

# Acclaimed actress, gospel artist headline HCCSD's Back to School Convocation 2019

**Press Release**

More than 600 employees, community leaders and stakeholders of the Holmes County Consolidated School District were energized for back-to-school readiness by “In the Heat of the Night” star actress, Dr. Tommie Tonea Stewart and gospel recording artist Zacardi Cortez.

Stewart, a Greenwood native and recently retired award-winning dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts of Alabama State University, served as the motivational speaker for the district’s Back to School Convocation 2019 on Aug. 1. A Jackson State University alumna, Stewart also reigned as Miss JSU and later served as an educator in the JSU Speech and Dramatic Arts Department.

Cortez, 33, a Houston, Texas native, widely known for his popular recording, “You Don’t Know,” performed a mini concert of several of his recorded songs and stirred up the crowd.

Both guests elevated the level of optimism and energy in the packed Deborah C. Mason Hall on Saints Academy Campus. School employees, adorned with t-shirts identifying their school or mission for the new school year, cheered and applauded. “What is your WHY?” stood out from among the shirts with school mascots and logos as a call for educators to know their motivating force for doing the work of educating the citizens of tomorrow.

Dr. Stewart’s speech ranged widely from song lyrics to Bible stories to poems by notable authors Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes, among others. She called on educators to “teach tolerance and do what you can to help others because at some point, someone helped you.” She urged everyone to remember

the past and to use it as a foundation for moving into the future. She stressed the need for teamwork, for the support of universities in developing teachers, of communities to support the superintendent and the schools—that it is “not time to pay lip service, but rather, time to pay life service...Get the funding we need from agencies such as the state department of education and the legislature’s discretionary funds.” She told of how cleaning up the Sugar Ditch area in the Delta paved the way for the economic development of Tunica and its casinos and resorts which lifted Tunica county out of its designation as poorest county in Mississippi—the spot now held by Holmes County. Dr. Stewart also called on Holmes County businesses and banks to give funds to the schools to support the needs of the children.

Board of Education President Rev. Anthony Anderson fired up the staff by urging them to “do all that we can to educate our children because our children are the future and without them, we will perish.” He encouraged everyone from “the custodians to the Board of Education to do our jobs to achieve great success.”

Closing out the convocation, Superintendent James L. Henderson, Ed.D., a JSU student of Dr. Stewart, shared a personal story of how she taught him an important life lesson: Stop acting and be. He extended that to “Be about the business of educating kids. Establish relationships with students in order to follow up with relevance and rigor in lessons.”

Dr. Henderson extended the practice, established at the 2018 convocation, of recognizing employees and district stakeholders with the Extra Mile Award. District vendor SAMAC’s founder and CEO,

Shannon Greer, donated funds so that the awardees received \$500 honorariums. Hannah Brooks, payroll clerk, was recognized for delaying her retirement in order to help the business department facilitate the conversion from the former finance system to a new one, and in so doing, seamlessly managed the payrolls over the summer months. High school band director, Stefan Mathis, was appreciated for his tireless preparation and travel with the band to perform, compete and represent Holmes County in several states across the southern region—including a performance of the national anthem at a New Orleans Pelicans basketball game. Straight Talk radio talk show host Zelfha Whatley was acknowledged for her work with youth and her support of the district’s goals. Andy Hallmon was commended for his generosity in December 2018 when he donated gifts and awards for student achievement at all of the district’s schools.

The superintendent announced that every teacher would receive a new laptop before the start of classes on Wednesday, Aug. 7, and he also underscored the investment the district is making into its teachers. He spoke briefly about the bond referendum on the general election ballot November 5 and described how funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency will combine with the \$16.6 million from the bond to build up to three new state-of-the-art schools for Holmes County students.

Lexington Mayor Robin McCrory said that all she had to add to the inspiring and entertaining presentations of the day was “period. Exclamation point!” She announced



Pictured at left (from left): Holmes County Consolidated School Superintendent Dr. James Henderson, board of education members Elder William Dean, Jr., April Jones, Dr. Tommie Stewart, guest speaker, Louise Winters, President Anthony Anderson and Rayford Horton.

(Photo submitted)

Pictured at right (center): Gospel Recording Artist Zacardi Cortez.

(Photo submitted)



Pictured at left (from left): Mayor McCrory, Dr. Allen Stewart, Dr. Tommie Stewart.

(Photo submitted)



Pictured above, Doretha Draine Wiley.

(Photo submitted)



Pictured at above (from left): Elder William Dean, Dr. Stewart, Zelfha Whatley.

(Photo submitted)

that new roads were going to be installed from Highway 12 to the district’s Educational Support Center and Career Technical Center on Olive Street. Mayor McCrory also announced the Healthy Hero grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi would

fund monthly visits by uniformed police officers to each school to discuss healthy life choices.

Holmes County Consolidated School District staff, guests, board of education members and community stakeholders were energized

and challenged by the events of the morning. They left the convocation galvanized to take on the work of educating the youth of the county to prepare students for the global community in which they must engage as successful citizens in the coming years.

## \*Elections

(Continued from page 1.)

votes/27.8%; and Earline Wright-Hart, 2669 votes/72.17%; Write-in Votes, 1 vote/0.03%.

Prosecuting Attorney - C. ‘Chuck’ Edwards, 3012 votes/99.87%; and Write-in Votes, 4 votes/0.13%.

Sheriff - Willie E. March, 2508 votes/67.33%; Donald ‘DY’ Young, 1159 votes/31.11%; and Write-in Votes, 58 votes/1.56%.

Coroner - Dexter ‘Skip’ Howard, 3185 votes/99.81%; and Write-in Votes, 6 votes/0.19%.

Tax Collector - Linda Rollins, 3301 votes/99.97%; and Write-in Votes, 1

vote/0.03%.

District 1 Supervisor - Henry Anderson, 284 votes/31.59%; Cleotha Dixon, Jr., 146 votes/16.24%; L. ‘Hamp’ Hampton, 261 votes/29.03%; Steve McClellan, 92 votes/10.23%; and John Mark O’Neal, 116 votes/12.9%. There will be a run-off between Henry Anderson and L. ‘Hamp’ Hampton.

District 2 Supervisor - James Young, 464 votes/99.57%; and Write-in Votes, 2 votes/0.43%.

District 3 Supervisor - Debra Mabry, 435 votes/59.83%; William Primer, Jr., 291 votes/40.03%; and Write-in Votes, 1 vote/0.14%.

District 4 Supervi-

sor - Leroy Johnson, 320 votes/41.78%; I. Tyrone Sly Lindsey, 120 votes/15.67%; Joe Willie March, 216 votes/28.20%; Robert Payne Scott, 24 votes/3.13%; Luther Wade, Jr., 84 votes/10.97%; and Write-in Votes, 2 votes/0.26%. There will be a run-off between Leroy Johnson and Joe Willie March.

District 5 Supervisor - Eddie J. Carthan, 651 votes/73.89%; Willie L. Townsend, 229 votes/25.99%; and Write-in Votes, 1 votes/0.11%.

District 1 Justice Court Judge - Shirley Neal, 1902 votes/99.37%; and Write-in Votes, 12 votes/0.63%.

District 2 Justice Court Judge - Marcus Fisher, 658

votes/42.37%; Francine Jefferson, 383 votes/24.66%; B. Johnson Streeter, 261 votes/16.81%; and L. Kashay Walden, 251 votes/16.16%. There will be a run-off between Marcus Fisher and Francine Jefferson.

District 1 Constable - Sharkey Ford, 1501 votes/70.37%; Vernell Sago, III, 628 votes/29.44%; and Write-in Votes, 4 votes/0.19%.

District 2 Constable - Willie Lee Anderson, 1371 votes/99.64%; and Write-in Votes, 5 votes/0.36%.

**REPUBLICAN**

Governor - Robert Foster, 74 votes/15.01%; Tate Reeves, 236 votes/47.87%; and Bill Waller Jr., 183

votes/37.12%.

Lieutenant Governor - Delbert Hosemann, 421 votes/91.52%; and Shane Quick, 39 votes/8.48%.

Secretary of State - Sam Britton, 191 votes/40.99%; and Michael Watson, 275 votes/59.01%.

Attorney General - Mark Baker, 132 votes/27.1%; Lynn Fitch, 196 votes/40.25%; Andy Taggart, 159 votes/32.65%.

State Auditor - Shad White, 414 votes/100%.

State Treasurer - E.S. ‘Buck’ Clarke, 163 votes/34.75%; David McRae, 304 votes/64.82%; and Write-in Votes, 2 votes/0.43%.

Commissioner of Agri-

culture/Commerce - Andy Gipson, 451 votes/99.78%; and Write-in Votes, 1 vote/0.22%.

Commissioner of Insurance - Mike Chaney, 453 votes/100%.

Public Service Commissioner Central District - Brent Bailey, 323 votes/72.1%; Nic Lott, 123 votes/27.46%; and Write-in Votes, 2 votes/0.45%.

Central Transportation District - Butch Lee, 302 votes/67.56%; Ricky Pennington Jr., 144 votes/32.21%; and Write-in Votes, 1 vote/0.22%.

District Representative 48 - Dana A. Gwin, 7 votes/5.83%; and Jason White, 113 votes/94.17%.