day. I have stood on a hill as

the sun begins to rise, listen-

ing for the familiar sound of

a gobbling turkey. His alarm

might be the loudest, but it is

not the only sound that comes

from the surrounding woods.

After a few days of listening,

one can almost predict the

order in which each creature

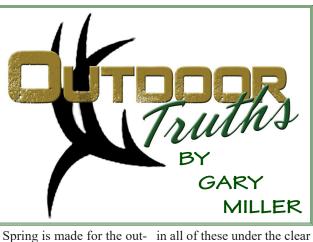
will make itself known. The

smaller birds will be the first

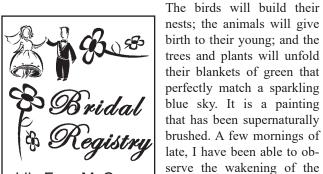
to sing their songs. The tom

turkey, along with a distant

rooster from a nearby farm



doors. It seems everything skies and in the clean air of that inspires us has its be- springtime. While fall will ginnings outside. Whether mesmerize us with its panyou hunt, fish, hike, bike, oramas, spring will motivate run, play sports, garden, or us with its pursuits. It is the simply mow your grass, it season of life and the prepafeels empowering to engage ration which comes with it.



Lily Fran McCrory Rosario Guastella May 22

Riley Angell Aaron Goldman August 1



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tively. And then a few minutes later the caw of the crow will officially open the door for a new day. And I am there to watch....and listen.

THURSDAY,

Perhaps the greatest obstacle for obtaining answers is not in research, but in observation. It is not in being surrounded with much, but little. It is not in being overwhelmed with possibilities but in being overcome with simplicity. It is being reminded that we have been given two eyes, two ears, and only one mouth - and while our eyes and ears are open during our most productive times, our mouth is closed except for an occasional moment when it is dropped open in awe from something our eyes and ears have just witnessed. I don't understand everything about God. There are some deep and difficult questions that linger within the minds of every honest believer and even every honest skeptic. But I do know that deep within the heart of each of us, is a longing to find out if there is a God and what he is like. And every spring, I am reminded again as I stand with eyes and ears open, and mouth gaped in amazement, that He is a God of life and that while I have no promise of the quality or quantity of my days on earth, I can clearly see through creation, one day there will be a new morning that will give way to a new life.

gary@outdoortruths.org

IN AND AROUND LEXINGTON BY LEONA (LENA) FIELDS D Tax an I RE I

Mr. Percy Applewhite is doing great by the grace of God. A while back he fell out of a tree, but God has blessed him mightily. Now he is able to get on his riding mower and cut grass. I would not be surprised if Mr. Applewhite planted a row of peas and a few hills of watermelons. Before his accident, he planted plenty of peas and watermelons. He used to pick blackberries. He is not a lazy man.

Rev. Fredrick Thomas has

2020 State of Preschool report recognizes Mississippi as one of top six states for high-quality Pre-K

News Release

6.

2021

MAY

JACKSON, Miss. - The National Institute for Ear-Research ly Education (NIEER) recognized Mississippi in its latest report on pre-K quality as one of only six states whose state-funded pre-K program meets all 10 quality standards for early childhood education.

The latest ranking is published in the NIEER report, The State of Preschool 2020. The annual survey provides an in-depth look at statefunded education for 3- and 4- year-olds nationally and in each state with a focus on enrollment, spending and 10 policies that support quality education.

NIEER evaluated Mississippi's Early Learning Collaborative (ELC) programs, which are partnerships among school districts, Head Start agencies, childcare centers and non-profit organizations. There are currently 18 collaboratives serving more than 3,000 children. Because of the quality

of the Early Learning Collaboratives, Mississippi has consistently been one of only several states meeting all original NIEER standards.

"Mississippi sets an example of policies to support high quality preschool, but funding is too low to allow programs to implement those policies well," said Steven Barnett, Ph.D., NIEER's founder and senior co-director, who is pushing for more federal funding for high quality pre-K. "Increased funding is needed to ensure quality and expand access to more children who can benefit from the program."

The Mississippi Legislature passed the Early Learning Collaborative Act in 2013, which provided \$3 million to establish a limited number of ELCs in underserved areas throughout the state. Funding increased in subsequent years based on the program's immediate success. During the 2021 legislative session, funding doubled to \$16 million,

"Research shows how high-quality ear- coaching and professional ly childhood education has a development and by providprofound impact on children ing guidance and support to throughout their lives," said school districts. Dr. Carey Wright, state surates and even less crime."

The education one if its top pri- grams in 2019-20. orities.

nered with the W.K. Kel- state spending per child. logg Foundation to build the

consistently cation infrastructure through

Mississippi's Early Learnperintendent of education. ing Collaborative program "High-quality pre-K leads to served 8% of 4-year-olds increased school readiness, in 2019-20, up from 5% in reading proficiency by third 2018-19. When combined grade, higher graduation with Head Start (22%) and special education pre-K pro-Mississippi State grams (5%), approximately Board of Education has 35% of Mississippi 4-yearmade increasing access to olds attended public early high-quality early childhood childhood education pro-

Mississippi ranks 39th in The Mississippi Depart- the nation for pre-K access ment of Education has part- for 4-year-olds and 42nd in

Read the State of Preschool state's early childhood edu- Report 2020 at NIEER.org.

Conservation Corner by James Cummins **Executive Director** of Wildlife Mississippi

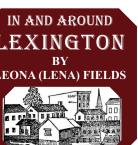
National Bike Month

National Bike Month is great inspiration and motivation for everyone to get out and cycle, especially as the weather gets warmer as we have been witnessing here in Mississippi. The League of American Bicyclists is promoting Bike to Work Week from May 17-23, 2021, and Bike to Work Day on Friday, May 21. Now is a great time to discuss bike safety.

First and foremost, the helmet is a very important piece of safety equipment. By law, all helmets sold in the U.S. must meet standards set by the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC). Some helmets are also endorsed by the non-profit Snell Foundation, but the CPSC stamp of approval is what matters. Improperly wearing a helmet can be more dangerous than not wearing one at all. For a tion. You don't have to pay proper fitting helmet, make sure no more than three fingers fit between the chin and stress and improve your carthe helmet strap. When pushing the helmet from the back something that many Missisforward, the helmet should sippians need to be thinking not touch the bridge of the about. nose. It should sit squarely and securely one or two fingers above the eyebrow. When pushing the helmet upward and back from the front, the helmet should not go above the forehead. Some rules of the road are: Obey all traffic regulations, signs, signals, and markings. Bicycles are subject to the same rules of vehicular traffic, wherever they apply. Observe all local ordinances ecutive director of Wildlife pertaining to bike safety. It is your responsibility to know them and obey them. Keep right: drive with the traffic, not against it. Drive single and plant resources throughfile. Keep as close to the out Mississippi. Their web

for drain grates, soft shoulders, and other road surface hazards. Watch out for car doors opening and for cars pulling into traffic. Don't carry passengers or packages that interfere with your vision or control. Never hitch a ride on a truck or other vehicle. Use hand signals to indicate turning or stopping. Protect yourself at night with the required reflectors and lights. Be extremely careful at intersections, especially when making a left turn. Most accidents happen at intersections. Drive your bike defensively; watch out for the other person.

Biking will allow you to not only enjoy your surroundings; you will also save money-especially with the price of gas steadily climbing-and enjoy some healthy benefits. Cycling reduces air, water, and noise pollufor automobile insurance or gasoline. You will reduce dio vascular health, which is





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had two deaths in his family lately. His cousin passed away then one of his sisters passed. Keep the Thomas family uplifted in prayer. Saturday night, April 24th, I heard from Christine Hodges in California. She said she was doing okay, as well as her sister Lanell and their brother. They are former Holmes countians and the children of Mattie and O.W. Hodges (both deceased). One day last week, I was walking on the hospital walking track. I met an old walker. He wanted to know my age. I told him I was 72. Then he told me he was 95 years old. He told me he has

which will serve approximately 6,000 pre-K children.

walked at midnight. He can get in his car and drive wherever he wants to go. May God continue to bless him. "Bubba Morris" of the Bowling Green community passed away recently. I'm sorry I don't know "Bubba's" real name. He was the Sunday school teacher at Wade Chapel C.M.E. Church. Before he passed away, he fell and broke his arm. Keep his family uplifted in prayer. If you are over 16, sign up and get your COVID-19 vaccine, if you have not already done it.

Riding your bike is a fun, life-long activity you can enjoy in a variety of climates. It is also a great means to see the world around you.

In honor of National Bike Month, National Bike to Work Week, and Bike to Work Day, watch your local paper, television, or listen to your local radio for specific events in your community.

James L. Cummins is ex-Mississippi, a non-profit, conservation organization founded to conserve, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, curb as practical. Watch out site is www.wildlifemiss.org.