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January 2023 • Volume 7, Number 1 • "Good News You Can Use"

Awards given at Long Beach Chamber breakfast

All photos by Toni Miles



Pictured (l to r) are Long Beach Police Chief Billy Seal, 2022 Police Officer of the Year recipient Detective Brad Gross, Mayor George Bass, and Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Chair Melissa Rae Seymour.



Pictured (l to r) are Mayor George Bass, 2022 Aline Doherty Citizen of the Year award recipient John Bull, and Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Chair Melissa Rae Seymour.



Pictured (l to r) are Mayor George Bass, 2022 AMR First Responder of the Year recipients Roy Williams and Brayden Lynch, Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Chair Melissa Rae Seymour, and AMR Chief Dana Thrower.

By Toni Miles

While Mayor George Bass was the main speaker at the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce's Breakfast with the Mayor, a longtime local businessman, first responders and a utility worker

were also in the spotlight as the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce presented its yearly awards for outstanding performance and achievements in the City's private and public sectors.

Long Beach Mayor George Bass presented John Bull, owner of Bull's

restaurant in downtown Long Beach, with the 2022 Aline Doherty Citizen of the Year Award recipient.

"When COVID hit, he took care of his employees," Mayor Bass said. The mayor also pointed out how the long-time businessman always pitches in

and helps local schools.

Joe Culpepper, with h20 Innovation, presented Avery Taylor with the Utility Person of the Year Award for 2022. Taylor has been employed with the Public Works Department for more

cont. on page 5

Property taxes due by February 1

Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Harrison County Tax Collector's office has mailed property tax statements to property owners in Harrison County. Tax payments must be made or postmarked on or before Wednesday, February 1, 2023, in order to avoid interest charges. After that date, a penalty charge of .5% interest will be added each month.

According to Sharon Nash Barnett, the Harrison County Tax Collector, property owners can make partial payments through June.

Payments can be made online at www.DeltaComputerSystems.com under Harrison – real or personal.

Payments will also be accepted by phone by calling 228-865-4039 or 228-865-4040 and selecting option 3.

Those desiring to pay by check must include a phone number, driver's license number, PIN and parcel number on the check. Checks can be dropped off at kiosks located at D'Iberville City Hall, Long Beach City Hall and the Orange Grove Library, or they can be dropped off at one of the Tax Collector's three locations: 1801 23rd Avenue in Gulfport,

730 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Biloxi, or 14321 Dedeaux Road in Gulfport.

Checks can also be mailed to Sharon Nash Barnett, P.O. Box 1270, Gulfport, MS 39502.

The Tax Collector's office will process and mail a receipt for each payment the next business day.

Barnett notes that tax payments often include mistakes that can delay payments. Some common mistakes include forgetting to sign the check, putting a different numerical amount in the check's box than is written on the check's line,

not including a phone number in case additional information is needed, and not specifying the parcel for which the payment is being made.

Residents who purchased property within the last year and a half are encouraged to look up their property online to see if it is still in the previous owner's name. If it is, Barnett asks the new owner to print the information with the previous owner's name and attach it to the payment.

For more information or assistance, call 228-865-4039 or 228-865-4040, and select option 3.

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Beekeeping 101 class dates set for 2023

Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Mississippi Beach Beekeepers Association, in partnership with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Beekeepers Association, recently announced their 2023 Beekeeping 101 classes.

Class dates will be January 14 and 28 and February 11. Classes will be held from 2 until 4 p.m. each day at First Baptist Church Long Beach, located at 300 North Cleveland Avenue. Additionally, a Field Day at a local beekeeper's bee yard will also be available, with a date and time to be announced later.

All classes are free of charge. Any-



one interested in learning more about the world of honey bees and beekeeping is invited to attend.

For more information, visit the Mississippi Beach Beekeepers Association on Facebook, or email MississippiBeachBeeKS@gmail.com.

Library plans meetings, story times for new year

By Guest Columnist Renee Rayburn, LBPL Youth and Technology Services

Happy New Year, Long Beach!

There will be a Friends of the Long Beach Public Library meeting on Monday, January 9, at 1 p.m. in the main wing of the library. All new members are encouraged to attend.

The Long Beach Board of Trustees will meet on Tuesday, January 10, at 3:15 p.m. in the main wing of the library.

The book sale, normally held in the meeting room, is temporarily closed.

Preschool story time will continue through January on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. in the children's wing. For a current schedule of events, visit the library's website.

The library will be closed for New Year's holidays at noon on Friday, December 30, through Monday, January 2, 2023. The library will reopen at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. The library will also be closed from Saturday, January 14, through Monday, January 16, 2023 for Martin Luther King's Birthday.

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CES parents take over for teachers in support of enrichment for faculty

Special to Long Beach Breeze

“It takes a village” was brought to life at Coast Episcopal School (CES) in Long Beach recently, when twenty-five parents volunteered to step into CES Classrooms while their children’s teachers attended the 2022 Mississippi Winter Literacy Conference at the Beau Rivage in Biloxi.

For three days, parents partnered with staff teaching assistants to cover kindergarten through third grades, while each of those class’s teachers attended the three-day conference. Prior to leaving for the enrichment conference, the classroom teachers created and provided resources for an in-class activity they dubbed “Reading Rodeo.”

Parent volunteers read five books to the students: *Snowy Day*, *The Legend of the Poinsettia*, *Owl Moon*, *The Legend of the Candy Cane*, and *There was a Cold Lady Who Swallowed Some Snow*, and then facilitated hands-on activities to reinforce the reading. Activities included watching the *Snowy Day* movie, doing art projects, playing games to boost understanding of parts of speech, and completing exercises designed to bolster writing skills.

Five teachers attended the confer-



Special to Long Beach Breeze

For three days, Coast Episcopal School parents stepped in to help lead CES classes, to enable five of the school’s teachers to attend an enrichment conference in Biloxi.

ence: transitional kindergarten teacher Melissa Flickinger, kindergarten teacher Kathy Terrell, first grade teacher Dody Bennett, second grade teacher and Elementary Dean Kim McWilliams, and third grade teacher Jilliane Larson.

CES Head of School Jake Winter remained on campus to oversee coordination of the Reading Rodeo.

“Watching our parents step into our classrooms to enable our teachers to attend this conference that will have such a positive impact on our students has been heartwarming,” said Winter.

“Our school community is very fortunate to see this kind of parental involvement to support our educators. It speaks to the magic that is Coast Episcopal School.”

The conference, which attracted educators from all over Mississippi, is an annual event produced by the Mississippi Literacy Association in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Education’s Office of Elementary Education and Reading for the purpose of providing literacy instruction for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

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School's mural serves as reminder of Marine who gave his all

By Toni Miles

It's been sixteen years since Margaret Levens' son, Marine Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens, lost his life serving his country. The twenty-five-year-old Long Beach native died doing what he loved, flying, a dream Donnie had since he was eight years old. It was a dream he pursued and took to new heights during his honorable service in the United States Marines Corps.

One can only imagine the grief Margaret, and all Donnie Levens' family and friends, bore upon learning of his death in a helicopter crash over Djibouti, Africa, on February 17, 2006.

Though short, Donnie's life was a life well-lived. Among many honors, Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens received the Good Conduct Medals for 1998-2001 and 2001-2004 from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He was also awarded the Air Medal for meritorious achievement by former President George W. Bush, who praised the Long Beach native saying, "In the successful completion of eighty-nine combat sorties over Iraq, he contributed materially to the success of national objectives in the liberation of the Iraqi people."

Donnie Levens was also recognized many times for his volunteer work, which began at age fifteen with his first mission trip to Saltillo, Mexico, when he was a member of the Catholic Youth Organization. He continued volunteering at various places throughout the world until his passing.

Donnie attended St. John's Catholic School in Gulfport until the sixth grade, then attended Catholic school in Long Beach, so his mother said it's only fitting that Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens's service and sacrifice be displayed for all to see, which it is - at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School's library.

A mural honoring the late Marine keeps Donnie Levens' memory alive, as well as his legacy.

"This is a CH-53 helicopter, which is what Donnie was flying in when he went down," Margaret Levens says, standing alongside the mural, also pointing out how Levens' name is painted on the mural of the helicopter, as well as the date of the crash, 02/17/06. There is also a star with angel wings to signify he's gone.

The mural was painted by a local artist who works at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School.

"Sandy Salvage painted it for us," Levens says. "Donnie loved to read, so that's the reason we chose to put it in the library," Levens said.

Levens smiles as she says her late son would be happy about the mural's placement.

"The library was his favorite place to be, besides talking about military or flying. He loved to read," Levens says.

Donnie Levens' photo is also featured on another wall in the hallway of the school, alongside dozens of other local men and women who have served in our nation's military.

His mother, Margaret, hopes the mural will inspire other young people to follow their dreams, just like her son Donnie did.



Toni Miles

Long Beach resident Margaret Levens stands by a memorial and mural honoring her late son, Marine Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country.



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Marine Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens.



Toni Miles

Margaret Levens stands alongside a photo of her late son, Marine Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens, featured on a wall honoring those who have served our country at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School.



Toni Miles

Margaret Levens hopes this mural in memory of her son, Staff Sergeant Donnie Levens, will encourage students at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School to also follow their dreams.



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cont. from front page

Chamber awards given



Pictured (l to r) are Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Chair Melissa Rae Seymour, Mayor George Bass, 2022 Utility Person of the Year award recipient Avery Taylor, and Joe Culpepper from h20 Innovation.



Pictured (l to r) are Long Beach Fire Department Chief Griff Skellie, 2022 Long Beach Firefighter of the Year award recipient Lee Jordan, Mayor George Bass and Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Chair Melissa Rae Seymour.

than forty years.

“Avery is always willing to stay late and get the job done,” Culpepper says.

Long Beach Fire Chief Griff Skellie took the podium to announce Lee Jordan as this year’s recipient the First Responders of the Year award for the fire department.

“He’s been with us for four-and-a-half years,” Chief Skellie said. “He was born to do this job. Everywhere he turns, his work is over the top.”

Police Chief Billy Seal presented Long Beach Police Department’s award for 2022 to Detective Brad Gross.

“He [Detective Gross] builds a good relationship with the citizens of Long Beach, and is able to get a lot of information we need to solve crimes,” Chief Seal said of Gross before the award presentation.

Two American Medical Response (AMR) employees, Brayden Lynch and William Roy, were named the First Responders of the Year award in the AMR Personnel of the Year category.

“These two honorees [Lynch and Roy] continue to pick up extra shifts,” said AMR Chief Dana Thrower before the awards presentation.

Chief Thrower also pointed out how the two AMR employees’ quick-thinking on one call that was supposed to be a routine transport led to saving four lives.



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Characters come to life at library's Fall Fantasy Faire

By Toni Miles

All photos Special to Long Beach Breeze

The Long Beach Public Library was closed on Saturday, November 19, but, across the street, library employees were hard at work and having fun, as story book characters came to life at the Fall Fantasy Faire. Although the cold weather and rain cut the festival short, plenty of people got out early to enjoy the first few hours of the event.

Kids dressed up as their favorite story book characters, played games and took part in magical activities at the event, which was held at the Harper McCaughan Town Green in Long Beach.

Music, games, vendors, a silent auction, raffles and a bake sale were just some of the activities those in attendance enjoyed, and all for a good cause - proceeds from the Fall Fantasy Faire are being used for the library's capital improvement fund.



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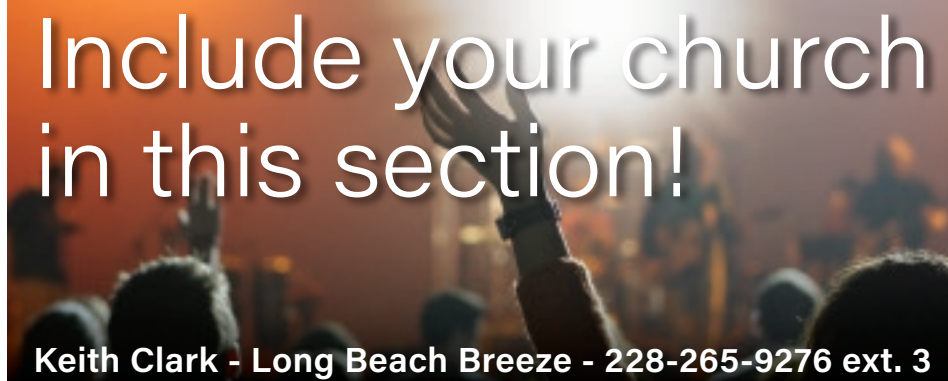
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Buddy Ball Fall Kickball season concludes



Long Beach Breeze

Mississippi Gulf Coast Buddy Sports (MGCBS) recently concluded their Buddy Ball Fall Kickball program, a six-week season that included eight teams.

MGCBS offers a multitude of organized activities throughout the year with the goal of providing parents of

children and adults with intellectual and/or physical disabilities the opportunity to participate in activities and play sports just like everyone else.

With programs that include Buddy Ball baseball, kickball, fishing, horseback riding, a Mississippi Sea Wolves hockey game, and many others, the organization requires a huge volunteer commitment to operate.

A “Buddy” is someone who commits to help each player perform the tasks that are needed while playing, no matter if it’s on the baseball diamond or on a fishing boat casting a line. Buddies help the adults and children with intellectual disabilities enjoy their time playing while their parents and caregivers can rest and cheer them on, knowing that they are being cared for.

Buddies, who currently number more than fifty, are quick to report that not only is being a Buddy simple, it is also a lot of fun – and being a part of a player’s life is a rewarding and extraordinary opportunity.

MGCBS invites anyone who wants to volunteer to visit www.MSGulfCoastBuddySports.org and sign up on the “volunteer” page.



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Sea Santa Sail-a-bration rolls out in Long Beach

All photos Special to Long Beach Breeze



By Toni Miles

Only in South Mississippi would you see a waterless boat parade, and that's just what unfolded in downtown Long Beach at this year's annual Sea Santa Sail-a-bration parade and event.

Parade floats, actually decorat-

ed boats pulled on trailers, rolled down city streets, followed by plenty of fun holiday activities for kids and their parents at the Town Green. Hosted by the Long Beach Community Development Association, organizers say this year's event was a wonderful success, pointing out that not even the

night's rain and fog could dampen the holiday spirit.

Winners of the 2022 Sea Santa Sail-a-Bratation included: Best in Fleet/first place, Aaron and Melissa Poor's float "The Grinch;" second place, Mark and Theresa Taylor's float "The Claus and Elves;" and third place, Randi and Alden

Smith's float "Christmas Overboard."

Bill and Sarah Hammack's float "Rub a dub Santa in a Tub" won Best Display of Lights.

The Best Costumes prize was awarded to Ronnie and Michelle Savoy on their float "Blue Christmas."

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Songs and shopping galore at this year's Christmas on the Avenue

By Toni Miles

There was plenty to sing about at this year's Christmas on the Avenue, put on by the Long Beach Concert Choir Association at the Harper McCaughan Town Green in Long Beach.

Hundreds of people from near and far turned out for this year's shopping extravaganza and were treated to live Christmas carols sung by the Long Beach High School Choir, and dozens of vendors sold their unique and locally-made crafts and food at this year's event.

There were plenty of things for the youngsters to do, too. Some kids took a train ride at the event, while others opted for a bouncy house set up on the Town Green as parents took a break from shopping. The line was also long as children lined up for face painting, to further celebrate the holiday season.

All photos by Toni Miles



Live Christmas carols sung by members of the Long Beach High School Choir drew a crowd.



There was a little something for everyone at Long Beach's Christmas on the Avenue.



Some kids and their parents took a train ride at the event.



Hundreds turned out for this year's Christmas on the Avenue in Long Beach.



Delliah gets her face painted, as brother Zane and mom Taylor look on.



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Local Sparklight employees use “Angel Day” to volunteer

All photos Special to Long Beach Breeze



Sparklight General Manager Greg Capranica and Administrative Support Specialist Jessica Robinson pack bags of food.



Pictured (l to r) are Sparklight associates volunteering on their “Angel Day” to assist a United Way of South Mississippi food drive: Jessica Robinson, administrative support specialist; Brandon Hursell, field technician; Darren Guillot, advance technician; Greg Capranica, general manager; Tiffinie Barnes, customer care specialist; and Douglas Montiforte, senior construction coordinator.



Sparklight associates Douglas Montiforte (left) and Brandon Hursell (right) load meals into a United Way of South Mississippi truck.

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Sparklight associates from Long Beach and Belle Chasse, Louisiana, recently used their “Angel Day,” a paid compa-

ny volunteer day, to pack and distribute nearly three hundred holiday meals on behalf of the United Way of South Mississippi. Sparklight encourages all company associates to use their

annual “Angel Day” to contribute their time and talents to local nonprofit organizations that make a positive difference in their communities. Giving back to the communities where Spar-

klight associates live and work is core to the company culture, which supports community engagement opportunities that make a meaningful impact in people’s lives.

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Photos by Ann Madden

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USM increases key student scholarships

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Scholarship awards often play a pivotal role in the decision-making process for prospective college students. At the University of Southern Mississippi, funding for several significant scholarships has been increased to help ease the financial burden on students and their families.

Notable increases include the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Transfer Scholarship, which increased from \$4,500 to \$6,000 annually and the Freshman-Designated Based Scholarships, which increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 annually.

Dr. Randall Langston, Senior Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management at USM, notes that the PTK Scholarship change will be especially impactful as the award covers more than sixty percent of tuition costs each year.

“This particular increase is being implemented to demonstrate additional institutional commitment and support to transfer stu-

dent populations and to provide affordable tuition to students during these difficult economic times,” said Langston.

While many of USM’s scholarships are based on academic merit, the Freshman-Designated Based Scholarships are designated specifically to acknowledge student leadership. These include Eagle Scouts, gold-award Girl Scouts, valedictorians, salutatorians, student body presidents and specific Mississippi-related organizations.

“At USM, we want to augment our commitment to student leadership, both inside and outside the classroom,” said Langston.

USM awards approximately \$6 million in scholarships to first-time students and approximately \$9 million in institutional aid to continuing students each year. Langston points out that the PTK and freshmen-designated increases are being funded internally as part of the University’s overall scholarship budget.

“We feel that the financial support provided by USM is exceptionally worthwhile, given our



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public mission and commitment to Mississippi and beyond,” he said. “These changes in our scholarship programs demonstrate the University’s commitment to students and their success. At a time in which many families are stretched financial-

ly, this is one way we are working to ease the burden on them.”

To learn more about the Phi Theta Kappa and Freshman-Designated Based scholarships, call 601-266-4540 or visit www.usm.edu/undergraduate-scholarships.



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Long Beach decked out Coast-style for the holidays

By Toni Miles

The Harper McCaughan Town Green and Pavilion in Long Beach looked like a winter wonderland in December, one befitting of South Mississippi, of course. A manger scene sat just outside the entry way to the pavilion, with a boat wrapped in lights anchored

to land nearby, an iconic reminder of the Coast's history and the industry the area was built upon. From the Incredible Hulk topped off with a Santa hat to Jolly Ol' Saint Nick himself checking his list, the decorations served as lively reminders of Christmas and the 2022 holiday season in Long Beach.

All photos by Toni Miles





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THE PASS POST

Documentary screening set for January 12

Special to The Pass Post

The Friends of the Pass Christian Public Library will host a screening of the documentary *City of a Million Dreams* on Thursday, January 12, at 11:30 a.m. in the conference room of the Pass Christian Public Library. The Friends of the Library will provide a free lunch for those attending the screening.

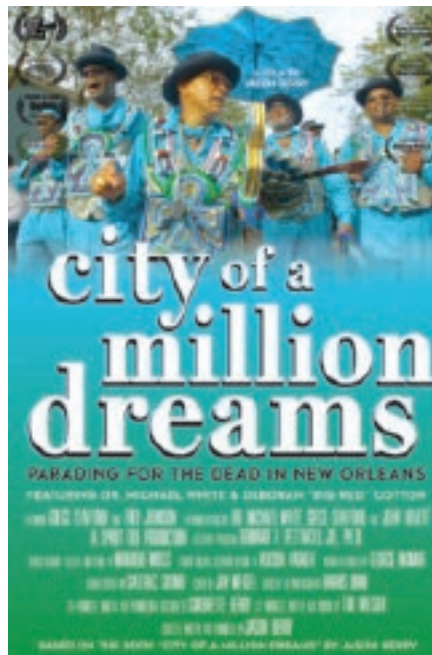
Famous the world over, jazz funerals have origins shrouded in mystery. Filmed over twenty-two years, *City of a Million Dreams* explores race relations at a tearing time in American society. Burial traditions train a lens on the unique and resilient culture of New Orleans. *City of a Million Dreams* draws from the 2018 book of the same title by Jason Berry.

Deb Cotton, an African American and observant Jew, leaves "hard-hearted Hollywood" for New Orleans, where she becomes a chronicler of the parading clubs spawned by 19th century burial societies. Her zeal for the city grows as she becomes a blogger for *Gambit Weekly*, adopting the handle "Big Red Cotton."

As Deb explores her adopted culture, Dr. Michael White, a prolific clarinetist and New Orleans native, plays "the widow's wail" on his clarinet, a cry of lamentation in the funeral marches.

White's transcendent music also includes joyous peals for the soul's cutting-loose, which happens when the band leaves the cemetery, followed by dancers in what New Orleanians call "the second line." Risen in the ranks of brass bands, White, too, is on a journey of self-discovery, seeking clues about his ancestor who played at the dawn of jazz. White says of jazz funerals: "For someone dealing with American racism and trying to figure out your place in this life...you can be transformed into another world that really sets you free." Mr. Berry, who produced the documentary, will be on hand to introduce the film and engage in a question and answer session after the screening.

The public is invited to attend, and the documentary screening is free. Pass Christian Books will have copies of the book available for purchase.



The Pass Christian Library is located at 111 Hiern Avenue. For more information, call the library at 228-452-4596.

Jackson named Youth of the Year



Special to The Pass Post

Jarienne Jackson was recently named the Youth of the Year for the Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast's Qatar Center in Pass Christian. The Youth of the Year Program is a Boys and Girls Club premier recognition program, providing the highest honor any member can receive. The Youth of the Year program develops leadership skills for successful transition into adulthood and highlights the impact of the Club experience on the lives of young people as they strive to embody the values of leadership and service, academic excellence and healthy lifestyles. The program also offers Club members an opportunity to make valuable connections, and potentially gain access to more than \$1 million in scholarship funds. For more information about the program, visit BGCGulfCoast.org.



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Historical Society plans Jan 23 luncheon

Special to The Pass Post

The Pass Christian Historical Society's (PCHS) January luncheon will feature speaker Don Davis, who will present "Asian Cajun Fusion: Shrimp from the Bay to the Bayou." The event will be held at noon on Monday, January 23, at the PCHS building at 201 East Scenic Drive.



The cost for the luncheon is \$12 for members and \$15 for non-members, and seating is limited to fifty. Reservations are required by 5 p.m.

on the Friday before the luncheon. No walk-ins, observers or standing reservations will be available.

Reservations can be made by email to reservations@PassHistory.org. Call 228-452-7254 for more information.

MSBA represents all public school boards of education in the State of Mississippi. MSBA is the lobbying wing of Mississippi school boards at the state and federal levels and assists school districts

Shaggy's investing \$50,000 in Pass Christian students



Special to The Pass Post

Recently, Shaggy's Restaurants presented a \$50,000 check to the Pass Christian Early Learning Collaborative, a 1:1 tax credit program that aims to provide high-quality early childhood education to four-year-old children. The donation will help expand the school district's pre-K program at Pass Christian Elementary School and at a Head Start program by opening one additional class at these locations. Children in Pass Christian's Pre-K program, school district leaders and representatives of Shaggy's Restaurants were all on hand for the donation.

Pass Christian School Board member elected MSBA president

Special to The Pass Post

Cecil J. Lizana, Sr., Pass Christian Public School District Board member, was recently elected President of the Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) for the 2022-2023 school year at the Delegate Assembly during the MSBA Fall Leadership Conference. The delegates represent school board members from across Mississippi.



Special to The Pass Post

"I would like to say thank you for the vote of confidence from the members of the Mississippi school districts," said Lizana. "Thank you for believing in me. To represent MSBA is truly an honor. Hearing all the positive things each district is doing for the students in Mississippi makes me proud to be a part of this team's mission!"

MSBA President and Pass Christian Public School District Board member Cecil Lizana, Sr.

MSBA represents all public school boards of education in the State of Mississippi. MSBA is the lobbying wing of Mississippi school boards at the state and federal levels and assists school districts with their grassroots lobbying efforts at the local level. MSBA is also the primary technical resource for school boards and superintendents on school board gover-

nance and other related issues and serves as a resource for statewide educational and parental organizations in helping them to understand the governance role of the board and the administrative role of the superintendent.

"I congratulate President Lizana and the new directors," said Denotris R. Jackson, M.Ed., MSBA Executive Director. "I look forward to working with him and the board as we continue to advocate for public school students and our members."

Lizana serves as a board member for the Pass Christian School District. He has served on the board since 2014. He has held the position of Vice President and is a dedicated supporter of public education.

Lizana attended Wayland Baptist University, where he received a bachelor's degree in occupational education with majors in business administration and occupational technology, and a specialization in instruction technology. He also received an associates degree in applied science in administrative management from the Community College of the Air Force. He and his wife, Debra, have three children, Lauren, Andria, and Cecil, Jr.

