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Walls of Hopewell church will soon rise again

■ Council approves variance, giving way for crews to begin rebuilding; 200 people from five states to help with construction in 1st week in June

MARY ALFORD
mallord@ddtonline.com

The walls of Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church will soon rise again. At last Tuesday's City Council meeting, D'Andre Williams, the city's housing inspector, and Mark

Hooker Jr., city engineer, appeared before council to ask for a variance in order to begin rebuilding the church, which burned to the ground Nov. 1, 2016. A member of Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church was arrested Dec. 21, 2016, in Washington County and charged

with one count of first degree arson of a place of worship.

Also present at Tuesday's council meeting was Bill Boykin, a local developer, and Bishop Clarence Green, of Hopewell MB Church. Boykin

See HOPEWELL on 2

High water leads to park closure



BILL JOHNSON/BILLJOHNSON@DDTONLINE.COM

Washington County officials on Saturday made the decision to close Warfield Point Park due to the rising Mississippi River. The park will be closed until further notice. Washington County's road department last week closed Lower Lake Ferguson Road because of flooding. Today, the river reached 47.8 feet on the Greenville gauge, Mississippi Levee Board Chief Engineer Peter Nimrod said. He said the river is expected to reach 48 feet this afternoon, which is the city's official flood stage.

Plans for Warfield Riverfest underway; volunteers, barbecue competitors needed

MARY ALFORD
mallord@ddtonline.com

Warfield Riverfest is back for its fourth year and once again, it looks to be packed with more fun than ever before.

The family event, which was created to assist in raising money and awareness for Camp Looking Glass, a camp for children and young adults with disabilities ranging from cerebral palsy and hearing impair-

ments to autism, Down syndrome and other cognitive or physical disorders, is set for 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. June 3 at Warfield Point Park. If the park is still under water or too damp for activities, the event will be moved to the Ernest Red Remson Memorial Expo Center.

Susan Shamoan, of Shamoan Advertising and organizer of Warfield Riverfest, said it's a great event that goes toward an even better cause.

Entrance to the fest is free for

children 6 years of age and younger and costs \$5 for everyone else.

Riverfest will boast several new activities this year, including bubble soccer ball, remote control car demos and a petting zoo. Shamoan said there hasn't been a petting zoo in the Delta in quite some time, and it's always fun to pet the animals. The petting zoo will feature several farm animals including goats, pot belly pigs, ducks and chickens.

"We don't have petting zoos. We

haven't had a petting zoo in the Delta for I don't know how long," she said.

Also new, and an event that Shamoan thinks folks will greatly enjoy, is the 32-foot D.E. Rolling Video Game Truck, which will hold 16 video players at one time. Players will be able to sit inside the 32-foot-long air-conditioned trailer and play games for 15 minutes at a time. The

See RIVERFEST on 3

Short films spotlight city's rebound

MARY ALFORD
mallord@ddtonline.com

Dozens of Greenville residents — and even a few out-of-towners — gathered at Schelben Park on Saturday night to enjoy the premiere of a series of photo stories commemorating the state's bicentennial while also incorporating the city's theme to stimulate revitalization and community pride.

The photo stories, all produced by community leaders, were the end result of The Celebrating One Greenville Bicentennial workshop with Blue Magnolia Films.

"Greenville is one of 10 cities across the state selected for the Mississippi Bicentennial Short Film Photography film festival," Mayor Errick Simmons said at the beginning of the screenings. "We want to show what is good in Greenville and what we have. So, these bright spots that we will be showing spotlight the good and revitalization in Greenville and also cultural heritage and the things that have gone on in Greenville for years. These films will not only be shown here in the Mississippi Delta and the state, but across the world."

Local developer Bill Boykin, who was influential in getting Greenville selected as one of the cities involved in the project and also was featured in a photo story for his efforts in downtown redevelopment, told folks in attendance he hoped that after seeing the 10 films, they would be "totally amazed" at what Greenville's community is like.

"It's been a long week and these 10 groups have probably put in about 80 hours putting this production together," Boykin said.

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148th Year
No. 211

EARN IT
& GET IT

CERAMIC DISH SET
FRIDAY, MAY 5

MINI CHOPPER
FRIDAY, MAY 12

5-PIECE LADIES WATCH SET
SUNDAY, MAY 14

FREE GIFTS
PLAYERS CHOICE
FRIDAY, MAY 19

HAND MIXER
FRIDAY, MAY 26

PATRIOTIC GAMING CHAIR
MONDAY, MAY 29

MORE OFFERS. MORE REWARDS. MORE CHOICES.
TA
TROP
CASINO GREENVILLE
A TORONCA ENTERTAINMENT PROPERTY

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County's unemployment rate in March lowest since 1990

MARY ALFORD
malford@dtonline.com

In March, Washington County reached its lowest unemployment rate since 1990.

The county's rate, according to the most recent information released from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, lowered from 7.6 percent in February to 7 percent in March. Greenville's unemployment, however, remained constant at a 6.2 percent.

Mary Willoughby, the bureau director at MDES, said anything that occurs around the area can have an effect on the unemployment rate be-

cause that number is residence-based. But, she said, it is common for the unemployment rate for March to decrease on both the state and county levels. She said the decrease could be the result of all sort of factors, such as the good weather in March resulting in more construction job opportunities. But, her best guess is "everything is just doing better."

"March is just a pretty good month, as far as months goes," she said.

Willoughby said Washington County's unemployment rate has been steadily decreasing in March for the past five years. The unemployment rate in 2012 was 13.7 per-

cent; in 2014, it went to 13.5 percent; in 2015, the rate dipped again to 10 percent; and in 2016, the rate was 8.8 percent for the month of March.

"Washington County has a good steady decrease if you're looking back over the years," Willoughby said.

Washington County's labor force in March counted 17,610 workers, 1,230 of whom were unemployed, while Greenville's labor force in March tallied 11,820 workers, of whom 740 were listed as jobless. In both instances, those who had quit looking for work were not counted.

Mississippi's not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March

was unchanged over the month at 4.6 percent. When compared to the March 2016 rate of 5.6 percent, the rate decreased one percentage point.

The nation's not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March at 4.6 percent decreased three-tenths of a percentage point over the month and was five-tenths of a percentage point below the year ago rate of 5.1 percent.

For the month of March, 30 counties in Mississippi posted unemployment rates less than or equal to the state's rate of 4.6 percent. Rankin and Union counties posted the lowest unemployment rate for the month of March at 3.2 percent followed by

DeSoto, Lamar, Lee, Pontotoc and Scott Counties at 3.5 percent. Issaquena County had the highest unemployment rate for March at 15.6 percent followed by Jefferson County at 13.8 percent.

With the slight decrease in the unemployment rate, Washington County's rank moved from 71st to 69th among the state's 82 counties.

It fared better than Coahoma, Kemper, Adams, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Wilkinson, Humphreys, Claiborne, Holmes, Jefferson and Issaquena counties.

RIVERFEST / From 1

video gaming systems on the truck include Xbox One, Xbox 360, PS3, PS4, Wii and Wii U. And, the games available for play will range from sports and Super Mario Brothers to Call of Duty. There will be a \$5 fee to play.

"We thought it would add a lot of fun," Shamoan said.

Back this year will be Big Red, a festival favorite, and several other fun activities, such as the dunking booth, rock climbing wall, free mini train rides, face painting, hands-on giant bubble maker, a 60-foot obstacle course, water walking balls and more.

There will also be an arts and craft booth set up and several carnival games.

"We'll have a lot of hands-on things," Shamoan said.

Also, residents will have an opportunity to meet with Ronald McDonald, who will be at the festival around 11 a.m.

The music stage will open the same time as the festival at 10 a.m. Although not all acts have been decided yet, some of those performing will be bluesman John Horton, John Anderson and the Third Stone Band and the B.B. King Museum Allstars.

"The B.B. King Museum Allstars are a group of juniors and seniors who had to audition for this Allstar group. They are a pop group. ... They are from six different counties. They did not know each before getting on stage and working together. They are traveling all over the place now," Shamoan said, noting they are the headliner for the fest. "They are supposed to be amazing."

Aside from all the fun activities and good tunes, there will also be lots of tasty festival foods available, such as funnel cakes, foot-long hot dogs, delicious barbecue, nachos and snow cones.

Although not with the Memphis Grill Network, Shamoan said they will still be having the barbecue rib competition. There will be cash and prizes for the winners. She said whoever cooks the best ribs will get bragging rights as the Delta's best barbecue rib cooker.

Shamoan encouraged folks to get their friends or co-workers together and head to the park to enter —

for free — into the competition. The chairman of the barbecue competition is Jimmy Brown.

"Bring your friends and come out and grill," she said.

Shamoan said they are still looking for volunteers and barbecue competitors for Riverfest. For more information, visit warfieldriverfest.com.

"Anybody can volunteer," Shamoan said, noting if folks do want to volunteer, she would ask them to sign up as soon as possible. "We want to get everybody assigned so they know what they are going to do as soon as possible."

A fundraiser for a worthwhile cause

All of the money raised through Riverfest will go toward funding Camp Looking Glass programs.

The camp provides accessible summer camp and year-round activities to the campers and their families at no cost. Some activities the camp offers include swimming, music, arts and crafts, fishing, bowling, theater and more.

Camp Looking Glass prides itself on being a traditional summer camp, yet catering to the needs of the individual, allowing all of the campers to participate and grow as individuals and community members.

"So many of the counselors that they have had there, they come junior, senior year in high school and it puts them on their career path," Shamoan said. "I can't tell you how many times that has happened."

The nonprofit first opened its doors in 2004, with the goal of providing valuable camp experience, including recreation and fellowship for children and young adults with disabilities in the Delta.

"Riverfest is for the whole community to come together to support Looking Glass, and it's a great family event. It's one of the most positive things you see around here," she said.

For more information on Camp Looking Glass, visit camplookingglass.org.



MARY ALFORD/MALFORD@DTONLINE.COM

Dozens of Greenville residents — and even a few out-of-towners — gathered at Schelben Park on Saturday night to enjoy the premiere of a series of photo stories commemorating the state's bicentennial while also incorporating the city's theme to stimulate revitalization and community pride. The photo stories, all produced by community leaders, were the end result of The Celebrating One Greenville Bicentennial workshop with Blue Magnolia Films.

ONE GREENVILLE / From 1

And, the participants were still working on the productions right up until they premiered them Saturday night.

The photo stories, which were all about 4 minutes in length, ranged from topics such as the festivals and cultural history to influential and inspirational people of Greenville.

Participants and their photo stories, included:

- Betty Lynn Cameron — Delta Hot Tamale Festival
- Benjy Nelken — Hebrew Union Temple of Greenville
- Raymond Wong — St. Joseph Catholic School
- Johnny Toy and Alex Jackson — Coleman High School
- Sharon Walker — Greenville Reflection & Youth Development Museum
- Claude Marchesini — Bill Boykin's downtown development
- Essie Patterson — Patterson Farms
- Genesis Norman — Mayor Errick Simmons and Sen. Derrick T. Simmons
- Sylvia Jackson — Area Agency on Aging
- Mable Starks — Mississippi Action for Community Education

Nelken at Saturday's event thanked Chandler Griffin and Alison Fast, owners of Blue Magnolia Films, and the films crews, noting how hard everyone worked.

"The 10 of us got together and did these films. It was real exciting working with each other and getting to know each other. We kind of worked as one. ... I would like to carry that on and work as a team as a community because the mayor says 'One Greenville.' That is what we

"When we get together, we work together and we can progress ... and Greenville can be the Queen City of the Delta again."

Benjy Nelken

Created photo story about Greenville's Hebrew Union Temple

need to do," Nelken said. "When we get together, we work together and we can progress. ... and Greenville can be the Queen City of the Delta again."

Starks said there are few times in a person's life when she experiences something that changes the way she sees things. Participating in this photo story workshop was one of those for her.

"The people that I have worked with on this team, knowing you now has changed me in such a way and that the 'One Greenville' theme means so much to me here," she said.

Echoing the comments from other participants, Cameron said, "This has been the most rewarding week."

"We appreciate everyone who had something to do with this team being here. Alex and Chandler. ... were awesome. They taught us a lot that we didn't know and taught us a lot that we do know now. ... It's been a ball," she said.

Doris Benford, who attended the premiere, had a ball just watching the films and said she thought all of the stories were wonderful.

"I think it was wonderful. It brings a lot of togetherness of the community because it had a diverse showing of how people had different things that contributed to the community that makes Greenville the great city that it is that nobody really knows about," Benford said. "It has so much to offer — the Jewish community, the Catholic schools — it just makes you think, 'What can I give to the community?'"

These photos stories will be posted online and will be integrated into downtown revitalization projects, including a "walkable" gallery, community events and a book project highlighting bicentennial stories around the state.

"We hope all these people who are coming from all over the world ... as they are walking downtown, that they'll stop ... and see and hear the stories of our community and the people and dedication that everyone has to trying to do our best. It's going to be awesome," Boykin said. "It will go around the world."

Folks who missed the premiere but would like to see the films can do so on Blue Magnolia Films' Facebook page.

"Please like and share," Fast said. "We made all of these stories so you can show everyone what is happening here in Greenville."

Local partners also assisting in the photo project include Main Street Greenville, Washington County Economic Alliance and Greenville and Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Other supporters include Barefoot Workshops and Corner to Corner Productions and Greenville native Laeitia Wade/Eitabug Productions.