



# The Clinton Courier

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## Grace Garden event center plans to open in time for spring celebrations

By Katherine R. Dougan

Crystal Collier of Clinton loves to plan events and weddings.

"I've been really busy as a wedding planner. I enjoy it; it is my passion," she said. While an undergraduate student at Mississippi State, she planned activities for her sorority and for community events.

Her undergraduate degree, her master's degree from Mississippi College, and her doctorate from Jackson State University are all in education and leadership, however, she has been a wedding planner since 2014. "I always knew from the wedding planning that I wanted to open up a venue," she said.

Something she didn't realize is how long it takes to get a project like a venue under way. She started the process of trying to get everything in order to build her event center in 2017.

"There's a whole lot that goes into it, and a lot of people involved." On November 5, she got the final go-ahead that she needed for her event center to, at long last, become a reality.

Mac and Susan Alford, owners of Vintage Home Builders, represented Collier at a Clinton Board of Aldermen meeting to get the center approved. After a presentation by Roy Edwards, Director of Community Development for the City, who presented the site plans, the Board voted unanimously to approve the plans to build the event center, named "Grace



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Grace Garden event center is planned for 1240 Cynthia Road.

Garden," which will be located at 1240 Cynthia Road in Clinton.

As soon as the weather permits, probably in about six weeks, Collier said, construction will begin on site.

"This is Clinton's first venue of this size," Collier said. "It will hold two hundred people and [have] an outside patio area with a fireplace."

When the center is rented for a wedding, there are rooms that can be used as a bride's room and a groom's room, or that can be converted for something else if rented for meetings of conferences. The facility is also equipped with a kitchen prep area for catering.

Not only will the center be available

for events, but also Collier will provide full-service event planning; everything from decorations to catering and entertainment, and full-service wedding planning. Collier has contacts in the wedding business, so it is "easier if people know who to contact and get resources. The day-to-day activities [of wedding and event planning] will just be overwhelming [without a planner]," Collier said.

With years of event planning and more than six years of wedding planning experience, Collier knows the business and what it takes to pull off the perfect wedding. By opening in the spring, "I'll be catching all the newlyweds that have been engaged over the holidays; we will

be like a full-service to coordinate and plan weddings."

Collier said that the most popular time for engagements are Christmas and Valentine's Day. By engaging her wedding services, she will not only be able to help the plan weddings from beginning to end, but will also have a new, beautiful event center for the celebration in the spring.

Grace Garden event center will have a liquor license, so celebrants will be able to enjoy champagne or other beverages with their celebration, if they desire.

Collier can be reached at 601-214-8658 or by email via [info@gracedgardenevents.com](mailto:info@gracedgardenevents.com).

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## Sanford returning as head coach of Mississippi Brilla FC

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Mississippi Brilla FC recently announced that Head Coach Luke Sanford will be returning for his second year with the USL League Two club. Sanford was appointed as the club's fifth head coach last February and compiled a 6-3-5 record in his first season at the helm.

"Coach Luke had a short amount of time to build his team last year, and did a great job leading us to compete for a playoff spot through the end of the season," said Mississippi Brilla FC Executive Director Rusty Bryant. "He has been working hard for the past several months to put together a team that can compete for a USL League Two championship."

Sanford, who recently completed his fifth season as the head coach at Indiana Wesleyan University, played for Brilla during their inaugural season in 2007.

"Coach Luke understands the mission of Brilla, and is a perfect fit to continue building that culture," said Bryant. "We could not be more excited about the upcoming season."

"My family and I are excited to return to the Brilla family this summer," said Sanford. "Last season was a fantastic experience, and I am so

proud to represent and lead a club that has such great history and reputation. We've been hard at work building this year's group, and we are very excited about what the team is looking like. Can't wait to be back in Clinton."

2020 will mark the fourteenth season in USL League Two for Mississippi Brilla FC. The new season will kick off in May, with home games being played at Clinton High School Arrow Field in Clinton.

Visit [www.BrillaSoccer.org](http://www.BrillaSoccer.org) for offseason news and information.



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**ROBERT BOYD AND ASSOCIATES**  
LAW FIRM PLLC  
103 Woodchase Park Drive  
Clinton, Mississippi 39056  
601-925-5511

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601-925-5511

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