

Community FOUNDATION NEWS

The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation

Giving Way To A Greater Community

<http://www.PineBeltFoundation.org>

Vol. 2 No. 3

November 2009



Ed Langton, Brittani Wynn and Theresa Erickson
(Photo by Frey Photography)

USM STUDENT EARNS THE T. ELOISE HOPSON SCHOLARSHIP

By ROBYN JACKSON

Brittani Wynn and her mother were trying to figure out how to pay for college when they found out about the Eloise T. Hopson Scholarship. Now, the \$3,000 scholarship is helping her pursue a degree in speech pathology at The University of Southern Mississippi, where Wynn is currently a sophomore.

The Eloise T. Hopson Scholarship was started in 1999 in memory of Hopson, an English teacher at Rowan High School who wanted to help African-American students continue their study of English at the university level. After her death, her family established the Eloise T. Hopson English scholarship endowment with *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation*, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that serves as a conduit for permanent endowments and pass-through funds. Revenue from the fund is used to help qualifying students pursue a degree in English and related studies.

Verna Miller, chairman of the Eloise T. Hopson Scholarship Committee, and members of the Hattiesburg Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., select the recipient each year. "We send applications to area high schools and ask high school counselors to help with the search process," said Miller.

For more information or to apply for the scholarship, contact the Hattiesburg Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., P.O. Box 17347, Hattiesburg, MS 39404-7347. ▲

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GIVES BACK

By DANA COLEMAN

The mission of the Westminster Presbyterian Church to "Trust God, Love All People, and Carry Christ into the World," includes a new avenue of service with the establishment of the *Westminster Presbyterian Outreach Fund*. Steve Ramp, Pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, planted the seed with an initial donation to establish the Outreach Fund in hopes that others in the congregation and other churches in the community will "go and do likewise."

When asked why he opened a fund with *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation* (GPCF), Ramp gave the following reasons. "When we support missions internally, only those directly involved ever hear about it. Whereas, by partnering with the GPCF we will raise awareness that God is active and working in our community." Ramp added, "This decision was a partnership, a pooling of resources and skill. I know the GPCF was started by very bright and caring people for the right reasons, and we were impressed with their mission and methods."

"Entrusting some of our money to the GPCF is a 'no brainer,'" says Ramp.

"We know it will be well-managed. Establishing a *Donor Advised Fund* with the GPCF was easy, convenient, and they offer highly individualized giving programs to help donors achieve specific goals. Working with the professional staff at the GPCF was enjoyable." The GPCF handles all administrative details of the fund and issues grants based on the contributor recommendations.

The Westminster Presbyterian Church supports a number of different causes such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, United Way, and the Domestic Abuse Shelter, just to name a few. However, Ramp believes that establishing an Outreach Fund through the GPCF offers an opportunity for individuals and organizations to make an impact for the common good.

"When you see someone doing great work in our community (like the Foundation) that advances the love of God, we intentionally support their efforts," says Ramp. "I expect that one day, long after I'm gone, this mustard seed will produce a bumper crop and God will be pleased."

For more information on contributing to the Westminster Presbyterian Outreach Fund, or to set up your own Donor Advised Fund, contact the GPCF at 601.583.6180 or www.PineBeltFoundation.org. ▲



Rev. Steve Ramp and Ed Langton, President
(Photo by Frey Photography)

PRESIDENT'S *Pen*

Many thanks go out to Andy Mercier, our immediate past President and one of our founders, who chaired the Search Committee for our new full-time Executive Director. He was joined by me and our past Presidents: Paul Laughlin, Gwen James, and Lou Ann Poynter (other past Presidents include Bill Oliver and Dr. Aubrey Lucas). They did remarkable work in sorting through numerous applicants and selected a top-notch contender.

So, I am pleased to announce our new Executive Director of The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation, Theresa Erickson! Many of you may know Theresa from her involvement in charitable work with the community or as a long-time executive with Hattiesburg Clinic, most recently serving as their Business Development Officer. Theresa left a superb career to take this position due to her PASSION-ATE desire to serve her community. Her passion has been exemplified in all of her community work, having served on numerous non-profit Boards. Theresa is well thought of and a very capable and experienced leader who will guide The Foundation to new heights! Please welcome Theresa to The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation!

Also words cannot express the tremendous thanks we have for Bill Pace for his service as the Interim Executive Director. Bill is a dynamic individual who energized The Foundation and bolstered its growth in so many ways. His dedication to his community and passion toward helping others is legendary. He continues to help us build The Foundation in many ways!

NEW FUNDS

Just read our newsletter and you will be inspired by the recent new funds opened at The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation. In addition to these, a resident of Starkville established the Women's Continuing Education Fund, for scholarships for women who cannot afford continuing education.

PARTNERS

We also are on a campaign to grow our Partners to #100. Partners are invaluable to our organization; without their support we would not be able serve the Pine Belt area like we are. If you are interested in helping support The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation, please consider becoming a Partner of The Foundation today!

Great progress is being made and our new Executive Director, Theresa Erickson, is a "ball of fire" with passion for building our Foundation to one of the best ever! ▲



Foundation President,
Ed Langton

LOCAL INSURANCE AGENT SUPPORTS PCS BASEBALL PROGRAM

By WILL HANSEN

For Patrick James, baseball is not just a sport or national past time, it is a walk of faith.

Baseball has always been an integral part of his life. James, a native of Hattiesburg, resides in the Hub city with his wife Julie and their three children. He grew up playing Dixie Youth baseball, starred at Hattiesburg High School, and went on to play at Pearl River Community College and Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA.

Upon finishing his Bachelor's of Science degree, James returned to Hattiesburg to work for the family insurance business, The James Agency, and later served four years of active duty with the United States Army. In 2005, he returned to the family business and baseball beckoned him again.

"The love of the game (baseball) and teaching kids are my passions," said James. He has served as the pitching coach for Presbyterian Christian High School Baseball since 2006. "I believe in what we're doing (at PCS). We're teaching baseball, but more importantly, we're raising Godly young men and we are trying to give them the tools to succeed," added James.

Understanding that PCS is a relatively new school system, with facility needs,

sparked the idea to help the baseball program. James's passion for PCS's baseball program and teaching lead him to *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation* where he opened a Pass Through Fund. "The benefit of going through *The Foundation* is that you don't have to establish a private foundation which can be expensive and time-consuming. *The Foundation* provides a tool for individuals', families, or organizations to be personally involved in making donations to causes they are passionate about. And because *The Foundation* is a 501(c)(3), donors can make contributions that are tax deductible."

"Hattiesburg and the surrounding areas have great baseball fans; fans that I believe will help," said James. James set up the fund to help student athletes with baseball supplies, travel expenditures and the facilities.

The PCS "Diamond Cat" Fund, through *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation*, gives people an option to give and support this program. "It is an investment in young Godly men and being a part of their future." If you are interested in donating to the PCS "Diamond Cat" Fund, please contact *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation*. ▲



Coach James and the PCS Baseball team

PHYSICIAN OPENS FUND TO HELP INCREASE AWARENESS FOR STROKE PREVENTION

By KRISTY GOULD

Dr. Jose Fernandez, Neurologist at Hattiesburg Clinic, has spent much of his medical profession dealing with stroke prevention, or what he calls, "damage control." Dr. Fernandez's passion is to teach people how to prevent a stroke, before they have it. So Fernandez and colleagues opened the **Southern Stroke Awareness Society Fund**. Fernandez and five other Hattiesburg Clinic neurologists including Dr. Wendell Helveston, Dr. Ronald Schwartz, Dr. Gabriella Szatmary, Dr. Scott Lynn and Dr. Joshua Maksi, established the Southern Stroke Awareness Society to create educational materials to get the word out about stroke prevention.

"Once a person suffers a stroke, irreversible damage has occurred within six minutes. A stroke victim needs to go to the emergency room within three hours to receive a clot dissolving drug that helps limit stroke damage," said Fernandez. "The goal is to educate people so they do not reach the point of having a stroke." ▲

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: CREATING A LASTING LEGACY



Executive Director,
Theresa Erickson

I was at a Red Cross fund raising event when Bill Pace, Interim Executive Director, approached me and mentioned the full-time Executive Director position. That is the moment my life completely started to change. I wasn't looking for a new career and I certainly didn't plan to give up the excellent position I had at Hattiesburg Clinic, where I had served for the past twenty years. However, I felt I was being led to serve our community in a whole different fashion. And, strangely enough, many, many coincidences kept happening – it truly was ironic. I knew that I needed to look at these coincidences and listen; listen to my heart and where I was being lead because I believe that coincidences are not "just accidents."

I moved to Mississippi in 1989 and in addition to working at

Hattiesburg Clinic, I have served as a volunteer for numerous non-profit organizations since that time. I always felt it was "my duty" to give back to our community – I guess that is the "social worker" coming out in me (my undergraduate degree was in Social Work).

From the training I received while working on my Master's degree, I knew my next step was to diligently research community foundations. I learned that there are over 700 in the U.S. and seven in Mississippi. I also learned that community foundations are one of the fastest growing sectors of philanthropy in the United States today; they build and strengthen communities by making it possible for a wide range of donors to create permanent, named funds to meet needs in their communities.

I also learned that the PineBelt Foundation is governed by 30 board members who I consider to be the "salt of the earth." These wonderful volunteers give of their time to make our community a better place to live. I knew it would be an honor to work with them.

Therefore, I listened to my heart and am now very proud and honored to provide my leadership, communication and marketing skills to serve the Pine Belt. This truly is an extraordinary opportunity to influence the capacity of our community to give back and to leave legacies.

I look forward to working with our superb Board of Directors, civic leaders, community organizations and current and potential donors to make a long-term positive impact in the Pine Belt. If I can be of service, please do not hesitate to call me. ▲

THE ST. JOHN FAMILY... HOLLEMAN AND HARRISON MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By BUD KIRKPATRICK

An inspiration gained during a casual conversation between the St. John family and fellow vacationers, while on a trip to Florida, has resulted in their youngsters realizing their dreams to make a difference. Children of Jill and Robert St. John, Holleman, age 12, and Harrison, age 8, were inspired by the activities of the tourist.

"The vacationers, all in their early-twenties, had done some pretty amazing things at their age. One had built an orphanage in Africa; one was a producer for CNN. My daughter was pretty inspired by what these ladies had done," Robert St. John, said.

Several months later, Jessica Burns, who was the Teacher of the Year in Petal last year, and a close friend of the St. John family, were talking about a problem in the school where some of the students are so under-resourced that they didn't have the few dollars it takes to make a class field trip. There are also times when some children do not have funds for basic school supplies.

"I think this situation and other situations of need, really touched my daughter," said St. John. "Jessica and Holleman got together and came up with the idea which they called *Angel Face Foundation*."

Funds from *The Foundation* will help

cover small personal expenses of students who are under-resourced for field trips, basic supplies, uniforms, and other needs. Once need is determined, administrators may apply to *The Foundation* for up to \$1,000 per semester to use at their discretion, from requests made by teachers.

Drawing inspiration from his sister, Harrison St. John, wanted to make a difference in the lives of people as well. His inspiration was amplified by a project at Main Street United Methodist Church, Six Mile Drought, developed by youth counselor Raven Tynes. This project raises funds to dig fresh water wells in Africa, because families had to walk six miles to get water, not necessarily clean water.

Harrison's philanthropy is *Dig A Well Foundation*. "We sat on the couch one night, and I asked him what he was interested in; he came up with most of this himself," said St. John. Contributors to the well proj-



ect will receive a commemorative bottle of private-label water.

According to St. John, establishing both foundations are in progress. Opening the foundations through *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation* was the easiest step. Now we are working on creating our web sites. Both Harrison and Holleman have designed a logo to represent their projects. (Harrison's logo will appear on each bottle of water.)

Funds for both Foundations are managed by *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation* (GPCF). "We looked at forming a 501(c)(3) but my accountant recommended that we use the GPCF. The simplicity and flexibility of *The Foundation* has made it possible for my kids, who have big hearts and big dreams to make a difference," said St. John.

The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that supports charitable activities in the Pine Belt. In keeping with its mission, Giving Way to a Greater Community, *The Foundation* is a conduit through which individuals, organizations, and corporations can establish a permanent base of endowed charitable funds, create scholarship funds, or simply open a pass through fund to support charitable purposes. ▲

NEW PARTNERS FOR THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

In order to meet the annual needs of *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation's* day-to-day operating budget, we have formed a "Partners Program." Partners truly help make a difference in our community.

An annual commitment for an individual is \$750 and an organization (a corporate partner) is \$1,500. We appreciate all of our Partners!

Thank you to our NEW partners:



Cellular South,
Valerie Sarton, Manager



Mike Ratliff,
Attorney at Law



Robert and Claire
Cornett

HONORING A SPECIAL VOLUNTEER

by BILL PACE

Bud Kirkpatrick is a very special person who uses his talents to assist organizations in a variety of ways. His professional background covered over thirty years as Director of Marketing and Public Relations at The University of Southern Mississippi. Since retirement, he has volunteered for numerous organizations including *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation*.

When asked to assist *The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation*, he once again volunteered his services. Bud assisted *The Foundation* in many ways by helping with press releases, Foundation literature, etc. We owe a debt of gratitude to Bud for his volunteer service to *The Foundation*. Words are hard to find to really recognize him, so the best we will do is to simply say THANK YOU BUD. ▲

2009 OFFICERS

PresidentEdward J. "Ed" Langton
Vice President.....Hayden Mitchell
TreasurerJames N. Yelverton
Secretary.....Robert Jackson, Sr.
Executive DirectorTheresa Erickson
Administrative AssistantEliska Schilling

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Ben Carmichael – Cardiologist, Hattiesburg Clinic (Retired)
Dr. Richard Clark – Retired MD
Mike Collins – Division Manager, Mississippi Power
Iris Easterling – English Department, William Carey University
David Fortenberry – Producer, Stewart Sneed and Hewes
Greg Garraway – Area Executive, South Mississippi Regions Bank
Dr. Angie Godwin – President, Area Development Partnership
Bernard Green – Agency Owner, Bernard Green Insurance, Inc.
Skippy Haik – Publisher, Laurel-Leader Call
Robert T. Jackson, Sr. – Attorney & Partner, Jackson, Bowman & Blumentritt, PLLC
Gwen James – President, Residential Division, Coldwell Banker Realty
Richard Jones – Owner, R. Jones & Associates
Edward J. "Ed" Langton – Chairman & CEO, Grand Bank
Andy Leslie – Vice President Investments, Trustmark Wealth Management
Dr. Aubrey K. Lucas – President Emeritus, University of Southern Mississippi
Andy Mercier – President, Merchants Food Services
Stace Mercier – Former CFO – USM Foundation
Hayden Mitchell – Executive Vice President, Citizens National Bank
Gene Owens, President – Owens Business Machines, Inc.
Bob Pierce – Executive Director, Southern Miss Alumni Association
Moran M. "Randy" Pope, III – Attorney at Law, Pope and Pope
Lou Ann Poynter – Retired Bank Executive
Mike Ratliff – Attorney at Law, Johnson, Hall & Ratliff, PLLC
Michael Shemper – Attorney, Michael J. Shemper, PLLC
Wanda Simpson – Director, Department of Human Services
Andy Stetelman – Realtor, London & Stetelman
Dr. Christy Thornton – Physician
Benny Waddle – Senior Vice President, Hancock Bank
Larry B. Watson – Senior Vice President & Compliance Officer, BancorpSouth
Chris Wilson – Realtor, First Choice, PLLC
James N. Yelverton – Retired Business Executive

CONTACT THE FOUNDATION

The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation
 1507 Hardy Street, Suite 208
 Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401
 Phone: 601-583-6180 • Fax: 601-583-6188
<http://www.PineBeltFoundation.org>
 e-mail: contact@PineBeltFoundation.org

The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation

1507 Hardy Street, Suite 208
 Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STAFF

Theresa Erickson
 Executive Director
 Editor

Eliska Schilling
 Administrative Assistant

Nonprofit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Hattiesburg, MS
 Permit No. 71