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Randy Merritt named regional business development manager



Randy Merritt

Randy Merritt has been named regional business development manager for The Christman Company and will be responsible for seeking new business and project opportunities, as well as maintaining and developing relationships for the construction company.

Merritt, who previously held the title of project manager at The Christman Company, has handled projects in health care, K-12 education, industrial, hospitality and entertainment,

retail, religious structures, and public facilities. Recent projects include the Tennessee School for the Deaf high school and dining hall in Knoxville and The Foundry Hotel in Asheville, North Carolina.

His 36 years of industry experience include general contracting and construction management. His operations expertise covers surveying, highway construction, environmental services, fuel storage systems, and precast fabrication and installation.

He holds an associate degree in construction engineering technology from Mississippi State Community College.

"Randy is exceptionally skilled at forming and maintaining client and community relationships," said Marty Gibbs, vice president and general manager for The Christman Company's operations in Knoxville. "His ability to build trust and unite teams, paired with a strong work ethic, make Randy a perfect fit for this position."

A native of Knoxville, Merritt

lives in the Luttrell community with his wife, Angie, daughter, Callie and her husband, Bruce, who is finishing a degree at the University of Tennessee, and dogs, Louie and Jaxx. He gives back to the community by volunteering with the United Way of Greater Knoxville and Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee and participating in church activities. In his spare time, Merritt enjoys playing bluegrass music, spending time in his workshop and caring for the family farm.

Sharing Christmas Memories

By Mike Steely
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The Knoxville Focus asked several people to share a Christmas Memory in one sentence. We asked all types of folks—office holders, community leaders and Focus Fans. We had such an overwhelming response that we cannot share each reply, but here are the ones we can fit.

Virian Skipes: I remember all of us getting up at two in the morning on Christmas Day to have Family Christmas with our dad who had to work a 14-hour day at the post office.

Buzz Bawerk: A couple of days before Christmas, my then-teenage daughter and I gleaned extras from The Angel Tree, added food donated by Ramsey's Cafeteria, and helped a frail oncology patient at Children's Hospital and three generations of his family celebrate the holiday.

Marshall Stair: I remember Tom McAdams, my dad's law partner, giving us some sort of cow gift to remind my dad of his investment in a dairy farm which failed miserably.

Betty Mahas: I remember all four of us sisters sleeping in one bed like a slumber party on Christmas Eve so my grandparents could stay over and be part of Christmas morning with all five of us (I have a brother also).

Pete Gaudas: I remember one Christmas when I was a poor seminary student and my wife and I lived in an old rented mobile home on a farm. There were many cedar trees growing on the property and the landlord said we could use one for a Christmas tree, so I cut the top off of one of them and we had a Charlie Brown Christmas tree.

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Clockwise from top: Knoxville's 2012 Festival of Lights remembered by Kaye Graybeal.

Marshall and Natalie Stair pick a Christmas tree for daughter, Stella.

Knoxville trolleys are spreading the holiday spirit as they travel the downtown streets.

Community leader Virian Skipes gets into the Christmas spirit.



Is the county's pension lawsuit finally over?

By Mike Steely
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Chancellor John Weaver agreed with a settlement between Knox County and three outside attorneys who represented several deputies. The attorneys had asked the county commission to pay their fees for services delivered for seven retiring sheriff's department employees but the commission decided to hire the firm of Annett, Draper and Hagood to negotiate a settlement.

Originally the three attorneys had requested about \$190,000 and, later, \$150,000. The final settlement that was approved by Judge Weaver as presented by Attorney Rob Frost was for about \$97,000 with a mediator getting \$3,150.

Finance Director Chris Caldwell told The Focus that the settlement amount for the attorneys falls below the threshold of \$100,000. Which county department's budget will be used for the payments isn't known yet and that may be up to the county commission, or the money may come from the county's general funds.

Altogether, from the beginning of the suit until the final payment agreement, the pension board and the county have acquired about \$600,000 or more in expenses. Some estimates are higher at about \$1.2 million.

Attorney Herb Moncier got a settlement of \$17,260. Attorney Al Hordfield received the bulk of the settlement, \$78,490, because he represented a number of the employees. Attorney Steven Garrett received \$1,250.

Chancellor Weaver asked Frost if the settlement included the Class Action portion and the reply was that portion of the case has been dismissed. Weaver then asked if there were any other types of claims expected other than the attorney fees and the answer was the county agreed to a complete release of all claims.

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