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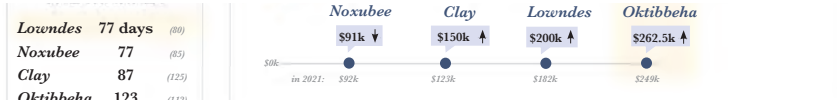
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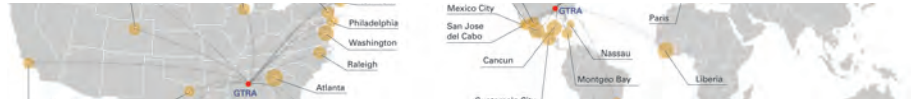
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PROGRESS MAGAZINE

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HEALTH

## DRIPPING WITH HEALTH

GOLDEN TRIANGLE'S FIRST IV HYDRATION,  
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**R**evive Wellness of Starkville opened in February, making it the first clinic in the Golden Triangle to offer IV hydration therapies.

An IV hydration drip can benefit people for various reasons, including recovery from a viral infection, chronic dehydration, vitamin deficiencies and even a hangover. The fluids used to treat these issues may contain vitamin supplements that provide various benefits, from improving skin coloration to alleviating nausea, clinic co-founder Dr. Josh Griffin said.

Griffin, an Oxford-based urologist, and Dr. Clifton Scott, a Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle ER physician, began planning the business in the fall of 2022.

Griffin explained the business idea derived from conversations with patients about specific issues that neither Scott nor Griffin could treat at the doctors' respective practices.

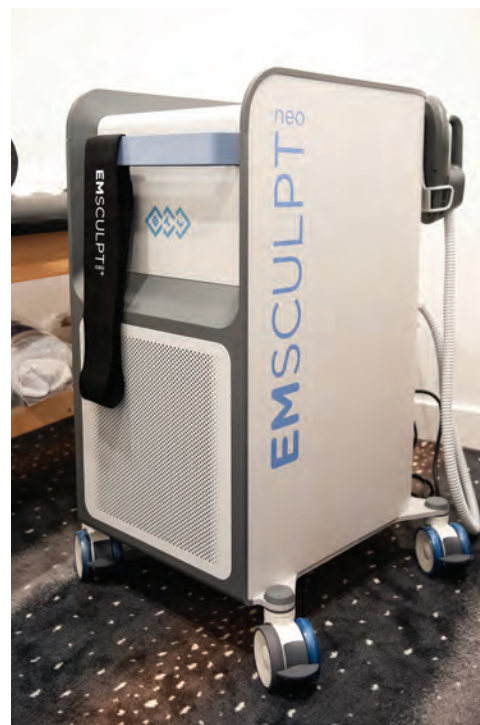
"It reached a point where I had a lot of people asking about it," Griffin said. "Every time I see a patient in the clinic, I always ask, 'Is there anything else I can do for you, anything else you need help with?' And you'll get things like, 'I really wish I could fix my knee or help my back problem out,' which I can't do."

Before opening the business, Griffin and Scott tried every product and treatment in their clinic to ensure a positive treatment experience and quality of care.

"The whole clinic is physician-curated," Scott said. "Every product that we add here are things that we use ourselves. Most of the supplements on our shelves are things that he (Griffin) and I use daily. We won't put it out there if we don't think it's effective."

In addition to IV hydrations, the clinic offers men's and women's hormone-replacement therapy, B-12 injections, Dysport, and Botox. Revive also offers a trio of treatments that employ a combination of electromagnetic energy and radio frequencies to burn fat and build muscle: the Emface for facial muscle toning, the Emsculpt for body shaping, and the Emcella for strengthening

**LEFT:** Columbus pharmacist Robert White receives an IV from Revive Wellness nurse practitioner Ashleigh Flora during the clinic's open house in early March. **ABOVE:** An IV drip in the clinic. **RIGHT:** An Emsculpt machine is one of several devices that clinic founders say burn fat and build muscle.





the pelvic floor muscles. The clinic also boasts an aesthetician and an associates massage therapist.

The doctors expect the lion's share of the business to come from their hormone therapy, which treats hormone imbalances. These imbalances, left untreated, can cause sleep deprivation, irritability, and energy loss, Scott explained.

"The person who assesses their health and health risks in their 30s is going to realize the most long-term benefit," Scott stated, "however, many people in their 40s and 50s are just beginning to realize that their mood or their energy levels aren't optimal; they can also realize

the benefits of HRT. It is never too late to make quality health changes that increase overall health and longevity."

Scott also explained that HRT and all other therapies offered at Revive appeal to him as a functional medicine practitioner – and as a patient. Functional medicine is a medical discipline that seeks to address the root cause of symptoms or conditions that patients experience, creating and sustaining long-term health benefits.

For more immediate wellness, Ashleigh Flora, Revive Starville's nurse practitioner, explained how IV hydration can make all the difference:

“We see people who are run-down from viral infections, and although they are eating and drinking, they are still depleted. Basic fluids help with that. We can also add B and C vitamins, which are good for immunity and help boost energy. You’ll see tremendous immediate benefits from these fluids if you’re suffering from a hangover, and we typically add other things to it like Zofran for nausea and Toradol for pain.”

The starting cost of IV drip treatments is \$175-\$200 without vitamin additives. Most services are priced based on a customized patient plan.

Griffin acknowledges that Revive’s services are costly. Still, he adds that a significant amount of research is behind the services offered, and both the long-term and immediate results of their different therapies are worth the price tag.

“We don’t typically discuss pricing unless someone comes in for a consultation,” Griffin noted. “We also run specials and offer financing options, too.”

STORY BY **GRANT MCLAUGHLIN**

PHOTOS BY **RORY DOYLE**

**LEFT:** Nurse Grace Dabbs gives a shot during Revive Starkville’s open house. **BELOW:** Revive Wellness of Starkville staff nurse practitioner Ashleigh Flora, co-founder Dr. Clifton Scott and nurse/social media manager Grace Dabbs.




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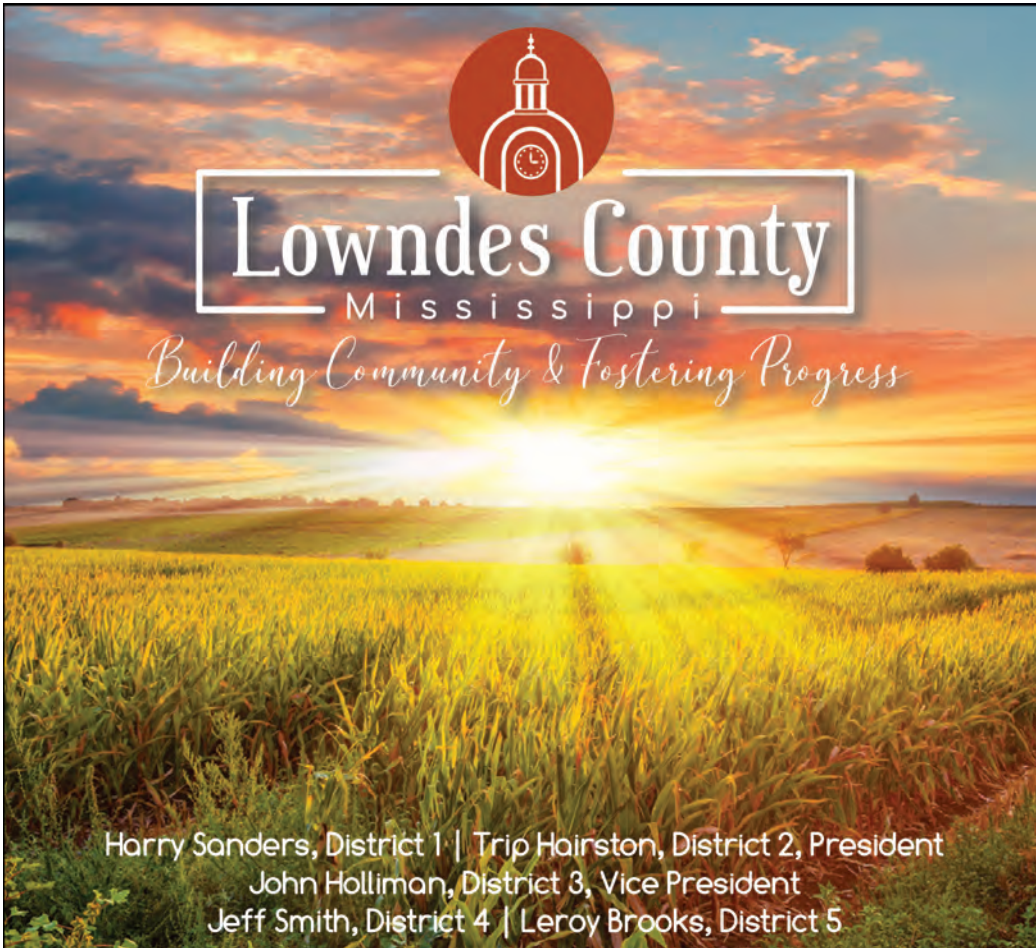
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## 3 INSPIRED PEOPLE

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 neighborhood, 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**  
SEITZ AND REID PHOTOS BY **RORY DOYLE**  
TORBERT PHOTO PROVIDED BY **GARRETT TORBERT**





## BOB SEITZ

**B**ob Seitz made his living selling food, but the payment he receives is a different sort of currency.

For the past 10 years, Seitz, who used to own and operate a quick serve pizza business, has volunteered with Project Homestead Food Pantry in his hometown of West Point. His primary job is to oversee the arrival of donated food and portion it out for the 400 to 450 families served by the pantry.

“People can get behind the 8-ball pretty quick. We want to be there when they do,” said Seitz, 62.

Project Homestead opens its door each Tuesday and Thursday for those in need of food.

“Usually, a family will walk out with two, three, sometimes four grocery bags of food,” he said. “A lot of the food comes from the Mississippi Food Network out of Jackson, but we also get food donations from Walmart, Dollar General and other stores. Churches have canned-goods drives that go to us. Other groups collect food for us, too. We also use cash donations to buy food, depending on what’s available at any

given time.”

The pantry, located at the old gym on the campus of Mary Holmes College, is run by volunteers and supported by churches, civic groups and individuals.

“Community Counseling means a lot to us, too,” he said. “They pay the rent, pest control, utilities, and those things add up. Really, it would be hard for us to do what we do without their support.”

In his time there, Seitz said he’s come to know the backstories of many of the pantry’s users.

“So many of them have just fallen on hard times, temporary situations when they just need a little help,” he said. “Somebody’s house burns down or they lose a job. It takes a while to recover and in the meantime, they could use some help. What we do doesn’t provide everything. ... It’s a supplement, but a lot of times it means they can make ends meet until they can get back on their feet. I’ve been fortunate that I’ve never been in that position, but a lot of good people have.”



## JULIETTE REID

In her 15 months as program coordinator for the Starkville Area Arts Council, Juliette Reid has discovered the role the arts play in a college town.

“(Mississippi State) is what brings a lot of people to Starkville,” Reid says. “The arts are what keeps them here.”

That’s certainly true in Reid’s case, a Missouri native who enrolled at Mississippi State in 2014 to study English.

“I didn’t have any connection with Mississippi State back then,” said Reid, now 25. “What I did know is that I didn’t want to go to school in Missouri. My boyfriend said, ‘What about Mississippi?’ I knew I didn’t want to go to Ole Miss, so I said, ‘How about Mississippi State?’”

Upon graduating with a degree in English in 2019, Reid might easily have joined the exodus of MSU graduates.

“When you get a degree in English, people naturally assume you want to be an English teacher. Reid said. “I never wanted to be an English teacher, so when I graduated I started looking around for something I could do that

was kind of English-y or Communications-y. This kind of fell into my lap.”

Reid joined SAAC as a Americorps Vista paid volunteer after graduation. After that two-year volunteer position expired at the end of 2021, she moved into a regular position as programs coordinator.

“From my time with Vista, the job has evolved into grant writing, marketing, social media and coordinating volunteers and, of course, putting together programs,” she said. “I like the variety. It’s worked for me so far.”

Reid sees her work and that of the SAAC as something like being the man behind the curtain from “The Wizard of Oz.”

“People may not know events they are attending are our work, and that’s OK,” she said. “For me, the fulfillment is working on something for months and months that turns out to be one big day that draws thousands of people to events, like the Cotton District Art Festival. Seeing the results of all that hard, behind-the-scenes work is the part of the job I enjoy most.”



## GARRETT TORBERT

When Garrett Torbert moved to Columbus in 2020 and joined the Mississippi State University Music Department as a voice instructor, he figured he had left the world of musical theater behind him.

In an odd sort of way, it was a failed attempt to open a neighborhood bodega that led him back to musical theater.

“I had everything set up for the bodega, then something happened to the facility I was leasing and they had to give me my money back,” Torbert said. “I kept noticing that every step I took, there was some hurdle in the way. So like a lot of people were doing during the COVID period, I stepped back and thought about going another direction.”

The new idea was to create a children’s theater program in Columbus.

Unlike the bodega, the pieces began to fall into place.

“When I decided to do this, everything I needed to pursue it came to me in a way I was able to pursue it to the fullest,” he said. “I took that as a testament that I’m doing what I should be doing, even though it wasn’t my first idea.”

Torbert, 30, used his experience in opera and musical theater, both regionally and nationally, to shape Golden Triangle Theatre.

“We started with 15 kids,” he said. “Now, we have about 60.”

Torbert said he chose to establish the theater in Columbus, but it’s a Golden Triangle program with 15 members from West Point and another 12 from Starkville.

“I could have started the theater in Starkville where I work, but I realized there was such a need in Columbus,” he said. “There wasn’t anything here for kids in music and theater.”

Torbert’s efforts have been supported by a very active board.

Each semester, Torbert’s kids put on a show, most recently “Annie,” in late February.

“It was absolutely great, I thought,” Torbert said. “We had 700 kids come to the shows and it was fun to hear so many of the kids in the audience singing along. We’ve put on a show every semester, always adding something as we grow. This time it was theater lighting. We’re building from one show to another and growing our group. I couldn’t be more excited.”



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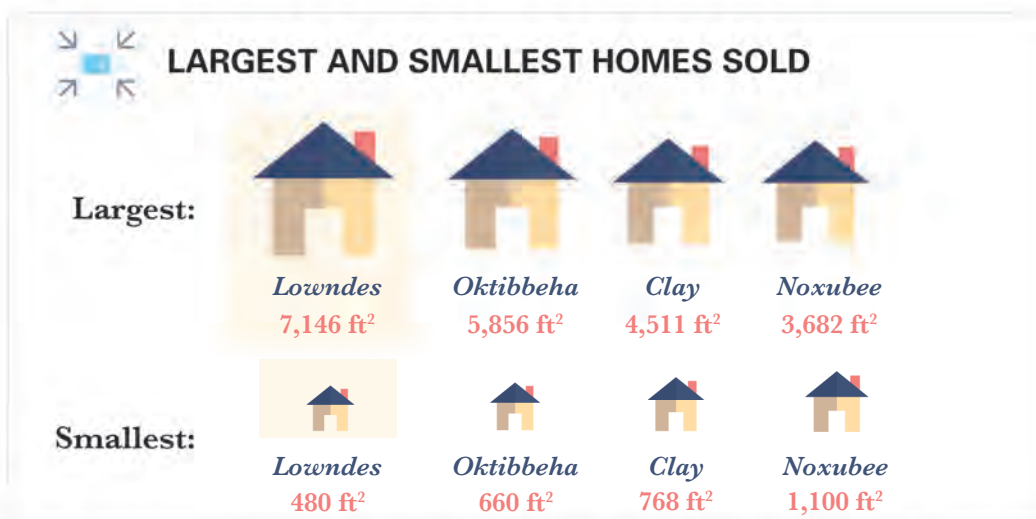
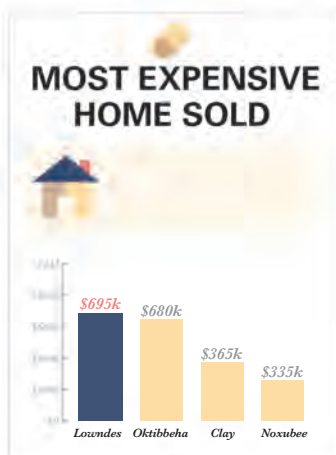
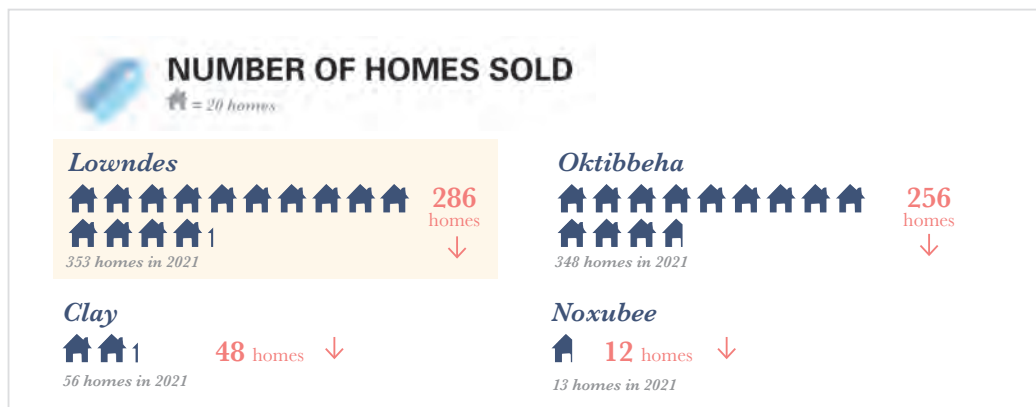
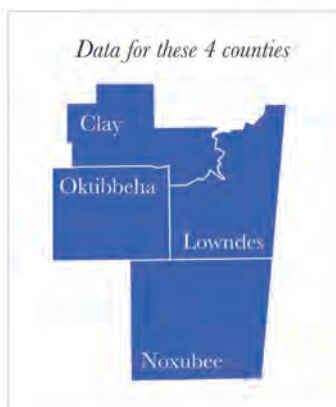
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# HOME SALE TRENDS

REAL ESTATE METRICS FROM JULY - DECEMBER 2022  
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Data courtesy of Greater Golden Triangle Association of Realtors®

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# HANDCRAFTED HOME

25-YEAR-OLD CLAY COUNTY WOODWORKER PUTS SKILLS TO USE FOR HIS NEW FAMILY

**I**t took some convincing for Kailey Harrell to agree to live in a barn.

She and her husband, Samuel, were married in May 2022, and Samuel finished painting the bedroom of the couple's would-be home only a few hours before the rehearsal dinner.

"I didn't like the idea," Kailey said. "I adjusted to it, though, and I love it here."

Taking a tour of what Samuel calls the "barn-dominium," it's easy to reckon why.

Beginning almost six years ago, Samuel, a 25-year-old craftsman, converted part of an old horse barn on family property off Windmill Road in Clay County into a 1,000 square-foot,

one-bedroom home outfitted with handmade touches. Samuel made 80 percent of the furniture, from the dining table to the cabinets and doors, even the frame for the toilet.

Downstairs, Samuel converted the old tack room into a sauna made from Western red cedar. Upstairs is a tub made from a white oak log that has been fiberglassed and wet-sanded. The second-floor ceiling is fashioned from 42 wooden panels and about a mile's worth of trim painted green.

"I wanted to call it 'The Green Mile,'" Samuel joked.

But the undisputed showpiece of the Harrells'



Harrell's 'barndominium'



Bedroom



Living room and sauna beyond swinging door



Kitchen



The Harrell's bathroom, including a hand-carved tub.



Details of stair rail

well-appointed abode is a hand-carved Spanish cedar handrail that winds in one continuous 20-foot piece up the stairway. He drafted it using the “tangent system,” which sent the Oak Hill Academy alumnus diving into some very old math books.

“It was pretty involved,” he said. “I read a lot of building manuals from the 19th century and derived some of the old ways when building it.”

Outside the barndominium doors is Samuel’s woodshop, where he spends his off hours from his shifts as a West Point firefighter toiling away with his chainsaw, lathe, chisel and carving equipment – making doors, chairs, tables and other furniture on commission; and fashioning wooden bowls he sells by the unit.

His woodworking passion started at about age 13, when he would help his grandfather, the late



Custom bowl by Samuel Harrell



Woodworking tools

Robert Harrell, in his shop.

“He was a really charismatic, eclectic guy,” Samuel said. “He was enjoyable to be around and had a lot to share.”

After high school, Samuel moved briefly to his great-uncle Johnny Bryan’s farm in Illinois, apprenticing under master woodworker Mike Jarvi before moving on to study at the Penland School of Arts and Crafts in North Carolina.

He returned to Clay County and took on the meticulous task of making the barn his home – one he’ll have to say goodbye to soon.

He and Kailey are expecting their first child, making the one-bedroom “barndominium” less ideal. But in true Samuel Harrell fashion, he will be very involved in building the timber frame house where the family will move.

“I’m planning on sawing everything,” he said. “The whole house will come through this shop.”

He’s never done anything quite on that scale, but he doesn’t intend to let that stop him.

“I always believe I can tackle something,” Samuel said, then started to laugh. “Sometimes when I get in it, I might say, ‘Damn, I’m in over my head.’”

The barndominium will remain in use, at minimum as a hangout and showroom for Samuel’s work. He’s even toying with the idea of renting it out as an Airbnb.

“I think people would get a kick out of staying in a woodshop with a sauna,” he said.

STORY BY **ZACK PLAIR**  
PHOTOS BY **RORY DOYLE**

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CULTURE



# RAILS TO TRAILS ON THE C&G

GREENVILLE TO WEST POINT  
BIKE TRAIL PROJECT GAINING STEAM

**F**rom West Point to Greenville, nearly 100 miles of the old Columbus and Greenville Railroad tracks sit dormant as nature retakes the land the tracks sit upon.

The tracks that once brought bustling trains chugging through towns are now unused and, in some places, dangerous, particularly at road crossings.

Wilson Carroll, an avid biker and lawyer, wants Greenville and West Point to serve as trailheads for a bike trail which would replace the tracks.

“Growing up in Greenwood, I knew the C&G had been abandoned, so in 2008 I formed the C&G Rail Trail Coalition to promote the idea of converting it to a rail trail,” Carroll said. “We got a lot of early support, but then the railroad was purchased by a company called Genesee and Wyoming. ... They did not have any interest at that point in abandoning the line and converting it to a rail trail.”

G&W still owns the railway, with the piece between West Point and Columbus still in use. But after years of unfulfilled hope that the rest of the railroad would be active again, Carroll said the southern region vice president of G&W reached out to him in February 2022 saying the company was interested in letting the unused portion become a trail.

In order to obtain the 92 miles of railroad, Carroll said the first thing the coalition needs is an estimate on how much it would cost to take up the tracks and replace it with a 10- to 12-foot

wide asphalt path. From there, Carroll intends to apply for federal funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation, which should support at least 80 percent, if not all, of the project.

The path across the state would go through the hearts of many towns including Greenwood, North Carrollton, Winona, Kilgore, Eupora, Mathiston, Maben, Pheba and West Point.

In January the Greenwood Convention and Visitors Bureau voted to spend \$25,000 to hire a grant writer, which would help apply for federal funds to conduct an engineering and environmental analysis of the project. A marketing economist, Randall Gross from Nashville, Tennessee, has also been brought on to give insight to the project’s economic impact.

“We are cautiously optimistic that hopefully by late this summer or early fall we’ll be able to report we’ve gotten the funding we need,” Carroll said. “This is not a commitment to do the job, but it will enable the cities, counties and citizens along the line to get a better understanding of what’s involved, which has to be done on any project of this magnitude. You have to do a study first.”

Johnny Mack Morrow, project manager for research and economic development at the Mississippi State University Stennis Institute, says the trail will draw bikers from all over, and tourism in the towns and counties along the path will increase. He points to towns like Houston and New Albany that have benefited from the Tanglefoot Trail, the most recent rail-to-trail conversion in North Mississippi.

“Throughout my lifetime, I’ve noticed that tourism projects, when they come to rural areas tend to take a small town that’s maybe not doing much economically and turn it into a boomtown,” Morrow said. “... As an economist, I



Wilson Carroll

learned when those new dollars come to an area, they have a multiplier effect, and experts say they increase spending six times before they actually leave the city in which it was originally spent.”

In efforts to reach the communities that will be affected by the rail trail, Carroll and other members of the coalition have visited various communities to hear citizens’ input.

“We plan to be a good neighbor,” Carroll said. “... Some people have expressed concerns, fears about having people coming across their land, their backyards, but all of these folks live in the vicinity of public roads, highways, gravel roads. People are always traveling on these roads, and bad things aren’t happening. The kind of people who frequent bike trails are good people – it’s not a criminal element. That’s why you don’t have horror stories from the Tanglefoot Trail or the Longleaf Trace (from Hattiesburg to Prentiss).”

Once the trail is complete, maintenance will be handed over to the local governments, and Carroll said every stop will have funding provided to create “whistlestops,” which will include tourism pamphlets like what to do, where to stay

and more.

The eventual goal is to create a network of trails across north Mississippi. The proposed project would be the only bike trail in the state that crosses through the Natchez Trace, and eventually Carroll would like to have a connecting trail from the Tanglefoot to the Trace.

“Once we get the (grant filled out), we will be able to really come up with a set of milestones,” Carroll said. “That should happen, we think, within the next six to eight months. In the meantime, we’re continuing to talk with the railroad on a monthly basis, and they are very supportive, very accommodating working with us to provide us with information we need. We’re doing everything we can to keep the ball moving forward.”

## SIGN THE PETITION

Learn more and voice your support of the trail at [cgrailtrail.org](http://cgrailtrail.org)

STORY BY **JESSICA LINDSEY**  
 PHOTO BY **JESSICA LINDSEY**  
 MAP COURTESY OF **GENESEE AND WYOMING RAILROAD**





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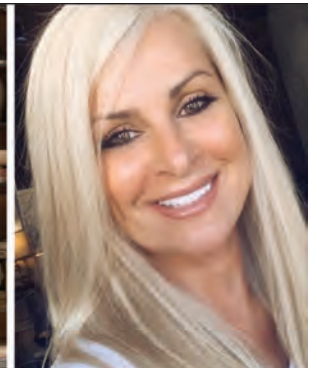


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# A NEW CALENDAR

## SCHOOLS MOVE TO A MODIFIED CALENDAR TO ADDRESS EDUCATION GAP, MEET CHILDREN WHERE THEY ARE

Schooling in the Golden Triangle has looked less and less traditional since COVID-19 threw education for a loop in 2020 with online classes and a heavy reliance on technology.

Educators and administrators attribute an education gap in English, language arts and math as a result of hybrid learning during the 2020-2021 school year. A return to class in the 2021-2022 school year resulted in an uptick in scores.

With a need to focus on helping students before they get too far behind, public school districts in the Golden Triangle have opted to modify the traditional school calendar to help continue making up the COVID gap.

A modified calendar differs from a traditional school calendar in that the school year begins earlier and ends later but consists of intersessions and longer spring and fall breaks. While it is often referred to as “year ‘round school,” the actual number of classroom days – 180 – is not different between the calendars.

The two intersession periods — one around fall break and one around spring break — provide opportunities for remediation for students who need extra instruction and enrichment for students who are excelling. The intersessions are not mandatory for teachers or students, but proponents of the modified calendar insist they are essential for modified calendar success.

“I think districts across the state and across the nation are looking at ways to better serve students,” Former Interim Superintendent of Columbus Municipal School District Dennis Dupree told The Dispatch. “I think the pandemic kind of gave us a sense of, ‘We better look at things a little different than what we’ve been doing.’ You’ve got to offer students more support along the way, so that’s what we’re trying to do.”

Other area superintendents echoed the sentiment, saying modified calendars allow teachers to address learning gaps before students fall too far behind.

As of the end of February, three districts in the area have adopted a modified calendar. CMSD and Lowndes County School District voted in the new calendar in board meetings in early 2023 and will officially adopt the new style beginning with the 2023-24 school year. Both districts will begin their school year for students on July 27 and end May 30.

### **INTERSESSIONS KEY TO SUCCESS**

LCSD Superintendent Sam Allison said the intersessions will allow the district to focus on helping students who fall behind in the first and third nine weeks.

“The first thing, the most intriguing thing, a modified calendar provides is an opportunity to fill gaps, remediate, outside of the normal school

day,” Allison said. “One of the biggest challenges we face is education differentiation, which means meeting the needs of all students at all the different levels. Once a student falls behind, it’s always going to be a struggle. The calendar offers an opportunity where helping the students can be the focus in small groups.”

Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District was the first to adopt and implement the modified calendar and is in the downward swing of the first year with it. SOCSO Superintendent Tony McGee said the first year has been a year of adjustments, but the breaks intersessions offer have been well-received by the teachers.

“Any time we try something new, there are unexpected adjustments, but I’m really proud of our teachers, students and families for the flexibility they’ve shown during this first year implementing a modified school calendar,” McGee told The Dispatch in an email. “We’ve heard from teachers about how valuable it is to have more breaks during the school year as we try to support and retain our staff. In addition, the added time during intersession to really work with boys and girls who need extra help is so valuable, especially since we can better target their specific needs in a smaller learning environment. We really believe we can help them achieve more academic success as we continue with this approach.”

SOCSO will enter its second year with a modified calendar in July, and classes will begin for the 2023-24 school year on July 25 and end on May 30.

West Point Consolidated School District is currently operating on a traditional calendar, but its board will be considering the adoption of a modified calendar at its March meeting.

## **PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

While the public schools have transitioned to less traditional calendars, private schools Heritage Academy and Starkville Academy have told The Dispatch they do not plan on switching to the modified calendar.

“As a school, we are always looking at what other schools are doing in both the public school and independent school associations because we are always evaluating how we do things and are open to ideas that allow us to serve our students and families better,” SA Head of School Jeremy Nicholas said. “While the modified calendar can have benefits for a particular school or school district, we do not believe it is in the best interest of Starkville Academy students and families to modify our current yearly calendar at this time.”

HA Head of School Sean Harrison said the needs and wants of the families and students are not currently in line with a modified calendar, so the school will stick with the traditional calendar.

He said Heritage benefits already from small class sizes that allow for more one-on-one time with students and teachers.

“The smaller class size is an advantage for our teachers, but we also schedule in the day and before and after school a lot of one-on-one time as well for students who may be struggling or need to make up work,” Harrison said. “... When we looked at everything that went with (the modified calendar), we just felt like we could best serve our community by staying with the traditional calendar.”

**STORY BY JESSICA LINDSEY**  
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## COVER STORY

# BRYAN'S BET

## OLD WAVERLY IS AN ENDURING LEGACY AND AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR WEST POINT

**I**n 1981, 12-year-old Wilkes Bryan tagged along with his dad, George Bryan, on a trip to Tiger Point Golf Club in Gulf Breeze, Florida. It was a real treat for the youngster. He got a golf lesson from Jerry Pate, an eight-time winner on the PGA Tour, including a U.S. Open and Tournament Players Championship.

“Jerry Pate gave me a lesson, then he disappeared out there somewhere with my dad,” Wilkes Bryan recalled. “I had no idea what they were talking about.”

Only a handful of people knew what George Bryan was up to then.

For the next five years or so, George Bryan quietly worked on putting all the pieces together for an improbable dream – building a world-class golf course on a 360-acre parcel in West Point he purchased from his brother-in-law, Robert Harrell.

When word finally got out what he was planning, most people were skeptical. Some were incredulous.

“I remember a lot of people saying dad was crazy,” Wilkes Bryan said.

“I’ll be honest: A lot of people didn’t like it,” said Robbie Robinson, who was the Clay County chancery clerk at the time and would go on to become a two-term mayor of West Point. “They thought golf was a rich man’s game and we’re all poor people around here. Why should we care?”



Wilkes Bryan

“I remember George picking me up one Sunday afternoon and taking me out there to explain what he wanted to do,” said Lee Stafford, Bryan’s friend and accountant, “I’ve never been the kind of person to ridicule a friend’s dream, but I just didn’t know about it. I listened and agreed to assist him, purely on the basis of our friendship.”

The story of Old Waverly Golf Club defies reason. It exists as a testament to the extraordinary vision, bull-headed determination and

inescapable charisma of one man.

George Bryan died Jan. 6 at his home at Old Waverly at age 78. His impact, expressed through his greatest achievement, lives on to the benefit of the entire community, even those who have never set foot on the Old Waverly property.

“It’s hard to imagine what West Point would be like now if George hadn’t decided to build that golf course here in his hometown,” Robinson said.

### AN IMPROBABLE DREAM

It’s not uncommon for golf courses to spring up in little towns across the country.

But something on the scale of Old Waverly is an outlier, the kind of an upscale golf experience rarely found in a location that isn’t adjacent to a major population center or in an established resort area.

West Point’s population at the time Old Waverly opened was just 8,778. The closest cities with a population of more than 200,000 were Birmingham (132 miles away) and Memphis (162 miles). The closest resort area is the Mississippi Gulf Coast, 250 miles to the south.

Jim Gallagher Jr. has spent more than 40 years at golf courses all over the country, first as a PGA Tour player (five career wins) and, since 2014, as an analyst for the Golf Channel.

In a particular way, Old Waverly stands apart. “When you’re coming up the driveway there and you see this beautiful clubhouse, all the buildings, the golf course itself, you think, ‘Where am I? Is this Mississippi? How can that be?’”

Gallagher said. “Then, a little later, you see that the U.S. Women’s Open (1999) is being played here. How? That just doesn’t happen.”

### **PUTTING TOGETHER THE PIECES**

To finance the project, George Bryan turned to his friends for support, in the form of a Founder’s Group, each of whom committed to buying a \$30,000 lot on the property.

“He knew it would be good to have some people on his side,” Wilkes Bryan said.

That \$900,000 covered only a portion of the investment needed, Wilkes Bryan said. “In those days, I think the cost turned out to be around \$4.5 million.”

George Bryan funded the remaining \$3.6 million through his own assets and through the sale of remaining 50 or so home lots on the property.

For the golf course, he turned to Pate, who at the time of the Bryans’ 1981 visit to Florida, was winding down his playing career and looking to get into course design, working with Bob Cupp,

a golf course designer who had worked with golf legend Jack Nicklaus on numerous courses.

For the architecture of clubhouse and other buildings, Bryan found a connection closer to home, West Point native Roger Pryor, whose architecture career was just getting started.

“I had just come back from graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania and I had a special interest in historic preservation,” Pryor said. “George was interested in two things – a level of historical authenticity and a continuity of that style in all the buildings. Obviously, it was an enormous opportunity for me as a young architect.”

Pryor said he was sold on the project from the moment Bryan approached him with his plan.

“I saw it immediately,” Pryor said. “He had a sophistication about him. He had been around the block. He knew good architecture when he saw it.”

Pryor worked with another West Point native, interior designer Steve Bengel.





They quickly learn two things: First, Bryan believed in quality. Second, he was no push-over.

“I’ll tell you something about George and the Byrans: They know the value of a dollar,” Pryor said. “There wasn’t a carte blanche budget on anything. He wanted quality, but if you didn’t give him a good value on the dollar you were out of there.”

### **A BIGGER CIRCLE**

The insistence on quality wasn’t just a personal pride for Bryan. It was strategic.

Old Waverly opened in 1989 before the large

industries – and the executives who were potential club members – arrived.

“Sara Lee (which purchased Bryan Foods in 1968) was still roaring then and they were a big help,” Wilkes Bryan said. “I think we got 26 members from them, but we obviously needed to reach out.”

To build that membership, Bryan relied heavily on the network of friends he had built throughout the state and in places like Memphis

**LEFT TOP:** Golfers play the course at Old Waverly.  
**LEFT BOTTOM:** Dinner is served in the Old Waverly clubhouse **BELOW:** Bartender Tiara Crimes.





and Birmingham.

“Businesses draw a circle, a radius that they rely on for customers,” Wilkes Bryan said. “For us, that circle just kept getting bigger and bigger.”

“George knew the top business executives all over the world and they respected him,” Gallagher said. “He could tell you the amount of cars that went up and down Highway 45. He knew everything there was to know about his business.”

Wilkes Bryan said Old Waverly now has almost 800 members from 30 states and seven countries.

“We’re built out on home lots,” Wilkes Bryan said. “We may have an odd lot here and there, but for the most part, all the home lots are taken.”

#### **MORE THAN A GOLF DESTINATION**

Old Waverly has been ranked among Golf Digest’s Top 100 golf Courses in the United States six times. It has been host to two of the most prominent events in women’s golf – the U.S. Women’s Open (1999) and the U.S. Women’s Amateur (2019). It hosted the HANNA Cup, a Ryder Cup-style event featuring senior women players in a U.S. vs. the World matchup.

Its sister course, Mossy Oak, which opened in 2016 and was ranked as Golf Digest’s the third best new golf course in the U.S. when it opened.

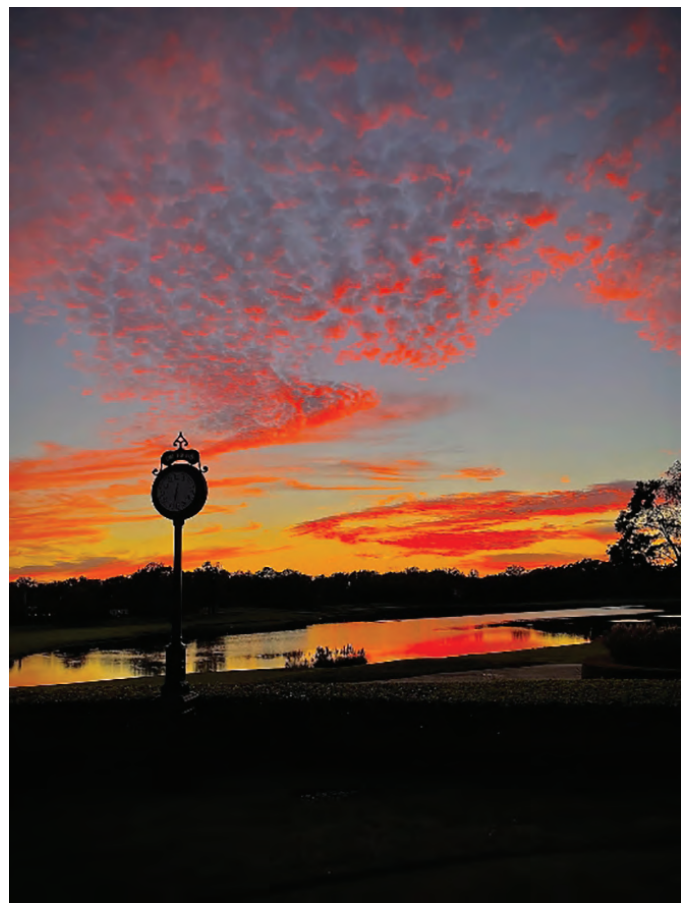
Mossy Oak is the home to both the Mississippi State mens and women’s golf programs as well as the home course for the state’s top junior golf program.

Old Waverly’s place in the world of golf is well-established, but to the people of West Point, its significance goes far beyond the game.

“You can’t just look at it as a golf course,” said Stafford, who as an accountant understands the broader impact of the property. “It’s also a retirement community and, for a lot of people, the home they have at Old Waverly is not their primary home, that means they’re not claiming homestead on those houses. They’re paying the full tax.”

“Put it this way, Old Waverly is 3 percent of the population paying 13 percent of the taxes,” Wilkes Byran said. “Then, you think of all the businesses here affected by the people at Old Waverly who are buying gas, groceries, eating in

**LEFT:** Old Waverly waiter Andrew Parker  
**RIGHT:** Sunset at Old Waverly



restaurants and shopping at all kinds of businesses. Old Waverly has a pretty big economic footprint.”

Tax income from the city on the property owned by the club and its facilities are no small figure.

“We just paid \$460,000 in city taxes in November,” Wilkes Bryan said. “Put it all together and Old Waverly has been a gold mine for the city.”

“I shudder to think where West Point would be without Old Waverly,” Stafford said. “It has softened the blow in the tough times (when Sarah Lee closed West Point operations in 2007, costing 1,200 workers their jobs) and is a source of pride not just for West Point, but for the larger

community of the Golden Triangle.”

Gallagher lives in Greenwood, but has a second home at Old Waverly.

“George Bryan did more for golf in Mississippi than anyone who has ever lived,” Gallagher said. “Anyone who knows me, knows I’m going to be talking about George and what he did at Old Waverly at some point,” he said. “It’s incredible.”

STORY BY **SLIM SMITH**

SUNSET PHOTO COURTESY **WILKES BRYAN**

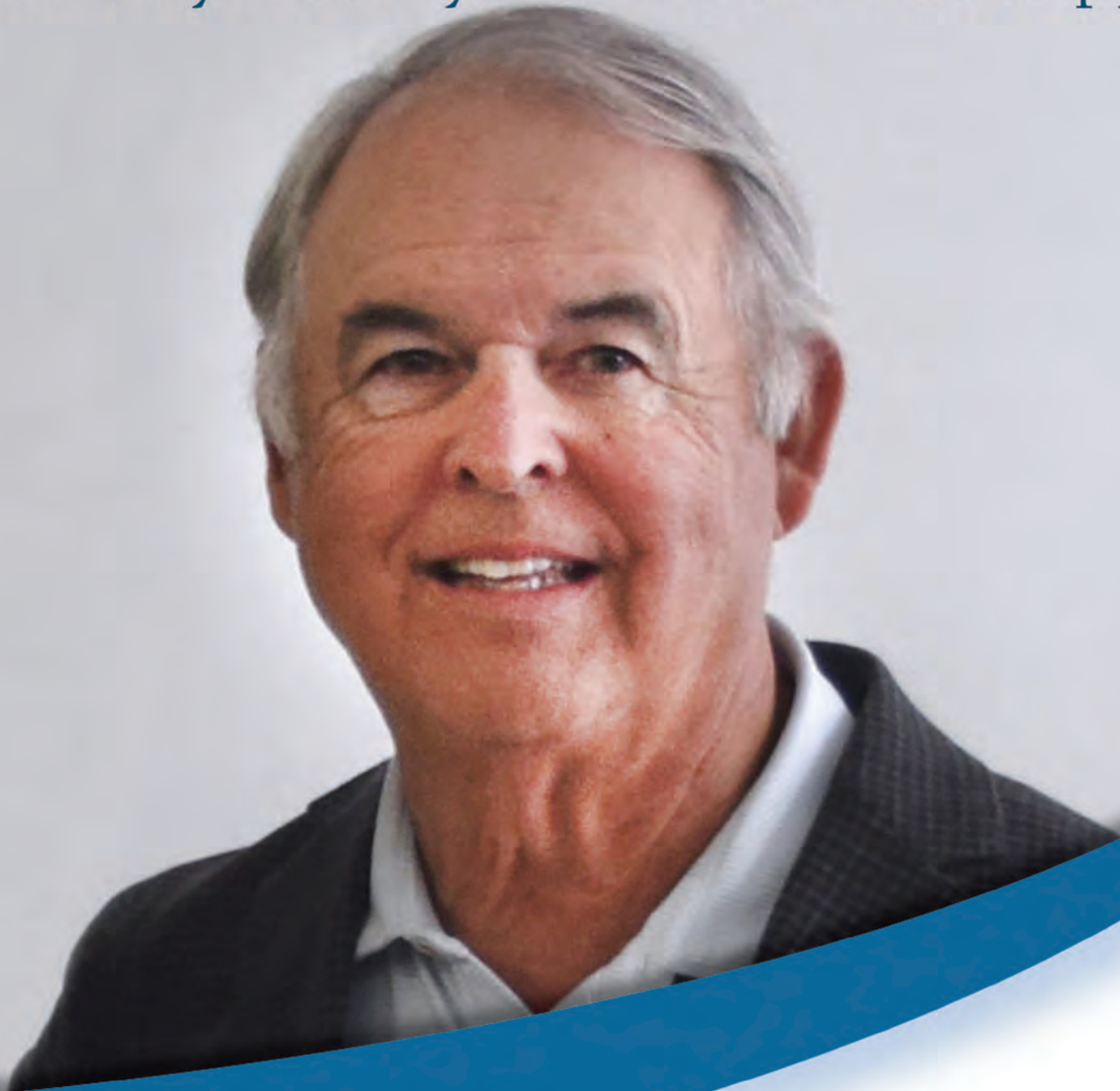
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**BELOW:** Residences under construction at Old Waverly in early March 2023.





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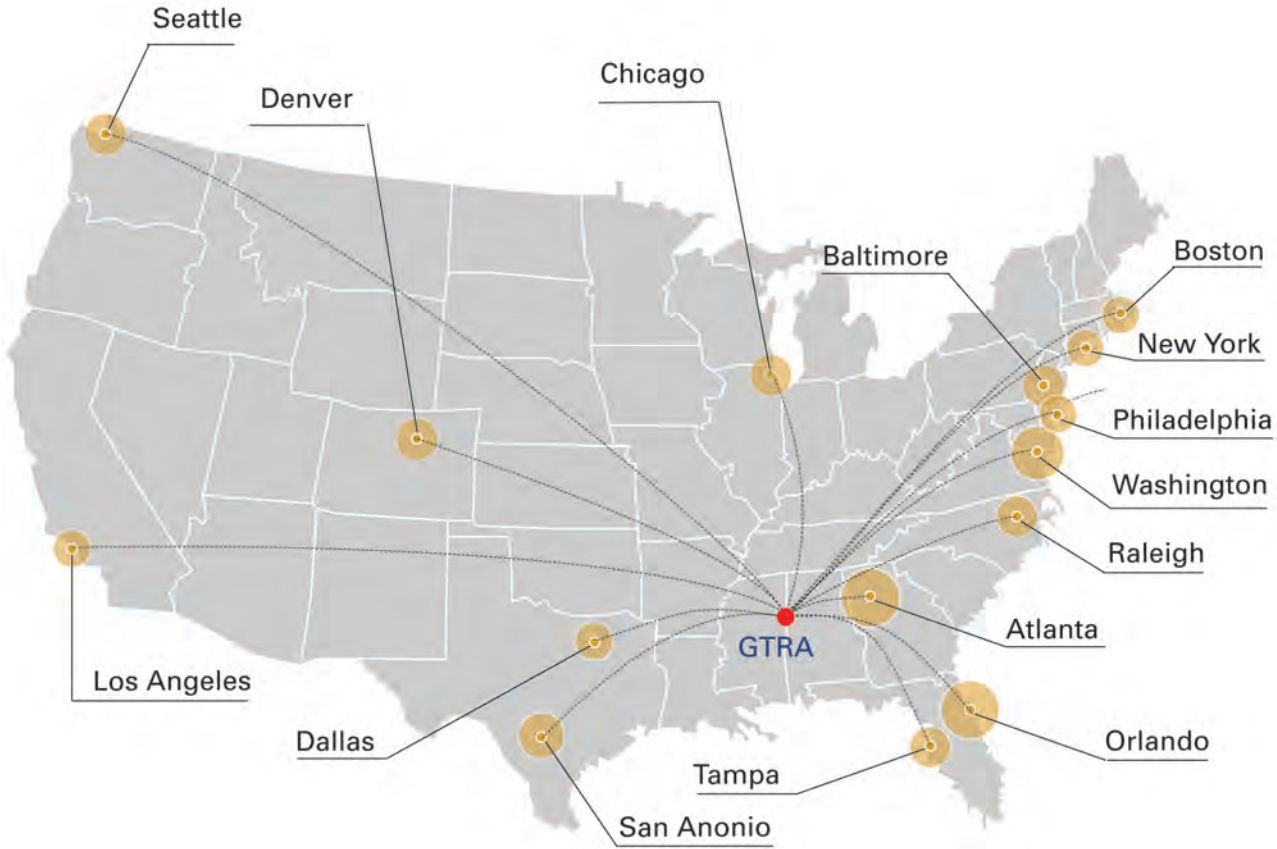
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| 2 Orlando             | 7 Baltimore           | 12 Philadelphia      |
| 3 Washington-National | 8 Boston              | 13 Chicago O'Hare    |
| 4 San Antonio         | 9 New York-La Guardia | 14 Seattle           |
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- |                  |                   |                        |
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| 2 Guatemala City | 7 London-Heathrow | 12 San Jose del Cabo   |
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Governor Tate Reeves and Steel Dynamics CEO Mark Millett charge a detonator, blasting a mound of dirt into the air at the future site of Aluminum Dynamics during a groundbreaking ceremony. Millett told more than 300 in attendance the company will benefit Lowndes County immensely with 1,000 jobs and will hire at least 2,000 contractors to build an aluminum flat-rolled mill on Charleigh D. Ford Jr Drive.



# \$2.5 BILLION GROUNDBREAKING

## ALUMINUM DYNAMICS PROJECT HAS TRIANGLE BUZZING WITH ANTICIPATION

In October Steel Dynamics announced a \$2.5 billion project that would add a low-carbon flat-rolled aluminum mill near its steel mill off of Airport Road in Lowndes County, and a biocarbon facility on Artesia Road near the International Paper pulp mill.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held March 7, and the mill is expected to be complete by late 2025 and create around 700 jobs. The biocarbon facility is expected to be complete by late 2023 and create around 40 jobs. Paving for the construction parking lot at SDI is already underway, with about five acres to be blacktopped.

The scale of the project understandably has the region buzzing with anticipation.

### LOWNDES COUNTY AND COLUMBUS

Aluminum Dynamics isn't the only project that has economic engines roaring in Lowndes County.

Land is also being cleared for two solar farms in western Lowndes County being built by Origis

Engineering on about 4,000 acres of land near the airport.

The city of Columbus is also seeing growth, with shotgun shell manufacturer Apex Ammunition planning a move inside the city limits. Apex, which is currently located off Phillips Hill Road in New Hope, agreed to buy the old Maxxim Medical building. The building sits on about 7.8



An Apex Ammunition employee operates equipment during the manufacturing process at the company's original location. The ammunition company has contracted to purchase the former Maxxim Medical building near the intersection of Hwy. 69 and Yorkville Road in Columbus.



acres off of Yorkville Park Square.

The building was jointly owned between the city and the county for more than a decade. Both entities used it for storage, and the Lowndes County Coroner's Office was housed there. Apex plans to be operational in the new facility by late 2023.

With Apex moving in, the coroner's office has to move out, and the county is negotiating a deal to breathe life into another empty building in Columbus, this time one of the former Ecolab buildings on Lehmborg Road.

The county plans on buying the building and the five or so acres it sits on for about \$500,000. The deal includes equipment on the site, such as forklifts and a generator that can supply power in the event of an emergency.

In another piece of good news for Columbus, the city has settled a lawsuit over damage caused by a runaway barge to the pedestrian bridge at The Riverwalk. In February the city was awarded just over \$4 million in damages after about a year of litigation.

That amount is expected to cover the total cost of replacing a damaged support pier. Work is set to get started in March. The bridge has been closed since February 2020.



## STARKVILLE

In Starkville, work is underway



George Bryan Airport

on two projects near Mississippi State University. The first is an effort to make Spring Street at Highway 12 more pedestrian-friendly. The city and MSU are using a \$400,000 Transportation Alternatives Program grant from the Mississippi Department of Transportation to fund the work.

MSU and Starkville are also collaborating on a walking/biking trail project that goes from the area of Old West Point Road at Highway 182 East, and will connect to College View Drive. Work is expected to be finished this year, hopefully by the end of the summer.

The city is continuing to seek funding for improvements to Highway 182. The project will improve paving, drainage and infrastructure over about 1.2 miles. The city obligated about \$5 million of its federal American Rescue Plan Act money to the project, as well as about \$12.66 million from the U.S. Department of Transpor-

tation.

However, drastically more expensive paving costs and issues with the supply chain have driven the price beyond the city's means and it is currently trying to find ways to cut costs without compromising the project.

Efforts to clear land and build a road and spec building at the Northstar Industrial Park are facing delays due to an unlikely culprit: bats. The northern long-eared bat, which roosts in trees during its mating season, is now an endangered species.

That means efforts to clear trees may have to stop during mating season, which stretches from mid-May until September. Work can continue until this summer, but likely won't be complete.

George M. Bryan Airport is in the running for a \$4.5 million grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to build a terminal. The general

aviation airport, which sees about 10,000 charter and private passengers yearly, is currently served by a single-room 1,100-square-foot building with one common entrance and exit.

Plans are to build a 9,800-square-foot, two-story multi-purpose building. The bottom floor will have a passenger terminal and offices, as well as hangar space. The top story will include a restaurant with a porch area.

Bryan Airport is the only airport in the state in the running for the grant award, and officials expect to find out if they will get the money within the next couple of months.

#### **OKTIBBEHA COUNTY**

Oktribbeha County is standing up a new judgeship. Due to the county's population growth

since the 2010 census, it is required by state law to have a county court to oversee both civil and criminal cases with values between \$3,000 and \$200,000.

Lee Ann Turner was elected to the post in November, and she is currently housed in the chancery court building.

That office could eventually be moved into the Felix Long Memorial Hospital building. The county is currently trying to get grant money to clean up asbestos inside, and is also seeking state money to begin engineering and planning work to eventually renovate it for use either housing the county's various court systems or its administrative offices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service is doing due





diligence on the dam at Oktibbeha County Lake. The NRCS will cover the cost of repairing the troubled dam, which is projected to cost between \$13 million and \$15 million.

#### **CLAY COUNTY AND WEST POINT**

Clay County is working to make its courthouse more accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The county received a \$506,000 Community Development Block Grant to make the courthouse more accessible for people with disabilities. The grant will fund plumbing, fixture and toilet upgrades in the bathrooms and add handicapped-accessible counters in the tax and chancery clerk offices.

A drive-through canopy will also be added with pneumatic service to the tax office, so customers can transact their business without having to come inside at all.

The grant requires a match, and the county is using \$275,000 of a \$350,000 state appropriation for that purpose.

Zaxby's has committed to coming to West Point. The restaurant will be located on Highway 45, near Walmart. Construction is expected to get underway later this year. Other development is on the way for that same area, as as-yet-unnamed developers are working on projects for the lot between KFC and McAlister's as well as the area behind the Love's truck stop.

Major paving work is in the planning stag-

es. The city has \$4.5 million on hand from a revenue bond secured by the city's state use tax receipts. The exact streets that will be paved have not been decided, but work is expected to get underway by late spring or early summer.

#### **NOXUBEE COUNTY AND MACON**

Noxubee County is also improving buildings. A new roof was put on the courthouse and the veterans' services building. The county is currently taking bids on interior work at the courthouse that will improve the ceiling and light in the courtroom and the room where the board of supervisors meets.

The board of supervisors also plans to re-advertise for bids to fix the roof at the Noxubee County Public Library after bids it received came in too high. Finally, the county is planning to bid out a new 911 building.

In Macon, the Macon Dreams Come True

Foundation is raising money to improve dilapidated tennis courts. The existing four courts, which are owned by the city, have been largely abandoned. Surfaces are cracked and uneven, the parking lot and access to the courts is not handicapped accessible and the lighting is poor.

The Foundation is looking into getting federal grant money to better the courts, but also looking at funding the renovation with privately raised funds. Engineers and contractors are working to come up with a plan, and then the organization will decide on funding sources.

STORY BY **BRIAN JONES**

ADI GROUNDBREAKING PHOTO BY

**GRANT MCLAUGHLIN**

APEX AMMUNITION PHOTO BY **RORY**

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ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY **DEANNA**

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### **JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL | JUNE 9, 16, 17, 18**

Juneteenth Ball celebrated June 9 followed by three-day festival with family fun, food, and live entertainment.

### **SOUTHSIDE BLUES FESTIVAL | JUNE 30, JULY 1**

Held in Townsend Park with food, Southern fun, and live entertainment including gospel, blues, and dance groups.

### **FIREWORKS ON THE WATER | JULY 1**

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### **CRAWFORD COTTON BOLL FESTIVAL | JULY 6, 7, 8**

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COMMENTS

WHEN YOU HAVE GUESTS VISITING FROM OUT OF TOWN, WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU MOST LIKE TO DO WITH THEM?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MILOŠ PRODANOVIĆ

**Allison Taylor**

Columbus

My favorite thing to do when family/friends visit from out of town is to take them to the Farmers Market. Then we walk around the beautiful downtown for shopping and eat at one of the local restaurants.



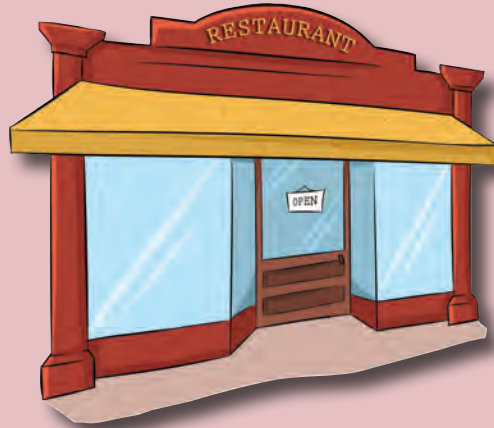




## Leah Brackin

Caledonia

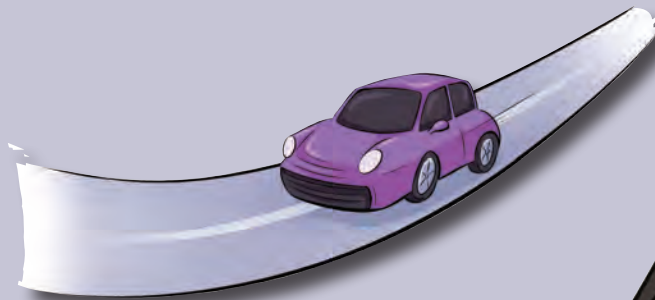
When out of town guests visit, my favorite thing to do with them is eat at a local restaurant. Harvey's, Proffitt's Porch, The Grill, Hucks, Anthony's, Mexican Kitchen, Rubens are my favorites.



## Sherry Ellis

Columbus

I love to take my out of town guests riding around the city when they visit.





**Name:** Zac Selmon  
**Age:** 38  
**Position:** Mississippi State University Athletic Director  
**Starting Date:** Jan. 13, 2023  
**Birthplace:** Chapel Hill, NC  
**Hobbies:** Being outside and watching daughters play basketball and volleyball  
**Spouse:** Rachel Selmon  
**Children:** Shayne and Rylee (aka Meatball)

# MEET ZAC SELMON

**Z**ac Selmon was named Mississippi State's new athletic director on Jan. 13. Former Dispatch sports editor Theo DeRosa sat down with Selmon at the end of February to discuss his transition to the new position.

## **How is Starkville? How has it been getting acclimated?**

I love it. It's been good. This is the first time since my freshman year in college that I've gone somewhere that I didn't really know anybody. That's been an adjustment — trying to get to know people's names; trying to figure out the basics of where we're going; house shopping. These things happen so fast. You're closing out things with your previous employer and also making sure you're leaving the right way. But it's been great once we got here. I'm starting to figure out which direction is east, which way is west. I really just like the people. That's one of the things that I felt in talking to Dr. Keenum initially on the phone — the people that we have. The food is fantastic. I haven't had a bad meal. I'm going to have to probably get like seven gym memberships, though, to work off all the caloric intake I've got. It's been really good. I've really enjoyed getting to meet and work with all of our head coaches, getting to know them. Getting to meet and know our teams, that takes time — just building relationships — but I've really enjoyed that. I'm really excited and opportunistic on what we can do here moving forward.

## **Who are some of the most interesting people you've met since you got here?**

I've been a fan of and seen Coach (Jackie) Sherrill's work from afar. He was able to stop by and share some of his stories. It's a blessing to have a gem like Coach (Ron) Polk who's still here, just to be able to sit and hear how we got to where we are. I think most importantly, it shows how special this place is, the love that people have for Mississippi State. Also people on our staff who have been here for quite some years and just hearing their stories about how we got to where we're at has been very special to me.

## **I saw a quote from you that said it's never been a better time to be at Mississippi State. What makes you confident in that assessment?**

I think it starts with the leadership at the top. We've had great support from our board through Dr. Keenum. It's good to have the opportunity to join an organization that has the leadership and stability with Dr. Keenum. I think in this world, there's so much uncertainty, but when you've got a great, integrity-filled leader like Dr. Keenum, you have the ability and stability to play, compete and be a member of the best league in America from a collegiate sport perspective. We've also got a great collective group of coaches. I think it's been proven you can come here and you can win. We've got two basketball programs under first-year head coaches on the cusp of both going to the tournament. There's

no better college baseball environment in the country than right here at the Dude, so as a baseball student-athlete, you've got that opportunity. Really from every sport, every facility, we're set up where you can be competitive and you can be successful. I think post-COVID, one of the things that we all look for in life is connection. Our community, our campus, our student-athlete body is set up where you can come here and be rid of a lot of distractions that come along with other things. Also, you've got a fan base. Women's basketball averaged 5,000-plus fans. We saw the Dude have 14,000 fans (Feb. 25 vs. Arizona State.) We saw over 8,000 fans this past Saturday night (Feb. 25) for (men's) basketball. You want it to be supported. You want it to be recognized. Each of our sport programs, you can come here, you can get a great education and be set up and have the tools for life. It's been proven you can master your skills here and really use this time to take your game to the next level. Whether it's professional sports or wherever you're going in life, you'll have the opportunity to be masterful in what you're doing.

**What did you know about Mississippi State before you began the interview process?**

Everybody knows the brand of Mississippi State, some of the great players. Clearly, everybody knows Dak Prescott and the history of baseball here. I just always thought it was a place where you could come and you could attract great players, and also just the state of Mississippi — I always knew just from coming up in the football world how many great players came from the state of Mississippi. I'm of the lineage of a bunch of defensive linemen, so I've always looked at the trench guys. I've always been a big

fan. You can be in Mississippi, you can recruit, and you can get kids to come in-state. I knew that much about it. I had heard of Dr. Keenum just from a lot of his work with the College Football Playoff. We've got some mutual friends and colleagues there. I've worked with a couple people who have worked at Mississippi State. You always got a sense of pride and feeling of Starkville whenever people said, "Mississippi State." (South Carolina football coach) Shane Beamer's wife Emily Beamer is from Starkville, so we crossed paths at previous stops. We would do Thanksgivings together. Every time she talked about Starkville, she lit up about her experience here. It's always felt like Starkville was a special place just because of the people that I've met.

**It's been reported that NIL contributions at Mississippi State have lagged behind some of the other schools in the SEC. How important is it to you to close that gap, and what strategies have you honed at Oklahoma for doing that here?**

Every stop I've been at, fundraising has been a key component and element of my role. The hard part with NIL is, yes, is there a reported gap or a perceived gap? Nobody exactly knows what the gap is. There's so much misreporting going on out there, and it's hard to know which is the truth, which is false. What I will say is at Mississippi State, we'll be in a good position to be successful in NIL. We've got great people who have done a very good job helping our NIL construct get to where it's at. Our fan base is passionate about the success of our student-athletes. Any way that our fans can continue to do what they can in the NIL space, I'm very supportive and encouraged. I know our coaches are. That's where we're at in college athletics right now. I'll



Rylee (aka Meatball), Rachel, Zac and Shayne visit with MSU president Mark Keenum.

always be an advocate for what's best for our student-athletes, and so I fully understand that there's always going to be work to be done. I'm bullish about where we can go.

**There's been so much done lately or ongoing with renovations for basketball, softball and baseball. When you look at this campus and the athletics facilities, is there anything you might want to upgrade, or is it too early to start thinking about that?**

It's early to know for sure, but I will say there's been some ongoing projects that are still going that we're just putting some tweaks on. Some of it is at Davis Wade — some of the west side there. There's also a project that's looking at the South End Zone facility. There's a couple locker room-type projects. From a master plan or a big picture standpoint, still just trying to learn when was the last time this facility was touched, what we can do, what we can't do — get the needs of the program. With the NIL space and the changing landscape, we're trying to make sure that if we're building, we have scenario-based plans, knowing that we can only control what we can control. Our plans will be adaptable and nimble enough to conform to whatever the next model

of college athletics looks like.

**You mentioned at your introductory press conference to ask your daughter Rylee how she earned the nickname "Meatball." For those who can't ask her, how did that come about?**

Meatball was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina at the hospital on campus. She was born about 11:52 p.m. New Year's Day. We're in the hospital all day. She was supposed to come; she didn't. But she decided, 'Hey, I want to be a New Year's baby,' and I think it's because she likes to party. She loves to throw a party. She came out with a lot of hair on her head. She had no neck. The weight she put on, she was just like a little ball. And then she had this spicy attitude from the second she was born. It was like, 'She looks like a little meatball.' It just stuck. I still ask her, 'Do you still want me to call you Meatball?' and she says, 'Yeah. Call me Meatball. That's my name.' She's really excited. She's got another week and a half or so and they'll be out here full time. You'll see a lot of Meatball running around.

INTERVIEW BY **THEO DEROSA**  
PHOTOS BY **MSU ATHLETICS**



Terry A. Westmoreland, MD, FAAD; Misty T. Sharp, MD, FAAD;  
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# A ROSY COCKTAIL

## HARVEY'S ABBYE ALLEN LOVES THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF BARTENDING

**A**bbye Allen is a true professional behind the bar. She measures ingredients and mixes drinks with such speed that it is hard to see with the naked eye at times.

Her skill should come as no surprise though, as she has been bartending for a decade.

She worked her way through the ranks at Harvey's in Starkville to become head bartender, a position she relishes.

"I've always worked in the service industry, and I thought that it was really cool to see the bartenders making drinks and stuff like that," she said.

She landed at Harvey's eight years ago because she had a friend who worked there and asked her to come work there.

Now as head bartender, she is responsible for crafting the cocktail menus for the restaurant as well as coming up with ideas for new drinks.

Her favorite cocktail is called Everything's Coming Up Roses. The drink is very floral, and she said it lends itself well to a spring afternoon.

"It's one of my favorites because it's very light and floral," Allen said. "I'm a really big gin fan. I like the floral citrusy aspects of the Uncle Val's Gin. It's also not too sweet. It's very easy to drink. I think it's perfect to sit on the patio and have a couple of those in the afternoon. It also looks really good. I think you pretty much drink with your eyes first."

Flowers and bartending seem to meld for her as well. She said one of the most challenging

cocktails she's ever made involved using ice cubes with frozen flowers inside.

"It was very challenging to get those right and to get the ice clear enough to be able to see the flowers," she said. "But it turned out really good."

Ultimately, she loves the social aspect of bartending, and the friends she has made along the way.

"They come in and they become regulars," Allen said. "They pretty much become a part of your family."

STORY BY **ROBERT SCOTT**

PHOTO BY **RORY DOYLE**

### Everything's Coming Up Roses

- 2 oz. Uncle Val's Gin
- 1 oz. lemon juice
- 1 oz. strawberry simple syrup
- 1 oz. liquid aquafaba

**Step 1:** Combine all of the ingredients in a shaker and dry shake.

**Step 2:** Add ice then shake again.

**Step 3:** Spray a martini glass with two spritzes of rose water and strain the drink into it.

Garnish with a rose petal.

**Notes:** Aquafaba is a meringue made with chickpea liquid.





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