A step toward legal marriage

Same-sex couples record marriage licenses in Lafayette

BY JERRI SCOTT  Staff Writer

It was an emotional scene at the Lafayette County Chancery Clerk’s office Wednesday morning as three same-sex couples recorded their marriage licenses in the “Miscellaneous Minutes” file in support of the Campaign for Southern Equality initiative.

The three same-sex couples in Lafayette County were among 17 gay and lesbian couples across the state of Mississippi who sought to have their licenses recorded Wednesday. The couples were participating in the “We Do” campaign, an initiative that supports statewide action for marriage equality in Mississippi.

The three couples in Lafayette County who recorded their marriage licenses were Stacy and Anna Harkins, Gail Stratton and Pat Miller, and Jenny Burkett and Sonny Wingo.

Miller, Jenny Burkett and Sonny Wingo."This is one step along the road," Stratton said. "This does not give us rights in Mississippi as a married couple. That is something that we need to keep working toward."

Stratton and Miller were legally married in Connecticut, but Mississippi does not recognize same-sex marriages as legal unions.

Put more heads in beds

Visit Oxford anticipates tourism future

BY ALYSSA SCHLOUGH  Staff Writer

With more than 200 new hotel rooms coming on board within the next two years, local tourism officials are preparing to meet the challenge of putting heads in those beds.

The best way to do that, according to tourism expert Berkeley Young, president of Young Strategies, is to think of Oxford as more than a college town.

"Oxford is a travel destination," he told the group attending Tuesday’s First to Know breakfast, held by the Oxford-Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce. "You attract visitors from all over the world. You have Ole Miss and all of its sporting events, a dynamic downtown Square, the heart of Oxford with diverse offerings of shopping, dining and charm."

Marketing Oxford

Visit Oxford hired Young last year to study and review Oxford tourism and how Visit Oxford could better market Oxford during down times throughout the year.

One of the original suggestions was to change the name from Oxford’s tourism organization, from the Oxford Convention and Visitors’ Bureau to Visit Oxford.

"It’s an action statement," he said Tuesday. "It’s what you want people to do."

Transit system ready for fall semester

Changes made to game-day parking rules

BY ALYSSA SCHLOUGH  Staff Writer

With the fall semester at the University of Mississippi getting under way in a little over a week, the Oxford University Transit system is gearing up to meet the demands of what could be a record year of ridership as the university continues to discourage parking on its campus.

All regular routes will return to their normal time schedule on Aug. 25 with buses running from about 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. on most routes. During the summer months, the buses end service around 6 p.m.

Six new buses have been purchased and will be on the road this coming week. Drivers have been making runs around the new roundabouts on Old Taylor Road to get comfortable with the new layout out of the bridge before traffic becomes heavy, Operations Manager Carol Pringle said at the Wednesday OUT board meeting. Seven new drivers have been hired as more buses are added to the bussier routes.

TODAY

ARICO SHARES STORES, RECIPES

Longtime Oxford Eagle food columnist Litsa Arico shares stories about family and food along with recipes in her book, "Inside My Italian Kitchen." For more about Arico and her funda-

RUNNING MATES

A retooled backfield has created depth and fueled competition among Ole Miss’ running backs during fall camp. To read more on the Rebels’ tailbacks, turn to Page 8 in today’s Sports section.

WEATHER

High today near 86 with sunny skies. Low tonight near 66 with mostly sunny skies and temperatures in the upper-70s again Friday.

LOYAL SUBSCRIBERS

The Eagle would like to thank Seth Dabney for being a long-time sub-

HELP OUT AND GET A CLEAN CAR, TOO

The Lafayette FSA will host a car wash at America’s Car Mart on Friday from 8:30 to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Washes are free, but the group will gladly accept dona-

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

The Yoknapatwpha Arts Council is accepting applications for local and regional artists to appear in the Powerhouse Community Arts Center Gallery.

Serving Oxford, Lafayette County and the University of Mississippi.
Fugitive couple arrested in Portland

JACKSON (AP) - A couple accused of leaving their severely injured 2-year-old daughter at a hospital and keeping their other two children in jail have been arrested after a five-year-old man escaped from the home, authorities said Wednesday.

The search for Janet Ramborn and her daughter, who had been held on an outstanding warrant, ended when she was found in a nearby park.

The couple left the home of Ramborn's parents in Jackson, Maine, on Monday night.

Marriage: Support shown for local couples

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According to Mississippi law, "marriage may take place and may be valid under the laws of this state only between a man and a woman aged 18 years or over, and shall not be recognized in this state and is void and unenforceable under the laws of this state."

Since the state does not consider same-sex marriage licenses obtained in other states as legally valid, the couple chose to show their support for marriage equality by having their marriage license recorded in the chancery clerk's office in Tchula and by submitting the marriage certificate to the state clerk's office.

"We are very高兴 for the opportunity to get married in Mississippi," said one of the women, who said they planned to return to their home in Arkansas after the ceremony.

Opposition on coast

Although most of the couples in South Mississippi are heterosexual, there are some who do not want to get married. According to a recent study, the majority of Mississippians support same-sex marriage.

The issue has been gaining momentum with courts around the nation, especially since the Supreme Court ruled last year in a case against a state's ban on same-sex marriage.

The issue was being fought in Mississippi as well, with a state which has 3,488 same-sex households in the state, according to Census data. Also, 26 percent of the same-sex couples in Mississippi are raising children, which is the highest percentage of same-sex households in any state in the nation.

"We want our marriage to be part of the public record of this country," Straton and Reasoner said in a statement. "This is where we live and this is where we pay taxes and support the schools, the community and churches. We want our county government to treat us fairly."

After receiving documentation of their marriage license, Miller offered this advice to Annie Baker, the clerk in the chancery office who accepted the record: "This is where I was born. This is where I grew up, and if we could have, we would have gotten married in Oxford."