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Wednesday, January 14, 2026
Issue 28 • 1 Section • 6 Pages



January	February	March	
December	PIKE COUNTY SANITATION DEPARTMENT		April
	January 1, _____ to January 1, _____		
November	I, _____		May
	affirm that I am a resident of Pike County		
	and I am not a pay-for-hire contractor.		June
October	_____ (signature)		
September	August	July	

Submitted photos/PCJ

LANDFILL PERMIT NOW OFFERED

Following local landfill prohibition, County Judge offers alternative solution

MURFREESBORO -- Pike County Judge Ed-die Howard has announced a new plan for county citizens to dispose of their trash follow-ing the announcement that the Pike County Landfill will no longer accept Class 1 house-hold trash.

Residents may now have a permit that may be picked up at the County Judge's office at the Pike County Courthouse in Murfreesboro. The permit will allow Pike County citizens to take two free trips each month to the Upper South-west Regional Landfill in Howard County.

When a resident goes to get their permit, they will need to bring at least one of the fol-lowing -- proof of residency, driver's license or utility bill.

"This is to help someone who has class 1 trash but can't take it to the Pike County land-fill, due to us not being able to take class 1 gar-bage anymore," Howard said on social media.

Residents will be required to have the actual permit with them to be able to utilize the dump for free by showing it at the landfill office. They will punch out a spot for each time you utilize the service.

Howard reiterated that the permit is only good for those taking refuse to the Upper Southwest Regional Landfill.

Food bank to distribute boxes locally on Jan. 28

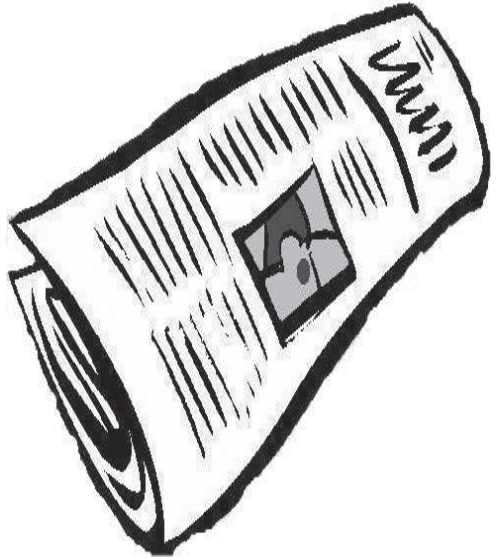
TEXARKANA -- Harvest Regional Food Bank will distribute TEFAP USDA Food Boxes directly from their truck in Murfreesboro on Wednesday, Jan. 28, from 8:30-10:30 a.m. or un-til all boxes have been distributed.

Recipients must come inside the Municipal building located at 204 E. Main St. to check in. Check-In starts at 7 a.m.

Once checked in, recipients will go back to their vehicle and proceed to line up along 2nd Ave and Owens St. towards First United Meth-odist Church.

Food boxes will be loaded directly into ve-hicles from the back of the Municipal building. The next Mobile Pantry is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18.

Recipients must bring photo identification or proof of address to verify they are residents of Pike County. Distribution is limited to one box per household and two households per vehicle.



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WORTH TELLING?
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Call (870) 285-2723 For More Information

Development Commission seeks community partners

To host luncheon in Murfreesboro next Monday to present cause

MURFREESBORO -- The Pike County Eco-nomic Development Commission (PCEDC) Board of Directors will host a membership drive luncheon and meet and greet on Monday, Jan. 19.

The event will start at noon in Connections Coffee on the Square, located at 19 Courthouse Square in Murfreesboro.

Amanda Chandler, volunteer acting director for the group will be the speaker at the event. Free sandwiches will be provided for those in attendance.

For more information or to RSVP for the event, please contact Chandler at (870) 356-9646 or e-mail her at amanda@pikecoaredc.com.

Attendees to the event will be provided with a community interest form for feedback on comments/questions/suggestions and how they feel the PCEDC can best serve Pike County.

The PCEDC was established in August of 2024, in an effort to develop strategic economic growth and community development for Pike County. Since its inception, the group "has ac-complished remarkable milestones that posi-tion it as a catalyst for positive change in the region," according to a press release.

Focusing on building a solid organizational foundation from the outset, a board of com-munity leaders with diverse experience from throughout the county began by developing comprehensive bylaws to guide their opera-tions and decision making processes. They also secured 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in order to serve the community while maintaining fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability.

The group also created a comprehensive economic development strategy along with the University of Little Rock's Institute for Eco-nomic Advancement. The strategic partnership brought professional expertise and economic analysis to complete a roadmap that identi-fied opportunities, addresses challenges and establishes clear priorities for Pike County's economic future that align with the county's unique strengths and needs.

The PCEDC is developing a website to serve as a platform for economic growth. The plan is for it to support job creation, retention an expansion efforts throughout the county by providing businesses the information and re-sources needed to thrive. The website will also showcase the county's advantages and connect

employers with workforce opportunities.

The group recognizes that Pike County is in transition, like much of rural America, facing the challenge of demographic change while trying to maintain a diverse economic founda-tion. According to numbers provided by the group, the county had a population of 10,066 in 2021, a 10.8% decline from the 2010 census. Furthermore, the decline is suggested to con-tinue, with projections of 9.661 population by 2027.

The group states that the county's popula-tion is aging, with a median age of 43.6 years. Working-age population (18-64 years) is 57.4% of the residents, but that youth (21.9% under 18 years) and seniors (20.7% over 65 years) rep-resent significant segments. Males (50.1%) and females (49.9%) are split evenly in the county, with minorities comprising 13.8% of the popu-lation.

According to the PCEDC, the county econ-omy centers on manufacturing, employing 448 workers at the median wage of \$45,832 yearly. Manufacturing has shown modest growth of 5.5% over the past five years, but the group said slight contraction may be coming. The group states that economic diversity exists with manufacturing, retail, education, health-care and agriculture.

The groups of agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting employ 251 with a median annual income at \$51,680. Finance and insurance fea-tures 155 workers at a \$53,640 median annual income.

Stating that there are economic challenges, the group points to a median household in-come of \$46,672 falls below many state and national averages and that 13.8% of families in Pike County live below the poverty level. While the unemployment rate stands at 2.6%, still 14.3% of households rely on SNAP ben-efits, that indicates "significant economic dis-tress among residents."

Educationally, 87.9% of residents have com-pleted high school, while only 19.5% hold bachelor's degrees or higher. The group says that "suggests potential workforce develop-ment challenges as industries evolve and re-quire higher skill levels."

The county's workforce is care-dependent, traveling an average commute time of 28.1 minutes with 80.3% of workers having to drive to work. Those numbers underscore the rural nature of the county and the limited public

transit infrastructure.

While housing remains relatively affordable with median home values of \$86,900, which are significantly lower than state and national aver-ages, housing cost burden is high in the county. Some 23.8% of homeowners have a mortgage of more than 30% of their income while 50.6% of renters fall into the same cost-burdened cat-egory, despite a median rent value of \$633.

Of the county's 4,042 housing units only 0.9% of homeowner properties and 6.9% of rental properties remain unoccupied, leading the group to feel stable housing demand de-spite the population decline.

The group feels that Pike County stands at a crossroads -- the 4% predicted population de-cline through 2027 will start to affect services, infrastructure and economic vitality. Mean-while, the aging population will likely increase demands for healthcare services while poten-tially reducing the available workforce.

The group says that the manufacturing sec-tor's historical strength provides a foundation for economic stability, however diversification and workforce development will be critical for long term prosperity.

As such, the group feels that the commu-nity's challenges -- population decline, mod-est incomes, housing cost burdens for renters, and limited higher education attainment -- are balanced against assets including low employ-ment, diverse industries, affordable housing and strong agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Therefore, strategic economic devel-opment efforts will need to address workforce skills development, support for existing indus-tries, attraction of higher wage employment opportunities and enhanced quality of life amenities to retain and attract residents in an increasingly competitive regional landscape.

The PCEDC board of directors include:

- Johnny Plyler, President, Glenwood
- Dr. Clayton Sorrells, Vice-President, Gle-wood
- Phil Terrell, Recorder/Treasurer, Murfrees-boro
- Amanda Chandler, Acting Director, Unin-corporated Pike County
- Scott Howard, Member at Large, Delight
- Darwin Hendrix, Member at Large, An-toine
- Karen Barlow, Member at Large, Unincor-porated Pike County

Local court sentences five defendants in proceedings this week

MURFREESBORO -- Five defendants were sentenced during the Jan. 12 session of Pike County Circuit Court.

Rex Ann Charles, 61, of Murfreesboro, plead-ed guilty to the charge of delivery of metham-phetamine. She was sentenced to 20 years in the Arkansas Department of Corrections with 10 years suspended.

Bobby Wilkerson, 55, of Murfreesboro, pleaded guilty to the charge of internet stalk-

ing of a child. He was sentenced to 20 years in the ADC with eight years suspended and will be required to register as a sex offender upon release.

Cody Smith, 31, of Amity, pleaded guilty to second-degree sexual assault and was sen-tenced to 10 years probation and fined \$2,500 plus court costs. A no-contact order was also issued for his victim.

Leah Ann Ransom, 25, of Glenwood, plead-

ed guilty to charges of theft of property and forgery. She was sentenced to 10 years proba-tion, fined \$2,500 and ordered to pay \$1,100 restitution on the forgery charge, and six years probation and fined \$1,000 on the theft charge.

Marion Scott, 42, of Nashville, pleaded guilty to failure to comply with registration reporting requirements of being a sex offender. He was sentenced to eight years probation and fined \$1,500 plus court costs.



Submitted photos

BATTLING THE LADY KNIGHTS ... (above, left) Kyndahl Posey (3) advances the ball against the Lady Knights while (above right) Carsyn Ballard provides defense coverage in the junior high girls' matchup. The junior Lady Rattlers won their game by a 49-14 score last week at home. Other scores saw the teams split the contests including the seventh grade girls team falling to the Knights 30-14, the seventh grade boys team won 43-20, and the junior boys dropped their contest by a 39-21 score.

Event set to celebrate Parton and former librarian

GLENWOOD -- A Dolly Parton birthday bash and former librarian Mona Swihart remembrance will be held at the Glenwood Community Room on Saturday, Jan. 17 from 2-4 p.m.

The community room is located at Bainum Library and Learning Center.

Refreshments will be available for attendees. The public is invited to attend.

The event is being held by the Imagination Library of the Ouachitas and the Pike County Library system, which includes branches in

Glenwood, Delight and Murfreesboro.

Activities will include a book reading, coloring and a cake walk.

Imagination Library features free books to registered youth 5 years and younger, paid for by the Dolly Parton Foundation. Youth not registered for the Imagination Library service may be signed up during the event.

Parton will turn 80 on January 19.

Swihart was a librarian in the Pike County system for many years, most recently at Glenwood until her death last year.

Signup times for spring ball announced

MURFREESBORO -- Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation will have softball, baseball and tee ball sign up on Saturday, Jan. 17th from 1:30-4 p.m. and on Tuesday, Jan. 20 from 4-6 p.m.

Both times will be held at the Murfreesboro park office.

Fees are \$70 for softball and baseball and \$30 for tee ball. Fees and form due at signup.

You may also sign up at the park during business hours (8 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m. on

Mondays-Fridays from Jan. 18-30. No forms will be accepted after 4 p.m. Jan. 30.

Age groups are as follows:

- T-ball boys and girls (ages 4-6) must be 4 years old by April 1
- 6U (ages 5-6) coach pitch
- 8U (ages 7-8) coach pitch
- 10U (ages 9-10)
- 12U (ages 11-12)
- 16U (ages 13-16)

Cemetery denotes donations for final quarter of 2025

The following donations have been given to the Murfreesboro Cemetery Fund, from October 11, 2025 to December 31, 2025.

- Jane Kennedy Memorial Fund
- Paul & Delores Crowson in memory of Dorothy Dillard
- \$500.00 -- Kathy Stafford
- \$200.00 -- Zetta Crocker

- \$100.00 -- Haroldeen ‘Dee’ Branch

The upkeep of the cemetery is made possible by your donations. Donations may be given to Marc Jackson, Margaret Byrd, Kayla Kuykendall, Mary Jean Barbre or Joyce Woodrull. Donations may also be mailed to: Murfreesboro Cemetery Fund, P.O. Box 185, Murfreesboro, AR. 71958.

Attorney General praises ending of racial quotas

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin issued the following statement after a federal district judge issued a declaratory judgment and permanent injunction in *Greene v. Griffin*:

“The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas today has righted a wrong that for too long allowed discrimination to be enshrined in state statute. The court has issued a permanent injunction, declaring that the requirement that the Arkansas Ethics Commission must include at least one member of a minority race is an unconstitutional racial quota that violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court’s ruling follows a joint motion that I filed yesterday with the plaintiff in this case asking for the in-

junction.

“I first noted my objection to this blatantly unconstitutional requirement enshrined in state law last summer when I refused to make an appointment to the Arkansas Ethics Commission based on the color of an appointee’s skin. Appointments to government boards and commissions should be based on one’s qualifications, not meeting racial quotas. With this injunction now in place, Arkansans of all races will be given fair and equal consideration for appointment.”

To read the court’s order, visit media.ark.org/ag/ECF-No.-13-Final-Judgment-and-Permanent-Injunction.pdf.



Regional Fly Tyers announce 2026 conference

Above photo submitted by the ArkLaTexOma Fly Tyers and Fly Fishers

MURFREESBORO -- The ArkLaTexOma Fly Tyers & Fly Fishers (ALTO) will present their “Home Waters 2026 -- A Celebration of the Little Missouri River” conference Feb. 6-8, in Murfreesboro

The event will be held at the Murfreesboro Municipal Building, 204 E. Main Street. Admission is free to all who wish to attend.

Anyone interested in attending is invited to join ALTO members for a weekend of tying, fishing, fellowship and fun. The event will feature expert tyers, vendors, seminars, and raffles.

The groups welcomes all tyers to demonstrate their skills and also to help with instruction at a “beginners’ table”.

“We want this to be an all-inclusive event open to the most advanced tyers as well as beginning tyers that want to tie their first fly,” said the event’s press release.

In addition to some exceptional tyers, the event will see several FFI Certified Casting Instructors available for some beginner instruction, or if your cast just needs a little tune up.

Tyers and presenters are asked to bring a new (or slightly used) item to contribute to the raffle.

The group has made arrangements with the Queen of Diamonds Motel for an ALTO Special. You must call (877) 336-3105 to access the special rates of \$84.00/night with no breakfast (Code FF84) or \$94.00/night with breakfast (Code FF94).

2026 CONFERENCE AGENDA
Friday Feb 6th

- 12 p.m. -- Doors Open
- 12- 5 p.m. -- Tyers set-up and event begins

- 5 p.m. -- Dinner Pizza (\$2/slice)
- 5:30 p.m. -- State of the River Report- Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
- 6:30 p.m.-until -- Gather around the campfire (weather permitting), or inside cabin, at Swaha Lodge and Marina, 205 Dynamite Hill Rd., Murfreesboro (Cabin location given at event Friday.)

Saturday Feb 7th

- 8 a.m. -- Door Open/Coffee Started
- 9:30 a.m. -- Spoon Fly Demonstration- Don Lawler
- 11 a.m. -- Everything you ever needed to know about Rod Caddies- Randy Hainen
- 12-2 p.m. Lunch -- on your own and/or food truck on-site
- 11 a.m.-4 p.m. -- Sweet and Salty Food Truck On-Site
- 2 p.m. -- Trout Fishing in Missouri- Jon Tupper & Greg Ester
- 3:30 p.m. -- Raffle begins
- 4:30 p.m. -- * Deer Hair Techniques Demo- Kenneth Bohanan
- 5:00 p.m. -- Dinner on you own

*** Special addition to our schedule. We are fortunate to add a special tying demonstration by Kenneth Bohanan. Kenneth is a pro tyer for diaachi hooks, dr. slick, Canadian tube fly co and Whiting. Kenneth will demo some deer hair techniques. You will not want to miss this opportunity to have a front row seat to watch this master of deer hair bugs.*

Sunday Feb 8th

- Early Morning Fishing or sleep in
- 10:30 a.m. -- Send off Devotion- Brady Gage
- 12:00 p.m. -- Event Ends

For more information on the event call Mike Hawkins at (903) 353-3357.

SOUTH PIKE COUNTY SCHOOL MENU

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21
Breakfast: Sausage biscuit or cereal, fruit, juice, milk
Lunch:Vegetable beef soup, grilled cheese sandwich, celery sticks w/ ranch, pears, milk
Line 2- 7-12 Turkey & cheese sub sandwich, lettuce, tomato, chips
THURSDAY, JANUARY 22
Breakfast: Mini blueberry waffles, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk
Lunch: Chicken spaghetti, seasoned carrots, steamed broccoli, garlic breadsticks, pineapple, milk
Line 2- 7-12 Salisbury steak w/ mashed potatoes
FRIDAY, JANUARY 23
Breakfast: Breakfast scrambler, fruit, juice, milk
Lunch: Chicken tenders, mashed potatoes,

green beans, whole grain roll, peaches, milk
Line 2- 7-12 Spicy popcorn chicken
MONDAY, JANUARY 26
Breakfast: Mini chocolate chip French toast or cereal, fruit, juice, milk
Lunch: Chicken tenders & waffles, fries, carrot & celery sticks, sliced apples, milk
Line 2- 7-12 Hot ham & cheese croissant
TUESDAY, JANUARY 27
Breakfast: Pancake on stick or cereal, fruit, juice, milk
Lunch: Taco salad w/cheese, pinto beans, lettuce, tomato, salsa, 7-12 Rice Krispie treat, pineapple, milk
Line 2- 7-12 Burrito w/ cheese sauce

**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*

MURFREESBORO SENIOR ADULT CENTER LUNCH MENU

MONDAY, JANUARY 19
Beef lasagna, broccoli & cauliflower, cheese bread sticks, ambrosia
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20
Pork loin, buttered new potatoes, brussel sprouts, roll, cinnamon pears

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21
Chicken & dumplings, salad, roll, salted caramel apple crisp.

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
Hwy 27 N. Murfreesboro

- Worship 11 a.m. • Sun. Eve. 5 p.m.
- Wed. Bible study & Prayer Meeting 6 p.m.
- Facebook services on Sunday at 10:45 a.m. & 5 p.m.

Bro. Curtis Abernathy

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(870) 379-2293



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Sun. eve. 6 p.m. • Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.
Radio Broadcast B99.5 @ 8:30 a.m.
Bro. Buddy Ray

Attend Church This Sunday!

HAVE AN ITEM YOU'D LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED?

email us at
mdiamond@windstream.net

WINTER OLYMPICS
* -- *Theme Related Clue*

ACROSS
1. Pinch to save
6. Brownie
9. Lady, in Madrid
13. Proprietor
14. Romanian money
15. Iraqi money
16. Coffee shop order
17. *Before 1998 only they played Olympic hockey
18. Spring to mind” or “Spring into action,” e.g.
19. *Most decorated country in Winter Olympics
21. * ____ of Hamill Camel fame
23. *How Olympic Athletes from Russia were designated in 2018, acr.
24. Assistant
25. ____ of war
28. Sushi wrapped in nori
30. Oblong cream puff
35. Singles
37. Manure, e.g.
39. Soil for cultivation
40. Bon Jovi hit “Have a ____ day”
41. “Encore!”
43. Don’t go
44. Bumpkin
46. Poet Pound’s first name
47. Rodeo Drive tree
48. Sense of alienation and isolation
50. Similar
52. Toast option
53. *Misha, 1980 Russian Olympics Mascot was one
55. Samuel Butler: “Spare the ____ and spoil the child”
57. * ____ Shiffrin, most decorated U.S. alpine skier

61. *Overall Olympic curling medal leader
64. Bikini ____ in the Marshall Islands
65. Zodiac sign
67. Pasture
69. Boundary lines
70. Government Printing Office
71. Rocky ridge

72. Singer Tori
73. Farm layer
74. *1964 and 1976 mountainous Olympic location

DOWN
1. Honda CR-X del ____
2. *Michelle ____, most decorated U.S. figure skater
3. Enthusiastic about
4. Part of MGM
5. From the 1930s, e.g.
6. Abounding with certain trees
7. Bruce ____ of karate fame
8. Fundus, pl.
9. Aeneas’ lover
10. “Don’t bet ____ ____!”
11. Lye formula
12. A in “M*A*S*H”
15. Do like Tarantino
20. Pleasant smell
22. Schiller’s “____ to Joy”
24. Real ____ of Seville
25. *Margot Robbie’s “olympic” role (2017)
26. “For better or worse”?
27. GEICO’s mascot
29. *Olympic toboggan
31. Speech defect
32. Place for worship
33. *2026 Winter Olympics location
34. Mother Goose creation
36. Give an impression
38. Michael Douglas’ dad
42. Nigerian money
45. Slandorous statements
49. Snake-like fish
51. Dairy choice
54. Frustration, in a comic book
56. Grocery store section
57. Cass Elliot, a.k.a. ____ Cass
58. Big-ticket ____
59. Japanese zither
60. Saloon selections
61. Colloquial “Follow me!”
62. Widely hunted ruminant
63. Kind of sax
66. King Kong or Donkey Kong, e.g.
68. Penn.’s neighbor

CROSSWORD

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Extension offers tips to combat seasonal affective disorder

BY REBEKAH HALL
U of A System Division of Agriculture

LITTLE ROCK — Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a common effect of winter’s cold temperatures and short daylight hours. While sunlight, exercise and healthy eating can help, more serious cases may warrant a trip to the doctor.

SAD is a common type of depression that is linked to a particular season, indicated by long-lasting feelings of fatigue and moodiness.

Brittney Schrick, extension associate professor and family life specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said studies about the causes of SAD “primarily point to a disruption in circadian rhythm caused by decreased sunlight.

“People who live at more northern latitudes are more likely to experience seasonal depression,” Schrick said. “Serotonin levels, which affect mood, sleep and digestion, tend to be lower during the winter, so people who are sensitive to those hormonal shifts are likely at higher risk of experiencing seasonal depression.

“There also appears to be a slightly higher risk for people who have experienced depression before, or who have other psychiatric or physical health conditions related to serotonin levels or mood,” she said.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, SAD symptoms include the following:

- Sad, anxious or “empty” feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability or restlessness

- Loss of interest or pleasure in enjoyable activities
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Oversleeping
- Changes in weight
- Social withdrawal, or feeling like “hibernating”

Schrick said that if you think you may be experiencing SAD and it is “interfering with your ability to cope with daily interaction, work, or family responsibilities,” then you should visit your doctor.

“They may refer you to a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist, or they may suggest using an antidepressant medication, light therapy, or a combination,” Schrick said.

BENEFITS OF LIGHT THERAPY
Schrick said light therapy has the most research support for alleviating symptoms of SAD.

“The light could be natural sunlight from spending time outdoors, or you could use a light therapy box,” Schrick said. “Especially during periods of cloudy weather, a light box that radiates at least 10,000 lux is the consistent recommendation.”

If you do get outside for natural sunlight, it’s still critical to wear sunscreen, Schrick said.

“Even if it is cold or cloudy, sun protection is always needed, so don’t be fooled into not putting on sunscreen,” Schrick said.

When shopping for a light therapy box, Schrick said it’s important to pay attention to “how far away you need to be from

the box to get the benefits.”
“Some benefit can be experienced from just having brighter light in your space, but to receive the full benefit, you may need to sit very close to the light or sit with it for a longer period of time,” she said. “This is not the same as a tanning bed. Light boxes are UV-free, so they do not have the same risks as tanning beds or sunbathing.”

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS
Schrick said it is always important to check in with your mental health and to pay attention to any changes in mood or reactions that don’t seem to have an obvious cause.

“If you know you are under short-term stress and you’re feeling snippy, that’s fairly common, and it will likely pass when your stress level is reduced,” Schrick said. “But if you seem to be down or moody or want to sleep more than usual, and there is no other cause besides the fact that it is dark at 5 p.m., that is worth keeping an eye on.

“Even though we don’t always remember this, humans are animals, and the desire to slow down and conserve energy is hard-wired,” she said. “However, going beyond a cozy need for soup and a blanket into feeling sad, anxious or worthless is not something to take lightly. Reach out to a medical professional if you are feeling hopeless.”

Schrick said that for less severe experiences of seasonal depression, in addition to light therapy, exercise also boosts endorphins. Eating healthy foods can also enhance your mood, especially those that boost serotonin production, including salmon, turkey, cheese, tofu, eggs, pineapple, nuts, oats and seeds.

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact the Pike County Cooperative Extension Service at (870) 285-2161 or visit www.uaex.uada.edu.

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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

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Submitted photo/PCUAEX

ON SALE ... The Pike County Extension Service has announced a discounted half-price sale on their remaining 4-H brittle fundraiser stock. Flavor varieties remaining include peanut, cashew, pecan and cinnamon brittle. Buckets (1.5 lb.) are priced at \$10 and bags (8 oz.) are \$5 each. The group also has Texas Roadhouse rolls available at \$5 per dozen and 4 oz. honey butter for \$2 each. Call the Extension office at (870) 285-2161 or visit them at 100 Court Street Suite A in Murfreesboro during office hours of 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Guide now available for volunteers collecting voter signatures

BY KRISTIN NETTERSTROM HIGGINS
U of A System Division of Agriculture

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas volunteers who gather the tens of thousands of voter signatures needed to qualify a constitutional amendment or state law for the statewide ballot now have access to a guide written especially for their civic role.

The Arkansas Volunteer Canvasser Guide includes helpful tips and information about new state laws so volunteers can better navigate the signature collection process. Arkansas Civic Action Network and the Public Policy Center at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture partnered on producing the guide.

“Our number one goal is for canvassers to feel confident in their role of volunteer,” said Gail Choate, executive director of Arkansas Civic Action Network, a Little Rock-based nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that engages Arkansans in civic life through education, workshops and community projects.

Choate and Kristin Netterstrom Higgins from the Public Policy Center wrote the guide after legislators passed several new canvassing laws establishing misdemeanor and felony crimes.

“Our shared goal is to give volunteers clear, consistent, and legally accurate information so Arkansans can volunteer confidently and safely,” Choate said.

The guide is available on both organizations’ websites: uaex.uada.edu/ballot and www.arkaction.net. The guide discusses what a petition is and what the canvasser is responsible for during the signature collection process. The guide also notifies volunteers that recent laws requiring canvassers to check a voter’s

photo ID and to witness voters read the ballot title are on hold as part of a federal lawsuit.

The signature collection process is where most ballot issue groups see their campaign efforts flail, said Netterstrom Higgins, who publishes a neutral statewide ballot issue voter guide each election cycle.

“The petitions are just one step of an intense process, but they’re often challenged in lawsuits seeking to stop a constitutional amendment from being put on the ballot for voters to decide,” Netterstrom Higgins said. “Either a canvasser didn’t sign a petition correctly or a campaign may have overlooked one of the many affidavits they have to submit about paid and volunteer canvassers.”

To qualify a constitutional amendment for the 2026 statewide ballot, a ballot question committee must collect at least 90,704 voter signatures from at least 50 counties. The number of signatures required represents 10 percent of the number of people who voted in the last governor’s election. For a state law, it’s 72,563 voter signatures, or 8 percent, of the number of people who cast a ballot in the last governor’s election.

“Volunteers have been the heart of many grassroots ballot issue campaigns for the past 100 years Arkansas has had the direct democracy process. This guide is a tool to keep that momentum going,” Netterstrom Higgins said.

The Public Policy Center, located at the Cooperative Extension Service state office in Little Rock, has provided Arkansans with research-based information and education about public issues since 2004. To learn more, visit uaex.uada.edu/ppc or follow on Facebook at @uappc.



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