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December 2025 ■ Volume 14, Issue 12 ■ Pelahatchie, MS

Locals join top 5 nominees



Special to Pelahatchie News

Several local businesses have been nominated to be top 5 finalists for Rankin's Best of the Best 2025-2026. These include Crooked Letter Kitchen, Crooked Creek Animal Hospital, Ever Reaching Community Outreach (ERCO), Jellystone Park Pelahatchie, and Rankin County Co-Op.

Continued on page 2

Southern Pine Electric hosts 87th annual meeting

Special to Pelahatchie News

Southern Pine Electric welcomed members from across its 11-county service area on Thursday, November 13, 2025 for the cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting, a day filled with fellowship, fun, and a shared commitment to the community the co-op has proudly served since 1938.

Members gathered at Southern Pine's headquarters to enjoy a variety of interactive booths that highlighted the many departments and services of the cooperative. Several booths showcased member spotlights, featuring local artisans and small businesses whose handmade goods, crafts, and wares reflect the unique character of the communities Southern Pine serves. Guests also enjoyed dynamic demonstrations from the Scott County Schools Robotics Team, whose students shared innovative projects and hands-on robotics displays.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Covington County Hospital provided free health screenings, and Lowe's, Co-Lin Community College, Mississippi State University's Cybersecurity Mobile Unit, and Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks were all a part of the celebration.

Attendees were treated to a special lunch, Linemen Storm Boxes, giving members an inside look at the meals provided to linemen during storm recovery operations. The lunch served as a unique way to connect members to the hard work Southern Pine's crews perform during severe weather events.

Following the festivities, music was provided by Seminary High School's Jazz Ensemble as members gathered for the official business meeting. Drummonds McAlpin, President & CEO, delivered the annual report, highlighting the strong state of the cooper-

Continued on page 2

Jellystone Park wins Pinnacle Club Award

By Guest Columnist Alana Goss

Recently, Jellystone Park™ Pelahatchie brought home the Pinnacle Club Award from the 2025 Camp Jellystone Awards Ceremony.

The Pinnacle Club Award recognizes parks that scored 95% or higher on their annual assessment.

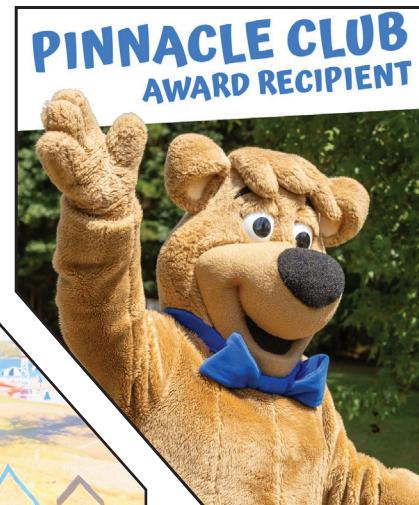
This award is a testament to the hard work of the staff and the loving campers that come back year after year. Thank you for loving Jellystone at Pelahatchie.

My mom (Stephanie Goss, GM) and I (Alana Goss) started here in 2020 during Covid.

My aunt, Tanya Scherer, was already working here during that time. We have only been here for those few years, but this year marked our 20th year anniversary of being a Jellystone Park™! It is a huge accomplishment. We were awarded this year at the 2025 Symposium Awards for our 20th Anniversary. We also received the Pinnacle Club Award while there. Mrs. Stephanie Goss is in the photo with the awards, and she has been the General Manager at Jellystone Park™ Pelahatchie since November 2022. This is a huge honor with the Jellystone Franchise.



Stephanie Goss



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Southern Pine Electric Hosts 87th Annual Meeting

ative, ongoing investments in reliability and enhancements to member programs and services. He reflected on Southern Pine's deep roots in the communities it serves and praised the dedication of the team members who "Bring the Power" every day.

Members also enjoyed the chance to win valuable prizes during the event. Drawings were held for door prizes, \$250, \$500, \$750, and \$1,000 worth of electricity, culminating in the grand prize giveaway of a retired Southern Pine pickup truck.

During the business meeting, four incumbent directors were re-elected by the membership to continue their service on the board:

- Billy Parish, Jefferson Davis County
- Blaine Eaton, Smith County
- Mims Berry, Lawrence County
- Dean Kirby, Rankin County

"We are thankful for another successful annual meeting and grateful for the opportunity to spend time with our members," McAlpin said. "Their trust and involvement ensure that Southern Pine remains strong, member-focused, and committed to providing safe, reliable, and affordable electric service."

For more information about Southern Pine Electric, visit southernpine.coop.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Continued from front page

Locals shine with top 5 lists for Rankin's Best of the Best



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Phillips' family supports Pelahatchie VFD as Christmas helpers

By Susie A. Wolfe

The Phillips family of Pelahatchie has decades of combined experience volunteering at the Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department (PVFD) — with a special Christmas twist.

Clark Phillips has volunteered with the PVFD for 30 years. His father, Harold Phillips, played Santa for years before his passing in 2000. Now, Clark is taking up the mantle. He has appeared as Pelahatchie's very own Santa Claus since 2023.

"I enjoy seeing children's faces light up," Clark, who is a Burke forklift mechanic by trade, said. "It's heartwarming!"

Volunteering at the PVFD is a Phillips family tradition. Clark's brother, Tracy Phillips, and nephew, Kirkland Phillips, are also PVFD volunteers. Clark served as Fire Chief for many of his 30 years of service.

In 2024, Clark's wife, Katrina, began joining him as Mrs. Claus at the Pelahatchie Santa Breakfast at the Community Center, the Christmas Parade, and Jellystone Park's Community Christmas. This year, they are adding Barefoot Springs Baptist Church to their circuit and are open to other opportunities in the area.

Katrina, originally from Pearl, met



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Harold Phillips was the Santa for Walters Pancake Breakfast, and Pelahatchie's Pancake Breakfast and Firefighter's Dinner. He is shown here at Pelahatchie Elementary. He passed away in August 2021.

Clark after moving to Pelahatchie. Their daughters and son-in-law, Mary Elizabeth Phillips and Tabitha and Harrison Varner, also live in Pelahatchie.

Katrina is the chief executive assistant at Canopy Children's Solutions and was appointed to the Mississippi Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee 16 years ago, on which she still serves today. She said the Phillips family is made up of service-oriented people.

"God gave our family the gift of en-

couragement," Katrina said. "It is such a blessing to see the kids smile and the parents light up!"

Katrina said she will also make personalized Christmas videos for \$10 from December 1-23.

The PVFD is holding their annual fundraiser, the Christmas Tour of



Katrina Phillips is offering Personalized Video Messages from Mrs. Claus December 1-23 for a small fee. She and Clark love to see the kids smile and the parents light up!

Homes, on December 6 from 1-6 p.m. Clark and Katrina will be at the Town of Pelahatchie Museum next to the library all day. Stops on the Christmas Tour of Homes include 202 Warren



Clark and Katrina Phillips will be standing in for Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Pelahatchie Santa Breakfast, Christmas Parade, and Jellystone Park's Community Christmas, all on December 6. Plus, they will be at the Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department's Christmas Tour of Homes from 1-4 p.m. that afternoon.

Street, home of Andy and Janie Johns; 395 N. Brooks Avenue, home of David and Leshea Gray; and 108 Teague Lane, home of Rick and Anne Cordell. There will also be a stop at the Pelahatchie Baptist Church for complimentary coffee and hot chocolate, hosted by PVFD chaplain Pastor Spencer Sullivan.

Bringing Christmas joy is something Katrina and Clark love to share. For more information, contact Mrs. Claus at 601-672-6001.

Mary Ann Griffin, CFNP • Kim Risher • Keli Robertson

Merry Christmas

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11

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Pelahatchie Elementary welcomes families to an enchanted night of learning



By Guest Columnist,
Robin Sanders, Principal,
Pelahatchie Elementary School

On Tuesday, November 4, Pelahatchie Elementary welcomed families for its annual Family Instructional Night, this year was themed "An Enchanted Night of Learning."

The event included themed stations and games for PreK through 6th grade students and their families. Reading, math, science and STEAM stations invited hands-on participation, and families rotated through activities designed to model at-home learning strategies.

The Pelahatchie Public Library

also attended this event, offering families the opportunity to apply for library cards and learn about community resources. The Scholastic Book Fair was on site, allowing families to browse and purchase books to build home libraries. Additionally, the PTO provided a themed snack for all students, and each student left with a bag of goodies to support continued learning at home.

Pelahatchie Elementary thanks the families who attended this magical event and remains committed to providing a strong partnership among home, school, and the surrounding community!



Special to Pelahatchie News

Thanks so much to Pelahatchie Elementary School for the invite to attend their Family Instructional Night & Book Fair. Ms. Brenna enjoyed playing games and sharing information about the library with all the families who stopped by.

Pelahatchie High School, Principal Anderson welcomes new staff



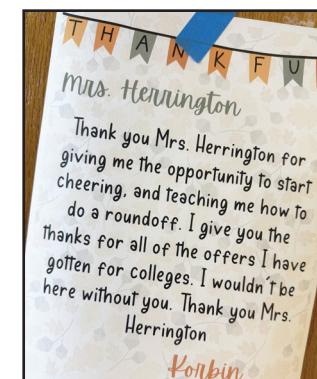
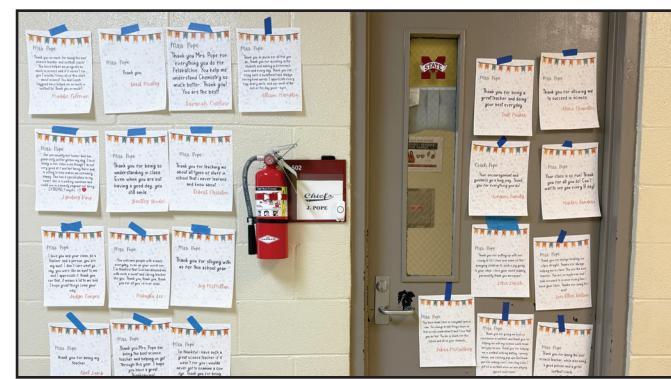
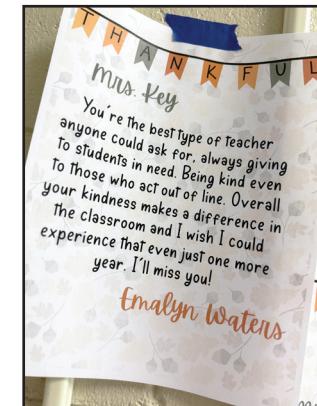
By Guest Columnist, Voncille Anderson, Head Principal, Pelahatchie High School

As we enter the season of thankfulness, goodwill, and giving, it is important to pause and reflect on the many ways our lives are enriched by our daily interactions. For educators, the connections we build with students, colleagues, parents, and community members hold exceptional value. Each day, our teachers walk into the building with a commitment to share knowledge, refine their practice, impart wisdom, and foster a love of learning. They pour themselves into our school out of genuine dedication to their students and to their profession.

Each year, the arrival of Thanksgiving ushers in a special season of gratitude at our school. During this time, parents, students, and staff members have the opportunity to express their appreciation for one another. The notes

shared with our faculty are both uplifting and deeply meaningful—often providing encouragement that teachers may not realize they needed. The greatest testimony of a teacher's impact is found in the words of his or her students. This month, our current and former students have poured out heartfelt reminders of the influence our teachers have had on their lives. Their messages—full of gratitude, reflection, and admiration—serve as powerful affirmations of the meaningful work happening in our classrooms each day.

I extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who took the time to share a message of thanks with a member of the Pelahatchie High School staff. Your words make a difference. As we move into the holiday season, I wish everyone joy, peace, and the reminder that the most meaningful gifts are those given from the heart.



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Pelahatchie Library December Events



ERA robotics undefeated at Tupelo qualifier for State



Special to Pelahatchie News

The ERA robotics team is currently ranked 24th in the world out of 500 teams that have competed this season. The team won the award for Winning Alliance Captain and was the Inspire Award runner-up at the Tupelo Qualifier that took place on November 15. This qualifies them for the FTC State Championship.

Eli Boyer among MSU Presidential Partnership Scholarship recipients



Special to Pelahatchie News

Eli Boyer, a computer science major from Pelahatchie, Mississippi, is among 13 Mississippi State transfer students receiving Presidential Partnership Scholarships this fall, the university's most prestigious awards for those transferring from the state's community colleges. Boyer is a graduate of Hinds Community College. Presidential Partnership Scholars receive funding to cover their full, on-campus tuition costs for two years. They are enrolled in MSU's First-Year Experience: CC Presidential Scholars leadership class. The students must be enrolled full time and maintain a 3.0 GPA. The scholars are members of Phi Theta Kappa, the two-year college national honor society, and are nominated by their respective community college presidents and selected by the MSU Scholarship Committee.

Crooked Creek Animal Hospital

Charles Edwards II, DVM
Katlyn Henning, DVM
Jenny Sowell, DVM
Carter Hill, DVM

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crookedcreekanimal.com
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City Beat: Mayor, Alderman meeting for Tuesday, November 3, 2025



By Shaun McInnish, Sr., City Beat Writer, Pelahatchie News

The November 2025 meeting of the Pelahatchie Mayor and Board of Aldermen was held on Tuesday, November 3, 2025, at Town Hall. Mayor Karl VanHorn called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the invocation by Alderman Jones and the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call was taken with Alderwoman Diane Hill, Alderwoman Sandra Harvey, Alderman David Gray, Alderman Eddie Jones, and Alderman James Harrell all present, establishing a quorum.

Residents and Visitors' Business:

Victoria and Devon Porter appeared before the board regarding Gingerbread Kutz, a childcare business they currently own in Morton and wish to relocate to Pelahatchie. Mrs. Porter explained that she already holds the necessary license but must receive the town's approval before the state can complete its required inspection. After discussing the request, Alderman Jones made the motion to approve the relocation, Alderwoman Hill seconded, and the motion carried with all members voting in favor.

David Hegwood was mentioned as wanting to express his plans for a building on Brown Street, with the Police Chief explaining he had talked with Mr. Hegwood and that he intends to lease the building and operate it as a shop. He noted that the structure had become an eyesore and stated his intention to clean and repaint it as part of preparing the building for use. Alderman Jones made the motion to approve his request, Alderman Gray seconded, and the motion passed with

all members voting in favor.

Department Discussions:

The City Clerk announced that the Senior Citizen Thanksgiving Luncheon will be held on Thursday, November 20 at 11:00 a.m. at the Knox Ross Town Center. The Pelahatchie Volunteer Fire Department will host its annual Breakfast with Santa on Saturday, December 6, from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., featuring pancakes and photos with Santa. Immediately after the breakfast, the Town of Pelahatchie will hold its annual Christmas Parade at 10:00 a.m. on December 6. This year's theme

AmFirst card and secondary to BCBS. Alderman Jones made the motion, Alderwoman Hill seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.

A bank draft payment to EMC Insurance for \$13,024.75, covering property insurance, was also approved with a motion by Alderman Jones and a second by Alderman Gray, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Payroll for October 2025 was then approved and ratified, with totals of \$77,003.73 for the General Fund and \$29,246.41 for the Enterprise Fund. Alderman Jones made the motion, Alderman Gray seconded, and the motion carried 3-2 with Alderwoman Hill and Alderwoman Harvey voting no.

Aldermen and Mayor Discussions:

Alderman Jones reminded everyone that a Veterans Day Program will be held on November 11 at 8:00 a.m. at the East Rankin Academy Activity Center. Alderman Harrell reported the need for pothole repairs on Grimes.

Mayor VanHorn closed the meeting updates by discussing the town's tornado sirens, reporting that the county provided a quote of \$200,000 to replace all six sirens within the Pelahatchie city limits. The proposal includes full installation of the sirens and a full warranty, to be repaid by the town at a rate of \$20,000 per year for ten years. Alderwoman Hill made the motion to accept the proposal, Alderwoman Harvey seconded, and the motion passed with all members in favor. Mayor VanHorn noted that the work would begin soon.

With no further business, Alderman Jones made a motion to adjourn the November meeting, Alderwoman Hill seconded the motion, the motion passed with all in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 P.M.



is "Winter Wonderland," and participation forms are available at City Hall.

New Business:

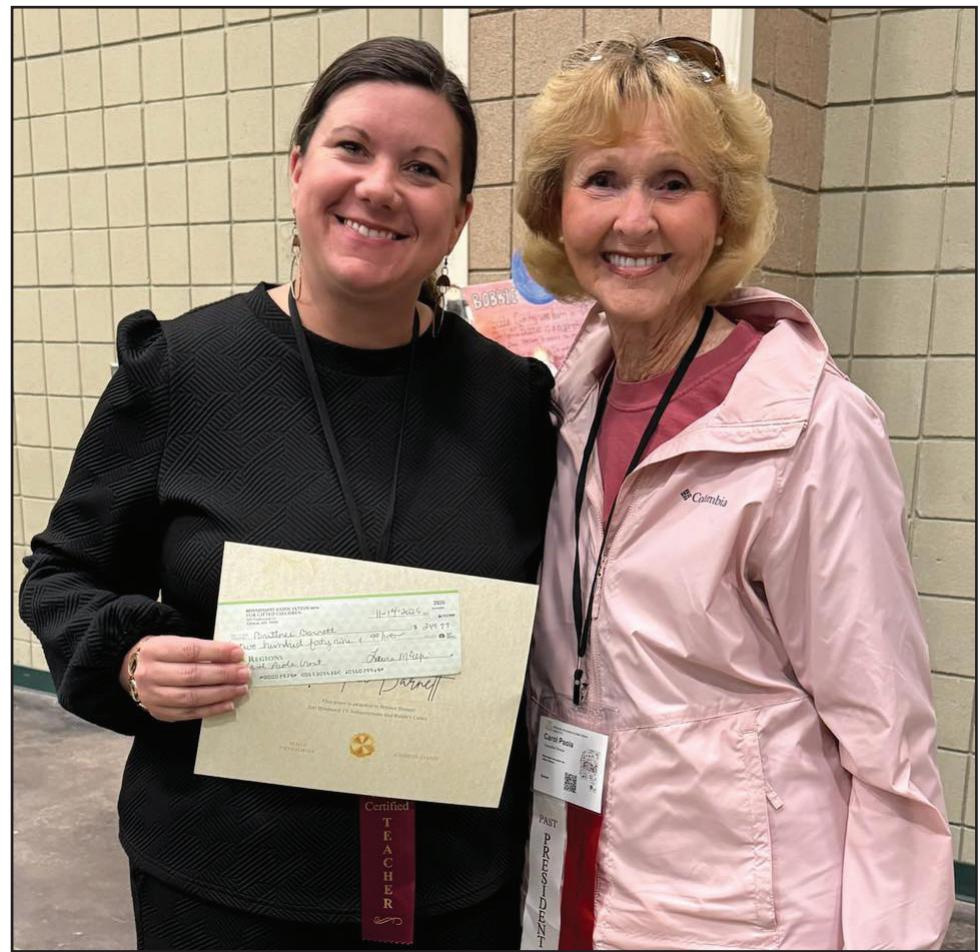
The board approved the minutes from the October 6, 2025 regular meeting on a motion by Alderman Jones, seconded by Alderman Gray, and the motion passed unanimously.

The unpaid claims docket was then approved on a motion by Alderman Jones and a second by Alderman Harrell, with the motion passing 3-2, with Alderwoman Harvey and Hill voting no.

The board next approved the disbursement of the bank draft payment to Morgan and White Insurance in the amount of \$1,114.23, associated with the



Barnett awarded new teacher grant



Special to Pelahatchie News

Britnee Barnett (left), gifted teacher at Pelahatchie and McLaurin Elementary, was awarded the Carol Paola New Teacher Grant at the Mississippi Association for Gifted Children Conference.

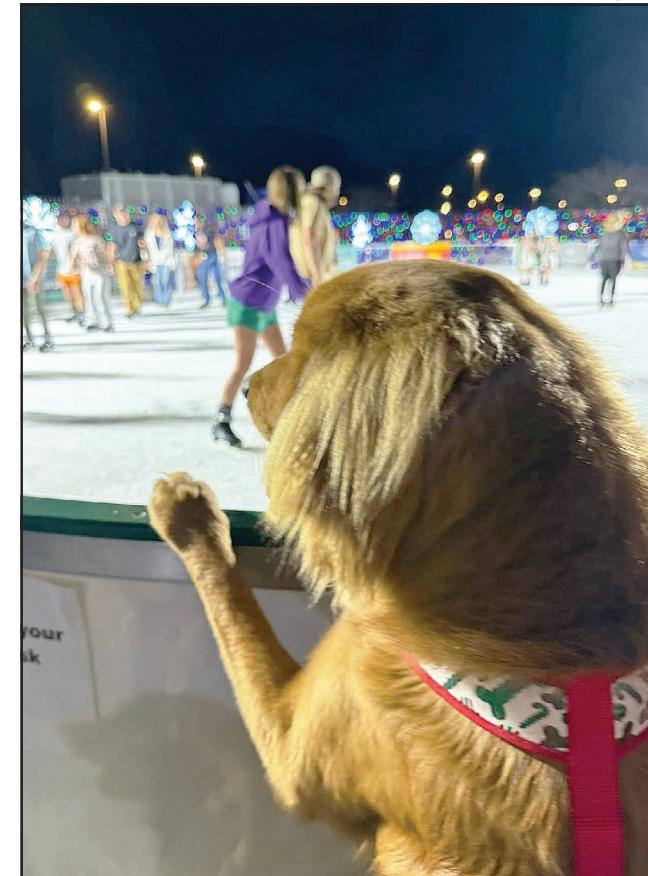
Trustmark Park's Southern Lights is now pet friendly

By Susie A. Wolfe

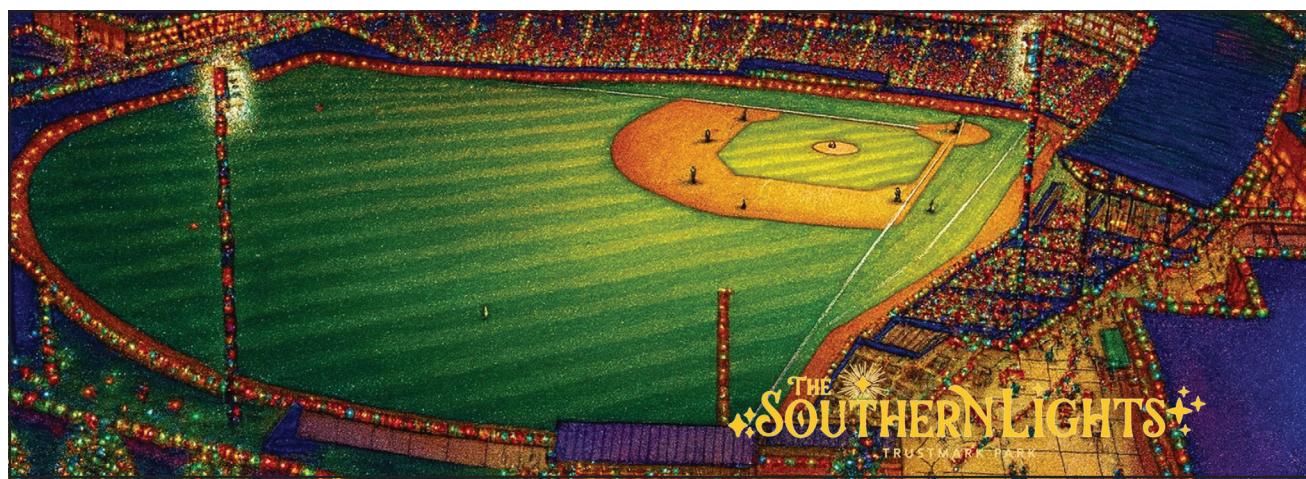
The Southern Lights at Trustmark Park in Pearl has officially opened the gates to pets. Attendees can now bring their dogs.

With millions of twinkling lights, festive walkways, warm fire pits, and the biggest holiday glow-up a ballpark has ever seen, The Southern Lights is now a place where the whole family can soak in the season together—even the four-legged family members who think every new smell is an adventure and every stranger is a new best friend.

To keep the joy flowing and the chaos fun instead of feral, pets must remain on a leash at all times. Guests are asked to clean up after their animals and follow all local, state, and federal pet regulations while inside the ballpark. The Southern Lights runs through January 4 with ice skating, train rides, s'mores stations, festive treats, and immersive displays across the concourse and field.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News



The Southern Lights have invited your pets to attend with the rest of the family. On Preview Night on November 20, dogs were enjoying the festive atmosphere.

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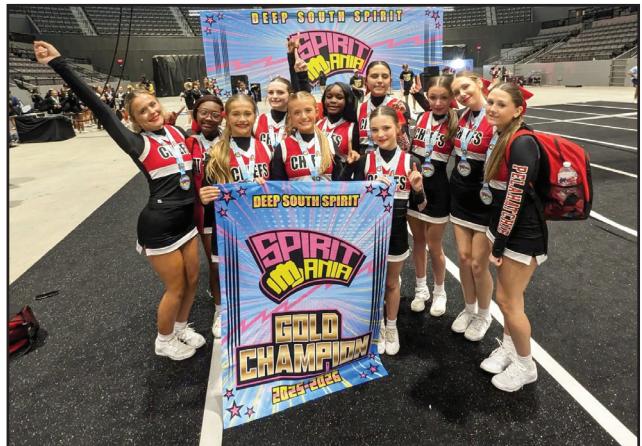
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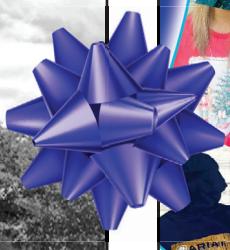
Pelahatchie High School cheerleading team wins at Deep South

Congratulations to the Pelahatchie High School Cheer Team for scoring first place in the Deep South Cheer Competition with their highest score in five years.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Cross Roads Baptist Church



Sunday Schedule:
9:00 a.m. - Worship Service
10:30 a.m. - Sunday School for all ages

Wednesday Schedule:
5:30 p.m. - Family Dinner (Call to make reservations)
6:30 p.m. - Prayer Meeting; Youth Worship;
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Rankin County Co-op

What's new at Performance Therapy Pelahatchie on referrals

By Susie A. Wolfe

Performance Therapy Pelahatchie has been serving the Pelahatchie, Puckett, Pisgah, and Morton areas since February 2019, with physical therapy services such as total joint procedures including balance and gait training; lower back; post-surgical; and sports injuries.

The Pelahatchie clinic currently has three therapists including Micah Brooke Smith, director; Kristen Shivers; and Hannah Berry; and three athletic trainers including Braxton James, Cody Shaw; and Bill Thomas. They work with athletes and adults usually on location.

The Brandon location also offers speech therapy, chiropractic, and pediatrics.

As of July 1, 2024, physical therapists in Mississippi do not require a physician's referral for direct patient access. This means residents can seek physical therapy services directly,



Special to Pelahatchie News

The Performance Therapy Pelahatchie staff (l to r) First row: Hannah Berry; Micah Brooke Smith, director; Kristen Shivers; Anna Kate Goree; and Courtney Rhodes; Back row: Braxton James; Scot Huffman, owner; Cody Shaw; and Bill Thomas.

though some insurance plans may still require prior authorization or a referral for coverage.

Performance Therapy Inc., owned by Dan Young, Spencer Shoemaker, and Daniel Tackett, has more than 22 locations and growing. The late Scot Huffman of the Pelahatchie area was also an owner.

The Pelahatchie Performance Therapy is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. To make an appointment or schedule a free screening at the Pelahatchie clinic at the railroad track at 201 South Brooks Street, call 601-759-5006. The website is www.performancetherapym.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Susie Wolfe, the author of this piece, just completed a therapy regimen for lower back pain at this location. She was scheduled two times a week for six weeks. It was her first experience with any type of physical therapy, and she considers the experience a success.

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Pilgrims to pecan pie: A brief history of Thanksgiving (Southern style)

By Kenneth A. McDade

If you ask most Americans where Thanksgiving comes from, they'll say something about Pilgrims in funny hats shaking hands with Native Americans over a giant turkey. And while that's partly true, the real story is a little less Hallmark and a little more "we really hope winter doesn't kill us."

The year was 1620. A group of religious separatists—yes, the famous Pilgrims—boarded the Mayflower not because they wanted to get a jumpstart on Black Friday shopping, but because they wanted freedom of religion and worship. England wasn't exactly handing out First Amendment rights back then, so off they sailed. The voyage was long, cramped, and smelled like 100 people living in a wooden salad bowl, but eventually they landed at Plymouth.

Their first winter was brutal. Nearly half of them didn't make it. In the spring, the Wampanoag people stepped in with actual life-saving knowledge: planting techniques, fishing advice, and probably a gentle suggestion that "maybe don't build your settlement on a windy hill." By fall of 1621, the Pilgrims had crops—at least enough that they weren't staring down another "winter of nope." They held a feast of gratitude, invited their Wampanoag neighbors, and unknowingly launched a holiday that would one day involve parades, football, and political arguments over sweet-potato marshmallows.

So how did this humble harvest meal turn into a national holiday? A footnote. Yes, a footnote changed American history.

In 1841, the Rev. Alexander Young published an account of that 1621 dinner. Tucked at the bottom of the page, he added the now-famous line:

"This was the first Thanksgiving, the great festival of New England."



People read that footnote and said, "Well, if the reverend said it, it must be true!" The idea spread faster than gossip at a family reunion. Suddenly, everyone agreed that the Pilgrims invented Thanksgiving—even though they didn't actually call it that.

And then along came Abraham Lincoln. In 1863, in the middle of the Civil War—when the nation was having what we might politely call "a rough patch"—Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday to promote unity. Nothing

brings people together like gratitude, hope, and a guaranteed day off work.

Now, fast-forward a couple of centuries and mosey on down South. Southerners took the original Thanksgiving concept—gratitude, community, harvest—and added their own twist: butter. Lots of butter. Also casseroles. And iced tea strong enough to power a small tractor. And sweet enough to be a dessert.

While the Pilgrims most likely dined on venison, fowl, squash, and corn, Southerners perfected what we now think of as "traditional" dishes. Cornbread dressing replaced New England's soggy bread stuffing (because if you're going to carb-load, do it right). Pecan pie strutted onto the scene, proving that even nuts can become dessert if you add enough sugar. And while turkey stayed the centerpiece, Southerners asked an important culinary question: "But what if we deep-fried it?" Thus, the legendary porch-side fryer tradition was born—along with approximately 3,000 emergency-room visits a year. Progress comes at a cost.

Even the meaning of Thanksgiving shifted. While still rooted in gratitude and reflection, Southern households expanded the celebration: family reunions, front-porch storytelling, church services, football rivalries, and leftover sandwiches stacked higher than a Baptist potluck table.

So yes, Thanksgiving began with a group of weary travelers seeking religious freedom and thanking God for survival. But over time, especially in the South, it transformed into a warm (and occasionally chaotic) festival of food, faith, family, and friendly arguments over who makes the best mac and cheese.

One thing hasn't changed: gratitude remains at the heart of it all. That, and the undeniable truth that someone will fall asleep on the couch before dessert is served.

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Have you heard the history of the Christmas tree



By Doug Carter, Rankin County Extension Agent

Around Christmas, I often wonder: When did the Christmas tree tradition begin? A Christmas tree is a decorated tree, usually an evergreen conifer such as a fir, spruce, or pine or an artificial tree of similar appearance, associated with the celebration of Christmas.

The winter solstice is when the earth travels the shortest path through the sky, and therefore that day has the least sunlight and the longest night. In ancient cultures, the winter solstice was heralded as the beginning of brighter days ahead, and an indication that the Sun God was gaining strength. In ancient Egypt, a similar mindset was adapted. This Sun God typically grew weak as conditions became colder and darker. This solstice was seen as a turning point in seasons, so Egyptians decorated their homes with palm leaves and branches. In ancient Rome, people were encouraged to celebrate the coming spring with evergreen decorations.

Evergreen trees became part of Christian rites in Germany, and in the Middle Ages "paradise trees" begin to appear. These trees were traditionally decorated with roses made of colored paper, apples, wafers, and



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

tinsel. Martin Luther reportedly first hung lighted candles on a tree in the 16th century and paradise trees evolved into Christmas trees. By the 19th century, Christmas trees were a firmly established tradition in Germany.

German settlers migrated from their country, and they took the Christmas tree tradition to other countries, including the United States. At first Christmas Trees were not fully embraced in the United States.

According to Wikipedia, several cities in the United States claim to be the first sites of Christmas trees in homes and towns. A Hessian soldier put up a Christmas tree while imprisoned in 1777 in Windsor Locks, Conn. The first Christmas tree in America is also claimed by Easton, Pennsylvania, where German settlers erected a tree in 1616, and in 1821 a gentlemen in Lancaster, Pennsylvania re-



corded the use of a Christmas tree and laid claim to the first American Christmas tree.

Charles Follen, a German immigrant in Boston, is credited for being the first to introduce to America the custom of decorating a Christmas tree. August Imgard, a German immigrant living in Woodster, Ohio, is said to be the first to popularize the practice of decorating a tree with

candy canes. It is said that Mr. Imgard cut a spruce tree for a Christmas tree and has a star constructed and decorated the tree with the star, paper ornaments, glazed nuts, and candy canes.

Edward Johnson, who was then vice president of the Edison Electric Company, created the first known electrically illuminated Christmas tree at his home in New York City in 1882. Johnson became the "Father of Electric Christmas Tree Lights".

Sources: "Christmas Tree" Wikipedia Encyclopedia; "The History of the Christmas Tree Goes Back Farther Than You Might Realize" Amy Mitchell, CountyLiving.com, 2021

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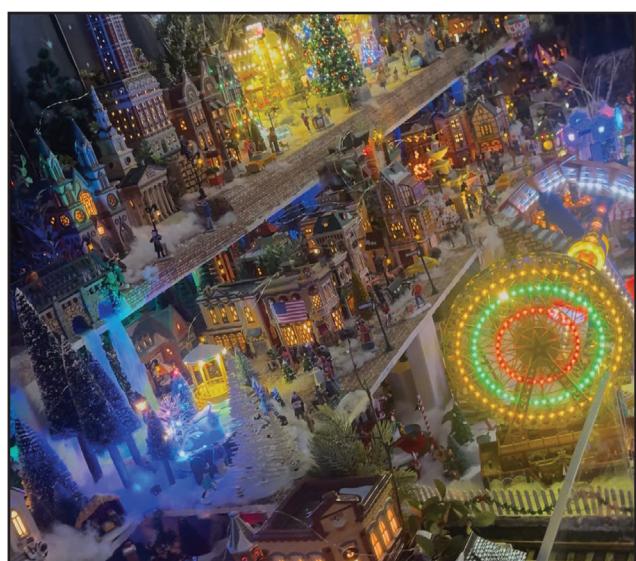
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Crossroads Christmas Village ready for new holiday season

The Christmas village is complete. Unpacking started on October 9th, and it has now finally been unveiled for everyone to see. With the help of family—and many long hours—it was all worth it to see the faces of family, friends, and customers in awe as they walk in to the shop.



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Pelahatchie's Varner honored with RCSD's Great to Best award



Special to Pelahatchie News

Recently, the Rankin County School District (RCSD) presented their Great to Best award recipients for the month sponsored by Community Bank and The Foundation for the Rankin County Public Schools, with Mrs. Shane Dubois presenting on their behalf. Recipients are: Secondary Administrator: Bryan Collins, Puckett High; Elementary Administrator: Catie Gunn, Steen's Creek Elementary; Secondary Certified Staff: Michael Granberry, Pisgah High; Elementary Certified Staff: Eboney Kyles, McLaurin Elementary; Secondary Classified Staff: Lindi Fallin, Richland High; Elementary Classified Staff: Tabitha Varner, Pelahatchie Elementary; Secondary Student: Austin Bailey, Pisgah High; Elementary Student: Bailey Sabins, Steen's Creek Elementary; Substitute: Peyton Herrington, Northwest Rankin Elementary; Congratulations to all for exemplifying RCSD's mission of bringing everyone's strengths together.

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Pastor's Perspective: Don't Lose Heart

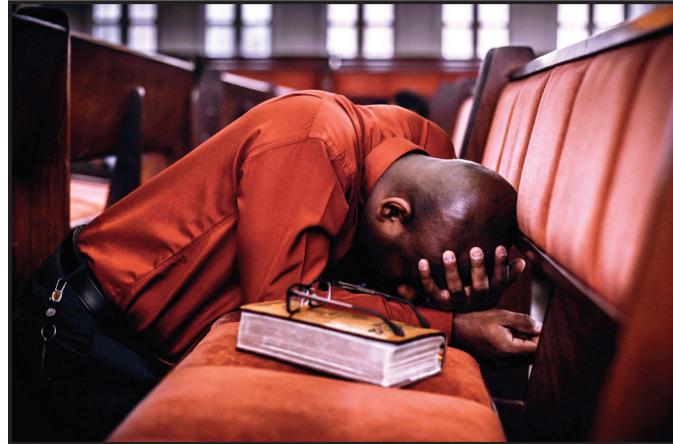


By Guest Columnist Spencer
Sullivan, Pastor, Pelahatchie Baptist

Prayer is the avenue that actually enables us to speak and communicate with God. What an amazing gift! Have you ever considered that? At any time, in any moment, we have the opportunity to speak to the Almighty God Himself. And the Bible tells us that when we pray...He hears us (Daniel 9). That is an astonishing truth! So, what has been your experience with prayer? Have you experienced God answering in ways that only He can? Or at times, do you feel like your prayers just aren't getting through, like a phone call with bad cell service? If you have spent significant time in prayer, you've probably experienced both extremes.

Over the last few months, I have written in this space about a few of Jesus' parables that are recorded in the Gospels. When Jesus shared a parable, there was always a spiritual lesson to be learned. Whatever the primary lesson is, Jesus' parables also give us a greater understanding of what God is like. In Luke 18, the Gospel writer, Luke, actually reveals to his audience the primary lesson of the parable that he was about to record. In verse 1, he wrote: "And He (Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."

The ensuing parable is recorded in Luke 18:2-8 and I encourage you to take a moment to read it. Injustice is a hot topic in our world today, however, this isn't a new problem under the sun. Jesus' parables always in-



Special to Pelahatchie News

cluded culturally relevant settings. Sadly, this parable presented the cultural reality that there were corrupt local judges. In the parable, the judge actually self-declared that he "neither feared God nor respected man." This was evident as the other main character in the parable, a widow, was repeatedly denied justice by this unrighteous judge. But, the judge's failure to take his job seriously and do it competently and justly did not dissuade the widow from continuing to seek justice. She kept coming to him over and over and over again. She was relentless in her pursuit and one day the unrighteous judge realized that she would never stop coming until he gave her the justice she was due. He said: "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming." The widow's relentless pursuit led

to her receiving the justice she was seeking. After sharing this short but powerful story, Jesus unveiled the primary lesson He was communicating. He said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily."

As a parent, when my children were much younger, I can remember times when they would request something over and over and over again, especially if my answer was 'maybe later' or 'not right now'. That would never be enough. They would continue to make their petition without stopping. Eventually, I would say something like: "If you ask me one more time, the answer is absolutely 'no'!" Can any of you relate? In the parable, God is contrasted with the unrighteous judge. Yet, clearly, they are nothing alike. The unrighteous judge only responded to the widow because of her relentless pressure. But, what Jesus is saying is that God actually desires that we come to Him repeatedly in prayer and that He will answer. He's not annoyed or bothered by our crying out day and night! He actually wants us to continue! In Matthew 7:7, He instructs His people: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." God actually teaches us to ask, seek, and knock. At the same time, God is not some genie in a bottle where we just send Him our wishes and expect Him to give us anything we want! He always hears us when we pray. And He answers us according to His perfect will, both for His glory and our good. So I encourage you to always pray...and not lose heart!

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Hometown Rankin Feature: Chancellor from Pelahatchie

Special to Pelahatchie News

Reader Spotlight | Brandi Chancellor

Why did you decide to make Rankin County your home?

Rankin County has been my home for 41 years, and I can't imagine living anywhere else. The people, the sense of community, and our church family are just a few of the reasons we've never wanted to leave. Though my husband has had opportunities to relocate, our hearts have always been here. Rankin County isn't just where we live—it's where we belong.

How long have you lived in Rankin County? I've lived in Rankin County my entire life. I grew up in the small town of Pelahatchie, MS, and graduated from East Rankin Academy in 2002—a tradition that runs deep in my family. My grandfather was one of the original members who helped establish the school, and my mom was part of the very first graduating class in 1974, even earning the hon-

or of being ERA's first "Most Beautiful," and my dad followed her in 1975. Carrying that legacy forward, my husband and I have also chosen to send our two children to East Rankin. For the past 15 years, we've made our home in Brandon, so I haven't strayed too far from where I started—and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Tell us about your family (name, ages, hobbies). I've been happily married to my amazing husband,



Special to Pelahatchie News

Justin, for 15 years. Our love story wasn't exactly straightforward—we had an on-and-off relationship during our college years, and I broke his heart three times before finally saying "yes." His persistence paid off, and I'm forever grateful it did. Justin now serves as Regional Vice President for RJ Young, where he's deeply respected by his team. Together, we're blessed with two wonderful children. Our son, John Walt, is in sixth grade and has

a passion for playing the drums as part of the East Rankin band. Our daughter, Lynlee, is in fourth grade and absolutely loves cheerleading, softball, and basketball. She's constantly flipping around the house, but at least we know those tumbling lessons are paying off!

What is your favorite memory of living in Rankin County? The first memory that comes to mind is attending the Muscadine Jubilee in Pelahatchie as a child. I looked forward to it every year—the funnel cakes, the muscadine grape stomp, the lively entertainment, and, most of all, the time spent with family. My grandparents were always there, sitting beneath the big tree as we prepared for the grape stomp, and my Mimi made sure I had a fresh bag of muscadines to enjoy. She always called them "muscadiMES," and to this day, I still do too. Though she is now in heaven, I like to imagine her delight as she celebrates the best Jubilee of all—worshipping around God's throne.

Southern Pine Stuff-A-Truck food drive



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Southern Pine recently held their Stuff-a-Truck food drive at Ramey's Marketplace. This ensured that over 100 bags will be filled for the Junior League of Covington County's backpack program, which is making a difference with children in need by providing shelf-stable food that can be placed in a child's backpack to make sure they have food over the weekend.

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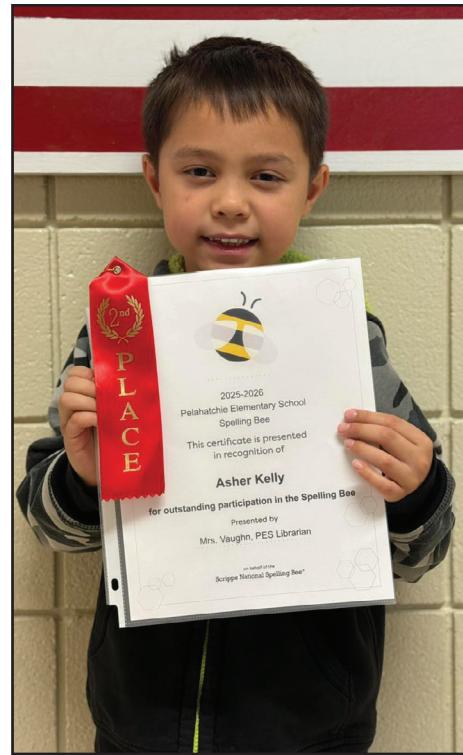


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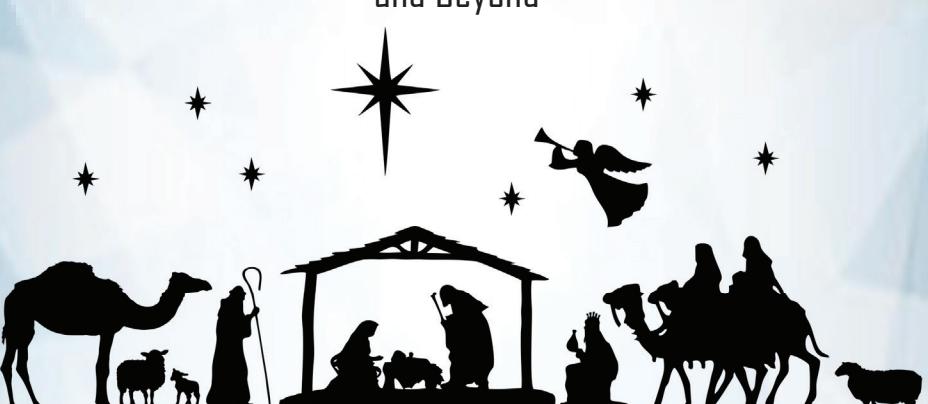
Pelahatchie Elementary School Spelling Bee Winners

Big cheers for the Pelahatchie Elementary School (PES) Spelling Bee champions! In the 1st-3rd grade category, the first place winner is A.C. Bartlett and runner-up is Asher Kelly. In the 4th-6th grade category, the first place winner is Zane Lawrence and runner-up is Riley Jordan. Congratulations to all participants! PES is so proud of you for your hard work and spelling skills!



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Four Patriots receiving MAIS All 4A Cross Country team honors



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Congratulations to the four Patriots receiving MAIS All 4A Cross Country team honors! From top, left to right: Sophomores, Taylor Stroh and Zack Price; eighth grader, Jewel Baker and seventh grader, Caroline Thornton!

Local fire fighters attend CO₂ training at academy

Special to Pelahatchie News

On Saturday, November 15, four Pelahatchie fire-fighters attended a CO₂ training program at the Mississippi State Fire Academy. The program, which was sponsored by ExxonMobil, trains firefighters to respond to incidents related to carbon dioxide, a common, naturally occurring molecule that is increasingly important to industrial and economic activity.

"We're very thankful for another great CO₂ training program, which will prepare Mississippi firefighters to assess and respond to CO₂-related incidents," said Matt Ellis, Instructor Supervisor at the Mississippi State Fire Academy. "This program will help keep our firefighters safe as well as equip them with the skills to save lives in the event an incident like this occurs. We are grateful to ExxonMobil for their support of this program, as well as the firefighters across the state who work each and every day to keep our people safe."

The training is a one-day intensive program that teaches participants about CO₂, including its uses and hazards, how to safely assess a CO₂-related incident, and how to respond. At the end of the program, trainees demonstrated what they learned by conducting live simulations on a new CO₂ pipeline prop, which was funded through a grant by ExxonMobil.

"At Exxon, safety is our core value, and training is the foundation of safety. That's why we're proud to



Special to Pelahatchie News

Pictured, left to right: Karl VanHorn, Clark Phillips, Tracy Phillips, and Kirkland Phillips.

bring this specialized CO₂ program right here to Mississippi," said Brian Carlin, CO₂ Operations Manager. "By making this training local, we're removing barriers and ensuring that every firefighter, whether serving in the Jackson metro area or a rural county in the delta, has the same access to world-class preparation."

In total, more than 20 firefighters from across the state attended the training, which is provided at no cost to first responders or their departments. Located in Pearl, the Fire Academy has already held two CO₂ trainings this year, with several more being scheduled for 2026. Firefighters interested in participating can reach out to the Fire Academy to reserve their spot.

Pelahatchie HS JROTC drill team competes



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Recently, the Chiefs drill team competed against other Rankin County drill teams at Brandon High School. They demonstrated a high level of leadership development at the event.

ERA joins All Things New to provide Thanksgiving meals



Photos special to Pelahatchie News

Recently, All Things New Rev 21:5 ministry was able to join with East Rankin Academy to provide one hundred Thanksgiving meal boxes to the residents in Pelahatchie and Morton. Many students participated in this project. The students not only donated all of the food, but they also assembled the boxes, delivered them, and even prayed for people. Thanks to Coach Brooke Rhodes, Shelly Overby, and Casey Heflin for their time and leadership on this project.

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