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### Taste of Christmas, parade to be held this Thursday

Editor's note: The Diamond incorrectly identified the date of the parade in last week's paper. Please note that it is set for Thursday, Dec. 12.

MURFREESBORO -- This Thursday, Dec. 12 and the Chamber will host their ever popular "Taste of Christmas" meal fundraiser at the Murfreesboro Senior Adult Center from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The meal features ham, dressing and a variety of sides and desserts prepared by local churchgoers. The cost of meal, which may be eaten there or in a to-go format, will cost \$10 or greater donation to the Chamber.

Later that evening on Dec. 12, the Chamber will conduct the annual Christmas Parade under the theme of "Light up Murfreesboro." Lineup for the parade will be in front of the former Pike County Hospital at 5 p.m. and begin traversing toward the other end of town at 6

Local businesses will be encouraged by the Chamber to hold extended hours that night following the parade. In addition, registration will be available at participating businesses starting December 7 through the night of the parade, with the Chamber drawing for prizes and chamber bucks.

More information for any of the above listed events may be obtained by calling the Murfreesboro Chamber of Commerce at (870) 285-

### Gospel event announced

ANTOINE -- The Antoine Baptist Church will be hosting a gospel singing on Saturday, Dec. 14, starting at 5 p.m.

The service will feature Ron Kelley and the

Kelley's from Benton. Refreshments will be served after the service.

Everyone is invite to attend this fellowship.

### Murfreesboro coach departs for Nashville

MHS begins search for new football head coach immediately, with no definitive timeline

MURFREESBORO -- The South Pike County School Board accepted the resignation of head football coach Brad Chesshir at their December meeting on Monday night.

Chesshir has been announced as the new football head coach at Nashville High School earlier Monday. Chesshir was a graduate of NHS in 2007, where he was an award winning linebacker and part of the Scrappers' two consecutive state championship teams in 2005-2006. Chesshir was also Nashville's defensive coordinator in 2015 when Nashville won another state title.

In his three years at Murfreesboro High School following his hire from De Queen in the spring of 2022, the Rattlers went a combined 22-11 and won first round playoff games the past two seasons after being back-to-back 4-2A regular season conference champions.

In a submitted letter, Chesshir penned the following to the board:

"Please accept this letter as my formal notice of resignation from the South Pike County School District effective on December 20, 2024. As this decision was not an easy one, I want to express my gratitude toward the South Pike County School District and the community for being so good to me and my family. This is a special place and will forever be special to my family. I know that the program will continue to be successful for many years. I look forward to following the success of the Rattler football program over the years and I will do whatever I can do to help. If I can be of any assistance through this transition, please let me know. Sincerely, Brad Chesshir

The board accepted the resignation of Chesshir by a 6-0 vote. In addition to his coaching duties, Chesshir also served as the district's athletic director.

After the meeting, Superintendent Tanya Wilcher voiced both disappointment and hope for the future.

"Well, I hate it personally and I hate it for our district -- he has been wonderful and brought a culture to us that I feel like will keep us growing for years to come. I totally understand [his decision] -- it's his family and his hometown. He wants to go [there] and build what he has done for us. He feels like he needs to go to his hometown and do that. We will definitely miss him, but I hope we will bring someone in that will just pick up and keep going stronger. I feel like we have the type of program going now that will get some good applicants, and I think someone will love to come join our team. That's what we are -- a family -- and we want someone to come be a part of our Rattler tradition."

Wilcher said there was no timetable for the process to hire a new coach, other than it would begin immediately.

"I will open it up tonight [Monday] and it will be online. We are basically going to accept applications until we find that person. I don't want to put a time on it, because I don't want to



CHESSHIR TO NASHVILLE ... The popular Murfreesboro High School football Coach Brad Chesshir resigned from his duties (effective Dec. 20) at MHS to accept the head coaching position at Nashville High School. Chesshir is pictured (above) talking to the team following the win over Lafayette County on October 18.

rush it, and I also don't want to have to extend it in order to find the right person."

Wilcher said that while the decision by Chesshir was not ideal, the timing was as good as it gets, allowing the district to find a new coach prior to both spring practice and summer workouts -- when the pool of possibilities would be much lessened.

"In March and April you have offseason going and everything rolling, you need somebody

in place to help you get all that done."

She also wished to put a good spin on the overcast day to conclude.

"I feel like it's been a good year, we are growing, doing well, we are proud of our sports and our academics -- it's going to be good and we will have a great second semester. I want everybody just to remember what is important -- which is our students."

### O'Neal to be honored at retirement reception

MURFREESBORO -- The public is invited to join a retirement reception honoring Susan O'Neal on Friday, Dec. 20, from 1 to 3 p.m.

O'Neal is an employee in the Pike County Circut Clerk's office as a deputy clerk under Pike County Circuit Clerk Sabrina Williamson.

The reception will be held on the second floor of the Pike County Courthouse.

Howard County man arrested for alleged fifth DWI MURFREESBORO -- A Howard County man has been arrested and charged in Pike County

after he was allegedly caught drinking and driving for the fifth time.

Freddie L. Robinson, 57, of Nashville plead innocent to the felony fifth-offense DWI charge Monday and he was ordered to return to court on Feb. 3 with an attorney. A March 3 pretrial date was set for the case.

Robinson was arrested by Arkansas State Trooper Micah Brown on Nov. 26 and charged Dec. 6. The trooper had pulled Robinson over in Murfreesboro for expired tags. Robinson, who was traveling with his son, was found to be driving on a revoked license and reportedly had a cold open can of beer in the center con-

Robinson is also charged with misdemeanor

refusal to submit to a chemical test, open container in vehicle, no liability insurance, expired tags, fictitious license plate sticker and violation of interlock device requirements.

Also on Dec. 6, Noe Ismael Gonzalez-Perez, 28, was Glenwood was charge with failure to comply with registration and reporting requirements of being a sex offender.





### Lady Rattlers jump out to 5-0 start of season

MURFREESBORO - The Murfreesboro Lady Rattlers have jumped out to a 5-0 start to the 2024-2025 basketball season.

The ladies opened with a 65-26 win over Umpire to open the

MHS would bolt to the lead in a 23-5 first quarter that saw Chloe Scoggin score all eight of her points in the game, including a pair of three-pointers.

The lead would expand to 38-11 by halftime.

Delaney Ford had eight points for Umpire, while teammate Savannah White knocked down a trio of three-pointers for her

Jenna May had 12 points to lead the Lady Rattlers, followed by Natalie Perrin with 10. Jocee Holt would add nine in the contest and add a team-leading seven steals.

Perrin would lead the team with four offensive and four defensive rebounds.

As a team, Murfreesboro cumulatively hit seven three-pointers and record 19 steals versus 14 total turnovers.

Scoggin had a team-high four assists.

#### VERSUS MINERAL SPRINGS

In the second night of the Lady Rattler Classic to open the season, MHS defeated the Lady Hornets of Mineral Springs by

The Lady Rattlers would jump out to a 14-4 score after one period, but Mineral Springs would fight back in the second, outscoring MHS 14-6 in the quarter to close the gap to 20-18 at the

MHS won the third period 18-14 and then defensively put the clamps down on the Lady Hornets in the fourth quarter, allowing only eight points, to secure the win.

Perrin would lead the Lady Rattlers in scoring with 15 points, followed by Holt with 13 points and May with 12 points each. Number five led the Lady Hornets with 13 points, while num-

ber 23 added 11. Sydney Braden led the team with 12 rebounds (6 defensive, 6

offensive) and had a pair of steals. Perrin, Holt and Jamie Howell each has two steals. As a team,

MHS recorded 11 steals and had 16 turnovers. Scoggin again led the team with four assists.

#### **VERSUS MAGNET COVE**

On Nov. 19, Murfreesboro would defeat Magnet Cove at home by a 55-45 score.

The Lady Rattlers had a 32-25 lead at the break, but Magnet Cove would outscore the hosts 10-4 in the third period to trail by one at the quarter's end.

Murfreesboro's Holt saved her best for the stretch run, scoring 11 of her 14 points and knocking down a pair of threes in the final quarter. Howell also had a pair of threes in the final quarter as part of her 11 points. Braden would tally ten points

As a squad, the Lady Rattlers hit eight three-pointers.

Tayla Tanaka led the Lady Panthers with 20 points, while her teammate Braelyn McEntire added nine.

Braden again led the team with 12 rebounds (nine defensive, three offensive). Scoggin had five steals to pace MHS. As a collective, the team recorded 16 steals and has 26 turnovers.

Scoggin and May each had four assists in the contest.

#### **VERSUS UMPIRE**

In their first of two games last week, the Lady Rattlers again

defeated Umpire, this time by a 77-44 score.

MHS would jump out to a 27-7 lead by the end of the first quarter and wouldn't look back.

Perrin would lead the team with 19 points, while Scoggin added 16. Braden had 12 in the game.

Ford would lead Umpire with 23 points.

Perrin led the team with seven steals, while Scoggin had five

As a team, MHS had 22 steals against 17 turnovers.

### VERSUS SPRING HILL

The Lady Rattlers defeated Spring Hill by a 43-34 score last

Friday night to open their conference slate.

After jumping out to a 13-8 lead in the first quarter, the Lady Rattlers would extend the lead to 22-13 by halftime. They held a 35-22 advantage going into the final quarter.

May led the team in scoring with 14 points, followed by Perrin with 12 and Holt with 10.

Kinslee Howell would lead the team in rebounding with eight (3 offensive, five defensive), while Holt notched four assists.

### Murfreesboro Diamond

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Any erroneous statement published in the newspaper will be gladly and promptly corrected if called to the attention of the management.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FRIDAYS AT 3:00 P.M.



SEEKING POSSESSION ... Kinslee Howell seeks to come away with the basketball on the offensive end of the court in the Lady Rattlers' recent game versus Spring Hill as teammate Jenna May looks on.

Perrin had four steals along with Scoggin's three.

Cumulatively, the Lady Rattlers balanced in the steals to turnovers ledger at 13 and shot well from long range -6/15 for 40%. The team's defense allowed them to shoot a subpar 27% (9/33) from two-point range and 50% (7/14) at the charity stripe.

#### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The Lady Rattlers still have a number of games prior to the holiday break, including at Horatio on Dec. 10, versus Hampton on Dec. 12, at Foreman on Dec. 13, versus Gurdon on Dec. 16 and versus Mountain Pine on Dec. 17. The Lady Rattlers will then next see action Dec. 28-Jan. 4 at the Mineral Springs senior tournament.

#### MURFREESBORO JUNIOR LADY RATTLERS

The Junior Lady Rattlers opened the season with a 42-37 win over Mineral Springs.

Kyndahl Posey would lead the team with 14 points, while Macy Gills and Kyndall Henderson each had seven points each. The Lady Hornets held a 24-17 halftime lead.

In their second game of the season, the girls traveled to Nashville to participate in the Scrapper Junior Tournament. The girls found themselves down 24-3 after the first period,

digging a hole that was ultimately too large to climb out of. The contest finished with a 53-12 final.

Back at home against Magnet Cove, the girls lost by a 37-36 score in overtime. Murfreesboro would control the game through three quarters,

taking a 23-13 lead into the final quarter. The Lady Panthers were able to outscore MJHS 13-3 in the fourth to move the game into an extra stanza.

In overtime, Magnet Cove would prevail by outscoring MJHS

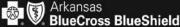
Maci Price would lead the team with 15 points and a pair of three-pointers. Henderson would add eight points and Shaylia

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on December 19, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. the contents of the following storage units will be auctioned off to satisfy the operator's lien. That sale will take place at the location of the storage unit on Highway 19 in Murfreesboro, Arkansas. All sales will be for cash and the buyer will be responsible to remove all contents from the storage unit within 10 days of the sale and sweep the unit clean. Units #21, 22 and letter G, L, and N.



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Morris had six points.

MJHS would again get to take on Mineral Springs in the second game at Nashville, winning this contest by a 35-31 score.

The Lady Rattlers held a 19-18 lead at the halftime break, but took control in the third outscoring MSJHS 8-2.

Henderson scored 12 points to lead MJHS, while Morris had

Last Friday night the girls defeated Spring Hill 42-21.

MJHS forced Spring Hill to play from behind the whole game, jumping out to a 14-4 lead by the end of the first quarter. The Lady Bears did make up a little ground by halftime at 20-14, and had the deficit cut to 26-24 by the end of the third. The Lady Rattlers were able to end any doubt of a full-fledged comeback by the early stages of the fourth quarter, however.

Henderson had 16 to lead the squad, with Morris adding 11 and Addy Silva with five.

Before the holiday break, the junior Lady Rattlers will face off at Foreman on Dec. 13 and against Mountain Pine on Dec. 17.

### LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

All letters to the editor must be signed, along with a phone number (that will not be published) provided for confirmation purposes. The Murfreesboro Diamond reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Letters must not be libelous or contain any profanities.

Send Letters to P.O. Box 550, Murfreesboro, AR 71958 or e-mail to mdiamond.editor@windstream.net

#### **Latimer Funeral Home** in Nashville

is offering personalized ornaments to families who have lost loved ones during this past year.

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### Rattlers ahead of schedule with fast start

MURFREESBORO – In their effort to replicate last season's highly successful season, the Murfreesboro High School Rattler basketball squad is off to a fast start.

After the football team was eliminated from the playoffs on Nov. 22, the basketball team put their pieces in place to attend the Magnet Cove Senior Boys Basketball Classic on Dec. 2.

The Rattlers took on the host Magnet Cove team to open the season, coming away with a 49-39 victory.

After an 8-8 first quarter that saw both teams feeling each other out, the Rattlers doubled their output in the second quarter to take a 24-15 lead into halftime.

The Rattlers were able to parlay that lead into a win after both teams essentially played even in the second half.

James Silva would lead the MHS in scoring with 21 points, while Caden Dixon added 15 and Kooper Caldwell eight. Anthony Villeczas would score 16 to lead Magnet Cove.

#### VERSUS UMPIRE

The next night, the Rattlers would return home to host Umpire, taking an easy 58-25 victory.

MHS would lead 20-5 at the end of the first quarter.

The Rattlers were able to substitute liberally in the game, gaining playing time for the back end of the roster.

Dixon would lead the team in scoring with 13 points, while Silva had 10. Kale Burns and Weston Lamb each has six points in the effort.

D'Artanian Duboise and Santos Salinas would lead the Wilcats in scoring with 8 points each.

#### VERSUS FOUNTAIN LAKE JV

On Dec. 4, MHS would return to Magnet Cove to complete their participation in the Classic and take on the Fountain Lake Junior Varsity squad in their third game in three days. The team would defeat the Cobras 43-29.

Silva netted 19 points to lead MHS, followed by teammates Dixon with 11, Laytan Wilcher with seven and Caldwell with

Agustin Vasquez would lead the JV Cobras with eight points.

#### VERSUS SPRING HILL

The Rattlers would open fast in defeating Spring Hill 82-52 at home last Friday night.

Buoyed by fantastic outside shooting, the Rattler opened up a huge early lead -- 32-13 - by the end of the first quarter. Spring Hill cut into the lead slightly by halftime at 49-34, but MHS' 20-10 third quarter gave them a deficit they couldn't recoup.

Silva led the team with 29 points, along with Caldwell's 19, Wilcher's 17 and Dixon's 10.

Caldwell was especially excellent on three-pointers, knocking down five of his eight attempts. As a team, the Rattlers went 10/23 from deep (43%), which

-- if replicated as the season goes on – will portend well for them as teams look to sag down to defend Silva in the lane.

Silva would secure nine rebounds (three offensive, six defensive), Dixon and Wilcher would each have three assists and

Silva, Wilcher and Kale Burns each claimed three steals.

As a team, MHS had 13 steals versus only a pair or turnovers in the game.

Maverick Mills scored 18 points to pace the Bears.

"We shot the ball extremely well – 56% from two-point range and 43% from three point range - I was not expecting that and was surprised," said coach Buster Bonner.

He was hopeful the trend could continue, but realistically still expects a few bumps in the road down the season.

"I told them in the locker room I knew we could be this good, but I didn't expect it this early ... I really didn't. I hope this continues and we can keep on building on this effort. We saw what we can do when they double James underneath and leave us open on the outside ... [the Bears] weren't expecting that -- but even when they adjusted and started covering us on the outside, we were still scoring. We scored more by halftime than we were scoring in whole ballgames [previous]. Kaden, Kooper and Laytan's outside shooting really was the difference in the game. Yes, James had 29, but we had four players in double figures and when you do that, something is going your way. If we are clicking like that, we will be hard to beat.'

Bonner said it was a great outing for his squad against what he feels is one of the better teams in the 7-2A conference.

He also added that he is still mixing and matching the lineups to find the best synergy, including the starting five.

"We still haven't settled on anything," he said, noting a group of seven leading players.

"All in all they are coming together, and we have high expectations for them.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

Leading into the holiday break, the Rattlers have a number of games, including at Horatio on Dec. 10, versus Hampton on Dec. 12, at Foreman on Dec. 13, versus Gurdon on Dec. 16 and versus Mountain Pine on Dec. 17. The Rattlers will then next see action Dec. 28-Jan. 4 at the Mineral Springs senior tournament.

Bonner said Foreman was much better than last year with the addition of some "dandy" freshmen and a 6'5" transfer center from Ashdown.

#### MURFREESBORO JUNIOR RATTLERS

The junior high Rattlers would open the season in the Nashville Junior High Tournament against the host squad.

The game started out in the junior Scrappers' favor, with them holding a 12-2 lead. The Rattler's woes continued into the halftime break where they faced a 34-12 deficit.

Ultimately, MJHS would lose by a 57-28 score.

J. Burgess would lead the Rattlers with 18 points, followed by Cale Humphry and Hunter Sweat with five points each.

In their second game at the Nashville Tournament, the team would face off against Mineral Springs.

Again MJHS would face a large deficit in the first half, trailing 15-10 after one quarter and 27-17 at halftime.

The Rattler would roughly play even with the Hornets in the second half, with the final score of 47-34.

Burgess would again lead the team in scoring with 24 points, followed by Cooper Lowery with four.

#### VERSUS UMPIRE

MJHS would host Umpire on Dec. 3, earning their first victory

### **BASKETBALL** Continued on Page 5



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### **Obituaries**

### Betty Sue Dillard, Murfreesboro



Betty Sue Dillard, was escorted to Heaven in the arms of her Savior, Jesus, on December 4, 2024 surrounded by her loving family. Betty Sue was born on July 21,1928 to Jennings Bryan Elam and Allene Hunter Elam. She leaves the following legacy of love: daughters, Kathy and husband Dowell Conley of Blytheville, AR, Diane and husband John Tom Hargrave of Fullerton, CA and Becky and Mike Dickey of Maumelle, AR. Six grandchildren: Kim and husband Brett Grotbeck of Boxborough, MA, Zac Hargrave of Fullerton, CA, Kristen and husband Joshua Thinnes of San Francisco, CA, Josh and Alexx Conley of Wilson, AR, Alyssa and husband Wes Painter of Old Hickory, TN, and Sean Hinerman of Nashville, TN. Four great-grandchildren: Peter and Evan Grotbeck of Boxborough, MA, Thea Painter of Old Hickory, TN and Samuel Conley of Wilson, AR. A brother, Jim Elam and wife Mary Alice of Longview, Texas and sister-inlaw Dorothy Dillard of Texarkana, Texas. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. C.E. Dillard Jr. "Jack" and her parents.

Betty Sue graduated from Murfreesboro schools, attended Southern State University and got her teaching degree from Henderson State University. She taught school in Delight and St. Louis, MO while her husband attended Dental school.

Her love for children led her to begin the Brownies and Girl Scouts in Murfreesboro. She was an active member of First United Methodist church for 75 years where she was also the Youth Leader and United Women in Faith President. She served on many committees but really enjoyed planning the programs of the church. She loved sewing for her girls, working on her beautiful back yard and planting as many flowers as she could.

She looked forward to spending lazy days at Lake Greeson with Jack on their party barge, riding her bike all over town, playing games and planning parties with her grandchildren. The joy of her life was the annual family reunion when everyone came home for her birthday. She would plan "theme parties" that we all enjoyed. There were always old movies and slides to watch and ice cream to freeze and of course lots of pictures to take. She was thrilled when she and Jack were chosen to be Mr. and Mrs. Diamond for the Annual Diamond Festival. They loved to travel and went to all the states in the union. They went to Mexico and cruised the Caribbean but will both agree that their trip to the Holy Land

was the best. Betty Sue was married for 68 years to the love of her life, Jack, and theirs was a true love story. Born in the same house, same bedroom, and delivered by the same doctor 5 months apart is a favorite story they loved to tell. They started 1st grade together, and were High School and college sweethearts. They did everything together and have been apart very few days of their lives.

Betty Sue will continue to live in the hearts of her many friends and more especially through her family who carry an untold amount of lessons taught and love received. She was a woman of true character whose life was a living witness of God's love.

A celebration of a life well lived was held on Saturday, December 7 at Murfreesboro First United Methodist Church at 2:30. Visitation was held before the service at 1:30. Burial followed in the Murfreesboro Cemetery.

In honor of her love for her church, the family humbly requests memorials be made to First United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro, AR. A special thank you to the many family and friends who brought food, visited and prayed for us. And thanks to Hospice Home Care for the loving and tender care given to our mother so she could be in her home. Two special angels helped to care for Miss Betty Sue in her last months and deep appreciation and love goes out to LaDonna Knighten and her mom Delores Marsh.

You may send an online sympathy message at www. latimerfuneralhome.com

### Leverett Raymond Epperson, 89



Leverett Raymond Epperson Jr., age 89, of Murfreesboro, Arkansas passed away on Monday, December 9, 2024, in New Boston, Texas. He was born on December 21, 1934, in Kilgore, Texas the son of the late Leverett Raymond Epperson Sr. and Anna Belle Hendrickson Epperson.

During his career he began as a self-employed chicken farmer in Highfill, Arkansas. At the age of 28 in 1962 he moved his family to Murfreesboro, Arkansas to serve as a USDA inspector, a job he did for thirty-two years retiring in

One of his favorite hobbies was fishing. He loved to wade the creeks and sloughs around the Pike County area catching fish. Mr. Epperson was a member of the Christian Educational Ministries, he loved the Senior Citizens Center, and playing chair volleyball.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife Okemah Epperson; one son Raymond Epperson III, one brother Lindsey Epperson, and one sister Sue Sul-

Survivors include two daughters Vandy Epperson Belasco and husband John of North Little Rock, Kelly Lidzy and husband Bud of Malvern; one son Grady Epperson and wife Kim of Corley, Texas; a daughter in law Annette Epperson of Jasper, TN; two sisters Mary Ellen Holland and Kathleen Huelett and husband Gene all of Highfill, AR; ten grandchildren Travis Belasco, Jared Belasco, Casie Yates, Charity Sky-Eagle, Amber Epperson, Emily Epperson, Sidney Foster, Brody Epperson, Blaine Epperson, and Kali Anna Jones. As well as one special friend Crystal White. Visitation will be from 1:00

p.m. until 2:00 p.m., Thursday, December 12, at Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro. Funeral services will begin

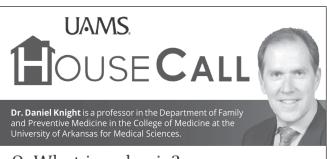
at 2:00 p.m., Thursday, December 12, at Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro, with Buddy Ray officiating, burial will follow in College Hill Cemetery, under the direction of Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro.

You may send an online sympathy message at www. latimerfuneralhome.com

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Common causes of aphasia include a brain infection or tumor, stroke, traumatic brain injury, or conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Aphasia can affect anyone but mostly occurs in older people The condition may come about suddenly if caused by a brain injury or stroke, or it can develop slowly if it's from a brain tumor or another progressive disease. Symptoms of someone affected with aphasia include being

speak or write or saying single words instead of complete sentences. The person may also speak words which are unrecognizable, have trouble following a conversation or be unable to understand what they've read. Treatment for aphasia depends

upon the extent of damage to the brain. In mild cases, the affected person may recover language skills on their own. Speech therapy may be required for more severe cases. Contact your health care provider for a treatment plan.

### Court sentences seven in proceedings this week

MURFREESBORO -- Seven defendants were sentenced during the Monday session of Pike County Circuit Court including a 73-year-old man that arranged to meet who he thought was a 14-year-old

Gary Eugene Johnson of Nashville plead guilty to the charges of internet stalking of a child and computer child pornography. He was sentenced to a total of 25 years in the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) with 10 years suspended. Johnson will return to Pike County court Jan. 6 for formal sentencing.

In August 2023, Johnson took the bait of Pike County Investigator Jason McDonald's undercover social media account, designed to catch sexual predators. The account portrays a 14-year-old female.

Johnson, who resides on Rankin Road, was 72 at the time and sent the account several pictures and videos of himself masturbating before setting up a meeting with the phantom 14-year-old. When he was arrested at the meeting place, he was found to be in possession of two cellphones and loaded pistol.

Also Monday, Micah Timothy Mitchell, 35, of Murfreesboro plead guilty to the amended charge of distributing, possessing, viewing matter depicting child sex and a single count of rape.

Mitchell was sexually involved with a 13-year-old female who had been sending nude images of herself to various men. He was sentenced to a total of 20 years in the ADC with 10 years suspended.

Clifton Lee Nash, 57, of Delight was sentenced to a total of eight years with five years suspended after he plead guilty to charges of possession of methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. Nash was arrested in December of 2023 after warrant was executed at his home on Bill-

Justin Stone, 31, of Delight, was sentenced to seven years with one years suspended on drug charges and three concurrent sentences of five years on three probation revocation charges. His sentence totals 11 years.

Brittany A. Smith, 39, of Delight plead guilty to drug and firearm charges and felony fleeing Monday. She was sentenced to six years with four years suspended on each of the two charges for a total of two years in the ADC.

Austin M. Swanger, 27, of Glenwood plead guilty to the charge of breaking or entering. He was sentenced to six years probation, fined \$1,500 and ordered into a recovery program.

Brandon Lee Watts, 44, of Delight plead 'true" to the charge of probation revocation and was sentenced to 60 days in the county jail.

### **Obituaries**

### Joyce M. Henderson, 90, Delight



Joyce M. Henderson, age 90, of Delight, AR passed away Saturday, December 7, 2024. She was born on July 25. 1934, in Okolona, Arkansas to the late James and Iva (Parks) Stockton. In her early teens, she assisted her family in operating a café in Delight. In Delight High School she was a star basketball player and was an avid roller skater. Upon graduating from high school, she had the opportunity to join the All American Red Heads (first professional women's basketball team) but after consultation with her dad decided to focus on work and family. She married Clovis W. Henderson in 1954 and after moving to West Texas to pursue work they had three children, Sandra, Sammy, and Shirley. The family moved back to the Delight, AR area in 1968 and she stayed there for the remainder of her life.

Joyce was a member of Delight Church of Christ. She en-

joyed gardening, bird watching, collecting 4-leaf clovers, and collecting anything to do with frogs. Joyce was a pillar in our family. She enjoyed spending time with extended family and touched many lives and will be missed by everyone who knew her. She was preceded in death by her husband, Clovis and her siblings, Silvia, Claire Bee, Inez, Louise, James, and Charley. Survivors include her sister Belinda Wilcox of Shreveport, LA, children Sandra Smith of Delight, Sammy Henderson (Paula) of Boulder, CO, and Shirley Smothers (Scott) of San Antonio, Texas, six grandchildren Jeremy Smith, Elizabeth Henderson Hartman, Jon Henderson, and Amanda, Samantha, and Matthew Smothers. Joyce was joyful and proud of her three great grandchildren.

Visitation is 9:00-11:00 a.m., Saturday, December 14, 2024 at the Ruggles-Wilcox Chapel in Arkadelphia. Funeral services are 3:30 p.m., Saturday, December 14, 2024, at the Delight Church of Christ. Services will conclude after the church service. Pallbearers are Jon Henderson, Jon Hartman, Jeremy Smith, Matthew Smothers, Ray Wise, Alvin Burnett, and Scott Smothers. Arrangements are by the Smith Family Funeral Home-Arkadelphia/Ruggles-Wilcox Chapel, 517 Clay Street, Arkadelphia, Arkansas 71923, www.smithfamilycares.com.



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### MHS announces postseason awards list

### Maroon a candidate for Class 2A defensive player of the year

MURFREESBORO -- Murfreesboro High School has announced the postseason awards list for the 2024 football campaign that saw the Rattlers win their second consecutive conference champi-

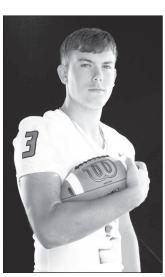
The senior trio of Laytan Wilcher, Brody Maroon and Lathan Compton were named to the 2A All-State team by 2A-3 conference coaches.

Players named to the 3-2A All-Conference list includes Wilcher, Maroon, Compton, Kale Burns, Logan Burrus, Hawkins Jackson, Cameron Stevens, Aden Stinson and Cash Lowery.

A pair of Rattlers, Kooper Caldwell and Daelyn Henderson, were on the All-Conference honorable mention list.

Also for Maroon, he is a finalist for the Farm Bureau 2A defensive player of the year.

The Farm Bureau Insurance Awards honor Arkansas' top offensive player, defensive player and coach of the year for each classification. The veteran staff at Hooten's Arkansas Football selects finalists for each category, and those finalists and their families are







ALL-STATE RATTLERS ... Three Rattler seniors from the team were named to the Class 2A all-state team for their efforts in 2024, including (L to R) Brody Maroon, Lathan Compton and Laytan Wilcher.

invited to attend the Farm Bureau Insurance Awards on Monday, Dec. 16 at the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Little Rock.

Mack Wallace, Vice President of Sales Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company of Arkansas, Inc., said: "It is truly my pleasure on behalf of Farm Bureau Insurance to take part in recognizing the incredible achievements of the student-athletes and coaches being honored here. They are some of the greatest in the state, and Farm Bureau Insurance wishes them continued

The other two candidates for 2A defensive player of the year are Gabe Boyle of Carlisle and Brady Domokos of Conway Christian.

For the Farm Bureau offensive player of the year finalists,

two were foes of the Murfreesboro Rattler this past season -- Dominique Grimes of Junction City and Ben Woodfield of Mount Ida along with Jeryn Thomas of Conway Christian.

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### **SOUTH PIKE COUNTY SCHOOL MENU**

Breakfast: Chicken biscuit or cereal, fruit,

juice, milk Lunch: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, black eyed peas, cornbread muffin, spiced ap-

ples, milk FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

Breakfast: Super donut or cereal, fruit, juice,

Lunch: Cheese pizza, steamed broccoli, sea-

soned corn, mixed fruit, milk **MONDAY, DECEMBER 16** 

Breakfast: Powered donut or cereal, juice,

fruit, milk Lunch: Cheeseburger, potato smiles, lettuce TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

Breakfast: Pancake on stick or cereal, juice, fruit, milk

Lunch: Chicken fajitas w/cheese, refried

beans, lettuce & tomato, salsa, fruit, milk **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18** 

Breakfast: French toast sticks or cereal, juice,

fruit, milk Lunch: Hot ham & cheese croissant, baked beans, seasoned corn, 7-12 baked chips, fruit,

\*Due to food item shortages menus are subject to change without notice. Any changes to the menu will be posted on the website at www.rattlers.org

### 'Dear Preacher' By Buddy Ray, Murfreesboro Church of Christ

IF YOU LOVE ME John 14:15

God's people spend great time and effort verifying the fact that they really love their Savior. We sing about it and we pray about it. How can we know for sure we love the Lord the way He wants us to love Him? We follow Him day by day and try our best to show that "Keep my commandments." Simply, He says, "Do what I have asked you to do." Talents and abilities vary but the command does not. The parable of the talents gives us a decisive look at how it works. We, individually, can only do what our ability permits. We must not try to judge our devotion by another child of God. The Lord knows what we are able to accom-



plish with the capacity He has given to us. The definition of a faithful servant is shown by our doing what we can in His service. We must do our best to step forward and accept any challenge or opportunity when it comes our way. Some of the open doors are always there and demand faithful devotion. The Lord knows each day will bring new challenges and our mind set must propel

us forward to do what we can every time we can. Accepting these challenges becomes a labor of love. We must do as Jesus did, work the works He has set before us each day we are blessed to obey. Do you and I love the Lord? The heartfelt answer is found in the joy we find in obeying our Lord. Do we look forward in great anticipation to honor Him every time we can? Is there a soul satisfying sense of bringing glory to Him each day we live? Jesus said, "If you love me..." Our response, obeying His commandments, will be done with zeal and love for Him. We are His servants and are honored that He has allowed us to serve Him and His father.

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**MONDAY, DECEMBER 16** 

Goulash, salad w/dressing, cornbread,

snickerdoodle cookies, milk **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17** 

BBQ on bun, pinto beans, oil & vinegar salad, fruited gelatin, milk

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18** 

Chicken & dressing, green beans, sweet po-

tatoes, cranberry sauce, peach cobbler Lunch served at 11:30 a.m. For more information (870) 285-2312. Open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 8 a.m. Carry out is now available for \$6.00

### **Trinity Missionary Baptist Church**

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Bro. Buddy Ray

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YEAR-IN-REVIEW \* -- Theme Related Clue

#### **ACROSS**

1. Cerberus' domain

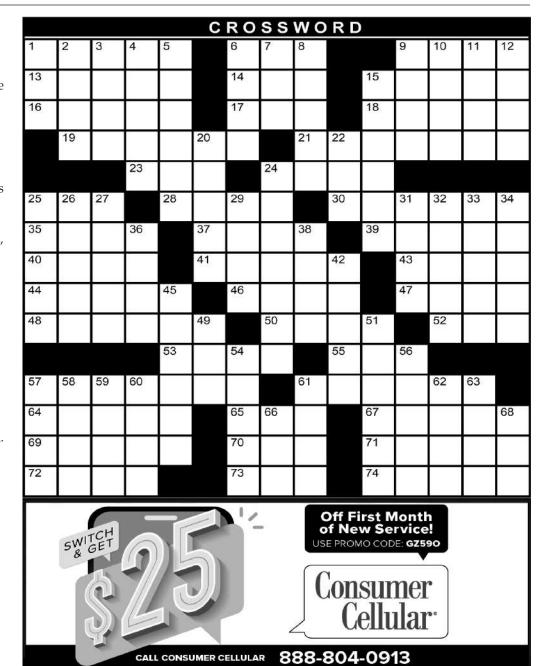
- 6. Chop
- 9. Mama's husband 13. Unsuitable
- 14. Adam's partner
- 15. Echo sounder
- 16. Sunny prefix 17. Armed conflict
- 18. In a heated manner
- 19. \*Highest grossing movie based on Broadway musical
- 21. \*Time's 100 World's Most Influential People cover model in 2024 (2 words)
  - 23. "\_\_\_\_ and the City"
  - 24. Not exciting
  - 25. Accident
  - 28. Rani's dress
  - 30. Talking points
  - 35. Aflame
- 37. Spanish sparkling wine
- 39. Slang for money
- 40. Velum, pl. 41. \*November 5th 2024 winner
- 43. Short for "and elsewhere" (2 words)
- 44. Met's offering 46. River in Bohemia
- 47. Queen of Hearts' pastry
- 48. \*Super Bowl winners in 2024 50. Visi\_\_\_\_ or Ostro\_
- 52. The Alan Parsons Project's "Eye in the
- of passage
- 55. \*Milton's center 57. \*Miley Cyrus' Grammy-winning Record
- of the Year in 2024 61. \*2024 Summer Olympic Games host
- 64. Cat's nine
- 65. Lowest or highest card
- 67. Accustom
- 69. E-wallet content
- 70. Backstabber 71. N in RN
- 72. Whipping mark 73. R&R spot

74. Support person

#### **DOWN**

- 1. "Say what?"
- 2. All over again 3. \*MV \_\_\_\_\_, cause of 2024 Baltimore bridge
- collapse
  - 4. Long stories
  - 5. Tends a fire
- 6. Obscene 7. Spermatozoa counterpart
- 8. Lost, in Paris
- 9. \*Olympic Gold winner Katie Ledecky's "court"
- 10. Dead against
- 11. Explore by touch
- 12. Maisie Williams' "Game of Thrones"
- character
  - 15. Hello, in Haifa 20. Dead-on
  - 22. Last month
  - 24. Disclose
  - 25. Wreaked state 26. Bet's predecessor
  - 27. Pileus, pl.
  - 29. Like steak order
  - 31. Maya Angelou, e.g.
  - 32. Itsy-bitsy bits
  - 33. \*Caitlin of college basketball 34. Gin and grapefruit juice cocktail, a.k.a.
  - dog
  - 36. Scarlet O'Hara's home 38. Speaking platform
  - 42. Dinklage or Townshend, e.g. 45. Again but differently
  - 49. Elton John's title
  - 51. Shenzi of "The Lion King" 54. Russian rulers, pre-1917
  - 56. Tedium

  - 57. "One\_ Over the Cuckoo's Nest"
  - 58. Classroom pests
  - 59. Elliptical
  - 60. Sunset location
  - 61. Sheep's milk cheese
  - 62. Little Miss Muffet's morsel 63. Gaelic tongue
  - 66. Upper limit
  - 68. Poetic "always"



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City council hears of grant to continue sidewalk project

### **BASKETBALL** Continued from Page 3

of the year by a 33-22 margin.

The Rattlers would hold leads of 11-4 after one quarter and 24-10 at halftime.

Burgess would score 10 for MJHS, followed by C.D. Morrow with six points.

Prior to the holiday break, MJHS will see action on Dec. 10 at Horatio and Dec. 12 versus Hampton. On Dec. 14 the seventh grade team will host a jamboree at the MHS gymnasium.

#### COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONGOING -- Holiday pecan orders are ready to be picked up at the Pike County Conservation District office at 131 N. Kelley St. in Murfreesboro on Monday thru Wednesday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Phone (870) 285-2424 for more information.

Email announcements to mdiamond@windstream.net

### Library announces new hours in '25

MURFREESBORO -- The Murfreesboro branch of the Pike County Library system has announced new working hours that will start beginning in January.

The library will then open at 9:30 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m. The new lunch hour will be from 12-1 p.m.

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Week of December 9, 2024

BY JOHN BALCH

Nashville News-Leader Staff

walk project through town.

### **BY RICK FLOYD** December's 'star' of the show

**PIKE COUNTY SKYWATCHERS** 

Murfreesboro Mayor Jim O'Neal announced Monday night

that the city has received a \$500,000 grant to continue its side-

The constellation Orion "the Hunter" is the star (no pun intended) of the night sky show in December as it rises shortly after sunset on the 24th.

It appears much larger as it comes up, and this is the same phenomenon that happens when the Moon and the Sun rises or sets. Science does not have a definitive answer to why we humans see this happen. They call it the Moon Illusion and that it is all in our heads.

A friend told me the answer is simple: when the Moon, for example, is at the horizon, our minds tell us that it is on the ground and therefore close, and when it is high in the sky it is far away. We all know than when something is near it appears larger, and vice versa. It is a plausible theory, and it points up the fact that the brain is a big factor in how we perceive reality. You can test the illusion by holding a pencil at arm's length

moon, and mark the bottom with your thumb. Do the exact same thing an hour or so later. It may surprise you to find that the measurements are about the same. The bottom line is to just enjoy the way we see things. Brain scientists pretty much agree that reality for us is a complicated relationship between our senses and our brains. Our eyes and

toward a large rising moon. Put the lead point at the top of the

adds what it "thinks" is there, and memory also plays a part. The Moon is full on the 15th. It rises at its most northern place on the horizon, near where the Sun rises at Solstice in June.

other senses provide information, the brain processes it and

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### Press

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O'Neal told council members that the Arkansas Department of Transportation 80/20 matching grant could be used to either finish the west side of the sidewalk project or start on the east side or attempt to complete the entire project - east and west with lighting. The project runs along North Washington through the

O'Neal advised council members to "kick it around" on how to best spend the funds with plans to meet with the project's engineer to determine costs for all three options. Treasurer/Recorder Penny Lamb said the city's matching funds for the project are expected to max out at \$210,000.

Mayor O'Neal also reported on the city's plan to appeal the 2020 census figure that shows the city has slipped below the 51% "Low to Moderate Income" designation. The mayor has said at past meetings that the increase in vacation rentals homes in Murfreesboro has contributed to the drop, as they formerly housed low to moderate income residents and families. The drop makes Murfreesboro too wealthy to qualify for many grant programs

until the next census in 2030. The plan is still being formulated to survey residents by mailout, phone or in person and submit the results through the proper channels for an appeal.

During discussion about the city's annual budget, council member Jane Fugitt made a motion to include the mayor's salary in the 4.5% employee pay raise approved for the 2025 budget. The motion was approved and will add \$4,000 to the position's salary. The mayor's current rate of pay is \$13,000 annually. Fugitt said the increase was warranted and called O'Neal "a working

Fugitt also reminded the council the Murfreesboro Chamber of Commerce's Taste of Christmas is Thursday at the Senior Adult Center from 11-1:00 and that there will be a retirement reception for Randy Miller Friday, Dec. 27 from 11-1:00 at city hall.

"He's given us 46 years of his life," Mayor O'Neal said of Miller, who is the city's water and sewer superintendent. The city's Christmas Parade will also be held Thursday night

at 5:00. The council also voted Monday to allow Chief Randy Lamb to sell the department's 2017 Ford Explorer to another agency for \$15,000. The Pike County Sheriff's Department has shown interested in buying the unit, according to the mayor.

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Staff Photo

**SANTA MAKES STOP IN MURFREESBORO** ... After being delivered to the Pike County Courthouse Square by the Murfreesboro Volunteer Fire Department last Saturday, Santa Claus took the time to visit with all the good boys and girls of Murfreesboro, regardless of age. After hearing their Christmas wishes, Santa presented the attendees with bags of fruit and candy.

### SPC school board selects replacement for vacancy

Approves new transfer rules that allow for possible immediate acceptance

MURFREESBORO -- In their December meeting, the South Pike County School Board unanimously selected Wes Campbell of Delight as the Zone 6 member replacement for the recently resigned Matt Henderson of Delight.

Henderson resigned his position on the board in November.

According to School Superintendent Tanya Wilcher, Campbell was the only candidate to submit a letter of interest for the position.

Wilcher gave the board an update on the new baseball/softball complex that is currently under construction.

She said the bleachers were recently delivered and being installed this week. Three walls of the concession stand have been erected, and sprinkler systems have been completed on the softball field. Sod will prospectively be added to the softball field this Thursday, and hopefully sod will be laid on the baseball field next week after the sprinkler system was completed there.

"It's really looking like a field down there," Wilcher said.

Wilcher went on to congratulate the 2024 MHS football team for their second consecutive conference championship.

"It's been a while since we've done that," Wilcher said, adding that commemorative shirts will be available for purchase in the near future.

Wilcher said the cheer squads for MHS and MJHS were at competitions recently and finished first and second respectively. The competition will end the MJHS season, with the senior high to compete at the state tournament

on Dec. 20 in Hot Springs.

Brody Maroon will sign a national letter of intent to play baseball at UA-Rich Mountain in Mena on Wednesday, Dec. 11 at 1:45 in the MHS activity room. Friends and family are invited to attend.

Semester tests will be held Dec. 19-20, which will be the last days of the semester. Students

will not return to campus until Jan. 7, 2025. The next school board meeting is scheduled to be held on Jan. 20, 2025, which is also the

Martin Luther King holiday.

The MHS marching band will perform in the Murfreesboro Christmas Parade on Dec. 12 starting at 6 p.m. and the band will hold their holiday concert on Dec. 18 starting at 5 p.m. in the MHS activity room.

In the MHS high school report, Cheyenne Burns highlighted some activities that didn't receive as much attention, including the breakfast ring ceremony for juniors that was catered by Terri's Place earlier this week. Additionally, the robotics team built robots that made deliveries around the school and the chemistry classes created christmas decorations from at-

The seventh grade quiz bowl team placed first in a tournament at Caddo Hills last week.

Other noteables at MHS included the use of new microscopes in class, history classes taking a field trip to Historic Washington State Park, the tourism class visiting Little Rock that included a train ride and scenic views and bridges, 10-12 grade English classes traveling to see Shakespeare on stage, dessert food wars in family and consumer sciences class, the "Pack the Pit" effort placed number 11 in a statewide competition of more than 70 entries for school pride.

James Riley told the board of testing that has been going on at MES with Arkansas Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (ATLAS). Used on "Testing Tuesdays" he said the results showed where students were excelling or lacking in key educational standards.

After C-Stop Exxon/Baskin Robbins recently changed ice cream providers, MES was provided with 12 three-gallon tubs of ice cream that was utilized for the fifth grade who won the November positive points contest.

Riley said December was "crazy" and he laughed saying he sent an e-mail to teachers to "keep the Christmas spirit and he didn't want to be the Grinch but we still need to do some learning. We are slowly going to crank the chaos meter as we get closer to the end."

The MES Jingle Bell Ball will be held on Dec. 17 from 4-6 p.m. in the activity room. MES students will go caroling at the Murfreesboro Rehab and Nursing Home throughout the week prior to Christmas, culminating in the Dec. 20 performance that will feature fifth and sixth graders in costume. Later that day, the play will be held at 6 p.m.

MES was treated to Gus, the 14-year-old mushroom horse, that was purchased by first grade instructor Jane Caldwell. The horse was formerly a birthday party act, whose owner sold it when he realized that kids didn't want ponies at their birthday any longer.

The board passed an update to the student transfer policy, which Wilcher said was unusual in the middle of a school year. New school choice law allows for schools to make decisions on transfers from Jan. 1-May 1 and allows for the school to immediately accept the petitioning student as a transfer.

Other choices for the board include accepting the student at the start of the next school year, reject the student's application for transfer or reject the student due to being on expulsion from another school district.

"You have 10 days to let them know your choices," Wilcher said. "You can do school choice now and be accepted immediately."

However, if rejected, there must be a "really good reason" Wilcher said, such as class size at capacity forcing the need for hiring new teachers.

She said larger schools might have more issues with accepting new students due to room/class availability.

"A school like Bryant may get like 50 new kids on school choice," Wilcher stated. "They may not have the room or teachers [for that]. They would accept more at the end of the year [for the next school year]."

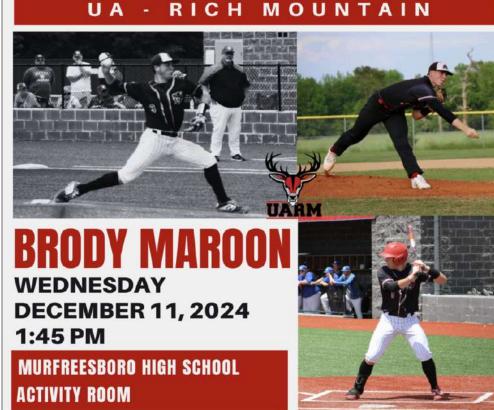
Wilcher said the still unclarified part of such a rule is whether transfer students could be eligible for spring sports -- softball, baseball and track.

"We don't know, and the Arkansas Activities Association is fighting the issue with the [state] legislature that starts in January."

The board also approved a measure to give each employee at the schools a \$300 Christmas bonus that will be included with their check this Friday.

Wilcher reasoned that since appraisals were up in the district and more tax revenue would be garnered -- even "playing it safe" -- she wanted to give back to the employees, as was her goal at every possible juncture.

## SGRING DAY UA - RICH MOUNTAIN



### Be vigilant for holiday scams

**BY JOHN BOOZMAN,** U.S. Senator, Arkansas

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- It is the season of giving but, unfortunately, it is also open season for criminals who take advantage of kindness and generosity. So, as you plan your shopping and end-of-year gifts, it is important to do your homework, make sure websites are legitimate and think about why an online person or entity

might be asking you for money.

Of course, scams are a problem throughout the year and my office regularly uncovers cases where Arkansans are being misled by a crook.

One example we've heard many times over the years involves a supposed friend – often called a fiancé – who is stuck outside the country. Their taxi got into a car accident on the way to the airport. They are in the hospital. They missed a flight and can't afford a new ticket. Their employer cut off their paycheck and now their bank in the U.S. froze their account. They are estranged from their family and don't know their neighbors, so this alleged "friend" convinces someone they've met on social media to send them money.

The problem is, it's all a lie. This piling-on of impossible coincidences with only one solution is a deceptive tactic criminals often use, which means it is important to be vigilant and use a healthy amount of skepticism when people approach us for money, especially online.

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It can be hard to tell what is real and what is fake when bad actors hack into or impersonate a real person's social media account. This is increasingly common. In fact, fake accounts have been created in my name on several occasions.

Fortunately, sharp-eyed constituents have called my office to find out if it was really me, and our team alerted authorities to remove the scam accounts. But it underscored for me and my family how easy it is for criminals to use the names of people and businesses we trust to manipulate unsuspecting victims.

Sadly, older Americans are frequently the target of these ploys. The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) tracks and investigates online crime and reports a few of the most recurring types of fraud involving the elderly include themes around romance, tech support, help for grandchildren and home repair. In 2023 alone, total losses reported to the IC3 by people over 60 topped \$3.4 billion.

But it is important to recognize that senior Americans are not the only ones scammers prey on, especially during the holidays. We must all pay attention to warning signs to make sure we are buying from legitimate websites and giving to real charities. The FBI offers tips and resources for buying and donating on the IC3 website (www.ic3.gov), as does the Federal Trade Commission (www.consumer.ftc.gov/scams), to make sure our money goes to real people and not in the pocket of thieves.

If you've been the victim of a scam, you can report the crime to these resources and local authorities. In addition, the Arkansas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division has helpful information about the most common scams circulating in our state and information on how to protect yourself.

Let's all do our part to safeguard ourselves and our family and friends during the holidays and year-round.





Staff Photo