

School district hears feedback during “Community Conversations”



SVME student Zahara Ahmed (pictured with hoodie), her father Askar Ahmed and siblings listen in during session 3. (Photo submitted)



Holmes County parents, children, community members and community/school district volunteers were on hand at S.V. Marshall K-8 school, April 14, for the Holmes County Consolidated School District’s (HCCSD) premiere Critical Community Conversations (CCC) and Carnival. The purpose was to discuss the district’s educational roadmap for the district (officially known as the It’s That Time! Strategic Plan), student discipline and the Summer Flight Program (summer school), as well as provide some good-old, community family fun. Activities included general sessions packed with information, explanation and discussion around the district’s strategic plan, food, fun and games. Families packed the cafeteria as they received critical need-to-know information. Pictured above, students pledge to improve behavior. (Photo submitted)

230-year-old water mill still making cornmeal and grits

Associated Press

Tucked away in rural Kemper County on the bank of Running Tiger Creek sits one of Mississippi’s oldest businesses. Its weathered clapboard exterior and rusted metal roof speak of its age.

Inside, old farm implements, hand tools and other antiques have a coating of dust from the grain that is milled there. That dust is also a part of Sciple’s Mill owner Eddie Sciple’s DNA.

“I’ve been around it since I was born,” Sciple, 53, said. “I used to help my grandpa when he was milling.

“I helped my daddy mill, too. Our family bought it around 1850 or 1860 — somewhere around that time frame. I’m the fifth-generation owner. We have seven generations that have worked at it.”

Of the four other mills that operated on Running Tiger Creek, only one remains and Sciple said it has not operated since the 1950s. Most other grist mills disappeared, too, making the mill about eight miles (13 kilometers) north-northwest of De Kalb a rarity.

“It’s the oldest one we know of that still grinds for the public,” Sciple said. “During the fall of the year we get real busy. I’ve got customers from Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee and everywhere in between.”

And the price of his service has never changed.

“We still charge the same we did in 1790, an eighth,” Sciple said. “If you bring in a bushel, I get a gallon of it.

“I’ll grind that up and bag it and sell it. That’s how I get paid.”

Most of the milling is done from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays. People come to see the process, tour the mill, and buy cornmeal, flour, grits and fish

fry. At other times customers can get products from a box located outside and leave their money in an honor box. Sciple said he also sells to a restaurant, about 15-20 stores and he takes orders by phone and ships them.

Sciple charges \$6 for 10 pounds of cornmeal or \$3 for 3 pounds. His grits and fish fry are \$3 for 2 pounds and flour is \$3 for 3 pounds. But why would anyone go to the trouble of driving to Kemper County to buy his products or have them shipped? Sciple said it’s simple — taste.

“Our grits, nothing is taken out,” Sciple said. “You’ve got all the nutrients.

“You’ve got the germ, which is the soft part. In commercial grits they remove that. It’s got a tiny bit of oil in it and that reduces the shelf life, so they remove that.”

His cornmeal differs, too.

“It’s different in taste and texture,” Sciple said. “You don’t have to add flour to it to make cornbread.

“It’s a smoother texture. It’s

ground slow. It’s not overheated. All of that makes a difference. Everything but the flour is gluten-free. It’s just 100 percent corn.”

The mill operates much as it did over 200 years ago. It is powered by creek water that is dammed with gates. The water turns a Leffel turbine that replaced the original wooden turbine when the mill was renovated in 1880. Corn and wheat are ground into grits, cornmeal and flour between two round 42-inch-diameter stones. The bottom stone is stationary and weighs 2,100 pounds. The upper stone rotates and weighs 1,600 pounds.

How much power the turbine produces is unknown. Sciple said his father Edward Sciple, who died in 2015, thought it generated between 250 and 300 horsepower. Sciple said research he’s done indicated it creates closer to 50 horsepower. Either way, the 140-year-old technology is powerful.

“It’s enough they ran a saw-

mill off it, they ran a cotton gin off it and the grist mill,” Sciple said.

The sawmill is still there, but the cotton gin is gone. The mill house was destroyed by a tornado in 1973. It was rebuilt using some of the original material and some new, but the second floor that housed the gin was not rebuilt.

According to Sciple, mills like his were once common.

“At one time there were five mills on the creek we’re on,” Sciple said. “Every little community had one.

“Not all of them were water mills. Some were steam powered.”

While the grist mill has been in the Sciple family for about 160 years, it dates back further.

“The original mill was built in 1790, they say,” Sciple said. “It was originally built by Dr. Hunnerly.

“He came here from South Carolina and built it. Our family bought it from a lady that ended up with it. Her name was Rose McMannis. I think there was a family or two (that owned the mill) between Hunnerly and McMannis.”

Sciple teaches at a nearby community college, so mill-

ing is a part-time job for him. But owning a water mill is a full-time responsibility that he describes as “very confining.” He said any trips he plans depend on rainfall. If there is rain in the forecast he has to stay home to adjust the gates in the dam so nothing is damaged. When there are heavy rains at night, adjusting gates comes before sleep.

Even so, he doesn’t foresee leaving the life of a miller and his family tradition anytime soon.

“It’s not something you can really retire from,” Sciple said. “You just keep doing it until you can’t anymore.”

*Central Holmes

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3rd; John Ward, 4th; Discus – John Christopher Riley, 3rd; Riley Patton, 5th; Shot Put - Riley Patton, 3rd; Martavious Hogan, 5th; 4x100 Meter Relay - Sean Harrell, Michael Jones, Jurden Engle, Noah Steen, 2nd; 4x200 Meter Relay - John Ward, Ashton Tate, Michael Jones, Noah Steen, 3rd; 4x400 Meter Relay - Sean Harrell, Jurden Engle, John Ward, Michael Jones, 1st; 4x800 Meter Relay - Sean Harrell, Cayton Edwards, Ellis Harris, Jurden Engle, 1st.

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