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TODAY

IN MISSISSIPPI

KAMASSA: Built to Heal

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COASTAL
HISTORY

PICTURE THIS:
SWEET TREATS

SOURDOUGH
IN THE SPRING

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A place for Mississippi's toughest kids

Before long, it will be summertime and thousands of children will be flocking to summer camp and taking part in canoe races, softball games, swimming, and fellowship. Unfortunately, not all children are able to have this type of experience. Those with special needs — medical, physical, or mental — cannot enjoy the same summertime fun as other children. Lucky for these children there was a woman who had a dream and a vision of a place where these special needs children could go and enjoy camp life and still get the medical attention they need. This woman was Mary Kitchens and her dream and vision has now become a reality.

Camp Kamassa is Mississippi's only year-round, fully handicap-accessible camp for children and adults with chronic illness, physical and intellectual challenges, and other special needs. The name, "Kamassa" (pronounced Kuh-MAH-suh), comes from the Choctaw language and means "toughness; to persevere under difficulties and not give up." How appropriate considering the campers and families who will use this facility.

I first learned of Camp Kamassa from Southwest Electric CEO Kevin Bonds. The camp is in Southwest Electric's service territory and Southwest, its board, and employees have been big supporters. Kevin brought the camp to the attention of the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi's board of directors and co-ops from all over Mississippi have supported Camp Kamassa over the last seven years.

While I have been supporter of the camp and participated in fundraising events, I had never seen the place until March 7. Deb McGee, the human resources and public relations specialist for Southwest, invited me down for a visit. "Southwest employees are going to have a workday that Friday," Deb said.

"It would be a great time for you to finally visit, and don't worry, no one expects you to work." That last part stung a little, but I realized she was referencing my cane, as I am still recovering from back surgery, and not my lack of skill or talent.

Tanya Mohawk, the executive director, gave me a golfcart tour of the facility and showed me around. I visited a huge activity center, where children will be able to experience woodworking, pottery, needle working, and even a performance room for plays or skits. Of course there are rooms for the campers, all wheelchair accessible, and even family cabins. There is a medical clinic, so children can continue to receive the medical treatment they need while attending camp. The magnificent zero entry swimming pool was gorgeous. Even the floating pier on the lake has runners to hold the canoe steady while campers take their seat. The camp was much more impressive than I had originally imagined.

Camp Kamassa will open to its first campers in mid-May. However, the work is not completed. Mary and Tanya still have some big plans, and they need support to finish Camp Kamassa. Please read our cover story and consider giving to help finish this wonderful facility. No amount is too small, and all donations will be appreciated. Camp Kamassa will be an incredible miracle for Mississippi's toughest kids. 🌟



by Michael
Callahan

*Executive Vice President/CEO
Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi*



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sipp & Savor
The MAX
April 12



Threefoot Festival
Downtown Meridian
April 18-19

**Earth's Bounty +
First Saturday**
The MAX • May 3



Bud N' Boilin'
Singing Brakeman Park
May 3

**Meridian Symphony
Beethoven & Blue Jeans**
MSU Riley Center • May 3

**Jimmie Rodgers
Music Festival**
Downtown Meridian • May 12-18

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TODAY IN MISSISSIPPI

The Official Publication of the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi

Vol. 78 No. 04

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On the cover

Camp Kamassa and Mississippi's Toughest Kids Foundation founder Mary Kitchens at the camp. Photo by Chad Calcote.

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84 students learn leadership skills at ECM workshop

High school juniors from all over the state descended on Jackson Feb. 26 to Feb. 28 to participate in the 38th Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi Cooperative Leaders Workshop.

The conference, held at The Westin in downtown Jackson, gave 84 high school students this year to learn about leadership, community service, and state government in action.

Each student was sponsored and chosen by different electric cooperatives throughout the state.

The students also earned an all-expense paid group trip to Washington, D.C. in June.

During the three-day workshop, students met with their state lawmakers, toured the state capitol, participated in problem solving activities, and attended speeches by motivational speakers.

Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann and Secretary of State Michael Watson spoke to the students during the event.



Cooperative Day *at the state capitol*

Mississippi electric co-op general managers, communicators, and linemen spent Feb. 20 at the state capitol in Jackson celebrating Cooperative Day.

The event promoted the important relationship between Mississippi legislators and electric co-ops, which provide electric power and high-speed internet to rural Mississippians.

The co-ops set up booths and demonstrations. Key staff from the co-ops visited with lawmakers during the event to talk about the state's important relationship with cooperatives and how their partnership works to better local communities.





Grow Goji Berry for Fruit, Flowers,

I am always on the lookout for plants that produce nutritious fruits and berries, and during a recent visit to a local nursery, I was drawn to some goji berry plants.

These fascinating plants are native to Asia. They have been cultivated for centuries for their highly nutritious fruit and medicinal properties. Their ability to thrive in a variety of conditions makes them an excellent addition to gardens, offering ornamental beauty and a bountiful harvest.

Growing as a sprawling, arching shrub, the goji berry plant matures to 6-10 feet tall and wide, forming a graceful, fountain-like shape. Its long, flexible branches are sometimes thorny and adorned with soft, lance-shaped gray-green leaves.

In late spring to early summer, clusters of small, bell-shaped purple flowers appear, attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies. These blossoms give way to small, oblong berries that ripen from green to a brilliant red orange.

Their glossy, thin skin encases a soft, juicy interior fruit. Goji berries have a unique flavor that blends sweetness, tartness, and subtle earthy notes.

Goji berries thrive in U.S. Department of Agriculture hardiness zones 5-9, making them ideal for Mississippi. This plant is incredibly resilient, tolerating both heat and drought once established. It prefers full sun for maximum fruit production, but it can adapt to light shade.

I recommend planting in well-draining soil with a slightly alkaline to neutral pH of 6.5-7.0. It grows well in sandy, loamy, or slightly clay-heavy soils.

Before planting, choose a sunny location with good air circulation to promote healthy growth and minimize disease risks. If the soil is compacted, amend with compost or sand to improve drainage.

Young plants require regular watering to establish strong roots. Once mature, they are quite drought tolerant. Water deeply but allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings to prevent root rot.

Feed your plant with a balanced fertilizer in early spring to encourage vigorous growth and fruiting. Its nutritional needs are similar to that of tomatoes.

Since goji berries produce fruit on new wood, I recommend pruning in late winter or early spring to remove weak or dead growth and encourage better fruiting. Goji berry plants begin flowering in late

“

With its graceful arching habit, brilliant flowers and nutrient-rich fruit, the goji berry plant makes a productive and ornamental addition to the garden. Grow yours as a landscape shrub, train it on a trellis or keep it in a container.



Plants Looks



Goji berry plants from Asia have been cultivated for centuries for their highly nutritious fruit and medicinal properties.

spring to early summer, and the fruit ripens from late summer to early fall. Harvest by hand to avoid bruising the delicate berries.

I enjoy eating the berries fresh at peak ripeness, but they are also excellent dried. This concentrates their natural sweetness and extends their shelf life.

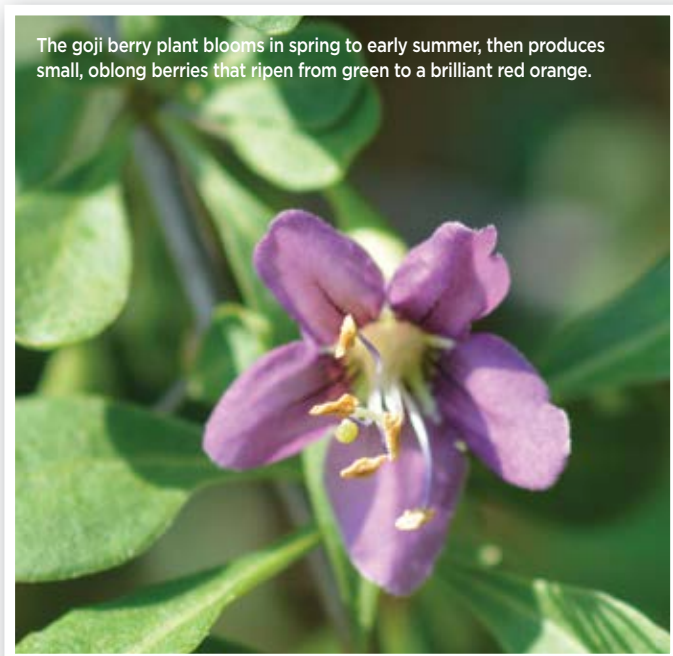
With its graceful arching habit, brilliant flowers, and nutrient-rich fruit, the goji berry plant makes a productive and ornamental addition to the garden. Grow yours as a landscape shrub, train it on a trellis, or keep it in a container.

However it is used, the goji berry plant provides a rewarding harvest while adding beauty to your outdoor space. 🌸



by Dr. Eddie Smith

Southern Gardening columnist Dr. Eddie Smith, a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, is an internationally certified arborist, Produce Safety Alliance certified trainer, and one of the developers of the Mississippi Smart Landscapes program that encourages the use of native plants in the landscape.



The goji berry plant blooms in spring to early summer, then produces small, oblong berries that ripen from green to a brilliant red orange.



Flounder *Fun*

Flounder can provide great action for Mississippi anglers

Most people catch flounder while fishing for redfish, speckled trout, or something else, but these odd fish can provide great sport and delicious meals, particularly when stuffed with Gulf Coast crabs.

Southern flounder, the most common in Mississippi waters, show irregular white splotches on their brown sides. They average about one to three pounds, but Karen A. Good set the state record with a 10-pound, 4.66-ounce fish.

Twice each year, flounder migrate from the bays and estuaries to the Gulf of Mexico and back, although some flounder stay in inshore waters all year long. As waters cool in the fall, most flounder head to the deep

waters of the gulf where they spawn and spend the winter. In the spring they return to inshore waters.

When flounder return to the bays, marshes and estuaries in about April, look for them along shallow weedy shorelines. Focus on little coves or grassy pockets where they can use their superior camouflage to hide from prey. They frequently bury themselves in silt with only their eyes protruding to look into the tidal flow. They wait to ambush anything irresistible that flows over them. Then, they explode from their lair to snatch it.

A live shrimp under a float offers a great way to catch flounder. Toss it along a weedy shoreline and let the current carry the bait naturally. Occasionally, pop the cork to make a surface commotion that mimics a fish striking bait. Live minnows also make great flounder baits, either fished under a cork or on the bottom. Flounder might also hit other natural baits.

“Live bull minnows are one of the best flounder baits around,” Mike Adams with Goin’ Coastal Charters (228-697-4808, goincoastalcharters.com) in Ocean Springs said. “Throw it close to the points or any marsh grass and work it slowly back to the boat by just dragging it on the bottom.”

Most Mississippi sportsmen fish for flounder with natural baits. However, flatfish sometimes strike artificial temptations that imitate shrimp or small baitfish. Anything that might entice a speckled trout or redfish could interest a flounder.

“

The shorelines along Bayou Caddy and Heron Bay are tough to beat for flounder. The marshes in the back of Bay St. Louis are great places to fish. Even in the bays, some of the pilings in the marinas and under the bridges can hold flounder.

Mississippi anglers might catch flounder all along the coast from the river deltas to the barrier islands. Flounder even venture into fresh water and regularly appear in streams miles from the coast. Many people fish the marshes from Bayou Caddy near Waveland to the Pearl River delta.

“The shorelines along Bayou Caddy and Heron Bay are tough to beat for flounder,” Sonny Schindler with Shore Thing Fishing Charters (228-342-2206, shorethingcharters.com) in Bay St. Louis said. “The marshes in the back of Bay St. Louis are great places to fish. Even in the bays, some of the pilings in the marinas and under the bridges can hold flounder.”

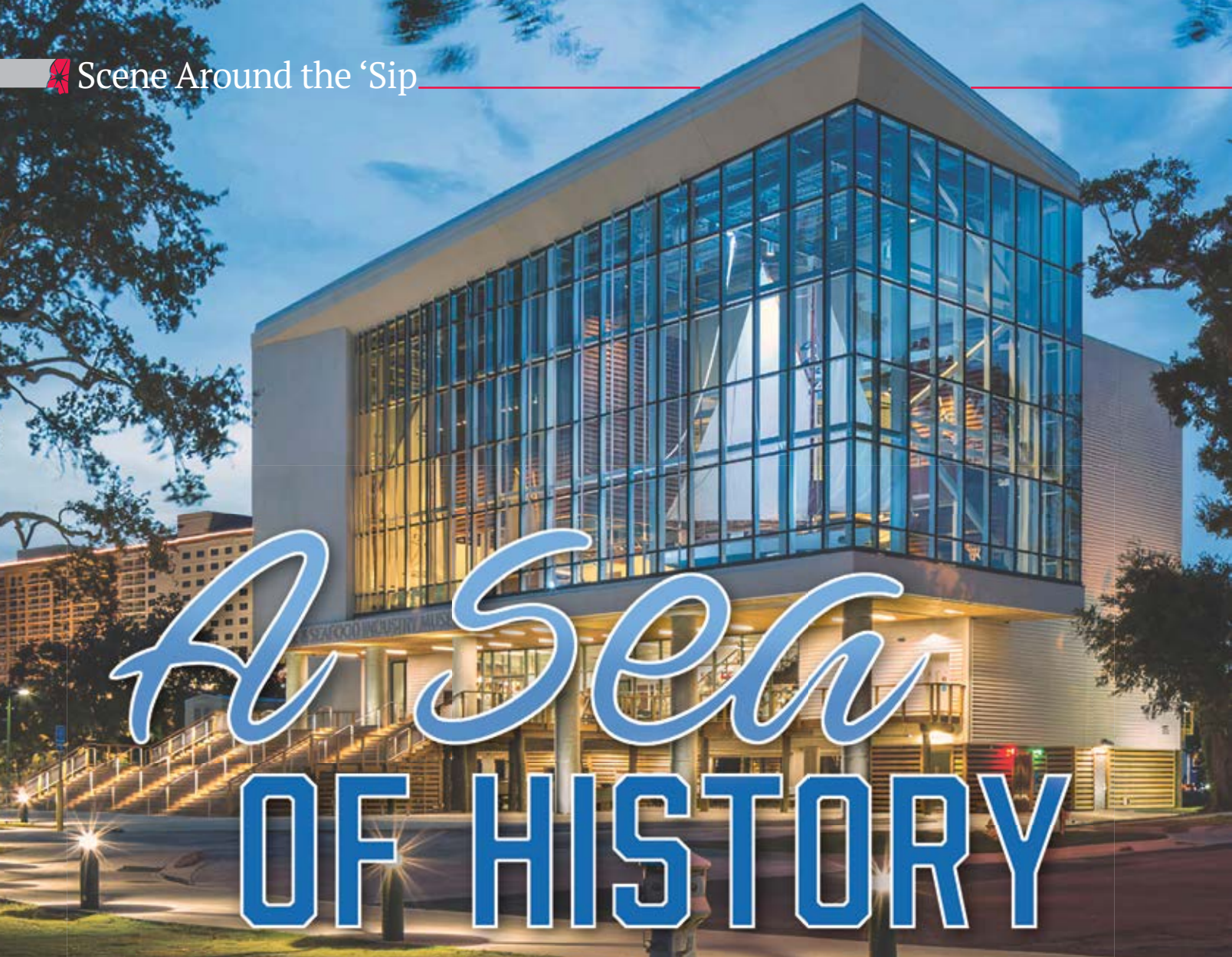
Farther east, several rivers flow into Back Bay, also called Biloxi Bay. Grassy islands and flats in the bay often attract flounder. The marshes by Old Fort Bayou near Ocean Springs can also produce good flounder action. The Pascagoula River also creates a rich delta that holds flounder. 🌿



by John N. Felsher

John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, and editor who lives in Alabama. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,300 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. Contact him at j.felsher@hotmail.com.





A Sea of History

Museum displays rich Mississippi nautical history

by John N. Felsher

Built on a peninsula and founded from the sea by the French more than 300 years ago, Biloxi always enjoyed a special relationship with the water and the seafood it produced. The Mississippi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum preserves the memory of that legacy, focusing heavily upon the seafood industry.

“The sea has been instrumental in the development of Biloxi since the beginning,” Elizabeth Alexander, the museum’s education and outreach coordinator, said. “In the 1800s, Biloxi was just a sleepy little fishing village. People caught the seafood and brought it to their dinner tables. By 1900, the people realized that the Biloxi area had enough seafood to share with the world.”

Established in 1986 at 115 1st Street in Biloxi, the museum exhibits many artifacts and interpretations of the vibrant maritime history and heritage of the Mississippi Coast. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed the museum, but a new 20,000-square-foot three-story museum opened in 2014.

“When people first enter the lobby, they see the beautiful Fresnel lens from the old Ship Island Lighthouse,” Alexander said. “We also have a Laitram automatic shrimp peeling machine, invented by 16-year-old J.M. LaPeyre. Before then, people had to peel shrimp by hand. We also have artifacts from the ‘U.S.S. Biloxi,’ a World War II cruiser, and many other things.”

Alexander’s great-great grandfather, Lazaro Lopez, became one of the people most instrumental in turning seafood into an industry in Mississippi by establishing the first seafood processing plant in the area. Many people from different cultures speaking various languages participated in catching, processing and shipping Mississippi seafood.

“Other cities might be a ‘melting pot,’ but we’re a ‘gumbo pot,” Alexander said. “We have a new Vietnamese exhibit to recognize their contributions to the seafood industry. The Mississippi seafood industry has an annual economic impact of more than \$377 million and provides employment for over 8,500 people. Back in the day, oysters were the huge player, but shrimp is king now.”



Of course, people venturing out to sea need boats. Once called the “White Winged Queens of the Gulf of Mexico,” Biloxi schooners harvested seafood and performed many other functions. These agile sailing craft built locally from Mississippi and Louisiana timber, began as oyster harvesting boats in the late 19th century. Their heyday lasted about four decades.

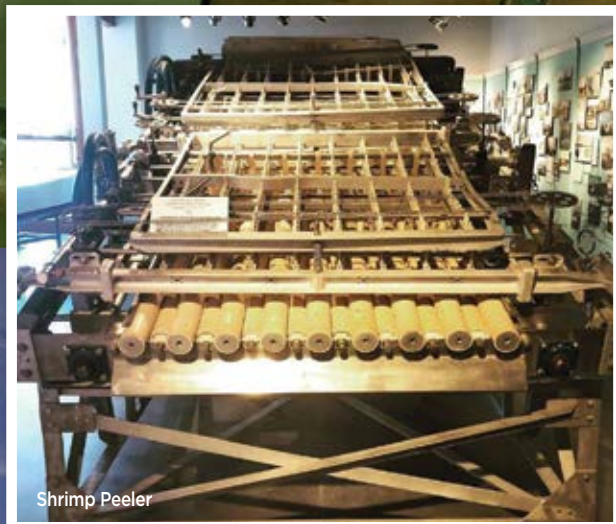
“Biloxi schooners were the worker bees of the seafood industry for a long time,” Alexander said. “Unfortunately, no original Biloxi schooners still exist, but we own two replicas, the ‘Glenn L. Swetman’ and the ‘Mike Sekul.’ People can charter them or take tours and experience how to sail. The princess of the show, the ‘Nydia,’ a sandbagger sloop built in 1898 about six blocks from the museum, sits in our main gallery.”

Youngsters can sail aboard a Biloxi schooner to one of the barrier islands. In other programs, campers can participate in things such as shrimping and fishing.

“Every summer, we hold a Sea-n-Sail Adventure Camp for children six to 12 years old,” Alexander said. “We teach them about the history of this area and do hands-on activities, like sailing on a Biloxi schooner, how to fish and catch shrimp. Also, Grayhawk Perkins of the Choctaw and Houma Tribes shares his Native American lore. We also hold private events, such as weddings and parties.”

Each May, the museum holds the Billy Creel Memorial Wooden Boat Show. At the largest gathering of boats on the Mississippi Coast, people can see and tour historic, antique, and other wooden craft. The 2025 show will be held May 17-18 at 367 Beach Blvd. in Biloxi. 🚢

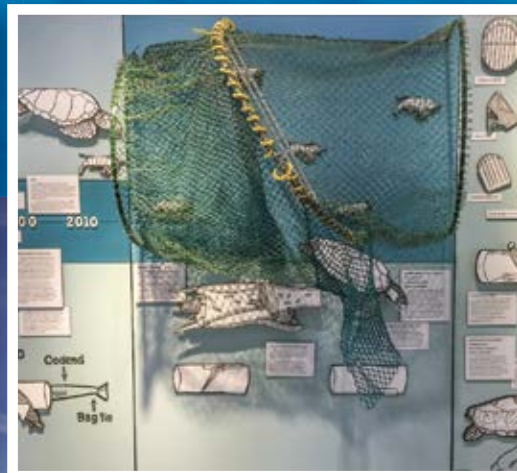
For more information on the museum, call 228-435-6320 or visit maritimemuseum.org.



Shrimp Peeler



Ship Island Fresnel Lens



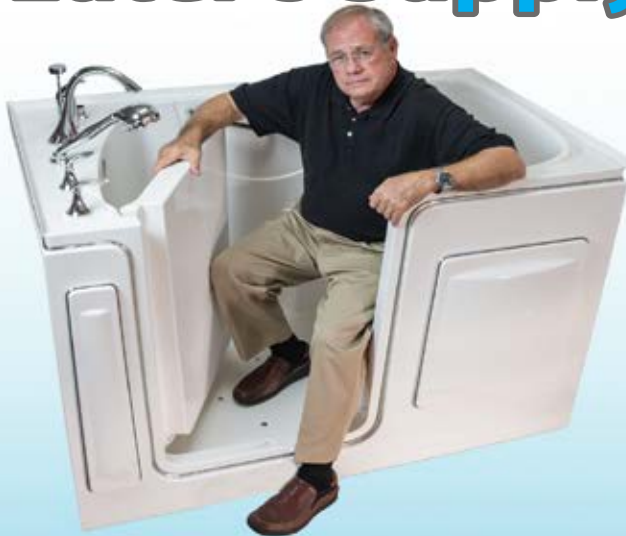
Next in Picture This:

Outdoor Fun

Send us a photo of your children, grandchildren, or kids in your family playing outside. The photos must be high-resolution JPG files of at least 1 MB in size. Please send the photo as an attachment to an email and send it to news@ecm.coop. Each entry must be accompanied by photographer or sender's name, address, and co-op.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 30. Select photos will appear in the July 2025 issue.

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Lineman APPRECIATION

by Jennifer Johnson

This month, we celebrate our linemen for all they do for PEPA and our members! When you see them out and about, take a moment to thank a lineman!

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M
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Listed in the top 10 most dangerous jobs in America.

Installs and repairs wires used in electrical power systems. It's intense work that must be done safely.

No matter the day or hour, a lineman is ready to grab his/her gear and get to work to restore power.

Electricity up to 14,000 volts is the norm. A lineman ensures there is a reliable power supply for residences and businesses in the areas we call home.

Maintenance tasks include inspecting power lines for damage or wear or testing electrical equipment for proper function.

Accuracy and attention to detail are crucial. Working with electricity requires both of these to make sure the linemen and other workers on the site are safe.

Needed, appreciated, and loved by family, friends, and their communities for all they do to keep the lights on.

LINEMAN APPRENTICESHIP ADVANCEMENTS:

Apprentice linemen Ben Bond, Corie Lucroy, Seth Moss, and Sam Stewart tested in late February to move into year three of the lineman apprenticeship program. Assistant Foreman Robert Mitchell reported that all four candidates successfully completed their testing. We appreciate the work they have put in to advance to the next level of the program.



Ben Bond



Corie Lucroy



Seth Moss



Sam Stewart



GROWING *future* LEADERS

A group of 84 high school juniors from all over the state gathered in Jackson from Feb. 26 to Feb. 28 for the 38th Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi Cooperative Leaders Workshop.

The program instills leadership skills, inspires creative thinking, encourages community service, and introduces students to legislative elected officials from their communities.

The conference was held at The Westin in downtown Jackson.

The students earned the trip to the workshop following a competitive selection process sponsored by their local electric cooperative. They will travel to Washington, D.C. in June for a seven-day youth leadership tour.

Pontotoc Electric Power Association students Corban Rock, Adalyn Vandiver, and Leah Clark spent the three days in Jackson with other students from around the state. They met with their state lawmakers, toured the state capitol, participated in problem solving activities, and attended speeches by motivational speakers — including one by political cartoonist Marshall Ramsey — who urged them to serve their communities.

Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann and Secretary of State Michael Watson spoke to the students during the workshop.



A. Adalyn Vandiver and Leah Clark sharing a laugh with Rep. Beth Luther Waldo on the second day of the workshop. **B.** Leah, Corban, and Adalyn posing for the camera, ready to start the workshop with a smile. **C.** (From left to right) Rep. Jonathan Lancaster, Adalyn, Corban, Leah, and Sen. Ben Suber.

Leadership & INTERACTIVE LEARNING



“

I truly believe this Cooperative Workshop has been life changing. I've met new people along the way who will continue to make a difference in my life. I have also been pushed to think about ways I can change my community and that, alone, is impactful. I will take things from this week and bring them back home to better my county. – Adalyn Vandiver



MILLS EMBRACES CALLING *Wearing many hats*

by Jennifer Johnson

Like many kids, Cage Mills grew up with a love for playing sports. Football, baseball, basketball, and golf were all part of his high school experience. After graduating from North Pontotoc Attendance Center, Mills had his eye set on coaching as a career path, so he worked to obtain his teaching degree. While doing his student teaching in Tupelo, Mills received an offer from South Pontotoc Attendance Center. He accepted the position and taught U.S. and world history. He also was an assistant football and baseball coach and then became head golf coach.

Three years ago, he was having lunch with a good friend who works for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) in Lee County. His friend recounted the exciting things happening in their schools through FCA. He mentioned that he would love to have a full-time FCA representative in Pontotoc and asked if Mills knew anyone who would be a possible candidate.



The Mills family (clockwise from bottom): Brantley Mills, Meagan Mills, Cage Mills, and Mia Jo Mills.

"I started thinking of some folks who might be a good fit, then we finished lunch, and I got ready to leave. I got in my truck and the Lord — in a voice so distinct and clear — asked, 'What about you?'"

Somewhat like the story of Moses in the Bible, Mills admitted he started back pedaling. "I said, 'I can't do it.' We just had our second child. We just built a house. I have never spoken in front of those kinds of large crowds."

Mills said taking the job with FCA meant he would have to raise his own financial support to cover his salary and anything needed for his ministry. He said the prospect was a little daunting. "I went through trainings, which were a three-month process. I tried to convince the Lord to let me do it part time so I would still be in the school system for a year."

Mills said he felt the Lord telling him to fully rely on Him, so he let the principals at South Pontotoc know he would not be coming back. He said he was concerned about losing a paycheck, but he raised the money he needed. He is quick to thank the schools, churches, and individuals who made it possible for his ministry to be successful.

I realized when I listened to God and committed completely to doing this, God's timing was perfect. "There were some seniors in the schools that God wanted me to get to know and encourage. If I had not listened to Him, I would have missed out on that blessing."

Another blessing he's seen is being able to provide a way for low-income students to attend FCA camps to grow them as young leaders, make a difference in their lives, and help them to grow in their faith walk.

Mills oversees several events to continue the mission God has given him. "We did Coaches Time Out in January, which was aimed at allowing coaches and their spouses to be poured into spiritually. The event included time for them to connect without distractions. We know coaching can be hard on a marriage and family."

Another event in April is the Night of Champions, which will be held at the Cadence Bank Arena. Two students each from North Pontotoc, South Pontotoc, and Pontotoc City Schools, as well as two from each of the middle schools, will be recognized for going above and beyond as student leaders.

There's also an FCA golf tournament in April, which is one of their largest fundraisers. Mills said anyone can play, and he's looking forward to a good crowd of golfers.

Mills' ministry even reaches to Uganda in East Africa. His FCA chapter has a "change for change" drive every October and November. They send the money they collect to FCA teams ministering there. Additionally, he's part of a team praying for the country.

Mills said his biggest support comes from wife Meagan, whom he met in 2015. He had noticed when Meagan posted on Facebook about her dad and the kind of man she hoped to eventually marry. That impressed Mills, so he reached out to his brother's girlfriend and got Meagan's number. The two started talking and dating. That led to a wedding and, a few years later, two children: Brantley, 6, and Mia Jo, 4.

In addition to spending time with his family and worshipping with his church family at Green Valley Baptist Church, Mills spends his days leading or overseeing "huddles" at each of the schools, which are times for Bible study and conversation for students. He can also be found putting together larger events within the schools, like the Every Rally which reminds students that FAC is not just for athletes and that everyone is invited to take part. He makes it a point to attend sporting events at each of the three Pontotoc schools and cheer on the athletes who are participating.

A busy man, Mills answers to "husband," "father," sometimes "coach" or even "Donut Guy" — he purchases lots of them to give to students at their meetings — but no matter the title, he's accepting the call God has on his life. "My wife and I prayed for awhile that there was something the Lord had for us to do. Never in a million years did I think I would be speaking at churches and large meetings. The Lord is faithful. He can use us if we're willing."

To learn more about giving to Cage Mills' FCA ministry, see his website:
MY.FCA.ORG/CAGEMILLS



Pontotoc County FCA Representative Cage Mills said he did not seek God's will for his career for a while, but once he asked, God showed him exactly where He wanted Mills to be.

If you're tired of having knee pain and want to talk to a doctor that can virtually give you your life back if knee pain is an issue, call Dr. Rob Acord... as he's the only doctor in the area... who has this newly discovered knee pain reduction technology.

"Chronic, Painful, Knee Pain Reduced in Less Than 8 Minutes?"

If you have knee pain, can't walk because of an old injury, or you just think it's part of getting old, you might want to read this article.

Knee pain is something that disables a lot of people every single year, but most people don't know what to do about it.

What Are Your Choices?

Some people immediately opt in for surgery, then some people watch TV and end up buying something they wrap their knee with-hoping it will help, and others just follow orders and take medications which simply block the pain signals while the underlying condition often progresses.

What Works Best?

All I'm saying is this. There are a lot of ways to TREAT your knee pain, but which one will really work?

If you've done your research, you know that there are not a lot of things that really work when it comes to actually helping align the knee, taking nerve pressure off the knee, and reducing the pain and swelling.

What if there was a "real solution" that worked from DAY ONE?

Hi, I'm Dr. Rob Acord and I'm here to tell you about a new device called the K.P.R.

I stumbled onto this one-of-a-kind machine at a recent medical conference and tried it myself.

THE RESULTS: My knees have never felt so good, and that was after.... just one treatment.

It virtually reduced my knee stiffness by 95%, so I am positive it'll help your knee pain, help you walk better as soon as you get your first treatment, plus help you do some things you used to do without the help of a walker, cane, or someone else helping you.



Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not guaranteeing a miracle if you haven't walked in many years.... but this just may be the answer you've been looking for.

Better late than never for sure. You should entertain this option... no matter what's happened to you in the past!

Let me be very clear; I'm here to possibly help you:

- **Get out of pain**
- **Walk better**
- **Move better**
- **Get up and down better**
- **Get out of chairs easier**
- **AND...**
- **Finally you will be able to move without relying on someone or something else**

"What if my knee(s) are BONE ON BONE?"

Here's all I can tell you. If you're bone on bone, and surgery is not an option for you, or surgery didn't work, this may be the exact treatment you've been needing.

You'll find out that K.P.R. is an amazing machine when teamed up with our Class IV laser therapy.

Will This Work for YOU?

Great questions and here's the answer: We have a reputation for getting great results, but if you're like most of our patients you know that the knee problem isn't going to just go away on its own. We're also known for our personalized care. We don't promise the world, but we will do everything humanly possible to get the results you want.

"I've NEVER done this before!" I'm going to offer you a consultation, knee examination, X-Rays, and TRIAL VISIT for only **\$47**

We'll know almost IMMEDIATELY if we can help and most importantly, YOU WILL TOO.

Take Action TODAY

As you know, it's human nature to procrastinate; this is not the time to do that... WHY?

My Trial Offer goes away at the end of this month. It's available as a hard deadline because I have a limited number of trial spots and we are already an extremely busy office.

Pick up the phone and call the office now. This one call could change the way you walk, feel, and move. **CALL TODAY!**

Dr. Rob Acord, D.C.

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Emotional Healing

by Steven Ward

Mary Kitchens said there are two kinds of healing when it comes to children and adults living with chronic illness and physical and mental challenges.

The first one is physical, usually gained through medical and mental health care that treats both the body and mind.

The second kind of healing is emotional.

It's emotional healing that Kitchens said she has witnessed firsthand with children at special needs summer camps.

"When the activities at a camp are done in a way where everybody can do it, whether it's riding horses, swimming, or canoeing; a couple of days at a camp can restore a child's self-esteem. They have hope and fun. And that's a different kind of healing," Kitchens, 79, said recently at Camp Kamassa in Crystal Springs.

Kitchens is the reason Camp Kamassa, the state's first and only year-around handicap accessible camp, will celebrate a grand opening on April 4 and welcome groups of campers this summer.

"God gave me the mission to do this. He said, 'I want you to do this.' And once I heard his voice, I never doubted it," Kitchens said.

Although the origins of the camp go back to 2007 when Kitchens founded the non-profit group, Mississippi's Toughest Kids Foundation, the seeds of Camp Kamassa were sown in 1984.

In 1977, Mary Kitchens and her husband Jim — a former member of the Mississippi Supreme Court — found out their 3-year-old son Dan was diagnosed with cancer.

After years of hospital visits and radiation and chemotherapy treatments, Dan was able to attend a three-day summer camp for kids with cancer at Strong River Camp in Pinola. That was in 1984 when Dan was 10. There were 30 children at the camp session, and

it changed Dan's life as well as the lives of the entire Kitchens family.

"They loved it. Our kids went back every year and became counselors. We wanted other kids to have the same experience," Kitchens said. Today, Dan Kitchens is cancer free and still involved in camp.

The camp session was put on by Camp Rainbow, an organization that created camps for pediatric cancer patients and survivors. Camp Rainbow would partner with different camps all around the state each year for their sessions.

"I just thought it would be so great if there was a permanent place for a special needs camp. I thought, I wish someone would build a permanent camp," she said.

She talked to her family and prayed to God about it.

After reading Hebrews 12:13 in her Bible, the passage spoke to her.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

“
When the activities at a camp are done in a way
where everybody can do it, whether it's riding
horses, swimming, or canoeing; a couple of days at
a camp can restore a child's self-esteem. They have
hope and fun. And that's a different kind of healing.



at CAMP KAMASSA

‘Kamassa’ is a Choctaw word for toughness

Kitchens visited 14 different special needs camps around the country. “I took photos and asked questions. I wanted to find out what worked and what didn’t. Everything here comes from that,” Kitchens said.

Kitchens also hired Tanya Mohawk to be the camp’s executive director. “You look around camp today, and everything you see are a bunch of miracles,” Mohawk said during a tour of the campground.

Jim Kitchens came up with the name.

“He said that special needs children have been through so much. They have to be so tough. Kamassa is a Choctaw word. It was perfect,” Kitchens said.

The foundation purchased 426 acres in Crystal Springs and paid it off by 2017. Construction on the camp started in 2018.

Military groups from all four branches came out over the years to work on the camp, Mohawk said.

Civil engineers and enlisted troops were sent to Camp Kamassa as part of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program. The reservist training provides key services to American communities.

There’s nothing like Camp Kamassa in the state of Mississippi.

The cost of the camp is approximately \$30 million.

When camp opens to the public this summer, Kamassa will have 14 cabins, a dining hall, a 14,000 square-foot medical clinic that can staff doctors and nurses, a recreation pavilion, a baseball and soccer field, a lake and lake house, a chapel, and an activity center where campers can participate in ceramics, woodworking, arts and crafts, music, and a dancehall.

There is also a wheelchair-accessible 3,000 square-foot pool for swimming.

The entire camp is wheelchair accessible.

Once Kamassa secures additional funding, they hope to feature other amenities including a rock-climbing wall in the activity center, a universal challenge course, an amphitheater, a general store, guided hunts, a farm, and an equestrian center.



From left to right, Camp Kamassa Executive Director Tanya Mohawk, Camp Director Andrew Vincent, and Mary Kitchens, the founder of the camp.

Concern for community

When Mohawk said the camp is filled with miracles wherever you look, she was referring to the work of volunteers and financial contributions of donors, organizations, and the state and federal government.

Southwest Electric, the Lorman-based electric cooperative, got involved with Camp Kamassa early.

Before any work could be completed at the site, they needed power.

Southwest Electric provided poles, lines, and 3-phase power at no cost.

Since that time, Southwest employees have provided countless volunteer hours getting the camp ready to open. Employees also donate money to the project through a voluntary monthly paycheck deduction.

All 25 of Mississippi's distribution electric co-ops and Cooperative Energy, a generation and transmission cooperative, made a collective donation to Camp Kamassa in the early stages of the venture.

Electric cooperatives live by seven Cooperative Principles. No. 7 is Concern for Community — "Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership."

For Southwest Electric CEO and General Manager Kevin Bonds, getting involved was a no brainer.

"The project spoke to me. The mission really pulled at my heart," Bonds said during a March volunteer workday at the camp.

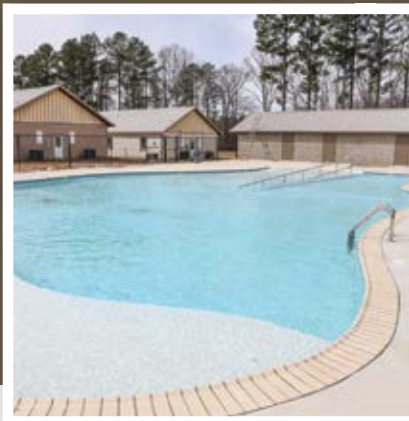
During that workday, Southwest Electric employees built beds for the camp cabins.

"I'm getting excited because we are so close to seeing kids out here," Bonds said.

Mohawk said Southwest Electric has become part of the Camp Kamassa family.

"We consider Southwest best friends," Mohawk said.

"They (Southwest) went above and beyond for us and are an essential part of this camp community," Kitchens said.



During a recent volunteer workday, employees of Southwest Electric built beds for cabins at Camp Kamassa. The camp has been a community service project for the electric cooperative since the beginning of construction of the Crystal Springs facility.



The polywood tables and chairs inside the Camp Kamassa dining hall were designed and made by an Indiana Amish woodworker employed by the furniture company, Amish Direct. The room can seat up to 225 people.



Southwest Electric General Manager Kevin Bonds and his wife Catherine stand with the couple's 4-year-old grandson, Bryson.

Summer 2025

Andrew Vincent, the camp director, said Kamassa has a brain and spinal injury group coming for a session in the middle of May.

For the summer, seven weeks are already booked for five different groups including a Camp Rainbow group and a session for sickle cell patients.

Vincent said he hopes to get into partnerships down the road with UMMC Children's Hospital and the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind. He also hopes to develop programming for the autistic population.

"This place has the capacity for so many opportunities in the future. I can't wait to see what will be happening out here in 25 to 30 years," Vincent said. 🌱



Southwest Electric and statewide co-op employees pose for a group photo during a recent volunteer work day at Camp Kamassa.

For more information about Camp Kamassa, how to volunteer, or donate money, call 601-892-1117 or visit campkamassa.com/support.

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80	\$136.00	80	\$156.00

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NRECA CEO Jim Matheson delivers remarks during the first general session of the group's PowerXchange meeting on March 10, 2025. (Photo by Michael Lynch/NRECA)

NRECA head: Local control is what co-ops do best

by Scot Hoffman

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jim Matheson brought a message of encouragement to electric cooperative leaders at the group's annual PowerXchange meeting in Atlanta last month.

In his remarks during the opening session, Matheson drew upon the inspiring stories of the program's early years as well as the impact of co-op vision, leadership and unity. He painted a picture of a co-op industry that is uniquely prepared to thrive.

“

We've connected the dots between economic growth and reliable, affordable, always-available electricity. The ironclad relationship between electricity and opportunity is something electric cooperatives demonstrate every single day.

“We strive to do the right thing, and we're good at doing it,” he told the crowd. “In the face of hardship, we draw on the incredible foundation of character, courage and hope laid by those who came before us.”

Matheson called out the electric reliability threats caused by “bad public policy” as a major challenge of our time.

“Public policies haven't planned for the growth in our economy and increases in electric demand the way they should have,” Matheson said. “That was our main message to the Biden administration, and it's been our main message to the Trump administration.”

He noted that he, the NRECA team and co-ops across the country have worked together to quickly engage policymakers on ways they can help co-ops and rural communities succeed.

“We're at the table. We have the relationships. We're leaders because we know what it takes to bring power to the places that America depends on for its strength,” he said.

“We've connected the dots between economic growth and reliable, affordable, always-available electricity. The ironclad relationship between electricity and opportunity is something electric cooperatives demonstrate every single day.”

Matheson told the story of President Franklin Roosevelt's summer home in Warm Springs, Georgia, dubbed the Little White House. It was there that FDR conceived the idea of creating the Rural Electrification Administration and entrusting rural Americans with the task of bringing power to the countryside.

“He knew what we could do,” he said. “He saw resilient men and women, forged by the experience of life in rural places, who could take on tough tasks, who possessed the self-reliance, the grit, the ability to work together to pursue an ambitious goal and then make it happen.

“And those attributes still ring true in rural America.”

Matheson also outlined the policy priorities co-ops are focused on in Washington, D.C. He listed key co-op objectives, including permitting reform, new power generation, continued investment in co-op infrastructure projects and a diversified national energy portfolio.

“When I talk about a pro-energy agenda for America, I'm talking about what we do best,” he said. “Pro-energy means local control. It means being practical. Pro-energy means being for something.”

“Our conversations this week help forge one, strong, powerful co-op voice. That's the voice people hear in Congress, in the White House, in Washington and across the country,” he said.

“We make an incredible difference when we speak with one voice, choose the communities and people we serve, and when we put them first.” ❁

Sweet Treats

1



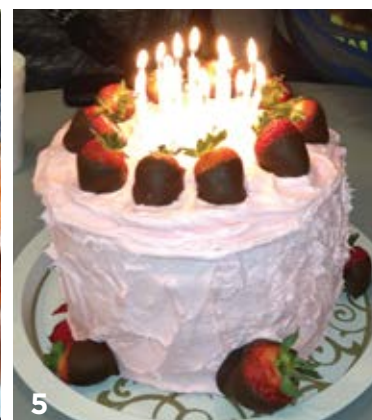
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8



9

1. Chocolate meringue pie. **Sissy Lloyd** of Brandon; Central Electric member.
2. Orange slice cake. **Lorraine Dickerson** of Olive Branch; Northcentral member.
3. Brown butter pecan cheesecake. **Lesa Wright** of Louisville; East Mississippi EPA member.
4. Walnut sticky buns. **Kathleen Cooper** of Biloxi; Coast Electric member.
5. Strawberry cake. **Virginia Fletcher** of Olive Branch; Northcentral member.

6. Banana pudding. **Elizabeth Lansdale** of Laurel; Dixie Electric member.
7. Chantilly cake. **Carla Thornhill** of Foxworth; Pearl River Valley Electric member.
8. Sweet Pralines. **Elizabeth Matthews** of Diamondhead; Coast Electric member.
9. Cranberry upside down cake. **Tana Bradley** of Biloxi; Singing River Electric member.
10. Sweets-covered strawberries. **Teresa Johnson** of Laurel; Dixie Electric member.



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19

11. Pecan pumpkin cake. **Donna Necaize** of Diamondhead; Coast Electric member.

12. Black bottom pie. **Lori McGraw** of Yazoo City; Yazoo Valley Electric member.

13. Pecan pie. **Haley Barnhart** of Pontotoc; Pontotoc EPA member.

14. German chocolate cake. **Sue Bennett Moore** of Cruger; Delta Electric member.

15. Pineapple upside down cake. **Shelia Atwood** of Ellisville; Dixie Electric member.

16. Lemon cake. **Vivian Jackson** of Heidelberg; Southern Pine Electric member.

17. Custard pie. **Dollie Cotton** of Summit; Magnolia Electric member.

18. Banana pudding. **Terri Phillips** of Mendenhall; Southern Pine Electric member.

19. Pound cake. **Patsy Rainey** of Seminary; Southern Pine Electric member.



Plated

with Rebecca Turner

A SOURDOUGH STARTER FOR SCRUMPTIOUS SUSTENANCE

Sourdough bread has a dense texture and slightly tangy flavor. It is naturally leavened through fermentation using a “starter” from flour and water. People have made sourdough bread for thousands of years; however, during the 2020 pandemic, homemade sourdough exploded in popularity. Sourdough requires more care and attention than other breads, and once people have more time, they can nurture a starter and experiment with different loaves.

Constance Shelby, a registered dietitian, nutritionist, and founder of Perfect Fit Nutrition, began baking sourdough during the shut-down. “During COVID, my sister lived with us for a month. To make sure we didn’t lose our minds, she wanted to try sourdough,” Shelby said. “We spent forever growing the starter, but we were in heaven when we finally had that first loaf.”

Growing a sourdough starter isn’t hard, but it can be challenging because it requires patience and constant attention, nurturing through feedings, and keeping in a proper environment. Many homemakers feel a sense of connection with their starter and name it, making it part of the family.

Julie Richardson of Brandon is new to sourdough, but her starter is already part of the family. “We named the first starter, Marcus,” Richardson said. “Now we have Marcus Jr. because Marcus Sr. got moldy.”

Shelby offers a tip to anyone intimidated by growing a starter from scratch: “Order a dehydrated starter!” Shelby said. “You can be confident that your starter is good before baking. You can always grow a starter later once you’re comfortable.”

You can start baking when your starter consistently doubles in size within 4 to 8 hours after feeding, shows visible bubbles throughout, and has a slightly sour smell. Depending on your environment and flour type, it can take 1 to 2 weeks. Test the readiness of your starter by seeing if a small amount floats in a glass of water when added.

The next step is to get baking! Start with a simple bread loaf. But don’t forget that patience and resilience are essential ingredients when baking at home.

Sourdough bread elevates sandwiches with decadent fillings. It pairs well with soups, hearty stews, or creamy spreads, and it is well-suited for gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches. 



BASIC SOURDOUGH BREAD

INGREDIENTS

4 cups bread flour (or all-purpose flour)
½ cup active sourdough starter (fed and bubbly)
2 teaspoons salt
1 ½ cups water (room temperature)

Mix the dough: In a large bowl, mix flour and water until just combined. Cover and let it rest for 30 to 45 minutes.

Add starter and salt: Add the sourdough starter and salt. Mix thoroughly by folding and stretching the dough.

Bulk fermentation (4 to 6 hours): Let the dough rest in a warm spot (~75 degrees). Perform 3 to 4 sets of stretch and folds every 30 minutes in the first 2 hours. Dough should double in size.

Shape the dough: Lightly flour a surface and shape the dough into a round or oval shape. Place it into a floured bowl with a towel seam-side up.

Final proof (8 to 12 hours in fridge): Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. This helps with flavor and structure.

Bake the bread: Preheat oven to 475 degrees with a Dutch oven inside. Transfer dough onto parchment paper, score the top with a sharp knife, and place it in the Dutch oven. Cover and bake for 20 minutes, then uncover and bake for another 20 to 25 minutes until golden brown.

Cool and enjoy: Let the bread cool completely before slicing.



by Rebecca Turner

Rebecca Turner is an author, registered dietitian, radio host, television presenter, and board-certified in Lifestyle Medicine. She is a lifelong Mississippian and a member of the Central Electric Co-op in Brandon. Find her on social media @RebeccaTurnerTalks or online at RebeccaTurnerNutrition.com.

SOURDOUGH BLUEBERRY MUFFINS WITH CRUMB TOPPING

*Recipe by Constance Shelby,
Perfect Fit Nutrition*

DRY INGREDIENTS

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon corn starch
zest of half a lemon
1 cup blueberries

WET INGREDIENTS

8 tablespoons butter melted
2 large eggs
½ cup sourdough starter discard
3 tablespoons sour cream
or plain Greek yogurt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

CRUMBLE TOPPING

3 tablespoons butter melted
½ cup granulated sugar

Crumb topping: Place the melted butter, flour, and sugar in a bowl and use a fork to mix until you have coarse crumble. Set aside.

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Line a 12-count muffin tin with paper liners or grease generously to prevent sticking.

Dry ingredients: In a large mixing bowl combine the flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, corn starch, lemon zest, and salt with a fork. Fold in blueberries. Set aside.

Wet ingredients: In a medium mixing bowl, whisk all the wet ingredients until smooth. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. (Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water or milk if needed)

Divide the batter evenly into 12 muffins and top with the crumble topping gently pressing the crumble.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean. Let muffins cool in the tin for 10 minutes before removing to cool on a cooling rack.

Events open to the public will be published free of charge as space allows. Submit details at least two months prior to the event date. Submissions must include a phone number with area code for publication. Email to news@ecm.coop. **Events are subject to change.**

Dianne Holloman Memorial Farmer's Market. April 5. May 3. June 7. Quitman. From 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Quitman Depot, 100 South railroad Ave. The market will feature fruits and vegetables, home baked breads, honey, jams and jellies, crafts, homemade goods, and plants and garden items for sale. There will also be live entertainment and food vendors. Details: 601-776-5701.

GULFPEX 2025 Postage Stamp and Postcard Show. April 4 and 5. Biloxi. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on April 4. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 5. Hosted by the Gulf Coast Smp Club with support from Gulfport's Traintastic S.T.E.A.M. Park and Model Railroad Museum. The show's theme recognizes the return of AMTRAC to the Mississippi Gulf Coast with exhibits that will feature trains on postage stamps. Over 10 vendors from across the country will have stamps, postcards, albums, stamp supplies, and more for viewing and sale. From experienced collectors to beginners to those just interested in learning about collecting, there will be something for everyone. Free stamps will be available for kids and dedicated volunteers to show them how to organize and mount stamps in an album and to answer questions about stamp collecting. Opportunities for free stamp identifications, evaluations of collections, or sale of collections will also be available. Admission and parking are free. St. Martin Community Center, 15008 Lemoyne Blvd. Details: 228-238-5433.

Waynesboro Whistle Stop Festival. April 5. Waynesboro. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year's festival theme is "Happy Trails." The festival will include pony rides, food, arts and crafts vendors, the Barney and Marie Memorial Car Show, children's train rides, space jumps, and many other activities. The downtown event is free. Details: 601-735-2268 or email librarywayne39367@gmail.com.

Spring Fling at Landrums Homestead. April 12. Laurel. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 1356 Highway 15 South. Photos with the Easter Bunny, face painting, a scavenger hunt, games, a bunny cake hop, homemade ice cream, open smokehouse, wagon rides, and gem mining. Admission is \$12. Children 3 and under are free. Details: 601-649-2546 or visit landrums.com.

Star Spring Festival for St. Jude Children's Hospital. April 26. Star. From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. 301 Mangum Dr. The event will feature a car, truck, bike, and tractor show, vendor and craft booths, a 5k walk/run, a kid's fun run, a DJ, food, raffles, and an evening pageant. Admission is free for spectators. All registrations will 100% benefit St. Jude Children's Hospital. Details: 601-842-7947 or visit starspringfestival.com.

Antiques and Collectible Barn Sale. May 2 and 3. Purvis. 4799 Old Highway 11 (Oak Grove area). From 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. More than 85 collectors with trailer loads of antiques, collectibles, advertising signs, glassware, railroad, wagon wheels, bells, primitives, anvils, crocks, advertising signs, furniture, tools, cast iron, tractor seats, old bottles, old windows and doors, jewelry, and coins. There will be a concession stand. Parking is \$2 for both days. Details: 601-818-5886 or 601-794-7462.

Arts on Beulah Festival. May 3. Tylertown. Presented by the Walthall County Arts Council, the inaugural downtown festival begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 6 p.m. The festival will feature live entertainment, food and shopping opportunities, arts and crafts vendors, and a children's activity area. The festival is looking for vendors to participate. Details: 504-458-4788 or email Susan.Appeldorn@walthallcountyarts.org.

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Glen J. Pelas

The Covington County Chamber of Commerce

Annual Okatoma Festival. May 3. Collins. The downtown, free festival is held around the historic Courthouse from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The festival kicks-off with a 5-K run/walk and 1-mile children's fun run. Activities include arts and crafts, food, a parade, antique car show, quilt exhibit, children's park, health fair, and live entertainment featuring Jason Arnold and The Bird Dogs. Details: 601-765-6012 or visit covingtonchamber.com.

Bay Oaks Quilt Show. May 9 and 10. Bay St. Louis. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 9. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 10. Quilts will be available for viewing. A raffle will be held on May 10 to win a quilt. The show is put on by the Bay Oaks Quilting Group. The show will be held at the St. Rose De Lima Community Center on Necaise Avenue. Details: 228-493-4678.

Harrison County Gem, Mineral, and Jewelry

Show. May 17 and 18. Biloxi. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 17 and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 18. The event will feature vendors, exhibits, and children's activities. Jappa Shriner Center, 13280 Shriners Blvd. Admission is \$6 for 12 and over. There is a \$1 coupon on show's website and Facebook page. Details: 601-947-7245 or 205-296-3779.

Gulf Coast Military Relics, Antique Arms,

and Collectible Show. May 23 and 24. Biloxi. Historical military artifacts and relics from all periods and all wars bought, sold, and traded. Firearms, swords, daggers, bayonets, uniforms, helmets, medals, insignia, flags, books, photos, currency, old bottles, and other collectibles will be available. May 23 - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 24 - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Joppa Shriners' Center, 13280 Shriners Blvd. Admission is \$7. Parking is free. Details: 228-224-1120 and 228-860-3575.

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What do Yankees have to do with a kiss?



Have you ever misplaced something you just had in your hand? That happened to me the other day. I was up early (well, early for me anyway) editing a story that had to air that afternoon on WJTV. When I finish editing a story, I always download it onto a thumb drive and transfer it to my laptop, from which I upload it to the TV station.

“

She'd say, "I'll give you a Yankee dime if you'll do so-and-so." A Yankee dime is a peck on the cheek — a short kiss.

I'd rather have had a real dime,
but I took what I could get.

Now, it doesn't take long for one of these little flash drives to start filling up. For instance, my current drive has all of my completed stories for about the past year and a half on it. Plus, all the raw video I shot on a trip we took to Europe a couple of summers ago. There's also a lot of field footage from which I edit my finished stories. Needless to say, that little drive has grown quite important to me.

To shorten the story a bit, after I did the upload to the station, I had a shower, got dressed, and went to work. Later that afternoon I put my hand in my pocket to grab that drive, and it wasn't there. I always keep that drive with me.

So, I went back to the parking lot to see if I dropped it when I got out of the car. No luck. I called Jo to go look in the driveway and see if I dropped it there.

Meanwhile, I was inventorying in my mind everything I'd be losing if I didn't find that drive.

About that time Jo called me back and asked me what I'd give her if she found it. First thing that popped into my mind was a blast from the past. I told her if she found it, I'd give her a Yankee dime!

Now, I had not even heard that expression in decades, much less used it. Mama would offer me a Yankee dime if I took out the garbage or ran across the street and got something for her from the store. She'd say, "I'll give you a Yankee dime if you'll do so-and-so." A Yankee dime

is a peck on the cheek — a short kiss. I'd rather have had a real dime, but I took what I could get.

I Googled "Yankee dime" to see if I could find out how the saying originated. Google was no help. I did find that the term seems to represent something that doesn't have a lot of value. I assumed it was a saying from Mama's childhood.

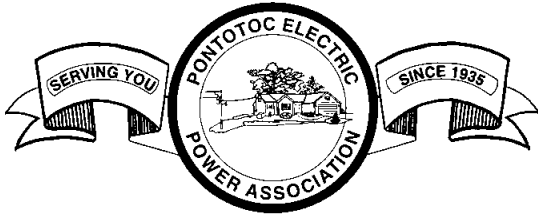
Jo found the missing drive in the pocket of the pajamas I was wearing that morning. I would have eventually found it myself. Well, maybe.

Working at the house in my pajamas has its advantages. I just have to remember to check my pockets before I get dressed for work. Either that or convince Jo a "Yankee dime" is worth more than its face value. ✨



by Walt Grayson

Walt Grayson is the host of "Mississippi Roads" on Mississippi Public Broadcasting television and the author of two "Looking Around Mississippi" books and "Oh! That Reminds Me: More Mississippi Homegrown Stories." Walt is also a reporter and 4 p.m. news anchor at WJTV in Jackson. He lives in Brandon and is a Central Electric member. Contact him at walt@waltgrayson.com.



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