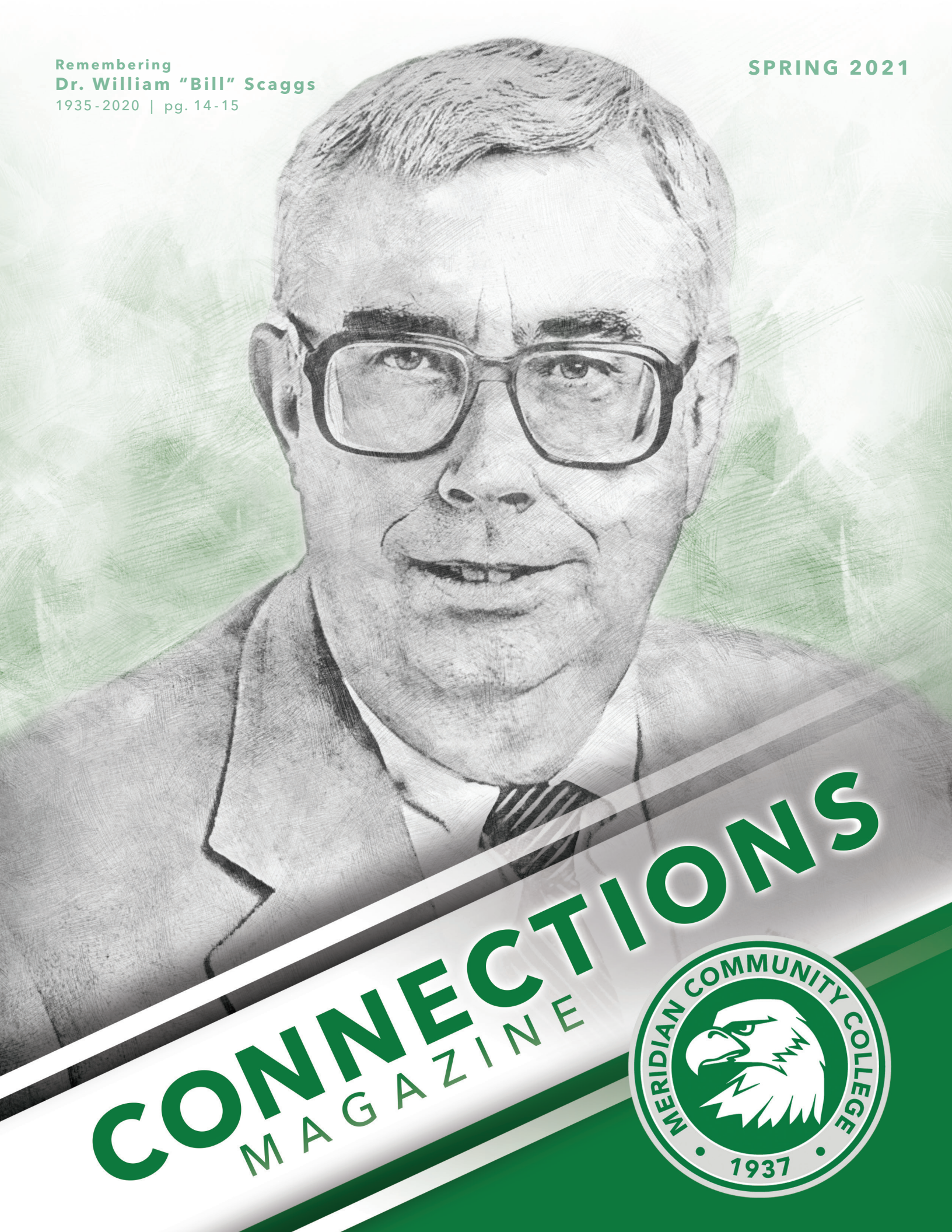


Remembering
Dr. William "Bill" Scaggs
1935-2020 | pg. 14-15

SPRING 2021



CONNECTIONS

MAGAZINE



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- Veldore Young-Graham

CONTRIBUTORS

- Tony Boutwell**
director of visual media
- Marmion Francis**
lifetime quest coordinator
- Christopher Haralson**
sports information director
- Leia Hill**
vice president of institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation
- Theresa Hogan**
scholarships and alumni relations coordinator
- Joy Smith**
communications coordinator
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director of public information



2020: AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR

I think I can safely claim that the last nine months have been the most challenging of my career. Never could I have imagined needing to become so familiar with pandemic trends, contact tracing, bipolar ionization, and Plexiglas®! I am thankful for so many who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the safety and educational needs of our faculty, staff, and students are being met daily. I am surrounded by wonderful people who inspire me and remind me why Meridian Community College is such a special place.

While the semester, no doubt, has been tough, we haven't wasted opportunities to engage our students and our community in some pretty incredible ways. Inspired by a donation from generous alumni, we launched the Giving Challenge, an effort to help students who struggle to find the next meal. We also started an alumni organization with big plans to engage those who attended MCC.

We hosted one of my favorite events of all-time—the FIRST MCC Candy Cruise, where our faculty, staff, and students passed out candy to more than a thousand trick-or-treaters. Our My College Cares event went online, but that didn't stop our Eagles from investing their service in our community as hundreds looked for ways to serve Meridian and Lauderdale County. In fact, on more than one occasion throughout the course of the semester, groups from the College took time

to recognize local healthcare heroes by sharing meals, gifts, or a simple "thank you" to employees of local hospitals and healthcare provider agencies.

While we've had our share of positive COVID-19 cases, our students, faculty, and staff have been overwhelmingly conscientious as we've worked to adapt to a new set of expectations associated with the educational environment - they've made me proud! But none of what I've shared should really surprise anyone.

Perseverance, appreciation, and community service are part of who we are at Meridian Community College.

Those values were deliberately cultivated by a man whose life and example are fundamentally important to this institution. In fact, we are dedicating this edition of Connections to his legacy. You can't be on this campus very long without being exposed to the work of Dr. Bill Scaggs. Dr. Scaggs was a visionary educator and servant to his community. He believed a community college education could transform people and that those people could transform the places they live. He was persistent, kind, tenacious and a model for college presidents. Dr. Scaggs was beloved, respected, and honored, but my favorite characteristic was his humility. He remained supportive of the college he nurtured and routinely attended activities on campus. I consider it an honor to have had many opportunities to sit with him, seek his advice, solicit his feedback, and hear stories about how he met the challenges of his day, which weren't that different than the challenges we face now.

You may know our board of trustees recently made the decision to rename a building to reflect the lasting contributions of Bill Scaggs. Next semester, when we are more comfortable hosting face-to-face public events, we will be inviting family and friends to celebrate the life of Dr. Scaggs by unveiling signage for Ivy-Scaggs Hall. The building, which will carry his name, is at the heart of campus, and I can't think of a more fitting tribute to recognize a man whose life, for so many decades, was the heart of this College.

Go Eagles!



FOCUS ON...

BACK TO MCC: SMITH REJOINS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

After a 12-year absence, community leader C.D. Smith has returned to MCC as the newest member of the Board of Trustees.

"MCC is one of the most important jewels in our community," said Smith, who was named to the board in September 2020 to fill the term of John Johnson, who retired as a trustee. "I enjoyed serving on the board previously, and I look forward to serving with Dr. Huebner and the other four trustees."

Smith was first appointed to the board in 1991 by former Meridian Mayor John Robert Smith. He served as a trustee for 17 years until he stepped down in 2008, when he was appointed by the governor to the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. His term on the IHL board expired in 2018.

"I now will have served on the Board with every president who has ever led MCC," Smith noted. The late Dr. Bill Scaggs, who led MCC for 30 years, was president when Smith was first named to the board, and Dr. Scott Elliott, who helmed the community college for the next 20 years, served as president when Smith resigned as a trustee. He will now be serving under MCC's third president, Dr. Thomas Huebner.

A native of Vicksburg, Smith is regional director for AT&T Mississippi, serving out of the Meridian office with oversight over 31 counties in east Mississippi. A 46-year employee of AT&T, he relocated to Meridian in 1977 to work for the local office of South Central Bell, then a subsidiary of AT&T. He worked his way up in the company and eventually earned both his bachelor's degree in business and industry and master's degree in business administration from the Meridian campus of Mississippi State University.

Smith is a member of the Board of Governors of the Mississippi Economic Council. He also serves on The Montgomery Institute Board of Directors, the MCC Foundation Board, Trustmark National Bank Advisory Board and the Weems Community Mental Health Center's Board of Commissioners. He served for nearly four decades in the Mississippi Air National Guard, retiring at the rank of State Command Chief Master Sergeant, the highest enlisted position in the Air Guard.



"MCC has a very good reputation for preparing students either for the workforce or to transfer to a four-year university, and I am glad to discover that focus has successfully continued," he said.

Smith believes his service on the IHL board will be beneficial as he returns as a trustee to MCC.

"I have a much better understanding of the financial challenges that community colleges face than I did in the past; challenges that were already present even without the difficulties resulting from COVID," he said. "I look forward to working with Dr. Huebner, who is an excellent administrator and has a great team around him, to ensure MCC continues to have the resources it needs to maintain its campus and its level of excellence in preparing students for their future endeavors."

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Alex Weddington, chair

Alex Weddington is a native of Meridian and is president of General Supply and Machine Co. He began serving on the MCC Board of Trustees in 2002.

Tommy Dulaney, a lifelong resident of Lauderdale County, is an alumnus of MCC. He is the founder of the



Tommy Dulaney

internationally-known company Structural Steel Services. The longest-serving member of the board of trustees for MCC, Dulaney began his service in 1984.

Jamie Cater, a native of Meridian, is an alumna of Meridian Community College and is the owner of Cater's



Jamie Cater, vice chair

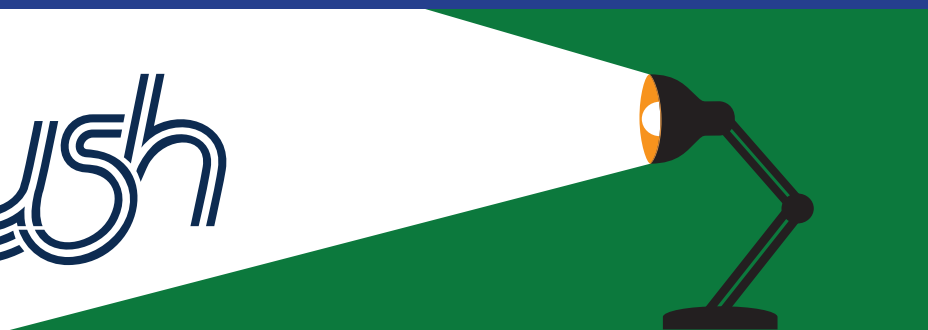
Market in Meridian and Starkville. Cater began her term as a trustee in 2014.

Rev. LaBaron Hedgemon is a native of Meridian and an MCC alumnus who is the full-time senior pastor for Freedom Rock Church. His service to the MCC Board of Trustees began in 2020.



Rev. LaBaron Hedgemon

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



Rush Health Systems and Meridian Community College have a long-standing partnership where education is valued and preparation for the next generation of healthcare providers is a priority. Rush and MCC's history dates back over half a century. In 1944, Rush joined forces with Meridian Junior College (now Meridian Community College) and initiated the first junior college and hospital nursing program in the state. Since that time, Rush Health Systems has donated over a million dollars for nursing education as well as a building for allied health training.

Meridian Community College plays a vital role in educating future healthcare professionals and shaping the healthcare landscape in our community. Rush is proud to employ hundreds of nurses who received their training from MCC. Both institutions are vibrant economic engines for our community, and educating and employing more nurses will continue to benefit the communities we serve. In addition, the Workforce Development Program at MCC has provided countless opportunities for certification achievements, continuing education and personal development. Rush and MCC have delivered customized classes in the following areas: Medical billing, leadership management, computer training, admissions and customer service.

As the largest, most diverse healthcare system in East Mississippi and West Alabama, Rush is committed to enhancing the quality of life in the communities they serve. As part of this commitment, Rush has 22 primary care clinics to assure patients can find quality healthcare at a clinic near them. One of these clinics, Family Medical Clinic, is located between MCC and the Workforce Development Center to provide convenient care for MCC faculty and students. Family Medical Clinic recently expanded its hours and is now open every day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with walk-ins always welcome.

Rush is also proud to be MCC's premier provider of sports-related medical care. The Rush Sports Medicine Team staffs a full-time certified athletic trainer for all MCC athletic events. Coaches, parents and athletes can be confident that Rush's five skilled orthopaedic surgeons and team of athletic trainers are dedicated to helping players stay at the top of their game.

Rush looks forward to continuing to partner with MCC to train the next generation of frontline heroes and continuing its mission to provide comprehensive healthcare in an efficient, compassionate, patient-centered environment.

FOUNDATION NEWS

MERIDIAN JUNIOR COLLEGE
MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



MCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION: MEMBERSHIP HAS IT PRIVILEGES

Meridian Community College's new Alumni Association is taking flight and is looking for alums to join.

Theresa Hogan, scholarship and alumni relations coordinator, said the College's Foundation established the new MCC Alumni Association to bring together alumni who share a common bond of pride for their alma mater.

Joining the organization has numerous benefits, including being informed of College events, networking with other alumni, and being an advocate for an institution that provides quality education.

The Alumni Association can help boost the College's image in the community, Hogan noted. With alumni input, the association can gather historical information and make future campus events more memorable and meaningful.

It is also a way for MCC alums to tell their story and stay connected. "We have so many alumni who attribute their successes to MCC, in some part large or small," said Leia Hill, vice president of institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation. "We are excited about finding those stories and being able to share them with our community," she said.

Hill added, "Theresa has a lot of ideas on how to grow the association, and we are excited about what's to come."

Alums can go to www.meridiancc.edu/alumniassociation to join. There's also a social media channel by going to www.facebook.com/groups/mccalumniassociation.

UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

- 2-4 p.m. - Alumni Association Opening Reception at the Quave

Thursday, March 25, 2021

- 2-4 p.m. - Hall of Fame Ceremony and Reception at McCain Theater and Ivy-Scaggs Mall

For details, contact Hogan at MCC at 601.484.8841 or email thogan@meridiancc.edu.



FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: WIN FOR STUDENTS

At its best, fundraising is no small task; during a pandemic, it's extremely challenging. Because of the efforts of the MCC Foundation Board members and dedicated donors, the "2020 Clear Vision for the Future" MCC campaign proved to be positive; and that's a win for students.

"This is a major accomplishment," said Leia Hill, vice president of institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation. "We really didn't know what to expect, but the Foundation has loyal donors who believe in our mission," she said.

"Because of them, our students will receive the assistance they need," she added.

The 2019-20 breakdown:

- Unrestricted funds: Up 4 percent
- Restricted funds (excluding grant support/in-kind gifts): Up 18 percent
- Total cash gifts: Up 11 percent
- Reported (including grants/in-kind gifts) Up 13.5 percent

The MCC Foundation is one of the premier community college foundations in Mississippi. It was the first to establish the signature Tuition Guarantee Program and is instrumental in supporting the two-decade old program.

The 2021 campaign, "Find Your Wings," begins this February. To give to the MCC Foundation, visit meridiancc.edu/giving.



MCC SUMMER ENROLLMENT HIGHEST IN SCHOOL'S HISTORY

Summer student enrollment at Meridian Community College set the record for the highest in the history of the College.

MCC administrators said the count reached 1,917 students for the summer term, compared to the 2019 report of 1,007 resulting in a 90 percent increase. Previously, the highest enrollment occurred in 2010 with a little over 1,500 students.

The record-setting figure represents a variety of innovative class offerings, including an eight-week digital teaching and learning course geared for K-12 teachers and a tuition-free summer class for high school seniors. Students who had to adjust their summer plans because of the pandemic environment took advantage of the College's summer offerings.



College officials are responding to the needs of the community, said MCC President Dr. Thomas Huebner. "In addition to providing regular summer courses, we offered an opportunity for incoming students to get a jump on their college career. Also, we used our resources to equip K-12 teachers to be better prepared to teach online if they are faced with similar challenges in the

future. We hope we've been successful in preparing them for what's next," he said.

Typically, in times of economic uncertainty, people turn to higher education.

"We can be the solution in becoming essential and in creating a better life for the people affected by COVID - 19," Dr. Huebner added.

GRANTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

DONATION BRINGS NEWEST TECHNOLOGY TO MCC PROGRAM LAB

From candy to chips to sodas, vending machines are a common sight. A different vending machine is now at home in a career and technical program lab thanks to a donation to MCC's Precision Machining Engineering Technology Program. MSC, a leading North American distributor of metalworking and maintenance, repair and operations products and services, has placed one of its inventory vending machines on the MCC campus - inside the Gene Haas Advanced Manufacturing Center.

Found on plant floors, the inventory vending machine allows workers to check out and check-in tools and supplies loaded into the machine. "It's a go-to standard, especially with second or third shifts where there may not be a supervisor to let them into (supply) cabinets to approve things, to sign off on things," said Glenn Brown of MSC Outside Sales. Also, Brown said businesses could keep track of spending and minimize losses using this machine.



MCC student Jody Solomon, left, Glenn Brown with MSC Outside Sales, and Brian Warren, Precision Machining Engineering Technology Program coordinator and instructor, watch as Scott Holland, right, programs the new inventory vending machine.



"This is going to help manage our inventory, and it's going to show students what it's like in the real world," said Brian Warren, MCC Precision Machining Engineering Technology Program coordinator and chair for the Industrial Technology Division. Warren noted many schools still use tool bins and tool rooms for supplies. "You go into industry now, and they're using vending machines. So, it won't be such a learning curve for our students because they're already going to be using inventory management," he said.

To his knowledge, Brown said MCC was the only school in Mississippi that had this machine. "This was a donation from MSC," Warren said, adding, normally a school does not qualify to have an inventory vending machine placed. "Because we have a new lab and we've partnered with the company, they've helped us with this," he said.

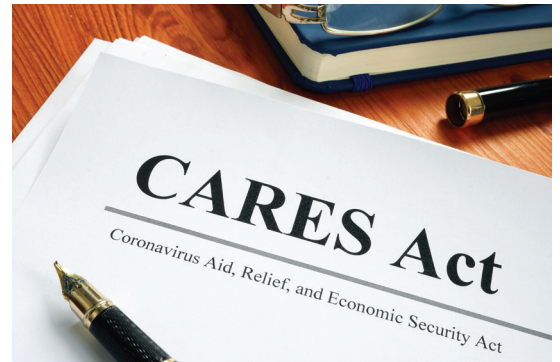
MCC student Jody Solomon, 21, of Meridian is excited to see the new equipment and is eager to learn more in the Precision Machining Engineering Technology Program. "This was what I wanted to do. I was going to Mississippi State University first; I didn't like the civil engineering program. So, I came home and started looking at the MCC program."

"I found this program at MCC, and it seemed to best fit what I like to do. I like being hands-on and making things. It's a calling," Soloman said.

FUNDS HELP MCC RESPOND TO COVID PANDEMIC

Because of federal awards given to the college, MCC is getting a financial helping hand from government agencies in connection with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES).

The awarding agencies are the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Treasury through the State of Mississippi. The U.S. Department of Education has issued the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) and the U.S. Treasury has issued the Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) via the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and the Mississippi Department of Employment Services (MDES).

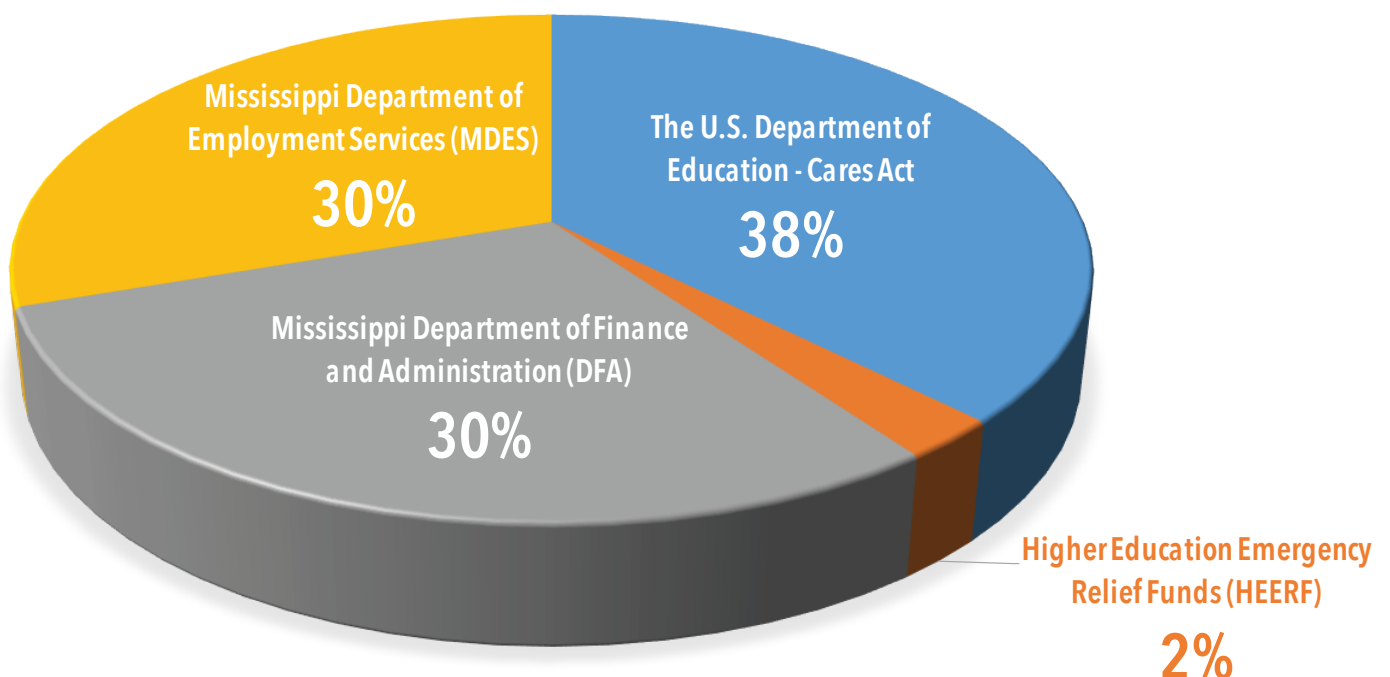


In the Spring, the U.S. Department of Education provided \$2,940,110 to the college through the CARES Act HEERF funds. Of this, 50 percent or \$1,470,055 was awarded directly to eligible students impacted by the pandemic. The remaining 50 percent awarded was given to assist with expenditures such as moving education and services to an online environment because of COVID-19. Funds were also spent to increase the safety of everyone on campus in direct response to the pandemic for items such as, masks, Plexiglass®, sanitizers, and signage.

Additional HEERF funds of \$198,092 were also awarded to MCC. These funds will be spent on the same types of expenditures, such as increasing safety, new teaching/learning methods and improving the use of technology in the classroom and in support services.

The College has been and is continuing to be strategic in the use of the Coronavirus Relief Funds to provide a safer and better online experience for our students. College officials have searched for expenses such as, additional equipment that allows for social distancing in labs, additional simulation equipment due to inability to utilize clinical spaces, and software purchases to enrich the online learning experience. In addition, these funds gave college officials the opportunity to improve the services for both students, faculty, and staff through new software for many campus offices such as human resources and financial aid. The total award to the college through DFA was \$2,320,543.99 and the total award for Workforce through MDES was \$2,372,799.

For additional information on these grants and the related spending of the college visit our CARES Act webpage at meridiancc.edu/caresact.



STAGE TWO

ONCE IN A LIFETIME 'SHAKESPEARIENCE'

Editor's note: Susie Johnson, director of Meridian Community College's Arts & Letters Series, is the founder of Stage Two, a theatrical training group for youths ages 13-19, now based at MCC. The troupe recently crafted the production of "Shakespeare Superlative." Here are the reflections of that production by cast member Dan Dye, a Stage Two alumnus.

Amidst the uncertainty of a pandemic, current and former Stage Two members presented "Shakespeare Superlatives" at McCain Theater. The program was a collection of some of the most memorable of William Shakespeare's works, including scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, among others.

Due to the social distancing guidelines and rules against large gatherings, it was clear that Stage Two would not be able to move forward with its annual summer musical. However, MCC Arts & Letters and Stage Two director Susie Johnson and her colleagues Sarah Benton and Apryl Sharp were determined to find a way to provide a theatrical opportunity for the community.

"Shakespeare Superlatives" was announced and offered to current Stage Two members as well as alumni. The program would be intensive, with all the rehearsals, sets, costumes, and other preparations to be completed in less than three weeks. On July 25, the show would be presented, regardless of the crowd's presence, and it would be filmed for the community.

After submitting auditions by video and receiving roles, the cast of 18 students began meeting in McCain Theater at the beginning of July. Meeting daily, each student worked on at least three major roles from different plays and often assisted with set building, eventually recreating a replica of Shakespeare's Globe on McCain's stage.

On Saturday, July 25, two performances were held to a reservation-only, socially distanced crowd, and one of the performances was filmed to be edited and released for public viewing.

Two Stage Two students that participated in the cast are Hunter Dungan and Mary Margaret Freeman. Dungan graduated from the University of Mississippi and is currently pursuing a master's in teaching at Belhaven. Freeman is a recent graduate of Clarkdale High School and will be attending Mississippi College this fall. This project was among their favorites in Stage Two, with Dungan attributing his enjoyment to the experience's difficulty.

"It has been incredibly fun and unique. Most of all, it has been challenging," Dungan said. "You can't do anything in theatre that is more challenging than Shakespeare, and to do that and put it together in three weeks is one heck of a challenge, but that is what makes it so fun."

During the program, the cast's health was prioritized with students wearing masks in the halls of MCC and using

hand sanitizer often to keep themselves and the rest of the cast healthy. Students were encouraged to respect social distancing whenever possible and to keep their belongings separate.

Even though students took physical risks by coming to practice, the project was a welcome change from the stress of quarantine. For Dungan, the practice was a break.

"For me, this has been such a good way to deal with stress during this time. This has kept me busy and proactive, which keeps my mind off of the typical stresses you have sitting at home," Dungan said. "It just has been very cathartic."

Aside from the heavy workload both on stage and off, the most impressive part of the program was the strong student leadership involved in making the experience run smoothly. Each scene was led by either a former or current Stage Two member.

The students were allowed to take the scenes in whatever direction they pleased, resulting in a rich and varied experience. Each of the students was able to express dialogue and block scenes in their own way. Along with unique creative styles, each student was able to work alongside others to bring the scenes together.

Dungan and Freeman both served as directors and enjoyed the creativity sprouted from working with the cast.

"I love the creativity most of all," Dungan said. "It is cool when you are watching a scene and you get to see or hear other peoples' ideas and think, 'Wow that was awesome, I would never have thought of that.' It is crazy what can come up with so many different creative minds in one place."

Freeman agreed, adding that the cast members' passions were the driving forces of this project.



Stage Two actors Dan Dye and Caroline Prewitt in a scene from "Shakespeare Superlatives."

"This isn't a professional theatre group answering to one person on a time schedule. No one is here because they are paid to be here. They are here because they are passionate about this," Freeman said. "We have room to be creative instead of just getting in and getting out. That makes this experience more personal."

Both Dungan and Freeman (who have previously served in Stage Two leadership positions) were impressed

and proud of the personal responsibility and trust present in this project, especially compared to previous shows.

"Since it is a string of multiple shows, it is not just one person in the limelight. It is not like a normal Shakespeare show where you have a lead or maybe two. Everyone has their moment as a lead throughout the show," Freeman said. "It is gratifying to know that someone I respect as much as Mrs. Susie trusts

us enough to give all of us that chance to go all in."

According to Freeman, the bottom line was to create something for the cast to be proud to share with the community.

"No one is paid for this; nobody is here for recognition; we are here for a different kind of reward. We want to create a good piece of art to share with the community to appreciate and enjoy," Freeman said.

TAKE ONE

MCC YOUTH TROUPE TAKES IT TO THE FOOTLIGHTS

It's never too early to start learning, and youths in MCC's after school acting classes are discovering that and more. "They're learning how to use their actor's tools - body, voice, imagination along with concentration and cooperation," said Susie Johnson, MCC director of the Arts & Letters Series and coordinator of Take One, an acting troupe for youths ages 8-12.

Take One is geared for the younger actor; it's an offshoot of Stage Two, the teen theater training organization that has been in action for 11 years. "Students from all walks of life are a part of Take One," Johnson said, noting that youths from the area and region are members.

Johnson and fellow Take One staffer Sarah Benton encourage the youths to build on improvisational skills, staging and movement, audition, and more. "They are also having a blast in the workshop station where Holly Triplett who is also with Stage Two, gives them opportunities to express themselves with visual arts, including design and décor."

The students will also have the chance to show what they learned by participating in the Stage Two Showcase on Jan. 18 and 'Pirates of Penzance Jr.' on Jan. 23 and 24," said Johnson.

The Tuesday afternoon classes meet for an hour and 15 minutes, and safety is stressed along with acting techniques. "We're extra careful - lots of hand sanitizing is going on," Johnson said, noting that masks are worn.

New to Take One are teachers' assistants, a team of high school juniors and seniors who help with the Tuesday sessions. MCC drama production students are pitching in as a part of their class assignment.



College officials are pleased, too. "I'm so excited about this opportunity for elementary and middle school students in Meridian and Lauderdale County. The arts are fundamentally important, and we live in a part of the country that has produced some truly fantastic artists--musicians, actors, visual artists--and I'm excited about the possibility of encouraging the next generation of performers through this program," said MCC President Dr. Thomas Huebner.

Dr. Huebner noted that Johnson is a perfect fit for the program. "Her positive spirit has the ability to bring out the best in her students," he said.

Leia Hill, vice president of institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation, said Arts & Letters has always been an integral part of the College's community outreach, known for its excellence in production and entertainment. "Take One is a dynamic new program to help prepare students for future opportunities in our Stage Two, and Arts & Letters programs. Take One helps strengthen our partnership and promise to this community in providing experiences that foster learning and growth for our future stars," Hill added.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

PAYING TRIBUTE TO POWS AND MIAS



On a somber fall morning, MCC faculty, staff and students, as well as community residents, gathered outside Ivy-Scaggs Hall's flag plaza to observe National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Recognition Day.



MCC President Dr. Thomas Huebner watches as flags are raised.



Meridian resident Kelly Miller listens during the POW/MIA Recognition program.

Traditionally observed on the third Friday in September each year, the observance is one of six days throughout the year that Congress has mandated the flying of the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag.

"I came to show respect for all of those who served and fought," said sophomore Bailey Weddington. Sara Beth Brown, another MCC student, agreed, adding her grandfather served in Vietnam, so she was there as a way to honor him.

Another attendee, Meridianite Kelly Miller, who served in the Air Force for 35 years - active duty for 10 years and with the Air National Guard for 25 years - said it's essential to remember POWs and MIAs because they are often forgotten. "We're very fortunate that we have not had conflicts lately that had large numbers of POWs and MIAs," he said.

SALUTING: COLLEGE VIDEO SPOTLIGHTS VETERANS

With the theme of "Honoring All Who Served," MCC paid tribute to veterans via a video salute featuring remarks from Capt. Timothy B. Moore, commanding officer of Naval Air Station, Meridian.

In the past, MCC has hosted Veterans Day programs on campus to spotlight both on-campus and community veterans. Because of the pandemic's limitations, a different way to salute veterans was needed, said Pam Baranello, MCC veterans and military services coordinator. So, the idea of a video emerged. "This program is very special to our campus and community," said Baranello. "We wanted to be respectful of this COVID-19 environment, but we also wanted to remember our service people," she said.

Capt. Moore, who began serving as the commanding officer of NAS Meridian in August, has flown over 3,200 hours in fixed and rotary-wing aircraft, including 150 combat flight hours in Iraqi skies. His decorations include the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

The video can be seen on MCC's YouTube channel: <http://mcc1.co/veterans>.



MCC President Dr. Thomas Huebner, left, and Capt. Timothy B. Moore, commanding officer Naval Air Station, Meridian, meet after a video session for the salute.

STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE: MY COLLEGE CARES PROJECT GOES VIRTUAL

MCC's My College Cares took on a different look this year. Nonetheless, its effects continue to make a difference.

My College Cares is an annual volunteer endeavor by MCC faculty, staff and students to assist community members in various ways. In years past, more than 100 sites were beneficiaries of the My College Cares

effort with more than 1,200 students participating.

For 2020, My College Cares developed into a virtual event due to the pandemic.

"We did not have an actual day this year," said LeAnne Motes, MCC director of campus life. Participants completed a minimum of five hours of volunteer service, and they logged

in their activities to their College web-based learning management system, CANVAS.

"I wanted to participate in My College Cares because I wanted to help out the community," said Estefany Chavarria, 20, a secondary education/Spanish major from Meridian. "I want to make a difference in the life of another person," she added.



Meridian Community College student Estefany Chavarria, left, helps fellow student JaCatherine Wilson, collect items for hurricane victims during a charitable drive. The annual My College Cares program was conducted virtually because of the pandemic.



Susan Swink is all smiles as she gives blood at the campus blood drive.

GIVING THE GIFT OF LIFE

Though it was the first time for MCC Student Services Administrative Assistant Susan Swink to give blood at MCC, it wasn't the first time for her to be a donor.

Swink knows the priceless value of being a blood donor. "I gave blood because my mom has had to have blood in the past. It saved her life," she said.

Because of the pandemic, many events have been canceled or re-arranged; however, the need for blood remains constant, so the College's Campus Life department hosted two blood drives during the fall semester.

At one session, 46 MCC students, faculty and staff members participated in the drive.

THE SEASON OF GIVING: MCC ALUMNI SET CHALLENGE

MCC alumni are always up for a good challenge. For example, one anonymous gesture of goodwill. The MCC Foundation received an unexpected gift, a large cash gift for the College's Food Pantry. But that's not all; the donation came with a challenge for others.

"I was thinking about my time here, and I remembered the students who were in need, especially around the holidays," the former MCC student said. "I knew I could help, and I thought, 'Why not challenge others to do the same?'"

The challenge is simple: Give what you can to help those in need to the College's Food Pantry. It can be food,

non-perishable items, or a cash gift. Donors can bring their donation to the MCC Foundation or give online at meridiancc.edu/givingchallenge.

"People really want to help each other now," said Theresa Hogan, MCC scholarship and alumni coordinator. "We know the holidays are always a tough time to go without, so we knew the challenge was something we could get behind."

Cash donations will go to the pantry to purchase necessary items.

The College's food pantry began 11 years ago when the social sciences division chair Diane Sollie came up with the idea to help students who

needed food. Now under the direction of La'Shundra Grady, MCC support services coordinator, the pantry is located in Smith Hall.

Receiving is only a matter of asking; MCC food pantry recipients do not submit an application for food.

Since Grady has been in this position for only a few months, she's noted a great need. "Since COVID-19, the food pantry and gas cards have been in demand." In thanking the alumni in advance for assistance, Grady said the pantry helps students maintain their daily life needs. "The food pantry is great to have on campus because students will not have to reach out to another agency," she said.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CRUISIN' FOR CANDY: COMMUNITY TURNS OUT FOR FIRST EVENT



Hundreds of vehicles and well over 1,000 adults and children ventured through MCC's first "Find Your Boo In Our Drive Through Candy Cruise," taking treats and leaving smiles and laughter.

"To say it exceeded our expectations would be an understatement," said MCC President Dr. Thomas Huebner about the event hosted by the Eagle's Nest Bookstore and held in Ivy-Scaggs Hall circle.



"This is just a good time for us to step in and say let's put this on for the community," said Cher Warren, bookstore manager. She added the reasoning behind the event was to offer a safe option for families and kids looking for a place to trick or treat.

And did they ever find it. "This is a fantastic

turnout," Warren said just as the event was beginning and vehicles were lining up throughout Ivy-Scaggs parking lot. Those lines would continue for nearly three hours.

Participants would drive through the circle, have their windows (or tailgates) open with bags at the ready for a candy drop, pause at a booth and move on to the next for more treats. First in line was a grandmother who had picked up her granddaughter, Joliegh Payne; they had waited for an hour for the event to start. Krystal Jones and her seven-year-old twin sons, Kyler and Kylan, were in the last vehicle to cruise through. Jones explained that she saw the traffic lines backed up, but decided the event was worth the wait.

The candy line consisted of tents decorated in Halloween themes; faculty, staff and students were dressed in costumes for the celebration. Overall, the parents passed out praises. "This is so easy," said mom Kristy Manasco. "Everybody has been so good," she said as she drove while daughter Greenly was in the back seat, waiting for the next stop.

Dr. Huebner noted a highlight was the overall College participation. "The faculty, staff and students had a great time building community and serving our community," he said. "Maybe it's because we've been isolated from each other for so long, but the energy and the sense of family was strong," he added.

Warren offered thanks to the College and community as well. "We are blessed to work with so many people who all have the same vision and desire to see MCC succeed in Meridian and surrounding areas."

THEY'RE GAME TO ROCK THE VOTE

"It's important to get other students to vote because our generation is the future."

For Ambreah Waters, a 19-year-old MCC sophomore from Meridian, helping fellow students prepare to vote is vital for a host of reasons, but especially for those her age. "Today's generation had it easy because we haven't had much to fight for. Voting is important because when we vote, we have a say so in who will be in office and in charge of parts of our finances and life," she added.

Waters, along with her Lady Eagles basketball teammates, helped to get 80 people, both students and community residents, signed up to register to vote in a two-day session held on the MCC campus, just outside of their home court at the Graham Gymnasium.

It was an MCC brand of Rock the Vote; an empowerment drive for youths to participate in the voting process.

Lady Eagles Assistant Basketball Coach Tia'Wana Pringle said the idea to do

this volunteer endeavor came about because of the elections. "We wanted as many people as possible, young women and men in college, to give themselves an option to go to the voting polls. We wanted them to know how much power they have in this next election," she said.

Because of the coronavirus situation, volunteering to help others outside of campus wasn't ideal. "With COVID-19 disrupting the norm, we thought, 'Why not participate in Rock The Vote campaign right here on campus?'" she said.

MCC COSMETOLOGY PROGRAM OFFERS SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY

For 72-year-old Meridian resident Thelma Hicksman, sitting in the chair with a cape around her neck as two students followed their instructor's directions for timing a hair chemical treatment, was like coming back home. "I think this is great. I couldn't wait for them to re-open," she said.

She was so eager that she admitted, "I would call every other week and ask, 'When will y'all be open?'" At MCC's Cosmetology Program, community residents often serve as clients for the students.

Designed to prepare students to care for hair, hands, feet and complexion, the Cosmetology Program combines classroom, lab and clinical training in compliance with the Mississippi State Board of Cosmetology Standards. The salon is located on the MCC campus in the College Park Shopping Center.

"We do manicures, pedicures, haircuts, roller sets, permanent waves, chemical relaxers, color, waxing, facials - a little variety of everything," said Tanya Wright, instructor and program coordinator for Cosmetology.

Wright said, "we want the community to know how important they are to us and how much we appreciate them allowing our students to utilize their cosmetologist skills before entering the professional industry."

Wright noted for the first week back working with clients, the students were nervous at first. But, they have enjoyed working with and interacting with the clients. Third-semester student Adrian Moore, 21, of Kemper, said she relishes learning the techniques of her future career. "I love it because I get to do different things and get the clients to feel satisfied," she said, adding, "I enjoy talking to people."

Learning how to style hair has always been a desire for fellow third-semester student Amber Clearman, 28, of Little Rock. "This program offered more cosmetology classes," she noted.

The students, instructors and clients are also learning how to navigate services such as those performed by the MCC Cosmetology Program in the COVID-19 environment. Proper precautions are being followed. "The students are wearing gloves when needed, masks or shields as well as protective drapes over their regular uniform," Wright said. Everyone uses hand sanitizer before work begins.

Wright said clients are only seen by appointment. "The door is locked, so when the client arrives for his or her appointment, they must call to let us know they have arrived. When the client comes to the door, we check their temperature, and the client must always be wearing a mask the entire

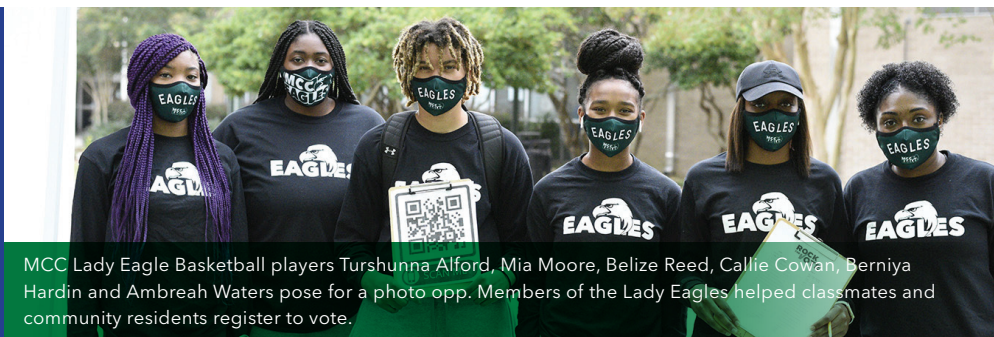
time they are in the Cosmetology building," she said.

MCC alumna Mirea Caraway (Class of 1953) returned to the salon needing a haircut, especially since she trimmed her own hair since COVID-19. "I need it straightened up," the 87-year-old said.

"I've been coming here for some years now," Caraway said. "I feel I'm helping the students, and I like the haircuts." She also noted because of the low-cost fees for the cosmetology services, "it helps when you're on a limited income." The program accepts clients on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with appointments from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. The salon is closed from noon to 12:30 p.m. for the lunch break. For more information, call 601.484.8867.



Tanya Wright, left, instructor and program coordinator for MCC's Cosmetology Program, demonstrates procedure to students Adrian Moore and Amber Clearman, as client Thelma Hicksman listens.



MCC Lady Eagle Basketball players Turshunna Alford, Mia Moore, Belize Reed, Callie Cowan, Berniya Hardin and Ambreah Waters pose for a photo opp. Members of the Lady Eagles helped classmates and community residents register to vote.

Pringle noted voting is important because of the evolving world. "Many times, our young people ignore politics because of not understanding any of the conversations," she said.

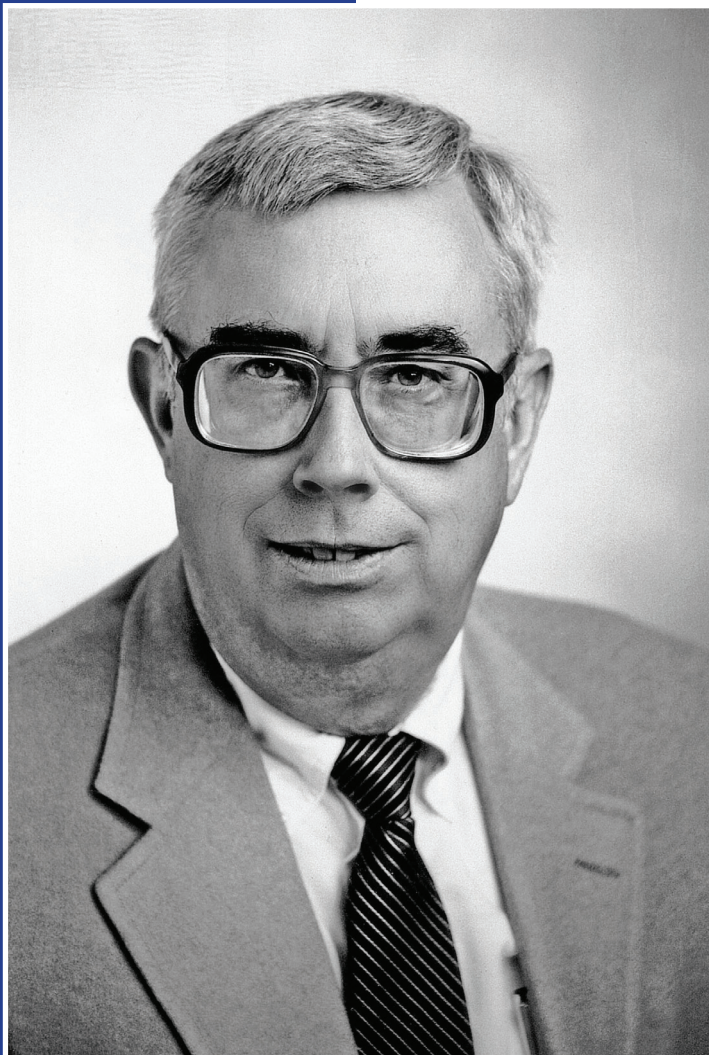
"This year - and many years before - the most affected group is college-aged youth. The changes that are occurring are ones they will have to live through and with for much of their adult lives. For that

reason, they should have the information up front and the power of choice to have a say in it," Pringle added.

The players agree. "I think it is important to get others registered to vote because this is our future and our voices need to be heard," said Turshunna Alford, 18, a freshman from Meridian.

Callie Cowan, an 18-year-old freshman from Gautier, reminded those of her generation: "It is important to register to vote because we millennials can determine what we want in our future."

IN MEMORIAM



DR. BILL SCAGGS: EDUCATOR, INNOVATOR, ADVOCATE

Because of the abundance of accurate words to describe Dr. Bill Scaggs fully, it is hard to be succinct. Certain terms, though, always seem to rise to the top: Servent-leader, Visionary, Educator, Influencer, Writer, Hero, Friend.

Dr. Scaggs, who broadened and deepened the connection between the college and community, died in July 2020, and his passing was felt deeply by those whose lives he touched - directly and indirectly. The remembrances of Dr. Scaggs point to his strong influence on so many.

Here are a few reflections of Dr. Scaggs:

Adrian Cross, executive director of the Meridian Freedom Project: "Dr. Scaggs should be remembered for his humility to others and his ability to help others see alternate views regarding culture and race relations."

Bill Crawford, a syndicated columnist and founder of The Montgomery Institute: "His was the wise and deliberate voice calmly mentoring local officials, legislators, educators, philanthropists, civic leaders and agency heads."

Wilhelmine Damon, a longtime MCC fitness instructor: "He was relatively quiet and calm, but a very dynamic person to work with."

Scott Berry, head baseball coach for the University of Southern Mississippi: "Certainly (he) was one who never wanted credit for anything. More importantly, (he) embraced the concept of community and college and education."

Tommy Dulaney, CEO of Structural Steel: "You could tell it (MCC) was in his heart."

Carolyn Beeland, MCC facility coordinator: "He would do anything for you... he was a gentleman."

Dr. Tommy McDonald, former MCC vice president of operations: "Dr. Scaggs was for this college and community a game-changer."

To honor the memory and legacy of Dr. Scaggs, an endowment fund has been established by the Scaggs family at the College through the MCC Foundation. To contribute, contact the Meridian Community College Foundation at 601.484.8612. Memorials may also be made online at meridiancc.edu/giving. Designate to Dr. Bill Scaggs.

Full tributes can be found at meridiancc.edu/billscaggs.



IN LOVING MEMORY



Dr. William "Bill" Scaggs | 1935 - 2020

Dr. Scott Elliott, former MCC president: "Meridian Community College will forever be the college that Bill Scaggs built. And what a marvelous job he did."

Dr. Evanda Lyons, retired nursing instructor: "I am grateful that Dr. Bill Scaggs welcomed me with open arms into the wonderful world of educating students on the community college level."



William (Skip) Scaggs, North Mississippi Industrial Development Association executive director and son: "Dad had two keys to the college. The one that mattered to us was stamped M-22. When we were young Dad would bring us to work on Sunday afternoon when he would catch up on work or prepare for the week ahead and with the turn of M-22 just down the hall from his office we had access to the gym and the eight basketballs with which to play. On rare occasion the gymnastic equipment would be set up and we'd jump on the trampoline when he was in his office. For siblings 6,8,10 and 12 years old this was magical just as it was a reminder that we shared him with a work family he dearly loved."



JOHN A. JOHNSON JR., 1933-2020

An educator and a manager, John A. Johnson Jr. began working at MCC in 1969 and the following year became its business manager. The College, its staff and students would become his passion for 23 years.

While at MCC, Johnson used his knowledge of public education and his capacity for leadership to impact public education in communities beyond the MCC campus. He served as a member of the accreditation committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities, participating in 20 reaccreditation engagements during his tenure. He was recognized as Business Manager of the Year for the four-state southern region in 1990 and was president of the Mississippi Business Managers Association.

With a desire to lend his experience back to the local school system where he began, Johnson also served an eight-year term as a member of the Lauderdale County School Board.

Following retirement, Johnson enjoyed spending time with family, working on his cattle and timber farm, hunting with family and friends and attending football games at Mississippi State. He and his wife, Ann, traveled extensively and still found time to attend frequent events with his beloved friends at MCC.

Memorials can be made to the John A. Johnson and Ann Johnson Scholarship Fund at the MCC Foundation. Memorials may also be made online at meridiancc.edu/giving. Designate to John A. Johnson.

STUDENT AWARDS

MCC GRADS CALLED AS CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE MEMBERS

As a way to recognize outstanding MCC graduates, the College established the tradition of naming Circle of Excellence honorees. Candidates are selected from College faculty and staff nominations.

The students, who study in both the College's University Transfer Program and the career and technical education programs, are saluted for their academic achievement, leadership, community service and spirit.

College administrators applaud the honorees' effort and note Circle of Excellence members are those who strive for academic excellence and stand out in MCC's student population.



TO THE TOP: MCC GRAD POSTS PERFECT SCORE ON LICENSURE EXAM



When Meridian Community College alumna Cara Horstman checked her computer for the results of her physical therapist assistant certification exam,

she thought her eyes were playing tricks on her.

"So, I quickly logged out and back in again and was surprised to see that same number. I still didn't believe it, so the next morning, I logged back in again and took a screenshot," she said.

She sent that image to her former instructor MCC Physical Therapist Assistant Program Coordinator Dr. Tommy Winston; he assured her she was reading it right.

Out of a possible score of 800, Horstman posted 800 - a perfect score on the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE).

The NPTE is the standardized licensure examination that measures the ability of graduates of physical therapy and physical therapist assistant programs to operate as an entry-level professional.

"The exam offers licensure uniformity, in that graduates must score 600 or greater to pass the exam and become a licensed physical therapist assistant," said Dr. Winston.

"Cara went far and above the minimum passing score. She scored the highest scaled score someone could possibly obtain - 800/800. To my knowledge, this rare feat has never been accomplished in the 20-plus year history of this program," Dr. Winston added.

Horstman graduated from the program in May, and she and her family have moved to Texas. She will start looking for work once settled. "I would love to work in an inpatient setting, such as a skilled nursing facility or even a nursing home, where I have the opportunity to work with geriatric patients and help them achieve their highest level of rehabilitation," she said.

MCC ALUMNA ACHIEVING DREAMS OF HELPING OTHERS

Hard work does pay. Just ask Carthage resident Laura Ladner.

Ladner is a May 2020 graduate from MCC's Physical Therapist Assistant Program, a two-year study that prepares students for a career in the physical therapy arena - a top healthcare support job.

As a graduate of the program, students like Ladner get the opportunity to sit for the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), the standardized licensure examination that measures the ability of graduates of physical therapy and physical therapist assistant programs to operate as an entry-level professional.

Ladner scored a 776 out of a possible 800 on her test. "Leaving the test facility that day, I never would have imagined that I made a score that high. I knew deep down that I had passed, but was so anxious and nervous that I would have never guessed I made a 776," she said.

"All of those long hours of studying paid off," she added.

Logging in countless hours is tough; it often means sacrificing time spent with loved ones. "There were many hours put in for class time and study time, which I expected," Ladner said. She also put in the time commitment for traveling - over an hour commute to school and back home.

Her mission was threaded with family ties. "I knew that I had to finish the program for my daughter, though as well as for myself; so I am thankful that I was able to achieve this degree."

When Ladner had her daughter, she was working on a paralegal degree, which she said, is the "total opposite of physical therapy. I never felt fulfilled or happy doing that, so I actually quit the program and applied for PTA," she said.

The desire to help others in the patient care field reached back to when her mom, at a young age, had a total hip replacement and home health care workers came to the house for rehabilitation. Ladner remembers being impressed with how the physical therapist would work with her mom and offer compassion and exercise routines. "He made such a huge difference in her daily life and got her back on her feet," Ladner said.

"I instantly fell in love with the field and had to know more. I knew that this was my life path, and I am so thankful that I did," she said.

Spending two years at MCC was worth it, Ladner said, and because each PTA program comprises just 14 students, classmates become friends. "You become more like a family," Ladner said. "We all went through so much together, even life troubles out of school. Having a team of amazing people behind you was so awesome, including amazing instructors that were always there to listen and help," she said.

Seeking a position in a skilled nursing facility or a hospital setting, Ladner said she believes in her calling. Truthfully, being a PTA is so much more than the physical rehabilitation.



In some facilities, we may be the only ones who interact with patients for an extended time."

Ladner knows her learning will go on. "Even though we just finished school, I am also excited for the continued education so I can learn new skills."

MCC PTA Program Coordinator and Instructor Dr. Tommy Winston noted that he and Jenny Bryan, academic coordinator of clinical education and instructor, were happy about Ladner's success. "She was one of the hardest working and most driven students to date. She commuted to campus daily, would be one of the first people in the building and one of the last to leave. Her commitment to excellence was evident. We are proud of her and wish her great success in her future endeavors," Winston added.

MCC APPLAUSE

The MCC Foundation spotlights outstanding faculty and staff members with its MCCer of the Month award. A \$250 honorarium comes with the recognition. Honorees are asked, "what is the thing you like best about MCC?".

Here are their answers:



JULY | RACHEL ROBERTSON

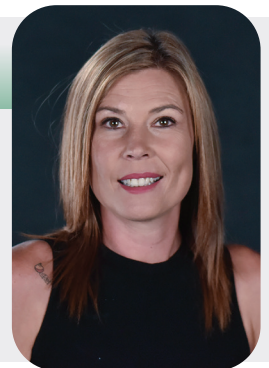
data curriculum specialist

“ The best part of MCC is the staff and faculty who work so hard to assist students each day. They take care of the students, but also take care of each other. I think it is wonderful to see people care so much about others. ”

AUGUST | KRYSTAL HOLIFIELD

Medical Laboratory Technology Program education coordinator and instructor

“ The Pride. This is my college. I get satisfaction in being in a role that I can make a difference in someone’s life. ”



SEPTEMBER | JULIE RICKS

purchasing and accounts receivable specialist

“ Knowing that, collectively, each of us, even those of us who are not on the educational frontlines play a part in the success of MCC students and the success of our community and state. ”

OCTOBER | SHAQUITA HOPSON

associate director of advising and student success

“ The family atmosphere that we have here is amazing, and I am thankful that I get to work with some amazing people. ”





NOVEMBER | CRYSTAL STERLING

math instructor

“ Teaching at MCC becomes less about the subject you are teaching and more about the relationships you’ve built as a mentor. ”

DECEMBER | DR. ROBIN GUNN

Associate Degree Nursing Program instructor

“ MCC is a great place to work because of the atmosphere and the people! Faculty and staff are more like family than coworkers. We enjoy and celebrate the accomplishments together, but we also provide support and care for each other during the hardships as well. We are not just employees of MCC. We are family! ”



MEET MCC’S NEW RECRUITER MANDY HURTT

As a recruiting coordinator, Mandy Hurtt finds helping people rewarding, especially at the College.

“As a student, I enjoyed my time at MCC. I try to share my experience with students in hopes they will one day feel the same. I also remember how it was navigating through college and trying to find my way. I was lucky to have some wonderful people help me. I would like to try to do the same for students,” she said.

With a bachelor of business administration with an emphasis in marketing from Mississippi State University under her belt, Hurtt said she’s now learning the program admissions requirements for her position at MCC. “I feel it’s important to help students and make their transition easy and seamless,” she said.

Her first job was working as a marketing coordinator for Van Zyverden, one of the largest wholesale distributors of flower bulbs in the United States. While there, Hurtt oversaw various projects for the company.

But her love for the College has deep roots. “MCC has always been a big part of my life. I spent three years here in school, and my father retired from MCC. I’ve wanted to one day work and retire from MCC, too,” Hurtt said.



MCC APPLAUSE

ALUMNA CONTINUES HER SUCCESSFUL PATH IN MEDICAL LAB FIELD

The talk of biomarkers, the human genome, infectious diseases and contagious viruses may frighten some, but MCC alumna Holly Covas finds it interesting.

Covas, who earned her associates degree in Medical Laboratory Technology at MCC in 2007, now serves as Assistant in Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology at Vanderbilt University Medical School and Program Director of Medical Laboratory Science.

"One thing I enjoy about the laboratory is how dynamic it is," she said. "We routinely identify new biomarkers that correlate with disease processes or understand diseases to a greater degree."

Over the past decade, technology has greatly advanced the medical laboratory field with many lab tests now performed through automation instead of manually. This allows for more accurate testing in less time, she noted. "As technology expands, we can identify diseases earlier than before, which provides a better prognosis for our patients," Covas said.

Born in San Bernardino, Calif., she moved to Meridian when she was young. She graduated from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) in 1999.



While at MSMS, she took courses related to medical laboratory. Because of her love of those courses, teachers arranged for her to participate in a summer internship with the microbiology department chair at Montana State University between her junior and senior high school years.

"This internship allowed me to learn about applying knowledge from the courses to research and health care as the department chair specialized in HIV research," she said. "After that, I knew I wanted to work in a medical laboratory."

Between enrolling at MCC, then moving and transferring colleges, working and moving again, Covas finally ended up back at MCC, where she graduated from the two-year Medical Laboratory Technology program in 2007. She immediately went to work as a generalist at Rush Foundation Hospital.



"I actually finished my clinical rotations on a Friday, started training the following Monday, and graduated from MCC the next Saturday," she said.

Covas continued her education, earning a bachelor's degree in clinical laboratory science from the University of Mississippi Medical Center in 2010. She obtained a master of public health degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 2014.

While still working at Rush, Covas started teaching at MCC and served as the education coordinator of the MLT program. In 2013, she left MCC and Rush to take the job at Vanderbilt.

"The educational path I chose has allowed me to expand the knowledge I learned at MCC into preventative health care and education," she said.

The way healthcare institutions nationwide have come together to fight the pandemic has not been lost on her. "I have been able to see how quickly laboratories across the country have shared information to develop and implement laboratory tests," Covas said. "We share this information as we learn it so that others can implement changes to support the individuals in their communities as well."

In 2018, Covas received the American Society for Clinical Pathology Member Excellence in Education Award, which is given annually to an educator who shows superior teaching performance. She is enrolled in the Doctor of Education in Learning and Organizational Change program at Baylor University.

Her ultimate goal is to become a dean so she can help support instructors and students in health care-based educational programs.

GED GRAD FINDS HER CALLING IN NURSING

For Maricela Zuniga-Alvarez, earning her associate's degree in nursing from MCC two years ago was a crowning achievement for the high school dropout.

"I love nursing," said Zuniga-Alvarez, who works as a nurse in the Intensive Care Unit at Anderson Regional Medical Center. "A lot of people ask me, 'Why do you work so much? Why do you take extra shifts?'"

To me, it is not even work. You know that saying 'if you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life' That is kind of how I feel about nursing," she added. "Of course, I still have a lot to learn, and I still have a lot of experience to gain with me just being two years into nursing, but I treat every day as a learning experience."

Zuniga-Alvarez, 36, grew up in California, and as a youngster loved school. But the family's move cross country when she was a teen followed by another move became overwhelming. "The change of environment kind of took a toll on me, so I dropped out of school in ninth grade," she said.

Zuniga-Alvarez ended up in Meridian about nine years ago. While working and trying to raise her children, she made a major decision. "One day, I just got up and signed up for GED classes at MCC, and it took off from there," she said.

She completed her GED diploma in 2013 at the age of 28. MCC offered

her a scholarship to take a class, which she accepted, and earned her health care assistant certificate in one semester followed by her Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certificate.

While working as a healthcare assistant at a local long-term care hospital, she began taking pre-requisite classes at MCC for the Associate Degree Nursing Program and was accepted into the program in fall 2016. She graduated two years later.

"I love MCC," she said. "They gave me the tools to succeed and to complete what I wanted to get done. MCC was the perfect place for me."

Zuniga-Alvarez has learned a lot about nursing and healthcare as



an ICU nurse at Anderson. The coronavirus pandemic has been challenging and heartbreaking for nurses. However, Zuniga-Alvarez knows nursing is her calling.

"Nursing kind of filled a hole I had in my heart," she said. "It makes me happy to see other people happy. Now that I am a registered nurse, it is even better. I can do more things for my patients. I can advocate for



them. To me, they come first. It is something that fills me with joy to see my patient's face light up when I walk into the room."

For her efforts as a nurse, Zuniga-Alvarez has been nominated for the DAISY Award, an honor given by Anderson to recognize efforts by nurses who excel in providing extraordinary care.

Currently, she is studying nursing online through the University of Texas at Arlington and plans to earn her bachelor's degree this spring.

Going back to school to earn her GED and then to graduate from college was an accomplishment Zuniga-Alvarez made for her children as well as herself. "The hardest part was making the decision to go back at age 28," she said, but admitting, "it was the best choice I ever made."

ATHLETICS

FREDNA CROSS TAKES HER PLACE IN MACC SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Long-time MCCer Fredna Cross was selected as MCC's inductee into the 2020 Class of the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges (MACC) Sports Hall of Fame.

The MACC holds an annual ceremony in April for new inductees, but this year's ceremony was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Paying tribute to Cross for her numerous contributions, MCC Athletic Director Sander Atkinson and other College personnel honored Cross at her home in Cuba, Ala., surrounded by family and friends.

From 1980 through 1993, Cross spent 12 seasons as the head softball coach at MCC. She garnered a record of 344-185, including four Region 23 championships and three National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) national tournament appearances.

In 1989, Cross was named MCC's athletic director in addition to her coaching duties, making her the first female athletic director at a Mississippi community college.

A committee member that founded the Special Olympics Program in Mississippi, Cross served 25 years as Mississippi's Area 5 Director for Special Olympics. Her



Sander Atkinson, MCC athletic director, left, gifts Fredna Cross with a special memento.

efforts were recognized by the International Special Olympics Committee when she was awarded the prestigious Hero Award.

Cross graduated with honors from MCC in 1951 and later earned a bachelor of science degree in physical education, health and recreation from the University of Southern Mississippi. She also received her master's degree in education from the University of West Alabama.



MCC'S SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH CONTINUES UPWARD

Facebook:

Since August 2018, fans have increased by more than 184 percent for a total of almost 16K; engagement has increased by 138 percent.

Instagram:

Since August 2018, followers have increased by 90.57 percent; engagement has increased by 12.7 percent.

Twitter:

Since August 2018, followers have increased by 19 percent; engagement has increased by 65.3 percent.

YouTube:

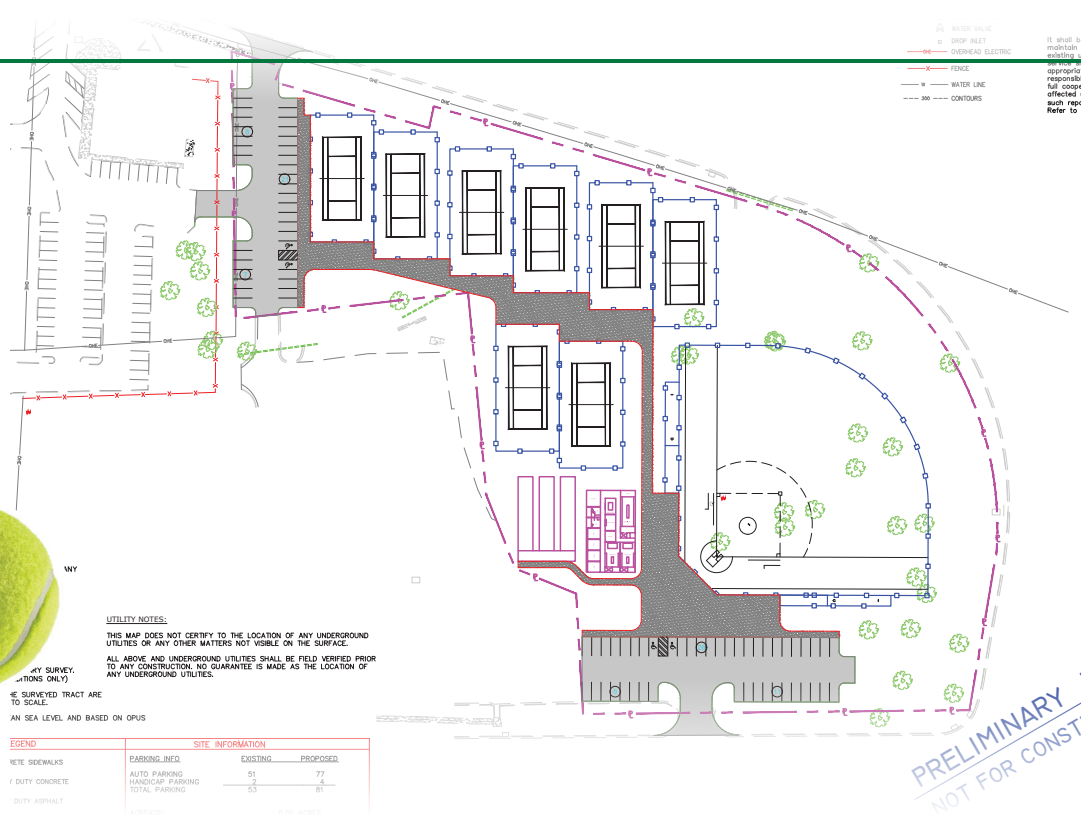
Since October 2018, followers have increased from 52 to 645.

LinkedIn:

Since May 2019, followers have increased from 4,992 to 5,557.

A WINNING COMBINATION

College officials returned to the drawing board asking for another look at a facility to house both the tennis and softball teams as a way to bring both teams close to the main campus. This schematic illustrates the potential project that will be housed on the former Matty Hersee property.



EAGLE ATHLETICS MOVE INTO SPRING ACTION

MCC Eagles' spring semester looks to be an active sports scene. After the NJCAA decided to move all fall sports to the spring due to the pandemic, the athletic calendar filled up quickly.

The semester will get rolling when the basketball teams take the court on Friday, Jan. 22, with a match against Mississippi Delta Community College. That same day, the tennis team will travel to Co-Lin Community College to

open their spring season. The following day, the Indoor Track and Field teams will have their first event in Birmingham, Ala., at the Samford Invitational.

Softball will open their season with a road trip to Pensacola, Fla., to take on Pensacola State in a four-game set Friday and Saturday, Feb. 5-6. Baseball will begin their season at home Tuesday, Feb. 9, playing Coastal Alabama North.

Nationally ranked MCC Golf Team will start its spring campaign Monday, Feb. 22, at Windance Golf Club at the MACCC Event No. 3.

Soccer, which typically starts the year off first in August, will be the last to start this year when they open up at home battling East Central Community College on Friday, April 2.

HOMECOMING WEEK 2021 PREVIEW

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

- 2-4 p.m. - Alumni Association Opening Reception at the Quave

Thursday, March 25, 2021

- 2-4 p.m. - Hall of Fame Ceremony and Reception at McCain Theater and Ivy-Scaggs Mall
- 5:30 p.m. - Women's Basketball vs Southwest MS CC at Graham Gymnasium
- 7:15 p.m. - Homecoming Queen Crowned
- 7:30 p.m. - Men's Basketball vs Southwest MS CC at Graham Gymnasium
- 7:45 p.m. - Homecoming reception for court and families
- 9:30 p.m. - Quave Rave

Friday, March 26, 2021

- Noon - Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament at Briarwood Golf Course

Saturday, March 27, 2021

- Noon - 20 year Ivy League Recruiter Reception at the Quave
- 2 p.m. - Baseball vs Northwest (Alumni Day) at Scaggs Field
- 5 p.m. - Baseball vs Northwest at Scaggs Field



HONORS COLLEGE

CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

From accounting to sound engineering and all things in between, members of the Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College at Meridian Community College have chosen a wide range of potential careers. One common thread with this year's group of 70 students - they are high achievers.

"The Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College is an integral part of Meridian Community College. It is crucial to offer our higher-performing students an avenue to explore their intellectual abilities," said Morgan Boothe, co-director of MCC's Honors College, and English instructor. Candace Rainer, math instructor and math division chair, also serves as co-director.

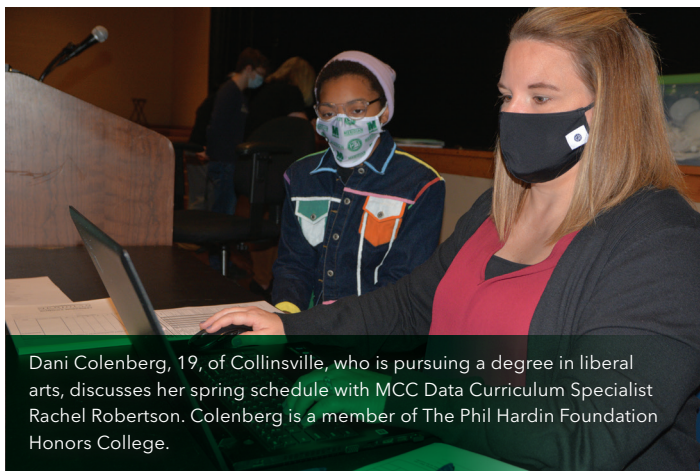
Honors College students must maintain a 3.25-grade point average on a 4.0 scale; they are required to enroll in honors courses, which are a little more rigorous than the mainstream classes. Leadership class is also a requirement, and students attend forums with guest speakers who share their experiences.

"I joined Honors College because I wanted to challenge myself," said Henry Zheng, a freshman from Meridian who is majoring in computer science. Sophomore Jimmyia Smith of Meridian, who aspires to become a certified public accountant and establish an accounting firm, echoed his words. "I wanted to be a member of Honors College for the opportunity to meet new people on the same academic level and to showcase my academic abilities," Smith said. Another Honors College student, Joseph Aviles, said he wanted to be a member not only for the extra scholarship but also the experience he would gain.

Designed to complement the University Transfer Program through enriched courses, the Honors College develops students' leadership skills and offers more individualized academic support. Additionally, students gain the opportunity for growth through volunteering and meeting with leaders and stewards of the community. Travel is also a component of the program.

Smith said for her the best thing about Honors College is the opportunities it creates, proving the more active you are in Honors College, the more you get from it.

But due to COVID-19, the plans for this year's class were approached differently, Rainer said. "We are using the Honors College Forum to have students meet each other



Dani Colenberg, 19, of Collinsville, who is pursuing a degree in liberal arts, discusses her spring schedule with MCC Data Curriculum Specialist Rachel Robertson. Colenberg is a member of The Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College.

in small, socially distant groups. By engaging in Zoom meetings, listening games, and other enrichment activities, we are using the power of the internet to travel, engage and learn from each other each day that we meet."

There's hope for a short trip this spring, Rainer said. "But if the pandemic is not improved, we will continue to work on skills designed to enhance students' characters and enrich their academic experience," she said.

Boothe explained because of the partnership with the Shackouls Honors College at Mississippi State University and the Honors College at the University of Southern Mississippi, a Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College graduate from MCC can continue his/her educational journey with the assurance of gaining real-world experience and a quality education.

Members of the Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College at Meridian Community College and their areas of study include freshmen **Jacob Aguirre** of Ellisville, University Transfer; **Harleigh Barham**, Collinsville, secondary education/English; **Madison "Claire" Benson** of Caledonia, pre-veterinary medicine; **Ralie Boles** of Meridian, biomedical engineering; **Chloe Boswell** of Collinsville, medical; **Clara "Eve" Boudier** of Meridian, pre-medicine; **Nicole Briggs** of Bailey, business; **Avery "Harper" Bryan** of Collinsville, veterinary medicine; **Eli Bryan** of Collinsville, forestry; **Jacob "Brock" Butler** of Marion, computer engineering; **Anna Card** of Starkville, biomedical engineering; **Bridgette "Brie" Cerda-Marin** of Enterprise, chemistry/pre-medicine; **Caleb Clearman** of Meridian, astrophysics; **Jaden Dominy** of Meridian, communications; **Ethan Doxey** of Toomsaba, engineering; **Landry Jones** of Hickory, kinesiology;

Skylar Kinard of Lauderdale, computer engineering; **Braden Luke** of Collinsville, University Transfer; **Rileigh Marlow** of Meridian, biology/pre-medicine; **Brett Mason** of Collinsville, mechanical engineering; **Aubrey McCary** of Meridian, speech pathology; **Loren Nix** of Meridian, University Transfer; **Andrew "Drew" Parker** of Quitman, physical therapy; **Jeremy Pippin** of Lauderdale, biological sciences; **Davis Pool** of Steens, business; **Alexsandra "Alex" Rangel** of Ripley, international business; **Mya Robinson** of Philadelphia, business; **Ansley Shelby** of Enterprise, biological sciences; **McKenzie Shirley** of Meridian, biology/veterinary medicine; **Jayla Smith** of Lauderdale, elementary education; **Tyler Smith** of Meridian, communications; **Joy St. Clair** of Collinsville, mechanical engineering; **Jacob Vance** of Collinsville, civil engineering; **Emily Williams** of Meridian, secondary education/math; **Ashonta Willis** of Meridian, nursing; **Alexis Wilson** of Meridian, biology/pre-medicine; and **Henry Zheng** of Meridian, computer science.

Sophomore members include **Joseph Aviles** of Collinsville, theological ministry; **Cainan Black** of Enterprise,

computer science; **Makenzie Bohl** of Collinsville, accounting; **Aaron Brannan** of Meridian, chemical engineering; **Grace Brown** of Meridian, biology; **Sara Beth Brown** of Rose Hill, speech pathology; **Estefany Chavarria** of Meridian, secondary education/Spanish; **Chandler Cline** of Taylorsville, nursing; **Jordan "Dani" Colenberg** of Collinsville, liberal arts/foreign language; **Thomas "Tank" Cottrill** of Meridian, accounting; **Erin Gibson** of Meridian, biology; **Dieter Gonzales Guevara** of Meridian, aerospace engineering; **Madelyn Gray** of Meridian, business; **Jesse Harrison** of Meridian, electrical engineering; **Andrew "Zach" Hodges** of Lauderdale, accounting; **Andrew "McCrae" Houston** of Brandon, biology; **Tia Malley** of Collinsville, University Transfer; **Morgan Marlow** of Meridian, biology/pre-medicine; **Britney Murphree** of Little Rock, speech pathology; **Cassie Nguyen** of Marion, biology; **Camryn Parten** of Collinsville, nursing; **Wesley Phillips** of Collinsville, marketing; **Tara Shelton** of Meridian, accounting; **William "Blake" Shirley** of Meridian, mechanical/aerospace engineering; **Jimmyia Smith** of Lauderdale, accounting; **Rhett Smith** of Meridian, political science; **Jade Temple** of

Meridian, kinesiology/athletic training; **Lucas Thomas** of Meridian, journalism/history; **Kayleigh Tidwell** of Meridian, medical technology; **Jourdan Williams** of Meridian, chemical engineering; **Presley "Ragan" Williamson** of Meridian, biology/pre-medicine; **Nolan Yates** of Meridian, pre-pharmacy and **Myea Young** of Meridian, sound/audio engineering.

The Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College at Meridian Community College started in 2009 with 12 students and was led by Barbara Jones and Cathy Parker. Both educators retired from the College in Summer 2020.

Noting they had big shoes to fill, Boothe and Rainer took on the challenge.

"We were excited to take the reins of a program so well-respected and expand their vision to make it grow each year. The Honors College gives us a chance to work with the best and brightest MCC has to offer, and we enjoy helping these students find their place at our College and in the world beyond," Boothe said.

Sophomore Jimmyia Smith said the advisors are advocates.

"They both seem to be very involved in the Honors College program and have shown how much they care and want us to succeed," Smith said.



Cainan Black, left, 19, of Enterprise, works out his spring schedule with Candace Rainer, co-director of the Phil Hardin Foundation Honors College at Meridian Community College.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS



MERIDIAN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP 2019-2020 RECIPIENTS



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Jean Ellen Winright Memorial
Scholarship

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WTOK Broadcast Communication
Scholarship

Hunter Thornton
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A NEW VIEW FOR THE NEST IN 2021

The College's Bookstore will soon have a fresh look - inside and out - as it is undergoing renovations to improve and upgrade the Eagle's Nest. Workers have removed and replaced the bookstore's "glass house," and new flooring has been installed.

Shop with us online!
Visit bookstore.meridiancc.edu to experience
our **NEW ONLINE BOOKSTORE!**

