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RAM set for free 3-day clinic in Knoxville

Free dental, vision and medical services set for Jan. 12-14, 2024

Remote Area Medical – RAM® – a major nonprofit provider of pop-up clinics delivering free, quality dental, vision and medical care to those in need – will hold a free, three-day clinic on Jan. 12-14, 2024. RAM will be set up

at the Jacob Building located at 3301 E. Magnolia Ave., Knoxville, TN 37914 for three days only.

All RAM services are free, and no ID is required. Free dental, vision and medical services will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. The patient parking lot will open no later than 11:59 p.m. (midnight) on Thursday night, Jan. 11 and remain open for the duration of the clinic. Once in the parking lot, additional information

regarding clinic-opening processes and next steps will be provided. Clinic doors open at 6 a.m.

Due to time constraints, patients should be prepared to choose between DENTAL and VISION services. Medical services are offered, in addition to dental or vision services, free to every patient attending the clinic. For more information, to donate or to volunteer, please visit www.ramusa.org or call

865-579-1530. Patients may also visit the Facebook Event for this clinic at <https://www.fb.me/e/1vBStqOIA>

Services available at the free RAM clinic include dental cleanings, dental fillings, dental extractions, dental X-rays, eye exams, eye health exams, eyeglass prescriptions, eyeglasses made on-site, women's health exams and general medical exams.

In some situations outside of

RAM's control, such as inclement weather, volunteer cancellations or other circumstances, the parking lot may open earlier or a smaller number of patients may be served. RAM encourages everyone who would like services, especially dental services, to arrive as early as possible. Clinic closing time may vary based on each service area's daily capacity.



PHOTO BY JAMIE SCHNELL

Terry Merianos, owner of Martha Lee's Jewelry, is celebrating the store's recent move to South Knoxville by offering a 20% off all in-stock jewelry promotion. Martha Lee's is located at 3508-C Maryville Pike.

Martha Lee's Jewelry comes home to South Knoxville

By Jamie Schnell
schnellj@knoxfocus.com

Martha Lee's Jewelry has found a new home in South Knoxville, where it all began for its owner. The business is owned by Terry Merianos, who took it over from her mother in 1980.

Terry's mother, Martha Beeler, started selling

Tennessee pearls on the north side of Knoxville in 1977, and as a child, Terry loved playing with her mother's jewelry. Terry grew up in South Knoxville and even got her first job at a deli in the same area where the new location has opened.

"Country roads brought me home and returned me

to my roots. I am thrilled to be back in this part of town, embracing my community, seeing old classmates, and learning about their lives."

Martha Lee's Jewelry is a family-owned, full-service neighborhood jeweler that offers a wide range of jewelry, including natural and vintage costume jewelry,

fine jewelry, gold, pearls, and diamonds (including lab-grown diamonds), sterling silver, Native American jewelry and custom design. The business has a team of experienced professionals including the jeweler Ray, who has 45 years of experience, and Terry's niece, **Continue on page 2**

Toni Scott running for 5th District Commission seat

As the wife, daughter-in-law and mother of University of Tennessee athletes, Toni Scott believes in the Volunteer spirit. When she retired from teaching to pursue motherhood, she threw herself into her community, volunteering in our schools, her church and civic organizations to give back to the community that raised her.

Now she's ready to take it to another level and run for Knox County Commission, District 5 in the upcoming Republican primary.

Toni says she has noticed a troublesome trend our community in recent years.

"We are losing the battle for our children's future. They're not growing up in the West Knox County I knew," she told The Focus.

"Traffic is outrageous,



Toni Scott

life is more expensive now than ever, and our schools are facing challenges unimaginable a generation ago."

Toni promises to fight to change that through protecting District 5 from overbuilding, opposing a property tax increase, working with our school system to empower family involvement in the classroom, and ensuring your child's safety when you drop them off for school.

Commission clears Young-Williams for animal control

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The final reading of a resolution granting animal control duties in Knox County to the Young-Williams Animal Center passed in a unanimous vote in the regular meeting of the Knox County Commission. That approval came after Commissioner Carson Dailey had questioned in a work session the previous week whether or not the center would pick up dead animals.

Dailey said the question has been resolved. Young-Williams will assume all animal control functions in the city and county beginning in April.

The fairly brief commission meeting also voted to change the rules in a request from the KCSO Employees' Merit System Board of Directors to permit a grievance any time an employee loses pay while being suspended.

The commission also **Continue on page 3**

Old Giffin School project among many new housing efforts in city and county

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The old Giffin Elementary School may become a housing development thanks to the first reading earlier this month by the Knoxville City Council. The 1834 Beech Street facility, empty for many years, may be renovated to hold 77 dwelling units within two new low-rise apartment buildings. It will also include a new commons structure near the street.

First District Councilman Tommy Smith said the project will bring "affordable housing to South Haven with workforce housing." Eligible future residents



The historic Giffin School may be approved for housing buildings. The South Knoxville project is only part of the city's effort to increase housing options for residents.

would have an income below the 60% mean threshold. Smith applauded the cooperation between the developer and the neighborhoods.

"The developer of this historic property listened earnestly to the residents of the neighborhood and

created a memorandum of understanding focused on tree preservation, vehicle congestion, and environmental protection for Baker Creek," Smith told The Focus.

"It is rare that you see a neighborhood and developer find common ground to

both preserve community and increase much-needed affordable housing," Smith added.

The renovation and additions to Giffin School is but one of the many property changes underway in the city to permit more housing, including an effort to permit accessory dwellings in the rear of existing residential homes.

Rezoning for 707 Delap Drive from RN-1 to RN-2 and 114 Sylvania Drive from RN-1 to RN-5, were approved as well as tax incentives for the renovation of four lots on East Magnolia Avenue for housing.

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Democrats And Republicans Used To Get Along Better

From a distance



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

always seemed to really please the person who had spoken to him.

I am pleased that during my 30 years in Congress, Republicans and Democrats could still get along with each other.

I tried to be kind to all the Democrats both because it made my time in office more pleasant and also because the Democrats controlled the House for 16 of my 30 years there.

That meant that if I wanted to get something done for my district or for one of my constituents, I needed to try to get along with everyone.

Now, I can drive all around my old district and see probably at least 300 or more major projects that my staff and I were able to get into various bills. And the Democrats treated me about as well as the Republicans did.

During my first year in Congress, the late Knoxville lawyer, John Hogin, who loved golf, wanted to play at the famous Burning Tree Country Club where President Eisenhower often played, just outside of Washington.

I was able to get him on the course because my friend, John Corcoran, who grew up in Knoxville and went to UT, was a member there. John was the top Norfolk Southern executive in Washington.

It was a cold October day, and the only others we saw on the course that day were Tip O'Neill, the famous former speaker of the house, and another former congressman, Fred Rooney from Pennsylvania, whom I had never met.

When Mr. Rooney found out who I was, he said, "Your Dad was the only man I ever knew who never

had an enemy in Washington." I thought it was one of the finest compliments of the many I have heard about my father.

Daddy and I both tried just as hard to help Democrats as Republicans, and I believe the people knew that. We never asked anybody's politics if they asked for our help.

Two other former leaders who always seemed to be kind to everyone in Washington were former Sen. Howard Baker and former Attorney General Ed Meese.

Sen. Baker was a great member of the Senate for 18 years, and I believe he would have been a very good president. But what impressed me even more than his time in the Senate were his two years as President Reagan's chief of staff.

The chief of staff is often

the one who has to say 'no' for the president. There is a mean way to say no, and a kind way to say it. Sen. Baker's predecessor as chief left as a very unpopular man. Sen. Baker became even more popular after his two years at the White House.

In my first 10 or 15 years in the House, I used to do a 5-minute radio program each week and a 30-minute TV show once a month. I once had Ed Meese as my special guest on both shows and then took him to lunch at the Capitol Hill Club.

Mr. Meese treated everyone who wanted to speak to him that day, and there were many, with great kindness and respect. President Trump later gave Gen. Meese the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our highest civilian award.

I had the privilege to

serve with almost 1,500 other members of the House because there is so much turnover in elective office today.

Most of them - Democrat or Republican - were some of the finest men and women I have ever known. Unless you are a political junkie, you could probably not name 50 of them.

It is easier for a Senator to get publicity than it is for most members of the House. A typical hard-working congressman doesn't get much publicity unless he becomes speaker of the house, chairman of a controversial committee, or gets involved in a scandal.

In fact, if a member of the House is frequently on national television, you can be sure that the member is a publicity hound who is working harder to get on TV than he or she is working for their constituents.

Merry Christmas

This Christmas, like all the ones before, I am grateful to have been blessed with great parents who had struggled to get an education and who made it easy for me and my brother to go to school.



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

had a high school degree and was the one-room school marm for black kids in Jones County, GA. Mother received the first four-year degree from Fort Valley State University (GA) and is considered the mother of that university. Both of my parents had master's degrees and both my brother and I have Ph.Ds.

My parents spent much of their lives trying to help educate black children in the Atlanta public schools. I am bitter about very few things. However, I am bitterly disappointed in the black intelligentsia and their opposition to improving the education of poor children. When I was growing up in Atlanta during the Civil Rights movement,

blacks made up over 50 percent of the school-age population but only had 6 of the 20 or so high schools in Atlanta. So our schools were big. We had horrible facilities, used textbooks with white school's names on them and had no scientific equipment in our labs. However, we had terrific teachers. Back in those days, teaching was a well-paying job for a black college graduate and we had tons of male teachers too. I got a great public school education. Now our public school teachers use teaching methods that do not work and make excuses for their failure. I thought that once blacks got the vote, we would elect city officials and school boards who cared about educating our children. I thought that the reason why black kids got shafted was because white officials who got elected by

running on a racist platform were actively discriminating against blacks. Well, it was true. So we got the vote, the whites fled the city, we voted the bums out and put in place black mayors, city councils and school boards. And what happened? Educational achievement went down. Why? First better jobs opened up for black college graduates. Teacher's standards eroded as well as accountability. My beloved mother who taught second grade for 40 years complained about the deteriorating quality of the teachers - saying that they were unprofessional in their dress and behavior. Second, the teacher's unions became a political force and were more interested in "social justices" than in academic achievement and third, the black politicians began to be manipulated and bribed.

What was ironic is that the only politicians who seemed to care were the Republicans who pushed for vouchers and charter schools - both of which demonstrated higher achievements among black urban kids than the public schools. Of course, both have been derided and panned by liberal democrats and their black sycophants. Well, vouchers work. Charter schools work. What we need is a market solution to the problem of low achievements in education. The market would not tolerate a system that is so bankrupt, so corrupt and so poor that damages and destroys our children. Most urban parents are not equipped to home-school their kids so that is not an option. However, many charter schools and private Catholic schools show a startling

juxtaposition of the same kids from the same environment having radically different academic results. It is a national shame that we have allowed our education system to become so woeful. In a market system, poorly performing schools would have been put out of business and their teachers and administrators fired. Instead, they have been rewarded with ever-increasing salaries, benefits, pensions and tenure. So when I once wrote, "Why do democrats hate black kids?" I meant every word. I also include among that number the black leaders of the teacher's unions and every so-called black leader and civil rights organization that remain silent rather than making this the number one issue in black America.



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Martha Lee's Jewelry comes home to South Knoxville

Cont. from page 1

Anastasia Merianos.

Terry's passion for vintage jewelry is evident in the collection she has curated at Martha Lee's Jewelry. Terry shares, "Every piece has a story behind it and can be passed down through the generations to be enjoyed for years to come."


Occasionally, she receives letters that accompany the jewelry. One such letter that she showed The Focus was dated 1893.

The previous location of Martha Lee's Jewelry had generational customers for 45 years, with kids and grandkids growing up with the business. Terry hopes to continue this legacy in the new location, where she believes she's "meant to be."

Terry told The Focus, "There was a higher power in me getting here, and I am thrilled to be back. We want to grow with the community and develop relationships like I did on the north side of town. I love what I do and I love interacting with people."

Terry believes that small businesses are the backbone of community relationships and encourages people to support them. "I'm hoping we can keep it rural while bringing more retail to the area, as supporting community businesses is essential for building healthy neighborhoods." Martha Lee's Jewelry is committed to growing with the community and providing excellent customer service.

If you're looking for a unique piece of jewelry or want to create a custom design, you can find Martha Lee's Jewelry at 3508-C Maryville Pike in Knoxville or visit their booth at Retrospect Vintage on Central St. You can also follow them on Facebook or call directly at (865)688-0114. The grand opening will last through the end of December, with a promotion of 20% off all in-stock jewelry.



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Publisher Steve Hunley
Editor, Art Director Marianne Dedmon
editor@knoxfocus.com, design@knoxfocus.com

Managing Editor Lisa DeMarsico
managingeditor@knoxfocus.com
Mike Steely, Senior Writer steelym@knoxfocus.com
Jamie Schnell schnellj@knoxfocus.com
Sales sales@knoxfocus.com
Pam Poe phpoe2000@yahoo.com
Ruthie Akers Ruthie@knoxfocus.com
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Publisher's Positions



By Steve Hunley, Publisher
publisher@knoxfocus.com

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Joe Biden routinely has threatened to go after "tax cheats" and has called on the better-off to pay their fair share. Evidently, that doesn't apply to First Son Hunter. Just about every member of the Biden family has had tax problems including brothers Jim and Frank and now daughter Ashley Biden. Special Counsel David Weiss in his indictment charged Hunter Biden of having "engaged in a four-year scheme to not pay at least \$1.4 million in self-assessed federal taxes he owed for tax years 2016 through 2019. . ." Weiss also charges Hunter Biden "to evade the assessment of taxes for tax year 2018 when he filed false tax returns in or about February 2020," which was while the "Big Guy" was running for president. Weiss

stated Hunter Biden allegedly "spent millions of dollars on an extravagant lifestyle rather than paying his tax bills." Of course Hunter did apparently spend freely on prostitutes and illegal drugs.

Teachers' Unions Oppose Any Competition

Randi Weingarten, the Broomhilda of the largest teacher's union in the country, has caused a viral sensation by squealing that school choice "undermines democracy." One of the queens of DEI, which supposedly stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion, but a more realistic definition is that coined by Robin Vos: "division, exclusion, and indoctrination." School choice allows parents to send their children to schools that may be located outside their particular neighborhood or simply not go the school for which they are zoned. Teachers' unions oppose school choice and vouchers, claiming they take away taxpayer dollars, which could be better used to raise teacher salaries, build more schools and fund the bureaucracy in the educational industrial complex.

Like virtually every other member of the Left, Randi Weingarten must not know what democracy actually means or is; it was

Weingarten who fought to keep schools closed as long as she possibly could. The Left has worn out the word "democracy" recently, just as they have calling those who disagree with them "Nazis." The latter has calmed down a bit while much of the Left indulges itself in antisemitism which would have won the personal approval of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. None of the college or university presidents gathered before the House of Representatives' committee could even condemn overtly antisemitic acts on their campuses or anywhere else.

University Prejudice

Harvard University just got caught with its pants down - - - again. According to Ground News, Harvard has removed web pages involving diversity and inclusion, which pertain to graduation celebrations for various identity groups. Harvard has sat down on a buzzsaw of criticism because the university apparently has failed to recognize Jewish students as an identity group, as well as one not worth protecting. All of the "affinity" celebrations included everyone but White people and Jewish folks. Among the affinity groups included were LGBTQ grads, Arab grads, "Indigenous" grads, graduates with disabilities,

Latin X grads, Black grads, and of course Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and Desi-American grads. The once proud university, Christopher Rufo noted, was providing racially segregated celebrations at its commencement earlier this year. Harvard described the celebrations as a recognition and celebration of the achievements of "graduates from marginalized and underrepresented communities." Now the webpage is gone, gone, gone.

Internal Combustion Engines Under Assault

Another threat to our global well-being has just been stamped out by the action of the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council, which has just voted unanimously to ban gas-powered leaf blowers. The ban will follow a four-year phase out but is not intended to cause anyone any economic hardship, but well, if it does, too bad. They are saving the planet and democracy. Just ask them.

Get A Room

A 24-year-old staffer for Democratic U. S. Senator Ben Cardin seems to be hinting that "homophobia" is to blame for the outcry about his leaked sex tape.

That tape was apparently filmed in a Senate committee hearing room. Senator Cardin fired the staffer, who has stated he is experiencing "a difficult time" because he had "been attacked for who I love for a political agenda." NO. Not at all. Some things are just wrong for anyone to do, straight or gay, and having sex in a governmental hearing room is one of them. The staffer wrote on his social media that he "would never disrespect my workplace." That's exactly what he did and it's astonishing he doesn't realize it.

Dr. Clarence Sexton A True Blessing

Knox County has lost a giant of an individual. Dr. Clarence Sexton, pastor of the Temple Baptist Church in Powell, passed away on December 12, 2023. Dr. Sexton had a definite impact on our community and when he accepted the call to helm the Temple Baptist Church, he made it quite clear that he intended to build a school as well. That was the beginning of Crown College. Dr. Sexton helped to launch Bible clubs in schools across the county and eventually his life and ministry helped to create more than 500 churches to be started on every continent across the globe. Dr. Sexton was a man of

rare vision and remarkable ability. Clarence Sexton was a force for good and one to be reckoned with. Dr. Sexton was a family man in every sense of the word, still in love with his sweetheart, Mary Evelyn, and the father of two sons, Shannon and Matt. Evelyn and Clarence Sexton have 6 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Yet Clarence Sexton's sense of family was much broader than his wife and children and grandchildren. Dr. Sexton's life touched countless others throughout his time on this Earth. Clarence Sexton knew what it was to have another life touch his own and for the great majority of his life, he gave all of himself to his Lord and Savior and his community. A leader in every sense of the word, Clarence Sexton was not too proud to follow the lead of the Lord.

The Knoxville Focus family sends our deepest sympathies to Mary Evelyn Sexton and the Sexton family, as well as the folks at Temple Baptist Church. The Focus joins in saluting and honoring the life of an amazing man who not only made his life count for the Lord, but also for his fellow man. Clarence Sexton's was a life well lived.

Guest Column

Parents Want to Protect Children Online

Tennessee Device Filter Bill Is the Wrong Solution



By Brian Hornback
Republican State Executive Committeeman, District 6

Whether it's keeping in touch with loved ones on the phone or using a tablet for help with schoolwork, our children are surrounded by technology in their daily lives. As a parent, I realize that it comes with a host of challenges. Today, it's difficult to keep up with the ever-changing technology

our children use - and it's becoming even more difficult to know how to protect them from online dangers.

There are millions of parents just like me (back in the day) learning in real-time how to raise our children in an online world. Around the country, lawmakers are trying to make our job a little easier by giving us more tools and resources to help us protect our kids when they're online. Unfortunately, some well-intentioned elected officials here in Tennessee are taking the wrong approach to remedy the problem.

Earlier this year, a bill was introduced in the general assembly that would have required phones to be installed with "content filters" designed to

protect children from viewing explicit or dangerous material online. Of course, every parent wants to protect their child from harmful content, but as in many other areas of our daily lives, a government mandate isn't the right solution to the problem.

Ultimately, it should be up to parents - not the government - to make decisions based on children's individual needs. There are already effective and readily available tools like parental controls that allow parents to take a tailored approach to their child's online experiences. A one-size-fits-all approach would instead let unelected officials make those choices and undercut the active role that parents like me want to have in our kids'

lives.

Even if we did want the government to mandate content filters on new devices, it's not clear how legislation like this would be put into practice, or if it's even legal. The technology described in the bill doesn't exist, and if it did, even legal scholars who support the measure say that device filters would quickly be struck down for violating the First Amendment. That means we could spend time and taxpayer dollars in court fighting to protect an impractical technology when we should be pursuing realistic and more effective options to protect our children online.

As our own lawmakers were focused on pushing faulty device filter legislation earlier this year, other

states have helped set the standard for how to protect our children online.

Last year, legislators in Florida passed a bill that created programs to educate children about online harms, like dangerous content and cyberbullying. In Utah, Governor Spencer Cox launched a public awareness campaign with the same goal in mind. These measures show parents how to use existing tools to protect their children from harmful content and encourage them to play an active role in teaching their child about safe internet practices.

In other states, like Louisiana and Virginia, legislators are holding websites that provide or promote explicit and harmful content accountable by forcing

those sites to verify users' ages. These solutions show there is a part for the government to play in protecting our children from dangerous content online without minimizing the role that parents want to have in raising their children.

Some legislators here in Tennessee might be inclined to renew the push for device filter legislation in January when the general assembly is in session again. They need to know that while elected officials and parents can work together to protect our children from dangerous material online, broad government mandates are the wrong solution to the problem. Let's make sure we get this right.

Commission clears Young-Williams

Cont. from page 1
approved a tax break for a multi-use development named Prosperity Crossing near Watt Road. The Industrial Development Board sought the "TIF" agreement.

Also approved was declaring the county a "Broadband Ready Community" and various appointments were made to boards and committees.

The commission also honored Kelle Shultz for 30 years as head of Habitat for Humanity and the Bella's Blessings program at the East Tennessee Children's Hospital for supplying needed items to children admitted unexpectedly.

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A look back at 2023, part 1

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The year 2023 saw many changes locally, the passing of some very special people, a city election that retained the city mayor for a second term along with most of the city council, an increasing number of homeless and the continued need to house newcomers, and the question of who should assume the county-wide ambulance service.



The Knoxville Focus front page for January 30, 2023

January

One year ago next month, the Knox County Commission upped the cost of the lease at Concord Yacht Club and approved the demolition of the historic but abandoned Rule High School. The county commission also voted to permit people to stay in campers onsite where their homes were under construction.

The newly reformed Knox County Sheriff's Office Employee's Merit System Board of Directors met and chose Christopher Manning as chair and John Valliant Jr. as vice chair.

The Knoxville City Council required all dogs to be tethered or watched and sought public comments on its One Year Plan.

The Longmire Brothers retired from owning and managing the Midway IGA Supermarket. The brothers were honored in April by the Knox County Commission for their 25 years of service to their community.

Former Knox County Commissioner Mike Brown celebrated his 82nd Birthday in an interview with The Knoxville Focus.

Fountain City Auction held its annual Advertisement Auction and The Focus began a series featuring Knoxville's neighborhoods.

The Bearden Volleyball Team built picnic tables for Lonsdale and the new Adrian Burnette School opened for students. Vine Golden Bears celebrate their 44-39 championship win over Holston in the TMSAA Class AA Area 3 finals at South-Doyle Middle School. The Bearden Lady Bulldogs upped their winning basketball streak to 42 games.

February

The month began with both mayors and others cutting the opening ribbon of the new Emergency Mobility Trailer, designed to assist first responders on some calls to 911. The Knox County Election Commission geared up for the upcoming city elections.

The merit board met to call for uniformed Law Enforcement Division officers to select a new representative on the board to replace Officer Winston Ragon and also set a date to hear a grievance filed by Wesley Keck. The county commission agreed with the sheriff to drop the minimum age for corrections officers to 18 years old and also approved a state grant to help with prisoner transportation.

Mayor Glenn Jacobs and Criminal Court Clerk Mike Hammond sponsored a resolution calling for the first mental health court in the county.

The Knox County School Board had a

very active public forum with parents calling for buses for middle school athletes and outside therapy for behavior-challenged students.

The Knoxville City Council looked at traffic light upkeep and the Disability Council. Knoxville asked the federal government for \$25 million in grant money for the South Waterfront Pedestrian Bridge

The Knoxville TVA Credit Union opened its Northshore location and the Parrott-Wood Library in Strawberry Plains received 525 new books. The new owners of the Midway IGA, Haven and Neal Galpal, were welcomed by the retiring founders, Joe and Dale Longmire.

Halls High School Red Devils wrestlers captured their first TSSAA State Duals Championship, winning the Class A Title with a slender margin. The Farragut Freshman Basketball Team ended up a perfect season winning the Knox County Tournament.

The Halls High School Lady Devils came back to win the 2023 District 4-3A Tournament Championship in basketball.

March

The merit board dismissed former Corrections Officer Keck's complaint against the sheriff's department in a 4-2 vote.

The Knox County Commission voted no in subpoenaing the sheriff to testify to the group regarding an incident at McAlister's Deli where three deputies felt slighted.

Knoxville City Council agreed to transfer some property agreements at the new Public Safety Center at the former St. Mary's Hospital. The property agreements went to the Community Development Department and Lincoln Memorial University. Council also granted the Knoxville Police Department space for a Real Time Information Center in the new Public Safety Building.

Winners in the Knoxville Neighbor of the Year award were announced with Eric Johnson of the Vestal Community chosen as the Good Neighbor of the Year.

In March 2023, Singer Con Hunley returned to the stage for a post-pandemic concert, the Cerebral Palsy Center got a new roof and the Three Rivers Republican Club elected new officers. Several unclaimed veterans were honored and interred in the East Tennessee Veterans Cemetery. Longtime Community leader Cameron Brooks announced plans to seek a seat on the Knoxville City Council. Sadly Brooks died just before the primary and his name did not appear on the ballot. The Focus featured the various Dogwood Arts Festival trails.

Seymour High School Lady Eagles basketball team captured a regional title win over Halls. The Catholic High School Lady Irish captured their first-ever basketball state championship. Fulton High School's boys basketball team rolled into the state championship finals, winning the March 18 championship against Haywood. The Focus profiled Knox County's best boys and girls high school basketball players.

April

The first class of Knox County Junior Commissioners graduated from its inaugural program and the school board heard



The Knoxville Focus front page for April 3, 2023

public opinions about a possible new charter school.

Knox County's new public safety director, Brent Seymour, joined a meeting of the Fire and Technical Rescue Committee. The meeting also heard a report that recommended a plan for a county-wide fire department.

Lisa Jerrell's grievance to the merit board was dismissed when she declined to release her medical records. Merit board applicants were interviewed at a commission meeting and the commission approved a secure schools initiative.

The city council sought \$3.6 million in federal funds for new electric charging equipment for city buses. The city council voted to approve two large grants to the Callahan Flats Development at 1511 Callahan Drive with funds from the Affordable Rental Development Program for 30 units for lower-income citizens.

Knoxville City Council candidates began picking up petitions for the 2023 election while Jackie Raley kicked off her 2024 campaign for Knox County Property Assessor.

Vietnam Veterans were honored in special ceremonies at the Veterans Memorial in Worlds Fair Park.

About 500 high school students from across East Tennessee gathered at Crown College for the 31st Annual Top Wrench Competition.

West High School's athletic field got a new look and Farragut's Brooke Simpson was selected as the state's Gymnast of the Year. The Gibbs Lady Eagles celebrated softball coach Carol Mitchell's 1,000 game win.

The Central High School's winning 1973 baseball team was honored and the Halls High School Alumni held its annual banquet.



The Knoxville Focus front page for March 27, 2023

May

The county commission learned how the Community Action Committee will repay \$2.4 million in loans and the commission opposed supporting Governor Bill Lee's limited gun control proposal. Knox County prepared to issue \$80 million in bonds and AMR's contract was extended as the county looked for bids for county-wide ambulance service.

Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs announced he was proposing a \$1 billion budget for the city for the next fiscal year. Sheriff Tom Spangler demanded a pay raise for his officers. The Knox County Commission debated permitting more housing or controlled growth. The county audit committee voted to recommend hiring Pugh and Associates again.

Mayor Indya Kincannon proposed an increase of \$6.3 million to the city budget with no tax increase. The city election candidates pulled petitions and began campaigning. Demolition of the long-abandoned Pryor Brown Garage was announced and the city council approved a housing development along Merchant Drive with a possible park above on the ridge. The city council was asked to approve bulletproof vests for the police department.

Legacy Parks broke ground on an Inter-generational Playspace at Beverly Park. The Knox and Union County Sheriff's



The Knoxville Focus front page for May 30, 2023

Offices each received \$2,500 from a Knoxville Dragway fundraiser. The Focus "Catching Up With" featured Debbie Sharp of the Office of Neighborhoods.

Knoxville Community Media, formerly CTV, called on viewers and supporters to contact their national representatives to oppose efforts to defund them. Local High School honors began to appear in the Focus, featuring outstanding seniors. The Focus continued its neighborhood features with an article about South Woodlawn's diversity.

A ribbon was cut for the new Mynatt Chapel Funeral Home in Powell

Seymour High School athletic director Gary Householder announced his retirement in May while Aaron Large became the Gibbs High School basketball coach.

Knoxville Catholic's Lady Irish took its first title in the KIL Track and Field Championship. The Gibbs Lady Eagles captured the Regional 2-3A softball championship.

Hardin Valley Academy captured the District 4-4A baseball championship and Halls High School captured their 4-3A title as Coach Doug Polston celebrated his 700th win.

The Farragut Admirals defeated Hardin Valley to get its second consecutive state title.

June

Mayor Jacobs and Sheriff Spangler reached an agreement on upping KCSO employee salaries. Jered Croom was appointed director of the Police Advisory and Review Committee and the county began looking at requiring housing developers to make improvements to new roads.

The school board approved releasing students from class during the school day to attend a religious class in a local church if the student's parents approved. The largest budget in Knox County history was passed by the commission.

AMR ambulance received a rate hike from the commission.

The commission voted to support the adoption of the Cherokee name "Kuwohi" for Clingmans Dome in the Smokies and re-hire Pugh and Associates as their outside auditor. A hearing for El Tequila Bar and Grill on Maynardville Highway was set for the Knox County Beer Board.

The multi-purpose stadium broke ground and Randy Boyd spoke for Boyd's Sports which is helping finance and will run the facility.

The Knoxville City Council began talking about creating an Alternative Response Task Force to respond to domestic violence calls.

The city began planning its July 4th World's Fair celebration and closed Sharps Ridge briefly as TV antenna work began.

Brinley Murphy of Bearden was named the High School Girls Soccer Player of the Year and Seymour's Female Student-Athlete of the Year, Bailey McCoy, signed with Milligan University.

The Focus featured 2022-2023 outstanding high school student-athlete leaders throughout the month of June for schools in its coverage area.



The Doctor is in

a weekly column by
Dr. Jim Ferguson

Populisms

This will be my last Focus column of 2023. And even though there is little difference week to week, we are all, nonetheless, time-focused creatures. In his trilogy on the origins of Western Civilization, Thomas Cahill imagined a moment when God first appeared to humans and established that present moment in time. And as a result, there was a past before He appeared and the promise He would come again. Western Civilization is based on Judeo-Christian precepts and therefore views time linearly. You might find it odd, but some Far Eastern and Mesoamerican cultures envision time as circular.

Each year-end I think about starting over. In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," the Ghost of Christmas Present lives but one day, and ages before our eyes. Fortunately, our timelines are much longer,

"threescore and ten...and if strong, fourscore" (Psalms 90:10). Consequently, I'll look much the same on New Year's Day as I will on New Year's Eve - and it helps because I've learned it is not wise to overindulge.

I've been thinking about populism and planned to begin the New Year with this important topic. You might consider this subject like a book on elephants - more than you care to know. However, spending a few minutes considering an issue so relevant to our time is a small price to pay for citizenship, especially since The Knoxville Focus and my FergNotes on this topic (CliffNotes) are free.

Populism is defined as a political strategy based on an appeal to the interests of the common man. The word derives from the Latin word *populus* or people. Some definitions describe the concept as

"anti-establishment or anti-intellectual or unorthodox policies which appeal

to the common man rather than traditional parties." Other definitions describe the term as "grassroots democracy or representing the common man." In our current time, Populism is frequently described negatively by elites in academia, the ruling class and the media, since it is often derisively associated with President Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement.

Actually, populism is often a battle between the haves and the have-nots and is probably timeless. And it is understandable that modern progressives label those opposing their divisive Marxist woke philosophy of class warfare as enemies. Hang with me and you'll understand why you often only hear one side of the issue.

As Mary Poppins once sang, we have to "start at the very beginning," at least in the recorded history of Western Civilization. And that means we begin with the first democracies of the ancient Greeks and their populism, and then the Romans' populism because they conquered the Greeks and the Hellenized world. Finally, we'll move to the populist uprisings of the American and French revolutions before finishing with the contrasting populisms of today.

You may find history boring, but you should

remember George Santyana's famous quote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn understood this as he described the way to destroy a people is to destroy their history. The fallacy of destroying Americanism through the destruction of our monuments and traditions by radicals should be evident. But if you've missed the signs, read on or wait until they knock on the door and take you to The Gulag Archipelago.

Ancient Athenians derisively referred to the "volatile, landless, urban mob" as the *ochlos* (the Romans called their mobs the *turba*). The Greek leaders of the people (*ochlos*) were called *demagogoi* (Victor Davis Hanson/VDH). Mr. Webster defines a demagogue, as "a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises to gain power." Ancient urban protest movements intended to tax the wealthy, redistribute property (wealth), cancel debts, and increase government employment and entitlements (VDH). Sound familiar to the demands of today's urban mobs?

In the 1790s the French Revolution mobs demanded liberty, brotherhood and government-mandated equality (or did they mean equity aka equal outcomes?). The French

Revolution substituted Enlightenment era reason for God and was a disaster, producing slaughter, dictatorship under Napoleon and disastrous expeditionary wars.

Our Founders fashioned a Republic predicated on the Constitution and the rule of law which guarantees equal opportunity, even though man's rights come from God, not government. These days I wonder if our leaders even believe in that concept or just pay lip service to the Constitution. Maybe we need a demagogue to remind them of their oaths and to hold them accountable to the Constitution. We need to say "No!" to today's *ochlos* who have now added reparations to the laundry list of demands from the mob.

And this brings me to the last point for your New Year's consideration. It seems like there are multiple mobs in America today. One is like the ancient urban mobs of Greece and Rome. They demand "bread and circus," only it's called food stamps, reparations and reality TV these days. They have their own demagogues: the Progressive-Democrats.

But the Democrat mobs are actually several. One is led by leftist radicals like AOC and her Squad. The other claims they are liberal and moderate. An example might be Senator Joe

Manchin, but he's such an outcast that he's retiring from the Senate because he is now unelectable. The radicals have taken over Joe Biden, the presidency and what is called the Democrat party, which is no longer democratic. If you doubt me, consider the "Democrat" judges in Colorado who have removed President Trump from the Colorado ballot in the latest example of election interference and "law-fare."

The group opposing the Democrats and their urban mob is more rural, more middle class and more conservative. Perhaps many identify as Republican, but this too is an oversimplification. One group's demagogues are led by the so-called RINOs (Republican in name only). An example is Mitt Romney. The other major faction is the populist MAGA movement led by President Trump.

The operating agreement of our country is the Constitution. We must never forget or allow demagogues to distract us from the opening lines of this magnificent document. We the People must be allowed to choose our representatives and determine what is best for us rather than the rest of the world. If we allow this to be taken from us, we are already lost.

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

On turning 77 years old

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

When does one become an old person?

For me it was today, December 26, when I realized I am now 77 years old. By anyone's standards that's old. I was born in 1946 and supposedly may be the oldest of the Baby Boomers. My wife is a couple of years younger and recently we were talking about all the things, places and people we've encountered over the years.

We both have or have had friends that go back to our early school years. As a young married couple, we moved around the county living in at least five different

states and briefly made friends here and there. I've worked on various newspapers and for media over the many years and, for the most part, enjoyed my various positions and the places we lived and the people we met.

I fondly remember when my wife and I operated our newspaper and how our pre-teen boys helped with circulation. It was a family business with all of us taking part.

From my years in the U.S. Coast Guard, daily and weekly newspapers, for a publishing company and cable television advertising we've weathered hard times and good times.

But I woke recently

realizing that I'm an old man with grown sons and grown grandchildren. I still have my hair but it's white and thin. My bones hurt and a year with Covid and then shingles has slowed me down a bit.

I've wondered how many more years my wife and I have together and what would happen if one or both of us passed away, how the other would survive.

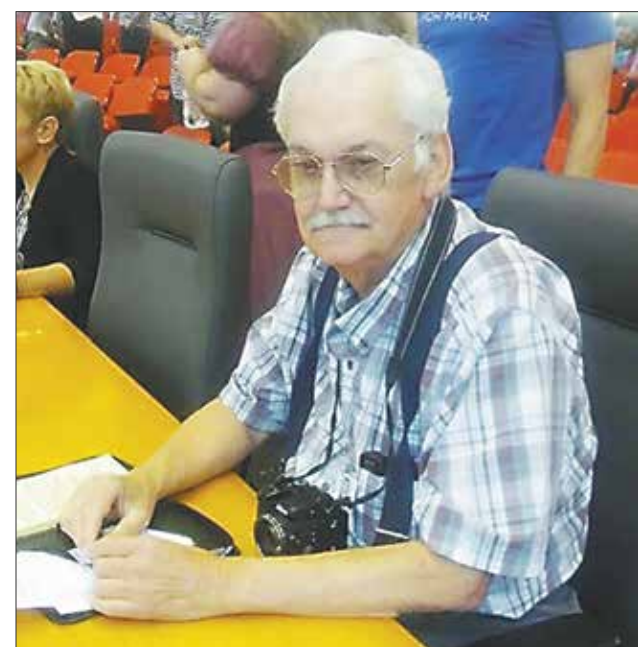
We just can't do some things, like travel and camp, we so love to do. Neither of us has much energy beyond brief physical exertion, we both have "elderly" aches and pains. That and family stress weigh on us now and then.

But she and I continue on,

facing our old age with some caution, hoping for the best and for a few more years of living productive and worthwhile lives. Our minds are pretty sharp at times but our memories are valuable.

I'm thankful for The Focus and the staff and publisher for their faith and trust in an old man who still loves to write and report factual news in the old journalistic style. I'm thankful for old friends who stay in touch from around the nation and for new folks I've come to know in my 26 years in Knoxville.

Who knows what this next year holds for any of us but let's put on a good attitude and face the future with an open heart. It may be true



Focus senior writer Mike Steely prepares to cover a local government meeting at the City-County Building's main assembly room.

that with age comes some wisdom, tempered by some understanding and compassion for others.

It's not easy getting older but, as they say, it's better than the alternative.

Happy New Year!

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a Happy New Year.

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Picture of my favorite nativity, a handmade wooden ornament, by Ralphine Major



Finding Christ in Christmas

As the Christmas celebration closes in 2023, did you find Christ in Christmas this year? Perhaps you found Him while unwrapping a pretty package from under the tree. Perhaps you found Him during the Christmas program in the words of a beautiful Christmas carol. Maybe it was during Christmas dinner as your loved ones gathered to fellowship and dine that you found Christ in your Christmas.

For many years, my mind has gone to a favorite little ornament when thinking about finding Christ during Christmas. While I really enjoy the fun side of Christmas with glistening garland, bright lights, lifelike reindeer figurines, and green wreaths with big, red bows, I know there is more to

Christmas than elaborate decorations and festivities. I have often said that if I could only choose one Christmas decoration, it would be the tiny ornament shown here depicting the nativity. It has become my favorite piece of all the Christmas decorations over the years. We have many nativity figurines featuring Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child. But this one seems different. Made from a small block of wood, it is simple in design—much like the birth and life of Jesus. Each time I look at it, I see Christmas. It is always a reminder to me that the Christ Child who was born in a manger grew up to die on a cross and bring eternal life to all who believe in him. May you always find Christ in your Christmas, and may God's richest blessings be yours every day in the coming year. Have a safe and Happy New Year!

Words of Faith: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." Luke 2:16 (KJV).



By Ralphine Major
ralphine3@yahoo.com

Tired of three things

I know that I'm at an age where no one wants to hear what I have to say on any subject. Most folks just call me grumpy, or worse. For years, I commented on most controversial subjects and spared no one's feelings. I've mellowed these days, or at least I feel that I have. Still, sometimes I just have had enough of some topics and can't keep my mouth shut. This is one of those times, so bear with me.

I'm steaming about the destruction of our language. After having spent 30 years teaching writing and grammar and literature, I'm on a slow burn at what new generations are doing to destroy English. Part of the blame goes to social media. The use of such shortened communications as "lol, lmao, and btw" creeps into formal papers for work or school. Students are no longer able to write in cursive. For some reason, it was dropped from the curricula of schools and replaced with other "serious" courses. I can guarantee folks that the inability to sign one's name speaks volumes about the quality of one's education. Something special has been stolen from individuals: their unique signatures.

What still fires me up most of all is the misuse of personal pronouns. Let me list just a few of the INCORRECT



By Joe Rector
joerector@comcast.net

uses of pronouns: "Keep this secret between you and I." "The warning was issued to my husband and I." Yes, the use of "I" is incorrect. How can you test if a pronoun is the correct one to use? Simply omit the other person listed before the "and."

Just as confusing is the new, politically correct use of "they" to refer to a transgender person. Now, I have no intention of discussing that topic, but when an individual declares that he or she is transgender, the use of "they" is absurd. We all know, or should know, that "they" is plural. I implore those who might be facing this issue to choose one side (he or she) and leave the plural pronoun alone.

Another topic that is wearing thin with me is the worries about artificial intelligence. I'd like a different name for it because intelligence cannot be artificial. What I have observed over the years is that the dependence on computers and cell phones has crippled us mentally. Too often, people let their electronic devices answer their questions. Developers pump more information and capabilities into these items. An easy way to control AI is to limit what we put into programs. If we don't, the takeover of our society might well happen when a computer

uses what it's been fed and makes a moral judgment against our survival.

Last of all, I am simply fed up with the division that has overtaken this country. We no longer have political parties. Instead, we have factions. Political parties find little agreement as factions from the right, middle, and left fight each other. Nothing is accomplished in the halls of Congress because the infighting of the parties themselves prevents bills from being passed and sent on. I'm tired of the failure of our elected representatives to look out for the American public.

Go ahead and call me grumpy, dim-witted, and shallow. I don't much care. I have no idea how much more time I have on this earth, but I'd sure like to spend it getting along with people of all viewpoints. This tendency to only associate with like-minded individuals only leads to more darkness and failure to learn. Step across the line and talk to someone on the other side of things. You might discover that most people have similar opinions with only nuances making those beliefs different.

It's New Year's week. Let's spend time learning to once again tolerate the views of others. Then, go ahead and love those who have different takes than you do. Otherwise, our wonderful country that leads the world in helping others might just fizzle.

FROM THE MOUNTAINS BY JADON GIBSON

Shootout at Hell's Half Acre

By Jadon Gibson

The Cumberland Gap was a passageway for Native Americans through the Cumberland Mountains for many years. Later it was deemed to be of strategic importance to both the North and the South during the War Between the States.

It was also the site of a small string of saloons that earned the sobriquet "Hell's Half Acre."

Middlesborough and the tri-state area went

through a period of rapid growth in a short period of time beginning in 1889. The great influx of workers laboring on the construction of Middlesborough and other area towns resulted in heavy travel through the famous Cumberland Gap.

Saloons were opened along the narrow mountain strip on the western tip of Lee County, Virginia, to take advantage of the hundreds of interstate travelers who passed daily on their way through Cumberland Gap.

It was a prosperous time of heavy employment with money circulating freely. Heavy drinking was mixed with gambling and women, resulting in violence on the hillside stretch, Hell's Half Acre.

In the late 1800s, Robert "Mac" Rains and Vernon Gibson were owners of the Rains and Gibson Distillery in addition to a saloon on the western tip of Lee County. The Cumberland Gap distillery, one of the largest in east Tennessee at the time, produced and marketed Cave Spring Whisky and Apple Brandy. It was advertised and distributed widely.

Vernon Gibson was charged with selling whiskey illegally. When he failed to appear at the Lee County Courthouse in Jonesville on the charge, a warrant was issued for his arrest.

The paperwork was

turned over to Deputy Charles Ball, a 21-year-old officer whose work was primarily in western Lee County.

On a sunny Saturday in January of 1900, Ball mounted his horse and headed for the Rains-Gibson Saloon on Hell's Half Acre. He anticipated no trouble as Gibson was a well-known and well-thought-out businessman.

"Mr. Gibson, I have a warrant for your arrest," he told Gibson politely upon his arrival. "As soon as you're ready we'll leave for Jonesville."

"Wait a minute now," Gibson countered. "I'll put up bail but I ain't going anywhere."

"Vernon, I have no authority to set bail," Ball offered. "I'm supposed to take you to Jonesville. The sheriff said you had skipped out once and for me to bring you in to get this settled."

Vernon had failed to appear in court for health

reasons and following a visit to his doctor, requested and secured a written statement of his illness. This was commonly done in the era before telephones were widespread. Gibson told authorities later that he planned to go to Jonesville the following Monday to settle the matter.

Yet on this unseasonably mild January afternoon, hot words were exchanged between Rains, Gibson and Ball as the youthful deputy attempted to lead Gibson from the saloon. Firearms were displayed and soon shooting erupted.

"Deputy Sheriff Ball drew his pistol and fired, the bullet striking immediately under Rains' heart," according to the Knoxville Journal. "Rains fell but drew his pistol and fired three shots at Ball. One inflicted a wound which it is said would prove fatal. Ball continued firing and killed a black man, Thomas Swan, who took a hand in the fray."

Rains died immediately. Ball and Swan, who was Rains' carriage driver, suffered serious wounds. Swan lingered for only a short time before dying. A saloon patron, George Eaton, was also wounded.

Vernon Gibson was unscathed although he was the subject of the incident and was arrested for selling illicit liquor and for shooting Deputy Ball.

"Mac" Raines was well known throughout the tri-state area. He was "a man of sterling business qualities" according to the Middlesborough Daily News, which wrote about the incident. In just a few years he amassed a fortune and his home in Arthur, Tennessee, was one of the finest in Claiborne County.

Ironically, Mac Rains was a prospective candidate for sheriff of Claiborne County at the time of his death. Many felt that had he lived he would have easily won election. Rains, a Kentuckian by birth, was raised just across the state line in the bluegrass state.

Rains' father had also faced a violent death. He was shot and killed by Andy Ray on Newman's Ridge near the Hancock and Hawkins County, TN, line. The Hawkins County sheriff then killed Ray.

Although Lee County Deputy Charles Ball approached death's door and lingered for several days, he eventually survived the barrage of lead at Hell's Half Acre.

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Jadon Gibson is a widely read Appalachian writer residing in Harrogate, TN. His writings From the Mountains are both nostalgic and historical.

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Life With Wild Bill

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill

rayhill865@gmail.com

George Graham Vest, an outstanding attorney and U. S. senator from Missouri, is still remembered to this day for his tribute to dogs. Vest had been hired by Charles Burden whose dog, Old Drum, had been killed by his brother-in-law, Leonidas Hornsby, who was also a sheep farmer. Hornsby had loudly insisted he would kill any dog which might step onto his property, and he kept his word when Drum, a foxhound, trespassed. An enraged Burden promptly took the only legal course available to him, suing his brother-in-law for damages in the amount of \$150. In 1870 that was a right fair sum, as it would be more than \$3,000 today. It was the maximum amount permitted by the law at the time.

The colorful Vest pledged to win the trial or offer an apology to every dog in the State of Missouri. In his closing argument, George Graham Vest did not reiterate any facts ascertained from the testimony of witnesses, but rather shrewdly appealed to the jury through his eulogy to dogs in general. Vest's oration remains as potent today as it was then:

"The best friend a man has in this world may turn against him and become his enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, whom we trust with our happiness and our good name, may become traitors to their faith. The money a man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it the most...

"A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He sleeps on the cold ground, where the wintry wind blows and the snow drives fiercely. If only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.

"If fortune drives the master forth as an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him to guard against danger, to fight against his enemies, and when the last scene

of all comes and death takes the master in its embrace and his body is laid away in the cold ground, no matter if all friend pursue their way, there by his graveside will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad but open in watchfulness, faithful and true even to death."

Nobody can be surprised Vest won that case, which Leonidas Hornsby took to the Missouri State Supreme Court to no avail. George Graham Vest won that case as well and a statue of Old Drum stands in the Missouri State Supreme Court Building in Jefferson City.

Anyone familiar with me personally or this column could not possibly be surprised by my love for dogs. I still hear from folks who talk about the column I wrote when my beloved little Scottish terrier, Mackie, passed away. This story is about my Jack Russell terrier, Billy.

Mackie was suffering from bladder cancer when it occurred to me a puppy might help to extend his life. I determined I would not get another Scottie as I realized all too well Mackie was slipping away from me day by day. It would be just too painful a reminder. I decided to find a Jack Russell terrier and quickly discovered they weren't exactly easy to find. My friend Cameron Brooks discovered a young Jack Russell available nearby and I made an appointment with the vet/breeder. I had been pondering names for a puppy and had just about made up my mind to name him "Billy." I was astonished to see that the puppy Cameron brought to my attention was named Billy.

On January 11, 2020, I drove to keep my appointment and the vet had two puppies of about 12 weeks along with Billy, who would soon be eleven months old. The puppies were full of energy, curiosity and determination. They were as friendly as could be and even more playful. Billy put up with their antics, remaining slightly aloof and I considered he was entitled to be a bit standoffish as he had been neutered the day before. I was at least smart enough to take the hint the Lord God had offered; the fact the puppy's name was Billy was a mighty big hint. I bought Billy and we got in



Billy the Jack Russell

the car to come home.

I don't think I'll ever forget how he sat in the passenger seat; Billy's head was down and he was trembling with fear. I tried to comfort him and when we got home, I attached his leash, which he didn't much like. Billy had never been walked on a leash, nor potty trained. Billy did well enough, and we walked through the door and Mackie stood upright in his crate when he saw Billy. Billy responded by wagging his tail. That was the first time I had seen Billy wag his tail.

Mackie came out of his crate and the two of them played nonstop for the better part of three hours that first day. Playtime occurred daily until Mackie finally became so ill he just couldn't muster the energy any longer. Each evening, Mackie would get on the sofa in the den in his preferred spot next to me. The first night Billy observed from the floor; the second night, he jumped up onto the sofa and settled himself between Mackie and me. Within a week or so, Billy began laying his little head on my thigh while we were on the sofa. That's when Mackie began shoving Billy to the floor and sprawling on my leg, peering down at a very surprised little fellow. Billy quickly adapted to our routine and followed Mackie outside on his leash. After initially almost demolishing his crate, I bought a bigger one which he seemed to like better.

I still believe bringing Billy home extended Mackie's life, but I also knew the eventual outcome was inevitable. Mackie passed away on August 3, 2020, less than seven months after I brought Billy home. The

pain of losing Mackie was intense and deep. I miss him still and suspect I always will. Yet, it wasn't long before I concluded that if God had need of Mackie and took him back, he had provided me with someone to look after and love. Mackie had slept on his Serta bed beside mine in our bedroom and I missed him. My friend Judy Pennoyer suggested bringing Billy back to my bedroom. I brought his crate and placed it in the bedroom, which Billy did not like at all. Finally, I just brought Billy back to the bedroom and watched him jump from the floor onto the bed like a tiny gazelle. He's slept there every night since. Another odd thing was, after Mackie passed, Billy without fail goes into Mackie's crate to eat his breakfast and dinner.

Billy proved to be a most engaging companion with many similarities to Mackie, although they are quite different in many respects. Mackie had the quiet dignity of an older gentleman, while Billy had the enthusiasm of a young boy. Like all of us, they had their likes and dislikes. Billy will sit patiently (for him) to be brushed, but if I produce a comb, he tries to bite it or take it from me. Clearly, he believes a comb to be some kind of instrument of the Devil, an attitude that I shared as a lad.

Billy has several great loves; food (mine and his own), treats, his chuck-it balls, riding in the car, walks, and going through drive-thru windows. Nor does Wild Bill mind

going to the vet where he knows everyone and gets groomed regularly. Where once he waited to see if someone was friendly, now he pretty much assumes someone is friendly and reacts accordingly.

Billy's dislikes include the aforementioned combs, squirrels, bugs, and those slow-witted individuals who are apparently unaware he is to be given a tidbit or morsel whenever he appears at a drive-thru window. According to Billy, there is no exception to this rule.

For those who think Billy lolls about all day, he would contend he has several vital responsibilities, which include alerting me to any visitor, notifying me when the postman arrives, and reminding me that my phone is ringing. When Wild Bill believes I am spending too much time writing, he leaps into my lap and sits so that I cannot see the screen. Sometimes he may think it is fine for me to write, but only while he is in my lap. Another thing that Billy approves of is napping on the weekends.

Billy has a special fondness for holidays, especially Christmas. Wild Bill firmly believes the fundamental meaning of the Christmas spirit is sharing bits of prime rib. Depending upon the visitor, Billy will lavish attention upon those who come to his home. Wild Bill's least favorite holiday seems to be Halloween, as he most emphatically dislikes scary masks and little ghosts prowling about. I also wonder if he

isn't too keen on the idea of small children getting what he suspects might be his treats.

Billy is also convinced he keeps the neighborhood safe for its residents as he has barked at and run off deer, raccoons, and all manner of vermin. Billy also gazes at joggers with what I believe is a look of pity. He always looks to see what might be chasing them.

As to playing ball, Billy isn't as fond of chasing the ball as much as he likes it bounced so that he can leap to try and catch it in midair. He only likes to chase it when he happens not to grab it in flight.

Like most small children, it is always wise to keep an eye on Billy. If he's being quiet, it's usually a sign that he is into something. Billy is a four-legged shredder, and he has destroyed countless dish towels. Paper is also a favorite to shred, and Billy is prone to destroy any carelessly set aside document.

Billy also has kleptomaniacal tendencies. I once was folding laundry when I noticed a towel apparently slithering away on its own. Socks are a favorite item and Billy will sort through the laundry bin to find an occasional sock if he can. He is also fond of stealing presents meant for others should he happen to fancy them. Once I bought my younger sister a Baby Yoda doll as a joke. As soon as Wild Bill caught sight of Baby Yoda, he was both enchanted and obsessed. At the very first, I put Baby Yoda on the dining room table until I put him in the closet for safekeeping. Going to change, I emerged from my room to see Baby Yoda's robe turning a corner. I saw Billy dragging Baby Yoda by the ear to what I am sure was a terrible fate. Apparently, Billy's sympathies lie with the Empire.

Once I retrieved Baby Yoda from certain death and placed him in the closet, Billy stationed himself stubbornly outside the closet, waiting for the moment they would be reunited.

Dogs give life even more meaning and fill one with joy and happiness. There is hardly a day when Billy doesn't cause me to laugh out loud.

What George Graham Vest said about dogs was exactly right. There is nothing or no one who will love you like your dog does. I contend that amongst God's many creations, the dog is His most perfect. © 2023 Ray Hill

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Bearden softball team helps Wreaths Across America

By Steve Williams

Bearden High's girls softball team lent a big hand to the Wreaths Across America event Saturday, Dec. 16, at the Knoxville National Cemetery.

For three hours, from 11 in the morning to 2 in the afternoon, they were remembering and honoring the past by placing wreaths on grave sites.

Feelings for the fallen didn't end when they left.

"A tag was placed on the backside of each wreath for anyone to keep as a reminder of the fallen soldier and their families," said Bearden Coach Kenneth Boles. "All of our ladies took one of the tags as a reminder of the fallen."

Boles noticed too that "the girls were very humble after the event," he said. "The ladies were blown away by the turnout and the show of support from the community."

The Saturday also was a day of building team unity.

"We use any chance we get to be together," said Boles. "We do team building activities."

"We will be helping on the Wreaths Across America's pick-up day. I believe that will be on Jan. 20."



Taryn Bryant, Co-Director for Wreaths Across America, and her husband Chris Bryant join the Bearden High School softball team at the Knoxville National Cemetery on Saturday, Dec. 16. Left to right, Front row: Kate Daniels, Kaylynn Wood, Kendall Hubbs, Elizabeth Newman, Makayla Garrett, Josephine Breeden. Second row: Kenneth Boles, Abigail Thompson, Laryah Ivy, Lainey Cox, Megan Lawson, Allie Seritt, Hannah Phillips. Third row: Alexandria Smith, Katherine Smith, Kylie Dutton, Aleksandra Walker, Bailey Hague. Fourth row: McKenna Webb, Makhia Nickerson, Jaycie Overton, Kendyl May, Rusty Bruce. Fifth row: Abigail Kelton, Madelyn Brown, Ashland Gonzales.

Three Bearden High School softball players participate in the Wreaths Across America event on Saturday, Dec. 16. Alessandra Walker kneels to place a wreath at one grave site, while Bailey Hague looks her shoulder. Standing and wearing a black hood is Catherine Smith.



A-E football players help in two ways

Quinton Calhoun, a junior lineman and team captain on Austin-East High School's football team, and freshman lineman Keaton Mear have been recognized for their community service during the holidays.

Both were school ambassadors said Coach Antonio Mays, serving to renovate bathrooms at A-E and in food distribution to families in need.

Roadrunners Quinton Calhoun (No. 52) and Keaton Mear (No. 66) receive high marks in community service.

Local middle school teams to participate in holiday hoops tournaments

By Ken Lay

Schools will be relatively dark and silent this week as students, staff and faculty are away for the holiday break.

But gyms at three area schools will be hopping with post-Christmas basketball tournaments.

West Valley will host its annual holiday tournament Dec. 27-29.

The event will feature both the host Wolves and Lady Wolves. Hardin Valley will have both its girls and boys teams in the respective tournament fields. Maryville will also have its girls and boys in the tournament. Liberty Bell, a powerhouse from the Tri-Cities will have both its boys and girls squads competing.

Other girls teams competing in this year's tournament include Holston and Seymour. Other boys teams in the tournament include Indian Trail, Cherokee, Sevier County and John Sevier.

Cedar Bluff's boys basketball program will host the annual John Melnick Battle at the Bluff at CBMS Dec. 28-29. The host Giants will have both their varsity and JV teams playing at the event.

The tournament, named for longtime Cedar Bluff basketball coach John Melnick, will also feature Gresham (varsity and JV); Fort Loudoun (varsity and JV) and the varsity team from Oliver Springs.

Anderson County High School will host the Maverick Middle School Christmas Tournament Dec. 28-30.

The Halls Red Devils and Lady Devils are in the field as well as the Powell Panthers and Lady Panthers.

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Holiday Helpers include HVA dancers and Junior Hawkettes

By Steve Williams

"We had a blast with the Hawkettes!"

That was Hardin Valley Academy Dance Coach Kaylee Pulvirenti's reaction after her team's performance with the Junior Hawkettes on Dec. 14.

Not only is the event fun for the kids and dance team, it's a fun night out for parents and grandparents to enjoy and get a break from holiday shopping.

The Knoxville Focus started including the event with its list of "Holiday Helpers" a few years ago. Yep, we enjoy the pictures, too!

The annual Christmas Hawkettes Dance Camp started soon after Hardin Valley Academy opened in 2008.

Most of the Junior Hawkettes come from Hardin Valley Elementary School.

"We have been doing this camp for over 10 years," said Coach Pulvirenti.



PHOTOS BY JEREMY WIGGS

It's hard to tell who is having the most fun -- the Hardin Valley Academy dance team or the Junior Hawkettes -- at their annual Christmas holiday performance ... but that's not a bad problem to have!

"Each year, we have such a great turnout, as it is the perfect opportunity to get our Hardin Valley community (and surrounding areas) together - something that the HVA dance team values greatly.

"As a coach of this team for five years, it warms my

heart to see the Hawkettes at later games or community events run up to my dancers as they created a friendship through dance."

The favorite part of this event for Jackie Pizzi, senior captain of the HVA dance team, is getting to dance alongside of the

Hawkettes at the game and have fun playing games during the camp portion, added Pulvirenti.

At this year's event as usual, the Hawkettes and HVA dance team members performed together during both of the girls' and boys' halftime sessions of the

HVA versus Karns basketball games.

Pulvirenti is assisted by Co-Coach Julie Mincke.

In addition to Pizzi, the dance team roster includes Lucy Blair, Eleanore Locke, Kaitlyn Keim, Riley Beemer, Trinity Kargbo, Jovie Raddon and Taelyn Beardsley.



A closeup picture of Junior Hawkette Emma Gaskins and the Hardin Valley dance team's Kaitlyn Keim during the annual Christmas performance.

Freeman to play soccer at Roane State

By Ken Lay

An aspiring third-generation nurse will get the chance to follow in both her mother's and grandmother's footsteps. And she'll also get the opportunity to play collegiate soccer.

Recent Gibbs High School graduate Lauren Freeman signed a National Letter of Intent to continue her academic pursuits and her athletic career at Roane State Community College at a ceremony at Gibbs High on Thursday, Dec. 14.

Freeman, who graduated from high school early, will play for the Lady Raiders' first soccer team in the fall. Roane State will be coached by former Oak Ridge High School and Grace Christian Academy coach Donnie Green.

She'll major in nursing. Both her mother and grandmother also majored in nursing at Walters State Community College.

Freeman met Green at a recruiting camp.

"Roane State came to

me," she said. "I just really liked their coach and we ran some drills."

She also considered Pellissippi State, which will also field a team for the first time in 2024 and Walters State, but Roane State provided a good nursing program and the chance for her to continue her career on the pitch.

Freeman signed with the Lady Raiders without seeing the campus.

"I just really felt like I belonged at Roane State," she said. "I never saw the campus. I never took a tour."

She noted that the small class size at the school was a factor in her decision. She also said that the opportunity to stay close to home also appealed to her.

"I kind of (want to stay close to home) because I'm very close to my grandmother," Freeman said. "I wanted to be close to home, but sometimes, it's good to stay on campus and get to know your team."



Gibbs High School soccer player Lauren Freeman will continue her career at Roane State Community College. She recently signed with the Lady Raiders, who will have a team for the first time in 2024. They'll be coached by former Oak Ridge and Grace Christian coach Donnie Green. Photo submitted.



PHOTO BY STEVE WILLIAMS

A little confetti is tossed into the air at a signing ceremony for Powell High's Steven Soles Jr. last Tuesday. At the honorary table (l-r) is grandmother Tracy Whitmore, Steven, mother Antonia Whitmore and great-grandfather Eddie Soles Sr. The tall man wearing a blue cap on the back row is Steven Soles Sr.

Soles Jr., PHS sack leader, signs with UK

By Steve Williams

With Knox County schools closed for the holidays last Wednesday, the official National Signing Day for NCAA Division 1 football programs, Powell High Coach Matt Lowe scheduled a signing ceremony on Tuesday afternoon for Steven Soles Jr., his record-breaking defensive end.

"It was a mock signing," said Lowe, who wanted Soles to get a taste of what a real signing is like and also allow his family members, coaches, teammates and friends to be there for the special occasion.

Steven officially signed Wednesday with the University of Kentucky "around 8 a.m.," confirmed Lowe via email.

There was nothing fake about Soles, the football player, either.

"He walked in (to PHS four years ago) with high aspirations," said Coach Lowe.

And the 6-2, 215-pound defensive end achieved a lot.

His 17 sacks as a junior was a school record for a season and his 47 career sacks is an all-time school record.

"When (the box) goes to 3rd and 10, he knows what exactly to do at that moment," said Lowe.

Soles was a "Sophomore of the Year" in 2021 when he helped lead the Panthers to the TSSAA Class 5A state championship.

He was a finalist for the Tennessee Titans' Mr. Football award this past fall and also was voted The Knoxville Focus / Coaches' Knox County Player of the Year.

Lamar Brown, head coach of West High's back-to-back state champions, said Soles was "the most explosive player I've ever coached against."

Steven was gracious for the recognition and said to all at the turnout: "Just wanted to let you all know I appreciate you and I thank you."

Wearing Kentucky blue, Soles said he is looking forward to "having a platform that can get me to the next level. I'm trying to get surrounded by athletes that have the same goal as I do. To push the brotherhood you build; to push the bond you build."

As for taking the big step from high school football to the major college level, Steven said he's looking forward to "the competitive nature of it all. Honestly, if I'm not competing, I'm not having fun. Just playing with people who are said to be great athletes; I'm ready to compete and have fun."

When asked what his main reason was for choosing Kentucky, he recalled: "I had an unofficial visit there. I sat through some meetings and talked to some coaches. It was really the game plan that they see with me in their system, having a good defense and me just being fast and ferocious off the edge."

Soles added the UK coaches showed him stats and records of past players his speed and size. Leading the SEC in sacks could be a possibility someday.

"I feel like I could be in a good position with those coaches," he said. "I know I'll play some outside linebacker as well. I'm pretty excited

about (the thought) of being able to move around on the field a lot more."

Soles said he also had offers from Alabama, South Carolina, Miami, Missouri and Memphis.

When asked if Tennessee offered him a scholarship, Soles answered: "No."

How do you figure that?

"They don't want to win," he replied. "They don't want to win."

As for what he might major in, Soles said: "Right now I'm thinking about Business and Economics, but that might change."

Lowe said Soles was a good student and had a GPA "around 2.8 or 2.7."

Three generations of Steven's family attended the ceremony, including his father Steven Soles Sr., a big man who played offensive right tackle at Lane College in Jackson, TN. "I'm very proud of Steven," he said.

Steven's mother, Antonia Whitmore; grandmother, Tracy Whitmore; and great grandfather, Eddie Soles Sr; also were at the ceremony.

His grandmother said she remembers starting to give Steven bean juice and cornbread when he was 3 months old.

"I'm so proud and trying not to cry," she added.

"It's all been an honor and a blessing," summed up Steven. "I couldn't ask for nothing more I guess. I can say I lived a nice life here in high school and met some great people. It's time to turn the page."

Who played in the final Garden State Bowl?

Who played in the final Garden State Bowl? It's been more than 40 years since the bowl's demise on Dec. 13, 1981, but fans in the know in Knoxville, Tenn., and Madison, Wis., know the answer, almost by heart.

By Tom Mattingly

Tennessee and Wisconsin squared off that day, with the Vols winning 28-21. Both teams came with 7-4 records. Dave McClain coached the Badgers, while John Majors was in his fifth season with the Vols.

The bowl lasted four years, starting with Arizona State and Rutgers in 1978, Temple and California in 1979, and Houston and Navy in 1980. The games were played at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, N.J., often in weather not conducive to drawing a big crowd.

One website noted, "Freezing temperatures and a lack of successful local college teams contributed to its demise."

For the Vols, the 1981 season had gotten off to a rocky start on "Rocky Top," or, more precisely, away from "Rocky Top." Tennessee looked dead in the water after lopsided losses at No. 10 Georgia (44-0, with Herschel Walker running for 161 yards) and No. 5 Southern Cal (43-7, with Marcus Allen running for 211 yards). Vol fans had traveled 5,000 miles or so to see their team outscored 87-7.

A season-ending knee injury to promising freshman quarterback Alan Cockrell in the win over Pat Dye's first Auburn team left Steve Alatorre and Jeff Olszewski under center.

Alan returned to action in 1983, leading wins over Alabama in each of the next two years and berths in the Peach and Florida Citrus Bowls.

The Vols lost only to Alabama

and Kentucky and lived on the brink a couple of times to win over Memphis State, Wichita State, Ole Miss, and Vanderbilt.

In the Vanderbilt game, a 38-34 Vol win, Commodore Whit Taylor, a native of Shelbyville, threw for 464 yards, with receivers running loose in the Vol secondary all day. Alatorre wasn't bad, throwing for 319 yards. Willie Gault had four catches for 217 yards and one score, second best mark in Vol history to that time, behind only Elizabethton's Johnny Mills (225 against Kentucky in 1966).

There was a key play in the final seconds. Taylor threw for the southeast corner to wide-out Allama Matthews. Matthews appeared to be open, before Tennessee's Carlton Peoples got a hand on the ball to save the game. Matthews would later become an SEC official and be involved in a controversial play 19 years later at the other end of Shields-Watkins Field, the Jabar Gaffney catch (or non-catch, depending on your perspective) in the 2000 Florida game.

Then came the trip to New York/New Jersey for the game against the Badgers.

The game featured the talents of Gault, offensive guard Bill Mayo, defensive tackle Reggie White, linebacker Carl Zander, Alatorre, center Lee North, wide receiver Anthony Hancock, and running back James Berry.

After Wisconsin scored to lead 7-3 in the first quarter, the Badgers kicked off, and 11 seconds later, the Vols led 10-7. All Gault did was return the ensuing kickoff 87 yards for a score. John Ward didn't identify the specific landmark Willie ran toward, as he did in 1980 at Vanderbilt ("Willie Gault has run all the way to the State Capitol..."), but he didn't need to.

Alatorre, who shared quarterbacking duties with Olszewski



Head coach John Majors and Willie Gault (26) celebrate Tennessee's win over Wisconsin in the 1981 Garden State Bowl.

in 1980 and 1981, completed 24 of 42 passes for 315 yards, throwing for one score and running for another.

Hancock had 11 catches on the day for 196 yards and was on the receiving end of a 43-yard strike from Alatorre.

Mendham, N.J., native Zander had 14 tackles on the day, and was even better in the 1984 Sun Bowl with a still-standing school bowl record 20 tackles, a record

shared with former Vol Jeremy Banks after his performance in the 2023 Orange Bowl.

The 1981 season was a high-light campaign for Majors and the Vols.

"I was more concerned about the 1981 team than any team in the last 13 years," Majors said in 1990. "We got tromped the first two games. We came back to win eight games, including the bowl game. That's one of the best

lesson builders — one I've used with our team and staff on many occasions — talking about what happens if you keep hanging on, keep fighting, keep coming back."

The lesson is clear. If you're going to close out a bowl game, even one with a mere four-year run, do it the right way. The Vols helped close out the Garden State Bowl the right way by defeating Wisconsin.

Tennessee Football Welcomes Class of 2024

By Mark Nagi

I can't be the only one who misses the old National Signing Day.

The first Wednesday in February brought with it fax machines and madness as thousands of college football fans eagerly anticipated which players would join their team in the Fall.

The early signing period has done away with most of the fun. Better for the student-athletes. Worse for the fans.

But I digress.

Last week Tennessee welcomed its Class of 2024, a group of 27 new Vols. That's 23 high school kids and four college transfers. Eighteen of them are set to be early enrollees who will participate in spring practice.

"I love the length and athleticism that we've added," said Tennessee head coach Josh Heupel. "You look at what we've signed, obviously a point of emphasis was the line of

scrimmage. We'll continue to add really good players to our roster in that way, and then athleticism and length at the skill spots. They're dynamic in the way that they play. I love the competitive makeup of this group. Some guys have already shown some leadership traits, and I'm excited to get to work with them whenever they get to campus."

When the dust settles this will be a top-15 class nationally, which keeps the Vols among the elite teams in the country, and smack dab in the middle of their fellow SEC schools.

"As competitive as it is on the football field, it's even more competitive in recruiting," said Heupel. "The time, energy, effort, and strain. Everybody is working in the same footprint. I think we're one of the few leagues left where it's actually a regional footprint. You're competing against guys inside of your conference

every time you're talking to a kid."

Tennessee wants to keep the best in-state players from leaving Big Orange Country. And while they lost some good ones, eight players in this Class are from within the state's borders. Nashville's Lipscomb Academy was good to the Vols, with 4-star defensive back Kaleb Beasley and 4-star linebacker Edwin Spillman signing with the Vols.

The secondary is a concern for the Vols heading into next season, and Beasley may be called on to make an immediate impact.

"We have some young guys that got to grow and mature as football players, but I love the athletic traits," Heupel said of his secondary room. "That's true of the young guys that were with us this past season (and) true of the signees that are coming in. We felt like we wanted to add some experience in those positions. We've attacked that through the portal with a couple guys, as well."

That group of eight in state also includes the 2023 Mr. Football in Class 6A, Boo Carter from Bradley Central in Chattanooga.

"I thought our staff

did a great job inside of our home state," said Heupel. "Boo Carter has played both sides of the line of scrimmage and was really good as a returner as well. We've already seen a lot of those skill sets from him. He's electric, he's got great change of direction, quickness, and a really good football IQ. He's natural as a returner, too. We've already seen some of that from him. Really excited about who he is. He's got a real maturity about him on the football field that is rare for a high school kid."

In addition, five members of the class are from the

state of Georgia, including 5-star wide receiver Mike Matthews of Parkview High School in Lilburn.

"He's (Matthews) got great length, just talking about his wingspan, extremely explosive," said Heupel. "The ability to go and high point a ball in the middle of the football field or out on the edge just going vertically. As a wide receiver, you are going to have to develop the ability to play versus man press at the line of scrimmage. Those are things that you typically don't see (from a high school player). But a really bright guy who's got a great future."



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Football coaching changes continue in Knox County

By Steve Williams

Last Tuesday was moving day on the local high school football scene.

Three schools announced new head coaches on the heels of Steve Matthews leaving Knoxville Catholic Monday and accepting the Concord Christian head position.

On Tuesday, Philip Shadowens was named the new head coach at Catholic. He and Matthews had been co-head coaches for the Irish this past season.

Matthews said he liked the idea of building a new program. CCS hasn't had a varsity team in several years. The Lions had a JV team this season.

Scott Cummings, after taking a season off to watch his son Connor play at West, took the Lenoir City job Tuesday and Paul Shelton resigned after two seasons at South-Doyle to get back into coaching on the college level.

Central, Grace Christian and Hardin Valley currently have



openings in Knox County.

BRAYLON HARMON, Knoxville Catholic standout, decommitted from Wofford and signed with UT on National Signing Day. He returned four kickoffs and two punts for touchdowns his senior season and also was an excellent receiver.

Other Knox County players signing NLI included Webb WR-DB Markeis Barrett (Vanderbilt), Farragut linebacker Jack Alley (Air Force) and Bearden running back Jaheim Merriweather (Purdue).

ZACK TURNER, Gibbs point guard, has reached the 1,000-point plateau in his basketball career, and it's early in his junior season. He received an award between the girls' and boys'

games Friday, Dec. 15.

Turner was a second-team honoree on last year's Knoxville Focus / Coaches' All-Knox County team.

DESHAWN PAGE, former Fulton High football and basketball standout, recently graduated from Mississippi State University, where he played linebacker for the football Bulldogs. DeShawn was a Class 5A Mr. Football honoree at FHS.

HALLS Football Coach Brent Hughes and wife Heather have a new baby boy. Cortland arrived Wednesday, Dec. 6, weighing 6 pounds and 12 ounces. "He doesn't look like a lineman right now - I'll tell you that," said Hughes.

Brent and Heather also have two daughters, Ava (5) and Sutton (2).

CLEVELAND took over the No. 1 ranking in the Tennessee High School Wrestling poll last week, moving past No. 2 Baylor. Halls is No. 14 in the season's third poll.

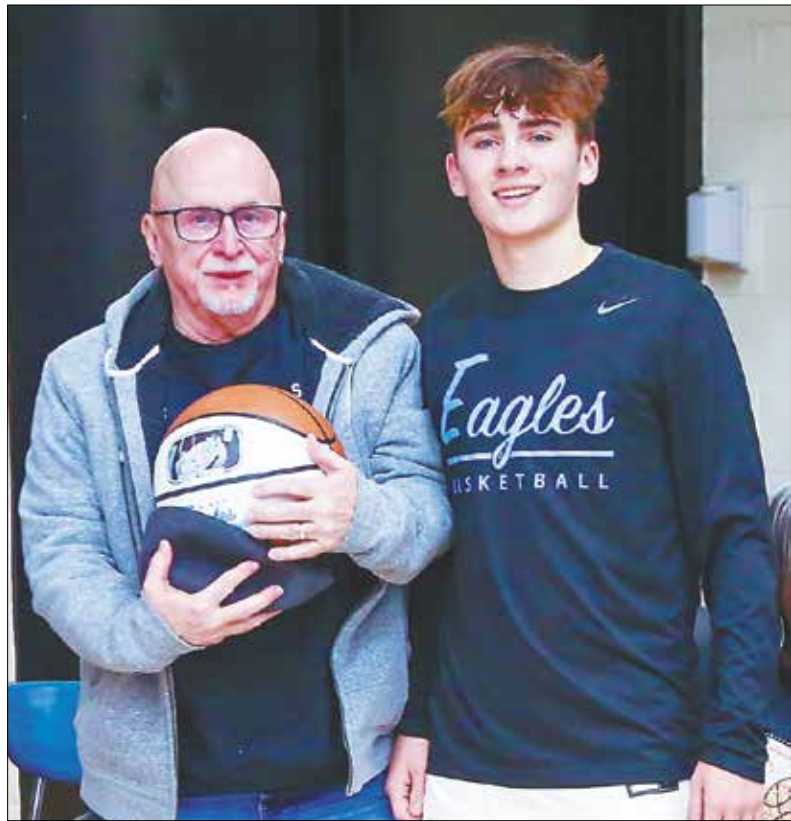


PHOTO BY JJ SPEARS

Gibbs' Zack Turner recently reached the 1,000-point plateau and dedicated his accomplishments to "Pops," his grandfather, who is battling esophageal cancer. Pops is holding a basketball that has his grandson's picture on it.

Area football players earn all-region honors

By Ken Lay

It was another banner high school football season for Knoxville Area teams, players and coaches. And area regions honored their stars with their postseason awards as recognized by the leagues' coaches.

In Region 2-3A: Austin-East went 4-8 and made the state playoffs. Roadrunners' junior quarterback Shane Cherry was named Offensive Player of the Year in his first year playing high school football. He's an all-state caliber guard for the Austin-East basketball team with multiple NCAA Division I scholarship offers. He has an offer from coach Rick Barnes and the University of Tennessee.

Cherry was joined on the all-region team by teammates Condis Cherry, DeMarcus Allen, D'Andre Hunley, Dimere Ligon and James Nyonkuru.

In Region 2-4A: Gibbs finished second in the region behind Anderson County. The Eagles' Brad Turner was named Coach of the Year, while offensive coordinator Tyler Kitts shared Co-Offensive Assistant of the Year, along with Anderson County's Jon Chadwell.

Benji Angola was named Specialist of the Year and Boone Brockwell earned Offensive Specialist of the Year.

All-Region standouts for Gibbs included: Wyatt West; Hayden Mills; DeJuan Harris; Landon Frisco; Cash Mount; Luke Tidwell; Brady Hughes; Wyatt Bentley and Levi Allison. The Eagles had two players receive All-Regional honors including Cam Norman and Sabe Smith.

Carter's Jody Scruggs was named the league's Newcomer of the Year. Spencer Russell (Carter) was named Offensive Player of the Year and Judd Taylor earned Offensive Lineman of the Year honors.

All-Region performers for the Hornets were: Jake Coffey; Roman Webb; Joseph Armenta; Isaiah Webb; Gabe Dennis; Andre Thomas; Isaiah Monday and Brody Sparks. Hayden Warwick was named to the

All-Academic Team.

Fulton's Vershawn Cash shared Defensive Lineman of the Year honors with Anderson County's Gracen Bradshaw.

All-league for the Falcons were Dexter Moulden; Albert Johnson, Garrin Bailey; Derrick Smith; Dexter Lewis; Joe Moore and Tavarria Allen. Vernon Anderson was named to the All-Academic Team.

South-Doyle had six players named to the All-Region 2-4A Team, including Maddox Cupp; Marquail Patterson; T.J. Tipton; Rolondo Phillips; Jaedyn Begovich and Trashaun Berry. Isaiah Mitchell was selected to the league's All-Academic Team.

Seymour had five all-league selections, including Jerry Isaacs: Carson Vines; Ryan Gibson; Zyon Rockett and Jaydon Shanklin. Sanjai Samtini was an all-academic team.

In Region 2-5A: Halls High's Brent Hughes was the Coach of the Year and the Red Devils' Amari Lethgo was named Newcomer of the Year and Owen Taylor (Halls) was the Specialist of the Year.

Central's Daniel Sackie shared Tight End of the Year honors with the Red Devils' Drew Ross. Steven Soles Jr. (Powell) was Player of the Year. Frank Johnson IV was named Offensive Player of the Year. Ryan Scott (West) was named Defensive Player of the Year. Powell's Connor Wheeler was the Running Back of the Year. Syxx Hoard (West) was the Wide Receiver of the Year. Britton Carver (West) and Jesse Massengill (Powell) shared Co-Offensive Linemen of the Year honors. West High's Marshaun Bowers was the Athlete of the Year. C.J. Smith (West) was named Defensive Lineman of the Year. Anderson Smith (West) was the Linebacker of the Year and Powell's Markus Jackson was the Defensive Back of the Year.

All-Region selections from the Rebels, who won a second consecutive state championship, included: Stephen Johnson; Jack Codavilla; Dominique Davis; Hunter Dance; Connor Cummings; Devin

Jamison; Wyatt DeRoche; Jack Keith; Antwain Burdine and Anterius McAlister.

Powell's All-Region standouts were: Chavron Thomas; Blake Neely; Byron Finger; Adrian Daugharty; Joshua Fife-Offshack; Dylan Stooksbury; Abu Keefer and Nikko McDonald.

All-Region selections from the Red Devils were: Nick Goodwin; Caleb Turner; Michael Harrop; Jackson Alvey; Kameron Bates; Gavin Cameron; Brody Rogers and Landon West.

All-Region selections from the Bobcats included: Dante Strickland; Torin McAfee; Jake Hobert and Donovan Washington.

The all-academic selections included: Washington (Central); Matthew Clayton (Powell); Brodie McFalls (West) and Riley Earle (Halls).

In Region 3-5A: Karns High's Alex Idol was the Defensive Lineman of the Year and Walker Lockhart shared Defensive Back of the Year honors with Clinton's Derek Bean.

All-Region selections for the Beavers included: Austin Kirk; Doug Turner; Kareem Ellis; Brody Cassell; Dassen Huckleby and Matthew Eldridge. Aiden Meredith was an all-academic standout.

In Region 2-6A: Bearden's Kevin Lane and Patrick Abernathy shared Co-Defensive Assistant of the Year honors.

Farragut's Jack Alley was the Defensive Player of the Year. Bearden's Jayson Thompson was the Freshman/Sophomore of the Year and Tory Beaufort was the Special Teams Player of the Year.

Hardin Valley Academy's Nathan Holbrook was the Kicker/Punter of the Year.

All-Region selections from the Bulldogs were: Sam Tummins; Clay Clough; Kai Ironside; Preston Gould; Kai Young; Brody Smith and Chaston Smith.

Farragut's all-league players included: Landis Davila; Nathan Harville; Avery Mohr and Wyatt Drummy.

Hardin Valley's all-league selections were: Tommy Joseph; Pierce Palmer; Brady Hogrefe and Michael

Stewart.

The All-Academic Team was comprised of Drew Parrott (Bearden); Holt Lawrence (HVA) and David Broda (Farragut).

In Division II-A East: The King's Academy had three all-league players in Alijah Davidson; Garrett Cogdill and Jack Hamilton. Peyton Brooks was an all-academic standout.

In Division II-AA East: Markeis Barrett (Webb School of Knoxville) was the Most Valuable Player. Cooper Cameron (Webb) was the Defensive MVP and Dakota Fitzsimmons (Webb) was the Offensive Assistant of the Year.

Grace Christian Academy's Lucas Hollifield was the Special Teams MVP.

All-Region standouts for the Spartans included: Jack Wagner; Xavier Hickman; Jalen Hill; Ari Klasky; Ethan Klasky; Mason Testerna; Harvey Niendorff. Eli Vickers was an all-academic selection.

In Division II-AAA East/Middle: Catholic's Braylon Harmon was the Player of the Year.

He was joined on the All-Region Team by teammates Tyreek King; Jayden Neal; Antori Hamilton; Quincy Pannell and Gavin Menard.

Tyler Kitts named District 2-4A Co-offensive Assistant Coach of the Year

By Ken Lay

Gibbs High School had a successful season on the gridiron in 2023.

The Eagles went 9-3 and finished second in Region 2-4A, behind eight-time defending region champion Anderson County. Gibbs earned plenty of recognition recently as the league's coaches when they announced their postseason awards.

Gibbs High's football team won four superlative awards. Head coach Brad Turner was named Coach of the Year, while offensive coordinator Tyler Kitts shared Co-assistant Coach of the Year honors with Anderson County's Jon Chadwell. Boone Brockwell was named Offensive Specialist of the Year and Benji Angola was named Specialist of the Year.

Kitts, a Gibbs graduate, who played football and baseball for the Eagles, oversaw an offense that averaged 30.5 points per game. He said he was honored to win the award, but credited the players and his fellow coaches.

"This season, we had a lot of good kids and our offensive line coach, coach (Brent) Hughes does a great job and he won this award last year," Kitts said. "Coach Turner does a great job, and he lets us do our job."

"We have great kids and it all starts with the parents. I'm honored to be here, and be back to where I went to school. We have great community support."

During his time as a player in Corryton, he played for longtime head coach Randy Carroll and also had ties to former Eagles' head coach and offensive coordinator Brad Conley and credits both as educators and coaches.

"They made sure that you did things the right way," Kitts said of Carroll and Conley.

In addition to its all-league superlative awards, Gibbs had two players named to the all-academic team as Sabe Smith and Cam Norman were recognized for their achievements in the classroom.

The Eagles also had eight players named to the All-Region 2-4A Team including: Wyatt West; Hayden Mills; DaJuan Harris; Cash Mount; Brady Hughes; Wyatt Bentley; Luke Tidwell and Levi Allison.

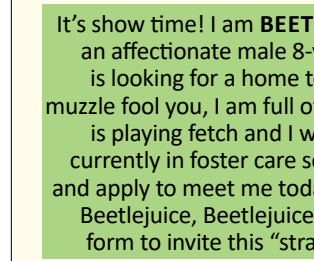
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Young-Williams Animal Center



Hi there! My name is **MAKA** and I am a female brown and black striped Domestic Medium Hair cat. I am 6 years old and love to race from room to room and bat my toys around as fast as I can. I am a very sweet but shy kitty looking for my perfect sanctuary. I am a petite lady looking for somewhere calm and quiet that needs lots of exploring. I am currently available from a foster home. You can find me on young-williams.org and fill out an application to get in touch with my foster pawrent to set up a meet and greet!



It's show time! I am **BEETLEJUICE**, the ghost with the most. I am an affectionate male 8-year-old black Pit Bull Terrier mix who is looking for a home to haunt forever. Don't let my graying muzzle fool you, I am full of spirit and love! My favorite activity is playing fetch and I will never tire of the excitement. I am currently in foster care so come on and make my millennium and apply to meet me today! You don't have to say Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice to summon me, just fill out the online form to invite this "strange & unusual" fellow into your home!

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www.young-williams.org

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