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February 2022 • Volume 6, Number 2 • "Good News You Can Use"

## Carnival fun headed back to Long Beach streets for 2022

Long Beach Breeze

After having to cancel their annual Mardi Gras parade last year, the Carnival Association of Long Beach (CALB) is getting ready to bring back the season's revelry to the streets of Long Beach on Saturday, February 19, at 6 p.m.

The last Mardi Gras parade in Long Beach was held by CALB in February 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began sweeping the world and causing widespread shutdowns and closures.

In place of the parade last year, the organization encouraged residents to decorate their homes and businesses, then post their photos to CALB's Facebook page for a friendly competition. The photo with the most "likes" was awarded a drawdown ticket for a chance to win up to \$5,000 during the 2022 Carnival season. The drawdown is scheduled for Saturday, February 5, at 6 p.m. at the Long Beach Senior Center.

This year's parade will be preceded on Friday night, February 18, by CALB's annual coronation ball, which will be held at St. Vincent de Paul School. CALB members get the first option to purchase tickets to the ball, but any remaining tickets may be purchased by the general public.

The 2022 Parade Grand Marshal will be Long Beach's own Moises Espinal, who served honorably in the U.S. Marine Corps. While in Afghanistan, he worked closely with Afghan interpreters; and, after the recent unrest in that region, he has been instrumental in helping and organizing efforts to help the interpreters and their families to safety. For his efforts, CALB leaders say they are pleased to honor him with the title of Grand Marshal.

King Scott the 62nd, who will be crowned on February 18, is the Honorable Melvin Ray, Harrison County Justice Court Judge, and Queen Rosalie 2022, also set to be crowned at the ball, is Lynn Madigan Mulherin.

The parade route has been extended to



Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Carnival Association King and Queen candidates for the 2022 season are the Hon. Melvin Ray and Lynn Madigan Mulherin, who will be coronated as King Scott and Queen Rosalie at the Association's annual ball on February 18. The Association's parade will be held in Long Beach beginning at 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 19.

the end of Jeff Davis Avenue to Hwy 90 and then north on Cleveland Avenue to both accommodate larger floats, as well as add more floats to the popular family-oriented parade.

Those who wish to participate in the parade can visit the CALB website for a parade application. The regular entry fee for the parade is \$125.

CALB is celebrating its 62nd year with the theme "Under the Sea."

The association was formed in 1960 by a group of mothers at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Long Beach to help raise money for St. Thomas Catholic School. Today, the association still contributes to St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School and other charities along the coast.

For more information, contact CALB President Jason D. Green at 228-323-7559 or Parade Chairman Eddie Seal at 228-326-7207. Information about CALB is also available on their website at [www.LongBeachCarnival.com](http://www.LongBeachCarnival.com).

## Massey named new head coach for Bearcats football

Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Board of Trustees of the Long Beach School District recently voted unanimously to hire Jacob Massey as the new varsity head football coach for the Bearcats.

Massey comes to Long Beach from Petal, where he served as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. Prior to Petal, Massey served as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Amory High School and Desoto Central High School, as well as wide receivers coach for a year at Desoto Central.

When it comes to his coaching philosophy, Massey has clear expectations for his team.

"As head coach of the Long Beach High School football team, I want to create positive relationships with the players, coaches and the community," Massey said. "Teamwork, discipline and

accountability will be fundamental principles guiding our program. Embracing hard work will be the identity of our football program, and we will relentlessly pursue success on and off the field."

His goals for the Bearcats are not only to provide a competitive and winning environment every day within the program, but to extend beyond the field of play and create a winning atmosphere in the classroom, the community and the football field.

"I want to prepare our players to be outstanding members of society and make positive contributions toward our community," said Massey. "I want the Bearcats to positively

impact the Long Beach School District and the Long Beach community."

"My expectations for the players are to get one percent better every single day, to bring a positive attitude to work, to be good teammates and to put in relentless effort in the pursuit of success."

Superintendent Dr. Talia Lock says she looks forward to great things from Coach Massey.

"I am so excited to welcome Coach Massey into our Bearcat family and community. After meeting with him, it became quite obvious he would be the perfect fit for Long Beach," Lock said.

"Not only does he bring extensive



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Jacob Massey was recently named the new Bearcats head football coach.

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# Long Beach ends annexation plans



Dom Fimiano

The Long Beach Aldermen and the Mayor confer during a recent meeting. The Board voted unanimously to table the filing of an annexation petition, which will stop all annexation proceedings for Long Beach at this time.

By Dom Fimiano

In January, the Long Beach Board of Aldermen agreed to focus on projects that must be completed rather than investing time, effort and funds in long-term projects that may take decades. With Ward 1 Alderman Patrick Bennett, Ward 5 Alderman Mike Brown and Alderman-at-Large Donald Frazer expressing concerns regarding completing current projects around the city, the Board voted to cease all annexation plans and, for now, to stop funding the Beatline Road expansion project.

City Attorney Jim Simpson reminded the Board they have the right to reconsider any decisions approved.

Projects that are currently underway include the Long Beach Harbor construction, Beach Boulevard Gateway Project, Jeff Davis Avenue beautification, street paving, and inter-segment improvements.

Alderman-at-Large Frazer made motions to stop annexation plans and to stop funding the Beatline Road extension. These motions were seconded by multiple aldermen and passed with no objections. Ward 1 Alderman Patrick Bennett stated that committing to projects like the Beatline Road expansion is tough, when the City has so many projects that need immediate attention.

The primary reason the alderman said they chose to stop the annexation process is to perform detailed studies on the pros and cons of an annexation that could potentially

double the size of Long Beach. The alderman believe they do not have enough information to responsibly move forward with annexation at this time.

Bennett stated that he does not believe the City can, in good faith, move forward without more information to make prudent fiscal annexation decisions.

"We must protect the long-term interests for our residents and the City," said Bennett. "It is also important to take into consideration how annexation affects the residents who live in the annexed territory. We must make sound decisions that protect Long Beach."

"We cannot blindly rush into annexation without knowing how our decisions may affect the future of Long Beach's financial commitments and taxation," said Frazer.

Frazer added that doubling the size of Long Beach at a time when construction expenses have more than doubled would be foolish and irresponsible.

City leaders said that annexation would require immediate financial decisions to provide water and sewage services, improve roads and build new roads in the territory acquired.

Mayor George Bass and the Board of Aldermen report that they are continuously working with FEMA and MEMA regarding the Long Beach Harbor. Frazer pointed out that the pace of the harbor construction is not controlled by the City, but that City leaders will stay focused through completion.

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Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@LongBeachBreeze.com

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Stephanie Tracy

**Office Manager**  
Doris Bynum

**Designer**  
Brad Henderson

**Photographer**  
Dom Fimiano

**Writers**

Will Brown  
Dom Fimiano  
Taylor McKay Hathorn  
Brooke Holley  
Datti Jankiri  
Lindy Sholes  
Anna Williams

**Sales**

Keith Clark

Keith@LongBeachBreeze.com

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# Celebrate Library Lovers Month with a book date

By Guest Columnist Renee Rayburn,  
LBPL Youth and Technology Services

This month is Library Lovers Month. During the month of February, readers can choose a book from the “Blind Date with a Book” displays (in the main wing) or “Play Date with a Book” displays (in the children’s wing). Attached to each “date” (book) is a bookmark that will give you more details about book.

Due to the rise in Omicron cases in our area, we will continue to only have Preschool Story time on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. A schedule of events can be found on the library’s website.

Second Saturday Story Hour will be held on February 12 at 10:30 a.m. This program is a great opportunity for the whole family to learn about the local wildlife in Mississippi. A care-

taker from the Gulf Coast Wildlife Rehab attends with one of the animals they are helping to rehabilitate and release back into their natural habitat.

The Friends of the Long Beach Public Library held their first meeting on January 3, 2022. There is no meeting scheduled for February at this time. Anyone interested in joining the Friends may pick up a membership form at the front desk. Membership is \$10 per year.

There is no meeting for the Long Beach Board of Trustees scheduled for February. They will meet again in April of

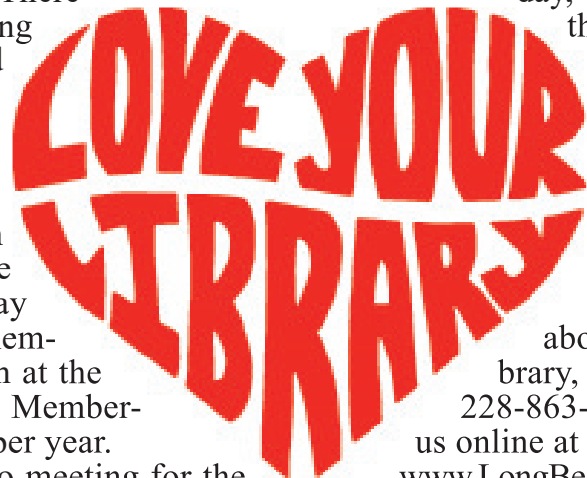
2022.

The book sale is now open to the public again. Book sale prices have not changed. Dis-cards in the main entrance are still free.

The library will be closed for Presidents’ Day from Saturday, February 19, through Monday, February 21. We will reopen on Tuesday, February 22, at 9 a.m.

For more information about the library, call us at 228-863-0711, or visit us online at [www.LongBeach.lib.ms.us](http://www.LongBeach.lib.ms.us).

Thank you for your patronage, and continue to stay safe!



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# Coast Episcopal launches transitional kindergarten program

Special to Long Beach Breeze

When Coast Episcopal's Head of School Jake Winter reached out to Melissa Flickinger to gauge her interest in teaching the school's first transitional kindergarten class (T-K), the University of Southern Mississippi graduate, who has thirteen years of experience in preschool and elementary education, with the last four as a preschool intervention teacher, immediately accepted the challenge. Flickinger had been keeping a watchful eye on research coming from California and Texas, two states leading the nation in implementing a transitional year kindergarten program, and she believed such a program could fill a need she had recognized on Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

Flickinger adds that her eagerness to accept Winter's invitation to join his team also was influenced by the fact that she'd already experienced the school's unique commitment to education, having taught in its 2004-2005 preschool program and, as a CES parent, watching each of her three children thrive from the school's creative and individual teaching practices.

According to Flickinger, the T-K program is a tremendous opportunity for students to have a "bonus" year between preschool and kindergarten.

The additional year provides students that have been identified via specific assessments with another year of growth and development and allows them to enter kindergarten with confidence, social skills and many other school-readiness markers that set them up for a successful academic experience. In many cases, the student who benefits greatly from this bridge year has intellectual abilities that exceed their emotional maturity level, and Flickinger believes this extra year



of social and emotional development will make a world of difference as her students face high school, college and beyond.

Parents whose children currently attend CES' T-K program agree. Says Leah Watters, "Our son, James, is in T-K this year, and we are delighted by the program. The topics of learning are so creative and relevant to their little minds. The enjoyable curriculum is teaching James to love learning, and the structured classroom environment combined with topics of natural curiosity invite him to love learning. Melissa has a delightful way of interacting with the kids and of making every topic so alive. James comes

home loving to spout off facts that he learned that day."

A visit to Flickinger's classroom confirms the reality that the children served by T-K are eager-to-learn and engaged in her lessons. Surrounded by eight students hungry to learn, Flickinger leads her class with a mixture of traditional yet joyful and animated instruction. With its base curriculum STEAM-focused (integrating Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematic lessons to encourage critical thinking and problem solving), Flickinger also incorporates ASL (American Sign Language) and Spanish into the hands-on activities that encourage learning through play. In addition to the T-K class lessons, the students participate each week in "specials," including art, music and science lab.

T-K curriculum is based on the needs and interests of Flickinger's students and, accordingly, will change from year to year. The concepts, however, will be consistent.

Introducing the T-K program to Coast Episcopal was a goal of Winter when he assumed the 71-year-old, independent school's leadership role on June 1, 2020.

"All children, especially young children, learn best in environments that consider their developmental

levels, not just their chronological age," said Winter. "Children are individuals who grow through developmental stages in their own unique way and at their own pace. CES' small class sizes, student/teacher 9 to 1 ratio, and established, stellar preschool and kindergarten program were the foundation needed to launch a successful T-K program. Once we found Melissa, we had all the necessary pieces to introduce the program to our parents."

Identifying a student who might benefit from the transitional kindergarten program is the result of assessments by the CES educators, who then follow up with conversations to gather input from the parents' own observations. Enrollment occurs once determination has been made by both the educators and the parents that this is the right decision to support the child.

Coast Episcopal School has been dedicated to a life-long love of learning by developing the whole child - mind, body and spirit - and providing a joyful, unique, and nurturing Judeo-Christian community that inspires its students to imagine and create a better world. Founded in 1950, CES is a member of the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS). For more information, call 228-452-9442.

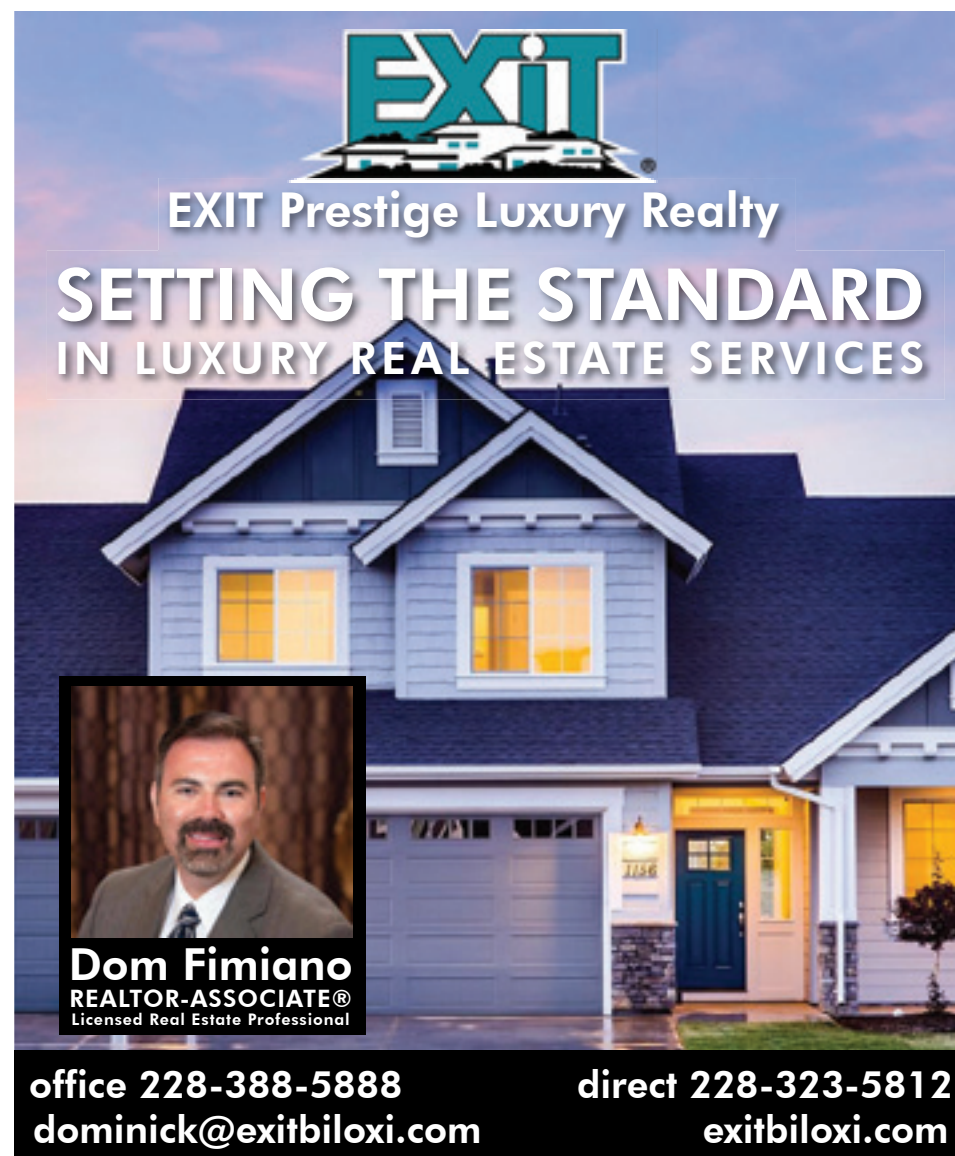


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# Farmers Market offers local options on Saturdays

All photos by Anna Williams.



Mikaela and pal Irie enjoy the morning, stopping to buy some fresh local produce.



Lesa Pino purchasing some farm fresh beef from Katie.



Marie shares a sample of her herbal homemade lotion with Amanda Schuuler (left) and Jennifer Rich (right).



Chance Williams buying homemade relish, a Poppe's special recipe.

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# Meet Your Neighbor: Joseph Gauci

By Will Brown

When Joseph Gauci arrived in Long Beach in 2007, the town was still cleaning up from the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Originally from Michigan, Gauci had traveled to Mississippi before and now was tasked with helping clean up the damage from the storm. A couple of years after arriving in Long Beach, Gauci's property company had purchased a restaurant, and now he has plans to expand his developments.

Gauci and his family arrived in Long Beach shortly after the storm, and he got to work helping rebuild the coast.

"I don't think we've completely recovered from Katrina, but we are starting to build," Gauci said. "When we got here, they were a lot of shady contractors, and they were ripping people off; so it was hard to get a foothold."

After a few years of doing smaller contracting jobs in Long Beach, Bay St. Louis, and Waveland, Gauci began buying property in Long Beach.

"A lot of people didn't have money to rebuild, because they were fighting with the insurance companies; and we just sat it out, bought this property and developed it," Gauci said. In addition to building a couple of houses and doing remodeling work in Long Beach, Gauci bought and developed the building that now houses La Vita Bella, an Italian Restaurant right off of Klondike Road.

One of the factors that convinced Gauci and his family to stay in Long Beach after first arriving to clean up storm damage was feeling like they fit into the community. Long Beach was very similar to their home in Michigan, and Gauci felt at home in the town.

"We ended up staying here because of the nice warm weather, and we like the community," Gauci said. "I think it's a nice, safe and quiet community with all the amenities a city should have, except sidewalks. We could really use some sidewalks."

Gauci has two children that grew up in Long Beach and still live in the community. His son has taken over the building contracts, and his daughter is a former teacher at Long Beach High School.



"We're real happy with the education and the school system here in Long Beach," Gauci said. "They hold a lot of our values to heart - the same ones we grew up with, they really take to heart."

In the years since purchasing the building that currently houses La Vita Bella, Gauci has been looking to build and develop more property in Long Beach. He is currently overseeing the construction of a high-end condominium complex right behind La Vita Bella, which he says will have several high-quality amenities.

**Question: What are some of your favorite hobbies outside of work?**

**Answer:** "I like to fly remote aircrafts. That is pretty much my only hobby I have, besides work."

**Question: Have you lived or built in any other places?**

**Answer:** "I've built in Mississippi; we haven't done much work outside of Mississippi or Michigan."

**Question: If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?**

**Answer:** "I don't really know where, anymore. I used to want to go to the Isle of Malta, but it's pretty much shut down now, so I can't go there. We stay pretty much here in

Long Beach and here in Mississippi."

**Question: If you won a million dollars in the lottery, how would you spend the money?**

**Answer:** "I think I would spend the money employing more people, if we can get them to work. I would do another development. I like developing properties."

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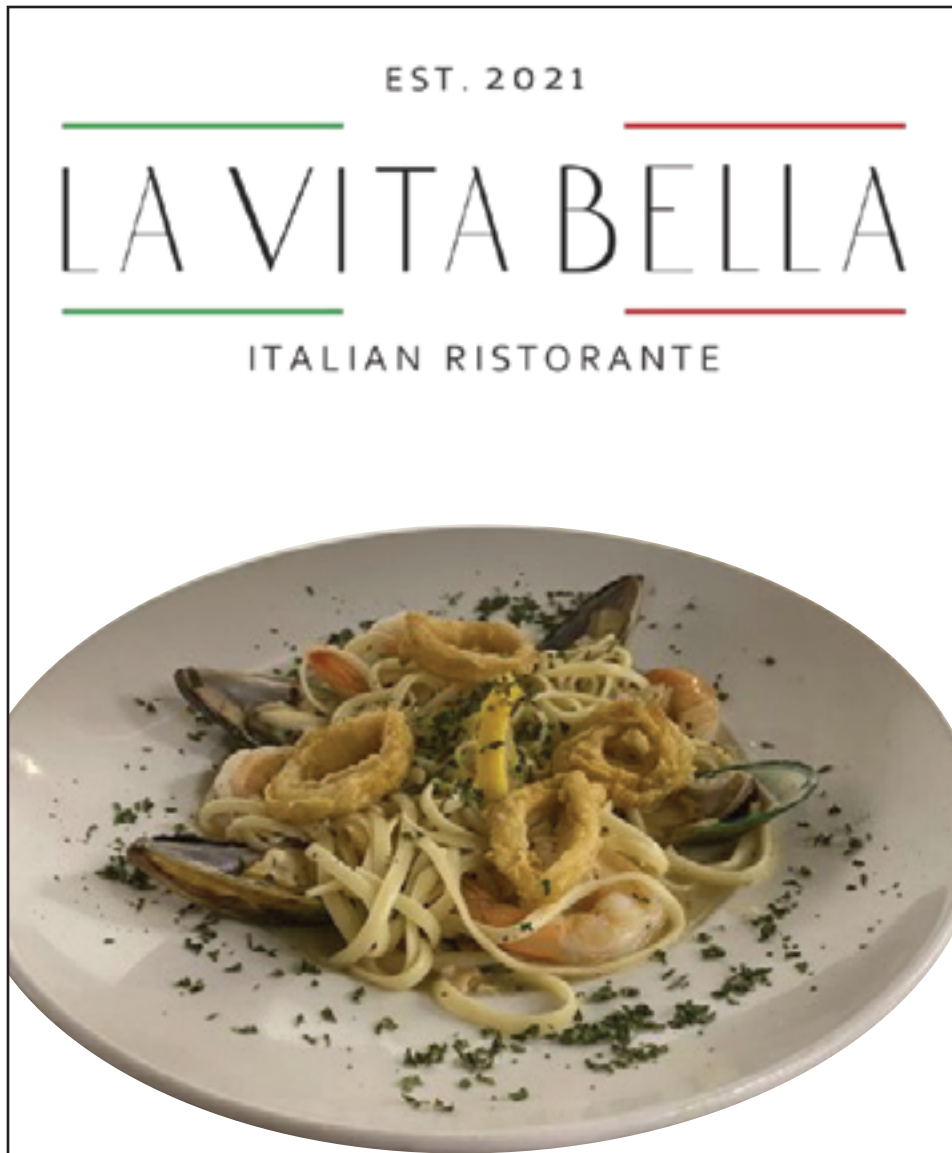
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## LOCAL TEACHERS AWARDED GRANTS

*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

The Long Beach Chamber of Commerce recently surprised three local deserving teachers with teacher grants and donuts. The recipients of the teacher grants included Naomi Rutledge and Kaylin Steiner of Harper McCaughan Elementary School and Will Ashley of Coast Episcopal School.



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

*Naomi Rutledge, who teaches fourth through sixth grade special education at Harper McCaughan Elementary School, plans to start a class business called "Kids at Work." She will be purchasing a popcorn machine, and the students in her class will serve popcorn to students who wish to order it. It will allow them to practice life skills by picking up orders, fulfilling orders, counting money, making change and delivering their orders.*



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

*Kaylin Steiner, who teaches fifth grade math and science at Harper McCaughan Elementary School, will be using her grant to purchase STEMscopes Coding subscriptions for her students. Through this program, students can design, build and share apps by writing real JavaScript code. She plans to incorporate these projects into her instruction and take technology to the next level.*



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

*Will Ashley, a fifth and sixth grade instructor in the Makerspace program at Coast Episcopal School, will lead his students to design their own wearable game controllers. They will be learning about sewing, circuitry and programming. This program will expand and enhance the Makerspace, which takes STEM concepts and applies them to real-life, hands-on scenarios.*



## Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Long Beach has successful holiday food drive

By Dom Fimiano

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Long Beach is a charitable organization which aids community members who qualify for long- or short-term assistance on an as-needed basis.

The international charitable organization was founded in 1833 by six college students attending Sorbonne University in Paris, France, and has a mission of assisting anyone in need. Only twelve years after the founding of the Society, the United States' Saint Vincent de Paul Society began November 20, 1845, in St. Louis, Missouri. The organization, created by laypeople, is still managed and operated by volunteers from each community. If anyone requests assistance from outside a Saint Vincent de Paul Society's territory, they are referred to a council from the area in which they live.

Members of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society Long Beach say they are thankful for the Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church parishioners and community members who donate to the Society. All assistance provided is a blessing for the Society and allows the group to meet the needs of people in the Long Beach community.

"We assist anyone who qualifies," said Long Beach Saint Vincent de Paul Society President Michael Barry. "Donations to the Society are the only way we can provide help. We see the greatest need for aid during tough economic times. All assistance is highly confidential and never shared."

"St. Vincent de Paul Society provides help in many ways," continued Barry. "Each Society provides financial assistance for housing, utilities, food, medicine and transportation. The families receiving assistance are those who have the greatest need for aid in each community. [In addition],

no charitable work is foreign to the Society. Vincentians respond to community needs, including disaster relief services."

Saint Vincent de Paul Society Long Beach has their annual food drive in October each year. This year, the group said their Thanksgiving food drive was so successful that more than fifty families received assistance. Thanksgiving dinners provided included large turkeys, as well as more food than originally planned due to the large amount of donations.

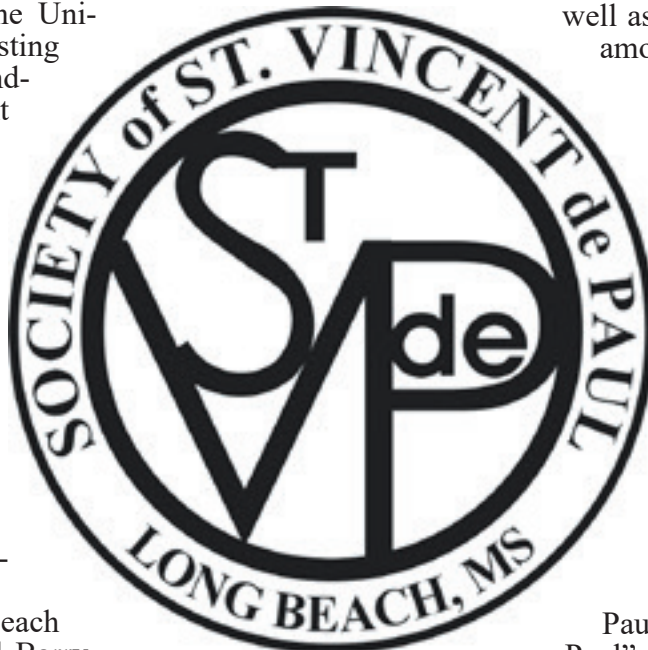
Member Charles Fallo said that, even after providing the food baskets to families, the food pantry shelves are now full.

"The donated food and gifts help feed [those who come to us] throughout the year and assisted the Society to provide Christmas gifts. Food, toys and bikes were provided to families. An additional fifty gift baskets were provided to sailors at the Port of Gulfport working during the holidays," said Fallo.

"The Saint Vincent de Paul Society is a blessing to the community," said Fr. Vincent Ajayi, St. Thomas priest and St. Vincent de Paul Society spiritual leader. "We provide more than economic assistance. We offer encouragement, comfort and prayer to everyone who comes to us."

For information on how to donate to St. Vincent de Paul Long Beach, visit the "Society of St. Vincent de Paul" page at [www.SaintThomasLB.org](http://www.SaintThomasLB.org), or mail a check payable to "Society of St. Vincent de Paul" to Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 712 E Beach Blvd, Long Beach, MS 39560. One hundred percent of every donation goes directly to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Those who need assistance must live in Long Beach boundaries to qualify and are encouraged to call the church at 228-822-0609 or email [help@SaintThomasLB.org](mailto:help@SaintThomasLB.org).



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# Girl Scouts complete Silver Award Project

All photos Special to Long Beach Breeze

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Girl Scout Troop 3429 of Long Beach recently completed their Silver Award Project for Hope Haven Children's Advocacy Center. The troop updated the facility's family room to create a more inviting and relaxing area for the families.

The five girls ripped up carpet and laid new hardwood flooring and learned how to use power tools and built new bookshelves. They repainted the walls and created/painted wall art. They created positive message bulletin boards and provided new seating and helped make the room more kid-friendly. They also created art work for the front lobby to make it more inviting for the kids.

It took about four months and 50+ hours for them to complete the project, and they juggled COVID-19 protocols, school schedules, extracurricular and sports schedules, and just everyday family schedules to get it done.

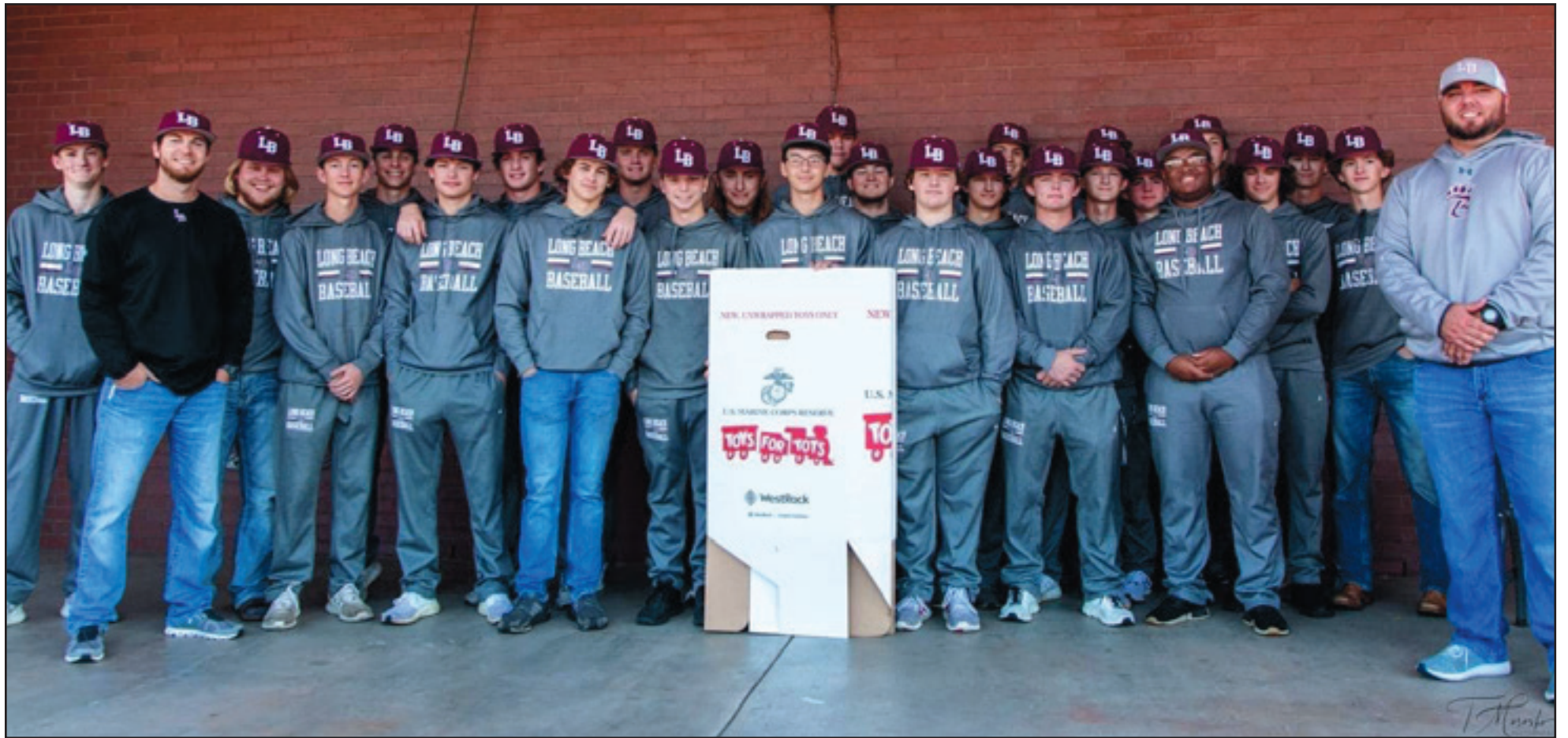
The Group Leader for Troop 3429 is Jennifer Larson, and members include Abbi and Hanna Larson, Madison Morris, and Katelyn and Melody Whittman.

Hope Haven Children's Advocacy Center (HHCAC) provides a family-friendly space for alleged child victims of sexual abuse and/or extreme physical abuse. The family-friendly environment provides the victim and caregivers a sense of comfort during the forensic interview process.

For more information about Hope Haven, visit [www.Hopehavencac.org](http://www.Hopehavencac.org).



# LB baseball hosts Toys for Tots at 5K



Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Long Beach High School baseball team recently assisted with the annual Fred Walker Jingle Bell 5K. The Bearcats team hosted the Toys for Tots toy drive, with help from the Marine Corps Reserve.

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## Harrison County reminds of recycling guidelines



**CURBSIDE RECYCLING GUIDELINES**

**YES**

- Clean pizza boxes
- Clean garden plastics
- Flatten cardboard boxes
- Empty and rinse containers
- Loose caps on plastic bottles
- OK to leave staples, clips, labels, stamps, spiral bindings and metal fasteners on paper products

**NO**

- Plastic bags
- Foam containers or products (Styrofoam)
- Wire hangers
- Window panes, mirrors, ceramics & Pyrex dishes
- Organic material and food waste
- Electronic waste (batteries, cell phones, computers, etc.)
- Paint, pesticides, oil & cleaners
- Waxed cardboard
- Needles or syringes
- Hazardous waste
- No scrap metal

HARRISON COUNTY UTILITY AUTHORITY  
www.hcua-ms.us/ 228.867.5309


Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Harrison County Utility Authority wants to remind residents what can and cannot go in the recycling cart.

Aluminum cans, plastic products (rated #1 to #3 – bottles, jugs, etc.), clean pizza boxes, garden plastics, flattened cardboard boxes, empty containers, glass and paper products such as newspapers, magazines, phone books, and similar items can be recycled.

Plastic bags, foam or Styrofoam containers, wire hangers, windows, mirrors, ceramic or Pyrex dishes, organic or food waste, electronics, paint, pesticides, cleaners, waxed cardboard, needles or syringes, scrap metal and hazardous waste cannot be included in the recycling carts.

Residents can also reference the graphic on top of their recycling carts at any time on what can and cannot be recycled.



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# Warren finishes Navy career with win over Army

By Datti Jinkiri

Long Beach High School graduate J'arius Warren closed out his collegiate gridiron career with a win in one of the greatest rivalries in football. Warren, a defensive lineman for the Naval Academy, helped the Midshipmen defeat Army 17-13 on Saturday. The win was Warren's second in his career over Army.

Warren had five total tackles in the game. He finished the season with 39 total stops, 4.0 tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, and a blocked kick. Despite this, Navy finished the



Photo Courtesy of Naval Academy Athletics

2021 season with a 4-8 record.

Warren finished his Navy career with 35 games played. He tallied 116 total tackles, 10.5 tackles for loss, 4.5 sacks, three forced fumbles, two fumble recoveries, and two blocked kicks. Warren went 1-0 in bowl games, as he was a part of the 2019 Midshipmen team that finished with an 11-2 record and a win in the Liberty Bowl.

Warren graduated from Long Beach High School in 2017, where he lettered in football and track and field. He was an All-Region selection in 2016.

LBHS graduate J'arius Warren

## PLACES OF WORSHIP



### ST. PATRICK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

310 North Cleveland Ave., Long Beach, Mississippi 39560

Sunday mornings at 10 or via Facebook  
The Rev'd Jane Bearden, Pastor  
Check our website or Facebook for info

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[www.facebook.com/StPatricksEpiscopalLongBeachMS](https://www.facebook.com/StPatricksEpiscopalLongBeachMS)

Include your church in this section!



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[LongBeachCofC@gmail.com](mailto:LongBeachCofC@gmail.com)

#### MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday A.M.

Bible Classes: 9:00

Worship: 10:00

Wednesday P.M.

Bible Classes 6:30



### Grace Lutheran Church



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#### Weekly In-house Worship:

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The services are also broadcasted live via Zoom.  
To request a Zoom link, please contact Pastor Dave at [gracepastordave1@gmail.com](mailto:gracepastordave1@gmail.com)



### We Welcome You To

First United Methodist Church of Long Beach

208 Pine Street, Long Beach, MS 39560

8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Worship In-Person in the sanctuary

This service will be live streamed on Facebook.

11:00 a.m. Sanctuary Worship In-Person in the sanctuary

11:00 a.m. The Well service In-Person at the USM Fleming Auditorium

This service will be live streamed on Facebook.



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# Bearcat Players band together, bring home awards



Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Bearcat Players recently received awards for "Best Ensemble" at Dramafest South. Additionally, senior Kodi Baxter made "All Star Cast" for their show, "We Are the Sea," by Laura Lundgren Smith. The Players overcame numerous obstacles to participate this year, with only in-class rehearsals and no theatre space, working as a team to create a masterpiece for the stage.

# CYP plans Breakfast Bash



Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Coast Young Professionals (CYP) and the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce will host a CYP Breakfast Bash in Long Beach on February 3. Coast Young Professionals are invited to stop by Bankhouse Coffee that morning from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. to socialize with friends, coworkers and other local professionals.

Coast Young Professionals (CYP) is an organization committed to developing young leaders on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. CYP offers numerous opportunities in professional development, leadership, networking, volunteerism, education and government. Members of CYP are exposed to hundreds of other young professionals gearing up to leave their footprint on the Gulf Coast.

For more information or to register for the event, visit the Chamber website at [MSCoastChamber.com](http://MSCoastChamber.com).

# Annual Meeting tickets now available

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Tickets are now available for the 2022 Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting. The event, which is set to be held on Tuesday, February 1, will begin at noon. Doors will open at 11:30 a.m.

The meeting will be held at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino, and the Pat Santucci Spirit of the Coast Award will be presented during the event.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce includes the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce, the Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce and the Pass Christian Chamber of Commerce.

Individual tickets are \$45 each, and sponsorships are available. For more information, contact Alexis Higgins, programming director, at 228-604-0014.

# ADVERTISE WITH YOUR HOMETOWN PAPER, LONG BEACH BREEZE!



Keith Clark recognizing Alan Simmons, Owner, Long Beach Safe Storage as business of the month

Contact Keith for more information on how you can grow your business with local advertising!

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# EXTRA Xs and Os – We all need love

By Guest Columnist Mika Hartman

My husband and I have been married over 24 years. Celebrating us today is as important as it was our first Valentine's Day. The first one, CJ came to my work and left perfume on my windshield. "Tommy Girl" perfume became my new favorite; I can still smell it. Not because it was the most wonderful smell out there, but because it smelled of love - his love for me. No, I don't still wear "Tommy Girl," but I can't forget how this little box made me feel. We hadn't known each other very long... and 24 years later, I remember that day perfectly.

CJ and I have three children together. Our hopes and daily prayers consist of the exact same thing for all three children, even though they all have a decade between them: True love, passion for life, determination, and success at a level they feel successful (all up to each of them to decide what these are to them) - all with God as the priority. This list is the same for many parents, including mine.

For my two older children, these are achievable milestones, as they should be. They will be on a path of their choosing, and all doors are open them. They can dream big and do whatever their determination level goes for. It is up to them to achieve the life they desire. I don't have to advocate or change laws to see them reach their full potential or to walk through life with someone they love. Just prayers are needed.

My youngest child, Hudson, has roadblocks set up that many have no idea about. I didn't know all of them until his arrival. He's only 3, and, while the laws may be improving, there is still so much that dictates the life he can have. Hudson was born with Down syndrome, a large hole in his heart and transient leukemia.

It's "Love Day" month - did you know many people with disabilities are unable to be married because of the penalties that they would face?

If two persons with Down syndrome fall in love and want to walk in this world together, they are penalized if they officially wed. The Federal Government says that they (the persons living with Down syndrome) will lose needed benefits if they marry, punishing them for seeking love at a deeper level. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid would deem incomes as joint, making the couple ineligible. And all cash gifts to the couple have to be reported as income, as well.

Other helpful programs, like Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), would be affected because of the parent connection that automatically goes away upon marriage.

As it stands today for our friends: You can fall in love, but you can't get married. Or, you can get married, and face your challenges with no help. That's not American.

Love is a powerful gift, but it is not so powerful that your medical needs vanish.

When I asked for guidance on this issue, I was told by a good friend that he has a friend who is calling her wedding ceremony "fake" in order not to lose their benefits. How awful to need to lessen or degrade the most important day in your life as "fake." Heartbreaking. But the person with Down syndrome recognizes that needed benefits trump a real ceremony.

It's also unknown that our friends with Down syndrome can be paid "subminimum" wage.... It's not even a real word, but it happens all over. This program was originally created to help open employment doors for people with disabilities. It was intended to help integrate the disability community and provide income that wouldn't disrupt any health services already provided.

But it worked against them, and it gave society the opportunity to devalue a person based on their disability. We are valued in life by our worth, productivity, opportunity and abilities. When a person is paid as little as 20 cents per hour, the message becomes that they are only worth that. Many states are making changes to this, but Mississippi hasn't yet.

Now, we don't pay 20 cents an hour that I am aware of, but how often do you see a person with a disability like Down syndrome working in your community? I live on the Coast, and I personally know of only one. You read that right! Many families find themselves in this very situation and either choose to keep their adult child at home or create an opportunity for the family to open a business.

Now let's put these two big dreams I have for my children together: Hayden and Henley can get married with a ceremony and a celebration of love; Hudson can't, not legally, at least, and still maintain the benefits he needs. My older children can do whatever job they seek and be valued and earn raises/have new opportunities; Hudson will be devalued by society and paid under minimum wage for doing his job,

or I will have to create him real opportunity.

This is the first time I've typed this, and my heart is skipping beats.

Hudson's diagnosis is Down syndrome. He has a life expectancy of greater than 65 years old. He has a strong will, and he CAN do big things. Every other person in life gets to choose a path. Why can't Hudson? I also want to add this: God gave Hudson his extra chromosome. Hudson didn't ask for it. He was created this way. And he's wonderful. Different isn't bad; his different is beautiful. The world needs the love he gives.

Some will argue that raising the pay to minimum wage across the board for all will lead to unintended consequences; not all good intentions play out as all good. I have heard this one already several times on my path to bringing the needed change. If you force employers to pay more, then they may not hire at all a person with Down syndrome.

And that is the problem.

It is embedded in us that they (people with Down syndrome) don't deserve better and fair wages. If a person has the heart to hire based only on the bottom line, they missed the mark. This wasn't created to make a bottom line better. It was designed to integrate wonderful, loving, happy people into the workplace and provide opportunities for them to grow and learn as active and productive citizens in our communities.

Some will argue that marriage isn't important, either, or that it is not a reasonable request. I disagree. Having someone you love to walk through this world with and be your best friend on the deepest level possible is everything!

Now let's put these two together: Marriage and a great job that values your contributions... the dream for all of us, right?

Now the money part. Better wages and two incomes becoming possible for our friends may deem that all the extra assistance isn't needed. But I want to ask you to think about it this way: a person living with Down syndrome has many health challenges, ones you'll never face, and the cost of healthcare is very expensive.

Hudson was born with a large hole in his heart that will require multiple surgeries, transient leukemia, hypothyroidism, missing tear ducts, and more. All require medical attention. He also eats by a g-tube. His feeding equipment is over \$2,000 per month. I've recently been denied a wheelchair for Hudson. The cost is thousands for his chair. Hearing that items on a wheelchair are "a luxury" is ridiculous. I need it for his safety on long walks, trips, and doctors' visits, because of his low muscle tone. His adaptive bike was \$9,000.

My point in sharing is that even with fair wages and two incomes through marriage, the necessary medical expenses that would no longer be covered by benefits if a couple marries can reach astronomical proportions, and a couple should not have to choose between medical care and love.

Love comes in many forms. It comes in a hand holding yours as you walk; it comes in a smile that cheers you up just when you need it; it comes in looking to the future with that special person.

Love can also be found in a mom moving mountains. I love Hudson so much, I will move these mountains; I have to. My dreams for my children will remain, though my prayers are different for Hudson. I pray I can be the voice he needs. I pray that he won't know all the discrimination that is out there when I am done. I pray he gets the life he deserves. I pray that life gives him the love in return that he gives. With God, all things are possible. Any help moving these mountains is truly appreciated.

February is Congenital Heart Defect (CHD) Awareness Month. Hudson is a CHD Warrior! Celebrate all our little fighters with me; they are heroes!

To help, please contact your local Down Syndrome organizations to find out how to get involved. If you'd like, you can follow Hudson's journey on Instagram at TeamHudsonTheStrong.

Extra hugs and extra kisses this February. Remember that love conquers all.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: CJ and Mika Hartman are personal friends of Long Beach Breeze's publisher, Clay Mansell. We wanted to use our publication to share Mika's journey as she works to change laws, perceptions and anything else she chooses to tackle to make our state a better, more inclusive one. Her son, Hudson, has Down Syndrome, and she will share his journey and hers as she works with lawmakers to make Mississippi a better place to live for everyone. Please visit our website to view her blog and important information on how we can all help make Mississippi better.*



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# Scholarships for Military Children applications open

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Applications are now open for the Scholarships for Military Children Program for academic year 2022 – 2023.

The program, now entering its 22nd year, recognizes the contributions of military families to the readiness of the fighting force and celebrates the commissary's role in enhancing military quality of life. It's administered by Fisher House Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping service members, veterans and their families. Thus far, the program has awarded more than \$21 million to 12,312 students, selected from a pool of nearly 109,000 applicants.

"For the 22nd year in a row, commissaries are honored to be a part of a program that provides the children of military service members with this valuable financial boost to their higher education goals," said Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Michael R. Saucedo, senior enlisted advisor to the DeCA director. "We at the De-

fense Commissary Agency again extend our thanks to the Fisher House Foundation, as well as [to] the generous industry partner donors and others that make these scholarships possible for so many deserving families each year."

Funding for the program comes from commissary business partners and other contributions to Fisher House Foundation designated specifically for the scholarship programs.

"Fisher House Foundation is grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Defense Commissary Agency providing scholarships to these very deserving military kids," said Chairman and CEO of Fisher House Foundation, Ken Fisher. "We are also fortunate to have incredible donors that are committed to helping military families through our scholarship program."

Selection qualifications are straightforward. Requirements include completing the application; submission of the student's

official transcript indicating a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale for high school applicants, or college transcript indicating a cumulative minimum GPA of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale for students already enrolled in college; and a 500-word essay. The subject of the essay is listed on the [militaryscholar.org](http://militaryscholar.org) website under "Scholarships for Military Children."

Eligibility for the program is determined using the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System database. Applicants should ensure that they, as well as their sponsor, are enrolled in the DEERS database and have a current military-dependent ID card. The applicant must also be planning to attend or already be attending an accredited college or university, full time, in the fall of 2022, or be enrolled in a program of studies designed to transfer directly into a four-year program.

Applicants who are awarded a full scholarship to attend a col-

lege or university or receive an appointment to one of the service academies or affiliated preparatory schools are not eligible to receive funds from this program. A full scholarship is usually defined as one that provides for payment of tuition, books, lab fees and other expenses.

For the scholarship year 2022-23, Fisher House Foundation will award 500 scholarship grants of \$2,000 each. The selection process will begin immediately following the application deadline of February 17, at 11:59 p.m. PST.

All rules and requirements for the Scholarships for Military Children program, as well as links to frequently asked questions, are available at [militaryscholar.org](http://militaryscholar.org).

Fisher House Foundation also has a free, easy-to-use custom scholarship search engine tailored to military families called "Scholarships for Service." It's available on both mobile devices and desktop computers at [militaryscholar.org](http://militaryscholar.org).



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