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GREENWOOD LEFLORE HOSPITAL

Consultants warn of deferred investment

Strategic recommendation could come next month

By TIM KALICH
Editor

The consulting firm that is helping Greenwood and Leflore County officials decide on the future direction of Greenwood Leflore Hospital says

that the last few years of multimillion-dollar losses are not only depleting reserves. They're probably keeping the hospital from making the kinds of investments that can assure its sustainability.

The financial downturn "means in

all likelihood there's been deferred investment — things that if you had adequate cash flow you would have replaced, you would have upgraded, maybe new things you would have done," Jeff Sommer, managing director of Stroudwater Associates, said

Thursday to a task force that has been providing input to the consulting firm.

Stroudwater, based in Portland, Maine, with offices in Nashville and Atlanta, was hired earlier this year to make recommendations about the best way to position the publicly owned hospital to respond to the changing face of health care and

return the medical facility to profitability.

Options being considered are selling or leasing the hospital, affiliating with a larger medical institution or continuing to operate as an independent entity, but possibly with the goal of developing into a regional medical

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Man jailed for waving weapon

Demolition crew was threatened

By SUSAN MONTGOMERY
Staff Writer

A 71-year-old man threatened a demolition crew clearing vacant, dilapidated houses for the city of Greenwood by waving a rifle at the workers on Ash Street around 7:30 a.m. Thursday.

They took cover behind a truck, but no shots were fired, according to James Arnold, owner of Gravel Hill Construction Co., a subcontractor for the demolitions. The crew was tearing down a residence at 433 Ash.

Robert Lewis Meeks, whose address was listed by the Greenwood Police Department as 321 Nichols St., was charged with displaying a firearm, public intoxication and carrying a concealed weapon. He was jailed within an hour.

"We had a little problem," said Arnold. "He walked up to my guys on Ash Street and kind of brandished this rifle and made some threats."

Arnold called the police. He said officers in four or five police cars quickly arrived, and among them was William Blake, a policeman who also is a city code enforcement officer.

"They whisked him right up. They defused the situation. They did real good," Arnold said.

Meeks also was carrying a pistol, he said. "The gun he was flashing around wasn't loaded, but the pistol was loaded," Arnold said.

Betty Stigler, a code enforcement officer for the city, said Meeks was already in custody and sitting in the back of a police car when she arrived at the scene.

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New shelter



Susan Montgomery
Above: Gabriel Soriano, who lives near Memphis, positions concrete blocks Thursday as part of a crew building the Leflore County Humane Society's new 6,200-square-foot animal shelter on 4.25 acres at the end of Cypress Avenue near Baldwin Road. Left: Part of the roof has been installed and walls are being built so the rest of the roof can be constructed. The building is expected to be finished by the end of the year.

After heart failure, pastor relied on faith

Lawrence vowed to be 'miracle'

By RUTHIE ROBISON
Managing Editor

Almost a year ago, Elaine Gray Lawrence was diagnosed with congestive heart failure, and at the time, she felt she had been issued a death sentence.

"Even though I know God and I trust God, when you initially hear it, you are human and you have human feelings," she said. "I was heartbroken. Devastated. And then I had to tell my children."

Looking at Lawrence today, however, it's almost hard to believe that just a few months ago, she was unable to perform simple everyday tasks that many people take for granted.

"It was the most difficult time in my life," she said. "It was the most difficult thing I've ever faced in my life."

Lawrence said her faith in God and a positive attitude pulled her through that difficult time. "I am a woman of faith, and I had to use my faith," she said.

Lawrence said, "I'm going to be a miracle. I'm going to be the one who confounds the doctors. I was speaking life and not death. The Bible says to speak life."

She said now she wants others to know that "all sickness is not unto death" and that "you just have to believe and trust God."



Lawrence, 54, has been ordained for 15 years and has served as pastor of Swiftown Missionary Baptist Church for 13 years.

For 20 years, she has worked as a bail bondsman at Pugh Bail Bonding Co., located on Main Street.

Lawrence said she's had some health issues in the past — a breast cancer scare, in which the lump turned out to be benign, and kidney failure, for which she takes medicine — but none related to her heart.

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Elaine Gray Lawrence holds up a copy of her new women's self-help book, "How to Become Her." Almost a year ago, Lawrence was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. Before a surgery to install a pacemaker and defibrillator, she was on bed rest, which is when she began writing her book. A book signing will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday in the upstairs Terrace Room at The Alluvian.

Till marker to be rededicated Saturday

The Emmett Till Memorial Commission of Tallahatchie County will rededicate its Emmett Till historical marker Saturday.



The marker is the fourth erected since the first was installed in 2008 where Till's body was found on the banks of the Tallahatchie River. The murder in 1955 is considered to have been a major catalyst of the civil rights movement.

The first sign was thrown in the river. A second was shot so many

times with bullets or pellets that it was replaced. The third was riddled with 20 bullet holes and was vandalized earlier this year. Three male college students, then enrolled at The University of Mississippi, holding weapons appeared next to the disfigured sign on Facebook and Instagram and were investigated in connection with the crime.

Those attending the sign's rededication will meet at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner and drive by caravan to the marker's riverside location for an 11:45 a.m. ceremony. A reception will be held at the Sumner Grille at 1 p.m. The rededication is co-spon-

sored by the Mississippi Center for Justice.

Patrick Weems, director of the Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, said he's hoping for a positive outcome. "We are cautiously optimistic," he explained.

"We understand that racial reconciliation begins by telling the truth," Weems said. "Our historical markers allow a first step toward that truth-telling process. Sadly, there are still those who want to deny the events of 1955. We cannot change the past, but we have a responsibility to tell our stories together so we can move

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A marker in memory of slain Chicago youth Emmett Till will be rededicated Saturday. Those attending will meet at 11 a.m. at the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner and then travel to the new marker's location, where a ceremony will be held at 11:45. Till's death in 1955 was a catalyst for the civil rights movement.

