

## ■ DELTA HEALTH ALLIANCE



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Jameshya Thompson's focus is on living healthy.

## Local Heroes

### Dietician's focus: healthy Delta lives

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**GREENVILLE** — Mississippi ranks last in the United States on a critical list of unhealthy lifestyles and medical conditions.

The state is at the bottom for sedentary lifestyle, obesity and diabetes. One Delta native is among those working hard to combat that grim reality.

Jameshya Thompson, of Hollandale, is Delta Health Alliance's registered dietician and oversees patients at Greenwood Leflore Medical Center and at Leland Medical Center, where her office is. She treated patients at the Good Samaritan Health Center prior to its closing Oct. 31.

Thompson, who has always maintained a healthy lifestyle, said she was unaware of nutrition-based academic programs until after high school when she began working with the now-defunct Delta Nutritional Intervention Research Initiative in Hollandale.

Thompson decided to major in nutrition and dietetics at Alcorn State, because she said, "I thought the research was fascinating."

In 2012, she received a master's degree in nutrition and food systems from University of Southern Mississippi and now drives down to her alma mater one night a week to complete work for her doctorate in education, with an emphasis on research, evaluation, statistics and assessment.

"My passion is community-based research," she said. "Until we can prove that something works, how can we say its true? It's a whole new skill set and something that I enjoy."

The hardest part about encouraging families to adhere to a healthy lifestyle is getting the entire family to buy in: "The whole family has to take

part. If only one member wants to eat healthier, then many times it doesn't happen. That is why our patient center focuses on the whole family. Everyone needs the information."

Key things a person can immediately apply are "portion control and increased physical activity," Thompson said. "People also need to stop eating processed food. That is why fast food poses so much of a threat. There are ways to eat healthier but not with fast food."

In the Delta, where everything from catfish to tamales is fried, "there is a steep learning curve with cooking," she said. "I have had to give instructions for preparing foods. You have to give people options."

Due to a shortage of preventative health care in the Delta, "I have to do a lot of reteaching," Thompson said. "There is a knowledge gap with misinformation mainly because people only go to the doctor when they are sick."

Thompson said offering food as a reward or withholding it as a punishment can lead to unhealthy eating habits, and "we have to do some rethinking. We have a truly obesogenic culture; people are eating what is convenient and we have to break that cycle."

With a year and a half left in her doctoral studies, Thompson is compiling research focused on the Delta with hope of bolstering healthier lifestyles.

"I have a passion for research, and I can see myself working with local organizations," she said. "There are lots of opportunities, even at the clinical level, to test out new programs."

"It is important to find out what will work the best for us, in our area."

### 4th annual Turkey Trot winners

■ Overall 5K Run Men  
1st: Ed Egger, 20:06  
2nd: Chad Freeman, 21:02  
3rd: Caleb Jordan, 21:54.

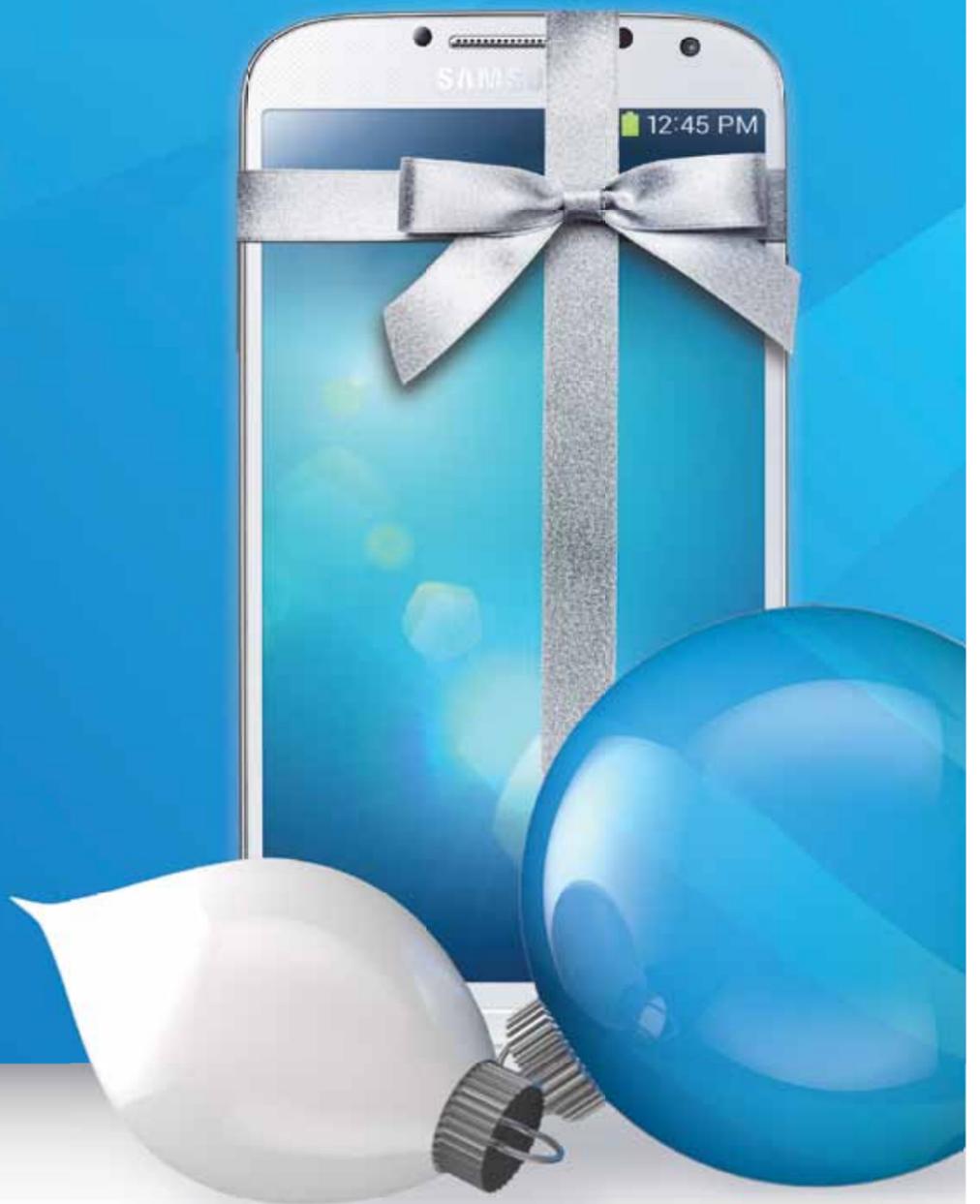
■ Overall 5K Run Women  
1st: Jamie Murrell, 24:24

2nd: Sharon Freeman, 26:04  
3rd: Melanie Chicoine, 26:49.

■ Overall 5K Walk Winners  
1st: Kenneth Stetina, 40:11  
2nd: Shea Omire, 41:23  
3rd: Sally Stetina, 42:47.



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