

Rials wins first place at spelling bee

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Venture to compete Internationally

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PELAHATCHIE NEWS

**April
2014**

**Volume 3
Number 4
Pelahatchie, MS**

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Pelahatchie News
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Multicraft International continues stronger than ever

Special to The Pelahatchie News

Multicraft International in Pelahatchie manufactures electronic and electro-mechanical component parts, switches, tubing and electrical assemblies conforming to ISO/TS16949:2009 quality standards that are sold primarily to North American original equipment manufacturers in the automotive, electric vehicle, outdoor power equipment and air conditioning industries.

Multicraft originally established operations in the Pelahatchie Industrial Park in August 1978. Over the years, Multicraft has had as many as nine manufacturing locations, along with a couple of joint ventures located throughout the state of Mississippi and Alabama. Today, Multicraft has two locations in Pelahatchie; and, just recently, working with the Town of Pelahatchie, has acquired one of the



Multicraft International plant located in the Industrial Park. (Photos special to The Pelahatchie News)

original plants located in the Industrial Park that will go under renovation over the next 10 to 11 months.

Multicraft scaled back operations during the recent automotive crisis of

2008-2010, but over the last couple of years has been successful in repatriating business from Mexico. Multicraft is built around employees who are trained, dependable and loyal to the

company. Multicraft continues to expand their business in areas other than automotive with a recent new business award from the HVAC industry. Multicraft continues to provide Engineering and Prototyping capabilities to all new potential customers and is developing new technology in the automotive and electric vehicle industry.

Multicraft also just recently purchased a house at 605 Second Street and is currently in the process of renovating the building. This building will be used for office space and available for company meetings.

"Multicraft will tell you that one of the great strengths of our community is the work ethic of their employees. They don't have a lot of turnover. They work, and they are loyal. They are very pleased with the type of employee here," says Mayor Knox Ross. "You want people who are here and invested in the community."

Easter Egg Hunt at Muscadine Park



(Illustration special to The Pelahatchie News)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On April 10, children eight years of age and younger are welcome to participate in the annual Easter egg hunt at Muscadine Park in Pelahatchie.

The festivities will commence at 10 a.m. Participants are encouraged to

arrive a little early. The hunt will begin on time, and the oh-so-eager children usually find them very quickly.

Parents are asked to provide an Easter basket for each child who will be participating. After the hunt, children can enjoy a space jump and other fun activities.

Former East Rankin Academy student instrumental in Junior College victory

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On March 20, Jones Count Junior College (JCJC) shocked the junior college sports world with an 87-77 victory over top-ranked and top-seeded Indian Hills Community College in Iowa.

Tyler Rhodes, a guard for the Bobcats and sophomore at JCJC, is a former East Rankin Academy student. Rhodes was an instrumental player in the win over Indian Hills.

Bobcat head coach Ladner was exhausted, but happy after the game. He thanked JCJC president Dr. Jesse Smith and athletic director Katie Herrington for their roles in bringing him to JCJC last year.

The championship is the first-ever in basketball for a Mississippi, MAC-JC or Region 23 school.

The Bobcats, who end the year at 28-5 (a school record for wins in a



Tyler Rhodes in action. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

season), entered the tournament as the 11th seed – and promptly became the lowest seeded school to win an NJCAA basketball title in any division.



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From the Mayor's Desk



By Knox Ross, Jr.
Mayor of the Town of
Pelahatchie

Warmer weather is finally here! The tulips and daffodils provided to us by *Keep Mississippi Beautiful* have added to the beauty of our town this spring. We hope you have enjoyed them, and I look forward to seeing more in our landscapes around town.

The transformation of our downtown area continues, as Multicraft has added very attractive landscaping to their ongoing restoration of the Glaze house and Jason Chapman has started the renovation of the building across from City Hall. We so much appreciate the confidence in the future of our town shown by these investments.

We continue to make progress on the sewer and road improvement project on the south side of town. This will ensure reliable service for many years to come, and I appreciate the assistance of Senator Cochran in securing a portion of the funding for this project.

Milltown Park continues to work toward completion. Entergy recently installed the walking trail lighting, and as weather permits, the final grading

and finish work will be done on this phase.

We also expect our playground equipment to be delivered this month, and we will be asking for help in installing it. We are planning now for additional development in the park, to make it a real asset to our town.

Thanks to everyone who has given our local businesses the opportunity to earn their business. We continue to enjoy increased sales tax revenue, and this will equate to additional business in our town over time. Please remember shop at home first, whenever you can.

We are working on many projects now, some which may succeed, some may not. Please know that we have much interest from many people in our town and what it has to offer, and many are working with us to help us succeed. I hope to be able to share some of this with you in the coming months.

It is an exciting time to live here. I am very optimistic about our future and the opportunities that await. Thanks to each of you for your commitment and investment in our town.



Cross Roads presents *The Cross*

Special to *The Pelahatchie News*

On April 12-13, Cross Roads Baptist Church will present a musical drama titled *The Cross*. The music will feature compositions and arrangements by David T. Clysdale, Jay Rouse, Camp Kirkland, Jared Anderson, Jeff Slaughter, Gary Driskell, and Clair Cloninger. The dramatic script was written for this presentation by the Minister of Music, Charles Wallace.

There is no charge for either performance, and both performances will begin at 6 p.m.



(Photo special to *The Pelahatchie News*)

Pelahatchie Chiefs hold fundraiser

Special to *The Pelahatchie News*

Pelahatchie Attendance Center is holding a mattress sale fundraiser on April 5, at 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., in the school's cafeteria.

All proceeds will raise money for equipment for the school's high school baseball and softball teams.

Over twenty different styles in all



Photo Special to *The Pelahatchie News*

sizes of mattresses will be available for purchase. Mattresses such as memory foam or gel memory foam, latex mattresses, and Simmons Restonic Southerland will also be available. The mattresses are award winning designs and

award winning quality. Prices are 30% to 60% below retail. Cash, checks, credit cards and layaway available.



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Legislative Issues: final events of the session



By: Tom Miles
State Representative

As you read this, the Legislature has likely closed up shop for the regular session of 2014, and I will be writing a final summary report for May. This column is a summary of some important matters that were brought before the House during the month of March.

We spent a lot of time in March deliberating measures sent to us by the Senate, considering appropriation and revenue matters, and deciding whether to agree with the changes the Senate had made to our bills.

If we voted to accept the Senate measures without amendment, they went to the Governor as enrolled bills, and on to become law with his signature. If we amended the Senate measures, they went back to the other chamber, where a decision was made

to either agree with our changes or invite conference. Three members from each chamber met to reach a compromise on the wording of the bill in "conference committees."

One of the final events of the session is "conference weekend," which was last weekend. All conference committees who met to iron out differences between House and Senate versions of bills were to have reported out by Saturday, March 29, at midnight.

Currently, the number of State Troopers on the highways and byways of Mississippi is seriously low. Some counties have actually gone without assigned troopers on their highways. A school will provide up to 50 newly trained officers. House members successfully inserted an amendment to the appropriation for the Department of Public Safety that provides funding for a new Trooper school. We believe this is an excellent use of available funds. Nothing is more important to the State

than providing for the safety of our citizens.

One bill that went to conference is House Bill 504, the "teacher pay raise bill." The Senate version guarantees \$2,500 in raises over two years; our version did not. Additionally, the Senate version places accountability measures on the entire school, not just on individual teachers, in determining merit pay. Many of my colleagues and I voted to concur with the Senate version, primarily because of the guaranteed across-the-board pay. The House majority decided to send the bill to conference. I believe we will be able to revisit the issue next session with an even better pay raise package.

I am proud to report that Senate Bill 2573 became law. This measure provides that firemen who retire, or the survivors of those who die in the line of duty, will be allowed to purchase the service helmet and badge of the fireman. It passed the House unanimously

and goes into effect July 1.

Senate Bill 2597 is another measure that the House unanimously approved. It allows law enforcement officers and firefighters to retain their personal and major medical leave if injured in the line of duty. The unanimous passage of this legislation is in memory of Sergeant Kevin "Gale" Stauffer of Tupelo, who was killed in the line of duty on December 23.

We voted to approve Senate Bill 2369, which establishes the option for a spring squirrel season which will start no earlier than May 15 and last no longer than June 1.

One measure that has generated quite a bit of discussion has been Senate Bill 2681 – the "Religious Liberty Bill." After asking for legal review, House Leadership determined that the bill, despite being amended in committee, may still create constitutional problems that weren't read-

continued on page 5

Lady Chiefs defeat Panthers

Special to The Pelahatchie News

The Pelahatchie Lady Chiefs defeated the Morton Panthers in fast pitch softball on Tue., March 18. Becca Kennedy recorded 8 strikeouts on the mound for the Lady Chiefs. She was backed up by Jessie Jones, Cait-

lin Bishop and Abby Bouslay, who all made several key defensive plays. Juleah Boyd, Becca Kennedy, Abby Bouslay, Shelby Sledge, and Kayla Tadlock all had multiple hits for the Lady Chief's offense. The Lady Chiefs broke open a 1-1 game in the fifth inning with several runs.



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Read Across America day at Pelahatchie Elementary

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On March 3, Pelahatchie Elementary encouraged children to read through the program *Read Across America*, which was created by the National Education Association (NEA). The school invited several respected visitors from the community to read to the students. The readers and the listeners enjoyed their part in the day's events.

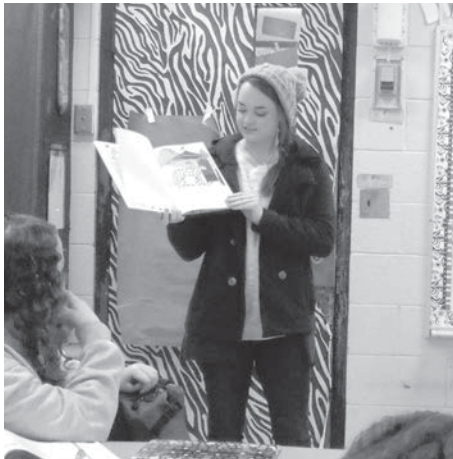
According to the NEA, *Read Across America* is "an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading."



Rachael Boyer reads during Read Across America.



Mayor Knox Ross poses with his reading group during Read Across America.



Caitlyn Bishop reads during Read Across America.



Megan Hall poses with her reading group during Read Across America.



Tom Miles reads during Read Across America. (Photos special to The Pelahatchie News)

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Rials wins first place at spelling bee

By: Kristen J. Rials

On March 4, Katie Mae Rials, a fourth grader at East Rankin Academy, competed in the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) Regional Spelling Bee at Park Place Baptist Church. Rials competed against ten other fourth-grade students from the region and placed first in the competition. Due to her win at the regional level, Rials will continue on the MAIS Overall Spelling Bee Competition on April 15 at the First Presbyterian Church Day School in Jackson, Miss.



Pictured are Katie Mae Rials and her teacher Margaret Shedd.. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

continued from page 3

Legislative Issues: final weeks

ily visible. The bill was amended to provide a study committee to review the bill, while preserving the “In God We Trust” language being added to the state seal and to make any recommended changes and report back to the Legislature.

I joined my colleagues in voting to allow local school districts the right to establish their start dates, beginning July 1. The 2012 Legislature voted to require schools to push their start dates to the end of August, but school districts were reporting that school schedules would be adversely affected if the requirement stood. House Bill 455 repealed that measure and will become law.

I am proud that House Bill 1433 was passed to help the families of first responders who lose their lives in the line of duty. I authored this measure to increase the death benefit for these brave Mississippians from \$65,000 to \$100,000. One of the things that my colleagues said repeatedly during the discussions on this bill is “It’s the least we can do.” I agree.

House Bill 1165 is a bill that I co-sponsored to provide an increase in the homestead exemption rate for disabled veterans. Again, the idea that we can give back to someone who has given so much for all of us was a popular proposal.

We were successful in passing a bill that requires students in grades 9 – 12 physical education classes to learn how to perform CPR and use defibrillators. This was an idea I authored last year, because I believed it would be our best chance at making sure a large portion of the population would know this vital, life-saving skill. This session, I sponsored House Bill 432, which is now law. In a few years, I believe we will realize the benefits of this important public safety action and will save many lives.

I was proud to co-sponsor House Bill 314, which expands protections against government confiscation of legally-posessed firearms during a state of emergency or natural disaster. While no one would ever want to contemplate a situation where things would be so desperate that citizens should fear losing their firearms, we felt it was important to make this policy statement. We have seen this happen in other places, and I am very glad that the idea received such broad support during this session.

If you have any questions or concerns on anything we are taking up please feel free to contact me at 601-469-7886, on Facebook at Representative Tom Miles, or you can email me at tmiles@house.ms.gov.



East Rankin
Academy
Sports Calendar

www.eastrankinacademy.org

High School Baseball

April 1	Copiah	B-team V	Away	5:00 7:00
April 3	Copiah	V-DH	Home	5:00
April 8	Columbia	B-team V	Away	5:00 7:00
April 10	Columbia	V-DH	Home	5:00
April 15	Oak Forest	B-team V	Home	5:00 7:00
April 17	Oak Forest	V-DH	Away	5:00
April 22	Parklane	B-team V	Away	5:00
April 24	Parklane	V-DH	Home	5:00

Junior High Baseball

April 4	MRA	DH	Home	5:00
April 7	Prep	DH	Away	5:00
April 11	PCS	DH	Home	5:00
April 14	Parklane	DH	Away	5:00
April 21	Copiah	DH	Away	5:00
April 25	JA	DH	Home	5:00

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Fight against identity theft

On March 27, at the Pelahatchie Community Center, senior citizens learned about identity theft, and then lunch was served with the help of Pelahatchie high school seniors. Trustmark's Doug Winstead, Vice President, Regional Security Officer, spoke about how not to become a victim of identity theft. He stressed one key point: banks do not call customers and request them to give up secure information, such as a Social Security or account number. If this happens, simply hang up and report the suspicious call to the Fed-

eral Trade Commission, at 1-888-438-4338 or TTY, 1-866-653-4261.



Trustmark Vice President, Regional Security Officer, Doug Winstead speaks on identity theft. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Seniors serve lunch at community center



On March 27, seniors helped the community at a lunch and learn held for senior citizens at the Community Center. Pictured (l to r) are: Mitchell Tagert, Zac Varner, Jasmiah Collier, Samaiyah Minett and James Lock. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Chiefs post season honors



Senior Cameron Moore (left) was named to All-Division 7-1a team for the regular season. He averaged 10 points, 7 rebounds, 3 steals, and 2 assists per game. Freshmen Keldrick Stokes (right) was named to the All Tournament team for Division 7-1a. Keldrick averaged over 22 points in 3 games as the Chiefs placed 3rd in the division tournament at Bogue Chitto. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

New flowers make colorful display



Bulbs donated by Keep Mississippi Beautiful can be seen in full bloom throughout downtown Pelahatchie. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)



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April 16, 11:30 a.m. - discussing Mitch Albom's latest novel, *The First Phone Call from Heaven*

Easter Craft

April 17, 6:00 p.m. - have fun making and Easter craft

Also in April:

- State and Federal tax forms available at the library
- Sign up for the new Library eNewsletter by providing your email address to: pelahat@cmrls.lib.ms.us.

Fish biting at 3rd Annual Fishing Rodeo

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On March 10, fish were biting at the 3rd Annual Fishing Rodeo at Lake Ruby. The event was sponsored by the Pelahatchie Police Department and Bubba Flannigan, who graciously allowed the event to take place on his property. Several participated in the fishing rodeo, which was a welcoming beginning to the first day of Spring Break.

The lake is naturally stocked with Florida bass, brim and crappie fish. If a fish is caught that is less than 13 inches, then the rule is to throw it back. Any fish caught over that size is a keeper.

When asked about how the day went, Chief Glenda Shoemaker said, "Great! Wonderful! Kids had a great time. It was a beautiful day. Couldn't have been more perfect."



Participants at the Annual Fishing rodeo at Lake Ruby are all smiles. (Photos by: Katie White)

Kortni Atkinson receives national honor

Special to The Pelahatchie News

The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) recently announced Pelahatchie Attendance Center student Kortni Atkinson from Pelahatchie has been selected to become a member of the esteemed organization. The Society recognizes top scholars who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, scholarship, and community commitment. The announcement was made by NSHSS Founder and Chairman Claes Nobel, a senior member of the family that established the Nobel Prizes.

"On behalf of NSHSS, I am honored to recognize the hard work, sacrifice, and commitment that Kortni has demonstrated to achieve this exceptional level of academic excellence" said Nobel. "Kortni is now a member of a unique community of scholars - a community that represents our very best hope for the future."

"Our vision is to build a dynamic international organization that connects members with meaningful content, resources, and opportunities," stated NSHSS President James W. Lewis. "We aim to help students like Kortni build on their academic successes and enhance the skills and desires to have a positive impact on the global commu-



Kortni Atkinson (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

nity."

Membership in NSHSS entitles qualified students to enjoy a wide variety of benefits, including scholarship opportunities, academic competitions, free events, member-only resources, publications, participation in programs offered by educational partners, personalized recognition items, and publicity honors.

For more information about NSHSS, visit www.nshss.org.

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Serve Out Loud at Muscadine Park

Special to The Pelahatchie News

The Ever Reaching Community Outreach (ERCO) organization will host a *Serve Out Loud* ministry on April 26, at Muscadine Park in Pelahatchie. Different ministries and organizations will come together to celebrate serving others. A flyer is available for download online at https://www.dropbox.com/s/kkb0pqjvmb3n49l/ERCO_Flyer_021914.pdf. Below is a current list of participants during *Serve Out Loud*:

- The Wingard Home
- Center for Violence Prevention
- Center for Pregnancy Choices
- Grace House
- Grace Place (Galloway United Methodist)
- Stewpot
- Catholic Charities
- Puckett Baptist Church
- Sole Hope
- Celebrate Recovery and Revelation 21:5 Ministry
- Ruth's Refuge
- Gallant Hearts
- Caring Hands
- Handbags for Hope
- Christian Women's/Men's Job Corp & Hands Up Outreach
- MS Blood Services
- Pioneer Ministries
- John Blough and Cowboy



The Bennett family home (left) sits mid-demolition near the newly-donated trailer (center) provided by the Ever Reaching Community Outreach. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

- Ministry
- Holmes Assembly of God and Living Free

In addition to the Muscadine Park ministries, a trailer donated by ERCO will soon be ready for installation for the Bennetts, an elderly couple whose family home is rotting and unfit for good health. Several groups are working together to help set up the trailer, and work days will be coordinated to help move them in.

For more information regarding ERCO ministries and events, visit www.facebook.com/EverReaching-CommunityOutreach.

Clay bell sculpture unveiled



The Core Sample clay bell sculpture unveiled in The Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On Thursday, March 20, the *Core Sample*, a work of *Significant Developments, LLC* was unveiled for the public. Venture students from Pelahatchie Attendance Center and Pelahatchie Elementary participated in this art

project. Some students learned how to make the bells, and some learned how to draw symbols of symbolic meaning in their culture.

The clay bell sculpture is available for viewing at The Art Garden located at The Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Mississippi.

Victims of house fire appreciative

Special to The Pelahatchie News

Jack and Joann Allen and their daughter, Melissa Hunt, would like to express their deepest gratitude for all the donations and prayers. People in the community have donated cash, food, clothing and furniture. Collectible dolls were also donated to Mrs. Allen, who lost her entire collection

due to the fire.

Hunt, who lives next door, says the community has been so generous that a small shop and another small building available to her is full. There is no more room to keep further donations of that kind.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen are currently exploring their options as far as a new home, but it has been a slow process.



Pelahatchie Attendance Center Sports Calendar

www.rcsd.ms/Page/26571

Jr. Varsity and High School Baseball

April 1	St. Al	JV HS	Away	5:00 7:00
April 4	St. Al	JV HS	Home	4:30 6:30
April 8	Bogue Chitto	JV HS	Away	5:00 7:00
April 11	Bogue Chitto	JV HS	Home	4:30 6:30
April 12	Puckett	JV HS	Away	11:00 1:00
April 14	Sebastapol	JV HS	Away	5:00 7:00
April 15	Ethel	JV HS	Home	4:30 6:30
April 17	Ethel	JV HS	Away	5:00 7:00
April 22	Puckett	JV HS	Home	4:30 7:30



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St. Patrick's celebration at Yogi Bear



Families enjoy St. Patrick's festivities at Yogi Bear park. (Photos by: Katie White)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

On Saturday, March 15, campers at Yogi Bear Park found the pot of gold in fun activities without having to go to Jackson. Kona Ice was on hand so no one would go thirsty. In the crafts center, Nikki Maddox, Activity Director, made sure families had plenty to do, and not just on St. Patrick's Day. Children could decorate shamrock cups to plant their very own shamrock

plants, learn how to tie-dye a t-shirt, or even get a temporary tattoo. Sherry Burdsal from Fancy Faces was also on hand to make sure faces were artfully painted and shimmering for the day's events. St. Patrick's day at Yogi Bear Park concluded with a parade. Campers decorated golf carts with green and bling, and drove up and down the ten mile-per-hour street that starts at the security gate and leads to the main campsite.

Venture to compete internationally



Pelahatchie High School Venture students pose with their many awards. Pictured (l to r) are, Anna Creel, Ryley McVeigh, Drew Harrell, Caitlin Bishop, Jordan Bishop, Jacob Henderson, Darcy Atkinson, and Caitling Russell. (Photo special The Pelahatchie News)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

Pelahatchie High School Venture students competed in the Mississippi Affiliate Future Problem Solving Bowl on Feb. 28 and 29. Darcy Atkinson placed 2nd in the Middle Division for Scenario writing while Anna Creel took 1st, Jordan Bishop- 2nd, Drew Harrell- 3rd, and Jacob Henderson-

4th, in the Senior Scenario Division. The team finished First in the Senior Community Problem Solving competition and will travel to Iowa in June to compete in the international competition. This is the team's second year qualifying for the international competition. Pelahatchie mayor Knox Ross was instrumental in making the trip possible for the students last year.



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11:00 - Blended Worship Service
5:00 - Cross Clubs for Children & Students
6:00 - Evening Worship

Wednesday Schedule

6:00 Family Dinner
7:00 - Children's Mission Activities • Student Worship
Ladies Bible Study • Couples Support Group
Prayer Meeting and Bible Study

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Chiefs powerlifting team places first



The Pelahatchie Attendance Center Powerlifting team after placing First in their division. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

The Pelahatchie Chiefs high school powerlifting team placed First in the 1A North State Championship Meet on March 8, at Calhoun City High School. The team placed in the following order in their respective weight class: Alfred Jones- 1st place, Schelden Irvin- 1st place, Austin Vancor-

2nd place, Quivonte Denson- 2nd place, Travion Patterson- 2nd place, Austin Nelson- 2nd place, Dwaun Patterson- 2nd place; Camden Jones- 3rd place, Zack Thompson- 3rd place, and Booker Ficklin- 4th place

On April 5, at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson, the students will compete in the State Championship Meet.

Lady Chiefs selected for tournament team



Three Lady Chiefs were selected for the All District-All Region Tournament Team. Pictured (l to r) are: Jasmiah Collier, Brittany Thompson and Janae Collier. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Special to The Pelahatchie News

The Lady Chiefs finished 2nd in the Division 7-1A. The District Tournament was held at Bogue Chitto, where the Lady Chiefs matched up in the first round as the number 2 seed vs. Piney Woods, the number 7 seed.

The Lady Chiefs won by a score of 60-11 and advanced to the semi-finals

round of district play where they fell 68-60 to the 3rd seed Boque Chitto. The Lady Chiefs defeated Natchez Cathedral 69-48 in the consolation game. The Lady Chiefs also had three All District/All Region Tournament Team players selected.

The Lady Chiefs had a successful season, 17-11, ending in the first round of playoffs with a loss to Salem.

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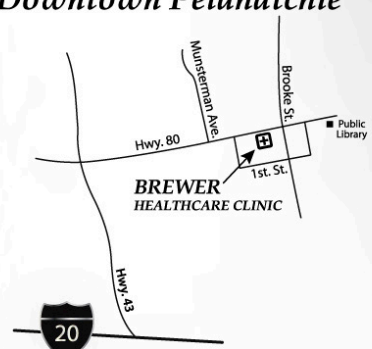
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The Pastor's Perspective: Easter Graves

By: Ron McDougald
Lead Pastor, Shiloh UMC



In the church, April is a time of talking about death (of Jesus on the Cross) and life (Jesus Risen)...life changing stuff...that requires a death to accomplish.

An old seminary friend in South Carolina shared with me how Easter became life-changing for him. Some years ago, he was invited to a baptism by one of his parishioners who was a guard at the Central Carolina Prison in Columbia. My friend arrived at the prison early in the morning. He was searched, ID was confirmed, interrogated, moved from waiting area to waiting area for over an hour; all to simply move him fifteen feet from outside the prison walls to the inside. Finally, he met his church member/guard and they walked together down long, cold corridors to the prison chapel. It was a small room, with a few rows of chairs and a platform at the front. On this day, the pulpit and piano had been pushed to the side against the wall. In the pulpit's place, flat on the floor, there was a large wooden box. In the box

there was spread blue plastic sheeting that draped over the sides of the box, and into the sheeting had been poured gallons and gallons of cold water.

As the small group gathered around the makeshift baptistery, at the very moment the convert stepped into the box full of water and the preacher reached over to grab his hands, lower him into the box and began to say, "I baptize you. . . " my friend had a realization that took his breath away. The box was a coffin; a standard, prison-issue, pine-box coffin. The man was being baptized in a casket, he was going into and coming up out of the grave.

In the liturgy that I often use for funerals, you find these words at the placement of the casket as the service begins: "When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised by the glory of the father, we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Death and life, despair and hope, going under and rising again; those are our themes today. On that first Easter when the women went to the tomb,

they went in deep sadness and despair. They went into a place of coldness and death, a prison house of the soul. They went with no hope, no anticipation, they went reluctantly, to perform a duty, to prepare Jesus' body for burial, to put their friend into a grave. But, when they got there, they discovered that things had changed. The tomb was empty, the body was missing, there was an angel hovering about. "Do not be alarmed," he says. Easy for him to say. "So," the angel goes on, "you're looking for Jesus? Sorry, he's not here. He's been raised. He's gone to Galilee. Go tell Peter and the others to meet him there."

The women are stunned, reeling, speechless. There's no wonder the Bible tells us they fled in terror and told no one, at least for a while. This business of rising again from the dead has never been easy for anyone to believe. It's not natural, it's not normal. It wasn't normal 2000 years ago, and it's not normal now. All of us who proclaim it know it's not easy to believe. But it is a story full of possibilities for all of us. From death to new life isn't just about going through physical death and then living happily ever after in heaven. It's about being changed,

transformed, in the midst of our circumstances, here, now. The prisoner who was baptized in a coffin didn't get to leave prison because he "got religion" - far from it. He still had 20 years to go on his sentence. For him, nothing external changed at all, and yet internally, everything had begun to change completely. After the baptism, he gave a "testimony" in which he said he had gone from being a dead man walking, a person already dead in spirit waiting to die, to life as a man filled with the new life of Christ living in him.

A couple of questions you might consider....What sort of prison are you living in? What darkness grips your soul? What cold and clammy tomb is holding you back from a joyous life? The message of Easter is this: You have to step into the cold waters of death in order to come out on the other side of the Jordan. You have to bury what's holding you back in order to embrace the new life God is giving you. You have to lay down in a coffin in order to stand up with joy on Easter morning. We are invited to a changed life today; a life full of hope and opportunity, overflowing with love and freedom; filled with the joy of the Risen Christ.



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Student of the Month and Citizenship Awards



February Student of the Month recipients at Pelahatchie Attendance Center included (l to r), front row: Will Goss, 8th; Michelle Moore, 7th; Jessica Moulder, 10th; Cameron Moore, 12th; and Noah Smith, 11th. Not pictured, Coach Ryan Keeton and Lexi Walker, 9th.



February Citizenship award recipients at Pelahatchie Attendance Center included Parker Garletts, 9th (left); and Juleah Boyd, 11th (right). (Photos special to The Pelahatchie News)

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