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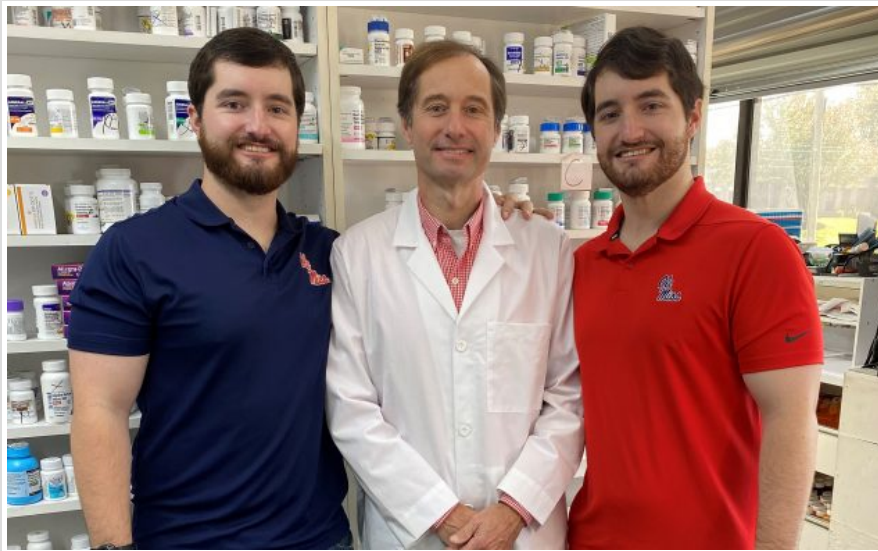
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Gift to Athletics Pays Tribute to Legendary Coach

UM pharmacy graduate's contribution supports student-athletes via Vaught Society

NOVEMBER 14, 2020 BY BILL DABNEY



Chris Bonner (center) and sons Bryant (left) and Will are all passionate Rebel fans. Bonner, a Columbus pharmacist, made a recent major gift to the Vaught Society to help provide scholarships, academic guidance and wellness support for Ole Miss student-athletes. Photo courtesy Chris Bonner

OXFORD, Miss. – Chris Bonner’s gift to the **University of Mississippi** is a testament to his admiration for the late legendary head football coach Johnny Vaught.

Bonner, a pharmacist in Columbus, gave \$125,000 to the **Vaught Society**, the **Ole Miss Athletics Foundation’s** fundraising level that provides financial assistance to student-athletes in the form of scholarships, academic guidance and wellness support.

“The name itself just brings chills,” said Bonner, a 1992 UM **pharmacy** graduate. “I grew up reading stories about Coach Vaught. He was a winner.

“At that time in Mississippi, we didn’t have much to latch onto, but Vaught was someone you could brag about. He was an equal to Bear Bryant; he just retired a decade earlier and, in my mind and heart, a decade too soon.”

Bonner hopes his gift will help Ole Miss athletics be the best it can be.

“I don’t think we should worry where we fit in the perceived pecking order of athletics departments,” he said. “We may not have the successes or failures of other schools. But if we maximize what we can do, what Ole Miss can be ... if we do all we can, then I can be happy with the results, no matter what.”

Jordie Kindervater, OMAF director of development for major gifts, expressed his gratitude for Bonner’s generosity.

“Chris was a pleasure to connect with,” Kindervater said. “His depth of knowledge and respect for the history of Ole Miss athletics immediately exposed his passion and desire to make a significant impact on our collective path to championship-level success.

“We are excited to welcome him and his sons into the Vaught Society as immediate difference-makers.”

Bonner’s passion for Ole Miss sports stemmed from his parents, even before his college days. Though he is the one true rebel in the family – his parents and twin sons, Will and Bryant, attended other universities – all are consistent fixtures at Ole Miss football, basketball and baseball games.

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to



Legendary Ole Miss football coach John Vaught inspired generations of Mississippians. A new gift from UM alumnus Chris Bonner honors the Rebel coach and benefits student-athletes. Photo by Robert Jordan/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

His dad, Jimmy Bonner, a contemporary of Archie Manning, was born near Drew, hometown of the renowned Ole Miss quarterback. The son of a sharecropper living on meager means, he rarely had an opportunity to watch sports.

“The first game my dad ever watched on TV was Archie’s famous 33-32 shootout loss to Alabama in 1969,” Bonner said. “From that point on, he was hooked on Ole Miss football.

“He later earned three degrees from Mississippi State University, but his passion for the Rebels passed on to me, and now to my sons.”

After college, Bonner worked for Kroger Pharmacy in Vicksburg for a year before transferring to Columbus to manage the Kroger pharmacy there. In 2001, he became manager of Winn Dixie Pharmacy in Columbus, which was sold to Southern Family Markets. In 2012, the company sold its pharmacy division, and Bonner sensed the timing was right to go independent.

“I opened Chris’ Pharmacy on Sept 17, 2012, and professionally, it was the best decision of my life,” he said. “Initially, I only wanted one store. But owning more became more and more appealing. I opened my second location, Chris’ Pharmacy and Sons Too, earlier this

year.”

The name reflects the relationship he has with his twins.

“My sons and I are very close,” Bonner said. “When they finish school at Samford University, I hope to open many more stores for them, and I hope they take it further than I ever could. I see my company as generational wealth if they are managed properly.”

The Commercial Dispatch named Bonner pharmacist of the year for the Golden Triangle three of the past four years. His business has also had honors: being named the best pharmacy in the Golden Triangle for the past six years by the Commercial Dispatch and best pharmacy in Northeast Mississippi and western Alabama by WCBI-TV the past two years.

When he’s not running a store, he’s running a road or trail, having completed several half-marathons and two full marathons. He’s also a Southern history buff who collects pharmaceutical artifacts and antique bottles dating from 1860 to 1900.

Additionally, he searches for Civil War relics and dredges for gold. On a trip to England, he found a bronze spearpoint that was dated 1500 B.C. by the Museum of London.

But none of his hobbies take priority over Ole Miss athletics.

“What I would like most for Ole Miss is for it to be a source of pride for the people who care about our university and student-athletes,” Bonner said.

For more information on supporting Ole Miss athletics, visit <https://givetathletics.com> or contact Denson Hollis at 662-915-8455 or dhollis@olemiss.edu.

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