



THE MISSISSIPPI LINK WISHES YOU A PROSPEROUS AND

## Happy New Year!

# Get your strut on

Line dance promotes health, fellowship for 2016



Aaron Honeysucker (right) teaches dance steps at Anderson United Methodist Church. PHOTOS BY JANICE K. NEAL-VINCENT

By Janice K. Neal-Vincent  
Contributing Writer

Line dancing has galvanized groups around the globe. Since the 1970s in the United States folks have used the choreographed dance that requires no physical contact as a way to exercise or simply enjoy each other's company. Locally, the art form has brought together 80 individuals, including senior citizens, in the gymnasium at Tougaloo College's Wellness Center. When the group started in 2004, there were only 20 students

that met in a small classroom. They called themselves the Strutters. "When the class started to grow, as a result of several instructors and the popularity of the present instructor, Aaron Honeysucker, the name changed from Strutters to line dance and the original members have maintained the name Strutters," said Rachel Owens, the class' founder. Not only are the Strutters members of the line dance class, but they line dance at sites for groups and organizations at nursing homes, Christmas parties, Christmas pa-

rades, veterans parades, dance festivals, birthday parties, family reunions, health and rehabilitation centers, Hinds County Sheriff's Department, and athletic departments. Additionally, they come dressed in red and black attire. "We get very good responses. It's motivating for others within our ages (55 - 85). I'm 82, blessed, and thankful. Our dances even encourage young people. I've had a lot of people tell me, 'When I get to be your age, I want to be just like you,'" Owens said. Owens asserted that line dance

not only stimulates persons on the dance floor, but it provides fellowship and health benefits. It strengthens bones, lowers blood pressure, and lessens pain that comes with arthritis. "Once you get older, you can no longer go to places you once have gone. But you can fellowship with others in the class," she added. Dance volunteer Heticene Allison mentioned that when she was asked to be an instructor at Tougaloo she declined but recommended Honeysucker who was teaching

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# Kwanzaa celebrations continue

By Stephanie R. Jones  
Contributing Writer



Unity, working collectively, sharing responsibility with one's fellow man were the topics Monday on the third day of Kwanzaa during the 25th seven-day celebration of the seven principles. The day after Christmas, the celebration of Kwanzaa began at the Medgar Evers Community Center on Edwards Avenue under the theme "Standing on the Shoulders of Greatness."

On Monday, the third day of Kwanzaa, Dr. Hank Harper of Madison and Omar Baruti of Memphis were the main speakers on the principle of Ujima (collective work and responsibility) at the commemorations, sponsored by the Jackson NAACP and Martin & Assoc. More than 100 people attended the event at the community center, which was decorated with posters and banners with information on African American and African history. Vendors were set up selling products related to the African and African American experiences.

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# State seeks federal disaster relief after deadly tornado

The Associated Press

PEARL - Gov. Phil Bryant said Monday that Mississippi is seeking a federal disaster declaration for some or all of the seven counties hit by a tornado last week. That statement came hours after another tornado hit near Seminary in Covington County just before dawn. Six homes were damaged or destroyed, but no one was injured, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency said. Officials were also bracing for unusual winter flooding along the Mississippi River in mid-January, as heavy rains filter downstream. The National Weather Service said the Monday twister was much less powerful than last week's storm, which killed 10. The tornado, with maximum winds of 95 mph, cut a path up to 100 yards wide and traveled 5.6 miles. Meteorologists evaluated it as EF-1 on the enhanced Fujita scale. Covington County Emergency Manager Greg Sanford said the damage happened near the town of Seminary, about 20 miles from Hattiesburg. Trees fell across U.S. 49, blocking southbound lanes. The scale of the destruction paled in comparison to north Mississippi. Bryant said preliminary counts show 233 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged in the Wednesday tornado, which ran from Clarksdale northeast to Walnut. Another 463 homes received lighter damage. Bryant said the state is asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to make grants to individuals available in Benton, Coahoma, Marshall, Quitman and Tippah counties.

# Midwifery's importance emphasized at forum

By Janice K. Neal-Vincent  
Contributing Writer

Several individuals gathered Dec. 19 to share ideas on educating the public about the impact and historical significance of midwifery. The Day of Sharing event was held at the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center in Jackson, but the focus was on the Scott Ford Museum and Interpretive Center located at 136 and 138 Cohea St. in Jackson. The two houses at the center built in 1891 and 1892 were used by midwives. Dr. James Smith, vice president of Scott Ford House, Inc., explained that it was on May 13, 1998 that the Scott Ford Museum Complex was designated a Mississippi Landmark. Smith articulated the need for a Scott Ford Museum Complex to focus on midwifery. "It connects the historical lineage from slavery to freedom; it preserves the midwives' contribution to the medical field and African-American medicine; it preserves



Ruth Weir stands next to a photo of her grandmother, Virginia Scott Ford, who was a midwife. PHOTOS BY JANICE K. NEAL-VINCENT

the artifacts used by midwives in their practice; it provides an opportunity to show the difference between midwifery and obstetrics

while creating and preserving a midwifery body of knowledge; it will allow lay persons and researchers to conduct research and record

the anthropology of midwifery and birth; and the museum will chronicle an African-American family's path from slavery, independent survival, and middle class attainment." "It's all about visioning the Scott Ford House Museum at 136 and 138 East Cohea St.," said Dr. Alferdeen Harrison, project director and president of Scott Ford House, Inc., who presided over the forum. The vision "is to be a catalyst for preserving, interpreting and presenting African-American history as a dynamic tourist attraction." In addressing this vision, the mission "is to develop the Virginia Scott Ford family home as a historic house museum which will reflect and interpret 19th and 20th century African American history." Highlighting that midwives were highly respected in their own communities, Smith noted that the Mississippi Board of Health and the

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