

The Murfreesboro Diamond

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USPC 103-230

Serving South Pike County, Arkansas Since 1975

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Delight VFD to hold fundraiser April 25

DELIGHT -- The Delight Fire Department will hold a fundraising dinner and auction on April 25 at 6 p.m. in the Delight school cafeteria. Smoked chicken dinners will be \$10 a plate. An auction will follow the meal.

Group seeks donations for fundraising sale

NASHVILLE -- Operation Christmas Child's (OCC) semi-annual garage sale will be held Friday, March 27, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and Saturday, March 28, 8 a.m.-noon in the Family Activity Building (FAB) of the First Baptist Church in Nashville. The church is located on College and 2nd Streets.

In order for this garage sale to be successful, the group is seeking donations of no longer wanted but still usable furniture, tools, dishes, lamps, decorations, art, collectables, electronics, toys, jewelry, books, clothing, etc.

OCC volunteers will accept donations at the FAB, Monday-Thursday, March 23-26, 9 a.m.-4p.m..

"Please mark your calendar with the donation times and especially the garage sale times. Thanks for your generous donations which will go toward helping children in need around the world," said the press release.



Staff photo/John Balch

SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES ... At the recent Mine Creek Conservation District and Pike County Conservation District 2026 Forestry & Land Judging Contest, the Pike County Forestry Judging team was the high point team judging overall winners (above left, L to R) Hanna McMillian, Gage Harper, C.D. Morrow (Pike County Forestry High Point Individual), Instructor Blake Simmons with MCCD board member Josh Tice. (above right) Avery Baker is pictured with Tice as the Pike County Land High Point Individual.

Voters select their preferences at the polls

MURFREESBORO -- Pike County voters went to the polls last week for their choices in the preferential primary elections.

In total 36.44% of the registered voters in the county cast a ballot -- 2,230 of the 6,120 eligible to vote.

More voters chose the early voter option -- 1,258 -- versus the 961 that participated on election day.

On the Republican side of the ticket several local contests were decided including the re-election of incumbents Eddie Howard for Pike County Judge and Travis Hill for Pike County Sheriff.

Howard avoided a runoff by taking 60.95% of the vote in a four person contest. He collected 1,222 votes countywide versus his challengers including Keith Couch (481 votes), Wade Stewart (161 votes) and Robert Shelby (133 votes).

Hill defeated Murfreesboro Police Chief Randy Lamb by a 1,240-761 vote. Hill will face former Pike County Sheriff's deputy Obie Laurent in the November elections. Laurent, running as an independent candidate, resigned from his position recently.

In other local elections, the Pike County Quorum Court will see at least three new faces in January, with Roger Floyd defeating challenger Payton Eckert 165-56 for the vacant District 1 position that was vacated after Lamb decided to run for sheriff. In District 6, Ron Parker defeated incumbent Kip Holbrook 164-52, while District 7 chose Robert "Mac" Irvin over incumbent Richard Mohlenhoff by a 133-74 margin.

Embattled District 9-West Prosecuting Attorney Jana Bradford lost her bid for reelection

both in Pike County and in the four county race. Erin Hunter received 1,437 votes in Pike County en route to being elected to the position overall, defeating Bradford (351 votes) and Clayton Tinkes (334 votes) in the county election.

In school board elections, Carrie Tidwell defeated incumbent Alyssa Duggan 103-74 for the Zone 7 position on the South Pike County School Board.

In the Zone 4 Centerpoint School Board District election, Larry Harvey defeated Pake Sutton by a 10-7 margin.

In statewide elections, Tom Cotton (1,667 votes) won in landslide fashion for his U.S. Senate seat versus Micah Ashby (179 votes) and Jeb Little (132 votes). Cotton would cruise statewide by about the same margin in the election.

Cole Jester won Pike County 1,502-395 over Christian Olson in the Republican Commissioner of State Lands race. Jester would also handily win the statewide race.

Pike County went a little different than the rest of the state in the Republican Secretary of State race by choosing Cathy Hardin Harrison with the most votes (738) over challengers Bryan Norris (631) and Kim Hammer (504). However, after the results were collected statewide, Harrison was on the losing end of the three way race that will require a runoff statewide.

Early voting for the runoff between Norris and Hammer will begin March 24-27 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Pike County Clerk's office in Murfreesboro and the Bainum Library and Learning Center in Glenwood. Both locations will also be active on Monday, March 30

from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Election day will be held on March 31 from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the four vote centers across Pike County -- Bainum Library in Glenwood, Bethlehem Baptist Center in Kirby, Delight Cafeteria in Delight and the Municipal Building in Murfreesboro.

Please note that for a person to vote in the runoff, they must have cast ballots of Republican, non-partisan ballot, or did not vote in the primary election. Willful violation of that prohibition is a misdemeanor crime punishable by up to a one-year incarceration and a fine of up to \$2,500.

In Democratic statewide contests, Hallie Shoffner defeated Ethan Dunbar 74-26 for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate. Shoffner also won the statewide vote.

Pike County voters chose James "Rus" Russell over Steven Layne O'Donnell by a 53-45 margin for the U.S. Congress District 4 race. Russell would win the multi county race as well.

For the Democratic Governor candidate, Pike County chose Fred Love over Supha Xayprasith Mays by a 87-10 margin. Love was also the more popular choice statewide.

In the non-partisan category, Pike County chose Nick Bronni as their choice for State Supreme Court Justice Position Three. Bronni defeated John Adams in county 711-420. Bronni would more narrowly prevail statewide as well in the contest.

For full election results from Pike County or statewide, please visit enr.totalresults.com/arkansas#election=7177a178-af02-40ec-92db-c5cc50882c68.

MHS baseball utilizes the past to form the future

MURFREESBORO -- With the baseball season underway and the Rattlers off to a 3-0 start, head coach Marc McRae said it was important to note how current success has been built on the recent past.

McRae, coach of the Rattlers since the 2015 season, said it was "lucky for him" to have a good group of baseball players -- over the course of the season and in that first season.

"From year one, it wasn't like we had to start from nothing and build up ... we already had a foundation of kids who have played a lot of ball, jumping in eleven years ago."

The Rattlers saw success with McRae at the helm quickly, making the state tournament in year one (2015), and the state semifinals the next season.

"We got that immediate burst -- and graduated ten seniors on the 2016 team. Which then led us having to develop and build."

McRae said he was especially proud of the 2017-2019 teams.

"Even in that rebuild time and having to work back, and putting kids in a lot of new spots, we were still able to compete in conference and be in the championship game. We competed well, but couldn't win the one regional game [to make the state tournament]."

He said the team found itself playing at unknown heights the first five years with him as manager.

"Those first five years, including a state-semi



finals, we were playing above our heads at times during those years. I saw back then we were starting to build something that would be pretty special and put a really good product on the field."

He credits that to the student athletes' work ethic.

"It was because how willing the kids were to buy in and getting better ... even when it was playing second base after they were at left field last year, because we needed them to. I didn't really get any pushbacks from those groups. They just showed up and worked. And there was only one span in those five years that we were not at .500 or better on our record."

McRae says that is impressive, noting that he likes to create difficult schedules for his teams.

"We play high level competition every year -- we will play 6A teams -- we played Pulaski Academy. We go out there and find teams and we play them, because it makes us better. So win-losses, I'm never just really concerned, but it does say something that for all of these years that we've been doing this, we've only had one season where we haven't won more than we lost -- with a couple of .500 years -- but over 10 years of baseball that's hard to do. That's a testament to the kids that show up and work hard for me. When you take kids at our level, and say we are going to go play fill-in-the blank, there has a to be buy-in as to why we are doing that."

He said he has been really fortunate in that regard.

"I've been blessed to say that the kids believe in what we are doing, and they understand why we are doing it. Now -- it's not always fun to go get your teeth kicked in by a big school. I'd be lying to act like it's all sunshine and rainbows. It's not. They kids are going 'oh, my gosh!' but at the end of the day -- once we get through it -- they are always able to understand

BASEBALL
Continued on Page 4



Fair announces dates for benefit bass tourney

PIKE COUNTY -- The 22nd annual Pike County Fair bass tournament has announced the details for the 2026 installment.

Set for Saturday, April 11 at SWAHA Lodge on Lake Greeson the tournament will begin at "safe light" and will continue until the weigh-in at 3 p.m.

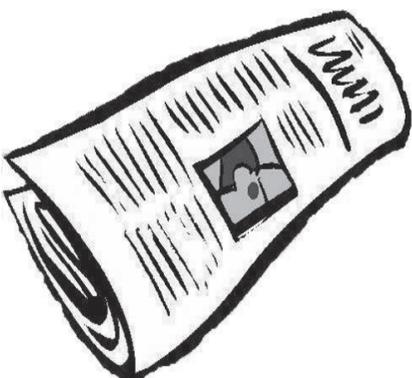
Registration for the tournament can be conducted at <https://forms.gle/tacREmt8eFbm-vjGn6>. The link can also be accessed via the Pike County Fair and Rodeo page on Facebook.

Takeoff numbers will be based on paid registration order. Registrants must register by April 1 to receive a tournament hat, but registrations will still be taken up to the start of the tournament.

A five bass limit will be held for the tournament, with a \$100 entry fee per boat.

Guaranteed prize money has been set for places 1-5 (\$1,000 to \$100) and a prize will be handed out for the big bass (\$500) of the tournament.

For questions regarding the tournament or a link to the registration page, please email pike-countyfairandrodeo@gmail.com.



DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING WORTH TELLING?

Submit Your Local News to the Diamond!
mdiamond@windstream.net

Call (870) 285-2723 For More Information

Discovering your roots: how family history strengthens identity and connection

In an age filled with constant change and rapid innovation, many individuals are turning to something timeless for grounding: their family history. Experts say that exploring one's roots not only provides a sense of identity and belonging but also deepens appreciation for the traditions, stories, and values passed down through generations.

For most people, the journey begins at home. Boxes tucked in closets, faded photographs, childhood school papers, or a grandfather's well-worn hand tool can hold surprising historical value. These everyday objects often serve as powerful reminders of the people and experiences that shape a family's journey. Organizing and displaying these items—whether framing a vintage portrait or creating a shadowbox for an heirloom tool—offers meaningful ways to honor the past.

The adventure grows richer when families reach out to extended relatives. Aunts, uncles, and cousins may hold letters, journals, photographs, or cherished artifacts waiting to be rediscovered. Borrowing, organizing, or digitizing these materials can open windows into earlier generations and spark conversations that might otherwise be lost to time.

But family treasures aren't limited to physical objects. Stories and traditions remain some of the most valuable pieces of history. Recording a grandmother recounting her childhood or preserving a grandfather's favorite songs captures personality and lived experience in ways documents never can. These conversations become priceless keepsakes for future generations.

For those eager to dig even deeper, modern genealogy tools make it easier than ever. Online platforms offer access to historical documents, census records, and family trees spanning centuries. A simple search for "genealogy" or "family history" reveals numerous resources designed to guide beginners and seasoned researchers alike.

The process isn't always rosy. Many families uncover difficult or complicated moments—"warts and wars"—in their lineage. While these revelations can be unsettling, they also serve as re-



PIKE COUNTY EXTENSION

EVA LANGLEY, FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES AGENT
FAMILY • NUTRITION • FOOD SAFETY • FINANCE • FITNESS & HEALTH

minders of the universal human journey of growth, resilience, and learning. Embracing both the strengths and imperfections of ancestors enriches our understanding of ourselves.

Experts encourage families not only to study their past but also to record their present. From daily journal entries to saved ticket stubs, artwork, photos, or video recordings, there are countless ways to document modern life. What matters most is choosing a method that fits one's lifestyle so these records can become part of a lasting legacy.

Rather than letting these invaluable pieces of history gather dust in storage, families are finding creative ways to integrate them into daily life. Heritage walls, framed documents, heirloom displays, and shared copies of meaningful letters help keep memories alive and foster deeper family connection.

Ultimately, exploring family history is about more than nostalgia—it's about understanding where we come from, celebrating what we've inherited, and passing along the stories that make each family unique.

Many families have put together recipe books of family favorites through the generations. I have been asking friends and neighbors for their traditional family recipes for Easter, and this ham recipe keeps getting mentioned. It might be one you recognize, or it may become a new tradition for your family. Either way, enjoy!

RECIPE OF THE WEEK: BAKED HAM

Ingredients:

- 1 whole fully cooked bone-in ham (15 to 18 pounds)
- Whole cloves
- 3 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 cup spicy brown mustard
- 1 can soft drink (similar to Dr. Pepper or Coke) or 3 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F.
2. Score the surface of the ham in a diamond pattern about 1/8-inch deep. Place cloves in the middle of each diamond. Place the ham in a large roasting pan with a rack, tent it with foil, and bake for 2 to 2 1/2 hours—or longer, depending on the package directions – check the package for a difference in time and temperature and follow those directions.
3. In a small saucepan, heat the brown sugar, mustard, vinegar, and soda until bubbly. Cook until reduced and a bit thicker, about 15 minutes.
4. After about 2 hours of baking time, remove the foil and brush the glaze on the ham in 20 minutes intervals (put the ham back in the oven, uncovered, in between) until it's nice and glossy. Remove from the oven and allow to rest 15 to 20 minutes before carving.

Man sentenced after pawning county owned weapons

MURFREESBORO -- A former Pike County sheriff's deputy who hocked two county-issued weapons last year was sentenced to probation Monday in Pike County Circuit Court.

Brandon M. Vines, 41, of Glenwood, was charged Jan. 31, 2025 with two counts of theft of property following an investigation by the Arkansas State Police.

Monday, Vines pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to six years of probation and 45 days in the county jail, and fined \$3,500 plus court costs.

Vines was employed as a county deputy from May 2024 to December 2024. He was terminated by Sheriff Travis Hill after he failed to show up for two scheduled dates to attend the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy.

On Jan. 2, Vines returned some of his assigned equipment to the county but did not return a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun and a Colt M-16 .223 rifle. He advised he was soaking the weapons to clean them and would bring them in the next day.

But on Jan. 2, Glenwood Police Chief Greg Harmon was at McGrew Pawn Shop when he recognized the shotgun that was up for sale. A serial number check determined the weapon be-

longed to the county and was recovered the next day.

The shop owner told the ASP that several attempts to contact Vines were ignored and because of lack of payment the shotgun was placed for sale.

The M-16 was recovered from an individual, Donald Parker of Glenwood, on Jan. 3, 2025. Parker told investigators that he was unaware the rifle was county property and that it was in his possession as collateral on a \$500 loan to Vines that he had not paid. The weapon was recovered that day.

Amity driver killed in wreck

HOT SPRINGS -- A three-vehicle accident on Saturday, March 7 in Garland County claimed the life of an Amity driver and injured three others, according to an Arkansas State Police preliminary report.

The wreck was reported at 1:31 p.m. on Highway 70 West/Airport Road in Hot Springs.

The accident killed Matthew Kersey, 43, of Amity and injured Brandon Moore, 32, of Oden and Courtney McCarty, 31, of Pencil Bluff, and an unnamed minor passenger.

Kersey was reportedly driving westbound in a 2016 Ford Escape when he lost control and crossed into the eastbound lane and struck a camper being pulled by 2024 Ram 2500. The driver of the Ram was not listed in the accident report. After striking the camper, Kersey's vehicle then struck a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado driven by Moore.

ASP Trooper Christian E. Ramirez listed the weather and road conditions as rainy and wet.

Pike County Dems to meet

The Democratic Party of Pike County will hold its convention Monday, March 16, at 5 p.m. at Telingas Mexican Restaurant in Murfreesboro.

During the meeting, Pike County Democrats will elect delegates to the state convention June 13.

The county convention also will elect representatives to the state committee, which will meet several times in 2026-2028.

Any Pike County Democrat may attend and vote at the county convention.

PUBLIC NOTICE

**In the Circuit Court of Pike County, Arkansas
 Probate Division**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF:
 GARY DEAN COFFMAN, DECEASED**

Case No. 55PR-26-11

**NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT CLAIMS
 AGAINST A SMALL ESTATE**

Notice is hereby given that GARY DEAN COFFMAN, aged seventy-eight (78) years, who resided at 35 Coffman Rd., Amity, AR 71921, died on or about December 31, 2025. On February 18, 2026, Tonja Whisenhunt, a surviving heir of the decedent, filed an Affidavit for Collection of Small Estate by Distributee in this Court. The affidavit lists as an asset of the decedent, real property along with a mobile home located in Amity, Pike County, Arkansas, and described as follows:

Part of the Southeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SE1/4 SW1/4) of Section 34, Township 5 South, Range 25 West, described as follows: For Point of Beginning, commence at the NW corner of said 40-acre tract and run thence East 192 feet; thence South 227 to a Point on the North line of the Loy Turner property; thence West 192 feet to a point on the West line of said 40-acre tract; thence North 227 feet to the Point of Beginning, containing 1 acre, more or less.

Legal description provided by Grantors.

All persons having claims against the estate must present them, duly verified, to the undersigned within three (3) months from the first publication of this notice. A failure to do so will forever bar and preclude the claim from receiving any benefit from the estate.

This notice first published the 4th day of March, 2026.

DUSTIN BISSELL
 ATTORNEY AT LAW
 306 E BROADWAY
 GLENWOOD, AR 71943
 (870)-356-2589

(d.b. 281w., 35,36)

PUBLIC NOTICE

**NOTICE FROM THE PIKE COUNTY ELECTION
 COMMISSION**

PUBLIC VOTE MACHINE TESTING

Pike County Clerk Randee Edwards has announced that logic and accuracy testing of all media to be used in the voting equipment for the 2026 Primary Runoff Election will take place in the Clerk's office at 112 N. Washington, Suite A, Murfreesboro, on Wednesday, March 18th, at 9:00 a.m.

The public is invited to attend.

This publication was paid for by the Pike County Clerk's office the amount for this publication is \$30.15 (p.c.c. 67w., 36)

PUBLIC NOTICE

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PIKE COUNTY,
 ARKANSAS PROBATE DIVISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF:
 DAVID WAYNE TURNER, deceased No. 55PR-26-13**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Last known address of the decedent: 1130 Hwy. 84 E, Amity, Pike County, AR 71921

Date of Death: February 6, 2026

An instrument dated February 27, 2026, lawfully appointed STEPHEN TURNER as Administrator of the above estate.

That all persons having claims against the estate must exhibit them, duly verified, within six (6) months from the date of the first publication of this notice, or they shall be forever barred and precluded from any benefit in the estate.

This notice first published on this 4th day of March, 2026.

STEPHEN TURNER,
 Petitioner

BY: /s/ Dustin Bissell
 DUSTIN BISSELL
 Attorney for Petitioner

306 E Broadway, Glenwood, AR 71943
 (870) 356-2589 • Arkansas Bar #2022047

(d.b. 138w., 35,36)

Murfreesboro Diamond

Your Hometown Newspaper since 1975

*Located in the County Seat of Pike County • Murfreesboro, Arkansas
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 P.O. Box 550, Murfreesboro, AR 71958

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.**

THANK YOU PIKE COUNTY!

I want to thank every single person who got out and voted for me.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again, I love Pike County! I will continue to work hard for all the citizens of our county.

I also appreciate all the calls, messages, texts and mostly the prayers during the campaign.

God bless you all!
 Eddie Howard
 Pike County Judge

Paid for by Re-Elect Eddie Howard for Pike County Judge Campaign



Council readies to 'move into the digital age'

The Murfreesboro City Council approved the city park's commission submission into a grant program from the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism.

Resolution 2026-3 will allow the commission to seek a grant through the Great Strides/Trails For Life program that if garnered, will create a smoke-free public trail on city owned property that the city will agree to maintain for 25 years.

The council approved the measure unanimously.

Mayor Jim O'Neal told the council that Curtis Turner, Jr.'s term on the city's water commission was expiring, and that he wanted approval to reappoint him for another three-year term. The council obliged.

In the city's 2024 legislative audit, the report came back with the statement that "nothing came to our attention that would warrant disclosure in this report."

The city was evaluated in compliance with certain state laws regarding district court accounting, budgeting, purchasing and investing/depositing of public funds.

City Recorder/Treasurer Penny Lamb asked and received the council's blessing to move forward with a plan to purchase eight refurbished iPads -- one for each council member, mayor and city recorder -- from South Pike County Schools after the end of the school year with the intention of distributing council meeting packets to council members digitally as opposed to paper packets.

The two-year old iPads will cost \$200-\$250 each, around half of their original purchase price.

With the iPads available in May or June, the city would look to implement the plan in June or July.

"It's time we move into the digital age," Lamb said, noting that many cities were moving toward this format. The packets will be sent via e-mail and paper packets will be provided to council members on request.

Mayor O'Neal told council members that if they decide not to run for their term again or were defeated in an election, they were to return the iPad to the city for their successor's use.

Councilman Cody Bachmann noted it would save a lot of paper, with Lamb noting time savings as well.

Lamb said the iPads would be enabled with necessary programs, such as Microsoft Word, to access the digital attachments.

The council approved the signing of an agreement with the Pike County Economic Development Commission to provide \$5,000 per year to help aid in the salary of an executive director for the group. The agreement is for a three year term.

The executive director will be tasked with, among other things, the recruitment of businesses to relocate/expand into Pike County.

The agreement comes with a 60-day-notice exit clause. Glenwood will also be asked to approve the same fundage amount, while Pike County will also look to provide aid. The remainder of the funds will be sought from local banks, industries and businesses. The University of Arkansas' Cossatot Community College will provide health insurance and retirement benefits.

The city currently has \$20,000 in its economic development fund.

Mayor O'Neal said he also has offered the still unoccupied mayor's office at the city's municipal building for the prospective director's use.

The council approved the measure.

O'Neal said the animal control report noted two dogs collected in Murfreesboro in February and no cats.

Two prospective plans were presented to the council, with both to return with more information at next months meeting.

The first was from Murfreesboro Police Chief Randy Lamb, who told the council of a program through the Arkansas State Police that would pay local officer's overtime to help work their traffic safety programs throughout the year, including Click It Or Ticket and Put the Phone Away or Pay.

Lamb said each of the programs lasted one to two weeks, perhaps up to a month, and aided in the visibility and enforcement of the programs. He said the officers on the program would not be patrolling the streets.

While the state will pay 100% of the accrued overtime, it will be a reimbursement, meaning the city will initially have to cover the costs.

Mayor O'Neal disliked the idea of an open budget, so suggested that if the city were to participate in the program that a certain amount of money would have to be set aside in a special

account so that when it was reached a stopping point could be established. He also noted that the city's tax collection revenue for November and December 2025 were on the lower side and he didn't wish to make any grand financial obligations.

R. Lamb said he envisioned it was entirely possible for the officers to gain 20 hours of overtime over the course of two weeks. He also expected that some, if not all, or the officers on staff would be interested in participating.

The program is open to all municipalities in Arkansas, so the city is not applying for the program.

The council asked Lamb to present more information about reimbursement times at the city council's April meeting. O'Neal said it was a possibility to call a special meeting if timing was a factor.

The second proposal was by Murfreesboro Fire Department Chief Ricky Branch, who was asking the council for approval to purchase a "smaller, more maneuverable" brush truck.

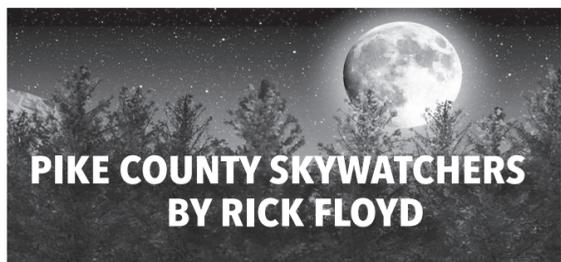
He said a new version at York Gary Autoplex in Nashville would cost between \$48,000-\$50,000. He was more than willing to consider a newer used option, but noted that those sold quickly in the range of \$27,000-\$35,000.

He added that a bigger truck can't get into pastures and wooded areas as well and would tend to sink in pastures. The vehicle would be used to primarily fight grass fires.

"It would benefit us this summer," Branch said, noting that a truck would have to be outfitted with a tank, hoses, lightbar and bed. He said the fire department already has the pump.

The Murfreesboro Fire Truck Fun currently has \$175,000, according to Lamb.

Branch was asked to investigate a purchase through the state bids network, and that if it was cheap enough, it might be worthwhile not to be buying a used truck with issues. He will present further information to the council next month.



March 14 a mathematical celebration

The late cosmologist and theoretical physicist, Stephen Hawking, is at the center of several historical connections and events this week. Hawking is well known for his quantum gravity and black hole theories, and for his iconic wheelchair and computer enhanced voice. He was born on January 1, 1942 which coincidentally is 300 years after the death of another science great, Galileo Galilei, in Italy on January 1, 1642. There is more, Hawking died on March 14, 2018 which coincides with the birth day of yet another science great, Albert Einstein (born in 1879). Both Einstein and Hawking were 76 years old when they died.

March 14 is not only a day to honor Hawking and Einstein, but it is of recent years a day to celebrate a mathematical constant that was certainly well known, and used, by the two scientists. March 14th is now Pi Day, a world-wide celebration of the irrational number that equals the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. The number Pi is 3 with an infinite number of digits after the decimal point. Briefly written, it is 3.14. The Pi Day idea came to an educator, Larry Shaw, at the Exploritorium in San Francisco in 1988 as a way to get kids interested in math and science. That one event caught on and gained momentum. Many people, including me, have a pie (chocolate) with the symbol for Pi, π , made of dough on top as part of the celebration, and to expand a little more into the decimal points of Pi the celebration starts at 1:59 (a.m. or p.m.) and lasts for 26 1/2 minutes. This bit of memory trickery brings Pi to 3.14159265. Many people take pride in knowing even more, and it has been computed to a trillion or so digits so far. Pie, by the way, is how you pronounce the Greek letter Pi.

The number Pi is encoded in most processes occurring in the universe, including biological ones, and is important in the computation of things like orbital periods of planets and of spaceship trajectories.

Jupiter is the most visible planet these nights. It is the brightest "star" you will see in the early evening when you look almost straight up. There is news about a comet coming in April that, if it is not gobbled up by the sun, will likely be a bright and showy visitor.

Celebrating 50 years

Gary and Cindy (Short) Cox will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on March 13, 2026. Their lifetime together began in their hometowns. Although they attended different schools, Gary and Cindy met as young teenagers through mutual friends at a track meet in Murfreesboro. After dating through high school, the couple married on March 13, 1976, at Ridgeway Baptist Church in Nashville. The couple have two children, Sara (Charlie) and Michael (Christina) and four grandchildren: Madalyn, Payton, Benjamin, and Charlotte. They have shared five decades of love, commitment, and family.

Throughout the years, Gary and Cindy have built a life centered on faith, family, and community and have been active in their church throughout their marriage. Their children and grandchildren have been blessed by their love, guidance, and the strong example of marriage and family that they have shown.

Cindy is enjoying retirement after working for many years in the banking industry. She spends her time traveling and is always up for an adventure with her kids or grandkids. Gary is still actively involved with the family farm. He enjoys hunting, perfecting his extraordinary grilling skills, and winning a lively game of Spoons or Wahoo.

Their family joins in celebrating this special milestone and wishes them continued love and happiness for many years to come. Please join us in celebrating this golden anniversary by congratulating Gary and Cindy on 50 wonderful years together.

Obituaries

James Edward 'Jimmy' Brock, 81

James Edward 'Jimmy' Brock, 81, of Murfreesboro, Arkansas passed away on March 4, 2026, at the Murfreesboro Nursing Center.

He was born on October 18, 1944 in the Roy Community, south of Murfreesboro, to C.E. Brock, Jr., and Ruby Jean "Duncan" Brock.

He was a member of the Ridgeway Baptist Church in Nashville.

Jimmy was preceded in

death by his parents, his wives, and his sister.

He is survived by a son, James Cameron Brock of Nashville, a brother, John Mark Brock and wife, Tammy of Murfreesboro, a brother-in-law, Darrell Miller of Murfreesboro, one niece and one nephew.

A memorial service will be held on March 28, 2026 at 10 a.m. at the Trinity Baptist Church in Murfreesboro.

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Card of Thanks

The family of Stevie Lowery would like to take this time to extend our heartfelt thanks for the kindness and compassion shown to us during the loss of our loved one.

Thank you for all the messages, cards, flowers and visits. We were overwhelmed by the presence of so many friends and family who came to honor Stevie and support us during this very difficult time. He will be missed so much by us.

Susan, Jarrod, Jamie, Ben, April, Kenzy, Cash, Cooper, Macy, Marly and Clyne

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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
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4-H to hold 'Giving Day' on March 17

BY SHANNON BALLARD
Pike County 4-H Program Assistant

ARKANSAS -- Communities across the county are coming together to support youth on 4-H Giving Day, a special day dedicated to supporting programs offered through 4-H. This annual event encourages supporters, alumni, families, and community members to invest in the future of young people by donating to local 4-H programs.

4-H Giving Day helps provide opportunities for youth to learn valuable life skills through hands-on experiences. Local 4-H members participate in projects such as agriculture, cooking, archery, leadership, STEM activities, and community service. These programs help youth develop confidence, responsibility, and leadership while building friendships and connections within their communities.

Funds raised on 4-H Giving Day help support local club activities, educational programs, camps, workshops, and project materials. Donations also help ensure that more youth can participate in 4-H programs regardless of financial barriers.

Through the 4-H pledge, members commit their Head to clearer thinking, Heart to greater loyalty, Hands to larger service, and Health to better living. 4-H Giving Day highlights how these values come to life as young people learn, serve, and grow into future leaders.

Community members are encouraged to participate in 4-H Giving Day by making a donation, sharing the event on social media, or simply helping spread the word about the positive impact 4-H has on youth. Every contribution, large or small, helps strengthen programs that empower the next generation. This year we have a "Give to Your County" option

along with a county challenge! The county that achieves the highest donor participation rate will be awarded an additional \$2,000 investment from the Arkansas 4-H Foundation.

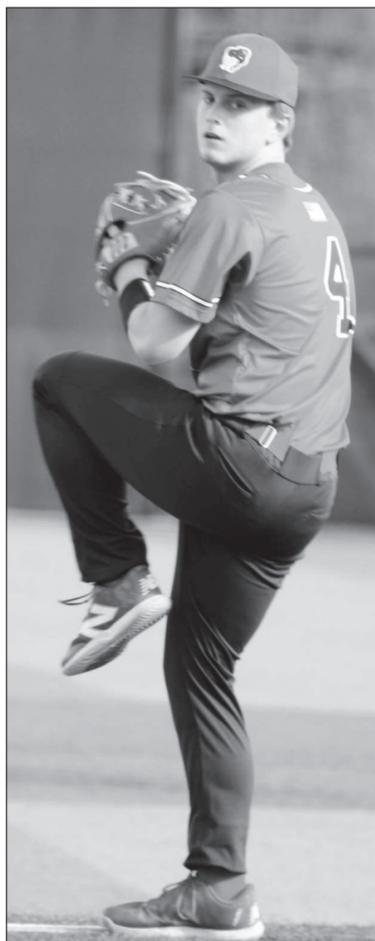
How the county challenge works:

- Donations must be made on March 17, 2026.
- Each individual donor is counted once, regardless of gift size
- Gifts must be a minimum of \$10 to count toward the challenge
- The winning county is determined by participation rate -- number of donors supporting that county divided by the county's population

How to sponsor:

- Scan the QR Code, select your amount, select direct to county program, enter Pike Co and fill out the remaining form!
- You can also take your donation to the Pike County Extension Office any time that day!

Local 4-H leaders hope the community will join them in celebrating and supporting the young people who are learning, leading, and making a difference through 4-H.



Submitted photos/Pearl Cox

PLAY BALL! ... The Murfreesboro High School Rattlers have opened the season with a 3-0 record by defeating Prescott 7-0, Hope 7-2 and Woodlawn 4-2. The team will host Caddo Hills on Tuesday, Parkers Chapel on Thursday and Cutter Morning Star on Friday. The Lady Rattlers softball team is 0-2 on the season after losses to Mineral Springs 12-7 and Magnolia 19-2. They travel to Magnet Cove on Tuesday and host Parkers Chapel on Friday. Pictured are Rattler pitchers in action this season, including (above left) Isaac Kuykendall, (above right) Hunter Cox and (left) Kooper Caldwell.



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'Dear Preacher'

By Buddy Ray, Murfreesboro Church of Christ

IF GOD IS FOR US
Romans 8:31

God has always worked for the good of all mankind and has always been on our side regarding our salvation. We need to understand the enormous cost of redemption for us. The apostle Paul's explanation of the work that God has done in bringing man back from sin to Himself anticipates that we do have an enemy. We have dangerous opposition from Satan and his demons. It is good to know that we are not in this struggle against sin alone. We would fail miserably if left to our own designs because Satan is stronger than we are but He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world.



If God is for us who can be against us? Our opposition simply pales in comparison with the mighty and powerful God who is our ally. Our fear of the world and all its hatred for righteousness and those who love the Lord should diminish. The everlasting arms of the Lord will see us through the battles we fight for the truth of God and

His church. Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28 Who then is great enough or powerful enough to stop the God given duties we are supposed to perform? Who is great enough to stop the power of the gospel lived and preached? The answer is "no one." No matter how it looks to us, God is able to keep His promises to His children. Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. Take heart! Have courage! Be faithful unto death and you will receive a crown of righteousness! Revelation 2:10

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THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Breakfast: Chocolate muffin, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch: Sausage pizza, seasoned carrots, steamed broccoli, applesauce, milk

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Breakfast: Fruit loop waffles, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch: Hot dog, 7-12 Hot dog with chili, onion & relish, baked beans, sidewinder fries, apricot cups, milk

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Breakfast: Mini chocolate chip french toast, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch: Vegetable beef soup, carrot & celery sticks w/ ranch, grilled cheese sandwich, apple

sauce, milk

Line 2- 7-12 Pizza sticks w/ marinara sauce

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

Breakfast: Sausage biscuit, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch: Beef fingers, mashed potatoes, steamed broccoli, whole grain roll, peaches, milk

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Breakfast: Chocolate donut, or cereal, fruit, juice, milk

Lunch: BBQ rib sandwich, cole slaw, pinto beans, 7-12 baked chips, pineapple, milk

Line 2- 7-12 Meatball sub w/ cheese

**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

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TUESDAY, MARCH 17

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

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The Shunammite's Son

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN, AFTER AN ARDUOUS TRIP, NOW APPROACHES ELISHA'S ABODE IN THE FERVENT HOPE THAT SOMETHING STILL CAN BE DONE FOR HER DEAD SON....

EVEN AT A GREAT DISTANCE, ELISHA HAS RECOGNIZED HER AND SENDS GEHAZI TO FIND OUT IF ALL IS WELL WITH THE WOMAN'S FAMILY.

ALL IS WELL.

BUT THE WOMAN WILL DIVULGE WHAT IS IN HER HEART ONLY TO ELISHA!

NOW ELISHA'S SERVANT, ON HEARING THE WOMAN, ASKS THOSE THINGS WHICH ELISHA WISHES TO KNOW....

THY HUSBAND? THY SON—IS ALL WELL WITH THEM?

LET HER ALONE! FOR HER SOUL IS VEILED AND THE LORD HATH NOT TOLD ME WHAT IS WRONGS—LET HER SPEAK!

...AND ON REACHING THE PROPHET, THE DISTRAUGHT WOMAN CLUTCHES AT ELISHA IN GREAT TURMOIL AT THIS UNLIE ACTION, GEHAZI ATTEMPTS TO THRUST HER AWAY BUT ELISHA INTERRUPTS.

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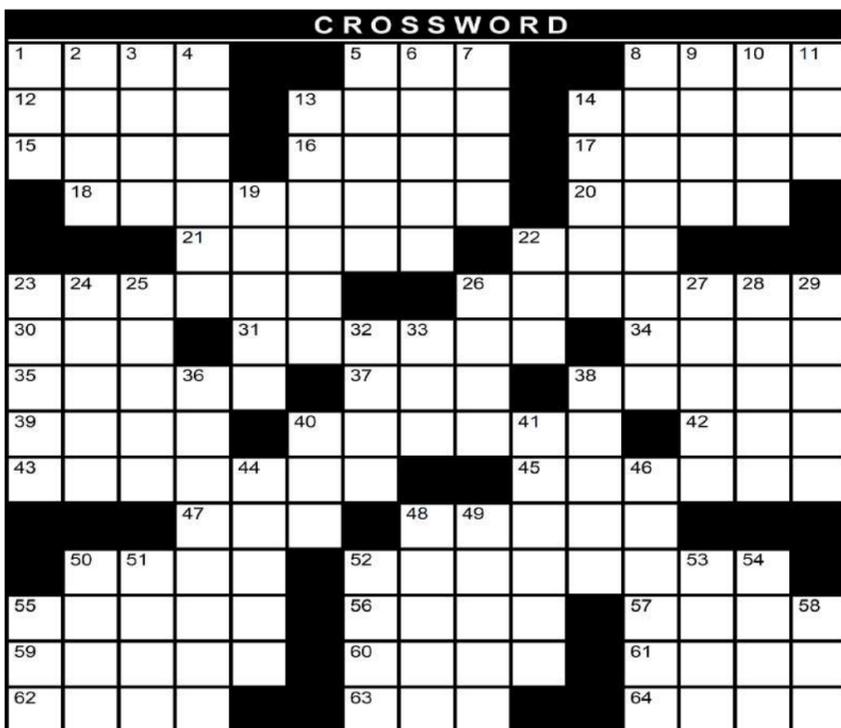
ACROSS

1. Abbreviation, abbr.
5. Corvine bird's sound
8. Aquarium dweller
12. Sandwich shop
13. Half human, half cobra in Hinduism
14. Blatant
15. Don't go
16. *Tony Stark, a.k.a. ____ Man
17. High-quality black tea
18. *Leader of Guardians of the Galaxy
20. Research facil.
21. Words to live by
22. Leo month
23. ____ Tree National Park
26. Period between linked activities (2 words)
30. Not safe in baseball
31. Drunk's speech?
34. Sitar music
35. Doughy snack of Jewish origin
37. Rage
38. Seize a throne
39. Common hosiery shade
40. Nom de guerre
42. "Wow!"
43. What emergency workers do
45. Choice word
47. Young newt
48. Passport stamps
50. Vomit
52. *Doctor Doom's frequent ally (2 words)
55. Deserved consequence
56. One of Great Lakes
57. Iranian money
59. Like Vitruvian Man, e.g.
60. Prima donnas' problems
61. Author Murdoch
62. Like Regina George
63. "____ My People Go"
64. *Sandman can transform his body into

this

DOWN

1. Pop-ups, e.g.
2. Risky business, pl.
3. Cry plaintively
4. Capital of Saudi Arabia
5. Billiards bounce
6. Ancient Greek marketplace
7. Diagon Alley purchase
8. *Captain America's team
9. Albanian monetary units
10. Small cave
11. What Pac-Man did to strawberry
13. Largest Asian antelope
14. Poppy seed derivative
19. Just outside a fairway
22. Inflation matter
23. *Batman's arch-nemesis
24. 1/16th of a pound
25. Not shakes, as in bartender
26. * ____ Titans, cyborgs' team
27. L in LOL
28. Acquiesce
29. Rubbernecker
32. Tough spot
33. *Leonardo to Michelangelo
36. *One from Krypton
38. Inuit skin boat
40. *Size-changing ____-Man
41. Yeses, alt. sp.
44. Butcher's refuse
46. Trouble, in Yiddish
48. Threshold
49. "Complete ____'s Guides"
50. Bid, past tense
51. Particular region
52. Comes on a rod
53. Turkish currency
54. Been in bed
55. * ____ Possible
58. Lysergic acid derivative, acr.





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BASEBALL Continued from Page 1

why."

McRae feels those steps were crucial to where the team is today.

"That's what I wanted to set up in those first five years. We're going to go play the best of the best. In the state-semi final season (2016) we went 15-11, and literally all the losses were to a state champion or a state runner-up from all classifications. It's about getting us ready to play our best in May. A lot of what we're setting up in those years was the mindset that we play the regular season in a way so we are ready to go win in May at the [end of season] tournaments."

He said he starts every season with a parent meeting to explain.

"What this team has, I have a plan for, and the scheduling is built around that plan. There's going to be time when I call on a Tuesday, because we are going to get rained out on Friday, so we play at who knows where on Thursday at 4 p.m. I'm sorry you can't make it, I know it's late notice, but we've got to get a game in this week because it is a part of the plan. As a whole I've been very lucky that the parents have understood that plan too, and know that I'm not just out there making stuff up off the top of my head. It's fortunate that the parents have understood as much as the kids – it takes the parents buying in as well. The famous quote from some of them was 'we know you are crazy, but it always seems to somehow work out' and I'm cool with that. We understand that I'm going to do things that at face value doesn't make a ton of sense, but the track record now is showing there is some reason why we are doing the things that seem crazy. That's fine, because that's how I am anyway. It's lucky the parents have bought in, because it's difficult when you are a freshman parent coming in and you haven't been in this environment yet where Coach McRae schedules a random game in Little Rock on a Tuesday at 4 p.m. because we just have to get a game in. That's a different thing and that takes adjustment to understand there is purpose behind it. That's what I was building the first five years."

McRae said that there is some difference between schools looking to compete at the highest level of baseball versus those just playing baseball.

"At our level, especially – less so as you go up levels – because they might have four baseball coaches. I'm very blessed to be able to put a lot of my concentration in the spring into baseball. There are schools where someone is assigned to coach baseball because somebody has to do it. At our level you do have people that take baseball a little more seriously, but it's hard with track going on as well. Some schools are really good at track, so they want to place their emphasis there. It's about finding a balance between track and baseball, letting kids do both if they want. We have put a lot of emphasis into baseball here lately – not necessarily me, but the kids, who are driving that. Obviously, I, as the coach, enjoy having the kids out there and wanting to compete, but they want to be successful and put in the extra work. I've been blessed with kids like that since I got here. They put in time on their own – hit and throw on their own. I've had several kids from every team that have private lessons as well. Baseball matters here, to these kids and their families. That is ultimately why we've been so blessed to have the success we have been having, because the kids and parents – the driving force -- want to be good at baseball. That buy in that 'we know this will inevitably make us get better.'"

McRae is "thankful and blessed" to work as Rattler head coach because "the families are willing and eager to go out and do the things that it takes to be good. That's not the case everywhere, other people have other priorities, and that's fine. It's not we are right and you are wrong; it's just how it is for us, and what it boils down to. The kids and parents step up, continue to step up, giving us the opportunity to compete."

McRae said the one simple factor, beyond all others, that demands all the effort is simple.

"It's how hard our region is – one of the toughest in the state, regardless of classification, and has been forever and ever, amen. Pre-covid, the state champion was always in our region. When you show up, you are playing the best of the best in the state, every year. I've had good teams over the years that had to absolutely fight in the first round of region [tournament] to even make state. The state semi-final in 2016 had to go to nine innings with Parkers Chapel to win 2-1. Parkers Chapel was one of the best teams in the state, and so were we, so one of us didn't get to go to state. We have learned, adapted, and our kids have gotten used to having to play this high-level ball immediately. As soon as you show up at region, if you are not your best, your season is over. It doesn't matter how good the regular season has been ... any year you can come out of that region in baseball, it's been a great year. It doesn't matter what your record is – if you can find a way to win one game in the regional tournament, it's been a great year. You just beat somebody who can play the game. A lot of the schools in our region just care and are baseball people, putting in the effort, and that's why they are there."

He said the lost covid season stole what could be a very good season for the Rattlers.

"We were really good and 5-0 and had just beat Prairie Grove [Class 5-A] at a tournament in Ashdown the day before school shut down. A lot of people can say 'what if' [that season] but I thought we had a really good chance with that team to be really successful. We had a lot of good players, lost to graduation and didn't finish out their senior season. It hurt, but the thought in my head at the time was that team was going to be the tipping point of the run that we have been on recently. But, since that time over five years, we have made the quarter-finals of state twice, the semi-finals once and the state tournament every year."

The recent five-year run has been memorable.

"If I'm wrong, I'd love to be corrected by someone, but from what I've found we have set a ton of MHS baseball records, including in 2021 when we had the most wins ever wins in a season at 26-4. That was an amazing team that just ran into a college-field old England team in the quarters. That year we also hit the most home runs in school history with 32. "Even at the old park, where the fence is shorter, 32 home runs for a high school team is a lot. I can coach as long as I want and my never come close to seeing that again."

In 2022, the team went 19-9, and faced some adversity at the end of the season with crucial injuries. Despite this the Rattlers defeated #1 Woodlawn in the regionals.

"That's a program defining type of win – you can beat all these teams, but can you beat the best when you have to beat the best? It's one thing to beat them in a spring break tournament, it's another thing to show up and win when you have to win. We started seeing more of that type of stuff. It's not we can beat 6-A schools, it's we can beat the people we when need to beat them."

McRae said the 2023 was a .500 year (14-14), but he was impressed by the fact that "we struggled day to day with wins and losses, we got beat by people we shouldn't have, but what it boiled down to – and I credit this to the previous years – because the kids saw and were a part of high-level baseball and winning games when they had to, that year we won the games we had to. We didn't win a million games, and we lost several games [we shouldn't have], but when it got down to we needed to win one game, we won one. We are getting to the point of – what you strive to be as a coach – where it's not teams, but an actual program with sustained success. That's not saying we won't have bad years, because we will, but it's about understanding what we've done in the past and what we've experienced, had led to us to be better the next time and we show up. Even for kids on the previous team that might have been a bench player, but when he shows up the next year and it's his turn to play, he's been around it – seen it – experienced it and understands what he has to do to make it possible for us."

McRae said the 2023 was the definition of that theory.

"We had, for sure, some talented kids – no doubt about it – but that team in particular found a way to overcome a lot of deficiencies. We had injuries and tons of adversity that year in all areas, but we found a way to show up and win when we needed to and still continue to make the state tournament. That's the key – if you just get yourself there, you have a chance. So, it's about getting out of our region."

The 2023 team set up the 2024 and 2025 teams by finding a way, even "by all intents and purposes we shouldn't have, so now let's go do something about it."

The 2024 team went 18-9 and a state tournament quarterfinal appearance, while the 2025 team 23-10 and a state semi-final appearance. "Ninth inning, tie game, chance to go play for one, you know?"

"The thing about the '24 and '25 teams is a testament to hard baseball actually is. We had the talent, the kids, the team to obviously be there. The '24 team beat the state champion three times [Ouachita]. We played them three times over the course of the season, beat them three times – but they got a great draw and they went and did it. The won, but we were good enough. You just have to have the ball bounce your way too. It's a hard game to wrap your head around because of how difficult it can be at times. Once you get there, it takes as much luck as anything. But in terms for our kids to see, we are good enough."

McRae said the 2024 quarterfinals could be summed up to "a couple hits and a couple errors" that erased a late lead for the Rattlers.

BASEBALL Continued on Page 6



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BASEBALL

Continued from Page 5

"Ballgame -- it ended up being a lot worse than what it was."

In 2025, McRae said the team had a bad regional tournament, going 1-2 and entering as the fourth seed.

"Just a rough weekend, every ball we hit went right at somebody. That's the game we play. The kids, because of that adversity from the 2024 season, seeing it ripped away from you, show up at state and beat a very good Conway Christian team, who won their region pretty easily. We were behind 3-0 almost immediately, but fight back and win, by doing what we do in our program -- nothing fancy, just what we do. We fought back and won. They bough so much into the understanding that they were in control right now, because we had 10 a.m. games. You are at Palestine-Wheatley, in a hotel, having to wake up at 6 a.m. to get breakfast and then go hit. Get to the field at eight-something -- it's as far from our normal schedule as you can be. But we found a way to buy into being as good as we can be, and doing the things it takes to be good. So, going to bed on time. Waking up on time."

The quarterfinals proved to be yet another 10 a.m. game, which the Rattlers won 10-0 in a run rule shortened game.

"And then, you go toe to toe with the [eventual] state champions for nine innings [in the semi-finals]. It slipped away late, plenty of opportunities, left a ton of people on base. That's the game we play. I will never be upset when it's the game. The game we play -- it will either fall your way or not. It's fair by five inches or foul by five inches. The difference is winning or losing. I'll never get caught up in -- baseball is such a hard game, a crazy game, and makes us crazy that we love it so much. However, our kids have been through the ultimate adversity that you can be through -- we were as close as you can be without being."

Having said all that, McRae still won't say what every South Pike County Schools resident wants to hear.

"I'm not saying we will win a state championship this year, and I don't know what our record will be -- but starting back in 2015 we have slowly been building and building on what it takes to be successful in 2A baseball. I don't know that we win the district championship, I don't even know that we will make it to the state tournament by winning that first round of the regional tournament. What I can tell you, and I have no doubt about it, is that we are in a position with our kids, with the parents, with this program that we are proud of it. As the coach and the guy trying to lead us down this path, I can't be more proud of where we have come to where we are right now."

The next step, according to McRae, is how to maintain success.

"Ultimately, one of these days, I truly believe that the ball will bounce our way. We just continue to put in the work we have been, continue to believe in the process of what we are doing, continue to have the buy-in from kids, parents and school administration that we want to be good at baseball. After that, to me, it's just a matter of time. It's not an if, but a when type of thing."

For an analogy, McRae references the Arkansas Razorbacks.

"It's like Dave Van Horn -- if you keep putting yourself into the position for it to happen -- you think ultimately, it's bound to happen. You just have to keep finding ways to be there. Eventually it will bounce your way because of what you are doing and what we have been building. Then it's not just luck at that point -- it's just what it takes. That's the biggest thing I see about where we are and where we are continuing to go -- there will be those years where you don't go 23-10 or 26-4, you can't expect that every year, but the reality of it is on those 14-14 years, which we've had a couple of over the past ten years, we are still winning when we have to. That's the thing I am most proud of, that is saying we believe in what we do, we believe we can do this -- baseball is hard enough, you can't beat yourself up. It's the state of our program and the learning process of how we can consistently be good."

McRae's all-time record at Murfreesboro sits at 173-106.

While last year's team graduated several key players, McRae said that "that has happened a lot to us in the past -- we've lost really good seniors all the time."

"Every team is new, and the question is 'how

is this team its best?' What we did last year, we are not going to be able to do this year, or the year before, or the year before that. Every year is simply finding 'what is this team best at, what are our deficiencies, and how do we get better at the stuff we are not good at, while staying consistent at what we are really good at?' This year's team is that new puzzle, like every team is that new puzzle."

McRae laughed at the question about replacing graduating seniors.

"You don't replace those kids. That's the thing about it -- every senior class I've had on all of these teams has been so successful, we are not looking to replace those kids, because you don't replace those kids. They are very good, but they are unique at what they are good at. I'm not looking on this team to find someone to replace Brody Maroon, Lathan Compton, Cameron Stevens, Cash Lowery or Laytan Wilcher. Those were my guys who played as last year's seniors. I'm not looking to replace them ... because I can't, and, I'm not trying to. It's more how can we make this team as good as it can be with the returning pieces -- we are returning more than we are losing from the starting lineup -- but can't replace the ones that we lost. That's the puzzle."

Practices started in January, fully for those not in basketball. For those participating in basketball, there was throwing practice on non-game days.

"If you don't build your arm up correctly, you are very prone to injury. I've been very lucky with the various basketball coaches that they have all been okay with the understanding that we are just protecting kid's arms and not trying to steal them away from basketball. When it's basketball focus on basketball, but we can't get done with basketball and then a week later be able to play a baseball game. The most miserable thing in the world is playing three months of baseball and your arm bothering you the whole time."

McRae said five everyday returners -- along with contributors would provide the starting portion of this year's team. The five returners are Isaac Kuykendall, Kooper Caldwell, Kale Burns, Carter Gilmer and Alex Bonner.

Contributors looking for larger roles this season include Hunter Cox and Cale Humphry.

"We have a good core and foundation to build on for this team to make it as good as possible. We are bringing back two really good arms, and that's where a lot of it starts."

- Kuykendall -- pitcher in quarterfinal victory, 7 IP, 0 ER.

- Gilmer -- pitcher in nine inning semifinals

"We have two as proven as they can be at our level, have pitched in the biggest games you can feasibly pitch in, and we have those two returning. That's a great starting point."

"[Kooper] Caldwell was our utility in 2025, and that team isn't close to what it was without Kooper. What a lot of people don't understand is he didn't lead us in hardly any statistical category, he was second or third in everything. Not only that, but he was also my mover -- meaning that at our level we don't have exclusive pitchers. Higher classifications have kids that simply pitch. We don't do that. Pitcher is my shortstop is my third baseman is my second baseman ... in that process, the best teams I ever have had really good movers. That means whoever is pitching, that kid plays the pitcher's spot, which is what Kooper did for us. When Isaac pitched, Kooper was at third. When Brody pitched, he was at first. Without a good mover, you are just not as good as you could be, because then you have to shift everybody everywhere. Kooper was the absolute unsung hero of last year's team -- one of the best we've had here. It's hard for people to see that because the typical way or recognition, or the way you would honor someone isn't by being a mover. You just have to trust me, and without him we just weren't what we were. So this year, Cooper was pitching some last year, and this year will have to step more into a pitcher role to help provide depth for the pitching staff. He looked good in his innings last year, but he didn't have to pitch as much, so he didn't. This year we will need him to pitch more, but he is still the guy that can go anywhere in the lineup. He will play wherever we need him to play to make him our best. Kooper is that type of kid and player. I think the only thing he hasn't done for us is caught."

"Kale Burns is moving to center field this year ... he was our right fielder last year. He has gotten better every single year, last year at region he was incredible, really hit the ball well against good opponents. He made some incredible catches in right field, plays that a lot of kids don't make. Just being able to stick him

out there, as one of my two seniors (along with Caleb Terrell) who's been in these games and competed, that's how we continue to stay at the level we are."

"Alex Bonner came in as a middle infielder [two years ago] and stepped up as catcher when we didn't know who it would be last year. From the beginning he said 'it's going to be me' and he worked at it, went to lessons for it -- and I can say this -- catching Brody Maroon last year was difficult, and he stepped right in and did it at a high level. He was at his best in the state tournament. Having him as a catcher for three years provides so much stability to the program. I started hitting him in ninth last year, and by the end of the season he was hitting toward the upper half of the lineup. It would surprise me if this year he's not one of the top three hitters in the lineup. He's not going to hit homers, but he is sneaky good -- hit gaps, hit the ball up the middle, and can bunt. He has the skillset and tools to do a lot of things to execute while at the plate -- and there is a lot of kids you can't say that about."

"Isaac and Carter are also kids that are top of the lineup and middle of the order kids, high value and high defensive versatility in high intensity defensive positions. Lot of stress, have

to make plays, and since freshmen they have been doing it. Both very good."

"While the senior class is very small -- two members -- the junior class is large, where a lot of our talent this year will come from. We are getting away from the 'we're young and learning standpoint' and starting to get old -- and the older you get in high school, the easier it tend to get at times. I'm expecting them to get better -- and as far as win and losses, we'll find out when we get out there. But, I have no reason to believe the guys won't continue their progression, which as already been a great success."

"Hunter Cox worked at DH and pitched for us some last year, he can do that again. Cale Humphry was our extra outfielder last year and will look to take a full time role. We have ninth graders who will look to find a spot, as the puzzle pieces get more organized. It won't be clear until May, when I figure out the best version of ourselves. We used a very similar lineup last year until the state tournament, when I completely changed it up because I felt this was going to give us the best chance to win today. It goes from how we win the most during the season to how do we win today? In a one time show up and win, what do we need to do today?"

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Farm Equipment Auction! Don't miss our Spring Auction!

Saturday, March 14th at 9:00 a.m. in Nashville, AR!

Live Onsite and Simulcast Bidding Available for This Auction

Our March Auction will be an outstanding one! Lots of local, one-owner equipment has already been consigned! Our list is growing daily, so what's below is just a PARTIAL listing. Plan to come and stay all day. Bring your trailers. Advertised equipment can start arriving Monday, Feb. 23 - Friday, March 7 from 8 a.m. - 5 pm. We will also be checking in any and all items **Monday, March 9 through Wednesday, March 11 from 7:30 till dark**. This auction offers something for all! Concessions and rest rooms will be available. Feel free to call us anytime at (870) 845-2142 or 845-9200. Go online to see current auction items at toddmorrisauction.com or check us out on facebook.

Directions to auction: On Hwy. 278, travel 3 miles from Nashville, AR toward Hope. From I-30, take the Hope exit (#30), then go west on Hwy. 278 for approx. 23 miles, sale yard is on the right.

PLEASE help us avoid a hazard by NOT parking on the highway the day of the auction - THANK YOU for your cooperation! The items below represent only a PARTIAL listing of what has been consigned to us two weeks prior to the auction. No Buyer's Premium. **TRACTORS * CAMPERS * TRAILERS * FARM EQUIPMENT * CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT * BOATS**

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5 Ft. 3 Pt. Cutter
GN 14 Ft. Dump Trailer w/Ramps and Tarp
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38 Ft. Toy Hauler w/Roof Damage
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Dodge Durango
New Wooden Trash Bins - Single and Double
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Grasshopper 729 w/ 72 inch cut
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NOTICE OF ELECTION

This notice is prepared by the County Election Commission to inform the public that the **2026 PRE-ERENTIAL PRIMARY RUNOFF** will be held on **MARCH 31, 2026**. The notice also provides the public information regarding this election as required by law:

EARLY VOTING DATES & TIMES:

- Tuesday-Friday, March 24-27, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- Monday, March 30, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Location of Poll, Address, Ballots Assigned to Poll:

- Pike County Clerk's Office, 112 N Washington, Suite A Murfreesboro, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots
- Bainum Learning Center, 128 E Broadway, Glenwood, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots

ELECTION DAY VOTING:

ELECTION DATE: March 31, 2026
HOURS: 7:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Location of Poll, Address, Ballots Assigned to Poll:

- Bainum Learning Center, 128 E Broadway, Glenwood, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots
- Bethlehem Baptist Center, 2589 Hwy 27 N, Kirby, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots
- Delight Cafeteria, 623 Webb St, Delight, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots
- Murfreesboro Municipal Building, 204 E Main,

Murfreesboro, AR, Vote Center/All Ballots

ABSENTEE VOTING:

To request an absentee ballot, or to see if you are qualified to vote absentee, contact the County Clerk's office using the information below:

112 N WASHINGTON, SUITE A, MURFREESBORO, AR
(870) 285-2743
OFFICE HOURS: M-F 8 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

BALLOT CANVASSING AND COUNTING:

All processes listed below will be conducted at the **PIKE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE** located at **112 N WASHINGTON, SUITE A, MURFREESBORO, AR**. The dates and times are provided below:

Activity, Date, Time:

- Canvassing and Counting of Absentee Ballots, March 31, 1:00 p.m. to Completion
- Compiling & Publishing Unofficial Election Results, March 31, 7:30 to Completion
- Counting of Election Day Ballots, March 31, 8:00 p.m. to Completion
- Initial Duplication of Ballots, April 1, 9:00 a.m. to Completion
- Initial Review of Provisional Ballots, April 1, 11 a.m. to Completion

- Provisional Ballot Hearings, April 6, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Final Review and Counting of Provisional Ballots, April 6, 1:00 p.m. to Completion
- Recount (IF NEEDED), April 8, 10:00 a.m. to Completion
- Post Election Audit, April 9, 9:00 a.m. to Completion
- Canvassing and Counting of UOCAVA Absentee Ballots (IF NEEDED), April 10, 1:00 p.m. to Completion
- Certification of the Election, April 10, 1:00 p.m. to Completion

ELECTION OFFICIALS:

Election Officials appointed to conduct early voting, election day voting, and all other required duties will be posted for public viewing in the Pike County Clerk's Office, on March 16, 2026 and remain posted for not less than 10 days. An objection must be filed with the County Clerk in writing prior to the following deadlines. An objection that an official is a spouse of a county election commissioner, a county party chair, or a spouse of a county party chair must be filed within 7 days of March 16. An objection that an official is married to a candidate or related to a candidate within two degrees of blood relations must be filed

within 10 days of March 16.

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY RUNOFF

CANDIDATES:
Secretary of State
Bryan Norris
Senator Kim Hammer

CROSSOVER VOTING IS A CRIME! It is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year incarceration and a fine of up to \$2,500, for a person to vote in the preferential primary of one political party and the general primary (runoff) of another. [A.C.A. §7-1-103(a)(19)(B), (b)]

Eligible voters are those who voted a republican ballot, a non-partisan ballot, or those who did not vote in the primary election.

VIEWING YOUR BALLOT PRIOR TO VOTING:

Any voter may look up his or her sample ballot on the Secretary of State's website at: <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/voterview>. Ballots will be available no later than 20 days prior to the election. Sample ballots will also be available at the polling site.

This publication was paid for by the Pike County Clerk's Office, the amount for this publication is \$282.15.

(PCC: 36 & 38, 627w)