

Dr. Townsend's RCSD letter to parents

Special to Pelahatchie News

Dear Parents,

The Rankin County School District (RCSD) team has been working diligently on a Smart Restart plan for opening school for the 2020- 2021 school year. With approximately 19,000 students, 40,000 parents, and 2,600 employees, many difficult decisions have been made while knowing we will not be able to please all due to the uniqueness of everyone's personal situation related to COVID-19. However, we want you to know the health and safety of our students and employees has always been our top priority.

The first goal of the RCSD Strategic Plan reads, "We will all experience a safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environment." Of course, COVID-19 has shed a whole new light on this year's health and safety planning process. We have intentionally and conscientiously dissected the possibilities, processes and procedures of a school day in order to develop a plan that would meet the needs of the majority of our families. Many stakeholders have been involved in the planning process. The RCSD Board of Trustees, district leadership, principals, teachers, custodians, bus

drivers, and many other employees have played a huge role in the development of the Smart Restart Plan.

We have also created a Smart Restart Task Force, whose mission is to problem solve and to provide insight and advice related to reopening. The task force consists of representatives from each of our eight communities such as parents, teachers, special education teachers and parents, principals, medical professionals, daycare directors, law enforcement officers, local and national public officials, and business leaders. Within this task force, a Medical Team was formed consisting of two pediatricians (one is also an internal medicine physician), a family practice physician who is also the chair for the Mississippi Medical Association, a nurse practitioner, a school nurse, a pediatric occupational therapist, a Rankin

County Health Department nurse, a Region 8 Mental Health director, and our district counselor. They have committed to assisting us throughout the year to support a safe reopening of our schools.

Parent and employee surveys were also collected and analyzed, which provided us with the highest number of responses in the history of this administration. This valuable information was used to guide us as we made decisions. The district also continues to stay updated on the guidance provided by local, state, and national public health officials.

As you can see, we are taking the reopening of our schools during the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously. We are committed to doing what's right for our students and educators. Know that all RCSD employees and the Board of Trustees are passionate about their

professional purpose, which is to protect and educate our most valuable assets—YOUR CHILDREN.

In closing, as you know, people move to Rankin County because of its amazing communities and excellent schools. While we may have different opinions and you also have some difficult decisions to make, we can all agree our children are watching and learning from us during this incredibly challenging, historical time. It is imperative that we all join together during these difficult times to support our children. We may be social distancing, but we can do this while modeling patience, flexibility, grace and love as we move forward TOGETHER.

Frequent changes could be made throughout the school year based on COVID-19 concerns, or hopefully, its mitigation in our schools and communities guided by the directions from the Governor's Office, the Mississippi State Department of Health, and the Mississippi Department of Education. Individual schools will provide policies, procedures, and processes for their specific and varied environment.

Serving you,

Sue Townsend, Ph.D.

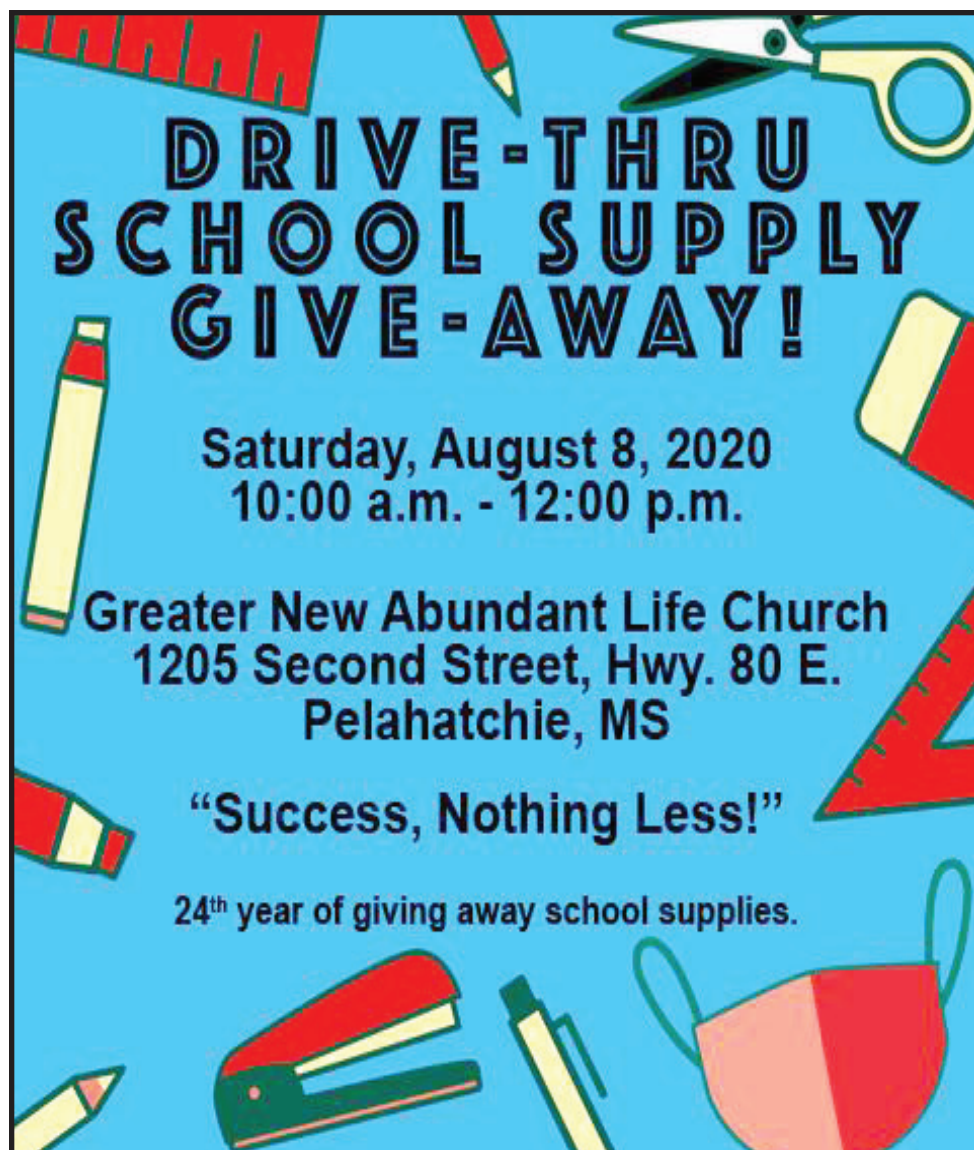
Superintendent of Education Rankin County School District.



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**DRIVE-THRU
SCHOOL SUPPLY
GIVE-AWAY!**

**Saturday, August 8, 2020
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**Greater New Abundant Life Church
1205 Second Street, Hwy. 80 E.
Pelahatchie, MS**

"Success, Nothing Less!"

24th year of giving away school supplies.

ERA wins scholarships as 2020 MSSP Overall State Champions



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The ERA shooting team pictured (l to r) front row, are: Abram Rowell, Gabe Nutt, Garrett Gregory, Addison Brown, Lana Jones, Josh Phillips, Anslee Boyd, Ben Wilson Buffington, and Will Burrow; and back row: Coach Philip "Doc" Nettles, Parker Davis, Riley Huff, William Woods, Brayden Warner, Elijah Vining, Aiden Boyd, Knox Ross, Ben Carter, and Brock Tullos. Not pictured are: Coach Vince Bynum, Hudson Bynum, Ashton Buffington, Braiden Warren, Christian Leeper, and Jon Isaac Irby.

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The East Rankin Academy (ERA) Shooting Team won the 2020 MSSP (Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Program) Overall State Shooting Tournament held June 25-26 at the McIvor Shooting Facility in Sardis, Mississippi. Eighth-grader Brayden Warner was the overall combined winner of the fifth annual Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks (MDWFP)-sponsored event in which ERA won a trophy for their first place finish.

They competed against the top 150 sporting clay, skeet, and trap shooters from 30 public and private schools from around the state.

ERA students won over \$7,000 of the \$10,000 in scholarships presented at the June event. All winners are listed by categories on www.pelahatchienews.com.

According to Michelle Carter, MDWFP director of outreach, due to COVID-19, the awards video is posted online. For more information on MSSP, contact Carter at carter@wfp.ms.gov or call 601-432-2276.