



FREEDOM: Are we there yet?



punish people for speaking openly. We've watched government agencies weaponized against political opponents. Americans increasingly worry about attacks on religious liberty, threats to the Second Amendment, and growing government intrusion into everyday life. For many people, it feels like the country our servicemembers fought to defend is drifting further away.

But Memorial Day should also remind us of something else: Americans do not quit fighting for freedom.

At the State Treasury, we've worked to protect Mississippians from being debanked because of their religious or political beliefs. Across the country, conservatives are pushing back against government overreach and working to restore power to the people where it belongs. And after years of attacks on constitutional rights, Americans are

standing up once again for the freedoms that define this nation.

Our country is not perfect. Even our Founding Fathers understood that. That's why they spoke of building "a more perfect Union," not a perfect one. America has always been a work in progress, strengthened by generations willing to sacrifice, serve, and fight to preserve liberty for the people who come after them.

That message feels especially meaningful as we celebrate America 250. For 250 years, American servicemembers have defended freedom around the globe. For 250 years, patriots have carried forward the work of preserving this great nation. And for 250 years, Americans have continued striving toward that more perfect union.

So, are we there yet? No. But are we moving in the right direction? Absolutely.

And thanks to the sacrifice of our fallen heroes, we still have the freedom to keep striving, keep fighting, and keep building a stronger America for the next generation.

May God bless our fallen servicemembers, their families, and all those who continue to wear the uniform in defense of this great nation.

Mississippi Treasurer David McRae is the 55th Treasurer for the State of Mississippi. In this role, he helps manage the state's cash flow, oversees College and Career Savings Mississippians, and has returned more than \$170 million in unclaimed money to Mississippians. For more information, visit Treasury.MS.gov.

This is not necessarily true. Upwards 90% of people are allergic to the oil so it is usually just a matter of time and proper exposure before they feel the sting.

Myth 6: If the blisters within the rash are broken, then the rash can be spread. Thankfully, this is not true. But it can cause your wounds to become infected and may make the scarring worse.

Poison ivy treatments are most often limited to self-care methods such as over-the-counter corticosteroid creams, calamine lotion, oatmeal-based products, and oral antihistamines.

While the rash typically goes away within 1 to 3 weeks, there are times when medical attention is warranted. For instance, if the reaction is severe or widespread, blisters are oozing pus, the rash affects the face or genitals, a fever greater than 100°F develops, or the rash doesn't improve within a few weeks, then see a doctor.

This article is a general overview of the effects of poisonous plants and in no

*Holmes

(Continued from page 1.) Phi Theta Kappa vice president. Jolley was also a 2026 Hall of Fame inductee.

Holmes President Dr. Jim Haffey presented special awards during both ceremonies. The awards given were the M.C. McDaniel Scholarship Award and the Outstanding Phi Theta Kappan Award. The M.C. McDaniel family established this scholarship to be presented to outstanding graduating sophomores who plan to further their education at an institution of higher learning. Alisha Grace Davis of Flora was the M.C. McDaniel Scholarship recipient for the Ridgeland Campus; Diana Garcia of Kosciusko for the Goodman Campus and Christopher Michael Beach of Duck Hill for the Grenada Campus.

Alisha Davis is a pre-physician assistant major who plans to transfer to the University of Southern Mississippi to pursue a degree in sports medicine with the goal of becoming a physician assistant. Davis currently works as an emergency room technician at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center and is interested in

*SBA

(Continued from page 1.) loans and may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets.

Homeowners and renters are eligible to apply for home and personal property loans and may borrow up to \$100,000 to replace or repair personal property, such as clothing, furniture, cars, and appliances. Homeowners may apply for up to \$500,000 to replace or repair their primary residence.

Applicants may also be eligible for a loan increase of up to 20% of their physical damages, as verified by the SBA, for mitigation purposes. Eligible mitigation improvements include strengthening structures to protect against high wind damage, upgrading to wind rated garage doors, and installing a safe room or storm shelter to help protect property and occupants from future damage.

Interest rates are as low as 4% for small businesses, 3.625% for PNPs, and 2.875% for homeowners and renters, with terms of up to 30 years. Interest does not begin to accrue, and payments are not due, until 12 months from the date of the first loan disbursement. The SBA sets loan amounts and

way serves as a substitute for advice from your personal physician.

emergency medicine and orthopedics. While at Holmes, she has been active as an Ambassador, vice president of Student Government Association, a member of Phi Theta Kappa and of the Content Creators Club. She has earned President's List honors, a STEMMY Award and recognition as STAR Student of the Semester in Dr. Gates' Medical Terminology course. Davis was also voted Ridgeland Campus Student Body Maid and was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Diana Garcia is a pre-radiological sciences major who has served as MOSAIC community service chairperson and was inducted into the Holmes Hall of Fame. She is active as a Holmes Ambassador, Phi Theta Kappa member, Student Government Association member and MOSAIC tutor, as well. She is also known for volunteering her time to assist non-English speakers by translating medical appointments and important documents. Upon graduation, Garcia plans to attend the University of Mississippi Medical Center's radiology program.

Christopher Michael Beach is a history major

terms, based on each applicant's financial condition.

"Through a presidential declaration, SBA provides financial assistance to help communities recover," said Chris Stallings, associate administrator of the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience at the SBA. "We offer disaster loans to homeowners, renters, businesses, and private nonprofits affected by the disaster."

With the changes to FEMA's Sequence of Delivery, survivors are now encouraged to simultaneously apply for FEMA grants and the SBA low-interest disaster loan assistance to fully recover. FEMA grants are intended to cover necessary expenses and serious needs not paid by insurance or other sources. The SBA disaster loan program is designed for your long-term recovery, to make you whole and get you back to your pre-disaster condition.

To apply online, visit sba.gov/disaster. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. For people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

The filing deadline to return applications for physical property damage is June 10. The deadline to return economic injury applications is Jan. 11, 2027.

who earned President's List honors and is an active member of Phi Theta Kappa and the Baptist Student Union. He was elected as Mr. Holmes Grenada and as a Hall of Fame recipient, as well. Upon graduation, Beach plans to either transfer to the University of Mississippi or join the National Guard.

Phi Theta Kappa awards were presented to Mary Crawford Canard of Madison for the Ridgeland Campus, Lawson Nichols of Benton for the Goodman Campus and Aubrey Lexi McClain of Vaiden for Grenada.

Mary Crawford Canard is an English writing major who was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Her academic achievements include membership in Phi Theta Kappa honor society, President's List honors and an ACT Scholarship. Canard plans to transfer to Mississippi State University to continue her studies in English writing. She is currently working on a novel and aspires to build a career in publishing, with the long-term goal of opening her own publishing house in Mississippi.

Lawson Nichols is a secondary education English major who has earned President's List honors and serves as Phi Theta Kappa vice president of campus projects. He is also a Hall of Fame inductee. A member of the Holmes cheer team, Nichols was named Most Valuable Freshman and has participated in numerous service activities through cheer and research initiatives focused on student mental wellness. Nichols plans to attend Northwestern State University to complete his degree and continue cheerleading before pursuing a master's degree in educational administration.

Lexi McClain is a pre-medicine major at Holmes who has earned the Dean's Scholarship as well as President's List honors. McClain was also inducted into the Hall of Fame, selected as Grenada Student Body Maid and elected as Miss Holmes Grenada. She has served as president of the Student Government Association and president of Phi Theta Kappa and is also a member of the Baptist Student Union and Content Creator's Club. Additionally, she has served as an Ambassador. After Holmes, McClain plans to attend Mississippi State University before applying to medical school at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, with the goal of pursuing a career in orthopedic surgery.

The ceremonies marked the culmination of students' academic journeys as they prepared to transition into the workforce or continue their education.

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

Ivy, Oak, and Sumac

Ivy, oak, and sumac are innocuous words until you put the word "poison" in front of them. Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac contain a potent oil, urushiol, which can cause an aggravating, itchy rash in those sensitive to its effects. It is doubtful that anyone reading this article hasn't had some sort of history with these plants, so let's look at some of the myths surrounding them.

Myth 1: There is an old saying that says something to the effect of "leaves of three, let them be." This is a good rule of thumb; however, poison sumac has 7 to 13 leaves on a branch but is not encountered as often as the others.

Myth 2: The rash caused from poison ivy is highly contagious. The fact is that rubbing the rash will not spread poison ivy to other parts of the body or to another person. The rash can

only be spread if the urushiol oil is still present. Therefore, it is a must to wash immediately if you know that you have encountered it.

Myth 3: Dead plants are no longer a threat. Unfortunately, the urushiol stays active on any surface, including dead plants, for up to 5 years. So, keep those gloves on even when discarded withered vines and plants.

Myth 4: You can be affected by poison ivy just by being near the plant. The fact is that direct contact is needed to release the urushiol oil. However, forest fires or burn piles containing these plants can cause the oil to become airborne. Even if a lawnmower or trimmer passes over the plant, the oil can become activated and airborne.

Myth 5: Many believe that if they have been exposed before and did not break out in a rash, then they are immune from the irritating oil.