



THE CANTON NEWS

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Special to The Canton News

Canton native and Canton High School alumnus Ashford Sanders brought his soulful voice, infectious energy and unforgettable personality to the stage during Night 6 of auditions for Season 21 of *America's Got Talent*, earning four yes votes from the judges and advancing to the next round of the competition.

Sanders, owner of Ashford's Kitchen in Atlanta, Georgia, was the final act of the evening, delivering a performance that left the judges and audience captivated.

Before taking the stage, Sanders shared his love for *America's Got Talent* and explained the inspiration behind his restaurant, which combines soul food and music.

"I centered it around music, because, if you're having a party at home and it's quiet, the energy is off. But if you just turn on a little music, something shifts in that room," Sanders said.

When describing his restaurant's menu to the judges, Sanders summed it up simply: "It ain't healthy, but it's good."

Although Sanders has "always loved" singing, he said he never imagined he would find himself performing on the *America's Got Talent* stage. Host Terry Crews encouraged Sanders to embrace the moment and enjoy the experience before his audition.

"Your spirit is wonderful," Crews told Sanders. "Go out there and just have some fun."

Sanders approached the performance with excitement and humor, describing himself as "chillin' like a villain, whatever that means," before closing his eyes and delivering a heartfelt rendition of Billie Eilish's Oscar-winning ballad "What Was I Made For?"

The simple arrangement allowed Sanders' flawless vocals to shine, quickly winning over the judges.

Judge Mel B praised Sanders' smooth R&B style, comparing his voice to legendary artists including Luther

Vandross, Alexander O'Neal, Raphael Saadiq and Tony! Toni! Toné!

"You were giving me everything and more, and the trills and the frills and the — ohh yes," Mel B said following the performance.

Judge Howie Mandel also praised Sanders' ability to connect with the audience.

"Your voice is like a warm blanket. It just covers you and it makes us comfortable and want to smile. It was beautiful," Mandel said.

Judge Sofia Vergara said she could have listened to Sanders sing even longer.

"I could listen to you forever. I didn't want it to end. And you're very sweet, your personality is beautiful. I'm very glad that you're here, because this is where you belong," Vergara said.

Judge Simon Cowell also shared his approval, praising Sanders' vocal talent and stage presence.

"I think you are a gifted, brilliant singer, no question. Beautiful tone. There

are so many songs out there you could reinterpret and you come over as a really sweet person as well," Cowell said.

Following Sanders' successful audition, the Canton Public School District celebrated the accomplishments of the Canton High School alumnus and shared its support for his journey on the national stage.

"Congratulations to Canton High alumnus Ashford Sanders! We are incredibly proud of you! You've worked tirelessly to turn your dreams into reality, and we're eagerly cheering you on to win the *AGT* competition," the district shared. "Remember, in our eyes, you're already a true winner!"

The district encouraged the community to continue supporting the Canton native as he competes on *America's Got Talent*.

With four yes votes from the judges, Sanders will continue his journey on the show, representing Canton with his talent, passion and infectious personality.



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CPSD encourages families to complete meal applications



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As students return to school in August, the Canton Public School District is encouraging all parents and guardians to complete the district’s meal application forms to help ensure the continuation of free school meals.

Students will receive breakfast

and lunch at no cost to families in August. However, beginning in September, the district’s ability to continue offering free meals will depend on the number of completed meal eligibility forms submitted by families.

District officials said at least 70% of families must complete the forms for the district to qualify for the lev-

el of federal reimbursement needed to sustain the program.

If the district does not meet the 70% threshold, students will still be able to eat at no cost to their families. However, the district would not receive full federal reimbursement for students who would otherwise qualify for paid or reduced-price meals. As a result, the Canton Pub-

lic School District could be responsible for covering those costs at the end of the school year.

School officials are asking all parents and guardians to complete and return the meal application forms as soon as possible, regardless of income, to help protect funding and ensure the district can continue providing free meals to all students.



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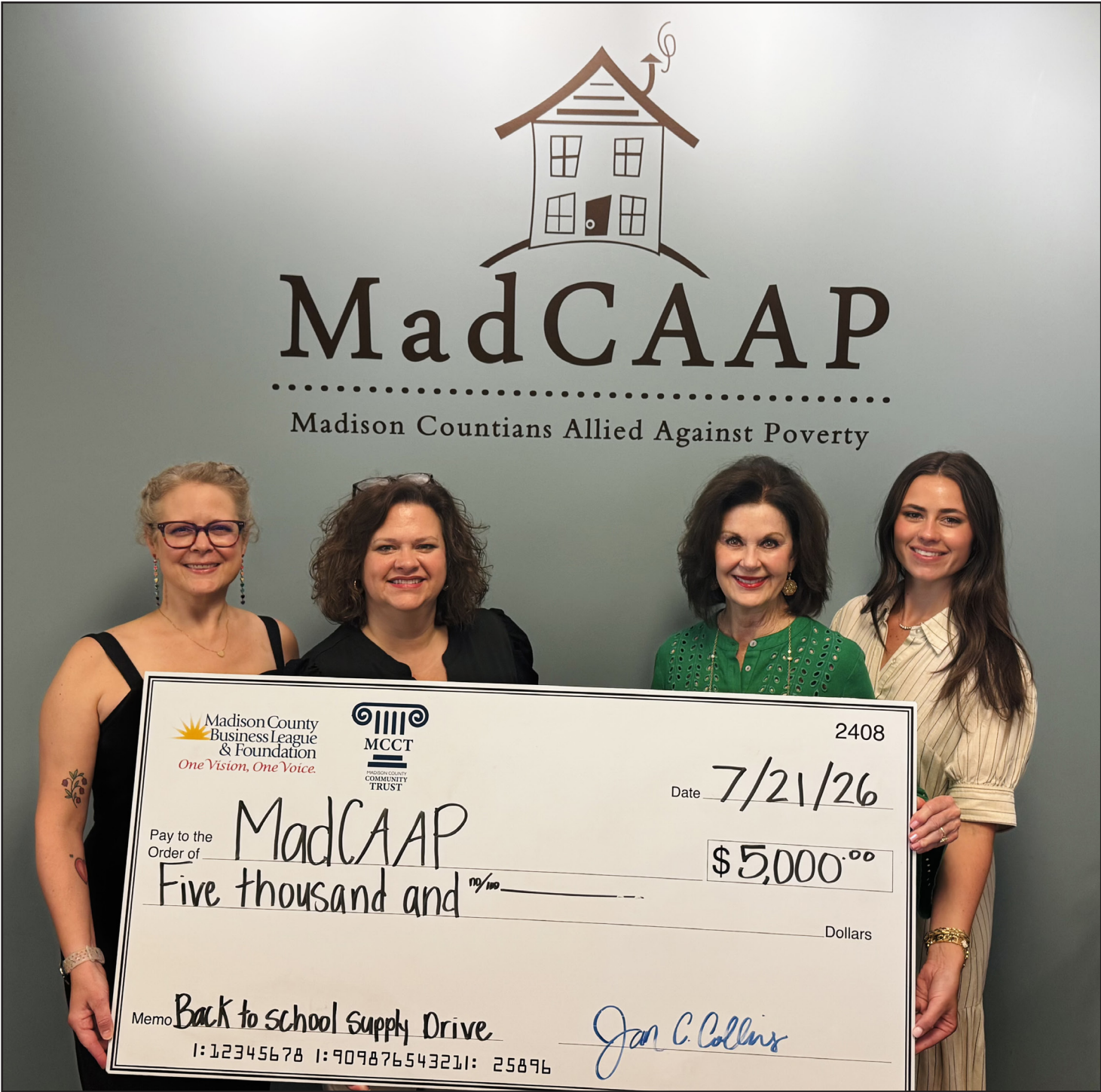
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MCBL&F and Madison County Community Trust support MadCAAP B.A.S.E. Camp



Special to The Canton News

Pictured (l to r) are Erin Buchwald and Lesley Dill, MadCAAP; Jan Collins and Ellis Wise, MCBL&F.

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The Madison County Business League & Foundation (MCBL&F) and the Madison County Community

Trust say they are proud to continue their support of Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty (MadCAAP) and its B.A.S.E. Camp after-school program. B.A.S.E. Camp provides el-

ementary students with a safe, engaging and biblically-based environment where they are encouraged to grow Bodily, Academically, Spiritually, and Emotionally Fit (B.A.S.E.).



Canton Made, Nissan Proud.

Letter from the editor: What’s your word of the year?

By Courtney Warren

It’s back to school time! I am so excited. I am not your average teacher that loves summer and time away from school. I want to be at school! I love teaching, being with my students, being with my coworkers and, frankly, just being in the building. It makes my heart happy.

As I start the new year, I’m so excited to be able to mentor two amazing new-to-us teachers. Throughout the summer, I have met with them a few times to ensure they are prepared for the moment students step into their classrooms.

I felt pretty equipped to answer all of their questions, but one left me thinking. One of our new teachers asked, “Were you just so scared?” So, I think back to the first weeks and days of being a teacher at my amazing school. Scared? Try terrified.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would get to teach at such an incredible school. I remember walking in and thinking I was so not ready to be here and they would soon figure out that I was an imposter.

But that’s the thing with blessings—they are so amazing that oftentimes we can’t even enjoy them, because we are so afraid of losing

them. We fear letting people down, now that this blessing is within our reach. We fear losing it all together, after having worked and prayed so hard for the opportunity. I have to remind myself that God wouldn’t have opened that door unless I was meant to step through it and thrive on the other side.

So, as we go into our school year, I have to prepare for so many meetings. One of those meetings involves choosing a word or phrase of the year. I think I’m going to go with “blessing.” I want to count every blessing and live beyond fear. I want to remind myself to look around at what I have, vs. what everyone else is doing or what I could have. I want to extend myself to be a blessing to those new teachers, so that I can help ease their fears. In moments where I’m nervous or overwhelmed, I want to praise God for all of the blessings that surround me, because the sheer fact that I’m overwhelmed shows how much my cup overflows! Also, let’s be honest, I tend to thrive in chaos.

So, what’s your word of the year? How are you approaching the new school year?

As we have to wash off the backpacks, purchase new shoes and iron uniforms, let’s remember the

I will bless
you and I will
make you a
blessing to others.

GENESIS 12:2

Special to The Canton News

blessings asleep in their beds ready for the school day. As we wash the dishes, whether they are cracked or brand new, let’s remind ourselves that there have been moments with empty fridges, and thank the heavens we have full bellies tonight. Maybe even such a full belly, you’re able to be a blessing to someone

else. Let’s remind ourselves as we walk outside and our eyeballs are sweating before we even reach the car, that the giant ball of heat in the sky was made by the Lord, and we will rejoice and be glad (and hydrate). Blessings. I’ll count them all and be thankful over fearful.

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Luckett leads Canton Public School District through transition, with focus on stability and student success

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After returning to the Canton Public School District as interim superintendent, Dwight Luckett Sr. has worked to provide stability, strengthen operations and continue advancing opportunities for students and families.

Following the departure of former Superintendent Gary Hannah after six years of service, the Canton Public School District Board of Trustees contacted Luckett, a three-time former superintendent with more than thirty-six years of experience in education, to help guide the district through the transition period and provide leadership through the semester.

The Board asked Luckett to focus on several key areas, including increasing accountability, reducing costs, eliminating activities that violated state laws and district policies, identifying inappropriate fundraising practices and recovering fundraising funds that had not been properly submitted to the district.

During his first twelve months back in the role, Luckett has worked to address those priorities while implementing initiatives designed to strengthen the district's future.

Upon his return, the Board of Trustees approved a comprehensive Internal Controls Audit. The district is actively taking corrective measures based on the audit's findings.

Luckett also helped stabilize the district's financial operations after a business office administrator's sudden departure created challenges in developing the budget for the current school year. He worked with the business office team to complete the process and ensure the district was prepared to move forward.

Under his leadership, the district de-

veloped a five-year strategic plan focused on continued academic growth and student success. He also implemented curriculum alignment efforts designed to strengthen instruction and improve consistency throughout the district.

Luckett led a personnel restructuring initiative to eliminate duplication of services, save district funds and increase productivity by placing qualified employees in roles where they could better serve students and staff.

He also identified teachers with expiring licenses and worked to support them through the renewal process, allowing them to continue serving students in the district.

In addition to academic and operational improvements, Luckett has focused on long-term facility planning. He helped the district purchase land for a future Central Office building, further developed plans for a shipping and receiving warehouse and maintenance building, and created plans for a Pre-K school at the board's request.

Recently, Luckett developed renovation plans for each school campus, including improvements at Nichols Middle School such as upgrades to the football stadium and track field, restroom and window improvements, new lighting and future plans for a new school facility.

Upon his arrival, Luckett worked alongside the district's Operations

Director and contractors to complete the Canton High School construction paving project, including improvements to the entrance, bus loop and parking lot.

These efforts reflect Luckett's continued commitment to his motto, "Working Together Works," as he collaborates with the Canton Public

School District Board of Trustees and district professionals to improve opportunities for students.

Before returning to CPSD, Luckett served as a member of the Madison County Economic Development Authority, where he helped support economic growth efforts, including purchasing

land and attracting businesses to the area. Those developments are expected to provide millions of dollars in revenue to the Canton Public School District over time.

Luckett previously served as superintendent of CPSD for eight years before retiring in 2014. During that time, he helped lead numerous accomplishments, including elevating the district to a "Successful" rating for the first time in its history and earning recognition from the Mississippi Department of Education for that achievement.

Other highlights from his previous tenure include increasing the graduation rate by 50%, decreasing the drop-

out rate by 50%, supporting current district administrators in earning certifications and licenses, and recruiting highly qualified personnel to meet district needs.

Under his leadership, the district constructed two state-of-the-art schools — Jimmie M. Goodloe Elementary and Huey L. Porter Middle School — without a bond referendum to raise taxes. He also oversaw renovations at Nichols Middle School, including new parking lots, helped coordinate new parking lots at Canton High School with the Madison County Board of Supervisors, and saved more than \$700,000 in construction costs.

Additional accomplishments included the construction of a 10,000-square-foot field house and a new modern football stadium, improved district communication through a redesigned website, increased school security measures, created a Security Department, installed safety lighting at the Canton High School entrance, and made improvements to transportation safety through bus cameras and updated air-conditioned buses.

Luckett also worked to improve financial stability by eliminating waste, replacing the Central Office roof, adding security cameras and continuing partnerships, such as G.A. Carmichael school-based health clinics to provide services for students.

The Canton Public School District expressed appreciation for Luckett's continued dedication and service.

"Thank you, Superintendent Luckett, for your years of dedicated, unwavering service and vigorous support of the Canton Public School District," district officials said. "Your commitment to students, families and the community continues to make a lasting impact."



Dwight Luckett Sr.

CPSD honored for partnership with MS for the Deaf and the Blind

By Courtney Warren

The Canton Public School District has received the Mississippi Association of Partners in Education's 2025-26 Governor's Award for Exemplary Partnerships in recognition of its collaborative efforts with the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

Superintendent Dwight Luckett, Exceptional Services Director Dr. Shannon Smith and the Canton Public School District Board of Trustees accepted the award from Governor Tate Reeves during the district's July board meeting.

The award recognizes the district's commitment to building meaningful partnerships that support students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired or deafblind throughout Mississippi.

LaMarlon Wilson, superintendent of



Special to The Canton News

education for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, praised the district's ongoing collaboration.

"On behalf of the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB),

we extend our sincere appreciation for your continued partnership and unwavering commitment to serving students across the State of Mississippi," Wilson said.

"This prestigious recognition reflects the strength of the partnerships we have built with school districts like yours, all working together to ensure that students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deafblind receive the specialized educational services they need to thrive. We thank the district for its commitment to educational excellence and inclusion. Thank you for your trust, collaboration and dedication to the students and families we collectively serve."

Luckett and Smith said they are honored to receive the recognition and look forward to continuing the partnership with the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. They said the collaboration helps fulfill the shared mission of empowering students to achieve their fullest potential through specialized educational services and inclusive opportunities.

Summerlin collection donated to the Historical Society



Special to The Canton News

Lynn Bailey Wiggers donates the Summerlin collection to the Canton-Madison County Historical Society.

Submitted by the Canton-Madison County Historical Society

For decades, Walterine B. Summerlin quietly preserved the history and genealogy of many families and institutions in Madison County.

Ms. Summerlin, who passed away on July 12, 2025, in Canton, at the age of 98, spent countless hours researching the families, cemeteries, schools, churches, and communities that shaped our county.

Recently, the Canton-Madison

County Historical Society received a Facebook message from Lynn Bailey Wiggers of Kosciusko. Although she lives in Attala County, Lynn recognized that the two crates of historical and genealogical research she had acquired overwhelmingly documented the people, places, and families of Madison County.

Rather than keeping the collection or allowing it to be discarded, she reached out to ask if the Canton-Madison County Historical Society would be interested in giving



Special to The Canton News

Binders, books, and files from the Summerlin collection.

it a permanent home.

Our answer was - yes.

A few days later, we met Lynn in the parking lot of the Madison Lowe's, where she generously entrusted the collection to the Society.

The collection reflects a lifetime of careful work by Ms. Summerlin. Inside are family histories, cemetery records, photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, research notebooks, and carefully organized files documenting generations of Madison County families, with particular emphasis on the communities of Canton, Camden, and Farmhaven.

Among the many family names represented are Ashley, Cain, Cameron, Culpher, Permenter, Payland, Ray, Shannon, and numerous others.

The donation also includes several important reference works, including *Memories of Farmhaven School, 1924-1969*, *Sulphur Spring/Culpher Methodist Cemetery, CAMERON... Lest We Forget* by Robert

Howell Cauthen, and *Cemeteries of Madison County, Mississippi*, compiled by Walter W. Wellington.

Together with the binders, books, and research files, these materials preserve countless stories that might otherwise have been lost.

Genealogical research is often a quiet labor of love. It is built one document, one photograph, one cemetery visit, and one family story at a time.

We are especially grateful to Lynn Bailey Wiggers for recognizing that this remarkable collection belonged where its story began. Her generosity and thoughtfulness ensured that Ms. Summerlin's work remained in Madison County, where it will continue to serve researchers, descendants, students, and anyone interested in our shared heritage.

The Canton-Madison County Historical Society is honored to become the steward of this extraordinary archive.



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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE LIHEAP PROGRAM

This public hearing will be held at the Canton Public Library 102 Prestley Street in Canton, MS, on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. The purpose of this hearing will be to obtain Citizens' input into the development of the application for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. The Madison County Citizens Agency of Madison County, Mississippi, is considering applying to the Mississippi Department of Human Services for this grant to provide energy assistance in Madison County.

ON THE TABLE



Easy Peasy Apple Tuna Salad

ingredients

- Dill
- Lemon juice
- Four cans of tuna in water (drained)
- Two diced celery sticks
- Two diced apples
- Lemon pepper seasoning to taste
- Mayo to your preferred consistency

By Courtney Warren

This is one of my favorite recipes! When I lived in the Delta, there was a coffee shop around the corner that served the best tuna salad sandwiches. When I was pregnant with my daughter, these were all I could eat. When we moved away, I knew I had to copycat this one and it's now a staple at our house. It's so easy, and it keeps for about a week, though I tend to eat it up way faster. You can pair it with crackers, pretzels, or even toast some bread and have it on a sandwich. Almost everything is to taste so this is a true "measure with your heart" recipe.

Preparation:

Mix everything together, and chill for a few hours before serving. Easy and so so good!

instructions



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Old Jail Farmer’s Market wraps up the 2026 summer season



all photos Special to The Canton News

The Old Jail Farmers Market is wrapping up another successful summer season after welcoming shoppers each Saturday throughout June and July at the historic Old Jail grounds, 234 E. Fulton St. Hosted by the Canton-Madison County Historical Society, the market featured locally grown produce, handmade goods and artisan products from Mississippi vendors while supporting local farmers and small businesses. The seasonal market was held from 7 to 11 a.m. each Saturday and will return next summer.



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Day of H.O.P.E. brings community together for wellness event



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Pine Grove Association, Inc. hosted its Day of H.O.P.E., “Wellness on the Grounds,” on recently at the H.O.P.E. Center Grounds in Canton, bringing community members together for a morning focused on health, movement and connection. Held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., the

free, family-friendly event encouraged participants to stay active, learn healthy habits and spend time with others. Activities included music, group exercise, games, snacks, health and nutrition tips, children’s activities and art activities. Following the event, organizers described the day as one filled with

meaningful conversations, opportunities to meet new people, learning about health, physical activity and laughter. They said the event fulfilled its mission of fostering community and hope. Young people who attended also shared encouraging messages by writing their thoughts on the concrete at the H.O.P.E. Center

Grounds, adding to what organizers called the positive atmosphere of the day. Pine Grove Association thanked everyone who attended and announced that additional wellness gatherings are planned for April 11 and April 25 at the H.O.P.E. Center Grounds.

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The City of Canton welcomes Eugene Luckett as new chief of police



Chief Luckett and his wife, Mrs. Antionette Luckett

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The City of Canton recently named Eugene Luckett as the city’s new chief of police. A lifelong Madison County resident, Luckett has served with the Canton Fire Department, Canton Police Department, Madison County Sheriff’s Office, Mississippi Highway Patrol and continues as a member of the Farmhaven Volunteer Fire Depart-

ment. A 1992 graduate of Velma Jackson High School, he brings decades of law enforcement and emergency services experience to the role. City officials congratulated Luckett on his appointment and expressed confidence in his leadership as he begins serving the Canton community. Check the September edition of *The Canton News* for a full introduction to Chief Luckett.

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CHS alumnus inspires future Bulldogs through Mississippi State leadership program

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Canton High School alumnus Jaquavian Ratliff is helping inspire the next generation of college students through his leadership role in Mississippi State University's Students Paving A Road to Knowledge (SPARK) program.

Ratliff serves as the co-director of programming for the SPARK Leadership Conference, which provides prospective high school seniors with an immersive experience designed to help them plan for their futures while exploring the academic opportunities available at Mississippi State.

During this year's conference, Ratliff had the opportunity to encourage Canton High School senior Alexandria Luckett as she considers her college options.

"I joined SPARK because I came in



Special to The Canton News

with a mindset of wanting to positively impact prospective students, and this organization strives to do that," Ratliff said. "In addition, my SPARK experience was the main factor in my decision to attend MSU."

Luckett said the program definitely "sparked" her interest in attending Mississippi State.

Ratliff, a junior majoring in computer science, is also part of the university's first graduating class to earn a degree in artificial intelligence. In addition to his leadership on campus, he recently earned recognition on the Dean's List.

School officials congratulated Ratliff on his accomplishments, praising him for representing Canton High School with excellence while encouraging future students to pursue higher education.



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Simple summer energy tips from Canton Municipal Utilities



Small changes can help lower summer energy use.

Try these simple tips to stay comfortable while keeping your bill under control.

1 Change air filters

Clean or replace filters monthly so your A/C can run efficiently.

2 Set the thermostat wisely

Choose the highest comfortable temperature to reduce usage.

3 Use fans

Circulate cool air with ceiling or box fans, but turn them off in empty rooms.

4 Block the sun

Close blinds, shades and curtains during the hottest part of the day.

5 Seal air leaks

Use weather stripping or caulk around doors, windows and ductwork.

6 Use a programmable thermostat

Help control costs by adjusting temperatures around your schedule.

Stay comfortable this summer while helping keep your energy use under control.

Canton Municipal Utilities

Canton Public Schools begins 2026-2027 school year with focus on unity and growth



All photos Special to The Canton News

Special to The Canton News

The Canton Public School District welcomed the 2026-2027 academic year with its annual Convocation, bringing together administrators, teachers, staff and community partners under the theme “Reconnect. Refocus. Rise Together.” Following an inspiring Convoca-

tion, the CPSD family renewed its commitment to creating exceptional educational opportunities and enriching experiences for students throughout the upcoming school year. The district expressed appreciation for Convocation speaker Dr. Candice Vance, consultant and author of Building an Inclusive

Classroom Culture, as well as Dr. Darein Spann, president of the Mississippi Association of Educators. CPSD also recognized the support of Mayor Tim Taylor, members of the Board of Aldermen, retired teachers, members of the Madison County Ministerial Alliance and the 100 Black Men of Canton. With a renewed sense of purpose

and unity, Canton Public Schools looks forward to fostering a vibrant learning environment where every student can thrive and succeed. “We are family,” the district shared, emphasizing the importance of reconnecting, refocusing and rising together with the support of the Canton community.

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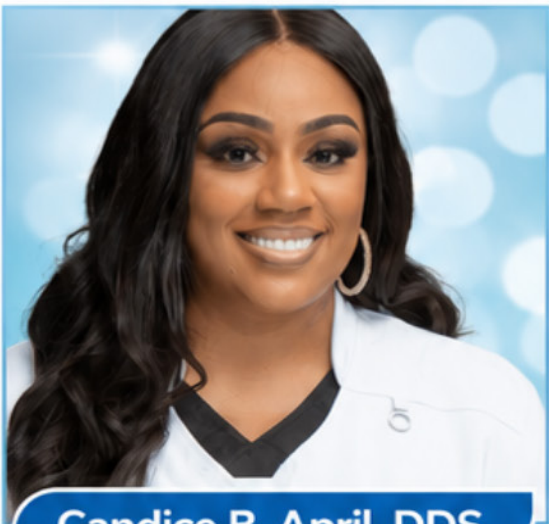


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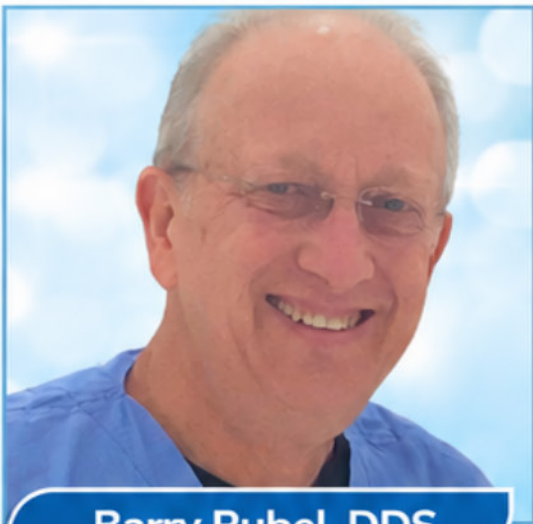
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CPSD Educator Huntley graduates from Mathematics Coaching Academy of Mississippi

Special to The Canton News

Canton Public School District educator Cassie Huntley was recognized as a member of the first graduating cohort of the Mathematics Coaching Academy of Mississippi (MCAM), a professional development program designed to strengthen mathematics instruction across the state.

The Mississippi State Board of Education recognized the inaugural class of graduates during a recent board meeting. State Board of Education Chair Matt Miller and State Superintendent of Education Dr. Lance Evans presented certificates to each graduate.

The Mathematics Coaching Academy of Mississippi is part of the Mis-



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issippi Department of Education's Moving Mathematics in Mississippi initiative. The program equips current and aspiring math coaches working in school districts with the same high-quality training provided to state math coaches, with the goal of advancing mathematics achievement statewide.

Following the recognition, Huntley thanked the Canton Public School District administration for supporting her professional growth. She expressed appreciation to Victoria Johnson, Principal Henry Doyle and mentor Gwen Purnell for the opportunity to participate in the program and continue helping develop CPSD scholars.



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Giants Fans should be excited about the arrival of Dakota Jordan

Article courtesy of Ryan Boman and Sports Illustrated

Just as the All-Streak break was dawning, San Francisco Giants prospect Dakota Jordan got the call of a lifetime for any minor league player. He was headed to The Show and would be donning the Orange & Black at Oracle once the Mid-Summer lull is over.

Jordan, 23, has an incredible set of big-league tools that (like all prospects) he will have to fine-tune on the biggest stage in baseball. A free swinger with good power, he could be a nice complement in the regular lineup alongside lefty slugger Bryce Eldridge if he pans out. His versatility on defense makes him a great all-around project for Giants manager Tony Vitelloto mold.

A multi-sport star for the Mississippi State Bulldogs, many observers thought he would be catching spirals instead of crushing sliders. He was projected to be a prominent NFL Draft selection. As his MLB.com profile explains, that was the biggest factor in his being largely ignored by MLB general managers.

“[Dakota] Jordan went undrafted because he was a three-star wide receiver set on playing two sports at Mississippi State,” the analysis states. “He never stepped on the gridiron for the Bulldogs but per-

formed well for two seasons before signing for a well-above-slot \$1,997,500 in 2024’s fourth round. He led the Single-A California League with 14 homers in his first full pro season despite missing the final month with an oblique strain, and he fell just one hit and one RBI short of the triple crown.”

Those numbers have been good enough that Jordan was ranked as the Giants’ number-five overall prospect before getting shipped to San Francisco.

“Jordan has the quickest swing and the best all-around tools in the system. His right-handed stroke generates huge exit velocities and at least double-plus raw power that plays to any part of any ballpark. Though he still needs to tame a tendency to swing through in-zone fastballs and chase breaking balls, he did cut his strikeout rate from 27 percent with the Bulldogs to 23 percent last year.”

Of his weaknesses, Dakota Jordan must make better contact at the plate. While his upside is amazing, he’s whiffing too much right now to take advantage of his titanic talents. A few adjustments could transform him into a consistent 25-30 home run guy, who averages about 80-90 RBI a year. For an example from the past, see players like former Los Angeles Dodgers star Matt Kemp,



IMAGN IMAGES via Reuters Connect

San Francisco Giants outfielder Dakota Jordan

or possibly even Atlanta Braves outfielder Ron Gant. Jordan isn’t just a machine at the plate; he’s got a motor on the basepaths and in the outfield, as well. His combination of skills has him bordering on being a five-tool player at the game’s highest level. But he has to display that he can be a contact hitter.

“Jordan can get from home to first base in less than four seconds on a grounder, and he started translating

that plus-plus speed into stolen-base and center-field prowess in 2025, “his scouting report continues. “He swiped 27 bags in 31 attempts (87 percent) after stealing just seven in two college seasons, and he looked very comfortable in center after playing only 13 games there at Mississippi State. He still needs to hone his defensive instincts, but his 30/30 upside will work anywhere in the outfield.

CPSD and MS schools implement stricter attendance policies

Special to The Canton News

Public school students across Mississippi face updated attendance requirements beginning in the 2026–27 school year, following new state legislative mandates designed to bolster classroom engagement and academic performance. The Canton Public School District recently outlined the upcoming guidelines, which stem from updated Mississippi state law and apply uniformly to every public school district across the state. Under the revised standards, the minimum daily attendance required for a student to be marked present for the day has increased from 63% to 66% of instructional time.

The updated rules significantly tighten guidelines for excused absences and medical documentation. Students may now receive up to five excused absences per semester—which includes both parent notes and medical excuses—replacing the previous policy that capped parent-excused absences at five per school year. Additionally, any absences due to illness or injury beyond the third absence will now strictly require official medical documentation. District officials noted that any additional excused absences beyond the new semester limits



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will require superintendent approval for extenuating circumstances, replacing the previous allowance of

unlimited medical excuses.

Extracurricular eligibility and early dismissal procedures are also

being restructured under the new state framework. Students will no longer be allowed to participate in school-sponsored activities if they are absent for more than 33% of the school day, down from the previous 37% allowance.

To ensure compliance with the 66% attendance mandate, districts have instituted firm cutoff times: elementary students must be present by 12:17 p.m., with an early dismissal cutoff at 1:15 p.m.; middle school students must be present by 12:37 p.m., with a cutoff at 1:30 p.m.; and high school students must be present by 1:02 p.m., with a cutoff at 2:07 p.m. District officials also emphasized that scholars may not be checked out during the final 90 minutes of the school day.

School administrators warn that parent outreach will occur much earlier as absences begin to accumulate. If unexcused absences continue to accrue without proper documentation, cases will be formally referred to attendance officers or local legal authorities under state truancy enforcement laws. Officials are urging parents to prioritize daily attendance, submit doctor notes promptly, and schedule medical appointments outside of school hours to ensure students stay on track.

CA senior explores future in law through summer camp



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Canton Academy senior Porter Dancy recently completed the Rankin-Madison Future Lawyers Law Camp, gaining hands-on ex-

perience and insight into the legal profession.

During the camp, Dancy observed proceedings in both Chancery Court and Circuit Court, participated in mock trials and learned from judg-

es, attorneys and court clerks about the many aspects of practicing law.

The experience provided Dancy with a firsthand look at the judicial system and strengthened his interest in pursuing a future career in

law.

Canton Academy representatives say they congratulate Dancy on this achievement and applaud his dedication to exploring opportunities that will help shape his future.



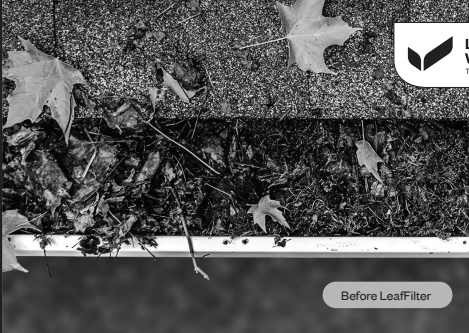
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Vanguard: Leading the Way

* Source: Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Student Assessment (2025-26 school year).

Canton Academy welcomes new head baseball coach JP Elkins

Special to The Canton News

Canton Academy has named JP Elkins as its new head baseball coach, bringing to the program a background that includes collegiate playing experience, championship-level coaching and a commitment to developing student-athletes on and off the field.

A Madison County native, Elkins graduated from Ridgeland High School before continuing his athletic career at Hinds Community College, where he competed in football and baseball. He later played baseball at Mississippi State University, earning SEC Academic Honor Roll recognition while helping the Bulldogs reach a Super Regional championship.

Following his playing career, Elkins entered coaching and spent the past five years at Madison Central High School. During his tenure, he served

as pitching coach, infield coach, strength and conditioning coordinator and camp director. Most recently, he helped lead the Jaguars to the 2025 MHSAA State Championship as the team's pitching and infield coach.



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According to Canton Academy, Elkins comes from a coaching family with more than 40 years of coaching experience. School officials said his focus extends beyond baseball, with a goal of building a championship program while developing young men of faith, character, discipline and toughness.

Canton Academy also welcomed Elkins' wife, Katy Grace, to the Black & Gold family as they begin this new chapter with the Panthers.

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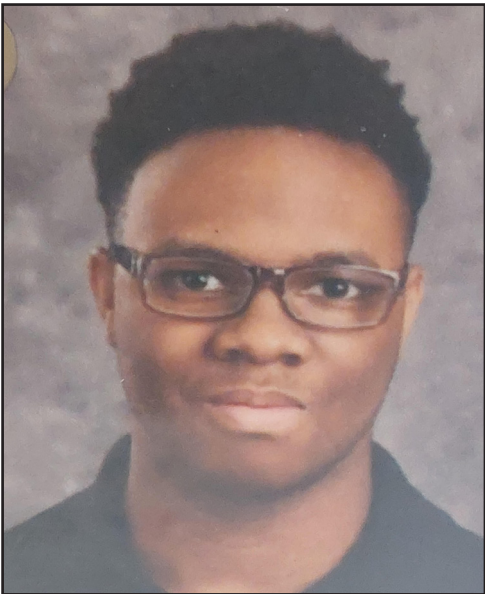
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CA student recognized for superior academic achievement

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The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) recently announced student Treyson Williamson from Canton has been selected to become a member of the esteemed organization. The Society recognizes top scholars who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, scholarship, and community commitment. The announcement was made by NSHSS Co-founder and President James W. Lewis.

“On behalf of NSHSS and our co-founder Claes Nobel, a member of the family that established the Nobel Prizes, I am honored to recognize the hard work, passion, and commitment that Treyson has demonstrated to achieve this exceptional level of academic excellence,” said Lewis. “Treyson is



now a member of a unique community of scholars — a community that represents our very best hope for the future.”

“We are proud to provide lifetime membership to young scholars to support their growth and development,” stated Lewis. “We help students like Treyson build on their academic success by connecting them with learning experiences and resources to help prepare them for college and meaningful careers.”

NSHSS members automatically become lifetime members at the time of their initial membership. Each step along the way — from high school to college to career — NSHSS connects outstanding young scholars with the resources they need to develop their strengths and pursue their passions.

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Canton Public School District recognized at national GED conference

Special to The Canton News

Canton Public School District’s High School Equivalency Program was recognized on a national stage during the 2026 GED Level Up Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, where Instructional Coordinator Monica McGhee represented the district.

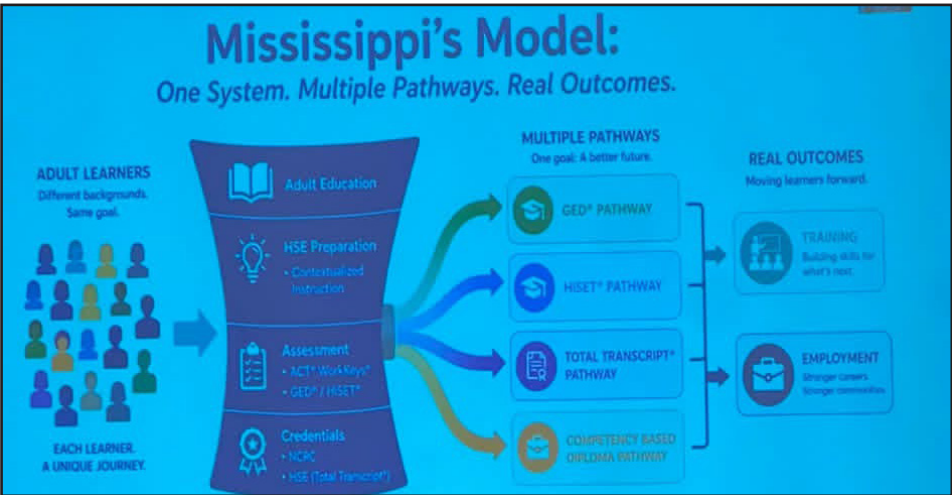
According to McGhee, she was the first representative from Canton Public School District to attend the national conference. During the event, she participated in sessions highlighting innovative programs, instructional strategies and opportunities designed to expand pathways to student success.

One of the conference’s highlights came during a presentation by Beth Little of the Mississippi Community College Board, who recognized Canton Public School District as the first dis-

trict in Mississippi to implement the Total Transcript Option. The pathway allows eligible students to earn their High School Equivalency credential through the ACT WorkKeys component.

McGhee said Little was unaware that a representative from Canton Public School District was in attendance when she recognized the district during her presentation. After identifying herself, McGhee said Little congratulated the district and expressed her appreciation for how quickly Canton Public School District adopted the opportunity for its students.

McGhee said the recognition reinforced the district’s commitment to educational innovation and student success. She also expressed appreciation to Canton Public School District for supporting professional development and



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investing in opportunities that benefit students, adding that she looks forward to bringing back new ideas, resources

and best practices to strengthen the district’s High School Equivalency Program.

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