



JROTC teaches pride and discipline

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THE CLARKSDALE Press Register

SERVING THE DELTA SINCE 1865



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24 PAGES IN ONE SECTION CLARKSDALE, MS \$1

Improve or perish

Supervisors told community must step up to reform local schools.

Floyd Ingram
The Press Register

Coahoma County Supervisors were told this week Clarksdale and Coahoma County must improve their schools or see them face takeover by the state.

Dr. Will Smith, Coahoma County native and current principal with the Utica School District, said both Clarksdale Municipal School District and Coahoma County School District must make changes if they want to avoid the Mississippi Department of Education sending in a conservator to right both school systems. Both Clarksdale and Coahoma school districts received F's in the MDE School Accountability Rating released earlier this fall.

"I am a product of Coahoma County schools and for years I have watched them become something less than their best," said Smith. "I am here to increase awareness that a takeover is a possibility."

Smith helped take Utica schools from an F to a B on state accountability ratings. He said the process wasn't easy and it didn't happen overnight.

Smith pointed out both Clarksdale and Coahoma County schools have been rated F for two years in a row, a key indicator for the state to step in, take control of the district and send in a conservator tasked with improving the districts.

SEE REFORM PAGE 10



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

Clarksdale gathered at The Pinnacle on the campus of Coahoma Community College Tuesday to announce a major expansion at Saf-T-Cart. Shown are Mayor Chuck Espy, from left, Saf-T-Cart founder Jimmy Walker Sr., his wife Helen Walker, son Jimmy Walker, Jr., MDA Executive Glenn McCullough, Clarksdale Chamber Executive Jon Levingston and Board of Supervisors President Paul Pearson.

Saf-T-Cart expands

Homegrown industry to add 25 new jobs in Clarksdale.

Floyd Ingram
The Press Register

The data shows 80-percent of the new jobs in any community are created by existing industry.

Clarksdale will see 25 new jobs with the announcement that Saf-T-Cart — a homegrown industry — will soon embark on a \$1.5 million expansion at the plant that manufactures steel carts and welding storage products.

"We started with nothing, just an idea for a product in the mid '80s," said Saf-T-Cart founder

Jimmy Walker, Sr. "We've had a lot of help from a lot of people in Clarksdale and from the state. It takes a lot of people to run our business. I want to thank them and my family for getting us here."

Saf-T-Cart produces cylinder carts, cages, pallets, truck beds and trailers, traditionally for welding applications. The company's plan is to construct an 18,000-square-foot addition onto its current 150,000-square-foot facility to accommodate its growing truck bed and trailer operations.



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

Jimmy Walker, Sr., speaks from the podium as his son, Jimmy Walker, Jr. and Chamber Executive Jon Levingston look on.

"Saf-T-Cart is very grateful to state, county and local officials who have all worked with us to help our business grow," said

Saf-T-Cart President Jimmy Walker, Jr. "This cooperation has allowed Saf-T-Cart to serv-

SEE SAF-T-CART PAGE 6

Paint The Town!

New set of murals go up

Josh Troy
The Press Register

The second annual Paint the Town in Clarksdale had a little bit of everything.

Artists came from as far away as Bogotá, Colombia

to paint murals on walls in the downtown area last week, but it was much more than the first Paint the Town in 2018. Four artists came last year and all of them painted murals. This year, more than triple the artists participated, some were local and there were a diverse range of paintings. Three rooms at the

Travelers Hotel were donated for artists to stay in. Some Clarksdale residents allowed artists to stay in their homes. All artists received a \$200 honorarium.

"They all like it," said Paint the Town organizer Eric Stone. "They like the publicity. The ones who

SEE PAINT PAGE 7



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

Howlin' Wolf, a black bird and a local face grace what was a blank wall on Second Street.

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Nationally Accredited Chest Pain Center

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REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

NorthwestMSMedicalCenter.org

Saf-T-Cart

Continued from Page 1

ice its customers in all parts of North America directly from the Mississippi Delta. We are excited about our next building expansion and are looking forward to its completion, along with more employment from area citizens.”

The younger walker also said his father is the visionary who saw the need to expand the company and prepare it for the future.

“I’m an engineer and think in a straight line,” said son Jimmy. “Dad was the one who saw 20-30 years down the road. Projects like this are great, but it’s really about the people who work at Saf-T-Cart. I want to thank them and my family for this announcement.”

The Mississippi Development Authority and Coahoma County

are providing assistance for building improvements and construction costs.

“MDA appreciates the team at Saf-T-Cart for bringing 25 new job opportunities to residents of the Mississippi Delta,” said MDA Executive Director Glenn McCullough. “Saf-T-Cart is a sterling example of a homegrown company achieving its goals in our state. This latest expansion is a win for the company, the area’s residents, and the local community, all of which will benefit from the company’s growth for years to come.”

Clarksdale Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jon Levingston praised MDA and also the City of Clarksdale and

Coahoma County Supervisors.

“A lot of people had a hand in this,” said Levingston. “The support of MDA was essential. I also want to point out the local support for every project we have brought to the city and county is critical.”

“Many people say the best days of the Delta are behind us,” said Levingston. “I think if we choose to look forward and not backward. If we choose to act and take advantage of every opportunity before us – and today we have – our best days are before us.”

Founded in Clarksdale in 1986, Saf-T-Cart currently employs 90 workers. The company expects to complete its expansion by February 2020.



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

Clarksdale Mayor Chuck Espy, from left, Mississippi Development Authority executive Glenn McCullough, PeopleShores CEO Murali Vullaganti and Clarksdale Chamber of Commerce executive director Jon Levingston share a moment after the Saf-T-Cart expansion announcement Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2019.



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

Mississippi Development Authority executive Glenn McCullough speaks at the Saf-T-Cart expansion announcement at The Pinnacle on the campus of Coahoma Community College this week.

Saf-T-Cart: From an idea to an industry leader

Floyd Ingram
The Press Register

In the late 80’s Jimmy Walker Sr. saw the need for a self-contained oxy/acetylene unit- or cutting torch outfit. After being unable to find manufacturers to produce his cart, Walker began acquiring equipment he bought from local auctions. Walker developed the very first Saf-T-Cart as an extension of Walker Welders in 1997.

“My dad left a steady job as a truck driver and started selling these carts out of a pickup truck,” said son Jimmy Walker Jr., the President of Saf-T-Cart. “That was a pretty bold move for a man with a five kids. Mom did the books.”

Today, Saf-T-Cart has expanded to produce cylinder carts, cages, pallets, truck beds, and trailers, and employs over 100 people in its everyday manufacturing operation.

Today Saf-T-Cart sells to all 50 states, Canada, Latin America and beyond.

The elder Walker, now 83, said the third generation is now involved in the business.

“I’m sort of embarrassed to say this, but I love to work,” said Walker, Sr. “We are always looking for new ideas and ways to serve our customers.”

With 60 years in the industry, Saf-T-Cart is constantly developing new innovations which change the way cylinder transport is accomplished in the packaged gas industry.

What originally started



as Walker Welders grew and a new fill plant and cylinder distribution facility was built on Highway 49 South around 1978, just nine years after it opened.

The Metal Fab Division

— later to be renamed Saf-T-Cart — started as a secondary business of Walker Welders in 1980. Walker Sr. thought of the idea after attending welding shows throughout the country. A welder himself, he saw many weaknesses in the components used in the welding industry, including manufacturers of cylinder carts and the like.

Walker said he also

wanted something recession proof and non-dependent on the Delta since so many businesses were hit hard whenever there was a downturn in the local economy.

The formation of a manufacturing company came with the purchase of the old Dublin School in the early 1990s.

In 1997, the facility in Dublin was too small and the Highway 322 complex

was purchased and the operation moved.

In 2005, the Coahoma County Board of Supervisors and Industrial Foundation brokered a deal for Saf-T-Cart to acquire the old Delta Homes location.

Saf-T-Cart’s growth can only be attributed to the loyalty and dedication from our customer base, which remains their primary focus to this day.

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