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City may support an alternative response service

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knoxville City Council meets Tuesday evening and may discuss three different resolutions in support of creating an Alternative Response effort with the idea of having medical and mental health professionals respond to some 911 calls.

One resolution, sponsored by council members

Andrew Roberto, Lauren Rider, Lynne Fugate, Charles Thomas and Tommy Smith, calls on the city to pursue partnerships to address mental health, substance abuse, and behavioral health needs for low-income and uninsured people and asks for matching funds to develop plans for alternative response services.

Councilwoman Amelia Parker has two resolutions

dealing more directly with the creation of an Alternative Response Team. One calls for a plan to pilot for the implementation of the program. She is also calling for additional trauma-informed services and a date for a public hearing on the issue.

The council may also vote on two voluntary annexations, one at 2920 Dresser Road for 5.29 acres and the other at 7624 Sabre

Drive for 0.64 acres.

The council will hear zoning appeals from Taco Bell at 5613 Kingston Pike regarding a planning commission decision; from Daniel J. Moore on a denial at 2900 North Broadway; and from John Holmes regarding the denial of six variances at 2230 Laurel Avenue by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The council will also consider changing the city

codes dealing with fines for underage beer sales and establishing a process for appeals.

Parking lot regulations and landscaping requirements may also be discussed by the council.

The council may talk about applying for \$10 million from the federal government with a \$2 million city match in the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant funds.

The Community Action Committee may get several allocations from the city council including \$105,608 for its rapid rehousing program; the Homeward Bound Program may get \$60,000; and \$1.3 million from COVID funds for transportation needs.

Mayor Indya Kincannon may make several appointments to the Design Review Board and the Airport Authority.

Last but not least!



PHOTO BY JJ SPEARS

Gibbs pitcher Reilly Byers looks back to take the throw from the catcher in a baseball game this past spring. You might want to look back too at *The Focus*' final group of "High School Leaders in 2022-23" in this week's issue. It includes Byers, a record-setting southpaw who will be continuing his education and baseball career at Mississippi State. Please see the other final honorees too in Sports and Recreation, Section C.

Hardin Valley color guard to participate in Farragut parade

By Ken Lay

As summer vacation for Knox County Schools and students and teachers are taking rest, one group remains hard at work.

The Hardin Valley Academy and Hardin Valley Middle School color guard teams will begin preparation today (June 26) for the Fourth of July Parade in Farragut.

"We will have four rehearsals for the parade and they will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday at Hardin Valley Academy from 3-5," said HVA and Hardin Valley Middle School color guard director and instructor C.J. McCrory. "Then, we'll have a dressed rehearsal on July 3, the Monday before the parade."

The color guard will also have a float in the parade. So the students will build the float in addition to its other parade preparations.

"We have 12 (elementary school students) riding on the float at the parade," McCrory said. "I'm the director of the guard at Hardin Valley Academy and at Hardin Valley Middle School, and hopefully, we'll work an elementary program in.

"We'll have 45 doing the parade and they range from Kindergarten to some students who are recent graduates. We'll have Fourth of July flags and we'll have tank tops that we had made."

Color guards compete in competitions and they are common sites at high school football and basketball games throughout East Tennessee but the Farragut Fourth of July Parade is a culmination of a year of hard work and intense preparations.

"We have a class every day for an hour-and-a-half and we practice for six hours a week after school," McCrory said. "That could include a football or basketball game, a rehearsal or a competition."

McCrory noted that she also serves as the color guard director and instructor for the programs in Karns.

The 32nd annual Farragut Independence Day Parade starts at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 4, on Kingston Pike at Stadium Drive, moving west to Boring Road.

Clingmans Dome, Pugh & Company discussed at county work session

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knox County Commission's work session Tuesday saw a diverse agenda, most of which will be seen again at tonight's regular meeting.

Renaming Clingmans Dome

Knox County is the first jurisdiction in the state to be asked to support the renaming of Clingmans Dome to its original Cherokee name "Kuwohi."

Mary Crowe appeared at the commission's work session Tuesday by internet to request support saying that the term means "Mulberry Place" and was the Cherokee name for the Sevier County mountain. Clingmans Dome is the highest peak in the Smoky Mountains and a popular overlook with visitors. The current

name is for a Confederate officer and defender of slavery.

Crowe represented the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, who descended from tribes who hid out on the mountain during the "Trail of Tears" and returned to settle the valley in North Carolina. Crowe said the name change would probably not include the observation tower.

Commissioner John Schoonmaker questioned the need for the name change and said the proposed legislation hasn't passed out of committee yet in Nashville. The resolution was moved on to today's commission meeting without a recommendation.

Summer Place tenant

Also moved to today's agenda is the transfer of a lease agreement with Nexus Group Inc. for office space



Commissioner John Schoonmaker questioned the request to support renaming Clingmans Dome. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee is seeking the county's support in their effort.

in the Summer Place of TVA Towers. The new company, Peace Communications LLC, will assume the lease agreement.

Continue on page 3

Festival on the 4th is Tuesday, July 4th

World's Fair Park 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

The Festival on the 4th delivers a wide variety of family fun including entertainment, activities and treats at the City of Knoxville's 4th of July celebration at the World's Fair Park.

The free festival begins at 5 p.m. and ends at approximately 10 p.m. at the conclusion of the fireworks display. This event is RAIN OR SHINE.

Throughout the day festival goers will be treated to good music, good food, good fun and good times on the Festival and Performance lawns of the World's Fair Park.

The musical finale will be performed, starting at 8 p.m., by the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. They will present the 39th Annual FREE Pilot Flying J Independence Day Concert on the World's Fair Park's Performance Lawn. This is a FREE CONCERT - no ticket required!

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We Were Misled Into A Rush For An Ineffective Vaccine

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr. duncanj@knoxfocus.com

Just like most now realize we rushed into a very unnecessary war in Iraq years ago, it is becoming obvious that we rushed into taking a very ineffective, often harmful Covid vaccine.

The world was scared into this fraud by a media that over-sensationalizes almost everything, a Democratic Party that was desperate to defeat Donald Trump, and pharmaceutical giants that wanted to and did make billions of dollars off a vaccine paid for by the taxpayers.

This nation led the world, seduced by the most lavish lobbying and public relations campaign in the history of mankind. It made at least nine newly-minted

billionaires out of top Big Pharma executives. Millions of children and adults were harmed mentally and/or physically across the world by this vaccine that was rushed to production without the years of research and testing given to or required of other major vaccines.

And while the numbers are all over the board and still uncertain, it is a conservative estimate that worldwide several million suffered adverse reactions to the vaccines and that many thousands were killed.

And all this was caused by a panic created about a virus that was no risk to those under 21 and minimal risk to those under 65.

One country reported that 90% of its Covid deaths were in people 80 or above, which was probably true of every country when reporting deaths caused by Covid and not just deaths with Covid.

At one point our own CDC said 94% of so-called Covid deaths were with co-morbidities such as heart failure, strokes, pneumonia,

diabetes, falls and accidents, or simply old age which were probably the main causes.

Because hospitals were given more money for Covid deaths, they were incentivized into reporting huge and distorted numbers that way.

Regular readers of my column know that my wife of a little over one year, Vickie and I both lost our first spouses to very serious illnesses. Her first husband died after roughly five years with Lou Gehrig's Disease, but because he had Covid, too - although certainly not the main cause - she was reimbursed for part of his funeral expenses.

Now, almost every week some new research or a new study comes out showing that the vaccine was more harmful than was first thought.

Of course, at first the pharmaceutical companies claimed that their vaccines were as high as 95% or 98% effective and they implied that if you got both of the first two shots you would not get Covid.

Later, when more people

who had been vaccinated got Covid than those who had not been vaccinated, the song became that if you were vaccinated, your Covid would be "less severe".

On June 5, a study by top South Korean researchers showed that Myocarditis likely killed hundreds of healthy young adults due to their mRNA Covid vaccines.

On June 6, a Veterans Administration study was reported of 63,281 vaccinated veterans compared to 27,055 who chose to remain unvaccinated. The unvaccinated had 15.86 hospitalized or dead per thousand, while the double-dosed had 24.90 hospitalizations/deaths per thousand, and those who were vaccinated and boosted had 27 hospitalizations/deaths per thousand.

Alex Berenson, the former New York Times science reporter who now devotes full time to fighting the Covid fraud, reported on May 22 that a study of three million women by Swedish researchers showed that women over 45 had a high risk of severe vaginal

bleeding after receiving the MRNA Covid shots. And the risk was even higher after the third shot than after the first two.

Also, on May 16, he reported that a new paper from Northwestern University said Covid had a "relatively low mortality rate" compared to other respiratory illnesses.

In April, it was reported that German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, previously a vaccine supporter, gave an interview in which he denounced "exorbitant" pharmaceutical profits, spoke of "dismaying" numbers of vaccine injuries, and said manufacturers should provide compensation for those who have been harmed.

Liberals seem to believe or at least act as though their God is big government. Thus, they became Covid fanatics sometimes even wearing masks when driving alone in their cars. They became extremely angry at those who refused to wear masks or who were very reluctant to do so. One woman screamed angrily

at the governor of Virginia when he didn't have his on.

This anger occurred even though there was no long-term or even short-term scientific study showing that masks and social distancing were effective at all against Covid.

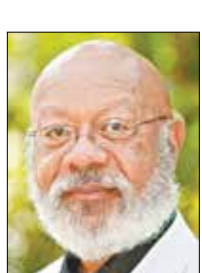
The same people who were quick to shout "my body, my choice" about abortion were very hypocritical when demanding compliance with government-ordered vaccine mandates.

Liberals who have difficulty running their own lives seem to believe they can run everybody else's life. Yet, every day Covid vaccinations face more and more cultural and social repudiation.

Demand for more Covid vaccinations has dropped off drastically as many more realize how far they were misled. Unfortunately, because the Covid vaccines have been so discredited, it may cause people to lose faith in other vaccines which have proven to be effective over time.

Don't Schoolchildren in Colorado Deserve Better?

I was going to entitle this article "Do you want these clowns teaching your children?" but I decided not to insult clowns. The Colorado teachers' union which has 39,000 members passed a resolution condemning capitalism.



By Dr. Harold A. Black blackh@knoxfocus.com haroldblackphd.com

postering and its racism exemplified by the enslavement and genocide of its Muslim population, the Uyghurs. China does not tolerate dissension and those who oppose the regime simply disappear. If Colorado's teachers were in China and issued a resolution against that government, they would now be in prison, or worse. China also is an embarrassment economically. Yes, I know the left heaps praise on it but consider that with a population twice that of the United States, its GDP is half that of ours. China has extreme rural poverty and forced millions to relocate to

work in its factories. Is this the teacher's "new, equitable economic system?" Certainly not. Again, Colorado teachers, where is an example of the system of your dreams? It simply does not exist. Every socialist country is a basket case with the "elites" exploiting the masses. Please Colorado teachers, enlighten me.

I guess that the teachers have forgotten that their own existence is due to capitalism which pays their salaries and funds their delusions. I feel for the residents of Colorado who must send their children to public schools. Those that are poor and those who cannot afford private schools or cannot home school are forced to put their kids in classrooms to be taught

by ignorant teachers who themselves are uneducated.

While capitalism when juxtaposed with socialism always wins, the left conveniently ignores this fact. Compare East Germany with West Germany, North Korea with South Korea, Soviet socialism in Eastern Europe with Eastern Europe now and see what is the more equitable system. Capitalism has lifted countless millions from extreme poverty all over the world. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal by Phil Gramm (my economics tutor at the University of Georgia) and Amity Shlaes presents data showing that despite the myth of the robber barons, capitalism rather than exploiting the poor, enriched them and moved them to the middle class. They write "Between 1870 and 1900, America's inflation-adjusted gross national product expanded by an unprecedented 233%. Though the population nearly doubled, real per capita GNP surged by 90%. Real wages of nonfarm

employees grew by 53%, and life's staples, such as food, clothing and shelter, became more plentiful and much cheaper. Food prices plummeted by 174% and the cost of textiles, fuel and home furnishings fell by 70%, 65% and 70%, respectively. The illiteracy rate fell by 46% and life expectancy rose by 12.5%. Infant mortality declined by 17%." Further, they write "Today's progressive rant that income inequality is an existential threat is unappealing and untrue. If we counted all transfer payments such as food stamps and refundable tax credits as income to their recipients and taxes paid as income lost to taxpayers—something the U.S. Census Bureau doesn't do—we'd find that income inequality is lower today than it was in 1947." It should also be noted that although the left constantly lobbies for a higher minimum wage, the current minimum would put its recipients solidly middle class in most of the world. As Michael Munger writes "If our system is so unfair

and "exploitative," then why are tens of thousands of people every year willing to risk their health, even their lives, to try to get here? It's because even poor people are rich, by comparative standards." The whining about capitalism exploiting people reminds me of the Bill Withers' song that says "If it feels this good getting used, you just keep on using me until you use me up."

I have never quite figured out why capitalism gets such a bad rap. Perhaps it is envy but more likely it is because of freedom. The left hates freedom for anyone but themselves. Milton Friedman once said that the reason so many intellectuals tend to the left is the desire to impose their ideas on others. It is obvious that those of us who love freedom and free markets need to make the moral case for capitalism. But as long as the left controls our education system and with the youth today not being intellectually aggressive, I fear for the future of our country.



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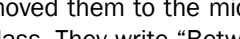
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Publisher's Positions



By Steve Hunley, Publisher
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Mental Health Court Needed

Knox County is set to establish a Mental Health Court, which will hear the cases of those with mental health issues, obviously. Not only is this a very good idea, but it is increasingly needed. Judge Chuck Cerny of the Knox County General Session Courts, and his fellow judges appear to be solidly behind the idea. It fits hand-in-glove with Commissioner Kyle Ward's push for a new mental health facility for Knox County. The facility would give Knox County judges an additional

--- and vital --- option in addressing the burgeoning homeless and addiction problems, which are all too often connected to mental issues. The mental health facility would greatly diminish the need to place those arrested in the penal farm operated by the sheriff.

An effective detox program can take up to a year and judges oftentimes sentence serious misdemeanors or complaints to 11/29. This is a big step in the right direction.

Brooks Versus Fugate

City Councilwoman Lynne Fugate is being pressed hard in her reelection race by Cameron Brooks. Last week Fugate attended the Center City Republican Club and received such a chilly reception she about froze to death. It was the first GOP meeting Fugate has attended since she graced the reorganizational meeting two and a half years ago. Since that time, Fugate has pretty much renounced her Republicanism in a

statement to the Compass, which is just as well since she voted to jack up Knoxville's property tax by a whopping 40%. Not exactly an action calculated to meet with the approval of Republicans or Independents and many cost-conscious Democrats.

One attendee of the meeting quizzed the councilwoman about that particular vote and Fugate was immediately on the defensive. Brooks has openly pledged NOT to vote for increasing any tax during the four years of his term, should he be elected. Fugate claimed that the no-tax increase pledge taken by Cameron Brooks applied only to the sales tax, which is odd as the city government is either very close to or has reached its maximum under state law.

Fugate has heaped self-praise upon herself recalling "Nine Counties, One Vision," which was heavily promoted by the Chamber of Commerce back in the day. Fugate was the executive director of the outfit. The organization was little

more than an idea, which paid Fugate a mighty nice salary. Fugate's eight years on the Knox County Board of Education was simply to ratify whatever Superintendent Jim McIntyre wanted. It was McIntyre who presided over the bloating of the bureaucracy of the school system at the expense of the classroom. Roundly hated by the teachers, McIntyre became the High Priest of Bloated Bureaucracy. With the sole authority to make appointments at schools, McIntyre anointed any number of principals and vice-principals who, like Topsy, continued to grow.

Lynne Fugate has shown the same kind of pattern on the Knoxville City Council, content to follow Mayor Indya Kincannon.

But evidently a deal was struck and Fugate supported a 40% tax increase then Kincannon and her administration moved in behind Fugate's reelection bid. That brought the Goddess of Recode into the fight and Fugate, smiling like an opossum with a cornucopia, was photographed

with former Mayor Madeline Rogero signing her petition to run again. There was a time when Rogero donned a wig, declared herself "Big Jane Rogero" to parody Jim Haslam, father of her then-opponent Bill Haslam, in a piece of negative campaigning. Rogero has carefully locked that event away in her political closet, but to those who know anything about this community, Jim Haslam has done more for Knox County and the City of Knoxville than Rogero ever did.

Several Democrat operatives have moved in behind Lynne Fugate's candidacy in order to prop her up. So, it is strange to see Fugate deign to attend a Republican meeting. The only Republicans who back Fugate are a few privileged country club Republicans, which are becoming as scarce as pro-life Democrats. Finding a Fugate sign in a working-class person's yard would be like finding spring water in the Sahara. In turn, Fugate signs sprout like weeds in toney Sequoyah Hills, where Fugate lives.

Cameron Brooks has been pitching his campaign, much to the irritation of Kincannon and her allies, to working-class people. Brooks ticks off the median income in the City of Knoxville, which is a fraction of what Kincannon and her leadership pull down annually. There are thousands of former city employees who make more in lifetime pensions than the average taxpayer. Brooks reminds audiences these are the working people paying the taxes raised by Kincannon, Fugate and the city council. Fugate talks about "affordable housing" while Brooks asks affordable for whom? A Realtor by profession, Brooks points to the fact Kincannon, Fugate and the city council have made housing less affordable for many because raising taxes increases rents and mortgages. Lynne Fugate has no answer to that, nor does Indya Kincannon.

GUEST COLUMN

Trustee: Mobile Office Program an asset for Knox County

I would like to shine a positive light on the Mobile Office Program at the Knox County Trustees Office.

We currently have nine team members that have Mobile Office Program training for the six vehicles. During my tenure, I am well aware of the necessity for the public to have the Mobile Office Program.

This program utilizes vehicles that are properly equipped to reach any taxpayer in Knox County. This program brings government to the people. We now have the ability to help our senior citizens as well as disabled veterans with various tax relief and



By Justin Biggs Knox Co. Trustee

freeze programs.

We are now capable of citizen outreach past regular business hours. This is to accommodate working schedules as well as the disabled or elderly who are home

bound.

Just this tax season, we have seen a large increase in home visits that have greatly benefited taxpayers. We also help those less fortunate which we classify as hardship cases. A team member will come to your residence, speak with you and determine a bank draft solution to your tax challenges. This allows citizens an opportunity to speak with a professional regarding tax solutions

and the ability to remain in their home. This certainly reduces family burdens, potential homelessness while adding to the tax base to support education, law-enforcement and public health.

Another component which is a larger part of the Mobile Office Program is our Collection's Department. Our team, has collected delinquencies of over \$4.6 million for Knox County and \$2.7 million for the City of Knoxville, since September 1 of 2022.

Team members are currently working on the next tax sale. We project those numbers to easily double.

In pursuit of collecting delinquent taxes, we always take the taxpayers best course of action into consideration. Each parcel placed in the sale

will have a team member speak with you in person. After our first visit, you will have an opportunity to pay out of the sale if your funds allow. If not, we will do another visit, capture an image and build a file for the parcel to be placed in the next sale. Once a picture has been taken and we start the court process for the tax sale, citizens have another visit where we serve process on the parcel to be sold. Prior to the sale, we (by state law) come to the parcel, post proper signage and notice of the parcel that is to be sold with date, location and time. This generates an incident with around a 75% paid out scenario. The other 25% are sold at the sale. Knox County then gets a check from the Clerk and Masters Office

after the parcels are sold. With our 4-wheel drive vehicles, we are now able to reach areas in the past that were unattainable. A large number of statements that come back as returned mail are now being collected. This has totaled \$1.4 million which is part of the \$4.6 million I referenced earlier.

Another important component we provide for citizens is the safety and well-being of knowing you are speaking with a Knox County Trustee Team Member. Mobile Office Program vehicles are equipped and marked with proper badging as well as white flashing lights in case we are hindering traffic in a roadway or other area that may cause a safety issue. This reduces incidents where team

members are harassed or threatened by unknown occupants in the parcels that we are approaching. The safety component alone has greatly benefited Knox County and reduced the risks of possible incidents that have occurred in the past.

We have been notified that our Farragut Town Hall branch will be closed this tax season, due to remodeling. We will utilize our Mobile Office Program in addition to our Cedar Bluff branch to serve the majority of West Knox County.

Thank you for your time and again I appreciate the opportunity to highlight our successes in serving all of Knox County and bringing government to the people.

Sharp's Ridge overlook to close temporarily

The J.B. Owen Overlook on Sharp's Ridge will be closed during the middle of summer, as contractor crews hired by WBIR Channel 10 methodically dismantle the station's nearby 701-foot-tall backup tower.

WBIR's 1,418-foot-tall primary tower will not be affected, nor will viewers see any disruption in programming on the station.

The older tower, which for decades had positioned WBIR's analog antenna, is no longer being used. WBIR, like most TV stations, has switched to transmission of TV signals using digital encoding rather than old analog signals.

Because the J.B. Owen Overlook is adjacent to the

tower, it is being closed today as a safety precaution and will remain closed for parts of June, July and August while WBIR's contractor, FullWave Tower & Broadcast, takes down the tower, starting on Friday. The Sharp's Ridge trails will remain open.

The work also required the removal of 22 trees in a straight line on City property to accommodate a tagline operation for a safe tower dismantling. That part of the work was closely planned with the City, to minimize the number of trees affected - and to not disturb the more mature, larger trees.

In addition, WBIR is contributing more than

\$55,000 into the City's Tree Mitigation Bank - funds that will pay for the purchase, planting and maintenance of 100 2-inch-diameter replacement trees. The new trees will be planted throughout the watershed area, in locations where the trees are most needed.

"WBIR and its contractors really worked with us to change the path of the tagline to avoid affecting the biggest trees," City Urban Forester Kasey Krouse said. "There was also discussion of putting the tagline on WBIR's property, but because it's a slope, that would have resulted in the loss of more trees in a more visible area.

"Everyone's goal was to

have the least possible impact while allowing the contractor to safely dismantle the tower."

WBIR President and General Manager David Hunt

added, "Our small tower on Sharp's Ridge has reached its end of life. As a result, and out of an abundance of caution, we have worked closely with the City of

Knoxville to ensure removal of the tower is done in a safe and environmentally-friendly way with as little disruption to the public as possible."

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Bringing History Back to Life in Tazewell

Attorney T. Scott Jones spoke for El Tequila Bar and Grill last week, defending the establishment before the Knox County Beer Board.



El Tequila beer license hearing set for August

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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The fate of a beer permit for El Tequila Bar and Grill on Maynardville Pike now hangs on a decision in August by the Knox County Beer Board. The establishment has been the site of several incidents and was discussed at length during the board's meeting last week.

The beer board's agenda listed a "discussion and possible vote" regarding the business and several Knox County Commissioners were apparently ready to repeal the beer license there. Attorney T. Scott Jones spoke for the restaurant after Knox County Sheriff's Lieutenant Tom Walker described several incidents reported at the location. Walker spoke of a fight in the parking lot, a customer shooting into the air outside, a fight inside, and a 16-year-old girl being reportedly raped in a car after drinking illegally in the bar. He also brought up complaints of loud music and erratic driving in the parking lot.

Attorney Jones defended the owner, Leopoldo Castandea, and the staff

for removing disturbing customers from the establishment and said everything that could be done to continue operation will be done including hiring off-duty city officers to secure the parking lot.

The bar continues to operate with a liquor license from the state but several commissioners suggested closing it as a "public nuisance." Jones said the board doesn't have that power and lambasted the board. He demanded a full public hearing on the beer permit and called the session Tuesday a "lynching" and said the business was being "vilified," noting the reported rape was never prosecuted.

Deputy Law Director Mike Moyers told the board that it could vote on the revocation and the case could be appealed in court. Commissioner Rhonda Lee moved to set the date for a full public hearing, which will allow for witnesses to speak on both sides.

The Lee motion was amended to include a suspension of the beer license until a decision is made in the August 22 hearing.

A Day Away



By Mike Steely

The little town of Tazewell is one of my favorite places and if you only drive along Highway 25E through Claiborne County, you'll miss the historic town center. Tazewell is just south of Cumberland Gap and has existed since 1804.

Tazewell, not to be confused with its next-door neighbor New Tazewell, has less than 3,000 residents. The town is located on the hill above the highway and has a little historic downtown section, a renovated and interesting gasoline filling station, and a home that is being preserved and protected.

I visited the Graham-Kivett House years ago as a guest of a descendant of the family. The late John Kivett was a scholar of family and local history. He had many relics in his home and shared information with me. He was polite and friendly, helping me in some of my East Tennessee History research and putting me in contact with other local Tazewell people.

Kivett took me around the area, showing me the Confederate Cemetery, pointing out other historic buildings and sites, and taking me up above the town to a Union Army breastwork fort



The Graham-Kivett House in Tazewell has stood abandoned for many years but local efforts are underway to preserve the historic home for future use.

that still exists along with the grave of one of the area pioneers.

The Graham-Kivett House was built by Irish immigrant William Graham, who built other houses in the community including Speedwell Manor. That structure was purchased by a Knoxville doctor who moved it, brick by brick, to Knoxville. Both armies used the home during the Civil War and General Ulysses S. Grant reportedly stayed there.

John Kivett died in 2004. His family bought the home around 1900 and, unfortunately, Kivett had no living family members to continue the legacy. The house sat

without repairs or upkeep.

The Claiborne County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic and Community Development Board in Tazewell have raised funds, including a \$75,000 state grant, to help save the home. The home was purchased for the price of its delinquent taxes due. Restoration of the roof was first and then rebuilding the chimneys is next. Fundraising events are planned.

The final step is to restore the stonework and mortar at an estimated cost of \$140,000. Plans are to relocate the Chamber of Commerce there and preserve local history in the stone home with a museum

and meeting place. It will apparently be known as the Claiborne Heritage Center.

The Graham-Kivett House is located at the corner of Main Street and Kivett Drive. You can search for "Claiborne Heritage Center" online or contact the Chamber of Commerce there at chamberceo@claibornepartnership.com or (423) 626-1611.

While you are in the area you might like to visit the museum at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, the Cumberland Gap National Park, or come back to Knoxville by way of Bean Station and stop at the overlook atop Clinch Mountain.

Clingmans Dome, Pugh & Company discussed at county work session

Cont. from page 1

Pugh & Company

An annual agreement to renew the contract with the county's outside auditor, Pugh & Company PC, was approved during the work session last week. The 2023-2024 contract for an independent audit of the county and school system is for \$347,900. The vote came after a good report by Knox Finance Director Chris Caldwell during the Audit Committee meeting prior to the work session. Caldwell said the county's

budget is about \$11 million ahead of forecast revenue. He said the Hotel-Motel Tax is up \$13 million over expectations, the sales tax is \$1.7 million ahead of the current budget, and the only decrease in projected revenue is from chancery and probate courts.

Fire and Rescue Report

The work session heard a report from the County Technical Assistance Service on the county's Fire and Rescue Evaluation. CTAS's Kevin Lauer gave

an abbreviated report calling on the county to create a fire department and hire a fire chief to oversee the current and future fire and rescue organizations. He suggested the county consider building a fire headquarters and creating contracts with the various providers.

Dwight Van de Vate, Knox County's Chief Operating Officer, agreed with much of Lauer's report and urged the commission to formalize a fire policy but warned against looking beyond the current providers, saying, "If it works, don't fix it."

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The Doctor is in
a weekly column by
Dr. Jim Ferguson

Triads

A man's rights rest in three boxes: the ballot box, the jury box and the cartridge box.

Abolitionist Frederick Douglas

Years ago, I wrote about my affinity for the number three. No, I am not a numerologist, but I see the wisdom in this grouping. Take, for instance, choices. For me, two choices seem inadequate; whereas four or more seem confusing.

Becky and I have been married almost 48 years, and we know each other pretty well. Nonetheless, I once told her that if there is ever a rupture in the space-time continuum and we find ourselves on The Newlywed Game and she is asked, how many might Jim choose, say "three" for me!

I am philosophically and theologically trinitarian. After two millennia of reflection, we moderns comprehend the triune nature of God. However, it took the early church 300

years to grasp the concept that God has three manifestations of one entity. There is God, the Father and Creator, Jesus Christ, God's earthly manifestation and our savior, and there is God's Spirit which resides in each of us.

The logic of a Creative Force responsible for the Universe is far more logical than the suppositions of a spontaneous universe. And I perceive the Spirit's influences on my conscience. Jesus lived among us as a man making the Trinity tangible. Analogous to three-in-one is the notion that I have a physical brain, but I also possess an intangible mind of thought. And I have a physical three-dimensional body, as well as a non-anatomical spiritual essence or soul.

C. S. Lewis described his famous "trilemma." Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. Since there is no support for the first two, like Lewis, I claim Jesus as my Lord.

Groups of three are all around us. There is a three-beat cadence in our state's name, as well as our northern neighbor, Kentucky, although the accented syllables are different. I've used this concept to teach countless young doctors the bedside art of diagnosing heart failure. If you're trained properly with a stethoscope, you can hear heart-beat sounds as Ken-tuck-y which reflect a weakened and failing heart muscle. However, if the cadence is Ten-nes-see, a thickened heart muscle which cannot fill properly is the cause of the failing heart. And the treatments are drastically different.

My point is not to teach clinical medicine. However, I do challenge the notion that you can teach doctors how to be doctors with diversity training or by remote interface. For many years I taught a course at Lincoln Memorial University for physician assistants working to achieve advanced doctoral training. I had students all over the country taking my Zoom course in clinical applications of medicine. These were experienced and motivated "physician extenders" who already had their Masters level PA degrees. But how can you teach someone the art of using a stethoscope or how to examine liver size by Zoom?

I am not a "nattering, nabob of negativity." I have worked with excellent nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Furthermore, an MD after your name does not guarantee bedside manner, rapport with family, competency or compassion. However, the rigors of the medical school selection process, the post-doctoral training and the experience of physicians are often superior to physician extenders. Common and straightforward medical problems are well within the scope of non-physicians. The problem arises when things are not straightforward and additional experience and training is needed. Enough said from an old-school doc.

Years ago, I was roped into a class on ballroom dancing. It wasn't pretty, but I learned about the triple beat of cha-cha-cha and the foxtrot. I also learned about the three-beat waltz by practicing the ♪ Tennessee Waltz. And most importantly, I later managed to passably perform the Father-Daughter dance with my girls at their weddings without stepping on toes, dresses or embarrassing them.

Wisdom is the recognition of knowing how little you actually know. When I was accepted into medical school, I thought highly of myself, until I realized everyone there was pretty

sharp. Then, after graduating I felt assured, until I was an intern and realized how little I knew. The same experience followed me into internal medicine residency and dogged me throughout my career. Perhaps that was a good thing because I never became complacent.

The problem is Joe Biden no longer knows how little he knows. Early in Alzheimer's disease patients realize that they are having problems. But during intermediate stages, patients no longer appreciate their problematic debility.

The frontal lobes of the brain sit above your eyebrows, behind your forehead. This area is where executive functions are centered which include "self-control, working memory, and mental flexibility."

The forehead in a human is prominent because of the large frontal lobes of the human brain. Cats are good at being cats, but they don't perform executive functions. And if you've ever petted a cat, you will notice they do not have prominent foreheads. I am not a neuroanatomist, but even a dog has more forehead and frontal lobe mass than a cat.

The executive functions associated with a prominent forebrain are attacked in Alzheimer's disease. Executive functions allow people to do things like

"follow directions, focus, control emotions/urges and attain goals."

You would have to be as dishonest as Joe Biden to deny the obvious signs of his decline. His recent bizarre behavior with transsexual activists and Eva Longoria at the White House, statements that Hunter Biden is the smartest man he knows, his plans to build a railroad across the Indian Ocean and his blessing, "God save the Queen," are just a few examples of his troubling and progressive debility. As a human being, I have pity for Joe. But as POTUS he is held to a higher standard. And I have come to disrespect him because of his dishonesty and malicious misuse of governmental power.

There are many Biblical examples of three. Perhaps my favorite is the 13th verse of the 13th chapter of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. There he writes of three theological virtues: faith, hope and love.

I have faith in the American people and I hope that We the People will wise up, step up and speak up. The love of country must reestablish the three co-equal branches of our government so recently and overtly corrupted.

You may email Dr. Ferguson at fergusonj@knoxfocus.com

Century Club needs your help identifying individuals who are 100 years or older

Fifty years ago, you rarely heard of someone celebrating a 100th birthday. But today, as many as half of five-year-olds can expect to live to 100 years. The U.S. is currently home to roughly 100,000 centenarians. This number is projected to rise to over 500,000 by 2060. Although the exact number is unknown, East Tennessee is home to a growing number of centenarians.

The Century Club of East Tennessee was established in 2022 to honor individuals who are 100 years and older. Members of the club receive a letter of greetings from the governor and a matted certificate of recognition from the Century Club. They also receive cards during birthdays and holidays. The club is open to residents in the 33-county region of East Tennessee. There is no cost to join



the Century Club.

In its first year, the Century Club recognized 35 centenarians. The Century Club is grateful for the community's support in helping identify individuals across the region. Their goal is to welcome at least 50 new members into the club in 2023.

Dr. Jodi Southerland, project coordinator, said, "People are living longer than ever. Centenarians are the fastest-growing age group in the U.S. It is

a phenomenal achievement to reach this milestone. In honor of National Centenarian's Day in September, we want to celebrate and recognize the distinctive experiences and achievements of East Tennesseans who have lived for 100 or more years."

Living for 100 years is a remarkable accomplishment, and the Century Club needs your help to pay tribute to these individuals. If you know someone who is 100 or older, tell them about the Century Club of East Tennessee or, better yet, help them register.

Those who want to recognize a centenarian can visit www.centuryclubnetn.com and complete a Centenarian Recognition Request Form or contact Dr. Southerland at (423)401-5000.

Is Your Yard Being Invaded?

Virtual program Thursday, July 6, presented by UT Arboretum Society

There's a quiet invasion going on in our yards. Kudzu, privet, English ivy, Amur honeysuckle, Autumn olive, mimosa and several others were invited landscaping plants into our yards, but these exotics are slowly taking over. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile. Join education coordinator Michelle Campanis and naturalist and author Stephen Lyn Bales via Zoom on July 6 at 7 p.m. EDT for the July First Thursday Nature Supper Club presentation hosted by the UT Arboretum Society. Take

a look at the benefits of choosing native plants, what the difference is between non-native and invasive plants and why your choices matter.

You can watch this Zoom class from the comfort of your home. Closed captions are available. The recording will be sent to everyone who registers.

The program is free, but registration is required to receive your Zoom link and the recording. Register at www.utarboretumsociety.org Please contact Michelle at mcampani@utk.edu for any questions or registration issues.

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The Chief

The first time I laid eyes on Dwight Smith, he was coaching his Karns High baseball team against Doyle High's team. Dwight had just blown a valve over a call made by the umpire, and his loud voice informed



By Joe Rector
joerector@comcast.net

the entire community that the ump couldn't find his behind with both hands and never made a correct call in his life. I asked the Doyle coach, Bobby Campbell, who in the world that maniac was. He replied, "Oh, that's just the Chief." Little did I know that in a few short years, I would be teaching with the Chief. We became close friends, and I grew to love the guy.

Over the years, Dwight was one of the most successful baseball coaches in the area. His friend and nemesis, Bud Bales, always seemed to have the right answers to beat Karns teams. He kept up with his record and could tell anyone how many victories he'd accumulated.

Players have bunches of stories about the Chief, and each one is hilarious. One related how Dwight loved to talk. He could discuss

any part of the game of baseball, and over the years, he actually did. His explanations lasted forever. He'd have his players sit against a wall and begin. Boys began nodding off; they squirmed and zoned out. Dwight wasn't aware of anything because he was in a zone.

My son was one of hundreds of boys who attended Dwight's summer baseball camp. Dallas is 38 now, but he still remembers verbatim the instructions that Dwight gave for throwing a curve ball. He loved that coach and wanted to play for him in high school.

The coach never had any problem saying exactly what was on his mind. My wife tells me that I have no filter; Chief didn't have one or anything to hold one. I watched at lunch one day at school as he made a statement to a football coach. The man disagreed with him, and before I could blink, the two were ready to fight. No, Dwight never backed down. At the same time, he had a great sense of humor, and his laugh was contagious. He teased

and taunted others, and he never minded others doing the same to him.

A couple of years ago, the Chief was inducted into the Tennessee high school hall of fame. Players who were near my age showed up, as well as younger men to watch a man whom they admired be rewarded for so many years of devotion to the game.

A Facebook post recently informed us that Dwight's illness had worsened. He spent time in the hospital, and his son Shane had moved him to a nursing home. We were told that the time was short to see Dwight, who now lives in Illinois. Because that kind of trip is impossible for most of us, we've replied to the post with prayers and well wishes.

The man whom I thought was a maniac the first time I saw him has been a good, close friend. His time with us is limited, and I want all to know what a good, decent man and coach Dwight Smith is. There will never be another Chief, nor should there be. My friend, know that you are loved and appreciated by your players and friends. You will forever be remembered as one of the best parts of the game of baseball.

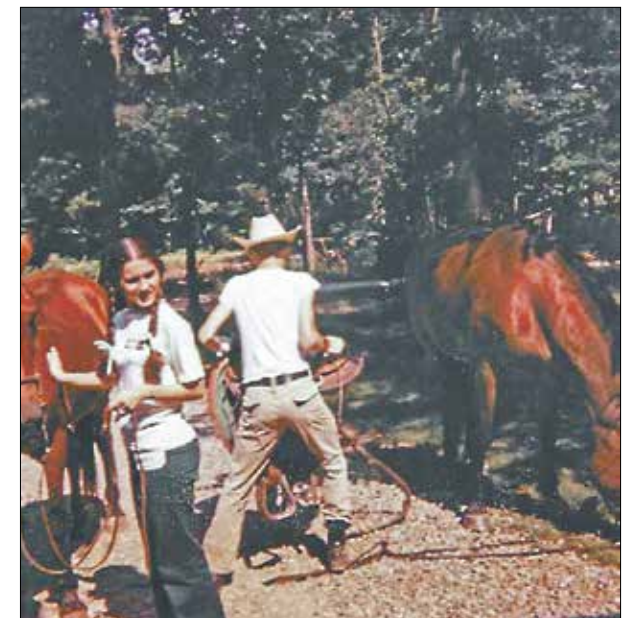
Summertime Fun!



By Ralphine Major
ralphine3@yahoo.com

It's official---summer is finally here! June 21 arrived with the first day of summer and the longest day of the year. Some summer activities are already happening.

The Tennessee Volunteers baseball team made it to the College World Series in Omaha! Vacation Bible Schools are well underway to add a bit of fun and social skills along with spiritual growth for youngsters. It is important amid our daily lives filled with work, family responsibilities, and church commitments to take a brief break from routine schedules. Vacations are important to clear the mind, rest the body, and recharge the soul. Some may choose a vacation to the beach or even a cruise. With inflationary prices, others may



Picture of Wayne and me after a day of summertime horseback riding, by Juanita Major.

vacation closer to home. Our area has many fun and educational places to visit, such as zoos, museums, and nature centers. Campgrounds may also provide a getaway from routine days. There are only a few days left in the month of June 2023. As the daughter of a dairy farmer, I am reminded of times when dairies often handed out free ice cream to celebrate June as National Dairy Month. However you choose to spend the summer, be safe and enjoy those

warm and beautiful days for they will soon come to an end. The photo shown here surfaced recently and reminded me of a time when my brother and I spent many summer days horseback riding.

Words of Faith: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9 (KJV).

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Milton A. Romjue of Missouri

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

The best-selling author Pearl Buck once wrote, "If you want to understand today you have to search yesterday." History is comprised of the high and the low and everything in between. The "great" historical figures every child (at least in my day) grew up learning about - - - George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Booker T. Washington - - - are merely one part of history. No less interesting are the folks who aren't familiar to the average person.

One thing that is notable about the U.S. House of Representatives is the fact is it precisely what the founders of the Republic intended: the People's House. While it may make some blush, all too often congressmen and congresswomen are the reflection of the communities from which they come. One constituency in Massachusetts convinced a former president of the United States to stand for election to Congress. John Quincy Adams remains the only former president to be elected to the House (Tennessee's Andrew Johnson tried and failed, although he was elected to the U. S. Senate following his time in the White House) after having served as our country's chief executive. Yet Adams consented to serve in the House of Representatives with the understanding he would never deign to actually campaign for office. That district kept Adams in office, although he had opponents run against him, until he died. Some congressmen rise to become enormously powerful and productive; others either become or always were scalawags and rogues, while others still are thieves and blackguards. Whatever a congressman or congresswoman is, he or she is truly one of the people.

There are always stories to be told, whether we have heard of the person or people involved or not. The name of Milton Andrew Romjue is almost surely unheard of by most readers, yet for twenty-four years he represented a district in Missouri in the House of Representatives. The descendant of a Frenchman who was a friend of the celebrated General Lafayette, who was a friend to the American people and a hero of the American Revolution, John Henry Romjue was an early Missouri pioneer. The future congressman was known as "Andy" to friends and family and demonstrated a determination to better himself early on, putting himself through the University of Missouri's law school. As one of nine children, quite likely Romjue learned how to do for himself early on. Throughout his long political career, Andy Romjue was well served by possessing a good sense of humor and was known

as an excellent storyteller. Associates of Andy Romjue thought the future congressman had a remarkable gift of reading people. Like any really good politician, Romjue liked people. Of course, not every prospective officeholder does and usually voters can readily discern the difference.

Andy Romjue graduated first in his class in 1904; two years later the young attorney was the Probate Court Judge of Macon County, a post he held until 1914. In 1916, Congressman James Tilghman Lloyd decided to retire, and Andy Romjue ran to succeed him. Facing four opponents inside the Democratic primary, each of whom had a local base, Romjue eked out a win with only 28% of the votes cast. Missouri's First Congressional District was ordinarily Democratic, and he won the general election with a solid majority.

Almost immediately Andy Romjue was faced as a freshman congressman with the prospect of voting to declare war and send American boys overseas to fight. Romjue's time in Congress included both World Wars. Not everybody was happy with the freshman congressman's service, and he faced Sidney Foy in the Democratic primary in his 1918 reelection campaign. Foy had run two years earlier and while he ran a respectable race, he lost decisively. Romjue faced a strong GOP candidate in Frank Millspaugh but managed to win reelection comfortably. Two years later, Millspaugh ran again and turned the tables on Congressman Romjue as 1920 was the year of a Republican tidal wave.

Romjue ran for his old seat once again in 1922 and proved his personal popularity by winning the Democratic primary against two opponents with more than a majority of the ballots cast. Romjue pounded Millspaugh and the Republican Congress and won the general election easily to return to the House of Representatives.

Romjue's tenure in Congress was seriously threatened in the 1932 election due to the failure of the state legislature to redistrict. That failure necessitated every aspirant for Congress having to wage a statewide campaign to be elected. Missouri had two potent political machines in its two largest cities, St. Louis and Kansas City. The Kansas City machine backed Tom Pendergast, while another rival political boss, Joseph Shannon, had himself elected to Congress and was one of the candidates running for an at-large seat.

There were thirteen seats to be elected and Andy Romjue was opposed by both big city machines, especially by that of Tom Pendergast in Kansas City. Romjue narrowly made it



NEA NEWS PHOTO FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION.

Congressman Milton A. "Andy" Romjue of Missouri in 1923.

through the Democratic primary, running eleventh out of the thirteen victors. Yet Congressman Romjue was no political reformer; Andy Romjue knew something about patronage and favors himself and gleefully rewarded his friends and supporters. Romjue also had a well-deserved reputation for not forgetting his political opponents and enemies. Once Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932 and Congress boasted big Democratic majorities, that became an important point, as Republicans were displaced from well-paying federal posts and replaced with deserving Democrats.

Like most politically successful congressmen, Andy Romjue depended upon a close network of friends and advisors in each of the counties he represented in Congress. Never too busy to keep an eye on developments back home, Congressman Romjue knew what was happening inside his own district. During the 1928 and 1932 elections, Romjue was the director of the State Democratic Headquarters for Missouri, which gave him some extra claim on jobs and positions with the Roosevelt Administration. Yet Andy Romjue did not get along with everyone. Clarence Cannon had first come to Congress from Missouri in the 1922 election. Only 5-foot-7, Cannon was a scrappy and somewhat cantankerous man who was an expert on parliamentary procedure and renowned for using his fists when affronted. In 1933, Andy Romjue and Clarence Cannon got into physical fights twice in two days.

Evidently, the second spat was the result of lingering hard feelings from the first altercation, which was still on the minds of at least one of the combatants. Reportedly, the fight occurred when Romjue and Cannon ran into one another on the first floor of the Old House Office Building.

The origin of the dispute between the two Missouri congressmen remains a bit hazy, but reputedly it was a disagreement over a

campaign check. Cannon's official office was on the fourth floor of the House Office Building, but he also had a small office on the first floor as the chairman of a subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. As Clarence Cannon was leaving the rooms of the Appropriations Committee to go to his office on the fourth floor, Congressman and Mrs. Romjue emerged from the elevator. Cannon asked about a \$45 check from Romjue for the Democratic campaign fund. Congressman Romjue said he would peruse his canceled checks and if he did not find he had paid his share of the fund, he would send along another check. According to a witness who remained anonymous, Cannon told his colleague, "You made an unprovoked assault on me yesterday" and punched Romjue in the face in front of the congressman's wife.

The bad blood between Andy Romjue and Clarence Cannon had been simmering for some time. The very first altercation began in the rear of the House chamber behind the railing where the 6-foot Romjue was supposed to have told Cannon he was a "double-crosser," a liar and then uttered something "for which no red blooded man will stand" and slapped the diminutive congressman across the face. While the accounts of the disagreement between the two Missouri lawmakers varied, sometimes significantly, the common thread in all of them was Romjue had been the aggressor. One thing that had seemingly rubbed Romjue wrong was Cannon's support for their fellow Missouri congressman Clyde Williams to serve on the House Democratic Steering Committee, a spot Romjue

likely coveted for himself.

Romjue had noted Cannon had received very good committee assignments from the House leadership and had promptly voted against President Roosevelt's economy bill. Whatever the case, the Missouri Congressional delegation quickly circled the wagons and told inquiring reporters they had been collectively "sworn to secrecy." Congressman John Cochran of St. Louis was approached by a reporter and before the journalist could say anything, snapped, ". . . if you are going to ask me about the fist fight between two Missouri members I don't know anything about it."

When newspaper reporters began sniffing around the purported pugilists, Congressman Romjue was supposedly confined at home due to "influenza." There were those unkind enough to say the Missourian had been confined to home with a split lip and black eye. The fight had been broken up by Congressman Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota, who said he had shoved one of the riled congressmen into the elevator and sent it in an upward direction. All Lundeen would say as to the person's identity is it was a "former House clerk." Clarence Cannon had worked as a Clerk of the House under Speaker of the House Champ Clark, who was also from Missouri.

Discord between Andy Romjue and Clarence Cannon was nothing new. Although he had served two terms prior to his defeat in 1920, Romjue had come back to the House in the 1922 election when Clarence Cannon had won his first term. Clearly, there were hard feelings between the two men, and they certainly didn't much like one

another. Romjue may have felt some jealousy toward the hardworking Cannon, who was well-positioned in the House.

In 1939, Andy Romjue became the chairman of the House Post Office Committee. While hardly a glamorous assignment, nor was it a much sought-after committee like that of Foreign Affairs whose membership were wined and dined throughout Embassy Row, it was a mighty practical assignment. Considering the rural nature of Romjue's congressional district, it brought the congressman considerable patronage. Considering the country had entered into a serious recession in 1937, good-paying jobs were still scarce as hen's teeth. Congressman Romjue was especially active in the appointment of postmasters and postal workers throughout his district. Those appointees largely remained loyal to Romjue and several of them would let the congressman know what kind of campaign materials were being sent out by his political opponents. Others provided Romjue with the names and addresses of voters who were undecided so that the congressman could get in touch with them.

Well before there were pensions for ex-servicemen, Congressman Romjue was very active in sponsoring the special bills required to provide for the widows and orphans of those who had been killed, as well as providing for those who were disabled. Romjue always paid close attention to correspondence from those needing his help, like veterans. Likewise, Romjue heartily supported pensions for the aged and relief for farmers, many of whom were destitute or barely scraping by.

Following redistricting in 1940, M. A. Romjue faced a closer-than-ordinary contest in the general election. 1942 brought a strong Republican challenger from businessman Samuel W. "Wat" Arnold, an old schoolmate of Romjue's. The Second World War was going badly all over the globe for the Allies in 1942 and the people were restless. Republicans made significant gains in both houses of Congress. The Show Me State was no exception, and several longtime Democratic incumbents lost their seats in Congress. One of those was Andy Romjue, who had not waged as active a campaign as he might have otherwise, as he was worried about his wife who had been injured in an automobile accident earlier.

Andy Romjue retired to his farm where he lived for another twenty-six years, dying at the ripe old age of ninety-three. © RAY HILL 2023

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HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS IN 2022-23

Student-Athletes of the Year from eight local high schools are recognized in The Knoxville Focus this week – the fourth and final week of the annual series.

This week's schools are Gibbs, Grace Christian, Halls, Hardin Valley, Powell, The King's Academy and Webb.

We're pleased to report that all 25 high schools in the Focus' coverage area sent us their male and female honorees again this year.

Athletic directors started the process of submitting their school's honorees. Teachers, coaches and administrators contributed to the selections and sent in information and pictures of the honorees.

We hope you will join us this last week in learning about the honorees' accomplishments and applauding each one!



PHOTO BY LUTHER SIMMONS

Brianna Baker of Grace Christian crosses a hurdle in a 300-meter race at the KIL meet on May 9. She nipped Bearden's Lydia Lively at the finish line. Baker's time was 45.63 seconds and Lively's was 45.65.

Baker, four-time state champ, stayed on track

By Steve Williams

In life, people often have to overcome hurdles. In the sports world, track and field hurdlers can run into difficulty, too.

Brianna Baker, Grace Christian Academy's female Student-Athlete of the Year, experienced adversity at times in her high school career, but managed to stay on track and finish her senior season as the state's most accomplished hurdler.

Looking back, Baker said she was proud of her progress as a 300 and 100-meter hurdler "despite coaching challenges."

The sprint coach at GCA got Brianna started in the hurdles her sophomore season. "He ended up moving to Florida within the past couple of years, so I lost him," recalled Baker.

"I've had to go to lots of different people to finally get my hurdle techniques to improve. I ended up running a different kind of technique with my club coach (Shane Begnaud at the 26 Training Academy)."

Baker became Grace Christian's first female state champion in 2021



Brianna Baker



Reilly Mehegan, Grace Christian's male Student-Athlete of the Year, sprints in for a kick in a soccer match at GCA. Riley ran cross country in the fall and outdoor track in the spring throughout high school, but also competed four years in soccer.

and she was team captain for two years.

At the Division II-A state meet in Murfreesboro in late May, Baker finished her prep career strong. She won her third straight title in the 300 hurdles (44.50) and claimed her first championship in the 100 hurdles (14.66) after being the runner-up the past two years. Both of her winning times are school records.

Brianna took on a new event – the discus throw – her junior season and placed sixth at the state and set a school record.

This season Baker went

all out, adding the long jump to her list for the first time plus taking on the pentathlon, which includes five events. She placed second in a field of 17 athletes and totaled a school record 3,143 points.

Brianna also had a school record leap of 17 feet, 2¼ inches as she tied for first place in the long jump event at the pentathlon. Later at the state meet,

she took third place in the long jump.

"What I'm most proud of is setting PRs (personal records) throughout my high school career, simply because I didn't have that much competition in the regular season," said Baker.

She leaves GCA with her name on seven school records in outdoor track

Continue on page 2



PHOTO BY JJ SPEARS

The power of Gibbs' Jordann Reagan can certainly be seen in this swing.

Gibbs' Reagan and Byers were 'diamond dandies'

By Steve Williams

Jordann Reagan and Reilly Byers were not diamonds in the rough. They sparkled brightly on the softball and baseball diamonds at Gibbs High and are the school's Student-Athletes of the Year for 2022-23.

Reagan, a power-hitting catcher, last week was named to the Tennessee Sports Writers Association's Class 3A All-State team. She also was

a standout in volleyball and bowling.

"Jordann is a hard worker and strives to be her best in everything that she does," said Coach Carol Mitchell. "She is a phenomenal catcher and a powerful hitter. She is a leader on and off the field."

Reagan, who also was an All-District 3-3A honoree, signed a softball scholarship with Lincoln

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HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS IN 2022-23

Madelyn and Charlie made No. 4 look good

Both Webb honorees wore that number

By Steve Williams

Besides being Webb School's Student-Athlete of the Year, there was something else Madelyn Ladd and Charlie Robinson

had in common.

Both wore No. 4.

Madelyn made the Tennessee Sports Writers Association's Division II-AA All-State girls basketball team three times in her prep career and was a veteran player for Coach Shelley Collier.

As a senior, the 5-10 guard averaged 14.5 points, six rebounds, three assists, two steals and

two deflections per game in the regular season.

Ladd, also a member of the 1,000-point club in the Webb program, signed with Carson-Newman University in January and will be playing for one of the top teams in the South Atlantic Conference.

C-N Coach Mike Mincey's comments on Ladd: "She is a physical guard that can do a lot

of things well scoring at all three levels and plays with a high motor. We are excited to have another player in that 5-10 range that can play inside and out. Most recently, she won a three-point shooting contest in the inaugural 5-Star Preps Christmas tourney."

Madelyn also earned the Careacter Star award in basketball season.

Robinson, a 6-1, 170-pound quarterback, helped lead Webb to an undefeated regular 2022 season (9-0) in Coach David Meske's last year before retirement. The Spartans wrapped up the Division II Class AA East Region championship with a 29-28 win over Chattanooga Christian.

After a bye week, Webb would win its quarterfinal playoff game before falling to eventual state champion Lipscomb Academy in the semifinals.

Charlie earned a spot on the TSWA All-State team and also was a finalist for the Tennessee Titans' Mr. Football award in Division II-AA. After hearing the announcement of the latter, Robinson tweeted: "All Glory goes to God!"

Charlie signed with



ABOVE: Webb quarterback Charlie Robinson runs past a Carter defender in the opening game of the 2022 season. Robinson and the Spartans went on to have a 9-0 record in the regular season. Photo by Danny Dunlap.

LEFT: Webb's Madelyn Ladd looks for an open teammate in a home game against Knoxville Catholic during the 2022-23 season. Ladd, a Carson-Newman signee, was named Webb's female Student-Athlete of the Year. Photo by Luther Simmons.



the Navy Midshipmen in February and will continue his education and football career at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

Incidentally, Robinson

has musical talent too and put it on display by playing the National Anthem on his trumpet prior to the Spartans' Sept. 9 game last season.

Tucker to continue hoops at Asbury U.

By Steve Williams

Juleigh Anne Tucker had some big scoring nights on the basketball court in her high school career at The King's Academy.

The 5-8 senior guard poured in 28 points, including six 3-pointers, in a win over Providence Christian this past season as TKA earned its first trip to the TSSAA Division II-A Final Four since 2020 when she was a freshman.

Tucker, who was named the female Student-Athlete of the Year at The King's Academy for 2022-23, also had a record-setting night in her junior season when she fired in 10 shots from 3-point range and totaled a career-high 39 points in a win over Concord Christian.

Perhaps Juleigh Anne will go on to have some big performances on the college level. Having signed with Asbury University in January, she's going to get that opportunity.

Asbury is a private Christian university in Wilmore, Kentucky. The Eagles are members of the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) and NCAA Division 3.

Tucker was named to the



Zeke Connatser

Tennessee Sports Writers Association's Division II-A All-State team this year and also made the All-Sevier County first team. Those are certainly strong credentials.

"Juleigh Anne Tucker exemplifies what we desire of a TKA graduate both on the court of competition and within our classrooms," said Jeremy Sandefur, President and Head of School. "She embodies a competitive spirit and seeks to excel at everything she sets her attention to."

Connatser is TKA's male S-A of Year

Zeke Connatser, a three-sport athlete in football, basketball and baseball, is The King Academy's male Student-Athlete of the Year.

The 6-1 senior earned TSWA All-State honors in



Juleigh Anne Tucker fights for the basketball during a game this past season. Tucker, an Asbury signee, led the Lady Lions on and off the court during her years at The Kings Academy.

football as a defensive back. He also was a wide receiver for the Lions.

Zeke intercepted nine passes as a junior.

He was a guard on the basketball team and an outfielder in baseball. He also received the Careacter Star award in basketball.

"Zeke Connatser is an

incredible student-athlete who deserves recognition for his effort, team leadership, and Christ-like character that he clearly displayed for each varsity team that he was a member of," said Sandefur. "Our campus and athletic teams will miss his leadership and impact in the years ahead."

Baker, four-time state champ, stayed on track

Cont. from page 1

and field. Brianna also excelled in the classroom and was the GCA co-Salutatorian. She had a weighted 4.44 GPA and was a NHS member and AP Scholar.

Baker signed with East Tennessee State University in February and will be going on a "free ride" as she received academic and athletic scholarships. She plans to major in Nursing.

Mehegan selected GCA male honoree

Reilly Mehegan, Grace Christian's male Student-Athlete of the Year, was a standout distance runner in cross country and track throughout his high school career.

In his senior year, he earned the team MVP award in cross country for the fourth year in a row, after being All-Region and running in the state meet four years.

In track this spring, Mehegan received the seventh place medal in the 3200-meter run at



Reilly Mehegan

the TSSAA Division II-A state meet at MTSU.

During his career in track, he posted top times of 4:41 in the mile run and 10:08 in the 2-mile run, which rank third all-time at GCA.

Mehegan also played soccer four years for the Rams and received the Playmaker of the Year award as a junior.

"Reilly has demonstrated exceptional athletic ability, dedication and leadership throughout his high school career," said Grace Christian Athletic Director Marcus Dilligard.

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Gibbs' Reagan and Byers were 'diamond dandies'

Cont. from page 1

Memorial University.

Gibbs volleyball coach Holly Walker said Jordann was a talented athlete that could play any position on the court.

"She was an excellent leader, hard worker, and was named the District 3 Class AA Most Valuable Player. She was always first in line for drills and first in finishing workouts and

sprints. She was voted as a captain by her teammates and was a great motivator for the team. She took control on the court and you could always count on her to get the job done."

Rick Honeycutt said Reagan "picked up" the sport of bowling as fast as anyone he has coached.

"She was a large part of the successful season our team had. She was an All-District 3 bowler and a

pleasure to coach."

Byers was a record-setting southpaw who broke the school record for strikeouts and wins in his four years at Gibbs.

He was a member of the Eagles' 2021 Class 3A state championship team and a TSWA All-State selection that season and in 2022. He is expected to receive that award this year, too.

Byers also stood out in

the classroom, earning a 3.85 grade point average and making the 2nd Honor Roll.

"Reilly's mom passed away his freshmen year and he has worked continuously to pursue his dream of pitching at a D1 school," said Coach Davis.

Byers will be going to Mississippi State on a baseball scholarship.

Which way, Tennessee?

If results are all that matter, you could say Johnny Butler ran 56 yards on Shields-Watkins Field in 1939 for a Tennessee touchdown that helped defeat



By Tom Mattingly

Alabama, 21-0. That covers the basics: Who, what, when and where. If color and pageantry and a few details are more appealing, you might put it this way: Tennessee third-team tailback Johnny Butler, Casper the ghost in an orange shirt, befuddled Alabama defenders for 56 yards and a touchdown on Shields-Watkins Field, the third Saturday in October 1939, record crowd of 40,000.

What Johnny did was later defined as the greatest run in Volunteer history. And it wasn't 56 yards. It was more like a quarter of a mile.

"Dancing, dodging, untacklable" said great sportswriter Grantland Rice in the New York Herald Tribune.

Butler came off tackle in the general direction of the south goal. Teammates knocked down several opponents. Johnny evaded a few. He zigged and zagged, changed directions, and ran east and west for a while, sideline to sideline.

Rice said Butler feinted,



Vol fullback Andy Kozar knew which way to go on his two fourth-quarter touchdown runs in the 1951 Cotton Bowl.

stopped, swiveled and spun away from Crimson Tide tackle Fred Davis.

Tide safety Hershel Mosley watched Butler's run coming his way, unfolding before him.

"It was like poetry. It looked like it had been choreographed."

There is something to be said about the importance of directions in football. Some think words paint a clearer picture if you can read which way a player or team was going or why it chose to defend which goal.

Hank Lauricella was going north in the Cotton Bowl on his famous 75-yard run against Texas in 1951.

Plays like this one are often the cause for jubilant celebrations in team dressing rooms.

The Vols scored the 1956 winning TD against Georgia Tech on a Tommy Bronson dive into the north end zone of Grant Field in Atlanta. That game was later declared No. 2 in the history of college football.

The Vols—most notably Tennesseans Bill Majors (Sewanee), Wayne Grubb (Athens), and Charles Severance (Knoxville)—stopped LSU's Billy Cannon short of the northeast corner early in the fourth quarter of the 1959 game, won by Tennessee. It's called "the Stop" for

a reason. The Tigers had three other chances to win that game, but could not do it.

Kenny Stabler threw the ball away on fourth down, not third as he had thought, at the southeast corner of Legion Field in front of the Tide student section in the final seconds of the 1965 Tennessee-Alabama game. Legend has it that Bear Bryant had an officer shoot the lock off the dressing room when the team returned to the dressing room after the game and the Tide couldn't get in.

Gary Wright's missed field goal was at the south end in the 1966 Alabama game.

Bubba Wyche led the first drive of the 1968 game against Alabama to the south end of Shields-Watkins Field, after doing likewise a year earlier at Legion Field.

Conrad Graham returned a fumbled pitch against Penn State in 1971 to the north end, with more-heralded Franco Harris in hot pursuit. Conrad had a head start. He won the race.

Alabama was driving northward before Mike Terry made the interception that cinched the 1982 game. That broke an 11-game Vol losing streak to the Crimson Tide.

Johnnie Jones went 66 yards to the north end of

Legion Field in 1983 to help defeat Alabama, 41-34. Vol track legend Ed Murphey had helped recruit Jones out of Mumford on the premise he would someday score the winning TD against the Tide.

Alabama was driving to the north end of Legion Field in 1985 when Dale Jones made his point-blank interception off Mike Shula.

In the 1991 Notre Dame game, Tennessee had to block a field goal attempt at the south end of Notre Dame Stadium to cinch the come-from-behind triumph.

Peyton Manning's TD pass to start the 1995 Alabama game went from south to north to Joey Kent.

Tee Martin's TD pass to Peerless Price in 1999 in Tempe also went south to north. Peerless handed the ball to the nearest official just the way he was supposed to do after completing the dramatic pitch and catch.

James Wilhoit's field goal to defeat Florida in 2004 was kicked at the north end, moments after he had missed an extra point.

Tennessee's game-winning score and final defensive stand at Kentucky in 2007 were at the west end of Commonwealth Stadium. Other fields run east and west, but coaches still talk about running backs getting "north and south" up or down the field.

Now, I ask you, do the Vols play better at one end of field than the other? That's the question for today.

Meet The Focus 2023 All-County Baseball Team

By Ken Lay

The 2023 high school baseball season was a banner campaign for Knox County teams as four teams made it to the state championships at the Spring Fling in Murfreesboro and two came home with state titles.

In Class 4A, the Farragut Admirals won their second title in that classification as they took down league and geographic rival Hardin Valley Academy in the state championship contest.

In Division II-AA, Catholic High School won its first-ever state title in baseball. The Irish had to qualify for the regional playoffs by winning their last regular-season series over rival Webb School of Knoxville.

In Division II-A: Christian Academy of Knoxville had a short stay at the Midstate after losing its first two games on the state's grand stage.

The Knoxville Focus honors some of the area's top players on its All-County Team.

Co-Coach of the Year: Caleb Moore, Catholic High

The Irish's veteran coach guided the team to its second consecutive trip to Middle Tennessee and its first ever state

title. The Irish was the final Division II-AA team from East Tennessee to qualify for the playoffs as they finished third in the regular-season standings. Catholic, however, came home with the state championship plaque.

Co-Coach of the Year: Matt Buckner, Farragut High

Buckner added to his already impressive resume with another state championship as the Admirals won their second consecutive Class 4A crown.

Player of the Year: Lukas Buckner, Farragut High

A junior infielder and Mississippi State commitment was the District 4-4A Player of the Year for the second consecutive time. He hit .458 and was a Tennessee Mr. Baseball Class 4A finalist. He finished with 43 RBIs, 13 doubles and eight stolen bases.

All-County Team Members

Landis Davila, Farragut High School: A junior outfielder and Virginia Tech commitment, Davila was an all-district standout as he batted .394 and

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Tennessee Baseball's Run in Omaha Ends

By Mark Nagi

Tennessee's baseball season came to an end last week at the College World Series following a 5-0 loss to LSU. It was a difficult way to finish a campaign that began with sky high expectations but saw the Vols struggle to find their way for much of the season.

Still, they battled back, won the Regionals and Super Regionals, and got to the College World Series for only the sixth time in program history. While in Omaha the Vols won a game for the first time since 2001, a 6-4 victory over Stanford.

"I think it was a competitive group," said Tennessee head coach Tony Vitello. "They can hang their hat on that. We talk about perspective. There's a variety of traditions within each program. It takes a lot in our league to be able to brag about tradition. But for us, in particular, we wanted to get to a Regional and we wanted to have a roster that was really athletic that you guys would be excited to write about... and we wanted to get here (in 2021), and we didn't win any games. Then we wanted to get here (in 2023) and win a game. And this group did it... pretty special group that would be remembered by everybody in this room for a lot of stuff. Love them or hate them. I love them."

The season only ends with a victory for one team in the postseason, which makes the ending for every other squad a painful one.

But the Vols can take a lot from their run in 2023.

"I think the thing I'll remember the most is probably the tough times we had and just the hills we had to climb," said Tennessee pitcher Drew Beam. "I mean, this season starts not just in February, it starts back in August when we get on campus in the fall. It's a grind. You go through so much with your teammates and coaches. And you figure things out and things don't work so you figure out something else. I think just those trials and tribulations that were thrown at us that we had to fight through as the season went on, that's just

the things you remember because you just push through it with your brothers, the guys beside you, the coaches beside you. That's just the memorable part. The winning is great but making the bond and making it a family with the guys beside you is what you come out on top with."

This was Tennessee's second trip to the College World Series in the last three seasons. Vitello believes that his program grows each time with that advance to Omaha, with the learning process continuing. 2024 will be Vitello's 7th season with the Vols.

"You've got to get used to the itinerary, the media

attention, the stage, and things will be passed down by guys," said Vitello. "We had some tough dudes on that 2021 team... But you've got to learn how to deal with rankings and expectations and then people start looking forward to playing you as opposed to maybe sleeping on you a little bit. There's a variety of circumstances. And we want our stadium to get bigger. We want our crowds to keep getting bigger and rowdier. We want our roster to be as competitive as anybody's. Of course, that will come and go a little bit. But to be able to handle things with shooting for a national championship every year."

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HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS IN 2022-23

The post-season was a fun time this past spring for the Hardin Valley tennis team, especially Ryan Leckrone, who was swept off his feet by teammates after winning the District 4-AA singles title.



HVA's Leckrone enjoys record-setting tennis season

By Steve Williams

They called it The Quadruple. Ryan Leckrone, Hardin Valley Academy's male Student-Athlete of the Year, won the District 4-AA and Region 2-AA tennis singles championships this past season, which led the Hawks to district and region team titles and a school record 19 match winning streak.

According to Coach Seth Rayman, Leckrone became the first Hardin Valley player to ever pull off the "The Quadruple," a four win title spree.

Counting singles and doubles play, Leckrone, Class of 2026, won 31 matches this year.

Ryan also had an academic highlight in early June when he went on a school field trip to Taiwan as part of his Chinese Language class at HVA.



Wrestler Ella Murphey is HVA's female Student-Athlete of the Year.

Murphey extends wrestling streak

Ella Murphey is still unbeaten on the mat.

The junior wrestler, HVA's female Student-Athlete of the Year, posted an 18-0 record and won her third TSSAA state championship this past season.

As a freshman, Ella said her goal was to do what former Hardin Valley wrestler Kenya Sloan had accomplished several years ago and that was win four state titles in a row and go undefeated throughout her high school career.

Murphey went 15-0 as a freshman and 15-0 as a sophomore.

Sloan finished at HVA with an 87-0 career record.

Conger and Wright are TSD honorees

By Steve Williams

Gage Conger and Janaya Wright are Tennessee School for the Deaf's Student-Athletes of the Year for 2022-23.

TSD Athletic Director Bryan Bowen said both seniors "demonstrated exceptional leadership in sports and in academics."

Conger was a standout in football and basketball, while Wright made her mark in volleyball and basketball.

Conger received honorable mention on the National Deaf Interscholastic Athletic Association's All-American Division II football team. Gage also made the 2023 Mason Dixon All-Tournament team that was recognized at Florida School for the Deaf.

Wright was named to the 2023 Mason Dixon All-Tournament team at North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton, NC.

HALLS HONOREES: Molly Stover and Harlen Hunley were named the Student-Athletes of the Year at Halls, according to Athletic Director Rebecca Smith.

Stover was captain of Halls' girls



Tennessee School for the Deaf's Gage Conger and Janaya Wright are their Student-Athletes of the Year for 2022-23.



soccer team and also was on the Lady Red Devils' track team.

Hunley was an individual state champion in wrestling.

POWELL HONOREES: The male and female Student-Athletes of the Year at PHS, according to Athletic Director Adam Seymore, were Bryce Jardret (basketball and tennis) and Adisyn Smith (basketball).



Congratulations to Powell High Student-Athletes of the Year, Bryce Jardret and Adisyn Smith.

Thanks and Congratulations!

This issue wraps up The Knoxville Focus' annual recognition of the Student-Athletes of the Year from the 25 high schools in our coverage area.

Thanks to the athletic directors for getting the ball rolling and providing us the names of the school's honorees. It all starts there. Thanks too to coaches and others who sent us information and pictures of our "High School Leaders in 2022-23."

One of the things we really like about this feature is recognizing the athletic and academic achievements of these student-athletes.

Congratulations to all 50 of you!

Lucas Nordin named Tennessee Gatorade Player of the Year

By Ken Lay

Bearden High School senior soccer player Lucas Nordin has been named the 2022-23 Boys High School Player of the Year.

Nordin, a forward, recently wrapped up his stellar high school career as he helped lead the Bulldogs (18-1-3) to the Class 3A State Tournament where they made an early exit, losing to Brentwood 1-0 in the state quarterfinals. The loss to the Bruins was the lone blemish on Bearden's record this season.

The Bulldogs claimed the District 4-3A regular-season title and tournament championship. They also won the Region 2-3A crown by

defeating league rival Hardin Valley Academy, which also reached the state tournament in Murfreesboro.

Nordin was one of the area's top scorers and play-makers as he finished the 2023 campaign with 27 goals and eight assists.

He will continue his soccer career at East Tennessee State.

During his career at Bearden, Nordin earned all-state honors three times and was the two-time Region 2-3A Player of the Year.

By virtue of his selection as Tennessee Gatorade Player of the Year, Nordin has earned a nomination for National Player of the Year.

Meet The Focus 2023 All-County Baseball Team

Cont. from page 3

collected 50 hits, including nine doubles.

Michael Delph, Farragut High School: Delph, a two-way player for the Admirals, posted a stellar season on the mound as he went 8-0 with a 1.17 ERA. The all-region performer allowed 35 hits and posted 75 strikeouts in 53.2 innings pitched.

Ty Denton, Hardin Valley Academy: Denton, a junior for the Hawks, was the District 4-4A Offensive Player of the Year as he batted .355 and came up with 21 extra-base hits, including 10 doubles, eight home runs and three triples for HVA, which won both the District 4-4A regular-season title and tournament championship.

Carson Hoffmeister, Hardin Valley Academy: A junior outfielder, Hoffmeister, batted .380 and finished with 46 hits, including 14 doubles, seven home runs and three triples. He was also an all-district selection.

Daniel Parris, Catholic High School: Parris, a Tennessee signee, was one of the county's most versatile players as he pitched as

well as playing in both the infield and the outfield for the Irish. He hit a robust .375 and clubbed 13 home runs and had 10 doubles. He was also a Mr. Baseball finalist.

Brennan Seigler, Farragut High School: Seigler hit .400 for the Admirals and had 10 extra-base hits for the Admirals.

Reilly Byers, Gibbs High School: Byers, a left-handed pitcher and Eagles' ace, helped his team win the district and regional tournament and had a no-hitter deep into his start in the state sectional series against Greeneville.

Brooks Wright, Bearden High School: Another versatile player, Wright was his league's defensive player of the year. He also batted .415 with six home runs and 10 doubles. He drove in 26 runs for Bearden, which finished second in the district standings.

Ian Hubbard, Catholic High School: A pitcher and outfielder for the Irish, Hubbard was clutch both on the mound and at the plate as he was a big-time performer, helping Catholic claim a state championship.

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