

► **More Awards**

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Photo by Russell Turner/Herald Editor

GCHS graduate Brandon Wash is shown making his way to accept the inaugural Mark Hicks Memorial Scholarship during Class Night festivities last week.

Education scholarship, while McKensy Kelly received a Career and Technical Education scholarship.

Jordaan Taylor was presented with an athletic scholarship for soccer.

Burch returned to the podium to announce awards as Prentiss presented awards to students.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College awarded an Academic Excellence scholarship to Maisan Tribble; an Academic Excellence and Leadership scholarship to Austin Palmer; and Graham Breland was awarded the Academic Excellence, New Century Skills, Master's and full-

tuition scholarship for two years.

Pearl River Community College awarded Javon Watts with a full athletic football scholarship that includes room and board for one year.

East Central Community College awarded Zamaiah Knight a full athletic scholarship that includes room and board.

The University of South Alabama recognized Kennedy Slocumb for academic merit by awarding her with an Academic Achievement scholarship.

Burch then welcomed Cruz Beech with Mississippi State University to present scholarships awarded by the univer-

sity. Those scholarship awards are as follows: Keri Graham received the George Bishop Family Endowed scholarship, the George F. McNeill Memorial Endowed scholarship, a Freshman Academic Scholarship, the BBB Foundation Promise scholarship and a Maxwell V. Rush, Jr. Memorial Endowed scholarship.

Caroline Holder was presented with a Freshman Academic scholarship, a Mar-Jac Poultry Endowed scholarship, C.T. and Earline Ramsey A&LS scholarship and a Southeast Mississippi Alumni Chapter scholarship. Lillian Rau was presented

with a Salutorian Scholarship and a George F. McNeill Memorial Endowed Scholarship.

Burch continued announcing scholarships, with Prentiss presenting awards to students as they presented Arthur Cole with a scholarship to Southern Virginia University.

Jase Mathews was awarded a four-year athletic scholarship from the University of Mississippi for his outstanding athletic ability, academic commitment, leadership and dedication to excellence as a student athlete.

Meridian Community College awarded Sarah Beth Barfield a full-tuition Valedictorian scholarship, STAR Student scholarship, Presidential Plus scholarship, Leadership scholarship and Eagle scholarship.

Barfield's award concluded the announcement of achievements from the GCHS Class of 2026.

Shanna Johnson approached the podium to invite guests to celebrate commencement with her and classmates at Johnny Ainsworth Stadium.

"On behalf of the graduating class of 2026, we extend our deepest appreciation for your attendance at our Class Night activities," Johnson said. "We invite you to join us tomorrow night at 7:30 p.m., at Johnny Ainsworth Stadium as we celebrate Commencement."

Brody Turner led his classmates and guests in a final prayer for the night.

"Dear God, Thank you for allowing us to celebrate this special night together,"

Turner said. "We are grateful for the hard work, dedication and perseverance that brought us to this moment, and for the families, teachers and mentors who supported us along the way."

"As we move into the next chapter of our lives, continue to guide our steps, give us wisdom, strength and faith for the journey ahead. Help us carry the lessons we've learned and

use them to make a positive difference in the world.

"Thank you for the joy of this evening and for the opportunities that await us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen," Turner concluded.

As graduates and guests left the gymnasium, they were greeted with rain outside, but that didn't stop the celebration from continuing.



► **Marches On**

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began right after graduation, or you may wake up one quiet morning and begin to wonder what's next.

All of you graduates will have new opportunities. You will meet new people, travel to new places and learn many new things. With each opportunity you're given, it's a chance to see a different perspective and grow. Take those chances to spread your wings. Those opportunities will challenge you, inspire you and change you in ways you didn't know were possible until it happens. Not every opportunity you take will work out the way you want or hope for, and you won't be able to take every opportunity that comes along. Both of those are

okay. Take the ones that are exciting, that are meaningful and that brighten your day at the thought of it.

Learn and grow from life. It is the best teacher. Friends will change, relationships will change, cars will change, jobs will change, where you live will change. Priorities will shift more than once. Sometimes change is easy, but it will come with challenges. You learn who you are in those moments. You take on more responsibilities, and maturity comes in small moments. Most of the time, others will notice changes before you do. Give yourself grace when adapting to change.

You have all spent the last 12 years in school, most of

that with one another. Your graduation marks the end of an era and the beginning of the rest of your life. I encourage you to spread your wings and fly to great heights, even if those heights are right here in your hometown. Keep reaching for more, keep reminding your-

self you can do big things and remember it's okay to go home or call home to ask for advice. It's okay if you try and don't succeed. Keep aiming for your goals, even if you must shift your path to get there.

Congratulations to the GCHS Class of 2026!



CONGRATULATIONS

Sending our warmest wishes and congratulations to our amazing graduates.

Class of
2026

WE ARE SO PROUD of our

4TH GRADE GRADUATE
Raeleigh Kayte Hicks

KINDERGARTEN GRADUATE
Emory Hodges

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