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS



22

## BUSINESS: FROM MACON TO MERGERS



26

## OKTIBBEHA COUNTY



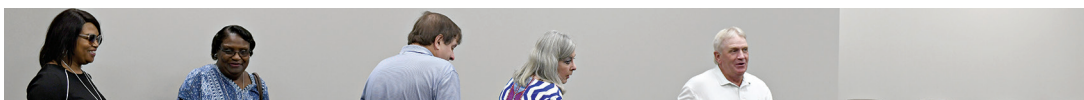
32

## REAL ESTATE: HOME SALE TRENDS



34

## COVER STORY: DANA MCLEAN



42

## CLAY COUNTY

46



**NOXUBEE COUNTY**

50



**OUTDOORS: AXE THROWING**

54



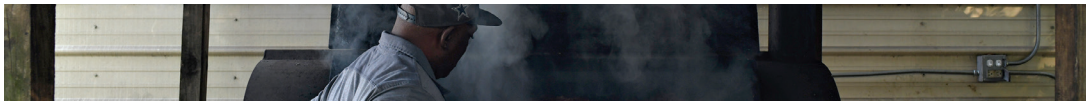
**HEALTH: HEART SURGERY**

58



**CULTURE: NEW PRESERVATION GROUP**

62



**FOOD: DUELING RIB TIPS**

66



**ART: LEE GIBSON**

70



**MEET BRIAN PUGH**

74



**OUR READERS**



Kubota

# THERE'S A KUBOTA FOR EVERY JOB!



KX SERIES COMPACT EXCAVATORS



Z SERIES ZERO-TURN MOWERS



L SERIES COMPACT TRACTORS

## EQUIPMENT SALES • RENTALS • EXPERT SERVICE

✓ Kubota Rental Program  
Daily, Weekly & Monthly Rentals Available!



✓ Expert Sales Pros - Skilled at Finding the Right Model  
✓ Huge Selection In-Stock

✓ Great Low-Rate Financing  
✓ Unparalleled Parts & Service Support

# H&R AGRI-POWER

THE POWER TO GET YOU **MORE!**

901 HWY 45 N  
COLUMBUS, MS 39701  
662-328-5341  
HRAGRIPOWER.COM



# You're not alone.

Facing an unplanned pregnancy is tough. Questions may be flooding your mind about where to turn or what to do next.

Come see us.



## STARKVILLE

PREGNANCY CARE CENTER

# Bright Smiles, Brighter Futures



## We Are The Pediatricians Of Dentistry!



## COME SEE THE DIFFERENCE!

- Did you know the prevention of cavities & other oral dental problems should begin no later than the child's 1st birthday?\*
- \*American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- Did you know pediatric dentists require 2-3 years extended study after dental school?
- Remember how much you loved that first baby tooth? We love them, too!



COLUMBUS, MS • CORINTH, MS • MADISON, AL

Call & schedule your appointments today! 662-327-0995  
300 HOSPITAL DRIVE • COLUMBUS, MS • [www.DrDKCurtis.com](http://www.DrDKCurtis.com)



D.K. CURTIS, D.M.D., P.A. AND  
KATIE CURTIS WINDHAM, D.M.D.





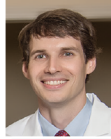
Micci Henry, Au.D., CCC-A, AI Alexander, M.A. and Carol Punday, M.S.



Justin Garner  
M.D., FACS, FAOHA



Robert C. Borden, M.D.



Stephen P. Smith, M.D.



**Physicians Hearing Center**  
at Otolaryngology Associates

2430 5th Street North - Columbus | 976 Highway 12 East - Starkville | 111 Medical Center Drive - West Point | 1105 Earl Frye Blvd - Amory

## Physicians and Audiologists you can trust in a professional setting.

We offer the best of both worlds by bringing both highly qualified ENT specialists and audiologists with over 30 years of experience. Our services include hearing evaluations for hearing loss and the proper selection, fitting and repair for hearing aids. With both audiologists and physicians at your service, you can be assured you'll get the care you need and deserve.

### Our Physicians specialize in treating the following:

- Ear, Nose and Throat Disorders
- Allergies (Allergy Testing)
- Chronic Sinus Problems
- Dizziness
- PE Tubes

### Our Audiologists specialize in the following:

- Comprehensive Hearing Evaluations for All Ages
- Digital Hearing Aids
- Hearing Aid Repairs and Maintenance
- Otoacoustic Emissions Testing
- Balance Testing
- Hearing Protection
- Assistive Listening Devices

### Stream your phone calls to both ears, hands-free!

- Connects to smartphones, TV and more
- Clearer, richer sound than ever before
- Rechargeable, built-in batteries
- Smart apps for on-the-go adjustments

When you need a hearing aid that delivers the highest quality hearing performance, the ultimate in listening comfort, and is easy-to-use, look no further than the new Phonak Audéo Marvel.



Phonak Audéo® Marvel

Call us at

**662.327.4432**

to discover how we can help you hear clearly!

 TRUSTED PROVIDER  
PHONAK HEARING SOLUTIONS

**\$240 MILLION**  
INVESTED IN MISSISSIPPI

**Nothing says commitment like \$240 million.**

At Steel Dynamics, once we make a commitment, we stick with it. That's why we continue to invest in our Columbus Division. Since purchasing the steel mill in 2014, we've invested \$100 million, with another \$140 million to come. This not only helps the local business economy, but all of Mississippi. The latest addition is our new paint line facility, which adds value for our customers and strengthens our position in the steel industry.

**Steel Dynamics, a proud member of the Golden Triangle.**

**Columbus Division**  
1945 Airport Road  
Columbus, Mississippi 39701  
(662) 245-4200  
[www.steeldynamics.com](http://www.steeldynamics.com)

©2018 Steel Dynamics, Inc.

## 3 INSPIRED PEOPLE

In every community, there are those among us who lead by quiet example. They seldom hold positions of power, nor do they have a title or any official designation that distinguishes them from their neighbors. Yet they are often the ones who, having found their own inspiration, serve to make us better people and a better community. The spark of imagination they ignite through the pursuit of their own dreams, passions and curiosity can spread down the street, through a neighbor, across a community. Their stories are an inspiration and in the telling of their stories, others may be similarly inspired. In each edition, Progress tells the story of three of the “Inspired People” of our community.

PROFILES BY **SLIM SMITH**  
PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**



## CATHY GREEN

**F**or much of her daughter's too short life, Cathy Green – noting that special needs children such as hers often were given special gifts – wondered what her daughter's gift might be.

“It seemed to me that so many times there was something those children were really good at,” said Green. “I never saw what it was until she passed. It was putting others first. She was always so concerned about people and telling them about Jesus.”

Mandi Green was born with cerebral palsy, then at age 17, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia, dying at age 18 in 1995.

Green, of Strugis, was no stranger to health issues herself. Born with a serious heart defect – she has had a pacemaker since she was 18 – Green credits God's grace for delivering her through many serious health threats.

Inspired by both her daughter's love for others and her own health struggles, Green has turned to service – through the Mandi Green Ministries

that provides a once-monthly meal and prayer service at the Ronald McDonald House in Memphis, where Cathy and her husband stayed during Mandi's treatment there – while also visiting female inmates at the Okitbbeh County Jail and working with young women at the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Starkville.

“I didn't start any of the things I'm involved with,” she says. “I just help out where I can.”

As Green sees it, even in tragedy, God can work it out for good.

“When you lose a child, there's nothing good about that,” Green says. “But God can work through that to make something good come from it. Anything I've done, it's because God has given me the opportunity,” says Green, 65, who now works part-time at the pregnancy center.

Her message:

“You don't have to have great abilities. You just have to be faithful to use the abilities you do have. As long as we are willing, God is the one who uses it and blesses it.”



## STAN MURRAY

Sundays through Fridays, most people like Stan Murray. Saturdays? Well, sometimes that's sometimes a different story.

"It goes with the job," said Murray, who lives in Columbus.

This fall marks the 40th year Murray has donned the familiar black-and-white shirt of a football official, six as a high school referee and now 34 as an SEC official.

Today, he's a replay official working from the booth, but he's worked just about every position on the field during his long career.

As an official in the SEC, where the crowds are large and the stakes are high – Murray knows his work is subject to intense scrutiny and no small amount of ire from fans who are convinced a referee has made a call that has hurt his team.

"When we go out there, there are 80,000 or 90,000 fans and we're not exactly the favorite people on the field," he said.

Obviously, Murray has found the benefits to far exceed the criticism officials encounter as part of their job.

For Murray, officiating has given him the comradery he loved during his own playing days. Murray played football at Mississippi State in the early 1970s.

After his playing days ended, he got a "real job" – as a banker at his profession for 42 years until he retired from Citizens National Bank two years ago.

He started working as a high school official in 1979.

"For me, this is an adult's only opportunity to continue to experience team sports," he said. "Now, I'm on a team of officials and we have to work together and depend on each other. We prepare really hard to do a good job. Many of the guys, I've worked 15, 20, 25 years with. It's just a special kind of friendship. My wife says it's really more of a brotherhood than a friendship.

"You know, your playing days, whether it's high school or if you have the chance to play college football, it's all over in the blink of an eye."

For Murray, it's been a way to continue living his passion for four decades.



## TRACY ARNETT

In one respect, Tracy Arnett is continuing in retirement what she did for 26 years at The Wellness Center at North Mississippi Medical Center in West Point.

After retiring this summer as the Wellness Center's director, the Florida native will turn her full attention to other types of wellness – the climate and animals.

"I've already started work on climate advocacy," Arnett says. "I'm working with my church (Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Starkville) as part of a Creation Care team, trying to encourage people to walk a little more lightly on this earth of ours."

Then, there are the animals.

Arnett has been a staunch supporter of the West Point Clay County Animal Shelter since it opened in 2011. Her devotion to the shelter is well-known: Her colleagues at the Wellness Center raised \$796 in donations to honor Arnett's retirement in August.

"I just feel for the underdog, literally," she said. "My husband and I have seven rescue dogs that just appeared at our door. We also give money to the shelter. Our's is a no-kill shelter and they do a wonderful job finding homes for all these animals that have been kicked out."

There are also her gardens. For the past three years, Arnett, 55, has been putting in small vegetable gardens for anyone who requests.

"The only condition is that they let me plant some milkweed, which is a critical food source for the monarch butterflies that migrate through Mississippi."

Focusing her "wellness" attention on nature and animals has an advantage over professionally caring for humans, she said.

"A lot of times, you want the person to be more healthy than they want to be," she said. "That doesn't happen with nature or animals. They'll accept everything you give them."



# *THE BLUE* FOR YOU



[WWW.MUW.EDU](http://WWW.MUW.EDU)



# HERITAGE ACADEMY

Columbus, MS • Grades K4-12

Fully Accredited by AdvancED, MAIS & SAIS

For more info: 662-327-1556, ext. 211  
or blucas@heritagepatriots.com



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

Heritage Academy does not discriminate  
on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin or sex.

## Serving Columbus and Lowndes County with Compassion, Professionalism and Understanding Since 1893



**Craig Summerford**  
Co-Manager/Licensed  
Funeral Director/Embalmer



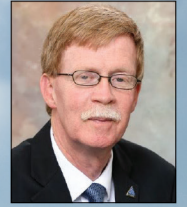
**Hollis Peel**  
Co-Manager/Licensed  
Funeral Director/Embalmer



**Floyd McIntyre**  
Funeral Assistant/  
Administrator



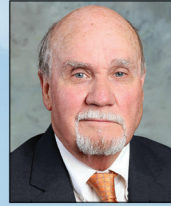
**Jimmy Jordan**  
Licensed  
Funeral Director



**Leland Gilmore**  
Licensed  
Funeral Director



**Wayne Blankenship**  
Funeral Assistant



**Pete Bowen**  
Funeral Assistant



**Rickey Puckett**  
Licensed Funeral  
Director/Embalmer



**Hayley Dees**  
Licensed Funeral  
Director/Embalmer



**Kathy Newton**  
Bookkeeper



# MEMORIAL GUNTER PEEL

FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY  
[memorialgunterpeel.com](http://memorialgunterpeel.com)

716 Second Avenue North  
Columbus, MS • 662-328-4432

903 College Street  
Columbus, MS • 662-328-2354

Get **MORE** with the Chamber of Commerce

EXPOSURE  
REFERRALS  
CONNECTIONS  
IMPACT  
INFLUENCE  
CREDIBILITY



**COLUMBUS LOWNDES  
CHAMBER of COMMERCE**

*Your business. Our focus.*

CLCHAMBER.ORG | 662.328.4491 | 1102 MAIN STREET  
JOIN TODAY





# CLEANING UP AND IMPROVING

## COLUMBUS REBUILDS AFTER STORMS, WHILE BUSINESSES AND PARKS EXPAND

**I**n Columbus, much of the focus has been on recovery from the Feb. 23 tornado. With debris removal complete, the city expects to move forward on a number of projects, some storm-related and others already on the books or

in progress.

Looks Great Services has collected more than 3,000 tons of debris within city since the storm, which not only caused millions of dollars worth of damage to public property but also damaged



more than 300 homes and businesses.

Recovery work continues. Columbus is working with Community Recovery of Lowndes County as they provide assistance to more than 100 storm-affected cases. Columbus also has provided the East Columbus Gym for federal and state emergency management agencies to accept applications for individual assistance for storm damage.

### **SIM SCOTT PARK AND THE OLD HUNT HIGH SCHOOL**

Some of the most high-profile damage the tornado levied was at Sim Scott Park and the former Hunt High School, which sit across 20th Street North from each other.

The EF-3 storm destroyed both the senior citizen and community center buildings at Sim Scott Park, but the city has already begun work replacing those centers with a 9,000 square-foot facility that will house both. The site for the new building at Sim Scott has been prepared for the foundation to be poured, while the city expects to soon receive artist renderings and start advertising for bids for the project. All but \$17,500 of the \$900,000 project will be covered by insurance, FEMA and MEMA funding. City officials hope the building will be open by the spring.

The old Hunt High — which Columbus Municipal School District was using for its Success Academy and some after-school programs — lost large portions of its roof in the storm. CMSD's programs, along with some artifacts from the R.E. Hunt Museum and Cultural Center that had been housed there, have been moved temporarily to Union Academy while the arduous task of restoring Hunt takes shape. Shortly after the storm, Hunt was deemed a state landmark by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,



which will guide how it can be restored.

The project is estimated to extend beyond 2020.

### **TERRY BROWN AMPHITHEATER**

Several thousand pounds of silt were washed onto the Riverwalk during winter and early spring flooding. Work has already been done to remove much of the silt. FEMA has given the city permission to remove the remaining silt and that work will begin soon.

The flood also compromised the electrical components at the amphitheater. FEMA and MEMA funds will cover 87.5 percent of the estimated \$150,000 in repairs and the city is collecting bids on that project. City Engineer Kevin Stafford said another \$600,000 will be used to make the venue suitable for free concerts as early as the spring.

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS**

On the retail front, Leigh Mall in Columbus will likely have a new owner by the time this magazine publishes.

Owners Colony Financial, which took the mall after previous owner Security National Properties defaulted on a loan in 2018, offered the property in an online private auction in October. Leigh Mall, which opened in 1972, occupies 30 acres of prime property along Highway 45, the



heart of the city's retail market. Occupancy at the mall had fallen to 57 percent by August, but key businesses such as Hobby Lobby and Planet Fitness still have a solid client base.

Construction on Bank of Vernon's Bluecutt Road branch is nearing completion.

"We're hopeful to be in by the end of the year," said co-CEO and CFO Andy Johnson.

Johnson's office will move from Vernon to the new Columbus building while co-CEO Joy Spencer's office will remain in Vernon.

Most of the county's larger employers have experienced growth in production or employees over the past nine months. Since January, there has been approximately \$280 million in investment and 200 jobs created in Lowndes County.

Construction on Steel Dynamics' most recent \$250 million expansion in the industrial park off Highway 82 west of Columbus is well underway and on schedule to finish in 2020. This project will create a minimum of 40 new jobs.

Mississippi Steel Processing has completed Phase 1 of a \$20 million expansion expected to create 40 jobs. Phase 2 planning is underway.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

One major parks project is getting closer to

completion in Lowndes County, while another is ramping up.

A county horse park on Tom Rose Road is already hosting 4-H livestock shows and other smaller events. But the county plans to invest \$200,000 more for the fencing, parking lots, road paving and drainage still needed to host larger rodeo events there.

Board of supervisors president Harry Sanders said the county has fielded interest from East Mississippi Community College's rodeo team, as well as a private rodeo group in Clay County, both of which might hold competitions at the horse park once it's finished by next summer.

Meanwhile, county officials estimate another three years before a planned sports complex off Highway 82 west of Columbus is up and running.

Engineering, design and preliminary site work could begin for the estimated \$4 million project in January, with phases to build fields, lighting, parking and concession stands to follow.

The current plan includes 14 fields encompassing baseball, softball and T-ball.

In Columbus, playground equipment has been ordered for East Columbus Gym and Hank Aaron Park. The picnic tables and other damaged equipment at Sim Scott also has been ordered. Repairs to the Splash Pad at Sim Scott, also damaged by the tornado, are underway and new equipment is being studied for Lee Park. An indoor volleyball court will soon be installed at East Columbus Gym.

The floors have been refinished at the Sandfield Community Center and are ready to use. Bids are also being received for a new outdoor pavilion at the East Columbus Gym, as well as an outdoor pavilion with restrooms at the Townsend Community Center.



### **HIGHWAY 82 INTERCHANGES**

Work on the exits off Highway 82 at 18th Avenue and Military Road are proceeding on schedule. The \$5 million MDOT improvements are under contract to be completed in May. The 18th Avenue interchanges are roughly 75 percent complete, with the primary remaining involving striping and traffic control installations. The smaller Military Road interchange is roughly 25 percent completed, but is also expected to be completed on time.



STORY BY **SLIM SMITH  
AND ZACK PLAIR**  
PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

# BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

DIRECTORS OF AREA NON PROFITS  
AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SHARE  
THE MISSIONS OF THEIR GROUPS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANNE MURPHY

## NADIA COLOM

**Boys and Girls Clubs of the Golden Triangle,  
Chief Professional Officer**

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Golden Triangle is a lifeline for so many youth who often feel like they aren't seen at home or at school or in other spaces. The Club is a place where every kid gets to feel important and that they belong. It is always our goal to build positive relationships with our members so they know when they go out into the world that there's a community that supports them and has high expectations of them.

In the seven years I've committed to this organization, I've seen real growth in the community's support of our mission. However, there has also been tremendous growth in need and demands placed on our staff and the services we must now offer, from increased enrollment to improved facilities to quality mental health support for our membership.

One of the great benefits of serving an organization with a regional umbrella such as ours is that we have the potential to build upon the unique qualities within each community. With the wealth of resources found within the local universities and the focus on growth in industry, we are well positioned to help create bright futures for Golden Triangle youth.





## LISA KLUTTS

**West Point Clay County Community Growth Alliance, Director**

My volunteering career started as a Candy Stripper at the Columbus Hospital in the late 80's. It was at age 16 that I learned not only how rewarding it was to volunteer, but also what a good way it was to learn new things that I could carry with me through my career. Fast forward to 2014 when I became the Director of Community Development for The West Point Clay County Community Growth Alliance, the non-profit organization that is the chamber of commerce, Main Street Association and tourism office for West Point. As the Director I depend on countless volunteers to carry out the goals and work we do that enhances the quality of life for everyone in West Point. Our program of work focuses on business recruitment, growth and development, as well as quality of life issues. It is rewarding to have the community come together, working together with our neighbors and business owners, to make West Point the best place for us to work, play and raise a family. West Point may be small, but together we do big things.

## RENEE SANDERS

**United Way of Lowndes & Noxubee, Executive Director**

The United Way of Lowndes County is now the United Way of Lowndes & Noxubee serving over 70,000 residents through our 14 funded agencies. We have the distinct pleasure of advocating on their behalf to stakeholders, volunteers and community leaders. At United Way, our goal this year is to be more visible, vital and vested in the community. Visible during disasters like the EF3 tornado that ripped through our community on Feb 23; vital through funding local agencies that focus on Education, Health and Financial Stability; and vested by identifying and addressing problems in Lowndes and Noxubee.

Please know, we are not just your grandfather's United Way but we are your United Way! We promote the values, standards and morals you would be proud to support. We are creating a new avenue for volunteers through a program called the Golden Triangle "Volunteer" Regional Hub that will serve seven counties. Our board of 25, staff of five, and more than 100 volunteers ask you to join with us and Live United!

To learn how to get involved, email us at [volunteer@uwlc-ms.org](mailto:volunteer@uwlc-ms.org) or stop by and visit us at 223 22nd St. N. in Columbus.



## SHAMEKA CONNER

**Noxubee County Library System, Director**

The Noxubee County Library System consists of a central library located in Macon, and two additional branches located in Brooksville and Shuqualak, serving over 10,000 citizens in Noxubee County. The central library, built as the county jail in 1907, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This library has welcomed many visitors from around the world who come to see the uniqueness and rich history of the building. The Noxubee County Library System provides residents of the county with an extensive list of services including free public access computer usage, color printing, weekly children's story time, free programming during the summer months for all ages, online research databases, and one-on-one computer training. Additionally, residents have access to free WiFi and a rich genealogy collection including free access to Ancestry.com. Dial-A-Story was recently added for those families who are not always able to make it to the library. Plan a visit soon to the Noxubee County Library System to meet the knowledgeable and friendly staff and learn more all about the outstanding services available.



## RICK WELCH

**Oktibbeha County Humane Society, Board President**

The Oktibbeha County Humane Society exists to serve the pets and their people in the Golden Triangle. Last year, OCHS served more than 4,200 homeless pets and 1,200 pets in the community. OCHS operates the City of Starkville Animal Shelter, an open admission shelter for residents of Starkville and Oktibbeha County, where every adopted pet goes home spayed/neutered, microchipped, and current on vaccinations and preventatives. The Shelter is open Tuesday through Saturday 11 AM-5:30 PM, and is located at 510 Industrial Park Road in Starkville.

Serving more than a dozen shelters and rescue organizations in North Mississippi, the OCHS Express is a regional program managed by OCHS that transports adoptable homeless pets from Mississippi shelters to partner shelters with an abundance of space and adopters.

Between these two programs, OCHS served more than 4,200 homeless pets last year with a life-saving percentage exceeding 93%. In 2018, OCHS began the OCHS/Fido Fixers Spay and Neuter Clinic which aims to decrease pet overpopulation by providing low-cost spay and neuter surgeries for cats and dogs. Income restrictions apply, but there are no residency restrictions. More than 1,200 pets were spayed/neutered in 2018, and more than 1,400 have been spayed/neutered so far in 2019.



## Banking on putting you first.

You may have already heard of us, but did you know we have internet banking, no-fee ATM access, interest-earning checking accounts, CDs, money market accounts, merchant services, mortgage loans, remote deposit capture, and more? We bank on putting customers first. Do you bank with us? If not, you should.

# BANKFIRST

[bankfirstfs.com](http://bankfirstfs.com)



Member  
**FDIC**

 **EQUAL HOUSING  
LENDER**





# FROM MACON TO MERGERS

THE SOLE BANK HEADQUARTERED IN THE  
GOLDEN TRIANGLE GROWS FROM ITS MODEST  
BEGINNINGS TO MORE THAN \$1 BILLION IN ASSETS

As it is with any business whose history extends over generations, there are years that are considered as milestones.

For BankFirst, there is 1888, the year the bank opened as Merchants and Farmers Bank in Macon. There is 1994, when the bank expanded into the Golden Triangle by opening three branches in Columbus and 1997, when it opened a branch in West Point. There is also 1999, the year the bank opened two branches in Starkville and changed its name to BankFirst.

Rivaling all those years in significance is 2010, the year Moak Griffin took over as the bank's president and CEO and, with his management team, declared it "a 125-year-old startup." Four years later, BankFirst moved its headquarters from Macon to Columbus, a strategic move based on the new vision Moak's team had created.

BankFirst Board Chairman David Barge, whose family has been shareholders in the bank

for more than four decades, said the decision to relocate the bank's headquarters was years in the making.

"My father was also the bank's chairman at one point," said Barge, a lifelong Macon resident. "I remember him saying years ago that the Columbus bank would be bigger than the Macon bank someday. There may have been a stigma in moving the headquarters to Columbus for a while, but it just made sense when Moak became CEO."



In many respects, Moak Griffin embodies the qualities required to keep the delicate balance of honoring the bank's traditions while pointing toward an ambitious future for the bank.

By the time he was named CEO after the retirement of Jerry Wilson, Moak was just 42 years old and had been with the bank for only



nine years.

Affable and informal, Moak leaned on the experiences of some veteran senior bank officials – Mary Ann Gray as CFO, Gray Flora in investments and Charlie Holmes in credit. With more than 75 years of combined experience, Griffin said the group sat down and plotted the course for the bank’s future.

“I didn’t come into the job knowing everything I needed to know,” Griffin recalled. “So we sat down and talked it out and figured out who would be best in each role. We weren’t worried about hierarchy. I just got lucky and got the best

title, but titles aren’t that big a deal around here. We all play different roles and they’re all equal.”

With the team in place, BankFirst’s board began its first large-scale expansion since the 1990s.

“Our whole board had been involved in that,” Barge said. “We devised the strategic plan and our primary goal was to reach \$1 billion (in assets). We had hired a management team for the future and not the present. We knew we had the team in place that would allow us to grow.”

Since 2010, BankFirst has easily surpassed its goal, with \$1.3 billion in assets. It has also added branches – Jackson in 2014 and, in April, five branches in Alabama after acquiring First National Bank of Central Alabama. BankFirst now has 22 locations in Mississippi and Alabama.

“I think we’ll keep growing,” Griffin said. “There are several good markets out there and if we can find the right banker, we’ll keep opening branches. There’s no reason to grow just to grow, but we feel there are opportunities for us.”



Despite its growth, in many respects, BankFirst sees itself playing many of the same roles it did when it was a single bank serving Noxubee County.

“Every bank has its own goals and different things it is trying to achieve,” Griffin said. “For us, its being a community bank with the focus on small-business lending and that’s something that’s always really appealed to me.

Griffin said local business lending is the bank’s sweet spot.

“Steel Dynamics is going to do their lending through one of the big banks,” Griffin said. “We’re not equipped for that. But we feel like we’re in a great position for local businesses,



from Waters Truck and Tractor to Graham Roofing right down to Noweta's Flowers and everything in between. Locally-owned business lending is what we do.”

Small business lending isn't necessarily unique; the Golden Triangle has numerous well-run banks that serve the area, but BankFirst is the only one headquartered here. Of the roughly 150 shareholders, the vast majority are in Lowndes and Noxubee counties.

One piece of their strategy that does set them apart is being aggressive in establishing footholds in small, rural communities, something that keeps faith with the bank's small-town roots.

“We're not afraid of rural communities,” Barge said. “In fact, we like rural communities.”

Griffin said acquiring small rural banks with dedicated customer bases helps provide BankFirst with funds it can lend in other markets where there is growth.

“It makes sense for us, if we can find the right people with the right customer base. Those banks don't have the assets to be lenders, so often they'll invest those deposits in the bond market. They may get 2.5 percent, where if that money is lent they could get 5 percent. So when we acquire a bank in a small town, we're able to do

what they can't because we have those assets that allow us to be lenders.”

Indeed, in addition to opening branches in larger markets – Tuscaloosa, Jackson and the Golden Triangle – BankFirst has also moved into small towns such as Hickory, Lake, Louin and Newton.

Those small towns help to keep the growing bank grounded in its small-town past.

“In those smaller towns, the local bank is such an important part of the community,” Griffin said. “Those may not be growing. They may even be getting smaller, but if there's a core base of customers there, we feel like we can not only provide the banking services they need, but add to what we're doing in other places.”

Despite its growth, maintaining that sense of being the neighborhood bank remains an important part of BankFirst's identity.

“If we lose that, we've lost everything,” Barge said.

STORY BY **SLIM SMITH**  
OPENING PHOTO PAGE A COLLAGE  
FROM **BANKFIRST ARCHIVES**  
ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER  
MOSBRUCKER**



# NO SIGNS OF STOPPING

FROM ROAD AND PARK PROJECTS TO STARKVILLE'S PENDING ANNEXATION PLAN, GROWTH IN THE CITY AND OKTIBBEHA COUNTY SHOWS NO SIGNS OF STOPPING.

The Starkville Board of Aldermen has voted on a plan to annex land east of the city that next goes to Oktibbeha County chancery court. The land in question is along the Highway 82 and Highway 182 corridors out to Clayton Village and in the University Hills area on the east side of Mississippi State University.

Some residents of those areas have expressed opposition to the plan, but Mayor Lynn Spruill is confident the annexation will succeed.

"I think it's a very conservative, thoughtful and deliberative approach to annexation that will be beneficial to the community as a whole," Spruill said.

The annexation will be good for the county as well as the city, Oktibbeha County Board of Supervisors President Orlando Trainer said. The city will receive additional property and sales tax revenue, and the county will have some leverage to enhance other areas outside the city, he said.

"It will help shape those areas out in the county that, for lack of a better phrase, benefit from being close to the city but not in the city," Trainer said.

## **RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The addition of a new retail center that will

include ALDI and TJ Maxx received county and city approval in August via a tax-increment financing plan. Castle Properties will build the center at the corner of Highway 12 and Industrial Park Road after Garan Manufacturing finishes and moves into a new building at North Star Industrial Park.

Site prep and infrastructure work is wrapping up at the new park, which is a partnership between the city and county. It will be at the intersection of Highways 369 and 82 at the north end of Starkville, and Garan is the first tenant.

The Mississippi Supreme Court put an end to a lawsuit over the zoning of the industrial park in September after almost three years, allowing the construction and marketing of the park to move forward.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE, PARKS AND STORMWATER UPDATES**

Voters approved increasing the city's tourism sales tax by 1 percent earlier this year to build a tournament-ready field at Cornerstone Park and make other capital improvements. The board of aldermen is nearing approval of a contract with Dalhoff-Thomas, the Memphis-based architecture firm in charge of the Cornerstone Park design.

In September, the Parks and Recreation Department unveiled a three-year capital project plan for all the city's parks, with a projected total cost of \$1.31 million. Recent improvements include the repaving of the walking track at J.L. King Park and the resurfacing of the basketball and tennis courts at McKee Park.

The city has a "very active pickleball group," Parks director Gerry Logan said, and one of the McKee Park tennis courts will be converted into one of the first permanent pickleball courts in the state.

The board of aldermen recently voted to hire two new firefighters and bring the fire station on Garrard Road up to full staff capacity after 10 years without it. A property tax millage increase will pay for the new hires and the addition of new city equipment, including a fingerprinting machine for the police department and a hot mix asphalt truck.

Discussions of updating the city's stormwater ordinance started in April after heavy rain caused flooding. The updated ordinance, effective in September, tightens restrictions on how stormwater can be handled on development sites.

South of the city, construction on Longview Road is underway and will be finished by August 2020. The project will replace culverts and widen the road so it can handle heavy amounts of traffic, District 4 Supervisor Bricklee Miller said.

"We want to make sure we build something that's going to last," Miller said.

Starkville Utilities installed two electric vehicle charging stations at the end of September. The ChargePoint stations are near the intersection of Jackson and Jefferson streets, behind Hotel Ches-ter, and outside the Starkville Sportsplex.

#### **RESEARCH PARK GROWTH AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY**

The software company Babel Street moved in



September from the Thad Cochran Research, Technology and Economic Development Park at MSU to the third floor of the Cadence Bank building on Main Street.

The MSU Research and Technology Corporation manages the research park and bought the Cadence Bank building in May. Cadence is leasing the first two floors for the next two years and will then move into a new building on Russell Street.

The plan is to turn the entire building into an innovation center for the research park and bring in more companies after Cadence moves out, Research and Technology Corporation Director Marc McGee said.

"(Babel Street) needed to expand and grow, and they loved the idea of being downtown because it creates a lot of walkability for them," McGee said. "The building will be for companies like Babel Street that would prefer to be downtown versus out in the research park."

The third floor of the Cadence building is more conducive to Babel Street's business than the space it just vacated at the research park, CEO Jeff Chapman said.

"It's a lot more free and open," he said. "What we do here is programming and software development, and what that means is a free flow and exchange of ideas."

Meanwhile, the research park has a new coffee house and restaurant on Technology Boulevard,

under the same ownership as Starkville Cafe and The Camphouse.

### **COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD FORMS AT OCH**

The OCH Regional Medical Center Board of Trustees appointed a seven-member community advisory board about a year ago to act as liaison between the hospital and the public. All seven members belong to organizations in the community and have been working hard to establish the board's presence, chairperson Cindy Walker said.

"There are a lot of rumors, and we try to make sure we have accurate information about the hospital," she said. "Anything that's said, we can clarify it when we're out in the community speaking to normal people that we come in contact with."

Walker facilitates a support group for caregivers of people with Alzheimer's, and other board members belong to groups including Starkville Rotary Club, Kiwanis and Lions Club, she said.

The board meets once a month and recently discussed creating its own social media presence to further build connections with the public, Walker said.

"I think we represent all facets of the community," she said. "We're able to bring the total community served by the hospital together and bring in different viewpoints."

STORY BY **TESS VRBIN**  
PHOTOS BY **DISPATCH STAFF**





## Digestive Health Specialists, P.A.

**Digestive Health Specialists specializes in the treatment of**

**Heartburn | Acid Reflux | Diarrhea | Constipation | Loss of Appetite | Weight Loss | Nausea | Stomach Pain | Difficulty Swallowing  
and other digestive diseases as well as Colon Cancer screening**

Stephen T. Amann, M.D.  
John B. Averette, M.D.  
Christopher H. Decker, M.D.

Roger L. Huey, M.D.  
Noel K. Hunt, M.D.  
C. Allen Justice, M.D.  
Barney J. Guyton, M.D. Emeritus

W. Garrett Ogg, M.D.  
John O. Phillips, M.D.  
Robert B. Smith, M.D.  
Samuel C. Pace, M.D. Emeritus

W. Ross Stone, M.D.  
Ashley L. Vaughn, CFNP  
Mary Ellen Mitchell, CFNP  
W. Carl Kellum, Jr. 1952-2006

Vicki A. Fitzgerald, CFNP  
Leslie E. Peterson, CFNP  
Stephanie B. Atkinson, CFNP

**For Appointment Information Call**

589 Garfield Street  
Suite 201 • Tupelo  
(662) 680-5565

118 Fairfield Drive  
New Albany  
(662) 680-5565

300 Hospital Rd.  
Starkville  
(662) 324-7484

**Corinth Location  
Coming Soon**

**1-877-942-7876 • [dhsgi.net](http://dhsgi.net)**

# Tired of Deer Camp Drama?

**Call Paul. Buy Land.**

Over \$350 Million in  
Real Estate Sales.



\*Since inception



**Paul Hopper** | Owner • Broker • Realtor®

601.942.5527 or 601.724.1435  
or 662.722.0011

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



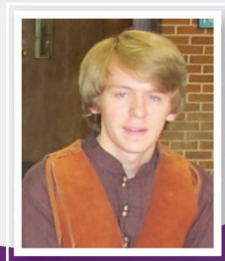


## COLUMBUS MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Striving for Academic Excellence*

**ACT Score 25 or above:**

**Alayah Harris, Jacob Bandoock and Diamond Dickerson** (not pictured)





# Vision is precious. Don't take yours for granted.

**Bennett Ophthalmology Group**  
Advanced Eye Care

**J. Dan Bennett, M.D.**  
Diplomate of the American Board of Ophthalmology  
Board Certified Ophthalmologist

**Casey Wells, NP-C**

2475 Fifth Street North | Columbus, MS | 328-1254



**WILLIAM P. STARKS, II**  
ATTORNEY AT LAW

- PERSONAL INJURY •
- CRIMINAL DEFENSE •
- FAMILY LAW •

662.328.4850  
407 7th Street North  
Columbus, Mississippi  
www.starkslaw.com



## Bright Smiles

— a life dental practice —  
**DR. BO DAVIS AND DR. TODD FINCHER**

611 LEIGH DRIVE, COLUMBUS, MS 39705  
**662-328-1825**

**COME SEE US FOR ALL OF YOUR COSMETIC DENTISTRY NEEDS.**

- Orthodontics/dental braces
- Implants
- Veneers
- Whitening

All services provided by general dentists.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

“All of the staff are caring, professional, and go out of their way to ensure that your experience is a great one!”  
— Whitney T.

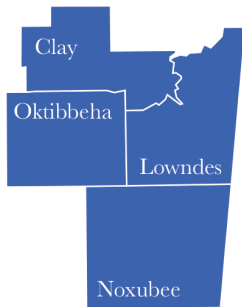
**WE CAN SEE THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

FIND US ON AND ON

# HOME SALE TRENDS

REAL ESTATE METRICS FROM JANUARY - JUNE 2019  
COMPARED TO THE SAME PERIOD IN 2018

Data for these 4 counties



## NUMBER OF HOMES SOLD

🏠 = 20 homes

### Lowndes



### Oktibbeha



### Clay



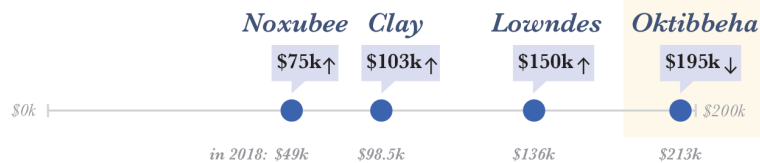
### Noxubee



## TIME ON THE MARKET

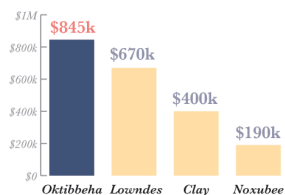
Noxubee	284 days	(294)
Clay	162	(157)
Oktibbeha	126	(124)
Lowndes	101	(104)

## MEDIAN SALES PRICE



## MOST EXPENSIVE HOME SOLD

Oktibbeha  
\$845,000



Data courtesy of Greater Golden Triangle Realtors

## LARGEST AND SMALLEST HOMES SOLD

### Largest:



Oktibbeha  
5,800 ft<sup>2</sup>



Lowndes  
4,871 ft<sup>2</sup>



Noxubee  
3,637 ft<sup>2</sup>



Clay  
3,400 ft<sup>2</sup>

### Smallest:



660 ft<sup>2</sup>



660 ft<sup>2</sup>



1,164 ft<sup>2</sup>



921 ft<sup>2</sup>



*Turning your dreams into an address!*

**Jake Randolph**  
REALTOR®  
(662) 315-4976  
Jake@jakerandolph.com

**Audrey McBride**  
Broker/Owner, GRI  
(662) 341-1000  
audrey@audreymcbride.com

**Erin Stenmark**  
REALTOR®  
(662) 322-6475  
erinstenmark@gmail.com

**Krista Karel**  
Office Administrator



**Kathryn Barnett**  
Administrative Assistant

**McBride & Co.**  
**REAL ESTATE**

201 Academy Rd. - Suite 4 - Starkville, Mississippi - (662) 338-0882



Check out our website for all MLS listings!  
[www.mcbrideandco.com](http://www.mcbrideandco.com)



# PAST AS PROLOGUE

## REPRESENTATIVE-ELECT DANA MCLEAN REFLECTS ON HER PATH TO JACKSON AND WHAT IT COULD MEAN FOR OTHER POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

**D**ana McLean remembers going to the McLellan dime store at Main and Fifth streets with her dad in the 1960s and '70s as a child growing up in Columbus.

He'd let her pick out anything she wanted, usually a plastic toy or candy.

She recalled Andrews' Shoe Store for children down the street and locally owned shops for various odds and ends scattered throughout downtown.

As a 4-year-old in 1964, McLean and her family moved to Columbus from Russellville, Alabama, after her father accepted a job as manager of the Sears catalog store on the east side of town.

Her parents rented a house on McArthur Drive, now Hospital Drive. Then, they bought a corner lot on Williamsburg Road in 1970 in the "friendly" and "close-knit" Arrington Park neighborhood and built the ranch-style brick house in which McLean and her younger sister grew up.

Columbus was home then, and since moving back in 2013 from Tampa, Florida, where McLean lived for 20 years, it's home once more — down to the house on Williamsburg, where McLean lives with her mother.

One thing is different now, though. After unseating 28-year incumbent District 39 Rep.

Jeff Smith, in the August Republican primary she will represent her neighbors in Jackson come 2020.

"Being able to represent my hometown and surrounding area in the legislature is a tremendous honor and privilege," McLean said weeks after her victory.

When she discusses the race and her new job, in a southern drawl she hasn't lost, it seems as though the dust hasn't yet settled.

"It feels weird for me to say that word, politics," McLean said. "I never aspired to be involved in politics at all, and I still don't feel like I am. I still feel like I'm just a representative, and not a representative with the big R, but just a representative of the people."





### **EDUCATION “THE MOST IMPORTANT THING”**

It wasn't until a couple years ago that she even considered running for public office, after attending a public forum in which legislators sparred over education funding.

“Education to me is the most important thing for a child and for your future,” she said. “I was going to the public forums, and I realized that ... the state officials were not focused on education.”

McLean, 59, described her public-school experience, first at Franklin Academy and later at Stephen D. Lee High School, in glowing terms. To her dismay, people encouraged her to avoid public city schools when she moved back to Columbus with her daughter, Madison, then a high school sophomore.

“I really wanted her to have the same high school experience that I did, but things had changed a lot,” McLean said. “I'd heard ... the best schools were in the county.”

Recognizing the need for complete education reform, McLean wanted to find a way to help. One option was simply to become a state legislator and work from the top down.

Then, Smith voted in opposition of renewing the 2-percent restaurant sales tax for tourism in

2018 — something McLean called “unwise and just bad decision-making” because it cut funding to the Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau for a year — and she was even more interested in running for the representative seat.

Ahead of the March 1 qualifying deadline for the primary, McLean patiently waited for someone to step up and challenge Smith. No one did, so she got in her car and drove to Jackson to file for candidacy — the day before the deadline.

“On the drive there I kept going, ‘Should I or should I not?’” she recalled. “Oh my goodness, I was terrified. I thought, ‘Do I have any idea what to do and how to do this?’”

A friend of McLean's wrote her a note after the election quoting “The Lorax”: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.”

It's an apt summary of what McLean did and what she wants others to understand: Someone who is “totally green but who is passionate about an issue” can make a difference if they're willing to step out of their comfort zone.

“I was confident in myself that I could do it, but whether I could convince others I could do it, that was kind of an issue or a fear,” she reflected.

## **THE VINTAGE AIRSTREAM**

After studying political science and French at the University of Alabama, it was a sales job that pulled McLean to Florida from Birmingham, Alabama, where she worked as a sales representative for fragrance and cosmetics companies. McLean became an attorney in her 30s after attending Stetson University College of Law.

Not long before she moved back to Mississippi, McLean bought a 25-ft. 1988 Airstream Excella travel trailer with a kitchen and bathroom, hoping for an adventure, or at least a change.

“I’d just gone through a very contentious divorce, (and) (Madison) was unhappy with school,” McLean said. “We knew we wanted to leave Tampa and just kind of have a fresh start, but we weren’t sure what we wanted to do, if we were going to come to Mississippi or we were going to maybe travel and go to all the national parks out west in our Airstream.”

They moved to Columbus and ultimately decided to table their road trip, but once McLean became a candidate, the Airstream was no longer idle; it became crucial to her campaign.

Using bungee cords, she attached a vinyl banner identical to her billboards in Lowndes and Monroe counties to the top of the trailer.

“I would just park it at different places, like I parked it at Cadence Bank on a Sunday, (and) I parked it in the old K-Mart parking lot for a while,” she explained.

Without a legitimate campaign strategy or a base of supporters, she raised \$14,550 in contributions from individuals, according to campaign finance records. Smith’s war chest exceeded \$74,000, with numerous political action committees having contributed most of that total.

“It was me just getting out there and doing what I felt like would appeal to me as a voter,”

McLean said. “Getting out and just talking to people and listening.”

Kathy Read, who’s lived in the Arrington Park neighborhood since 1975, got to know McLean after she moved back home. McLean described Read as one of her “biggest cheerleaders.”

Read said she was “very impressed” with her intellect, focus and involvement in organizations, including the Columbus Arts Council board, Exchange Club of Columbus and the Columbus-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce.

The fact that she sought to unseat an established politician in her first political race shocked Read and showed her what McLean was made of.

“Whenever she decides that she’s going to accomplish something, she makes that her goal, and she does it,” Read said.

## **WOMEN IN POLITICS**

It was a good time for a change.

That’s what McLean said about her win.

“I think it wasn’t necessarily people were voting for me; I think they were voting against my opponent in some instances,” McLean said. “I think they had become disenchanted and they didn’t feel represented.”

Relatability was her main draw, she said. Voters could relate to a mother who’s struggled as a single parent and battled the related challenges. Some voters could also relate to a successful attorney who’s dabbled in other lines of work, she said.

“I feel like everything I’ve done in the past, the experiences I’ve had will really help me because I’ve been in a lot of different places,” she said. “It hasn’t always been a bed of roses.”

In McLean, voters put their weight behind a female candidate, a rare anomaly in Mississipp-







pi. Between the House of Representatives and Senate, only 24 women currently hold seats, amounting to 13.8 percent of the legislature, according to data compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

“There’s something wrong with that picture,” McLean said. “We need more representation in our legislature, and hopefully this is one step in the right direction.”

The #MeToo movement has had a profound effect on women, McLean said. In the 2018 primary elections, a record 589 women ran or said they would run for U.S. representative, senator or governor seats, according to the Center for American Women and Politics and the Women in Public Service Project. Out of the hundreds, 125 women were elected.

The movement inspired McLean, and she thinks it will inspire more women to enter the political arena.

Greater female representation will also require more women supporting one another, as well as elected officials leading by example and actively encouraging them to run for office, she said.

“I think if there are those that are willing to run, if the other women, friends and coworkers and just community activists would step up and just stand alongside these women and encourage them and support them, then I think we can make a difference in having more women elected,” McLean said.

### **THE NEXT ADVENTURE**

McLean prevailed with 51.93 percent of the vote, a narrow margin, so she knows she will have to win more people over.

“There will be a lot of naysayers going ‘She has no clue,’” McLean admitted. “And a lot of that may be true, but I have a real passion for doing a good job.”

She plans to beat the learning curve through reading, research and analysis — her “forté.”

Mike Arzamendi, president of the Columbus Arts Council board of directors, has known

McLean, whom he described as “articulate” and said she “brings a lot to the table,” for about three years as a board member.

“I really admired her attention to detail,” Arzamendi said. “She’s very careful and very analytical in approaching different tasks.”

He was “thrilled” when McLean told him she was running for office.

“She has talked about representing a wider base ... and that other people’s voices need to be heard,” he said. “I think she’s going to be able to take that to Jackson.”

It turns out that the adventure, the fresh start McLean desperately desired when she bought the Airstream and left Florida in the rearview mirror were realized in her own backyard. The next chapter, though, and the arduous yet empowering “trip” that got her here are parts of her life she could’ve never predicted.

“I think I had lost a lot of self-esteem through the divorce,” McLean said. “It’s amazing to think that now, five years later, I would put myself out there and run for office when I felt so broken and just lacking in self-confidence ... You can see really what’s inside you when you can, on your own, build yourself back up.”

**STORY BY VICTORIA CHEYNE**  
**COVER AND FEATURE PHOTOS**  
**BY JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**



*Destination Shopping at...*

*Beards*  
FURNITURE & ANTIQUITIES

BRIDAL REGISTRY & GIFTS GALORE!

662.386.6157 | 248 CHUBBY DR. | COLUMBUS, MS

WWW.BEARDSFURNITURE.COM

*Shop Small...  
Shop Local...  
Shop Downtown!*

**Columbus**  
MAIN STREET

662.328.6305  
www.columbusmainstreet.com

**CGC** CROWELL  
GILLIS &  
COOPER, PLLC  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

*John W. Crowell\**, 243-7308  
*William F. Gillis*, 243-7329  
*William T. Cooper*, 243-7334  
*Elizabeth F. Jones\*\**, 243-7318

\*Also admitted in Arkansas  
\*\*Also admitted in Tennessee

Corporate and Business Planning & Succession  
Mergers & Acquisitions | Estate Planning & Probate  
Litigation | Employment Law | Construction  
Creditor Bankruptcy  
Personal Injury & Workers Compensation  
Family Law | Real Estate

322 Main Street | P. O. Box 1827  
Columbus Mississippi  
39703-1827

www.cgclawpllc.com

**STARKVILLE**  
PROPERTIES  
SERVING STARKVILLE & THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE SINCE 2002

**#1 Real Estate Company**  
*in the Golden Triangle*

BASED ON 2017 MLS SALES RANKINGS

**THINKING OF BUYING OR SELLING?  
OUR REALTORS CAN HELP!**

**662-324-0037**

Starkville Properties [www.starkvillepropertiesms.com](http://www.starkvillepropertiesms.com) @StarkvilleProp

**100 Russell Street | Suite 19 | Starkville**

CLAY COUNTY



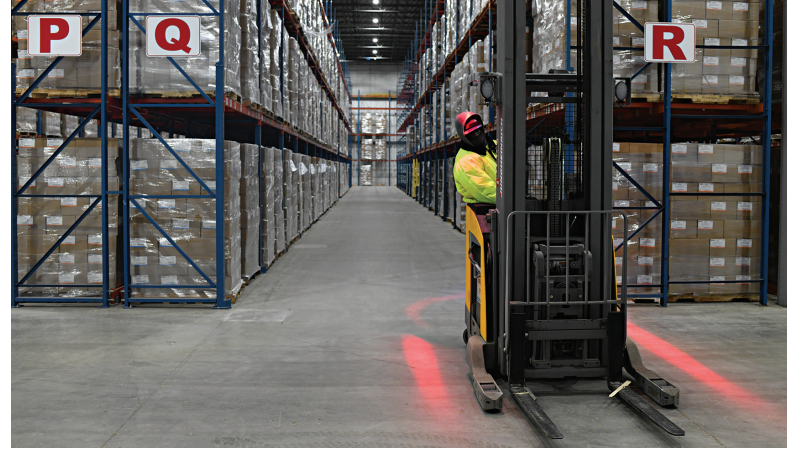
## PREPARING FOR GROWTH IN CLAY COUNTY

**W**ith the arrival of Yokohama and Peco Foods plants over the last few years, Clay County has seen increased investment in infrastructure and community resources, from road improvement and water plant refurbishment projects to the expansion of businesses to the opening of \$4 million court complex on Main Street in West Point's

downtown. The community has also been home to major events, hosting a crowd of thousands at Old Waverly Golf Course in August for the U.S. Women's Amateur Golf Tournament.

### **A NEW COURTHOUSE**

The new court complex on Main Street in downtown West Point is open for business — or,



in this case, justice.

Clay County officials cut the ribbon on the new complex on Aug. 29, and employees in the county's circuit and justice courts began moving their equipment into the building over the next weeks. Circuit court and the circuit clerk's office opened in time for October's circuit court term, a few weeks ahead of November's state and county elections.

The complex houses both circuit court and justice court offices, meeting space and secure holding areas. It also comes equipped with three courtrooms, two with jury booths — a marked improvement from the courthouse on Court Street where circuit judges had access to only one courtroom. The courthouse was also home to the chancery court and clerk's offices, youth court and the tax assessor's office, meaning parking was difficult during circuit court sessions when there were so many people in the building that it became a safety hazard.

The complex is located in the former Pass-It-On building on Main Street. The county purchased the building from Community Counseling Services for \$450,000 and financed about \$4 million for the building's purchase, construction, architect fees and other expenses. The deal is for 20 years, but county officials plan to pay it off within 15 years.

### **WEST CHURCHILL ROAD PROJECT**

Forty employees are now at work at Peco Foods' freezer on West Churchill Road off Highway 45 South. The company bought the former Bryan Foods freezer in 2018 to convert into a chicken processing facility. Peco is in the process of building a 150,000 square foot par fry facility

on the property, to produce chicken nuggets. The fry facility will help provide the 300 jobs the company promised when it located in West Point. The facility should be completed around June 2020, and those employees will likely be hired within the next five years, plant manager Jordan Townsend said.

The jobs will pay between \$15-17 per hour, on average, Townsend added.

"We're really excited," he said about the facility. "...We're looking forward to bringing more jobs to West Point."

With the arrival of Peco, the city of West Point and Clay County are partnering on a nearly \$1 million road project to resurface West Churchill Road. The stretch of road slated for paving is about a mile long and runs between the Peco Foods plant and Prestage Farms and is currently pitted with potholes. Calvert-Spradling Engineers in West Point will begin construction on the road in early 2020, said West Point Mayor Robbie Robinson.

Mississippi Department of Transportation will contribute \$500,000 for the project, which will also receive a \$240,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant and a \$150,000 Small Municipalities grant. The rest of the funding will come from the city and county, Robinson said.

Between Prestage Farms, the new Peco Foods facility and other businesses in the area, the new road will affect about 800 jobs, said Robinson.

### **WATER PLANT REFURBISHING PROJECT**

The city of West Point also signed a \$500,000 contract with Professional Application Services Inc. out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to refurbish



the city's north water plant.

Robinson said the city is paying for the work with money that had been set aside for the project over the years.

Work began in July and is expected to be completed in mid-November. Robinson said when the plant is working at full capacity, it produces 4 million gallons of water per day, far more than the city needs. However it has been 17 years since the plant was worked on.

While construction is underway, Robinson said, the city's south plant is producing all the city's water — 3 million gallons per day, which Robinson said is still more than the city needs.

#### RECREATION AND EVENTS

Mossy Oak Golf Club, which opened in September 2016, will finish its last major construction project by the end of the year in the form of an 8,700 square foot clubhouse between the ninth and 18th holes.

The public golf club, a “sister course” to Old Waverly, which in August hosted the U.S. Women's Amateur, already boasts five four-bedroom cottages, said Director of Marketing Gary Billington.

Construction on the clubhouse began in late 2018. The finished structure will include a restaurant and bar, with a back porch overlooking the course.

“It'll be exciting to get that clubhouse open, really complete the course for us and be ready to go going forward into 2020 with it,” Billington said.

Boys and Girls Club of the Golden Triangle also hopes to make progress on fundraising for a new clubhouse in West Point, with various fundraisers. The benefit features live bands State of Shade, Bonfire Boys and Artistik, along with food and brew vendors. Director Nadia Colom said she hopes to raise at least \$8,000 in the fundraiser.

A few years ago, West Point hosted its first Makin' Hay Day, a fall farmers market featuring live music, a hay ride, pumpkin vendors and other family-friendly fall activities. The event has now become a tradition in West Point, held on the first or second weekend of October.

STORY BY **ISABELLE ALTMAN**

PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

**Christian Changes**  
Counseling & Recovery Center

Licensed Professional Counseling  
From a Christian Perspective  
Serving Children, Adolescents, Adults,  
Couples and Families

Accepting Most Major Insurances

Main Office:  
309 E. Lampkin Street  
Starkville, MS 39759

For an appointment call  
**662-338-1880**

For more information, visit our website  
[www.ChristianChanges.com](http://www.ChristianChanges.com)

**PHILLIPS**  
CONTRACTING

ESTABLISHED 1946

CIVIL  
INDUSTRIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
RESIDENTIAL

1500 MOSS STREET | COLUMBUS MS  
662.328.6250  
[www.phillipscontracting.com](http://www.phillipscontracting.com)



# Growth Alliance



## West Point Main Street

A PROGRAM OF THE GROWTH ALLIANCE




Wake Up  
West Point!



The Growth Alliance is Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Association and Tourism Office for West Point and Clay County.

662.494.5121 | [www.westpointms.org](http://www.westpointms.org) | 746 East Main Street | West Point, MS 39773

 West Point Life

NOXUBEE COUNTY



## EXPANSION IN NOXUBEE

TWO BUSINESSES BREAK GROUND ON  
MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR EXPANSIONS

**S**uperior Catfish Products broke ground Sept. 17 on the \$17 million expansion that will create 25 new jobs and 50 to 60 construction jobs.

The plant serves 65 farmers in the area who supplement their income by farming catfish in addition to cotton, corn and soybeans. The

expansion will add a new production facility and turn the current one into dry storage space, bringing the total square footage of the plant close to 74,000, almost double the existing amount, general manager Fred Johnson said. It should be finished and in operation by January 2021.





“I get a bigger satisfaction out of an announcement like this in rural Mississippi than I do with the bigger announcements,” Mickey Milligan, chief economic development officer for the Mississippi Development Authority, told the small crowd at the groundbreaking ceremony. “This is very meaningful to Macon and Noxubee County.”

Johnson said to his knowledge, there have been no other recent projects in the county that will create as many jobs as this one will.

The plant has been in Macon since the late 1970s, and a group of local catfish farmers bought the plant in 1994 and made it a co-op, Johnson said. It is currently producing at maximum capacity and is expected to produce 20 million pounds of catfish this year. Production should increase 20 to 25 percent after the expansion,

Superior Catfish board president Phillip Giesbrecht said.

The nearest catfish processing plants outside Noxubee County are in the Delta region and Louisiana. Having a nearby outlet keeps the local catfish farming industry thriving, Johnson said.

### **BRIDGE REPLACEMENT**

The replacement of three bridges on Jack Spann Road in the southeast part of the county will also benefit the local agriculture industry, Noxubee County Board of Supervisors President Eddie Coleman said.

“They’ll be able to haul catfish, corn, beans and cotton through there, (and right now) they’ve been having to go around another way instead of coming down that road,” he said.

Laurel-based Tanner Construction received the contract for the Jack Spann Road project in April. The three bridges were closed due to safety concerns, and the new ones will have the capacity to hold 80,000 pounds, County Engineer Steve Miller said.

The Mississippi Department of Transportation previously allocated almost \$2.9 million of its emergency road and bridge repair program to Noxubee County — \$2.15 million for Jack Spann Road and \$725,650 to replace a bridge



on Butler Road. The latter is still in the preliminary design stage and no contract has been awarded yet, Miller said.

### GROWTH NORTH AND SOUTH OF MACON

The Oakwood Manor Assisted Living retirement community in Brooksville will have seven new suites and a conference space by June or July of next year, administrator Aaron Koehn said. The project costs about \$1.3 million.

The building already has 24 suites, but the project was a response to a demand for more, and all seven new rooms are already taken, Koehn said.

Additionally, Shuqualak Lumber Company in southern Noxubee County invested about \$6 million in new equipment for its sawmill in an effort to stay competitive with other sawmills in Mississippi and Alabama, vice president Charlie Thomas said.

The new lumber sorter, carriage system and curve saw profiler will bolster the sawmill's hourly production from an average of 49,000 to about 65,000 feet of logs per hour, increasing annual production from 125 million to 150 million feet, Thomas said.

The company is also looking into a project that could create up to 20 new jobs, he said.

"Being in a poor rural neighborhood, we're one of the largest employers here and we're continuously looking at ways to grow," Thomas said.

STORY BY **TESS VRBIN**

OPENING AND OAKWOOD PHOTOS BY **DEANNA ROBINSON**

CATFISH PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

The Golden Triangle's  
#1 CHOICE FOR  
U.S. FARM  
RAISED CATFISH

662-726-2502  
11751 Highway 45  
Macon, Mississippi

@SuperiorCatfish  
on FaceBook for  
Discounts & Specials!



**Protecting the health of your home and family since 1951.**

*If it crawls, call...*

**Northeast Exterminating**  
Jimmy Linley • Richard Linley **LLC**

Starkville: 662-323-5232

Columbus: 662-329-9992

West Point: 662-494-7555

**[northeastexterminating.com](http://northeastexterminating.com)**

WE MOVE MOUNTAINS FOR YOUR COUNTERTOPS!

# THE Granite Guys



BEAUTIFUL. DURABLE. AFFORDABLE.

Custom Fabrication  
& Installation of  
Granite, Marble,  
Quartz, Travertine  
and Slate.

662.329.8687

2859 S. Frontage Rd.  
Columbus, MS

msgraniteguys.com



In addition to our friendly staff and superior location, you will find:

- Breakfast
- WiFi
- Microwave
- Mini-fridge
- Fitness Center
- Outdoor Pool
- Self Laundry Facility

For Reservations:

662.245.6133

www.ihg.com



2000 6th St. N. | Columbus, MS 39701



662.338.0108

- ★ SHOOTING RANGE
- ★ MEMBERSHIPS
- ★ FIREARM SALES
- ★ AXE THROWING
- ★ DEFENSIVE CLASSES
- ★ FIREARMS TRAINING
- ★ FIREARMS STORAGE
- ★ EVENT SPACE
- ★ FIREARMS RENTALS
- ★ ARCHERY
- ★ COMPETITIONS



13070 MS HIGHWAY 182 | STARKVILLE, MS | WWW.GUNCOUSA.COM



# RODNEY A. RAY

ATTORNEY AT LAW

419 Main Street  
Columbus, MS 39701

Phone:

(662) 329-0110

Licensed in the States of  
Mississippi and Florida

# EXPERIENCE INTEGRITY RESULTS



OUTDOORS

## THROWING AXES

STARKVILLE GUN RANGE OFFERS AXE THROWING AS THE SPORT GROWS IN POPULARITY NATION-WIDE

**T**hump! Clang! Thump! Clang! One after another, flung axes bounce all over the walls that divide three lanes for wooden targets, then fall to the concrete floor.

It seems none of the 15 or so participants in this Synergetics corporate team-building exercise

can figure out how to stick the axe blade into anything, much less their wooden target, as the practice round commences.

Then, amid the dissonant sounds created by the errantly hurled weapons, comes a more muffled, but distinct “Thunk!”

Angela Martinez, on her first try, sticks an axe in the wall just a few inches above her target.

Using the two-handed throw a Gunco Store and Range instructor recommended, Martinez toes the line about 10 feet up the lane and sticks axes near the target on her next two throws. On her fifth and final practice toss, she nails the target, just missing to the right of the bullseye.

Martinez's coworkers notice – all impressed but some jokingly rumbling there might be a ringer in their ranks.

“I swear I’ve never done this before,” says Martinez, a sales development representative. “I mean, I hunt and stuff, but this is the first time I’ve ever thrown an axe.”

Similar in spirit to darts, axe throwing involves hurling an axe or hatchet against a target, which is typically made of wood and has the familiar bullseye surrounded by concentric rings. It's a sport that's been gaining in popularity nation-wide for a little more than a year. Venues range from sparse warehouses to swanky bars.

The National Axe Throwing Federation was formed in 2016 to encourage league and tournament play, but most people initially get exposed to the sport in more casual environs such as Gunco. Individuals 18 or over (or as young as 16 if accompanied by an adult) can throw the assorted



weapons at the range for \$20 an hour. Private parties and corporate events are also welcome.

For the team from Synergetics, “different” was the draw.

“It’s so nice to get out of the office with the team and have a competition where everyone is laughing,” said marketing manager Sherea Mercure who organized the outing. “We thought this would be unique and fun. I would definitely recommend it to anyone.”



Calvin Lim stands toward the back of the indoor axe throwing range supervising the competition and offering the occasional advice to the fledgling throwers.

“Use your hips,” proves helpful to the most people over time.

On a table Lim has prepared lay several two-pound “heavy” axes, a few 20-ounce tomahawk-style “light” axes, as well as assorted knives and stars from which the throwers can choose.

“The heavy axes are actually easier to use because they are more likely to stick,” he tells one participant.

Lim, a certified firearms instructor, has worked for Gunco since it opened on Highway 182 in Clayton Village in spring 2017. But he’s thrown knives and axes off-and-on for 15 years, starting when he was a teen.

“This is really hard to do well, and if you don’t practice it’s so easy to lose (the skill),” Lim said. “When I came out here the first time, I hadn’t done it in a while. It took me 10 minutes of throwing to get one on the target.”

Range rules dictate an axe-throwing coach be present for all such events. The Synergetics crew was the second “big group” he’s coached since



the gun store and shooting range added the axe throwing facility in May.

“Usually it’s fathers/sons or husbands/wives who come to throw,” Lim said. “It gives people a little something different to do for recreation, and it’s a little more primal, honestly. ... The main thing is we want people to be safe and have a good time.”



Five throwers line up at each lane. The rules for the night are simple, as Mercure explains.

Each competitor gets five throws, with the top two point earners in each lane squaring off in a five-throw semifinal. Then each lane winner will get another five throws in the finals.

Sticking the bullseye earns 10 points, the middle ring 5 and the outer ring 3.

They can use any weapon on the table.

The various competitors take turns slinging the

sharp objects and moving through the tournament. Martinez — the first to make an axe stick during practice — breezed through to the finals.

She’s facing off against Marc Lening and Byron Ketcham. Ketcham switched from axes to throwing stars halfway through the first round and easily pushed through to the championship round.

There, Lening falls behind quickly, while the favored Martinez, still throwing axes, valiantly tries to keep pace with Ketcham.

When it’s over, Ketcham wins by only two points.

“I’m very surprised,” he says after his victory, before picking up a few knives to throw at the targets just for fun.

Turns out, he’s pretty good with those, too.

STORY BY **ZACK PLAIR**

PHOTOS BY **LAURA DANIELS**

INTERIOR DESIGN ■ FURNITURE ■ FLOORING ■ STYLING



# SIMPLY HOME

INTERIOR DESIGN & FLOORING



402 EAST LAMPKIN STREET ■ STARKVILLE, MS 39759 ■ 662.323.4323



402 E. Lampkin St.  
Starkville, MS  
662.323.4632



## WITH A COMPUTER THIS POWERFUL, WE COULD NEVER KEEP IT TO OURSELVES.

What's the big deal, you ask? It's just a computer, right? Well, not exactly. With the introduction of our new Orion system, Mississippi State University now stands as the nation's fourth fastest academic supercomputer site and home to one of the world's top 100 most powerful non-distributed systems. But there's more. This cutting-edge supercomputer is so fast, it can calculate more than 5 quadrillion computations a second, providing solutions to large-scale problems in automotive designs, cybersecurity, concussion research, weather and ocean modeling and more. So go ahead. Spread the word. News this big deserves to be shared. [MSSTATE.EDU](http://MSSTATE.EDU)



**MISSISSIPPI STATE**  
UNIVERSITY™

# WE RING TRUE™





# REVISITING A HEART

A CALEDONIA WOMAN WHO RECEIVED A PIONEERING SURGICAL PROCEDURE IN THE 1970S HAS THE SURGERY AGAIN, THIS TIME IN COLUMBUS

When Dr. Hemraj Makwana told Suzette Creppel Green she had a hole in her heart, she thought, “Oh my goodness, not another one.”

Green was the first person to undergo a revolutionary noninvasive procedure to fix a hole in her heart when she was 17-years-old. Interventional cardiologist Dr. Terry King helped develop a way to close a hole in the heart without open-heart surgery, and he performed the procedure on Green at Ochsner Hospital in New Orleans on April 8, 1975.

Forty-four years later, on May 7 of this year, Makwana performed the same procedure on Green at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle in Columbus. It was the first surgery of its kind performed at Baptist.

“I was nervous, but I wasn’t quite as nervous (as last time) because I believed in my doctors,” Green said.

She made sure Makwana had King’s contact

information so they could discuss the best treatment for her.

“I have him on speed dial,” she said. “Dr. King calls me once a year to see how I’m doing and all.”

## A PIONEERING PROCEDURE

Green grew up in Crown Point, Louisiana, south of New Orleans, and has lived in Caledonia since 2009, when she and her husband moved there to be closer to his family. She has four children, seven grandchildren and an 8-month-old great-granddaughter.

Her first child was born when she was 16, and “that’s how they really found out how bad my heart was,” even though it had sent her to the hospital periodically since early childhood.

At the time, open-heart surgery was the only known remedy for a hole in the heart, but King had been developing an idea for an alternative procedure since the late 1960s when he was a



cardiology fellow at Duke University.

He solidified the idea when he was stationed at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and was asked to remove a loose catheter from a child's heart through the leg. He was the fifth doctor to attempt the procedure, and the first to succeed instead of resorting to surgery, he said.

"It confirmed my thoughts that if you can make a hole with catheters and you can pull things out of patients' hearts with catheters, why can't you close the hole (in the heart)?" King said.

The next question was what could be small enough to enter the body through a catheter but big enough to close a hole, and the answer came to him at 4 a.m. one morning: an umbrella.

King worked with cardiac surgeon Dr. Noah Mills to create the umbrella-like device made of surgical stainless steel and a form of polyester.

The five-foot catheter is inserted from the leg to the heart and attached to either side of the hole so it can snap closed and, over the next several months, grow into the flesh of the heart.

King and Mills perfected the procedure in experimental models at Ochsner until they were comfortable performing it on a human.

That human was Suzette Creppel, not yet Green, and the procedure was done in seven minutes, King said.

Green didn't know she was the first person to undergo the Mills-King procedure, as it is called in medical textbooks, and the media storm that hit when she was released from the hospital was terrifying, she said. After the initial press conference in a room packed with reporters, she received phone calls for the next few months from several news outlets, some from other countries.

"I just had people from all over calling for interviews," Green said. "I think I was more

excited that they had fixed the heart and I didn't have to go through open-heart surgery.”

King's share of attention for the procedure that created the field of interventional cardiology continues today. He has traveled to a variety of countries including Poland, Germany, Argentina and Honduras as well as all over the U.S. to talk about his work, he said.

More than one million people have gone through the procedure since 1975, and it has been adapted into 33 versions worldwide, he said.

### **LOCAL AVAILABILITY**

Makwana had done the Mills-King procedure hundreds of times before, but introducing it to the Golden Triangle and performing it on the first person to receive it made him feel “very privileged,” he said.

He came to Columbus from Lima, Ohio in September 2018 partly because he saw a local need for a doctor who performs structural heart procedures.

“We don't have any other specialists in town. I'm the only one to provide this care for the community,” Makwana said.

Green's second Mills-King was also the first structural heart procedure performed in Baptist's new Hybrid Operating Room, which opened in April. The \$1.3 million, 1,000-square-foot room includes a variety of technology meant to help surgeons perform faster, more accurate and less invasive procedures.

People in the Golden Triangle who needed the Mills-King procedure done had to drive to Tupelo or Birmingham before Green's procedure in May, Makwana said. The procedure requires a patient to stay in the hospital overnight, so staying as close to home as possible is both more



convenient and keeps patients close to their support systems.

“You can just do it here and go home the next morning,” Makwana said. “A lot of people (might) feel uncomfortable going to a big city. Plus their local doctor's not there, and their family is here.”

The second procedure worked as it was supposed to, and Green said she is no longer frequently exhausted and short of breath.

“I was a little scared because I didn't know how it was going to work with the first umbrella, doing the second one, but I was so glad after I had it done because it came out as great as the other one,” she said.

STORY BY **TESS VRBIN**

OPENING PHOTO BY

**JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

HISTORIC PHOTO COURTESY OF

**SUZETTE CREPPEL GREEN**

SURGERY ROOM PHOTO BY

**AMANDA LIEN**



## A GROUP FOR ALL HISTORIES

RECENTLY-FORMED COLUMBUS NONPROFIT WANT TO BE A RESOURCE FOR PRESERVATION EFFORTS

**I**n a city where unique architecture and recorded history combine to tell stories of place, the newly-formed Preservation Society of Columbus plans to raise the bar.

“Our mission statement is to save buildings,

places and memories that include all cultures, all neighborhoods, that define our past, present and future through storytelling, advocacy, education, conservation and preservation,” said board member Kathy Novotny.

For months, organizers of the group have researched feasibility, looked into potential grants and visited other cities known for historic properties. Now, they are ready to put plans into action. A public membership drive through October and November will culminate in a Dec. 7 founding members' celebration at Riverview, a National Historic Landmark.

The group's inaugural board members are homeowners who participate in the Columbus Pilgrimage Tour, an annual event the preservation society expects to assume oversight of in 2021. But the new organization has a broad view in mind.

"It's not just a group for antebellum homes," said Preservation Society of Columbus President Dick Leike. "It's a group for all cultures, all histories."

And the scope is not confined to Columbus.

Novotny said, "We intend on serving the Golden Triangle. We want to include West Point and Starkville."

Goals include developing resources to assist home and building owners with issues from architectural research to getting structures listed on historical registers. Proposed preservation projects will be adopted. Education efforts could even extend into schools. Advocacy in support of preservation is a priority as well.

"We need to know and understand what preservation laws we have and understand what they mean," Novotny said. "And we need to explore what laws we may need and help members advocate for things that will keep a community as beautiful as it is."

### **PRESERVATION PARTNER**

Strategic partnerships will aid the mission of preserving and restoring homes and buildings



that reflect the people, traditions and habits of bygone eras. One much-anticipated collaboration is expected with Mississippi State University, where groundwork is underway for a proposed master's degree in historic preservation.

Beth Miller, Ph.D., is director of the interior design program at MSU, the only university in the state currently offering a historic preservation course. While any proposed degree requires an extensive approval process, response to implementing the master's has been enthusiastic — not only from students but from entities including the Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Heritage Trust, Miller said.

"We are looking to Columbus, and especially

to this historic preservation group, in finding opportunities for research for our graduate students,” remarked the director. “It’s just a wide open opportunity for research and grants with the structures that Columbus has. And a lot of them are still intact and have not been tapped.”

Using the city as a preservation “laboratory,” students could take part in structure research, grant writing and documentation of residential and commercial buildings of all types.

“The value that could come from helping people document their buildings would be tremendous,” said Miller. “It’s a win-win situation for everyone. ... I can see this being an economically powerful opportunity for the surrounding area, and especially for Columbus.”

An understanding of the past and how earlier generations lived is worth fostering, expressed Leike, noting the creativity and skill put into

historic dwellings and structures still standing in Columbus, some almost 200 years after the first stone was laid.

“It’s just a fine collection of what they did work-wise, just impressive that they could have built these things with crude tools compared to what they have today,” he remarked. “We want to preserve that history that is there.”

“This will be a true preservation society — we’ll have a lot of talk, but even more action,” said Novotny. “We’re intent on making an impact in our communities.”

*The Preservation Society of Columbus may be reached by email at [preservecolumbus@gmail.com](mailto:preservecolumbus@gmail.com), or at 662-889-1145.*

STORY BY **JAN SWOOPE**

PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

## GET THE RESULTS YOU DESERVE.

Specializing in Surgery & Diseases of the Eye.



Cataracts

LASIK- FREE CONSULTATION

Glaucoma

Retina & Macular Diseases

Diabetic Eye Exams & Treatment

Medical Eye Exams

Cosmetic Lid Surgery

Pediatric Ophthalmology Care

“Excellence in Vision Care” Est. 1950

**COLUMBUS  
EYE CLINIC &  
LASER SURGERY CENTER**

Doctors Park • 425 Hospital Drive, Suite 8 • Columbus  
662.328.2061

William Gillespie, M.D.

Scott Bradley, M.D.

Fellows of  
American Academy of Ophthalmology

Board Certified by  
American Board of Ophthalmology



**J. Douglas Dalrymple**

**REAL ESTATE  
CLOSING  
SERVICES INC.**

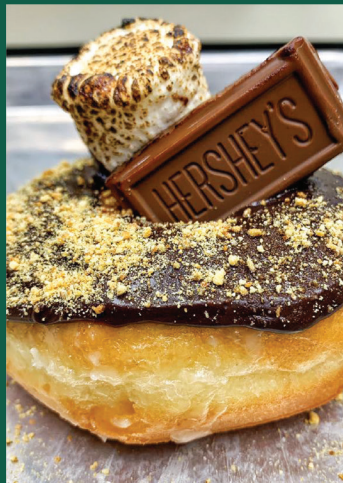
**508 2nd Avenue North  
Columbus, MS 39701**

**662-327-1088**

**[doug@recsi.net](mailto:doug@recsi.net)**

# Hoover's Bakery

Doughnuts - Coffee - Baked Goods



58 Highway 45 N. Plaza • West Point, MS 39773

662-391-1285

Monday-Saturday 5am-1pm



@homeofthesausageroll



hooversbakery





## DUELING RIB TIPS

JUST DOWN THE STREET FROM EACH OTHER,  
TWO PIT MASTERS PERFECT SAVORY RIB TIPS

It's going on 3 o'clock in the afternoon on a hot September Saturday. After the lunch rush, Ronnie Colvin is watching over a smoker full of meat before the suppertime hungry show up at his Memphis Town BBQ at the intersection of 14th Avenue North and 20th Street in Columbus.

"Be an hour or so," he calls out to drivers who pull in and then walk toward the big cooker he mans outdoors. The converted commercial warmer billowing smoke stands in a bay of what used to be a car wash. It's filled with Boston butt, chicken and a menu item that's enjoying a surge in popularity — rib tips. Those short, savory



sections of pork are cut off when the ribs are trimmed and then smoked to a crusty char.

“I don’t cook by fire, I cook by smoke,” says Colvin, who is often at his post from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. “That’s why it’s so tender. The hard part is taking it out without it fallin’ apart.”

In the South, where barbecue can be a primal experience, good cooks can’t give away their secrets, but Colvin doesn’t mind announcing that he uses no marinades, no salt.

“I don’t marinate any of my meat. I don’t believe in none of it,” he declares.

He will, however, say there is lemon pepper involved in this union of meat and smoke going on at the business he opened about two years ago. There’s an art to it all, Colvin says. He began learning it by watching his mother.

“Mama taught me well,” he grins. “But I



learned grilling on my own. I just know what meat’s doin’ ... ”

A few blocks south at 20th Street and Seventh Avenue North, Ronnie Clayton tends two custom cookers behind his Brother’s Keepers BBQ. Smoke rolls out and up, finding escape at the edge of the metal canopy overhead.

“Rib tips used to be a by-product, just like





wings were, but pretty much rib tips are out-selling ribs now,” he says, loading long strips of tips into the smokers with tongs. When finished, the strips will be cut into individual tips. “I like the low and slow method,” Clayton adds. “You get all the smoke and all the seasonings coming together.”

A couple of lawn chairs are nearby, in the shade of a massive tree. Piles of wood are close at hand. Clayton uses a combination of charcoal and wood — hickory and pecan. The first order of business on any cook day is to get the pits “right,” get them hot, up to about 225 to 230 degrees.

“The meat’s gonna do pretty much what you want it to if you get that steady temperature,” he says. And those seasonings? He uses six — but don’t ask.

Clayton opened Brother’s Keepers about eight years ago. Like Colvin, he found early inspiration at home.

“I used to watch my grandmother,” Clayton says. “I was fascinated to watch when she used that wood-burning stove.”

Both meat masters practice their mouthwatering craft not far from their childhood homes, in

the neighborhoods they are rooted in. They cook not just for the customers who drive up but also for the gatherings that bring people together, the parties, reunions, funerals and celebrations at the heart of any community.

“You got to have a love for cooking,” says Colvin, brushing off the hardships of cooking outdoors come rain, shine, heat or cold. He has no plans to stop. “I love what I do. I never get tired.”

“I love people commenting on it,” says Clayton about what keeps him cooking. “... People sayin’ they love it — and the smiles on their faces.”

*Memphis Town BBQ is located at 1927 14th Ave. N. in Columbus.*

*Brother’s Keepers BBQ is located at 1925 Seventh Ave. N. in Columbus.*

**STORY BY JAN SWOOPE**

**PHOTOS BY JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

**Play, Dine, & Belong @**



**LION  HILLS**



**EAST MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**RESTAURANT & GOLF COURSE**

**Single & Family Golf or Pool Memberships**

**Corporate Memberships - Military Rates**

**Driving Range Plans - Meeting & Event Space**

**Catering - Daily Lunch Buffet - Sunday Brunch**



**LIONHILLS.EASTMS.EDU**



# OUTSIDE THE LINES, WITH LEE GIBSON

WEST POINT ARTIST USES A PALETTE KNIFE  
TO 'BUILD' PAINTINGS

Without ever touching a hammer and nail, oil painter Lee Gibson could be called a builder. With palette knives — not the usual array of brushes — she “builds” vibrant images that lift from the canvas for an almost dimensional experience. The technique, she said, is freeing.

“When I started years ago, I wanted to paint. I needed to. But I thought, the brush is just not right. It’s so muddy, it’s so tight,” said the artist who lives in Starkville. “Why not try a knife? For me, it’s a looser feel. I was forced to stay away from detail with a knife. I’ve worked so much with it now, I can almost wield it like someone would a brush.”

Raised in Annapolis, Maryland, and Westport, Connecticut, Gibson moved to West Point in the 1970s and long ago embraced her Southern surroundings. They emerge in her landscapes, portraits and still lifes. Frequent subjects range from prairie farmland to wildlife, coastal beaches to boats. Water is an old friend she paints often. She grew up crewing for her dad — “he was quite the sailor” — on Long Island Sound.

“I didn’t know it at the time, but I had a charmed life as a kid,” she said.

Vivid color has become Gibson’s signature.

“The vibrant colors started everything,” she acknowledged. Lately, however, she has also produced paintings with more muted palettes for those who prefer them. An “earthy step back,” she calls it.





Gibson's canvases are carried in galleries throughout the Southeast, including Culin-Arts in West Point.

"Her use of color and depth and texture just brings paintings to life," said Culin-Arts owner Valeda Carmichael, who has several of Gibson's paintings in her own home. "Some of them, it seems like you could just walk right into them."

The artist's gift for capturing an essence of a person, or even of a favorite hunting dog, generates plenty of commission work.

"She's really good with so many things, but her wildlife and pets ... she has a real talent, a way to capture their eyes," Carmichael said. "It's like they're looking right at you."

Gibson is influenced not only by her roots in the Northeast and years in the Deep South: While living in Warsaw, Poland, in the early 1990s, she visited art meccas of the world. She has studied in Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam, Budapest, London, Rome and Costa Rica. She also spent a summer at the prestigious Glasgow School of Art in Scotland.

And if she had to name one artist whose work inspired her? Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890).

"He's as old as time, and I still love him," Gibson said. "I love how he struggled. I can identify with that. He was my early, early inspiration, and he's so phenomenally good. The ones that

survive time, those are your really top tier artists, and they just never lose their flavor."

Even as Gibson completes commissions and new oils for galleries in Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana and Arkansas, she also paints for a cause close to her heart — her annual Art for EB shows. These local events raise awareness about epidermolysis bullosa, a painful genetic disorder that took her 8-year-old grandson, Gabe Valentine. A portion of every show's proceeds goes toward research into a cure.

Gibson's latest collection also features new looks coming out of her Starkville studio, some sparked by "inspirational" photos and images she's accumulated. The palette knife artist is ready to do some exploring.

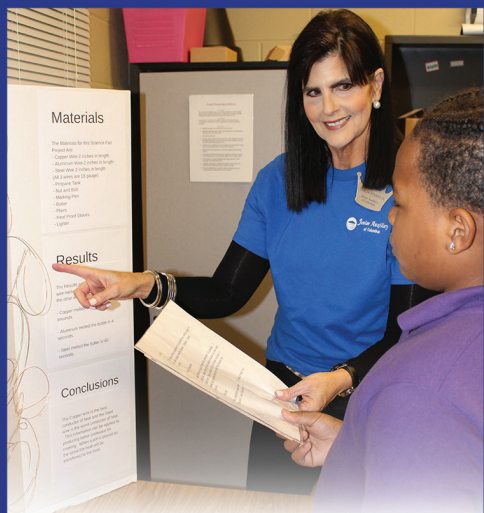
"I'm gonna try to branch out," she smiled. "I'm gonna stir it up a little."

■ [leegibsonartist.com](http://leegibsonartist.com)

STORY BY **JAN SWOOPE**

PHOTOS BY **LAURA DANIELS**





Care Today, Character Tomorrow

Proudly serving the children of Lowndes County for over 70 years through general welfare & clothing, scholarships, tutoring, and a variety of projects on topics such as anti-bullying, disability awareness, and making healthy life choices.

WWW.JACOLUMBUS.ORG



hipp  
Family Dentistry

662.329.3431

3497 Bluecutt Road | Columbus, Mississippi  
www.shippfamilydentistry.com

# HIT HARD BY KIDNEY STONES?

## FIGHT BACK WITH STARKVILLE UROLOGY

KIDNEY STONES MIGHT SEEM LIKE A PAINFUL, UNBEATABLE ADVERSARY, BUT STARKVILLE UROLOGY CAN HELP YOU LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS AND THE LIFE-CHANGING KIDNEY STONE SERVICES OFFERED AT STARKVILLE UROLOGY. WITH THE LATEST TECHNIQUES AND TREATMENTS STARKVILLE UROLOGY IS YOUR ALLY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST KIDNEY STONES.



STARKVILLE  
UROLOGY  
GORDON M. CASTLEBERRY, M.D.  
WWW.STARKVILLEUROLOGY.COM

662-324-1097

1207 Highway 182 West Suite B  
Starkville Mississippi



# MEET BRIAN PUGH

AS ONLY THE SECOND DIRECTOR OF THE STENNIS CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY, THE MERIDIAN NATIVE WORKS TO GET CITIZENS ACTIVE IN PUBLIC SERVICE

**A**n interview with the second executive director of the Stennis Center for Public Policy

**Thank you again for letting us sit down and talk with you. You volunteered and later worked for the center when you were a student at Mississippi State. What about that experience led you to want to come back here as executive director?**

I volunteered for the center as an undergrad and worked here as a graduate student. I always thought that Rex Buffington, my predecessor, had the best job. It was just amazing being around a lot of people who had a passion for public service. It really didn't seem like work. It seemed like it was just fun.

One of the specific missions of the Stennis Center is to promote public service in America. I think a lot of young people especially think of public service as politics and running for elected office, but it's so much more. I never wanted to run for office, but I always knew I wanted to work in government, so I really enjoy just letting students know that there are other options. Most public servants are not elected officials. They're

**Name:** Brian Pugh  
**Position:** Executive director of the Stennis Center for Public Policy  
**Years in public service:** 10  
**Birthplace:** Meridian, Mississippi  
**Hobbies:** Running, reading, history  
**Spouse:** Dominique  
**Children:** Robbie, 7, and Mae, 2

working in state government, they're working in local government or on the federal level. And it's a diverse group of people too. Just here in Mississippi you have the Army Corps of Engineers. You have the Stennis Space Center down on the coast, which is NASA. They have rocket scientists and other really, really smart people.

**Can you explain a little bit more about the center's mission? I think people in the area know that it's here and know that it broadly deals with public policy, but maybe not more specifics.**

Well, we don't deal with policy. We deal with public service. That's one of our primary missions. Most people mistake us for the Stennis Institute of Government, which is a part of



Mississippi State University, but we're not a part of Mississippi State. We are a federal legislative branch agency, and we promote public service, not only in Mississippi but throughout the country. When Congress created the Stennis Center in 1988, they were pretty intentional in that being a part of our mission. We have Democrats on our board and Republicans on our board, and that was the way it was made up.

**What are some of the programs that have pushed this mission of getting more people, and particularly young people, involved in public service?**

The Stennis Center started working specifically with Mississippi State on the Novice Speech and Debate Program in I think 1996. The idea was if you target students that are interested in debate, they're much more likely to want to go into public service. We work with the Presidential Scholars at Mississippi State University, which is part of the Honors College. Once every four years they'll go to DC. They'll go to a major city annually, and we usually sponsor some type of public service aspect of that trip.

That's what we do with young people. Other programming includes the training and development for Congressional Staff. The Stennis Fellows Program has been around since 1993-94. We work with senior level staffers. You have Democrats, Republicans, House members, Senate members, and we engage in dialogue. We have round table discussions where we bring experts in from all over the country to work with them. One of the amazing things about the program is when you're seeing them interact with each other and discuss things, a lot of the times, you can't even tell who's a Democrat and who's a Republican because they're all so dedicated to



making Congress better.

**You also have some programs promoting women in public office.**

Ready to Run was one. We worked in collaboration with Millsaps College when we had it down in Jackson this year. It's the one program that focuses more on politics and possibly running for office. That's a little bit outside our mission, but this is the one time I can solicit money from the Mississippi parties. This year, the Mississippi Democratic Party and the Mississippi Republican Party both sponsored the event, and

we took care of the remaining cost. We made it free to all the women who wanted to participate.

Another women's program is New Leadership, a collaboration with Mississippi University for Women. We get female college students from throughout the state that participate in a week-long session of training at MUW and we fund a Jackson trip. One of the things I really wanted to do this year with new leadership with The W is, in addition to having politicians, have more women in public service.

**Rex Buffington was executive director of the Stennis Center since it began. What are you planning to keep the same and what new programs do you want to implement?**

One of the things that I mentioned to the staff about possibly changing is Southern Women of Public Service — change it to something like Women in Public Service, so we can reach D.C. women and women in other parts of the country and promote women in public service in general. It's not just a Southern problem right now. We need more women all over the country. There's a really good chance Ready to Run will go back to the Stennis Institute, because that program is specific to Mississippi and they actually had that program first. Everything else we plan to keep the same.

One new thing that I'm looking to do is what I'm calling the Stennis Service Corp. I'm thinking of working with not only the city of Starkville but nonprofit organizations and finding ways to pair Mississippi State students and high school students from Lowndes County and Oktibbeha County to service opportunities. What better way to learn about public service than to go and do an internship or go and volunteer for some

type of entity that provides some type of service? Since we're here in Starkville, we can start locally and then expand on to Jackson and other states and then use the resources that we have in DC with our Congressional Fellows to expand there as well. It's in its beginning stages, but we want to get that going hopefully next year.

**When we talk about the political climate in the United States today, we talk about polarization a lot. As you pointed out, your focus isn't necessarily on people who are running, but how does that affect public service today?**

I think that's what you see a lot on TV, but I think there are members of Congress who still get along and who work together. At the Southern Women in Public Service conference in Asheville, North Carolina this year, we had Representative Martha Roby, a Republican from Alabama, serve on a panel with Terri Sewell who's a Democrat from Alabama. They talked to the women there about their relationship working in Congress. They didn't agree policy-wise, but they maintained their friendship and I think it was just remarkable that they got a chance to express their relationship to the audience. One of the things that they said was there are other Congressmen and senators that work together too, but that's not the stuff that makes the news. I think it was one of the highlights of the conference and it was really good for participants to see that. If I didn't see that myself, to be honest with you, I would probably find it quite hard to believe based on just what you see on TV all the time.

INTERVIEW BY **ISABELLE ALTMAN**  
PHOTO BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

MAKING *Special Moments* FOR OVER 30 YEARS...



**COLUMBUS**

OB/GYN SPECIALTY CENTER, PLLC.  
662.240.0095



*Health Additions*

EDEN BODY SCULPTING

662.244.0206

GREGORY W. CHILDREY,  
M.D., FACOG, AACB

CLAY B. HUDSON,  
M.D., FACOG



SPECIALIZING IN OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY, BIOIDENTICAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT, ROBOTIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES ALONG WITH ROUTINE & HIGH RISK OBSTETRICS, GYNECOLOGICAL SURGERY & PROCEDURES, LIPOSUCTION, TUMMY TUCKS & COSMETIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES

425 Hospital Drive | Columbus, MS | [www.drgregorychildrey.com](http://www.drgregorychildrey.com)

 Offering the Best in Senior Living 



**Dugan**

*Skilled Nursing Care*

26894 East Main Street

West Point, MS | 662-494-3640

Offering a professional nursing staff 24-hours a day with quality care in a comfortable, safe and loving environment at affordable rates.

- Professional short-term rehab or long-term care services
- Private and semi-private rooms

**The Henry Clay**

*Independent Apartment Living*

603 Commerce Street

West Point, MS | 662-494-1079

The nostalgic Henry Clay Hotel is the perfect setting for active retirement living.

- Offering unfurnished 1 or 2 bedroom apartments with private bathrooms
- Social activities and specialized programs

**Trinity Place**

*Retirement Community*

230 Airline Road

Columbus, MS | 662-327-6716

We have the change you have been looking for with our secure retirement lifestyle.

- Independent Living Apartments
- Assisted Apartments
- Supportive Living through Skilled Nursing
- In-House therapy available

***Some apartments qualify for rental assistance based on income.***



## OUR READERS

With each issue of Progress, we sit down with a handful of readers to learn a bit about them. These aren't always news-makers, but each has their own stories to share.

The questions are the same in each issue and are designed to gain insight into a handful of your neighbors.

Some were nervous; others were relaxed. One thought she knew how she'd answer a question, but, when the time came, gave a more candid answer.

These five readers joined us in The Studio, a meeting space upstairs in The Commercial Dispatch building on a hot October afternoon.

We'd love to hear your story as well. If you're open to answering our five questions, let us know by emailing [progress@cdispatch.com](mailto:progress@cdispatch.com).

INTERVIEWS BY **PETER IMES**

PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER MOSBRUCKER**

# PEGGY BUCKLEY

RETIRED RETAIL BUSINESS OWNER, STARKVILLE

**Is what you're doing right now what you wanted to do when you grew up?**

My mother was in the retail business. She sold women's hats when women's hats were really popular, so as I grew up I said, "I'll marry anybody but I'm not going to be in the retail business. But when I married, my husband had just gotten back from Guard camp in Oklahoma, and he wanted to open up a business that had first class merchandise. He opened up Mullins Menswear in the late-50s. We started that business, then we bought W.W. Scales & Co., which became Mullins Department Store.

**If you could give your younger self advice, what would it be?**

I grew up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and it was really large, but at LSU we could not live in the dorm if we lived in Baton Rouge because the dorms were full. So I accepted a scholarship to Ole Miss, and I loved it. I became a member of the debate team and I really liked that. And I was glad I was in a college town. I like being around that kind of atmosphere.

**What's the one thing people tend to misunderstand about you?**

They probably think I'm bossy! I've always heard all my life that if you have a second toe that's longer than your big toe that you're bossy. And I'm pretty organized but I guess that's one thing they may say. I'm persistent in (The Partnership) Ambassadors, but I like to complete something if I start it.

**What's your greatest extravagance?**

Probably clothes. I sold clothes my whole life and I loved them. When I go outside and see the clothing today it's really strange because during the 60s and 70s and 80s we had beautiful clothes. And they were expensive, much more so than they are today. I don't think you ever went out in public that you didn't see a woman in something that you thought, "Oh I would love to have that." But nowadays the clothing is very different and it's less expensive and you don't have to dry clean it.

**If you could master one skill, what would it be?**

I've always loved beauty pageants and I've judged beauty pageants. In fact I was co-hostess of Miss Starkville when Cheryl Prewitt won Miss Mississippi and won Miss America. I don't care whether it's a beauty pageant or food... I love judging. It's an art, I guess, that you can pick up through the years. I miss being able to do that now, because they want younger people to do that.



# JOSIAH ANDREWS

COFFEE ROASTER, BARISTA, PASTOR, COLUMBUS



**Is what you're doing right now what you wanted to do when you grew up?**

No. I had no clue I would be doing coffee. On the side of doing ministry, absolutely. This has always been my dream, and I knew I wanted to do this the rest of my life. But on the coffee side, no clue. I've always enjoyed coffee a little bit since I was a kid, but I never thought I'd be this involved in it.

**If you could give your younger self advice, what would it be?**

Slow down. I always — I'm only 24 — but I've always had this feeling like I should go for it and get it done. I've really come to realize the importance of my family and my kids and be able to slow down to become a person rather than simply doing all the things I need to do. It's important I become the person I need to be so my kids and my wife can have that person in the home that needs to be there instead of this person who just does the things that need to get done.

**What's the one thing people tend to misunderstand about you?**

Coffee roasting, being a barista, playing music... anything I do professionally, it flows from a place of loving God and loving people who are made in his image and seeing him in all things. I guess that's what gets misunderstood the most: The reason behind why I do what I do. I want to roast coffee well because I love God and I love people. I know that sounds crazy, but I guess that's one thing people don't understand sometimes.

**What's your greatest extravagance?**

My devotion to the Lord. Genuinely it could be considered extravagant. There are things you do that are unreasonable. If a certain set of claims aren't true, the things you may subject yourself to are sort of ridiculous. Turning the other cheek is an example. If a certain claim that people are made in the image of God isn't true, then turning the other cheek is ridiculous. But if they are, then it's a sacred thing to turn the other cheek.

**If you could master one skill, what would it be?**

Waking up whenever I want to wake up. I'm such a heavy sleeper. My wife is my saving grace. I have to be at work at 5:30 and my wife is the only reason I make it. If I could master one skill it would be the ability to wake up right when I wanted to wake up, not groggy or half asleep. That would last me my whole life.

# CHARLOTTE VERDELL

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CHEMIST, COLUMBUS

**Is what you're doing right now what you wanted to do when you grew up?**

Actually, no it's not. When I was a child I wanted to be a pediatrician. I wanted to take care of children, from the infant stage all the way up through adolescence, just being able to nurture them, care for them, make sure they're healthy and well. But I went to USM in Hattiesburg, took the MCAT and just never pursued medical school. I came home to Columbus, got a job in Aberdeen at another chemical company then I transitioned to Southern Ionics and just never left.

**If you could give your younger self advice, what would it be?**

Don't over think it, Charlotte. Two quotes come to mind. "Those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind," and, "Why fit in when you were born to stand out." Often times I over-think or over-analyze a situation, but I would say to just relax and to live in the moment.

**What's the one thing people tend to misunderstand about you?**

I am nice, but I have very high expectations. I'm also very cordial, but people who know me well know that I like seeing things done right or done well.

**What's your greatest extravagance?**

My family and food go hand-in-hand. It's a fellowship and enjoyment as well as socializing. I'm an undercover foodie — I like to eat, I like to go places and sit in restaurants — so that's my extravagance. Food is also a great way to pull the family together.

**If you could master one skill, what would it be?**

Dancing! I would like to take lessons and maybe get a variety of lessons. It's fun! People are laughing, they're happy, they're enjoying the moment no matter what.



# GAIL COOKE

VOLUNTEER, SUBSTITUTE TEACHER, COLUMBUS



**Is what you're doing right now what you wanted to do when you grew up?**

Teaching is what I wanted to do, but it took me awhile to get there. Instead of getting my BS from school, I thought my "Mrs" was the best way to go. And I got that, but now that I am older and retired, I can be in the classroom when I want to, and I am loving that. It helps me stay active.

**If you could give your younger self advice, what would it be?**

Stand firm and follow your dreams. Don't let anyone influence you with a negative attitude. Fight for it if you have to, but follow your dreams. I regret not getting my college degree. If you have to work two or three jobs to make it happen, make it happen.

**What's the one thing people tend to misunderstand about you?**

I don't really think there is anything, because if you know me, what you see is what you get. I tend to be an open book. Sometimes I may come across as being rude or whatever, but I don't like to think I'm that way. I do tend to say what's on my mind.

**What's your greatest extravagance?**

I afford myself a monthly pedicure 12 months out of the year. I don't care if I have sandals on or not, it helps me feel better about myself. Also, I'm a music lover and I spend lots of money on music CDs, and I probably have too many. I'm drawn to oldies because that's what I am, but I do like my religious instrumentals and soundtracks from movies and soft music.

**If you could master one skill, what would it be?**

Playing the piano. That's something else I wanted to do when I was young, and in the last couple of years I've started taking piano lessons. I encouraged my granddaughter to take lessons, and, in a turn of events, she and her mother were the ones who got me to start taking lessons a couple of years ago.



# WILLIAM L. “BILL” HENRY

VIETNAM VETERAN, RETIRED FROM MSU, STARKVILLE

**Is what you’re doing right now what you wanted to do when you grew up?**

I joined the Marine Corp in college, and when I did I had no earthly idea what I wanted to do. I spent about 11 months in a hospital on my way home from Vietnam, and that’s how I met my wife. She was the first nurse I met when I came back. My professional life was just something that came along. I interviewed once with a railroad in Missouri. It’s organized very much like the military, very structured. I started with the Extension Service at the county level in Jackson County and real quickly came up here. The Extension Service, regardless of what they say, is quite political. For people who had interest in that kind of stuff - and I did - there was always something to do to help.

**If you could give your younger self advice, what would it be?**

That’s a hard one. I’ve never thought of that. I would say “study more,” but I sure would have missed a lot of fun. I guess I’m pretty happy with it all.

**What’s the one thing people tend to misunderstand about you?**

I’m pretty direct. I was raised that way and then it was re-enforced with my service. You just didn’t make a mistake, or if you did, it was very costly. So I guess a lot of folks don’t know enough about my background to realize that I’m as direct as I am for a reason.

**What’s your greatest extravagance?**

My wife would tell you it’s MSU sports. I’m backing off a few now, but I’ve had season tickets for everything for a long time. There’s no question that baseball is my favorite sport to watch. When my son was 8 or 9, (former baseball coach Ron) Polk had a program called the Foster Parent Program, where you would adopt a baseball player. They would come to your home, eat a meal and so-forth. It was perfect. My son got to know all the players, and I’m still in touch with a good number of them. I fish a lot too, bass fish. I’ve about cleaned that (Tombigbee) river out over there. That’s what I like the best.

**If you could master one skill, what would it be?**

Finance. I’ve always been a frustrated economist. I love to read about it a lot. I guess I can say I never mastered it, but it is fun to follow.



# MAKE ALL YOUR DAYS DAWG STATE DAYS

with the 2020 CALENDAR for MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



Enjoy beautiful pictures of familiar campus scenes that bring back special memories of your time at Mississippi State. The official State calendar has become a Bulldog tradition. With pictures by MSU's own award-winning photographers, it's truly a one-of-a-kind treasure. Order online today at [msufoundation.com](http://msufoundation.com) or call 662-325-7000.



FOUNDATION  
MSU is an AA/EEO university.



ALSO

*Share your Bulldog spirit  
this holiday season.*

Send friends and family exclusive MSU holiday cards featuring original illustrations by MSU alumni. Purchase yours online at [msufoundation.com](http://msufoundation.com).



## TASTES OF COLUMBUS

Join Us March 26-April 4, 2020 for the 80th Annual Spring Pilgrimage



Visit [ColumbusMS.org](http://ColumbusMS.org) for a complete list of attractions and events.  
Tennessee Williams Home & Welcome Center | 300 Main Street | 800.920.3533





MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Opportunities for Independence

# OFFERING NO COST SERVICES TO BUSINESSES

*such as* 

- Help Reaching Diversity Goals • Job Ready Candidates • Work Opportunity Tax Credit
- Staff Training on Disability Etiquette and Awareness
- On-the-Job Training • Job Site Accommodations • Building Accessibility Evaluations



Explore the possibilities of sub-contracting with our AbilityWorks program which offers flexibility, space and cost savings to businesses.

AbilityWorks provides estimates at no charge.

Call 1-800-443-1000 for the Business Development Representative or AbilityWorks facility nearest you.

**AbilityWorks, INC.**

Resources that Work for Mississippi Business

*a division of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services*

*All MDRS services are personalized to meet your business needs.*

Mississippi  
**ABLE**



*Achieving a Better Life Experience*



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

**(888) 609-3469**

**Sign up today!**

**Savings accounts for individuals with disabilities**

**Will not affect public benefits**

**Can be used for daily transactions and/or long-term savings**

**May provide tax advantages**



Brian D. Adams, FNP-BC, John J. King, MD, FACC,  
Madelyn B. King, ACNP-BC and Abbey Dichiara, FNP-BC.

# KING & ASSOCIATES CARDIOLOGY



2323 5th Street North | Columbus, MS 39705 | 662-368-1169 | Fax 662-570-1492  
(Across from Chris's Pharmacy)

## Services offered but are not limited to:

- Pacemakers
- Defibrillators
- Heart Caths
- EKGs
- Heart Monitors
- Heart Stents
- Complex Coronary heart caths
- Internal Loop Recorder Monitoring
- CardioMems internal heart monitoring
- Congestive Heart Failure
- Atrial Fibrillation management
- Atrial Flutter management
- Warfarin/Coumadin monitoring
- Amiodarone monitoring
- Sports physicals
- Blood pressure management
- Cholesterol management
- Echos
- Stress tests
- Chest Pain/Angina management
- AND MORE!!!

*Hospital privileges remain at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle.*