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NEWS Pelahatchie

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Rodeo Cowboy Cole Bilbro doesn't want a real job

By: Susie A. Wolfe

Twenty-six-year-old Cole Bilbro has been a rodeo cowboy for five years, attending an average of 60-70 rodeos a year. He said he doesn't want a real job.

The Mississippi State University graduate with a degree in Real Estate/Finance, "likes the freedom of traveling all over the United States with his best friends." He said he would rather be "broke and free, than rich and tied-down."

Bilbro, who grew up north of Pelahatchie riding horses, started participating in rodeos as a sophomore at East Rankin Academy, as part of the Mississippi High School Rodeo Association. He then spent two years at West Alabama University in Livingston on a rodeo scholarship before transferring to Mississippi State.

As part of the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association, he participated in the saddle bronc riding at the Dixie National Rodeo in Jackson in Febru-

ary, before heading to Hattiesburg then Perry, Georgia, to ride in other rodeos. He said that there is a rodeo just about every weekend somewhere in the United States, where the sport was invented.

November and December are slow months unless a cowboy makes it to the circuit finals, where Bilbro has been three times. He proudly wears the belt buckle of when he won the Southeast Circuit Finals in 2012.

Bilbro calls Pelahatchie home. He and his wife of two years, Hanna, live north of town, where they have 50 head of cattle. Both his father, Michael, and his mother and step-father, Jodie and Jimmy Vaughan, also live in the area and help with the cattle.

Rankin County Supervisor Steve Gaines, also a cattle rancher in the same area, said, "If I had a son, I would hope he would have the character that Cole has."

It may be a crazy ride for Bilbro now, but he gives "all the glory to God. I wouldn't be here without Him."



Pelahatchie native and East Rankin Academy Graduate Cole Bilbro shown with wife Hanna. They have 50 head of cattle that she manages while Bilbro is on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association circuit. (Photos by Hannah Caylor Photography)

Sheila Sharplin named Pelahatchie Elementary Teacher of the Year

Special to *The Pelahatchie News*

Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) has named Shelia Sharplin 2016 Teacher of the Year. Sharplin is the elementary music teacher, as well as director of Chieftacular, the sixth grade show choir she created this year. For the previous 12 years at PES, she taught second and third grade.

Being the music teacher for grades K-6, Sharplin is able to touch more than 300 lives with her love for music.

"Mrs. Sharplin ignites her students' interest for being successful by creating learning opportunities that are challenging, meaningful, and relevant," said fellow teacher Sharon Hall. "She believes that teachers must embrace change, encourage innovation, and foster creativity; not just in their students, but in themselves."



Image special to *The Pelahatchie News*

Sharplin's objective and favorite saying is posted in her room every year - "The greatest thing you can give a child is a chance."

Pelahatchie Elementary holds 2016-2017 Pre-K registration

Special to *The Pelahatchie News*

Pre-Kindergarten registration for Pelahatchie Elementary will be March 21 through April 29. Eligible students must be four years old on or before Sept. 1, 2016. Applications will be available

at the school starting March 21. For more information, contact the offices of Pelahatchie Elementary at (601) 854-8060 or Family Resource Center at (601) 825-6577.



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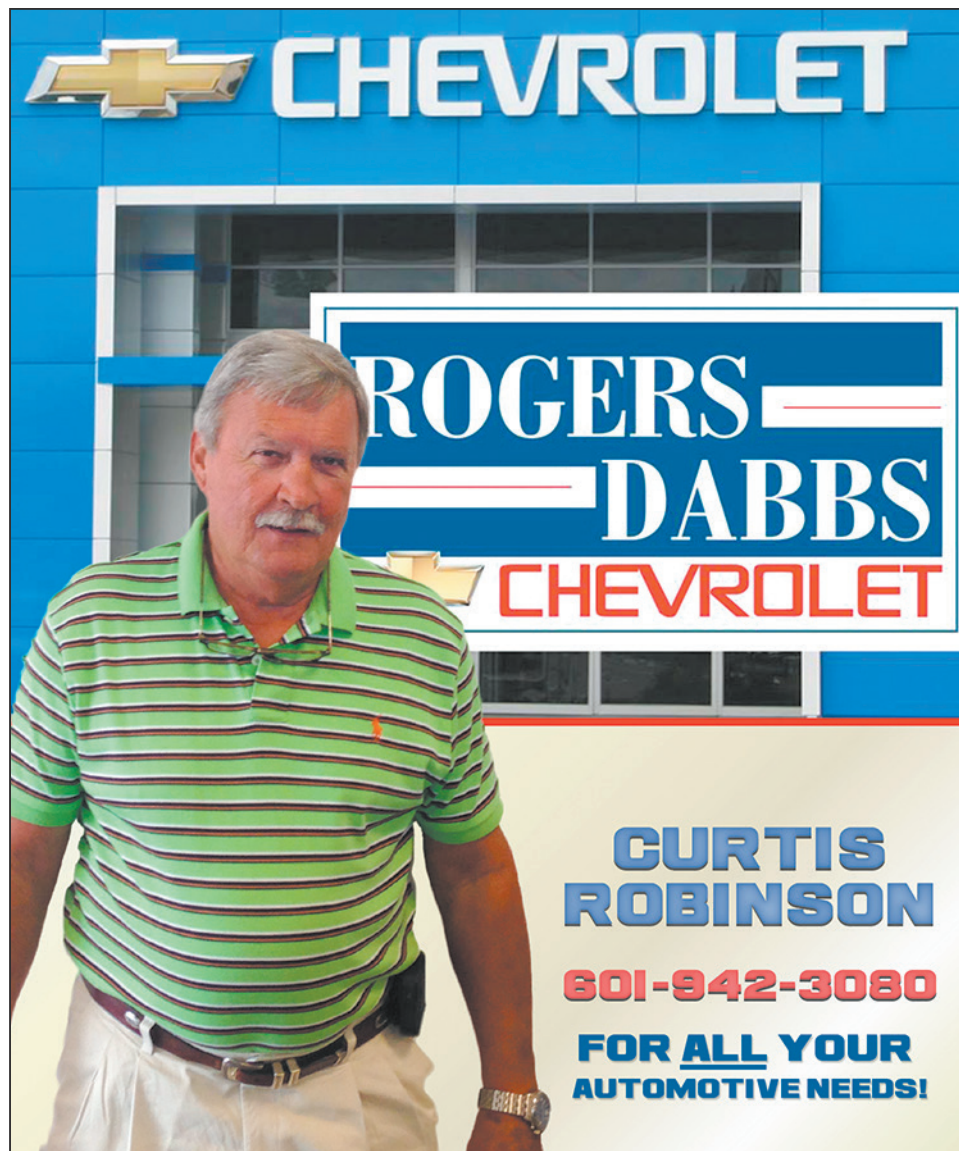
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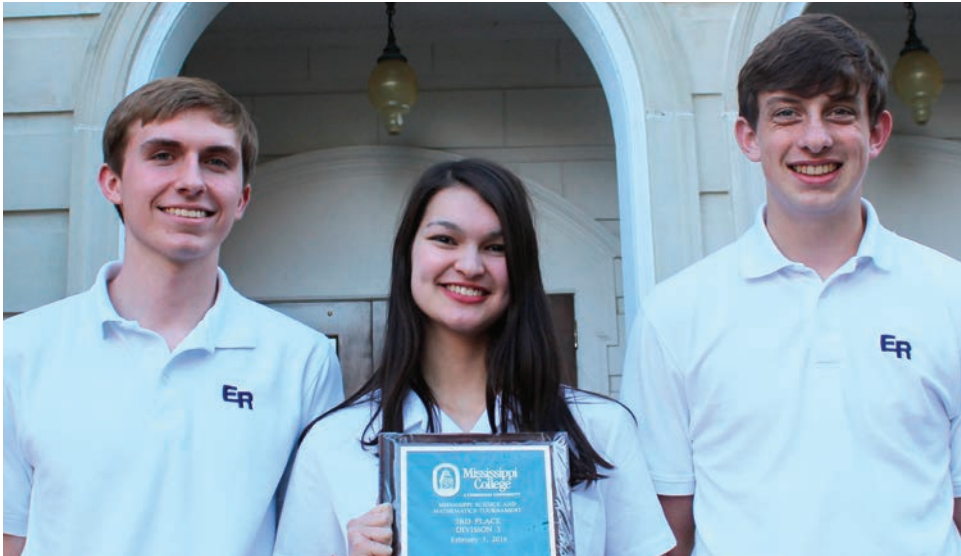




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East Rankin Academy students compete at Mississippi College



East Rankin Academy students Ward Winstead, Catherine Teh and Brandon Evans competed on February 5, 2016 at Mississippi College's annual mathematics & science competition. The two-day event on the Clinton campus attracted hundreds of high school students from across the Magnolia State. Winners are eligible to receive MC scholarships. MC has hosted the competition for more than 40 years. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Megan Courtney Hall named president of Central Mississippi Realtor Association

By: Susie A. Wolfe

Pelahatchie Alderman Megan Hall, a realtor with ERA Real Estate Professionals in Jackson, is the 2016 president of Central Mississippi Realtors, founded in 1949. She was elected by its more than 1600 members. Hall is the youngest to hold that position.

A Rankin County native and Belhaven graduate, Hall has served in many other positions with the Central Mississippi Realtors, Mississippi Realtors and National Association of Realtors, including:

- 2016 Vice-Chair, Member Services and Technology Committee, Mississippi Realtors
- 2016 Member of Presidents in Partnership, Mississippi Realtors
- 2015 President Elect, Central Mississippi Realtors
- 2013 and 2015 Young Professionals Network Chair, Mississippi Realtors
- 2012 and 2015 Young Professionals Network Chair, Central Mississippi Realtors
- 2014-2016 Mississippi Representative, Realtor Party Member Involvement Committee, National Association of Realtors
- 2011-2013, Member, Federal Finance and Housing Policy Committee, National Association of Realtors



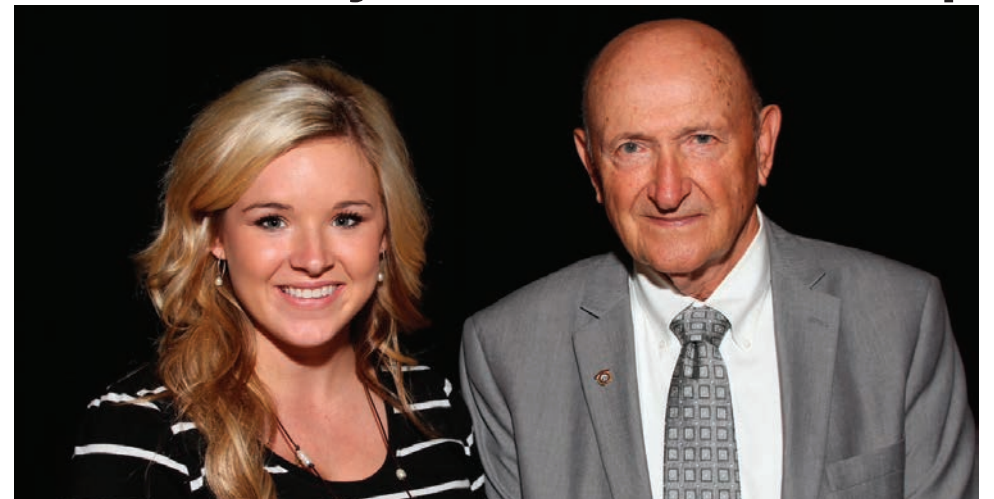
Image special to The Pelahatchie News

"I take what I do very seriously," said Hall. "I look at it as much more than just a job. I find myself privileged to be part of one of the biggest decisions in a family's lifetime...purchasing a home."

She was the youngest to ever receive the Realtor of the Year for the Central Mississippi Realtors, which she received in 2013. Other notable awards include: 2013-4 Under 40 Award, Mississippi Realtors; 2012-2015 National Circle of Achievement, ERA Real Estate Global; and 2013-2014 Top Lister, ERA Real Estate Professionals.

Married to Kevin Hall, Hall co-founded the Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary, and serves as its president.

Jones of Pelahatchie receives the HCC Jimmy Smith Scholarship



Harlee Dillard-Jones, of Pelahatchie, received the Jimmy Smith Scholarship by the Hinds Community College Foundation for 2015-2016. With her is Jimmy Smith, of Brookhaven, formerly of Pearl. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)



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Pelahatchie Board of Alderman meet to take care of important issues



The Pelahatchie Board of Aldermen during a first Monday board meeting at city hall, from left, Jerry Norwood, Alderman At Large; Margie Warren, Ward 3; City Attorney Chris Palmer, City Clerk Bettye Massey; Mayor Knox Ross, Jr.; Megan Hall, Ward 4; Frank Boyd, Ward 2; and Michael Adams, Ward 1. (Photo by Susie A. Wolfe)

Gulde UMC Women support local American Legion

By: Susie A. Wolfe

The Pelahatchie American Legion Post 171 recently received a generous donation from the Pelahatchie Gulde United Methodist Church Women. The gift will be used for supporting our local veterans. Post 171 would like to publicly acknowledge the

Church Women and their dedication to the ideals of service in words and deeds.

The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organi-



Image special to The Pelahatchie News

zation devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in their communities, advocat-

ing patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to service members and veterans.

Post 171 meets at 7:00 p.m. monthly on the third Thursday at the Pelahatchie Methodist Church, 101 Church Street. All veterans are invited to attend.



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Business Spotlight: REchelle gives pets the parlor treatment



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

By: Susie A. Wolfe

REchelle's Pet Parlor on Highway 80 offers pet grooming, including cuts and baths. Customers come from as far as Lena, Utica, Florence, Richland, Forest and Madison for the special spa treatment, which is usually booked two weeks in advance.

In the doggy day care setting, pets interact with others and have fun. REchelle brings her own dog, Omi, with her every day to help manage the business. Husband Charles is there, too, to facilitate bathing and nail butting as well as to assist Omi as needed.

REchelle opened her business in Pelahatchie in August 2011 after mov-

ing it from Forest, where they operated the previous four years. She previously served as salon manager at both Jackson Pet/smart stores, and, worked in Starkville.

To say REchelle loves pets is an understatement. At home, she, Charles and daughter, Jessica, care for four dogs, four cats, 15 chickens, one chinchilla, and a number of fish in two tanks.

The best advice for pet owners, said REchelle, is regular vet check-ups, a well-balanced diet and lots of TLC. They also recommend keeping pets brushed; playing with the pet's feet from an early age so it won't be skittish; and cutting its nails regularly.

Bedtime story event held at Pelahatchie Library



The Pelahatchie library had a Bedtime Story Time event on Thursday, February 23. The children came dressed in their pajamas and enjoyed a story, craft and a bedtime snack. Shown is librarian Tina Mauney reading bedtime stories to the attentive crowd. (Photo by Susie A. Wolfe)

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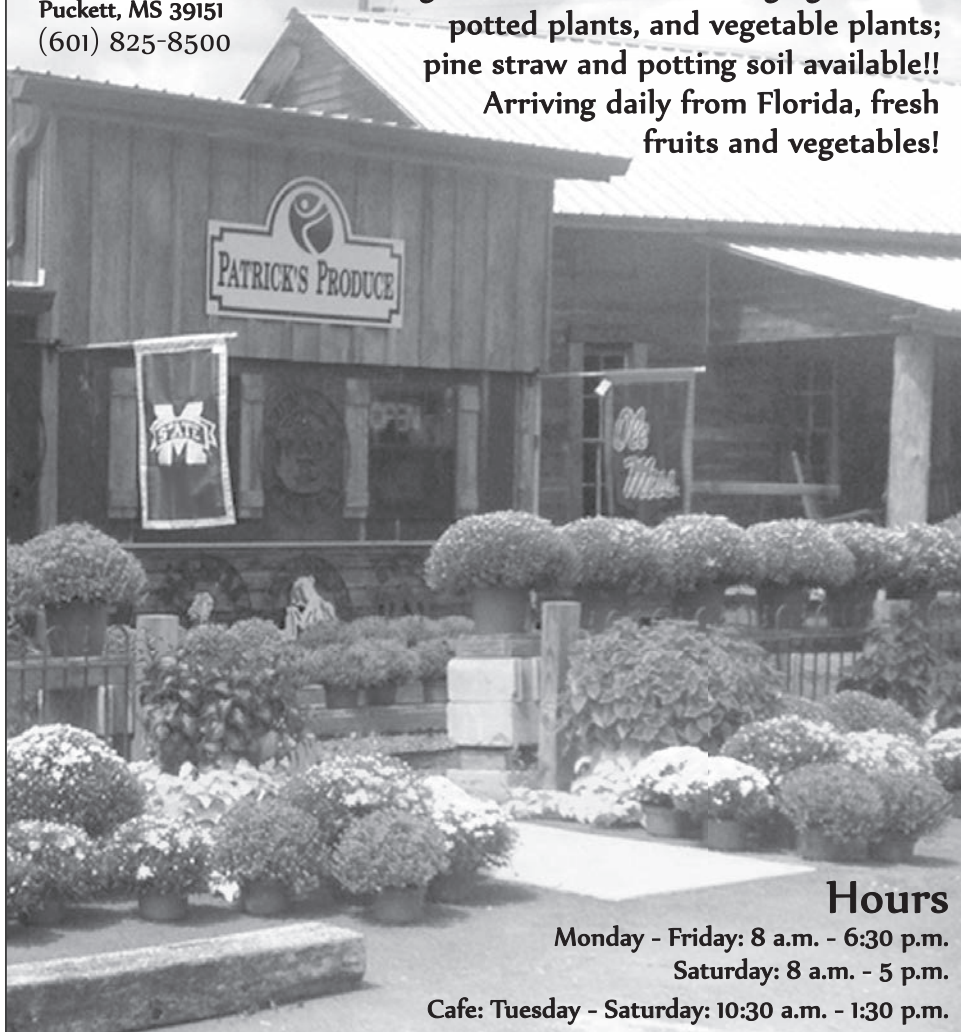
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Mississippi Blood Services recognized Midsouth Baking Company as an All-Star



Midsouth Baking Company was named a Mississippi Blood Service All Star for their blood drive achievements throughout 2015, and for going above and beyond in making sure the drives were a success. Will Sims, left, accepted the award on behalf of the organization. He is shown with David Allen, MBS President and CEO. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

Importance of staying focused

By: Dr. Bryan Marshall, Pelahatchie
High School Principal

Spring is in the air, spring break is around the corner, and the end of the school year is in sight. The spring semester generally proves to be the toughest. In today's world, there are so many distractions that capture our interest and time, that school seems to take a backseat. Baseball and softball are starting, postseason basketball is starting, and swimming holes are warming up from the chilly winter air. Soon, all we will be able to think about is what we will do with those long summer days away from school.

So, I will be the bearer of bad news. We still have to focus, and we still have to study for a short time, at least. We have all been told that we must pay the price now, in order to play later. Our goal is for all of our students to be successful in their lives post graduation.

Students need to be able to work and make a living to support their lifestyles and interests. Oh, how hard it is to see that a little hard work now will pay off so much in the future for each of these students. We can all remember the days of our youth, when studies were the last thing on our mind. So many things to do, and so little time for school. But, the reality is that we still have lessons to learn, reports to write, and tests to take.

Parents and guardians, we must not

lose sight of what is most important for these students. We must continue to help them focus on getting a quality education and becoming the type of person that will be an attractive applicant for any job in the future market. The jobs these kids will seek in the future have not been created yet. There is no way to fathom what the jobs of the future even look like. These jobs will probably involve high tech computer skills, thinking critically, and, yes, the ability to read and comprehend to produce a solution to problems.

Pelahatchie High is committed to provide that type of education for the future of your children, the future of the City of Pelahatchie, and the future of the State of Mississippi. Therefore, parents and guardians, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and anyone else that influences today's youth, encourage students to stay focused just for a little while longer and get the education they need and deserve. Lets all work together to stay FOCUSED.



(Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

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Palmer and Slay turn friendship into partnership

By Susie A. Wolfe

Chris Palmer and Craig Slay have opened Palmer & Slay, PLLC, and have new offices on Woodgate Drive in Brandon. Slay is the former Pelahatchie city attorney, and Palmer is the current one. Slay is the current county attorney working with the Rankin County Board of Supervisors.

Other Pelahatchie ties include Slay's wife, Anita, a teacher at East Rankin Academy, and his daughter, Anna Beth, a junior there. Another daughter, Caroline, is a graduate of East Rankin, and is currently in nursing school at the University of Alabama.

Both men attended the University of Alabama, and, at one point, both worked at Adams & Edens and attended the same church. They have much in common, including running. Both men are distance runners and

train together. Palmer has completed four marathons (26.2 miles) and two 50ks (31 miles), and Slay has completed five marathons and one 50k.

The two attorneys also found that their law expertise complements each other, so they joined forces to assist in business law, family law, wills, trusts, and probate. The new firm has clients in the area, and from as far as Michigan.

They have a general law practice, according to Slay, but have areas in which they specialize. Palmer understands the complex laws and regulations in estate planning, particularly for farm families where there are different considerations. Slay offers advice and counsel to charitable organizations, among others, which again, has its own set of complex legal issues.

One word of advice, said Slay, is to not assume that Rankin County at-



Craig Slay, left, and Chris Palmer opened their new firm on Woodgate Drive in Brandon. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

torneys don't practice a certain kind of law. He encouraged residents to ask before seeking help elsewhere.

At a minimum, they can make recommendations that may save their clients time and money in the long run.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT DIRECTORY

Image special to The Pelahatchie News

(Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)



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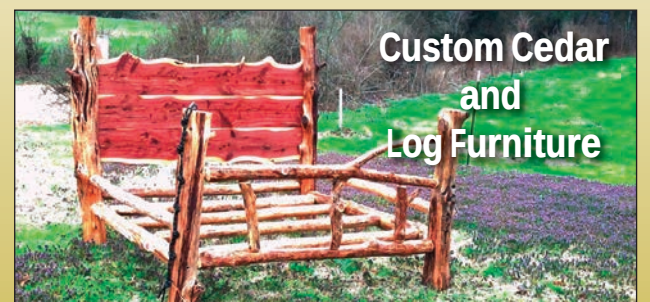


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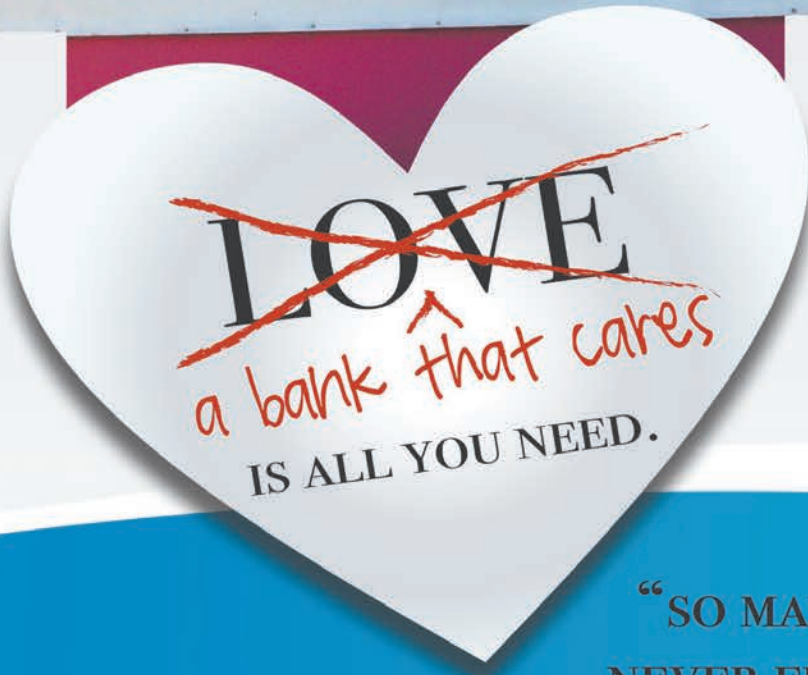


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Country Boy's grand opening set for April 2

By: Susie A. Wolfe

Country Boy's is opening a furniture and appliance store at 1200 East Second Street, in the old Lindz building. Hours will be Monday-Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Country Boy's main operation is on Highway 43 across from East Rankin Academy, where they specialize in poultry and farm construction, according to CEO/owner Joe Hedgepeth. He said the company originally planned to use the new location as a storeroom, but decided to maximize the space as a retail location.

"We will carry items that the community won't have to drive to purchase," said Hedgepeth. "We'll still have the other, but wanted to utilize the showroom and other space in our new location."

The new store, owned by Hedgepeth and Steve Garrett, will carry Ashley and Fitzgerald brands. Products will include washers, dryers, bedroom sets, stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers, sectionals, sofas, living room sets, area rugs, and accessories including lamps



(Photo by Susie A. Wolfe)

and home décor. They will not carry electronics, but they can be ordered.

"We will have in-house financing," said Catherine Poarch, purchasing agent. "Customers just need to bring proof of residency, proof of employment and their driver's license."

"Customers can pre-order in March, and we will have furniture delivery coming soon," she said.

The store will feature custom, hand crafted cedar and log furniture from J & M Outdoors, the store next door on Highway 80. Three pieces will be featured including a bed/head board, cedar chest and Adirondack chairs.

The grand opening for the new Country Boy's store will be Saturday, April 2, beginning at 9 a.m. The celebration will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. featuring refreshments and entertainment by Big Money Mel & Small Change Wayne.

Pelahatchie Lion's Club Father-Daughter dance



Walter Hudson brought Rosa to the Father-Daughter Dance held at Town Center Saturday, Feb. 9. The annual dance is sponsored by the Pelahatchie Lions Club. (Photo by Susie A. Wolfe)

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Firearms training for a woman can be an incredible journey



By: Guest Columnist
Kim Condon

Never in a million years would my family have guessed that I would become a gun enthusiast, a firearms instructor and an advocate for safety with firearms - but I did!

I guess the saying is right, "With age, comes wisdom." At a later time in my life, I started paying attention to some of the possibilities of danger that could become a reality for me. I know for myself that I don't live in fear, but I am not naïve to the evil that does exist in our world.

Upon hearing the news of the Colorado theater shooting, I had an "aha" moment. My thought was that this could very easily happen in my hometown, just as it did in Colorado. No one likes to think that their town is not safe, but let's be real here! We don't live in a bubble.

My wisdom kicked in, and I began a journey of educating myself on how NOT to become a victim. The journey led me to seeking formal firearms training, because, you see, I had absolutely zero experience with a firearm.

What I did have was fear of the firearm and insecurities in asking for help. With wisdom, I also realized that I had to be the one to make this journey. My husband could support me, but, ultimately, I had to go through the process myself in order to overcome my fear and insecurities.

This has been an incredible journey, to say the least. I have been educated and trained by the best, surrounded by like-minded men and women, and have become a partner with my husband in owning a firearms training academy.

I was adamant about providing a facility for those who are walking in my shoes. You know you need to do something, but are not sure where to start. Let me tell you, my friend: if I can do it, so can you.

If you decide you want to take the leap and learn more about handling a firearm, be sure to find a safe and controlled environment to do so.

Editor's note: Kim Condon is co-owner of Boondocks FTA, LLC, and is a National Rifle Association Firearms Instructor and Chapter Leader for The Well Armed Woman Shooting Chapter (Clinton/Raymond MS- Chapter).

Student of the Month and Citizenship Awards



Pelahatchie Attendance Center recently recognized January Students of the Month. They included (l to r) Brock Wilson, 9th; Olivia Sirmon, 8th; Ashley Cannon, 11th; JaMarion Hardy, 12th; and Brandon Jackson, 10th. Not pictured: Chloe Walters, 7th. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)



The January Citizenship Award recipient at Pelahatchie Attendance Center included John Jason Gill and Bianca McKinnis. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

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Sunday Schedule

8:30 - Contemporary Worship Service
10:00 - Bible Study for all ages
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
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Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	Arrangements
Nena C. Dansby	59	Lake, MS	2/5/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Ricky Federick	68	Lake, MS	2/8/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Modesto Aguilera-Rivera	73	Forest, MS	2/9/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Dorothy Bailey	84	Lena, MS	2/12/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Velma Warren	84	Forest, MS	2/12/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Lucy Hunter	57	Morton, MS	2/18/16	Wolf Funeral Serv.

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Pastor's perspective: God brings hope if we let him



By: John Vaughn, Pastor,
Cross Roads Baptist
Church in Pelahatchie

I don't read everything that shows up on my Facebook page. I just don't have time! But, for some reason, when a friend from Tennessee posted this, I did read it. If you choose to read it, I hope you find encouragement in "Not Everything Happens For a Reason" by Christine Suhan. Have you ever found yourself, in the midst of unimaginable grief, pain, heartache, or despair, wondering how you are going to make it through another day? Wondering where your next breath is going to come from? Your world has crumbled beneath you, and you are left feeling shattered, empty, and hopeless.

And then, a well-meaning friend or family member comes along and drops the infamous "Everything Happens for a Reason" bomb. You smile kindly and nod - that's all you can do to keep yourself from punching them in the face.

You can't possibly imagine a reason for what just happened. The more you stew about a possible reason for your pain, the angrier you become. You try desperately to make sense of

a situation that won't ever make sense. You reach for answers, but none come. I spent years searching for answers, trying to find reasons that would bring an end to my pain. I thought that, if I could find the cause, I could treat the condition. But what I found through years of searching, experiencing, and living is that often there is no reason for why tragedy has occurred.

Sometimes bad things happen for no reason other than we are human beings having a human experience. Pain, heartache, grief, loss, disease, and death are inevitable parts of the human experience.

We hear people say "life dealt me a crappy hand," as if pain and hardships are not the norm. We assume that life is supposed to be easy; and, when things don't go our way, we feel like we have been wronged. Human beings seem to have an innate sense of entitlement. We think that we are owed a pain-free existence.

But the truth is that human beings are not exempt from the human experience. And struggle is an innate part of the human experience. None of us are exceptions to this rule. We all struggle. We all suffer. We all experience pain, heartache, and loss. And sometimes, there's just no reason other

than we are human, and pain is a part of the process.

I recently had a conversation with a friend who was struggling to find peace with "God's plan" for her life, including the recent death of a loved one. "How could this possibly be God's will?" she asked.

Here's what I've come to know about God's will: God's will is not the path we walk, but rather how we walk the path. God's plan is never for someone to have cancer. God's will is not for an innocent child to be brutally murdered. God's will is not for a teenage girl to be raped. God's will is not chronic pain, illness, disability, or death. God's will is not an event that happens to us, it's how we respond to what happens.

God's will for us is to walk with Him through the cancer. Through the abuse. Through the death. Through the illness. God's will is for us to draw close to him in the midst of pain. God's will is for us to use our painful life events to carry his message of hope, grace, forgiveness, and mercy.

God's plan was never for pain to be part of the human experience. His plan was for us to live in peace and harmony with Him. The human experience became painful when sin entered the

world. Our own free will weaved threads of tragedy, loss, heartache, and pain into the human experience.

God is not responsible for our pain. We are not responsible for our pain. What happened in the Garden of Eden is responsible for the human condition. And the human condition is hard wired for pain and suffering. God is not causing us to hurt. He is hurting with us. What we do with our hurt is what matters. How we handle tragedy is what brings purpose into our pain.

There's hardly ever a justifiable reason for the bad things that happen in life. Tragic loss is not laced with inherent specks of good. I used to get so mad when people would say, "you can find good in every situation." That's just not true. There was nothing good about being raped. There is no good in murder or abuse. We have to create the good. We have to choose to respond in a way that brings good into an impossible situation. We have to choose to give purpose and meaning to our suffering.

Not everything happens for a reason. But in everything that happens, there can be a reason to bring hope and healing to others. God can use our pain for a greater good if we choose to let Him in.



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Walters Power Equipment provides personal service on equipment, parts and repairs

By: Susie A. Wolfe

Terrell and Gretchen Walters opened Walters Automotive, now Walters Power Equipment, in 1978. They are the second oldest continuously owned and operated business in Pelahatchie, after Rhodes & Robby Drug Store.

Walters sells SCAG, Husqvarna and Stihl equipment, including lawn mowers, chain saws, weed eaters, hedge trimmers, and leaf blowers, plus keeps parts in stock. There are also three factory-certified mechanics available for repairs.

"Business has changed in 38 years," said Pelahatchie native Terrell. "Short pulpwood transportation has transitioned to sales and service for the commercial lawn business. And, now our competition is the internet."

"Today, we are selling to the third

generation customer," said Walters, who has six full-time and two part-time employees. "We know our customers, and what separates us from the big box stores is personal service."

Walters said he caters to farmers in the area, both row crop and poultry. They build hydraulic hoses on site and supply heavy duty batteries and other supplies as needed.

The shop will have a SCAG Open House on Friday and Saturday, March 18 and 19, where a sales rep will be on hand to demonstrate products. There will be special pricing on SCAG equipment all week. Store hours are 7:30-5:00 Monday-Friday, and 7:30-12:00 Saturday.

The Walters have two sons, Isaiah, who is in the U.S. Army, and Gabe, who operates Specialty Tree Service in the area. Gabe and Lacie live in Pelahatchie with their three children.



Photo by Susie A. Wolfe

Yogi on the Lake to hold Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Craft Fair

By: Susie A. Wolfe

Yogi on the Lake is hosting its third annual Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Craft Fair at the park on Campground Road, Saturday, March 26 from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$6.00 per person for activities that include the Easter Egg Hunt at 11 a.m., craft fair from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., and Percy King Snakeman at 1:00 p.m.

Other activities include the swimming pool and splash pad, pictures

with the Easter bunny (bring your own camera), face painting by Fancy Faces, carnival games, music by DJ Spidey, egg decorating, miniature golf, fishing and the space jump. There will also be food and representatives of the fire and police departments.

The Spring Craft Fair will include ceramics, sand art, sun catchers and more. For more information, call 601-854-6621.



Yogi and Boo Boo invite you to hunt Easter Eggs with them. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

The first Mother-Son Dance by Milltown Park a success



The first Mother Son Dance sponsored by Milltown Park was a success. Shown, from left, are Pamela, Austin, Noah Craig, Maddox and Mallory Culpepper. (Photo special to The Pelahatchie News)

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