

**EARLY DEADLINE**  
**FOR MEMORIAL DAY**  
**ALL LEGALS, ADS AND EVENTS**  
**SUBMITTED BY**  
**THURSDAY - MAY 23 @ NOON**



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Serving  
 Holmes  
 County  
 Since  
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**HOLMES COUNTY**

# HERALD

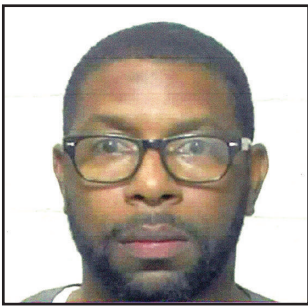


THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2019 ONE SECTION LEXINGTON, MISSISSIPPI 39095 VOLUME 61 - NUMBER 21

## Holmes County assistant principal accused of sex with student

Associated Press

An assistant principal at a Mississippi high school faces statutory rape charges. Leflore County Sheriff Ricky Banks tells The Greenwood Commonwealth that Dyana Thomas, 49, was arrested Friday, May 10, at his Greenwood home. That's where the sheriff says Thomas had sex with a female student younger than 16. Thomas remains jailed, with bail set at \$500,000. It's unclear if Thomas has a lawyer.



DYANA THOMAS

was sentenced to a year's unsupervised probation,

plus 120 days of suspended jail time.

Holmes County Superintendent James Henderson said the district conducts background checks for all employees before hiring them, as required by Mississippi law. But Henderson also said Thomas would have been hired to his position before Henderson became superintendent in summer 2018.

## Mississippi man accused in slaying of 75-year-old woman

Associated Press

Thomas works at Holmes County Central High School. The district said it investigated and gave results to law enforcement, adding that the "safety and well-being of students is always our highest priority." Thomas ran into trouble three times for misusing school money in Alabama. He pleaded guilty to federal mail fraud charges in 2007 over allegations that he wrote checks to people for bogus workshops, while principal at Choctaw County High School in Butler, Alabama, getting kickbacks from one. Thomas was sentenced to five years' probation and \$1,200 in restitution, federal court records show. At the time, Thomas also lost his position on the Sumter County School Board. In 2012, the Alabama Ethics Commission fined him \$1,000 for misuse of funds at Wilcox Central High School, The Birmingham News reported. Last year, Thomas pleaded guilty to third-degree criminal mischief and harassing communications, both misdemeanors, over 2014 allegations that he took kickbacks from people he paid to work at school functions at Greensboro High School. State court records show he

A central Mississippi man is accused in the death of a 75-year-old woman. Holmes County Sheriff Willie March tells local news outlets that Antony Fisher, 34, is charged with murder in the death of Ora Lee Irvin. A niece found Irvin dead in her backyard on May 3 when she stopped by to drop off food. Irvin had been shot in the head. March says investigators were tipped to Fisher's involvement, with someone reporting that two men had picked up Fisher near Irvin's house. Fisher allegedly was wearing a hoodie with items underneath. Investigators



ANTONY FISHER

also found the Pickens resident used Irvin's cell phone.

Fisher was arrested Friday on a separate armed robbery charge in Lexington.

He remains jailed with bail set at \$200,000. It's unclear if he has a lawyer.

## Living Day to Day: Surrounded by water and ignored by powerful officials, Tchula and its people fight for survival

Story by Anna Wolfe  
 Mississippi Today

Elizabeth Coats and her landlord Tony Mansoor agree the trailer where she's lived for 12 years should be condemned. It's dingy, damaged sheetrock walls are covered with photos, art, clothing and a sign reading, "HOME IS WHERE the heart is."

Coats lives with and takes care of a disabled elderly man while managing her

own mental illness. Both are on fixed income and she must often borrow money to buy their various medicines.

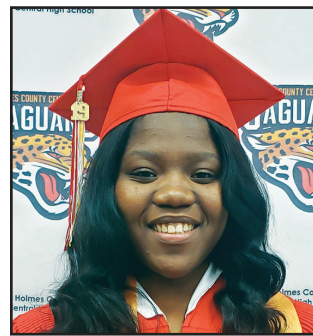
When nearby Tchula Lake flooded recently, and the water rose right up to her doorstep, the Salvation Army helped them flee and stay in a motel for five days during the surge. But they're home today with few options.

Coats is not alone. Many of her neighbors live in similarly dire conditions follow-

## Valedictorian and co-salutatorians named at Holmes County Central HS

Holmes County Central High School has announced the valedictorian and co-salutatorians for the Class of 2019. Rabria Moore has been named valedictorian and Samantha Deering, Kiersten Ellis and Shakenya Hester have been named co-salutatorians.

Rabria Moore, 4.1724 GPA, valedictorian of Holmes County Central High School's 2019 graduating class, is the proud daughter of Mr. Robert and Mrs. Monique Moore of Durant, MS. Rabria is the eldest of four children. The scholar is actively involved in an array of academic, leadership, athletic and social entities in the Holmes County area. Those affiliations include: National Honor Society, Senior Beta Club, Superintendent's Roundtable, Holmes County Central High School Student Government Association, Leadership for Life, Mayor of Durant Youth Council, Varsity Jaguar Cheerleading Squad, HCCHS Announcement Team, Senior Class President and the Senior Class Cabinet. Rabria has



RABRIA MOORE



KIERSTEN ELLIS



SAMANTHA DEERING



SHAKENYA HESTER

chosen to spend the next four years of her life in Oxford at the University of Mississippi pursuing degrees in journalism and psychology. The vibrant intellectual is presently the recipient of a number of scholarships which include, but is not limited to the following: the Lucky Day Success Scholarship, Community Student Learning Center

Scholarship, Delta Honors Scholarship, Gannett Freedom Forum Scholarship and the Academic Merit Scholarship.

Samantha Deering is one of three co-salutatorians for the HCCHS class of 2019. Deering is the extremely proud daughter of Ms. Angela Deering and Mr. (Continued on page 3.)

Nearly 12 weeks after the storms began, residents long accustomed to living in survival-mode continue to wait for relief.

"Tchula seems like its at one of its lowest points," said resident Geneva Williams, who's been experiencing sewage backup in her yard as a result of the flooding.

In Tchula, consistently among the poorest places in the country, more than 60 percent of its roughly 1,850 residents live in poverty. Ninety-nine percent are black. Mechanization cou-

pled with white flight turned this once prosperous Delta town built on farm economy into a desert, mostly void of wealth, opportunity and even food, despite having some of the richest soil in the country.

"The flood just compounded an already serious situation. It put it almost in a devastation. It's going to take some serious resources to overcome. That's the bottom line," said local farmer Calvin Head.

Annie Horton's trailer, (Continued on page 8.)

50¢ Single Copy



**Thursday**  
 Sunny  
 91/68  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Friday**  
 Sunny  
 91/69  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Saturday**  
 Partly Cloudy  
 94/68  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Sunday**  
 Partly Cloudy  
 94/70  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Monday**  
 Partly Cloudy  
 94/70  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Tuesday**  
 Mostly Sunny  
 94/71  
 Precip. Chance  
 10%



**Wednesday**  
 Partly Cloudy  
 91/70  
 Precip. Chance  
 20%

How to reach us

PHONE • 834-1151  
 FAX • 834-1074  
 EMAIL  
 hcherald@gmail.com