



Lee notches first win at Strayhorn

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THE CLARKSDALE

Press Register

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Clarksdale hosts MDA visit

Floyd Ingram
The Press Register

It's one thing to tell people about the Delta's Rising Star, it's another thing for them to come to Clarksdale and see it for themselves.

John Rounsaville, newly appointed Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, visited Clarksdale last week, stopping by several new businesses and industrial expansions that have graced the community over the last 18 months.

Rounsaville said he had been told about the success of economic development in Clarksdale and made a special trip Wednesday to see for himself. Rounsaville has an extensive background in economic development and was picked by Governor Tate Reeves in April to head the state's top economic development agency.

"We have such a habit of thinking about industrial development and economic development as smokestacks and large factories," said Rounsaville as he visited PeopleShores. "While we will continue to seek and attract those types of projects, I don't think they are always the right fit for many communities. The smaller, tech companies – like PeopleShores – can bring a lot to a community and our state."

Rounsaville said breaking that mindset and developing a more diverse economy is one of the reasons he and much of his staff came to Clarksdale.

In addition to PeopleShores, Rounsaville also toured a major expansion at Saf-T-Kart, also financed and supported by state economic development dollars.

Rounsaville was accompanied by Joe Donovan, MDA Director of the Entrepreneur Center and Dr.



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

John Rounsaville, Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, was welcomed at PeopleShores last week. Shown with Rounsaville are, from left, Mickey Austin, PeopleShores CEO; Jon Levingston, Executive Director of the Clarksdale/Coahoma Economic Development Authority; Rounsaville; Murali Vullaganti, Founder and Executive Chairman of PeopleShores; Dr. William Ashley, Director of Business Research and Workforce Development, Mississippi Development Authority; and Joe Donovan, Director of the Entrepreneur Center, Mississippi Development Authority.

William Ashley, Director of Business Research and Workforce Development. The group was hosted by Chamber Director and Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority, Jon Levingston.

Clarksdale Mayor Chuck Espy met with Rounsaville at PeopleShores and thanked them for their visit and support of projects in Clarksdale.

"They work beautifully with Jon Levingston, our local economic developer, James Curcio, the director of the North Delta Planning District, as well as with members of our administration and the owners of our local industries," said Espy. "The MDA is essential to our future and to bringing new jobs to our community."

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Joe Nelson: 'School is about students, not adults'

Josh Troy
The Press Register

Dr. Earl Joe Nelson had two offers to become a superintendent in July 2019 – one near family in Biloxi and the other the Clarksdale Municipal School District in the Delta.

And he chose us.

Both were failing districts with the Mississippi Department of

Education, but the CMSD was 70 points away from a D and the district near family was seven points away from a D. Thanks to CMSD's five board members, Nelson decided to come to Clarksdale.

Nelson spoke about his decision to be the CMSD superintendent, his experiences through a little more than one year on the job and his vision for the future at Clarksdale Baptist Church Sunday morning.

"I was really drawn to the five members of the board here," Nelson said. "I've been around Mississippi and I was told that, not only do you want to be a part of a system, you want a system to



Nelson

be a part of you. Not only are you interviewing with them, you're interviewing them as well."

Nelson is in his 29th year in education after teaching at Biloxi High School for 11 years and being an administrator in the Pass Christian School District for 16 years. Both were A districts during Nelson's tenure.

"You learn a lot in an A system,"

SEE NELSON PAGE 19

Summer work season

County crews busy paving and building

Floyd Ingram
The Press Register

The summer construction season is in full bloom in Coahoma County with Supervisors busy on a variety of construction projects and making plans to replace a major bridge in the county.

County Road Manager Otis Griffin updated supervisors on various road projects and work done this summer that delayed paving projects in the county. With those projects behind him, Griffin said the focus now is roads.

"We worked on the Justice Center parking lot, we worked hauling dirt to the new fire station and we just had limited resources," said Griffin. "We are looking at roads now."

Board President Johnny Newson pointed to the county's four-year road plan as a good place to start.

Supervisors ranked the following projects at their July 6 meeting.

- 1.) Sunflower River Road – reseal.
- 2.) Little Simmons Road – reseal.
- 3.) Bennett Road – reseal.
- 4.) Young Road – reseal.
- 5.) Install reflectors on Lee Drive from West Second to Oakhurst Drive.
- 6.) Coahoma-Moon Lake Road – reseal.

Supervisors were also handed a bid last week from Joe McGee Construction for \$2,359,241.30 to replace the Johnson Road Bridge over the Sunflower River. The project will reduce the number of piles under the bridge that has allowed debris to build up and block the flow or water.

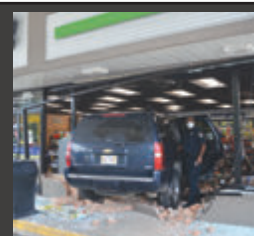
County Engineer Ken

SEE COAHOMA, PAGE 19



FALL FESTIVAL
Tennessee Williams
Festival announces lineup
PAGE 7

CRASH!
No one seriously hurt when
SUV jumps curb at store.
PAGE 11



Dale Clark said:
'White privilege,
Black privilege,
they both sound
exclusionary to me.'

New Jonestown mayor sworn in

Convicted former mayor Burnett seeks back pay

Josh Troy
The Press Register

JONESTOWN—Vivian Burnett was sworn in as the new mayor of Jonestown Tuesday night, but the former mayor asked for severance pay.

Former mayor Kenny Lester, who was forced to resign after pleading guilty in Coahoma County Circuit Court on four counts of embezzlement in July, spoke at the meeting about the issue.

Lester said the council unanimously voted to give him \$3,200 in severance pay, but later reversed its decision. Unta Wiley was the lone alderman who did not vote to reverse the decision.

"After we signed the contract, they came back and said they're not going to honor the contract of pay — all but Alderman Wiley," said Lester, adding he was supposed to receive the pay following the day of his resignation.

Alderman Gregory Neely Sr., who served as acting mayor following Lester's resignation and before Burnett

took office, said the town was not legally permitted to pay Lester the \$3,200.

Neely Sr. cited Article 4, Section 96 of the Mississippi Constitution that reads, "Extra compensation and unauthorized payments prohibited."

Neely Sr. said part of the agreement was Lester had to return all assets, but kept a gun and three different weed eaters.

"Then, there's the opinion from the attorney general's office saying you can't give extra compensation unless it's a contract," Neely Sr. said.

Neely Sr. also said while Lester signed the agreement to receive \$3,200, no one who works for the city of Jonestown signed it.

"He's the only somebody who signed it," Neely Sr. said.

Lester said he never had the town's weed eaters. Even though he pleaded guilty for taking a firearm, he said he was set up.

"If there was a walk-through and we checked up on the walk-through, then why wasn't it brought up then?" Lester said.

The council also voted to hire police officers Stephen James and Eddie Earl during the meeting. James was one of the two police officers laid off shortly after Lester's tenure as mayor began.

A different kind of drive-through



FLOYD INGRAM / PRESS REGISTER

This Chevrolet Tahoe jumped the curb, crashed through bricks and a plate glass window and rolled into the first row of shelves at the Double Quick at 201 McGuire Cove about 1 p.m. Friday. "We were at the cash register when we saw it come in," said cashier Jalisa Collins. "We heard some kids scream and I thought someone was under the truck. Then the driver put it in reverse and tried to back up." Collins said four kids and three adults were in the store and luckily none were at the front of the store or under the truck. Police were on the scene almost immediately and the driver was taken to the hospital for observation. Police said while virtually everyone in the store went to the hospital to be checked out as part of DoubleQuick's company policy, no one was seriously hurt. The accident was investigated by police and the window was boarded up and the store closed until repairs could be made.

Clarksdale

Continued from Page 1

Levingston echoed Espy's statement.

"We were deeply honored to have MDA's new Executive Director John Rounsaville spend a day in Clarksdale," said Levingston. "As the state's economic development agency, MDA's support and funding have been critical to the success of all of our projects these past three years."

"They have lent great counsel and guidance to me, significant financial support to our local industries and leadership in the recruitment of new industry for our community," Levingston added. "John

Rounsaville has a tremendous track record of achievement during his career which he brings to his new role as our state's chief economic developer."

An Air Force veteran, Rounsaville is an attorney, has worked in Washington for former Congressman Chip Pickering and in the office of Governor Haley Barbour. He has had two tours of duty as the State Director for USDA.


"He is among the most qualified individuals ever to serve as MDA's Executive Director," said Levingston. "The MDA is an example of state government at its best."

At PeopleShores, the

MDA team had the opportunity to tour the completed work on the building funded by the state and see examples of the Robotic Process Automation software developed in Clarksdale by PeopleShores' employees.

At Saf-T-Cart, the MDA team toured the plant and examined in-progress construction that will add over 20,000 square feet to the Saf-T-Cart plant and add 20 new jobs to the company.

MDA's funding of the Saf-T-Cart expansion is building a new truck shop and Rounsaville and his staff saw how their investment in Clarksdale is paying off.




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