

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Fancy Nancy the Musical Comes to Life on the Historic Saenger Stage

**Hattiesburg** – On Saturday, April 19, beloved storybook character Fancy Nancy will bring her one-of-a-kind flair to the Historic Saenger Stage with *Fancy Nancy the Musical*.

In *Fancy Nancy the Musical*, Nancy and her friends, Bree, Wanda, Rhonda and Lionel are going to be performing in their very first show, "Deep Sea Dances." Nancy is positive that she and Bree will be named mermaids in the show. However, when another girl gets picked for the coveted role, Nancy is stuck playing a dreary, dull tree. A hilarious and exciting plot unfolds as Nancy tries to find the "fancy" in this unfortunate situation.

Inspired by the New York Times bestselling children's book series by author Jane O'Connor and illustrator Robin Preiss Glasser, *Fancy Nancy* has been dazzling readers since 2005. The character of Fancy Nancy is a vivacious young girl who believes that more is always better when it comes to being fancy. From her sparkly tiara to her pink shoes, Nancy is always on a mission to add a little pizzazz in her life.

"The Saenger Theater is always excited to help bring children's favorite storybook characters to life through the magic of musical theater." Said Daniel Taylor, Manager of the Saenger Theater, "*Fancy Nancy the Musical* will create family memories that will last long after the performers take their last bow."

With two showtimes at 11am and 3pm, *Fancy Nancy the Musical*, is guaranteed to entertain audiences of all ages! Tickets are \$17 (plus applicable fees). VIP tickets may be purchased for \$35 (plus applicable fees) and include special front-row seating, a Fancy Nancy-inspired costume accessory, and a voucher for Nancy's favorite fancy concessions. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Saenger Theater Box Office at 601.584.4888 or visiting online at [www.HattiesburgSaenger.com](http://www.HattiesburgSaenger.com).

*Fancy Nancy the Musical* is produced by award-winning Vital Theater Company out of New York City. The production, brimming with wit and style, won the Off-Broadway Kids Original Musical CD of the Year in 2013. Founded in 1999, Vital Theater Company produces numerous entertaining and educational shows each season.

The Saenger Theater is a Hattiesburg Convention Commission Facility. Since 1991, the Hattiesburg Convention Commission has been developing and operating tourism-related facilities for the Hattiesburg area.

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### Hattiesburg Saenger Theater and Spirit of Women present Funniest Housewives of Orange County

**Hattiesburg** – The Hattiesburg Saenger Theater and Forrest General Hospital's Spirit of Women invites the public to experience the *Funniest Housewives of Orange County* – a fabulously funny stand-up comedy show featuring three unique housewives. The "Anti-Aging Housewife," the "Post-Menopausal Housewife" and the "Inappropriate Housewife" will have the Saenger Theater bursting with laughter on May 15 at 7 p.m.

The *Funniest Housewives of Orange County* is a sizzling comedic sensation that brings together the best and cheekiest stand-up comedians who have appeared on *Oprah*, *The Tonight Show*, *David Letterman*, *Comedy Central*, *Jimmy Kimmel*, *Jimmy Fallon*, *The View* and more. From bad husband jokes to puns about everyday life struggles, this show is guaranteed to be a good time for both women and the men who don't understand them

"The partnership between the Saenger Theater and Spirit of Women continues to be a winning duo," said Daniel Taylor, Manager of the Saenger Theater, "The *Funniest Housewives of Orange County* offers the perfect opportunity for a much-needed girls' night out or even an ideal Mother's Day gift."

This performance of the *Funniest Housewives of Orange County* will feature three "femme fatales" including Cindy Burns as the Anti-Aging Housewife, Kira Soltanovich as the Inappropriate Housewife and the Post-Menopausal Housewife, simply and fittingly credited as Mrs. Hughes. Each of their personas stand strong alone, but when they come together they are a hilarious force to be reckoned with. The Housewives perform regularly in front of sold-out audiences across the country.

Tickets to the *Funniest Housewives of Orange County* are \$25 to \$35 (plus applicable fees) and can be purchased by calling the Saenger Theater Box Office at 601.584.4888 or visiting online at [HattiesburgSaenger.com](http://HattiesburgSaenger.com). Members of the Forrest General Hospital Spirit of Women are eligible for discounted tickets to the show, and may call the Saenger Theater Box Office for more information.

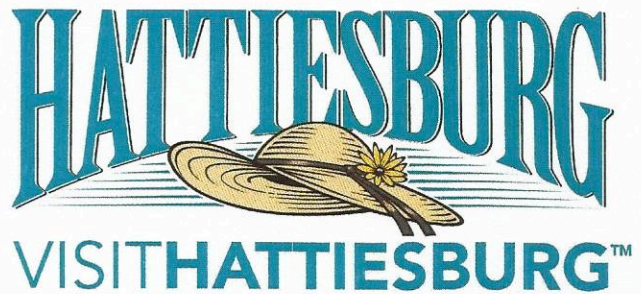
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### Hattiesburg Celebrates National Tourism Week

For the thirteenth consecutive year, VISITHATTIESBURG™ is celebrating the value of the local tourism industry during National Tourism Week, May 5-9. In addition to placing an emphasis on the \$254 million spent by visitors to Hattiesburg last year, the spotlight will also be on highlighting 10 years of hospitality and service provided through the Hattiesburg Visitors Center.

Among the week's activities, Tourism Ambassadors from VISITHATTIESBURG™ will spend a few days "blitzing" businesses and individuals involved in Hattiesburg's tourism industry workforce.

On Wednesday, VISITHATTIESBURG™ will hold the annual Tourism Partners Luncheon at the Historic Train Depot in Downtown Hattiesburg. During the luncheon, Shining Star awards will be presented to Hattiesburg's greatest assets – exceptional employees within the local tourism industry who have gone above and beyond to make visitors feel welcome in Hattiesburg.

"The men and women who make up the tourism workforce are the heartbeat of our industry," said Rick Taylor, Executive Director of VISITHATTIESBURG™. "From front desk and housekeeping teams to local business owners, to the volunteers who lend their time with various tourism organizations, these individuals give Hattiesburg an unrivaled reputation for genuine hospitality among our visitors. These lasting impressions convert into meaningful dollars for Hattiesburg. Last year, visitors in Mississippi spent \$6.25 billion and visitors to Hattiesburg spent more than \$254 million in the local economy. Thanks to our local tourism workforce, people across the state and nation are seeing the value in Hattiesburg's thriving tourism market."

To wrap up the week's celebrations, VISITHATTIESBURG™ will host the annual "Picnic with Hattie" on Friday, May 9 from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Hattiesburg Visitors Center. The public is invited to join special guest, J.T. Williamson from SuperTalk Mississippi's *The J.T. Show* as local food, art and entertainment and special events are showcased. In addition, Tourism Ambassadors will invite guests to take part in celebrating 10 years of signature hospitality made possible to Hattiesburg's visitors through the Hattiesburg Visitors Center which originally opened in the Spring of 2004.

"The Hattiesburg Visitors Center serves as the face of Hattiesburg's tourism industry," said Kristie Fairley, Deputy Director of VISITHATTIESBURG™. "In its 10 year history, the Hattiesburg Visitors Center has hosted almost **100,000 visitors** from all around the globe. Hattiesburg was one of Mississippi's first local communities to open a stand-alone Visitors Center and since then, many other communities have followed suit. Even with amazing handheld technology to help us when we are traveling, nothing can replace the face to face interaction with another human being. Visitors still want personalized answers to their individually-unique questions. Friday's Picnic is a perfect opportunity for Hattiesburg residents to see our Visitors Center first-hand and soak in a little hometown hospitality for themselves!"

The Hattiesburg Visitors Center is conveniently located at the intersection of Highway 49 and Interstate 59 and is open to the public Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Operating as VISITHATTIESBURG™, the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission continues to economically grow the local and state tourism industry by presenting events like the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant. Since VISITHATTIESBURG's creation in 1990, the Tourism Industry has grown to become a \$254 million industry for Hattiesburg.

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### 2014 Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant Tickets On Sale

**Hattiesburg** – Experience southern hospitality at its finest at the 65<sup>th</sup> annual Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant on July 25 and 26 at the Historic Saenger Theater in Downtown Hattiesburg. This year, 35 of Mississippi's best and brightest young ladies will take the stage in competition for the title of 2014 Mississippi Miss Hospitality – a title that comes with a ticket to travel across the State of Mississippi promoting Mississippi's economic development and tourism industries.

This year marks the 17<sup>th</sup> year that Hattiesburg has hosted the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant. The tradition began in 1949 under Governor Fielding Wright and the Mississippi Legislature. Since then, the Pageant has called the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Starkville and now, Hattiesburg its home. Presented by VISITHATTIESBURG™, the City of Hattiesburg and The University of Southern Mississippi, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant offers more than \$100,000 in scholarships and prizes to young women from across the state.

Hailey Thomas, 21, of Meridian, won the title of Mississippi Miss Hospitality 2013 last July and has worn the crown with poise, sharing Mississippi's trademark Hospitality with everyone she encounters. As an upcoming senior at the University of Mississippi, she is pursuing a degree in biology with hopes of becoming a pediatrician. She serves as an Ole Miss Ambassador, a member of Gamma Beta Phi Honor Society, as well as, being actively involved in Leadership Council. Throughout her reign, Thomas has traveled more than 30,000 miles as Mississippi's Goodwill Ambassador.

During the Pageant Week, contestants will explore Hattiesburg, attend social events, rehearsals and competitions, all leading up to the crowning of the 2014 Mississippi Miss Hospitality. Guests of this year's pageant will travel back in time as the production tells us why Miss Hospitality has remained a "Crowning Jewel for 65 Years," the theme for this year's Pageant.

Tickets for the 2014 Pageant are now on sale and can be purchased at the Saenger Theater Box Office by calling 601.584.4888 or online at [HattiesburgSaenger.com](http://HattiesburgSaenger.com). Tickets are \$22.50 for premiere reserved seating and \$17.50 for general reserved seating. Two-night ticket packages are also available and may only be purchased by calling the Saenger Box Office.

The Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant is a program of VISITHATTIESBURG™, and is presented by VISITHATTIESBURG™, The University of Southern Mississippi and the City of Hattiesburg. For more information about the Pageant, contact the State Pageant Office at 601.268.3220 or [mshosp@hattiesburg.org](mailto:mshosp@hattiesburg.org). Additional Pageant information can be found online at [MissHospitality.com](http://MissHospitality.com).

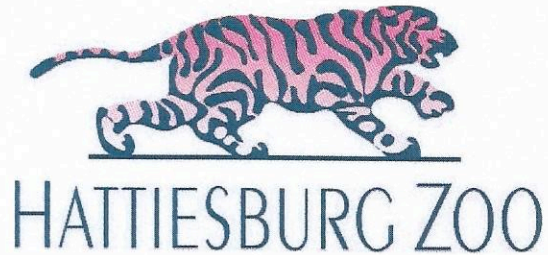
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### Zoo Mourns the Loss of Beloved Tiger, Tigger

**Hattiesburg** – After 17 years of serving as an ambassador for her species in the wild, Tigger, the Hattiesburg Zoo’s beloved Siberian Tiger, was humanely euthanized Friday afternoon following a decline in her quality of life due to old age.

“A decision like this is never a simple one, but after consulting with three veterinarians who unanimously agreed upon this decision, we are confident that it is the right one for her.” said Animal Curator, Katie Barry.

Siberian Tigers are the world’s largest species of cat and are listed as an endangered species, due to poaching and deforestation of their natural habitats in Eastern Russia, China and North Korea. There are approximately 400 to 500 Siberian Tigers currently living in the wild. Typical life expectancy for a Siberian Tiger in the wild is 10 to 15 years. Tigger exceeded this by two years.

“We were fortunate to have had a species of Tigger’s distinction in our Zoo,” said Barry. “She brought to Hattiesburg a tremendous opportunity for the public to learn the importance of conservation of the natural world. She has been a pillar in the Hattiesburg Zoo family, and we will mourn for her as a community, remembering what a great representative she has been.”

Born at the Hattiesburg Zoo, Tigger enjoyed frequent training and enrichment activities with her keepers. Over the years, countless students and volunteers of the Zoo’s educational programs participated in creating enrichment items for Tigger’s enjoyment. The public often had the chance to watch as Tigger played with her toys and hunted for treats left in her home. Her other favorite activities were swimming in her pool and playing with her boomer ball.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of Tigger, but this is the nature of Zoo work,” said Rick Taylor, Executive Director of the Hattiesburg Convention and Tourism Commissions. “We take solace in knowing that she had a good, long life and that she was loved by our staff and community. We will miss her.”

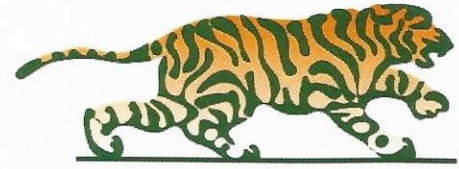
The Hattiesburg Zoo is a Hattiesburg Convention Commission Facility, in partnership with the City of Hattiesburg and the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission. Since 1991, the Hattiesburg Convention Commission has been developing and operating tourism-related facilities for the Hattiesburg area. For more information, visit [www.HattiesburgZoo.com](http://www.HattiesburgZoo.com) or contact us at 601.268.3220.

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# HATTIESBURG ZOO

### Hattiesburg Zoo Cuts Ribbon on the State-of-the-Art Asbury Discovery Center

**Hattiesburg** – On Friday, May 23, the Hattiesburg Zoo cut the ribbon, unveiling the much-anticipated Asbury Discovery Center. Through the monocle of an early explorer, guests of this private event traveled back in time to experience the age of the Industrial Revolution as never before imagined. Guests were able to tour the 2,200 square-foot building featuring viewable housing for many of the Zoo's never-before-displayed education animals, viewable offices and laboratories for zookeepers and a new home and play yard for the Zoo's Galapagos Tortoises.

“The Asbury Discovery Center is an educational facility completely unmatched anywhere in Mississippi,” said Rick Taylor, Executive Director of the Hattiesburg Convention Commission. “This event offered members of the Asbury Foundation and other partners of the Zoo an up close and personal tour of this curiously fun and intriguing new facility. We are thrilled to open the doors on the Asbury Discovery Center so that children and adults young at heart from our community and beyond may be enriched by a fascinating and memorable Zoological experience.”

Introducing a “steampunk-inspired” design, the Asbury Discovery Center will use the concept of steam-powered machinery to celebrate the early 20<sup>th</sup> century age of discovery and innovation in a whimsical style, creating an educational experience unlike any other found among existing education attractions throughout the state of Mississippi. Steampunk-themed refreshments as well as animal encounters topped off this delightfully eccentric event on the eve of the Zoo's annual Birthday Bash.

In July 2013, the Hattiesburg Convention Commission announced that the Zoo had received a \$277,000 grant from the Asbury Foundation for use toward this new education facility. The overall look and feel of the Discovery Center is the result of collaborations between the Hattiesburg Zoo and Because We Can, a design firm in Oakland, California specializing in the distinctive “Steampunk” design, which celebrates the early 20<sup>th</sup> century age of discovery and innovation in a futuristic whimsical style.

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### The Historic Eureka School Presents Freedom Summer Documentary

**Hattiesburg** – On Thursday, May 29 at 5:30 p.m., The Historic Eureka School will present *Freedom Summer*, a documentary released by American Experience Films and PBS. This special screening of *Freedom Summer* will be held at the Saenger Theater and is free and open to the public. *Freedom Summer* highlights the ten memorable weeks during the summer of 1964 in the state of Mississippi, when more than 700 student volunteers from across the United States joined with organizations and African Americans in a historic effort to shatter segregation.

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker, Stanley Nelson, *Freedom Summer* will feature firsthand accounts of this tumultuous time in Mississippi's history. Hattiesburg natives, Peggy Jean Connor, Anthony Harris and Daisy Wade Harris, will all be featured in the film. Peggy Jean Connor was actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, serving as executive secretary of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. As a young boy, Anthony Harris attended a Hattiesburg Freedom School and today has published multiple books, including his autobiography, *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round: A coming of age story and a personal account of the Civil Rights Movement in Hattiesburg, Mississippi*. Anthony's mother, Daisy Wade Harris, opened up their family home to Freedom Summer volunteers during this 1964 movement.

"The Historic Eureka School is proud to host a preview screening of this documentary which shares such a meaningful story that has shaped our area's heritage," said Latoya Norman, General Manager of Museums. "As Mississippians and African Americans from all over mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Freedom Summer, it is important to highlight the significant happenings which occurred right here in Hattiesburg to advance the civil rights movement."

The film will focus on an essential element of the Civil Rights Movement: the patient and long-term efforts by outside activists and local citizens in Mississippi to organize communities and register black voters – even in the face of intimidation, physical violence and even death.

June will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Freedom Summer. The film will air on PBS stations across the United States on June 24.

The Historic Eureka School is currently under restoration and upon opening in 2015, will house the Freedom Summer Museum. When completed, the Museum will tell the story of the Civil Rights Movement in Hattiesburg, specifically Freedom Summer 1964.

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