An award-winning college newspaper, by students for students

DECEMBER 2024

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY ITTA BENA, MISSISSIPPI

Volume 50 / Number 4

Fall commencement speaker 'ignites a spark', motivates grads

By Gail H.M. Brown, Ph.D., DDG Faculty Advisor

"You are evergreen, everlasting, and powerful. Never forget the power you hold to create change, seek justice, and overcome the challenges within and around you."

These encouraging words were expressed by Exodus Oktavia Brownlow, the speaker for the Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) Fall 2024 Commencement Ceremony, Saturday morning, Dec. 14.

A graduate of the MVSU English Department, Brownlow, an award-winning writer, sewist, author, and editor, told the graduates that she wanted to focus on them and not her.

The nearby Black Hawk, Miss. native also stressed to the graduates that they "have the power to be seekers of justice because it's not just about you but all of us.

"You cannot let jealousy and envy rot away at us. You have the power to win the ongoing war within yourselves. Don't let the fear of the temporary sway you," she said

Graduates and audience members

alike listened attentively as Brownlow spoke. "Today's graduation ceremony was elevated by the truly inspiring words of Exodus Brownlow," said Justin Stevenson, who earned his Master of Science in Sports Administration. He said that with "a perfect blend of wisdom, humility, and passion," her words "connected deeply with every graduate in the room. Ms. Brownlow didn't just deliver a speech – she ignited a spark in all our hearts."

MVSU President Jerryl Briggs, Sr. recognized Javid Ibrahimov, a Computer Science major, and Shelby Barnard, a Business Administration major, for achieving the highest-Grade Point Averages (GPAs).

President Briggs also expressed how proud he and the university are of all of the graduates.

MVSU National Alumni Association, Inc. President Dr. Jerry Redmond, Jr. inducted the graduates into their, complimentary first-year MVSU NAA membership.

For more of 2024 Fall Commencement highlights, see the gallery on page 3.





Dr. Briggs recognized Javid Ibrahimov and Shelby Barnard for achieving the highest grade point averages (GPAs). Photo by Comm/Marketing - LaTunya Evans

A great-grandmother bubbles with pride at MVSU Hooding Ceremony





By Gail H.M. Brown, Ph.D., DDG Faculty Advisor

Rhoda Lyons told the Delta Devils' Gazette that she wasn't about to allow the 673-mile ride from Chicago to Itta Bena, Miss. keep her from witnessing the hooding of her great-granddaughter Briana Jordan's achievement of the Master of Science in Criminal Justice.

"We are right off the road!" Jordan interjected.

"It was something I just had to do," Lyons said, beaming with pride. "She's a fighter, always has been, and I've been so proud of her every step of the way." Lyons raised her great-granddaughter from when she was about one year old.

"She gives her all to everything she does," the great-grandmother said. "And to see her reach this level, it just fills my heart."

For Jordan, a mother of three, earning her master's degree was the culmination of long, hard work and a dream come true. With a bachelor's degree from MVSU in biology already, she is now setting her sights on a career in crime scene investigation or forensics—a field where she hopes to merge her passion for science and justice.

"It means the world to have my family here," Briana said. "Having my greatgrandmother make this trip with me, along with my little ones, is more than I could ever ask for."

Briana's fiancé Jacques Greer of Itta Bena also shared in the pride, reflecting on her late nights and challenges of balancing graduate studies and family life. "Seeing how hard she worked, sometimes struggling with assignments but never giving up, it's just indescribable," he said.

Jordan's message for others considering returning to their alma mater for advanced degrees, "You've already walked through these halls, so you know what to expect," she said. "You might as well finish what you started."

The Delta Devils' Gazette reached out to the family by phone Saturday evening, Dec. 14, after MVSU's 2024 Fall Commencement Ceremony to see how excited they were to see Jordan walk across that stage. Greer said, "You have no idea." Great-grandmother Lyons said, "I'm just on a cloud!"

Jordan is also weighing opportunities to pursue her doctorate.



By Jaheim Wilder, Columnist

As the sun sets on 2024, I find myself reflecting on a year that has

challenged us, inspired us, and forced us to grow in ways we never imagined. This year has been one of ups and downs, progress and setbacks, triumphs and trials. Yet, through it all, the spirit of resilience has reminded us of the strength we find in ourselves and each other.

This year wasn't easy.

Families worked hard to stretch every dollar, farmers faced unpredictable circumstances, and educators gave their all to make sure students didn't fall behind. Yet, in these moments, I witnessed something extraordinary: perseverance. I saw neighbors supporting neighbors, teachers inspiring students, and leaders stepping up to

guide us through uncertain times.

On a personal level, this year has been one of growth. I faced moments of doubt. There were moments when I wondered if my voice or my work really mattered. But every story I shared and every conversation I had reminded me that change begins in the small acts. It's in the words of encouragement we offer, the traditions we pass down, and the dreams we dare to pursue.

One of the most significant lessons from this year has been the importance of hope. Hope is not just wishful thinking, it's an act of faith. Hope is not passive, it's an active choice we make to believe in better days ahead. It's what keeps a farmer planting seeds,

even when the harvest feels uncertain. It's what inspires a child to dream of a future that may seem out of reach. Hope is what connects us all.

As we prepare to welcome 2025, I encourage all of us to carry the lessons of this year into the new one. Let's continue to listen to each other, to lift each other up, and

to work together to build a better future for our community and beyond.

In every challenge, we found strength, and in every setback, we uncovered hope. May the new year bring us closer to the dreams we hold dear and the community we strive to create.

Here's to moving forward with purpose, gratitude, and unwavering faith in what lies ahead.

Song of the Month

The song of the month is "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers. As we reflect on the challenges we've faced and the ways we've lifted each other up, this song reminds us that none of us has to go through life alone. Whether it's a helping hand or a kind word, the strength we find in each other is what keeps us moving forward. As the lyrics say, "We all need somebody to lean on," and as this year has shown us, we know how to be there for one another.

Hilliard accepts role as the Gazette's new photo editor

By Serenity Echols, Student Writer

Every second, every minute, and every hour of each day add up to making different memories of our lives.

As we grow older, we might not remember some memories as distinctively as others, so we result into looking at old photos or videos to recall those memories.

Kobe Hillard, a mass communications student at Mississippi Valley State University, helps capture those memories. According to Hillard, his favorite thing about photography is capturing different people in different settings to show off their personalities while gaining constructive criticism from his clients.

Mikeala Parris, an MVSU junior mass communications major, described Hillard as a hard worker who is dedicated to pursuing his career in photography and videography. She mentioned seeing Hillard working at many football, volleyball and basketball games.

Managing going to school to receive a bachelor's degree and having your own business can be tough for most people, but for Hillard that is not the case. "Being a freelance photographer/ videographer, you have to start somewhere. So, I started by taking pictures and videos



of my work to make my way up. So, I can control my future," Hilliard said in a recent interview.

D'yanna Maxey, also a junior, praises Hillard for having the courage to start his own business while being a full-time student in college to get a bachelor's degree.

Hillard is not just the man behind the camera saying, "1,2,3" while taking pictures. He is a hardworking dedicated photographer who captures many of his client's lifetime memories.

He recently accepted the request to serve as the new Photo Editor for the MVSU Delta Devils' Gazette. So the next time you pose for a Gazette photo, he may very well be the person behind the camera.

Newspaper carried by an additional local business

DDG Staff Report

The Delta Devil's Gazette Newspaper continues to expand its access by adding a pickup location at a popular local business. Walgreen's at 700 Park Ave, Greenwood, MS 38930

has become another pick-up location this fall for MVSU's award-winning newspaper.

The Delta Devils' Gazette campus newspaper may also be picked up from the following business locations:

B B King Museum – Delta Interpretive Center, 400 Second Street Indianola, MS 38751

The Greenwood Market Place, 410 W. Park Ave., Greenwood, MS

Save-a-Lot, 719 W. Park Ave., Greenwood, MS

CitiTrends, 2608 US-82, Greenwood, MS

Dollar General Market, Hwy 82 W., Itta Bena, MS **Double Quick,** Hwy 82 W., Itta Bena, MS

PEAK's Restaurant, Hwy 49, Tchula, MS

Community Students Learning
Center, 333 Yazoo St. Lexington,

The Mayor's Office, 105 S.
State Street, Duck Hill, MS

Forter and Sons Funeral Home, 237 Yazoo St., Lexington, MS Greater Macedonia

C.O.G.I.C, CR - 247 Sidon, MS, 38954

Holy Temple M.B. Church, 5077 Cabaniss Circle, Jackson, MS (Sunday mornings only)

Urgent & Primary Care of Clarksdale, 125 Hwy 322, Clarksdale, MS 38614

Young Chapel M.B. Church, 1196 Young Chapel Road, Duck Hill, MS

W8 Restaurant and Sports Bar, 309 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Itta Bena, MS,

GAZETTE

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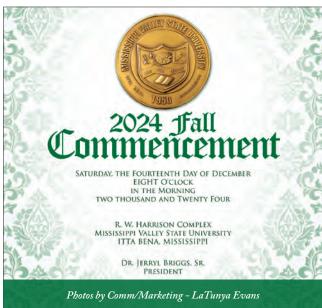
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MVSU graduate programs participate in Prostate Cancer Awareness

By LaTavia Williams, Contributing Writer

Graduate Program students participated in an informative Zoom presentation on prostate cancer led by Tobe S. Momah, M.D. and Kip Bitok.

The virtual event, organized by the MVSU Office of Academic Affairs, highlighted the importance of early detection, prevention strategies, and advancements in prostate cancer treatments. Dr. Momah and Bitok shared valuable insights and engaged attendees in a discussion about this critical health issue, which affects millions of men worldwide.

Associate VP of Academic Affairs Abigail Newsome explained the event underscores the university's commitment to health awareness and education within the community. Graduate students were permitted to ask questions and several expressed appreciation for being a part of the initiative.

"The informational meeting on prostate awareness that we, as a department, got to be a part of was extremely eye-opening," said Convergent Media Graduate Student James Snipes. "A lot of people don't truly understand the significance, so I'm glad this could spread awareness."



GAZETTE DECEMBER 2024

Bolivar County MVSU Alumni Chapter hosts big supply giveaway for students

By Michael T. Coleman, Contributing

ITTA BENA, Miss. — The Bolivar County Chapter of the Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association (MVSU NAA) celebrated World Hello Day in a big way by hosting a large-scale supply giveaway for MVSU students on Nov. 21, 2024, at Rice-Totten Stadium.

The chapter partnered with Boss Lady Pam Chatman's nonprofit organization, which played a crucial role in securing the resources for the event. Together, they loaded an 18-wheeler with supplies and delivered them to campus, offering students the items free of charge.

Faculty and staff were also invited to participate in the event, acquiring leftover items after the students received their supplies.

The giveaway reflects the chapter's commitment to supporting the success and well-being of MVSU students. It is also a demonstration of the importance of connection and community, aligning with the spirit of National Hello Day. "We are saying hello to all of our students at



Mississippi Valley State University," said Bolivar County Chapter President Dr. Nannette Brown. "We wanted Christmas to come early to our students as a way to say thanksgiving for all the work they have done."

MVSU students expressed their gratitude for the generous contributions,

which came just in time to help them through the academic year. "I was able to get two bottles of Pine-Sol disinfectant wipes, and a comforter," said student Maxina Mosley. "I really needed cleaning supplies so this was a blessing."

*Note: Contributing Writer Cortney Dyer also contributed to this article.



The Valley Experience with **MVSU Transfer, Bryson Baggett**

By Cortney Dyer, Contributing Writer

Since graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School in 2023 in Dallas, Bryson Baggett recently transferred from Southern University to Mississippi Valley State University to continue his

Although Baggett is originally from Indianola, Miss. where he spent the majority of his adolescent years, he was raised in Texas and is excited about returning home. "Dallas allowed me to like expand academically and athletically," said Baggett.

Baggett is currently singing Bass in the MVSU Choir in two ensembles: "The University Choir" and "Valley Singers." He is also a member of the Mean Green Marching Machine. He has always had passion for music since he was young. He said being a part of the choir is like being around your family. "We all know how family works, but when it's time to get work done, we get down to business," said Baggett.

Like most freshmen, Baggett was excited to experience homecoming at MVSU for the first time as a student. However, this homecoming would be one to remember since he was surrounded



by so much family as they gathered on campus and set up tents for the game. "Mississippi Valley State University offers me an experience, now [to be] back where my roots are. You felt that homecoming feeling of coming home." Baggett stated.

While excited about furthering his education, Baggett stated it has taken some adjusting, but he's enjoying his time here thus far. While continuing to rise in his goals, MVSU is sure to benefit from his great passion and dedication. "I'm still here and I'm in a position to obtain black excellence, which is the common goal here. Baggett said.

Freshmen and transfer students speak on the Valley Experience

By Starneicia Campbell, Contributing Writer

As the Fall 2024 Semester closes and the holiday break begins, it is essential to assess how the MVSU experience has been for its freshmen and transfer students. The mindset and experiences of students on this campus are highly important because they highlight how this is such an amazing institution and also open the viewers' eyes to the different experiences here at MVSU.

First time Freshman Kyeron Fields of Augusta Ga. said his experience here this fall has been well. "MVSU's classes are particularly easy as a freshman as long as

you stay on top of your work and know how to stay focused." He later stated that this is a very friendly, calm, and quiet campus, and if you are new, you will be treated with great hospitality.

Fields

First time Freshman Shakylia Warren of Ruleville, Miss. said that her experience at MVSU has been "refreshing." Growing up, she has always been familiar Valley's campus. This was a dream school as she used to march with the Ruleville High School band and also

take dual credit classes with MVSU. "I got to make new friends, learn more things about myself that I never knew, and I also accomplished new things I could never be more proud of my wonderful experience here at MVSU," she said.

Transfer Student Martavis Chester from Atlanta said his experience has been bittersweet. Chester is a transfer student from Talladega College in Talladega



Chester

Ala. "I came to MVSU because I was given an opportunity of a second chance, and it is a great experience," he said. "It was an adjustment at first because things here are done differently

but I have become accustomed to the way things are done here and I love it." Chester also marches for MVSU's band and said that it is sometimes a challenge with classes, band, and just everyday life but with balance, you can achieve it all.

It is amazing how there are students from different walks of life with different experiences here at MVSU. The key to living a great campus life is to work, pray and stay motivated.

Valley Voices Question: What are you grateful for this holiday season?

"I am thankful for being alive. The Lord gave me another chance to be on the earth, and I'm glad he did."

- Debroah Swinney, Development Project Coordinator/ Assistant to the VP OF University Advancement





"With me, I am most thankful for just being here, just to see to another day. Also, I'm very excited to be finally graduating with a Bachelor's in General Studies with a Concentration in HYPER.."

-Lester Townes, Student Alumni Association Attorney General

GAZETTE

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS YEAR END REVIEW























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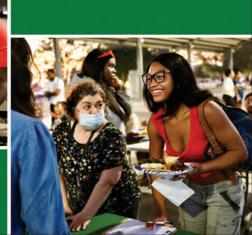


MVSU Students and Faculty enjoying 2024 International Potluck

Office of International Programs

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE

UNIVERSITY



FACULTY CORNER Asst. Prof. Shelly Buchanan-Garlotte's Valley offer hits a career high note

Garlotte

By Gail H.M. Brown, Ph.D., DDG Faculty Advisor

Dr. Shelly Buchanan-Garlotte joined Mississippi Valley State University in 2019 after teaching public school for over 10 years.

She said she had begun to feel that her three music degrees, including a doctorate, were "without purpose." "I was not using my musical training or experience in public school, and I really missed singing and working with other musicians," she

"I prayed for guidance, asking God if I should stay or go elsewhere. Shortly after that, just before COVID-19 hit, I received a call about a voice position at Valley."

Now in her fifth year, she is making her mark as Assistant Professor of Voice in the Fine Arts Department. She teaches courses such as Applied Voice, Diction for Singers, and Vocal Pedagogy.

Previously, she taught English Language Arts to middle and high school students. Looking back, she believes those years prepared her for her current role. "Teaching in public schools taught me lessons I share with my students, many of whom go on to teach music themselves. It helped me connect performance with education," she said.

Her student Dawon Johnson said she is the best teacher he ever had.

Dr. Buchanan-Garlotte holds a Bachelor of Music and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from LSU, as well as a Master of Music from Indiana University. She has performed in roles from Bizet's

"Carmen" to Puccini's "Madama Butterfly." She has also reached the regional level of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, a notable achievement that highlights her talent.

At MVSU, she enjoys serving as the Secretary of MVSU's Faculty Senate. In a

recent faculty meeting, Faculty Senate President Dr. Carter Stevens praised her efficiency and dedication. Faculty Senator Dr. Zainul Abedin recently said she is "a very caring person who listens carefully to others" while taking minutes in th meetings.

She is also passionate about her role as Auditions Coordinator for the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

When not mentoring students or organizing competitions, she enjoys crocheting gifts and caring for her 12

Dr. Buchanan-Garlotte sees MVSU as a place where her music passion and love for training students are high notes of her career.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT A sixth-grade visit sparks Marilyn Jones' 'green' passion for the Valley

Jones

By Gail H.M. Brown, Ph.D., DDG Faculty Advisor

Mississippi Valley State University captured Marilyn Jones' heart as a child and shaped her life as an adult.

The Lorain, Ohio native never imagined attending college. "No one in my family had gone beyond a sixth-grade education," she shared. "But I was divinely chosen to be the difference." After migrating to Charleston, Miss., in the 70s and 80s to live with her grandparents, Jones' first introduction to MVSU came during a sixth-grade Girl Scouts trip.

"This was the first time my mother allowed me to go away without her being present," she said. "I had the most fun! I remember playing with a huge bouncing ball in the HPER Building (now the R.W. Harrison Complex). That one moment stayed with me and defined the rest of my life."

Years later, Jones returned to MVSU as a first-generation college student, earning a business degree despite her initial struggles. "I was here on grace by the Grace of God," she reflected. "I have so many people to thank for nurturing me and shaping who I am today."

Jones' connection to Valley deepened as she married in the H.G. Carpenter Auditorium, lived in her first apartment

> on campus, and began her career in the Academic Skills Parlor. Even though she left for a while, "I came back because I literally bleed green," she said.

Today, she serves with that same "green" passion as Office Manager of Business and Finance. Jones finds joy in seeing systems she helped

establish still being used. "It's been 32 years, and I'm still learning and excited about MVSU," she said.

Jones is also a minister and musician for over 40 years.

Her advice to potential students: "Take a step of faith. Don't just make a difference—be the difference."

For Jones, Valley isn't just a place. "It's a purpose," she said. "I love making people feel appreciated and amazing. MVSU has done that for me, and I hope to pass it on."



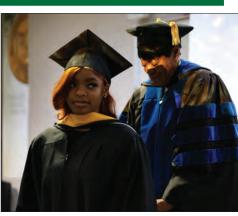
MVSU 2024 Fall Hooding Ceremony

PHOTOS BY LATUNYA EVANS, MVSU COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

























COMMUNITY/STATE

7

Jackson-Hinds MVSU Alumni Chapter hosts Annual Scholarship Luncheon

By Kendal Brookins, Student Writer

The Jackson-Hinds Chapter of the Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association hosted its annual scholarship luncheon on Dec. 6, 2024, at the Country Club of Jackson, located at 345 St. Andrews Drive.

The fundraiser aimed to generate scholarship funds through ticket and table sales and donations. The keynote speaker, Dr. Alfred Rankins, an Alcorn State alumnus and Commissioner of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), highlighted the importance of consistent financial support to the university.

"Sustained giving—whether monthly, quarterly, or annually—makes a significant difference in improving the university's overall operations," Rankins said.

Rankins also addressed misconceptions about giving, clarifying that purchases such as season passes, or homecoming tickets are not considered direct donations. "You are supporting the university, but you are not giving money directly to it. You are paying for access and admission to the athletic event. Period," he said. His remarks, prefaced by an apology, drew laughter from the audience.

Prominent MVSU attendees included President Jerryl Briggs, National Alumni President Jerry Redmond, Jr., other administrators, and representatives from F







MVSU student government.

Rankins also proudly shared that his parents are MVSU alumni.

The MVSU Choir provided crowdpleasing entertainment under the direction of Dr. Brandon Cash.

PHOTOS BY: GHM Brown/DDG







Micheal Joe Cannon and Tony Ellis pictured being awarded the

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SPORTS GAZETTE DECEMBER 2024

MVSU parts ways with Coach Wade after two short seasons

By Shomari Hunt, Sports Writer

Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) has parted ways with head football coach Kendrick Wade after two seasons. Wade, an alum of MVSU, led the Delta Devils to a 2-21 record during his tenure.

Notably, his team achieved a historic upset by defeating Florida A&M, ending the Rattlers' 23-game home winning

Wade was announced as Valley's head coach during a news conference in January 2023.

Prior to his role at MVSU, Wade was recognized as a top wide receiver coach, contributing to successful programs at Delta State University and Fort Valley State University. His coaching career also included positions at Briar Cliff University and various high school

MVSU has appointed Kyle Williams as interim head football coach as the search begins for a new permanent head coach. According to mysusports.com, "Williams joined the Delta Devils this year as Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Backs Coach, bringing a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success in developing top-performing defenses."

As for the student body, student reactions are mixed. MVSU student Johterrian Evans expressed that, after the



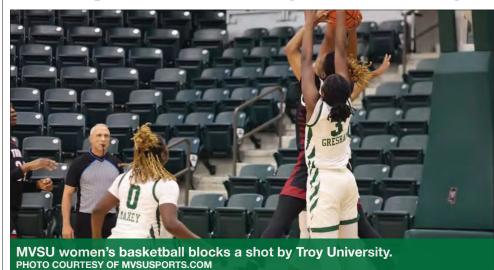
Former MVSU Football Head Coach Kendrick Wade PHOTO COURTESY OF MVSUSPORTS.COM

school has struggled with losses over the past two seasons, if the administration believes that replacing the coaching staff is the best solution to address the issue, he fully supports their decision.

The members of the Gazette were not able to get direct information or in contact with former Coach Wade or athletic administration personnel.

Students say it will be interesting to see how MVSU approaches the way they go about finding the 15th head coach to lead the once promising and mighty football program back to their rightful position as top dawgs of the SWAC.

MVSU Women's Basketball triumphs over Troy University



By Shuto Okumura, Sports Writer

On Dec. 1, the Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) women's basketball team secured a thrilling 66-65 victory over Troy University. The game was a nail-biter from start to finish, with both teams exchanging leads and showcasing relentless energy.

Troy started strong, leveraging fast-paced play to take an early lead. However, MVSU quickly countered with tight defense and timely scoring, keeping the game close. By halftime, Troy held a seven-point advantage, but MVSU showed resilience and determination in the second half.

As the third quarter ended, Troy led by just two points, setting the stage for a dramatic final period. MVSU, fueled by a vocal home crowd, mounted a comeback, outscoring Troy 15-12 in the last quarter. MVSU's season record to 1-5.

Yuto Sato, an MVSU student, described the atmosphere: "This game was exciting to watch. If more people had come, the cheers would have been even louder." Another student, Kai Hanasaki, echoed this sentiment, noting the energy in the

Head Coach Kimberly Anderson praised her team's effort: "Troy has an amazing team—very quick and explosive on the court. It was a great experience for our players to capture their first nonconference win at home. I'm thrilled that my girls stayed composed and fought hard until the end. This win reminds us that if you never quit and believe in your team, you can always finish strong."



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