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Canton News
P.O. Box 1163, Canton, MS 39046

Good News You Can Use • March 6, 2025 • Vol. 11, No. 3 • Canton, Mississippi

Acclaimed Author Martin Hegwood unveils latest novel, *Queen of Memphis*



Martin Hegwood

Special to The Canton News

The Canton-Madison County Historical Society recently welcomed celebrated author Martin Hegwood for an engaging discussion about his writing career, his journey through law school, and his latest novel, *Queen of Memphis*.

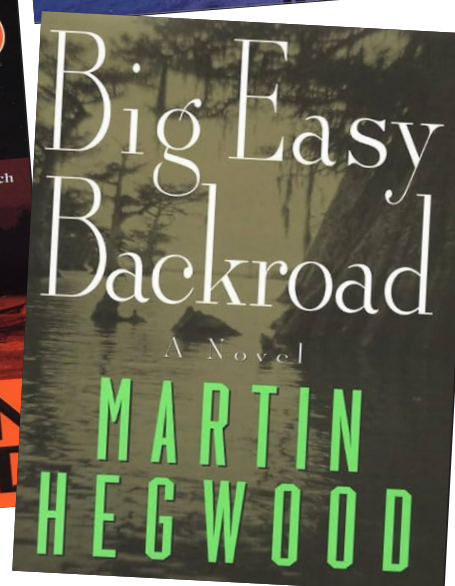
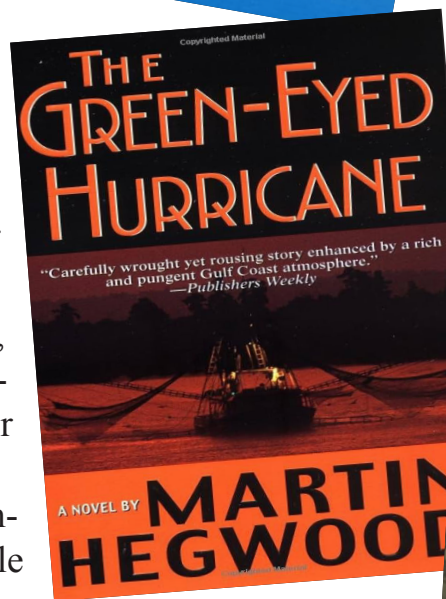
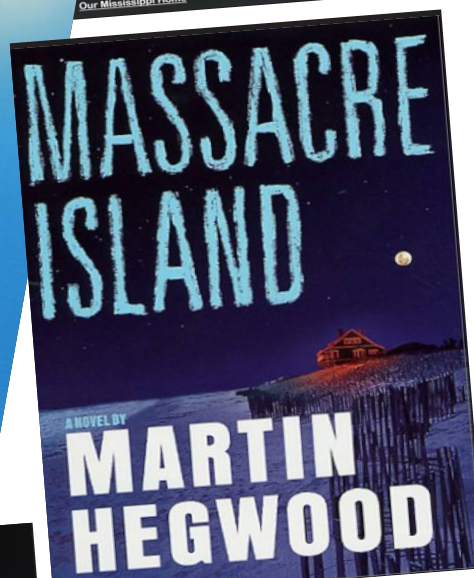
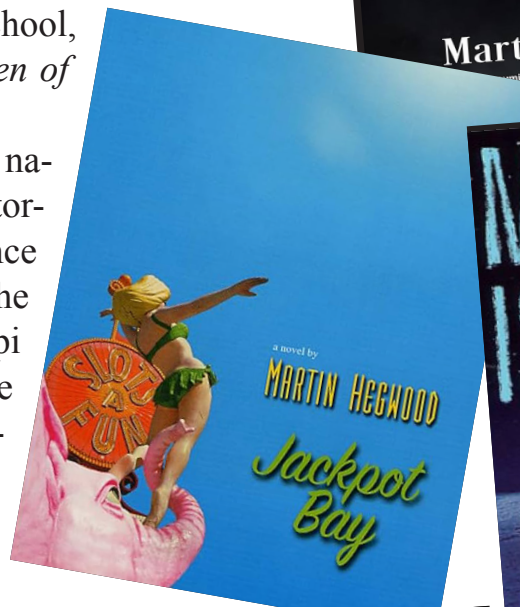
Hegwood, a Mississippi native and government attorney, captivated the audience with stories of his time at the University of Mississippi School of Law, where he studied alongside best-

selling author John Grisham. His passion for storytelling has led to the publication of five novels, including *Jackpot Bay*, *Massacre Island*, *The Green-Eyed Hurricane*, and *Big Easy Backroad*.

His newest work, *Queen of Memphis*, takes readers into the heart of high society intrigue in 1999 Memphis. Described by Hegwood as a “soap opera,” the novel follows LuAnn Collier, a determined small-town beauty queen who marries into the prestigious Winnforth family, much to the dismay of her formidable mother-in-law, Maggie. What ensues is a fierce battle of wits, wealth, and well-kept secrets—one of which threatens to upend the Winnforth legacy forever.

During his talk, Hegwood shared insights into his writing process, drawing inspiration from the Deep South’s rich history and complex social dynamics. His books, including *Queen of Memphis*, are available for purchase on Amazon.

With a career that seamlessly blends law and literature, Hegwood continues to leave an indelible mark on Southern fiction. Readers eager for a tale of ambition, power and scandal won’t want to miss his latest page-turner.



All photos Special to The Canton News

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Sandridge visits and motivates students at CCC



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Lt. Mark Sandridge from the Madison County Sheriff's Department visited Ms. Bright's Law and Public Safety Class to share invaluable insights about pursuing a career in law

enforcement. He emphasized that good work ethics are essential for success and the importance of always striving to help others.

He focused heavily on resiliency and maintaining a positive mindset,

encouraging students to surround themselves with positive people and to practice gratitude for what they have. As a business owner, Lt. Sandridge shared his personal journey, detailing his failures and successes,

and stressed that reaching your goals often involves being led by God.

He also urged students to learn as much as they can about the careers they aspire to and to never hesitate to ask for help when needed.



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Winter gardening in February for Canton

By Guest Columnist Jessica Stein

Canton Garden Club gathered together against February's chill at the Sacred Heart Parish Center for a small but powerful meeting. As the club grows and branches to new paths, we've had several conversations about partnerships and hopes for the future in Canton.

Sherrye Brannon and Wanda Baldwin hosted the meeting with exquisite Valentine's-themed treats. Members enjoyed socializing and then quickly got to business. Work has already started on this year's Upstairs Downtown, a beloved event Canton Garden Club organizes every other year for the city. Keep your calendars open in November!

Canton Garden Club partner Keep Canton Beautiful has received a grant for the Great American Clean Up; these funds will help provide bags and gloves to help clean the streets of Canton. Please get out and join your community (and the entire nation) on the morning of March 22 to pick up trash and recycling.

This event happens every year, but this year's clean-up is extra special. Keep America Beautiful wants to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our country by clearing 25 billion pieces of litter from public areas.

"By working together, we can make our neighborhoods more beautiful in time for America's Birthday on July 4, 2026."

For February's presentation, the Garden Club welcomed renowned Felder Rushing, recently back from



Felder Rushing

Special to The Canton News

England, to talk with us about winter gardening.

Central Mississippi blesses us with the climate to grow many beautiful things in the winter, which are rarely collected in one seasonal spot for enjoyment in the cold. Here are some wonderful plants which require little maintenance and provide winter cheer: winter honeysuckle (fragrantissima), camellias, star and Japanese magnolias, sweet olive, winter jasmine, sedum, hellebores, roman hyacinth, rosemary, iris foliage, and of course, narcissus.

The earliest narcissus bloomers are Lent Lily, paperwhites and jonquils.

Cool season vegetables can also double as interesting garden visuals.

Cold hardy peas, lettuces and herbs can be planted in beds, pots and borders to attract the eye with greens, purples and yellows. Then, they can easily be harvested for salad, too.

Felder reduces plant arrangement designs to a simple rule: combine "spiky, bushy, frilly and floppy." As always, Felder encourages all types of gardening, from folk to fancy. Buy a pretty pot or use an old colander, as long as you enjoy the result; it's gardening. Often, what we need is all around us.

In March, the Garden Club will meet at the Kline Farm for a program by Emily Stewart. Guests can join any monthly program with an invitation from a member.

Canton Board of Aldermen addresses infrastructure and community initiatives at February meeting

By Courtney Warren

The Canton Board of Aldermen held its regular meeting on February 18 at Canton City Hall, where key issues related to infrastructure, community events and future projects were discussed and voted on.

Mayor William Truly, Jr. called the meeting to order, followed by an invocation and roll call. Present at the meeting were Aldermen Marke Blount, Rodriquez Brown, Fred Esco Jr., Les Penn, Tim C. Taylor, Lafayette E. Wales, and Alderwoman Monica Gilkey.

The Board adopted the agenda before welcoming a series of presenters. Corey Tate and Brooks Edward from ENT, LLC, along with Comelia Walker, Demetra Stewart, Iveanna Murry, Canton Tourism, Nancy Pate, Waggoner Engineering, and Angela Stewart, shared updates and proposals on various community projects.

One of the major agenda items was

the discussion and consideration of a concrete slab parking lot with line spaces versus a gravel parking lot for a commercial property. The Board also reviewed and approved a proposal from Drews Design and Construction to rework sheetrock, rehang and trim outdoor fixtures, and replace fluorescent lights for a total of \$3,965.

Additionally, the Board ratified an engagement letter with Novum Advisory PLLC and the City of Canton and considered an agreement with the Canton City Clerk and the Republican/Democrat Executive Committee, in accordance with Mississippi law.

Infrastructure improvements were a focal point, including the approval of a culvert repair and drainage damage project at 503 Harvey Watkins Drive due to water runoff erosion. The Board also authorized Waggoner Engineering to prepare a task order for addressing flooding issues on Cowan Street.

Election support was addressed with the Board's approval of an agreement for ES&S Election Systems & Software. They also approved a credit application to purchase chemicals through a purchase order.

In the consent agenda, the Board approved funding for bands participating in the Black History Parade, allocating \$175 each to the Canton High School Band Booster and the Velma Jackson High School Band, and \$170 to the Lanier Band Booster Club.

The Board then moved into an executive session to discuss personnel matters across the Police Department, Building and Development Department, Fire Department, and Supervision and Finance. Discussions also covered potential litigation and negotiations regarding the prospective sale and lease of lands.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for March 18 at Canton City Hall.

CPSD tech team continues learning



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Canton Public School District's Technology Department and Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) clerks recently participated in the Mississippi Educational Com-

puting Association (MECA) 2025 Conference to gain insights. The MECA Conference brings together educators, administrators and technology enthusiasts to discover the latest and best practices in digital learning.

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Merit Health kicks off Jars of Love drive

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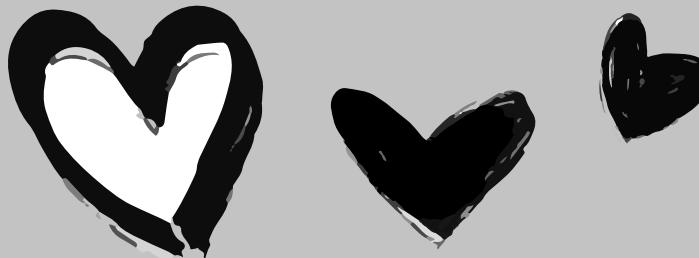
Merit Health recently kicked off its annual Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive benefitting Mississippi Food Network, and is inviting community members to participate in this effort to fight hunger in Central Mississippi. Peanut butter is a sought after item for food banks because of its high nutritional value and long shelf life. Yet, it is one of the least donated items. The Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive kicked off on February 24 and will run through March 21.

“Merit Health not only supports the patients who come through our doors, but we are also committed to supporting better health throughout our community,” said Dr. Greg Oden, Chief Medical Officer.” An estimated 16% of people in Mississippi are facing food insecurity, which has a profound impact on overall health and well-being. With the Jars of Love Peanut Butter Drive we can help a vital community organization reduce hunger in our area.”

Donations may be made online at www.justgiving.com/campaign/jarsoflove25. A gift of \$20 can supply 10 jars of peanut butter, or approximately 100 sandwiches.

Peanut butter can also be dropped off at any of the following collection sites:

- Merit Health Central in Jackson
- Merit Health Madison in Canton
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- Any of our Merit Health Clinics
- Clinton Chamber of Commerce
- Flowood Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership
- Pearl Chamber of Commerce
- Rankin County Chamber of Commerce



Canton Lions learn about drones



Special to The Canton News

County Agent Jared Vandiver, pictured with Lions Club President Gary Teasley

Special to The Canton News

Madison County Agent Jared Vandiver entertained the Lions talking about drones. In addition to being

a County Agent, Vandiver is a certified drone pilot and had a drone at the meeting. With his knowledge and experience, he was able to answer all the random drone questions.

Mayoral candidate discussion planned



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Grace Episcopal Church, 161 East Peace Street (the white wooden church with the red door) will host a discussion with the mayoral candidates at noon on March 12. Everyone is invited to bring a brown bag lunch to meet the candidates and hear their hopes and intentions for

the city of Canton. The gathering will be in the parish hall. The parish will provide drinks. Attendees can either park in the city lot north of the Regions parking lot and enter through the door that opens from the Regions parking lot, or in the grassy area to the east of the church and come in through the courtyard.

Garrett named Holmes Ridgeland class favorite



Special to The Canton News

Pictured are the Holmes Community College Ridgeland Campus 2025 Who's Who recipients. They are: (seated, left to right) Mr. Holmes Logan McAdory of Brandon, Miss Holmes Swayze Brewer of Brandon, (standing, front row, left to right) Class Favorites Paris Garrett of Canton, Macey Bowman of Pelahatchie, Lacy Burns of Florence, Anniston Lyles of Brandon, (standing, back row, left to right) Houston Griggs of Pearl and Jeremy Heflin of Florence. Not pictured: Class Favorite Samantha Doyle of New Albany.

Rules of the Road campaign begins

Special to The Canton News

Should you stop at a flashing yellow light? What's the difference between a white and yellow line (or stripe) in the middle of the road? The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) seeks to bring clarity to traffic conundrums like these and more with the launch of its new video series and public awareness campaign, the "Rules of the Road."



Special to The Canton News

Intended to educate and entertain, MDOT aims to address commonly broken or misunderstood traffic rules and highlight fun facts about traffic through the campaign.

The pilot episode of the new video series was released on MDOT's social media channels, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and X.

The first episode explains the meaning behind a flashing yellow or white line (or stripe) in the middle of the road.

More episodes will be released through 2025 and will focus on topics such as what to do at flashing yellow and red lights, how to turn in a median, how to properly merge and what the colors of a reflective pavement marker mean. The videos that make up the Rules of the Road series will

be short, fast-paced and lighthearted to reach young audiences, primarily through social media.

Follow the hashtag #RulesOfTheRoadMS on social media for an opportunity to learn more about the Rules of the Road. To learn more, visit GoMDOT.com and follow @MississippiDOT on social media.

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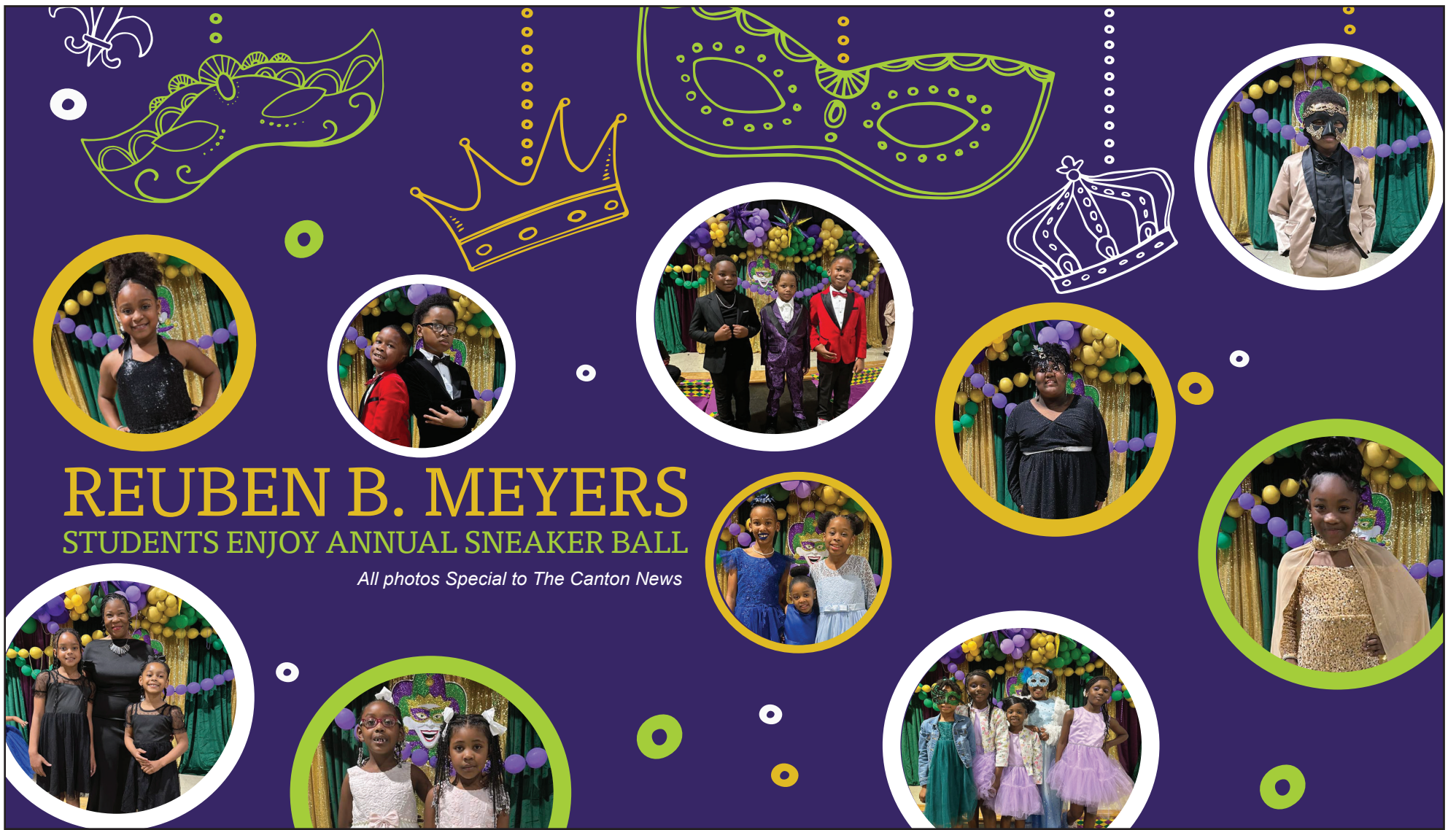
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Morton and Fleming named 2025 Mr. and Miss Basketball



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The 2025 class of “Mr. Basketball” and “Miss Basketball” (presented by C Spire) award winners was recently announced by the Mississippi High School Activities Association and Mis-

issippi Association of Coaches and includes three repeat Mr. Basketball winners and one three-time Miss Basketball.

Shamira Morton of Canton High School was named 5A Miss Basketball,

and Jamarion Fleming of Canton High School was named 5A Mr. Basketball.

All Mr. Basketball and Miss Basketball winners will be recognized during the 2025 Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Big House Classic MH-

SAA State Championships at the Mississippi Coliseum. Recipients will also be honored at a special awards luncheon in the MHSAA Conference Center, which will also be live streamed on the NFHS Network.

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CHS varsity tigers named basketball state championship



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The Canton High School Varsity Tigers came out victorious and were named 5A Champions once again. Their reputation on the court has made these players known throughout the state. The Canton High School Lady Tigers put in the hard work to get back to Big House and place as the 2025 MHSAA Class 5A State Championship Runner-Up.

“it all started with a watermelon”

Kylie Melons is back open and excited to see you!

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Letter from the editor: I'll remember beach sand from the actual beach

By Courtney Warren

Do you ever have a moment where you wonder if you've gone overboard? As in...did I take this too far? Fortunately, for me, I never have to wonder this, because the answer is almost always "yes, Courtney."

My daughter has recently become hyperfixated on all things Pokémon. For those that don't know, Pokémon is a brand that was created in Japan in the 1990s and tells the story of Pokémon-trainers and over 1,000 creatures called Pokémon. The Pokémon trainers have the goal of catching all of the Pokémon and learning about them.

Each Pokémon has different abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and personalities. My sweet child can not only name every single Pokémon, but she can draw them and tell you all about their stats.

She came home several weeks ago talking about computer class—in which she discovered Google Maps. She typed in "Pokémon center" and found that the best Pokémon store is in Tokyo and the cost for two airplane tickets is around \$3,000. For weeks, she has been saving for these plane tickets and putting all of her money in the Japan Jar. She has \$32 and is very very proud of herself.

In her Google searching, she also learned that Pokémon Day is celebrated on February 27 and marks the franchise's birth. The day is also often used by The Pokémon Company for announcements and reveals, which in recent years have all been packed into the Pokémon Presents online show.

She was thrilled! A holiday! She got in the car that afternoon and asked how we would be celebrating this major event. At first, I thought it was silly. However, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that, even if I thought it was silly, I had the opportunity to create what I now call a "beach sand" moment.



Special to The Canton News



When my brothers and I were young, think elementary and primary school age, we lived in a giant house.

It was in south Georgia and sat on several acres of wooded land. Behind the house was the cut out that was perfect for a playground.

Now, I don't know if the playground area already existed when we got there or if this was something my parents bought and placed there, but what I do remember is the sand.

We didn't go to the beach often—we weren't a beach family, but when we did it was a very exciting time. The beach was always this exotic place to us, filled with sea creatures we had only seen on TV and in movies.

One day, we told mom we wanted sand for our playground—but not just regular sand. We wanted beach sand. From the beach, Mother. The ones in Florida.

Was that ridiculous and expensive? Yes. But she was a stay at home mom with nothing but time and access to a telephone, so it didn't take long for two giant dumptrucks full of beach sand from Florida to slowly back their way into our back yard. We spent hours playing in that sand. We dug tunnels, we made forts, we created castles. More importantly, we made core memories, because I'm still able to tell you this story at 35 years old.

Which brings me back to Pokémon Day. The morning of February 27, I set up the kitchen. There was a banner that my students helped me create and read

"Happy Pokémon Day!" The cookie cake was placed on the kitchen counter with care, iced to perfection to depict Pikachu's and Berit's name in the frosting. Surrounding the cake were Pokémon plushies, coloring books, cards that were donated by a few students, and her Nintendo Switch, which was fully charged and had a brand new Pokémon game loaded.

"Is this too much? It's kind of a lot," my husband said as we pushed play on the Pokémon theme song. When our little girl ran into the kitchen, eyes bright, dressed in pink Pokémon pajamas, she didn't run straight for the stuff. She didn't immediately rip into the presents to celebrate Pokémon Day. She ran straight to us. She wrapped her arms around us and told us thank you and Happy Pokemon Day.

So no, it wasn't too much. It was just enough. It was the perfect Beach Sand Moment.

Happy Pokémon Day to all.

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CPSD preps for state testing



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Representatives from the Mississippi Department of Education conducted professional development sessions with Canton Public School District (CPSD) teachers, assistant teachers, administrators and early childcare directors. They offered strategies and techniques for un-

packing early childhood standards, classroom centers, creating effective lesson plans, applying strategies during Tier 1 instruction, and preparing for the State Istation Assessment. The Istation assessment is a computer-based test that measures reading, math, and Spanish literacy in students from kindergarten through third grade.

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Canton student pages in MS House



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Pictured (l to r) are Sponsor Tammie Sutton, Kirsten Jackson, Jaidan Handy and Speaker Jason White.

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Kirsten Jackson of Canton and Jaidan Handy of Terry, recently served as pages for the Mississippi House Representatives. Pages generally run errands for officials and House staff.

Jackson, 16, is the daughter of Karondra Jackson-Shalton and Shaun Shalton, and she attends Canton High School. Handy, 15, is the daughter of Jamila Cross and

Darrell Handy, and she attends Terry High School. Both students were sponsored for the week by Tammie Sutton.

When asked about her experience as a page, Jackson said, "I love getting to serve as a page in the Mississippi House of Representatives and also meeting new people. I can't wait to come back next year. A big thanks to Tammy Sutton for being the best!"

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On the shelf: Amazing female leads for Women's History Month

By Courtney Warren

March is Women's History Month, a time to honor the achievements, struggles and contributions of women throughout history. If I love anything, it's the concept of girl power. This month reminds us of the importance of recognizing women's voices, stories and impact on society.

One of the most powerful ways to uplift and celebrate women is through literature. Books about strong, trailblazing women—both real and fictional—highlight resilience, courage and the fight for equality. By reading and sharing these stories, we continue to inspire future generations and ensure that women's voices remain an essential part of our collective history. Here are five powerful book recommendations featuring strong, inspiring women:

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo by Taylor Jenkins Reid

This novel about a reclusive Hollywood icon, Evelyn Hugo, reveals the untold story of her life, love, and ambition. Evelyn is a fierce, determined woman who rises to fame on her own terms. This was such a quick and gripping read for me. I found myself immediately rooting for this female lead.

Becoming by Michelle Obama

This memoir by the former First Lady offers a deeply personal look at her journey

self. No matter where you fall politically, learning about a president from his wife just

A mesmerizing retelling of the mythological figure Circe, a powerful sorceress who defies gods and mortals alike to carve out her own destiny. It is a tale of strength, transformation, and independence.

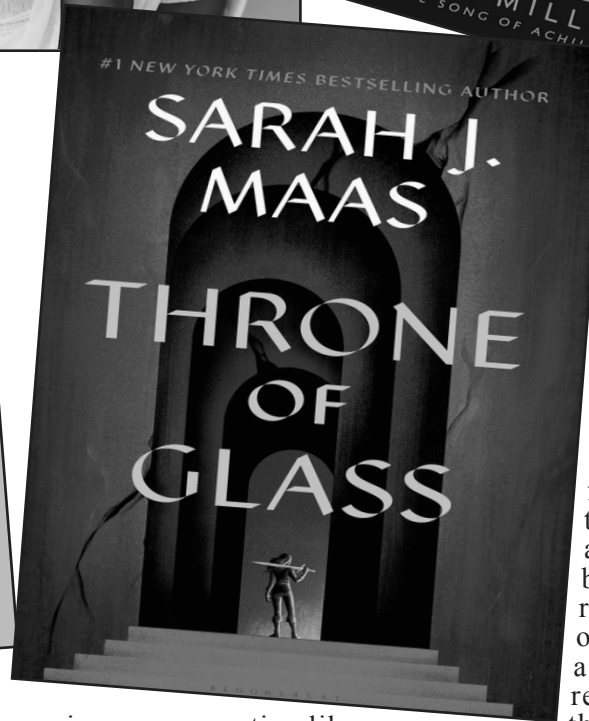
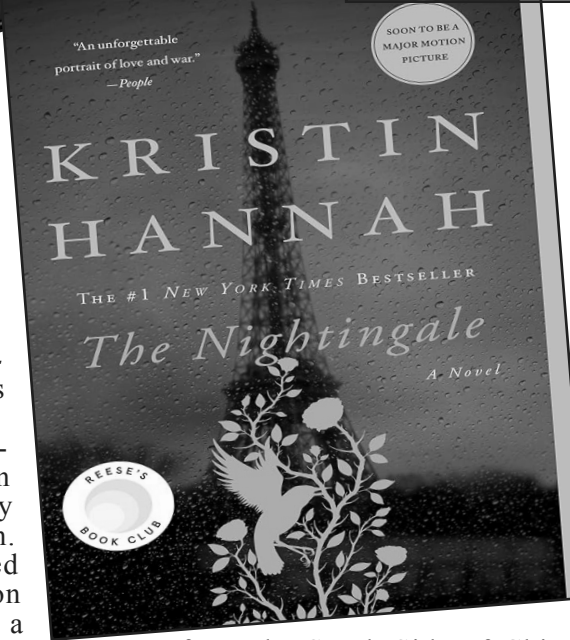
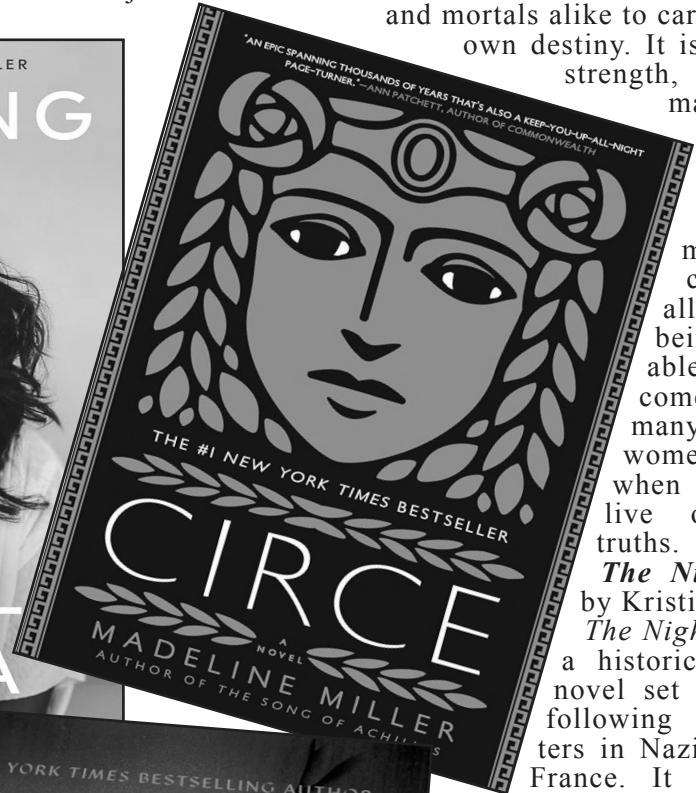
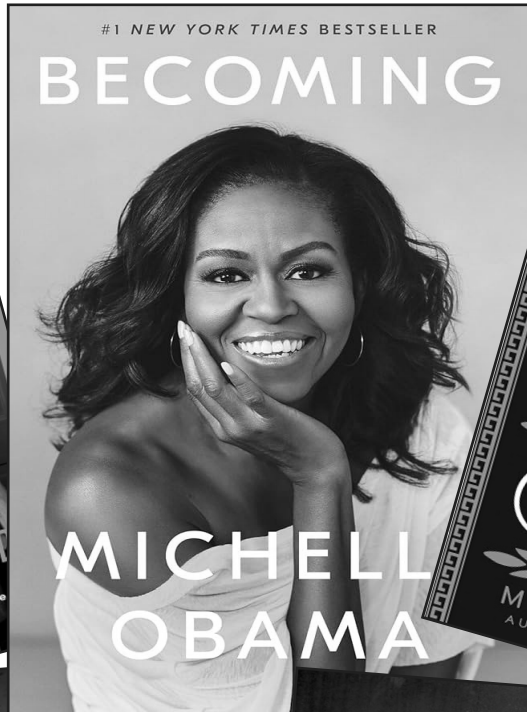
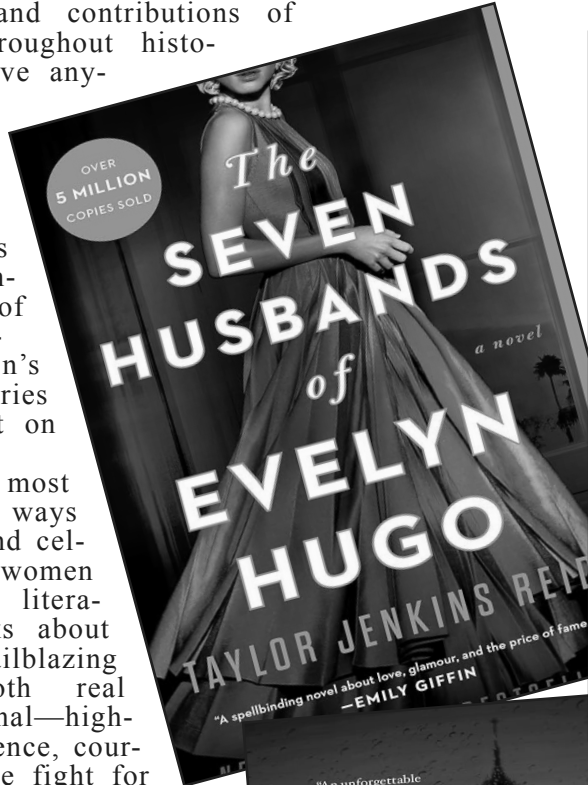
Circe infuriated me as a character, all while being relatable when it comes to the many emotions women face when trying to live out their truths.

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah
The Nightingale is a historical fiction novel set in WWII, following two sisters in Nazi-occupied France. It highlights the resilience and courage

of women in times of war and sacrifice. Every time I get on a plane, this is in someone's hand. It is my top choice for the month of March, and I am excited to dive into this story.

Throne of Glass series by Sarah J. Maas

This fantasy series follows Celaena Sardothien, a skilled assassin with a tragic past who fights for her freedom and destiny. With breathtaking action and a heroine who refuses to be defined by her past, this series is an empowering journey of strength and survival. This is a book series that I think about regularly. It has become a series that I find comfort in and know that, no matter how difficult life may seem, "I will not be afraid."



from the South Side of Chicago to the White House. It's a testament to resilience, grace and the power of believing in your-

gives a perspective like no other.

Circe by Madeline Miller



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Smith from Canton Academy signs with Co-Lin



All photos Special to The Canton News

Canton Academy senior Zach Smith recently signed a football scholarship with Copiah-Lincoln Community College. Known for his loyalty and commitment to excellence, Smith was surrounded by classmates, family, and coaches as he was celebrated for his achievements.

Miller named Master Teacher



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Canton Academy second grade teacher, Mrs. Jacki Miller, was recently surprised at school by members of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. In the presence of all elementary students, teachers, staff and administration, Mr. Matt Bramuchi, MAIS Director of Teaching & Learning, presented Mrs. Miller with the "MASTER TEACHER AWARD."

According to Bramuchi, "The

MAIS Master Teacher Program bestows well-deserved recognition to MAIS Master Teachers who exhibit best practices in the classroom and a willingness to share, serve, and collaborate with other educators. The MAIS commends its Master Teachers who inspire excellence inside and outside of the classroom."

Mrs. Miller was granted MAIS's Lifetime Teaching Certificate and will attend a special Master Teacher ceremony in April.

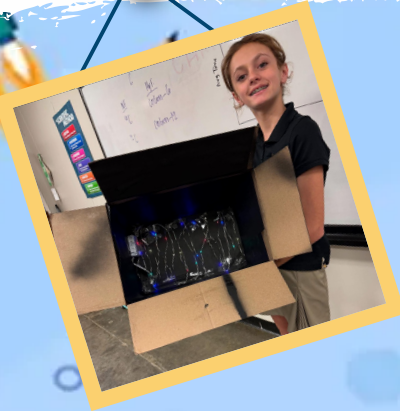
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CA 8th-Grade Science Solar System

All photos Special to The Canton News



Coach Ratcliff's sixth-grade science class at Canton Academy has been studying the solar system. The students worked hard in groups to create their own versions of the cosmos.



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Johnson from Canton Academy signs with MGCC



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Recently, in the presence of family, friends and fans, Canton Academy senior Cruz Johnson signed with Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's football program. Johnson is known for his athletic skill and quick wit and is expected to shine on the MGCC field.

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Ag class supports classmate at Livestock Show



All photos Special to The Canton News

Ms. Moseley's agricultural science class at Canton Academy recently took a trip to the Dixie National Livestock Show to support their class member, Claiborne Perry, who was showing his heifers. Perry's classmates enjoyed getting to see his cattle and learning how the heifers get ready for their shows. Moseley said, "I knew this would be a great introduction to our next unit, where we will dive into all things large animal!"



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Sixteen CHS scholars admitted to Ole Miss

Special to The Canton News

Sixteen scholars from Canton High School were recently accepted to the University of Mississippi. Julia Corso, the Regional Admissions Counselor, greeted them with T-shirts and other items, while offering important guidance to finalize their enrollment as she welcomed them to the university.



Special to The Canton News

The following students were admitted:

Dequavian Brent
 Cameron Carson
 Brianna Cheeks
 Jaleal Davis
 Yazmin Dzib Perez
 Chelsea Grant
 Atlantis Hudson
 Kynderrick Meeks

Jaziria Morment
 Aurelia Nash
 Yesenia Ramirez Miranda
 Javon Rose
 Kennedy Taylor
 Kenyatta Brown
 Marleigh Stewart
 Katelyn Flint

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