

The Murfreesboro Diamond

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USPC 103-230

Serving South Pike County, Arkansas Since 1975

◆◆◆ Home of the Crater of Diamonds State Park ◆◆◆



4-H announces summer programs

MURFREESBORO -- The Pike County 4-H program has announced its slate of summer workshops to be held at the Pike County Extension office in Murfreesboro.

- The office is located at 100 Court Street.
 - May 21 -- AGFC -- Wildlife & Archery -- 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
 - May 26-27 -- Sewing Feed bags -- 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - June 11-12 -- Bobble Heads -- 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 - June 29 -- Terrarium Workshop -- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - July 6 -- Cake Decorating -- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - July 14 -- STEM Workshop-- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - August 6 -- T.O.T.E. Day -- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - August 10 -- Craft Day -- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- For more information about the programming or joining 4-H, call (870) 285-2161.

Referendum effort seeks petitions

MURFREESBORO -- The quest to get alcohol sales on the ballot for the second time is well underway.

According to the numbers provided by Pike County Clerk Randee Edwards, the group has to obtain a minimum of 2,387 valid petitions from registered Pike County Voters to place the referendum on the November ballot for voter consideration.

The referendum failed by six votes at the polls in 2022.

Lisa Harvill said the effort has officially begun dispersing petitions to volunteers across the county that will help in collections.

Anyone that is willing to help with petition efforts -- regardless of amount -- is asked to call (870) 557-1860.

For those that would like to sign a petition, can visit Harvill Insurance at 325 West Main Street, Murfreesboro or the Gypsy Underground Flea Market located at 111 West 13th Street, both in Murfreesboro, where petitions are available.

The group plans an event in the near future and is looking to establish petition locations across the county.

FUMC to offer kid summer meals

Partners with Harvest Regional Food Bank under 'Hunger Doesn't Take a Summer Vacation' mission

TEXARKANA -- This summer, children can enjoy FREE lunches through the Summer Feeding Program, sponsored by Harvest Regional Food Bank and open to all kids ages 1-18 years. No applications are necessary to drop in and all children and teens are welcome.

The Summer Feeding Program makes sure all children can eat healthy food during the summer months when they cannot eat at school. Approximately one in five children in Arkansas are food insecure, meaning they have limited or uncertain access to safe and nutritious food. Children who are hungry or food insecure are more likely to be in poor health and less likely to develop physically, mentally and emotionally.

Locally, meals in Pike County will be available at Blessed Beginnings (Murfreesboro First United Methodist Church), 403 2nd. Avenue in Murfreesboro.

The meals will be offered "Grab-N-Go," where parents and guardians may pick up meals for their children without children present. Three days of meals can be picked up on Monday and four days of meals on Thursday per child. The meals may be collected on Mondays and Thursdays from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. from May 28- August 13.

For more information call Blessed Beginnings at (870) 285-2579 or Harvest Regional Food Bank at (870) 774-1398.

About Harvest Regional Food Bank, Inc. Harvest Regional Food Bank serves Bowie County in Texas, and Miller, Columbia, Little River, Lafayette, Hempstead, Howard, Nevada, Pike, and Sevier counties in Arkansas. As a Feeding America and Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance partner, our mission is to eliminate hunger in this region through food distribution and education. More information can be found at www.harvestregionalfoodbank.org or by following us on Facebook at facebook.com/harvesttxk.



Submitted photos/CODSP

CLASS OF 2025 ... Keshia Smith (above center), a Pennsylvania native, discovered the 3.09 carat Za'Novia Liberty Diamond (above right) at the Crater of Diamonds State Park on April 22. Smith is pictured with her boyfriend, Joey, and her brother, Kirim.

Pennsylvania native unearths 3.09 carat diamond

Second largest diamond find of 2026 at Crater of Diamonds State Park

Submitted Article

MURFREESBORO -- While grieving the deaths of her son and father, Pennsylvania native Keshia Smith recently found a 3.09-carat white diamond during a visit to Arkansas' Crater of Diamonds State Park, a poignant reminder that joy and hope can still emerge from the weight of sorrow.

Smith started planning her trip to Arkansas' diamond site over a year ago, researching where to go and where to dig, even reaching out online to some of the park's frequent visitors for suggestions. After losing her son in October and her father in April, Smith hoped the outing would bring some much-needed comfort. She made the road trip with her boyfriend Joey and brother Kirim and arrived at the park on Tuesday, April 21. Smith spent her first day at the park meeting people and getting the lay of the land. On her second day, she made the memory of a lifetime.

When Smith returned to the park around 9 a.m. on April 22, she greeted friends made the day before and met a few of the park's frequent visitors, who gave her tips on where to search for her diamond.

Smith was digging dirt on the south end of the park's 37.5-acre diamond search area, near an historical marker commemorating John Huddleston's 1906 discovery of the first diamonds in Arkansas. As she dug deeper, Smith saw the colors of the soil change from brown to black. After a couple more scoops, she spotted something shiny in her shovel.

Skeptical at first, Smith placed the glimmering stone in her bag and kept digging. After carrying her dirt to the park's south wash pavilion to wet sift, she was showing others the shiny crystal she had found when someone told her, "You definitely need to take that up and get it looked at." Realizing she might have

found her own diamond, Smith was overcome with joy and started crying, laughing, and hugging everyone around her.

Later in the day, Smith brought her find to the park's Diamond Discovery Center, where staff confirmed that her glimmering stone was a gorgeous, 3.09-carat white diamond. When Smith heard the news, she was again overwhelmed with emotion, both the weight of her grief and the uplifting joy of finding a diamond.

Smith's diamond has a flat, smooth appearance and is about the size of a bead. It is colorless, with a few unique inclusions around the edges. When asked what shape she thought her diamond most resembled, Smith replied, "To me it looks like a heart. That's the first thing I saw when I found it."

Smith spoke with park staff about her feelings leading up to the trip, stating, "I have felt so much pressure the last six months. In October I lost my son, and we just buried my dad a week ago. It has been a lot!" Looking at her diamond, she continued, "I really needed this. I really prayed for this, and I just can't believe it actually happened!"

Park Interpreter Sarah Bivens says, "Ms. Smith exuded joy from the moment she walked in the door. It's not uncommon for larger diamonds like this to be found during the first hour of the finder's dig time. Sometimes, I think diamond finds like this are just meant to be." Other park guests also remarked how excited and enthused Ms. Smith was to even be searching for a diamond, let alone actually finding one.

Many guests name the diamonds they find at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Smith chose to name her gem the Za'Novia Liberty Diamond. Za'Novia represents the names of her two grandchildren and Liberty represents the significance of finding her diamond during America's 250th year.

The Za'Novia Liberty Diamond is the second-largest diamond registered at the park so far this year. As of this publication, park guests have registered 214 diamonds at Crater of Diamonds State Park in 2026.

Quick facts about Crater of Diamonds State Park
Diamonds come in all colors of the rainbow. The three most common colors found at Crater of Diamonds State Park are white, brown and yellow, in that order.

In total, over 75,000 diamonds have been unearthed at the Crater of Diamonds State Park since the first diamonds were discovered in 1906 by John Huddleston, a farmer who owned the land long before it became an Arkansas State Park in 1972.

The largest diamond ever discovered in the United States was unearthed in 1924 during an early mining operation on land that later became part of Crater of Diamonds State Park. Named the Uncle Sam, this white diamond with a pink cast weighed 40.23 carats. It was later cut into a 12.42-carat emerald shape. The Uncle Sam is now part of the Smithsonian's mineral and gem collection and can be seen at the National Museum of Natural History.

Another well-known diamond from the park is the Strawn-Wagner. Found in 1990 by Murfreesboro resident Shirley Strawn, this 3.03-carat white gem was cut into a round brilliant shape weighing 1.09 carats. It graded as ideal cut, D-colorless and flawless and was set in a platinum and 24-carat gold ring. In 1998, the state of Arkansas purchased this diamond for \$34,700 in donations and placed it on permanent display at the park visitor center.

Crater of Diamonds State Park is located on Arkansas Highway 301 in Murfreesboro. It is one of 52 state parks administered by Arkansas State Parks, a division of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism.

Memorial Day service to recognize fallen heroes

Event to be held on courthouse square on May 25 at 10 a.m.

MURFREESBORO -- Pike County Veterans Service Officer, Bob Williams, reports that a "Memorial Day Recognition Ceremony" will be held at the County War Memorial located on the Courthouse square in Murfreesboro, May 25,, starting at 10 a.m.

In the case of inclement weather, the event will be held in the Murfreesboro Community building where the Library and Water Office are located.

He encourages all veterans, citizens, and visitors to our area to make an effort to assemble as patriotic Americans to remember our war heroes who "Gave Their All" to preserve our Nation's freedoms and securing those same opportunities for future generations.

Pike County has knowingly sacrificed seventy-eight of our own, who were killed in action during American conflicts spanning from WW-I, WW-II, Korea, Vietnam, and through the continuing War on Terrorism.

Williams conveys, "I realize this is the first big holiday as our children start their summer vacation from a long school year but let us take a moment out of one day to teach them about the cost of freedom and set aside about forty-five minutes to reflect on the true meaning of Memorial Day. I truly hope the residents and visitors of Pike County can turn out to show our respect for those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Many have been forgotten over time, but their names will forever be immortalized, not only in stone planted in the heart of our community, but rekindled upon the hearts of this grateful patriotic city we call home. Their great sacrifice will be honored, as well as others like them, across every

state in America and in distant cemeteries on foreign shores. Come join us on this hallowed day, "Lest We Forget" and dishonor their memory."



Lady Rattlers fall just off pace at Class 2A state track meet

QUITMAN – The Murfreesboro Lady Rattlers finished third at the state Class 2A track meet in a tight battle for the championship.

The Lady Rattlers accrued 99.5 points, just behind Quitman's 108 and Ozark Catholic's 103.

Dierks High School finished in sixth place with 24 points, tied with Caddo Hills.

Lady Rattlers earning points included:

Macy Gills – fourth place 100 meter dash, 13.50; fifth place 200 meter dash, 27.92; first place 400 meter dash, 1:02.14;

Ma'Shaylia Morris – third place 200 meter dash, 27.70; third place 400 meter dash, 1:04.05; fifth place high jump, 4'8"; sev-

enth place long jump, 14'9.75"

Kinleigh Mounts – seventh place 880 meter run, 2:44.30

Adalyn Silva – fifth place 3200 meter run, 13:32.64

Mason Phillips – fifth place 100 meter hurdles, 18.79; sixth place 300 meter hurdles, 53.17; second place pole vault, 9'0"

4x100 meter relay team – fifth place, 54.97

4x200 meter relay team – fourth place, 1:58.67

4x400 meter relay team – fourth place, 4:32.37

4x800 meter relay team – third place, 11:18.07

Josey Jones – fourth place pole vault (tie) 7'0"

Arianna Jones – second place long jump, 16'3.75"; fourth place triple jump, 32'5"

Kinslee Howell – fifth place discus, 88'7"

MHS BOYS

The Murfreesboro Rattlers had three points at the meet, finishing in twenty-sixth place. Dierks High School earned 31 points, good for tenth place. Fordyce won the meet with 128 points.

Jarrin Burgess finished in sixth place in the triple jump with a distance of 38'8".

For those that qualified, the season ending Meet of Champions will be held in Russellville this Wednesday.

Chamber hears discussion of former Tyson hatchery, Juneteenth

MURFREESBORO -- At the May 5 Murfreesboro Chamber of Commerce Meeting, Mayor Jim O'Neal said a proposal to obtain the former Tyson hatchery building was moving up the chain.

The city requested that Tyson donate the building and five acres of land for their use, and had received a "favorable response" but was still short of formal acceptance.

A large parcel of land -- some 70 acres -- would not be included.

The Chamber and the Juneteenth planning committee moved toward finalizing plans for the event.

This year the entire celebration will be contained to the city park on Saturday, June 13, the Saturday before the official Juneteenth holiday on Friday, June 19.

The event will kick off with the annual parade, starting at 9 a.m., which will go from the Chimney Rock grocery store parking lot to the city park.

Other planned events will include a domino tournament, a bounce house, bingo with prizes and a spades tournament. Someone to do face painting will be sought. Hot dogs, watermelon, chips and drinks will be served for lunch.

"We get to buy local this year," Chamber president Ricky Branch said, referencing Chimney Rock grocery store.

A live disc jockey will be present with room for a dance, which Mayor Jim O'Neal said was a good idea.

"By having it all at the park, there will be restrooms available and no need for a time schedule," O'Neal said.

Almonzo Benson will speak at the event.

On Sunday, June 14, an interdenominational sunrise service will be held at the park, starting at 7 a.m., which will be set to conclude before other church services begin.

"It will be a nice way to conclude the event," O'Neal said.

The group will sell t-shirts if there is sufficient interest.

In other Chamber news, the group will look to start the Farmer's Market late this month. The market is open on Saturdays beginning at 7 a.m. This year the effort will be open to "anything homemade" including crafts. People interested in being a vendor are asked to pre-register with the Chamber before coming by calling (870) 285-3131 or e-mailing murfreesboroar.chamber@gmail.com.

With two members' terms about to expire on the Murfreesboro Advertising and Tourism Commission -- Robin Dildy and Jamie Terrell -- the chamber was tasked with nominating possible replacements for the mayor's final choice.

It was noted that both expiring members were in favor of staying on the board.

Mayor Jim O'Neal expressed interest in bringing some fresh eyes to the mix and asked about the inclusion of Phil Terrell.

It was noted, however, that the board must be comprised of four members from the hotel/motel/vacation rental industry -- currently Jamie Terrell, Dildy, Angie Branch and Caleb Howell. The board has one "at large" member -- Lance Bridgeman -- along with two representatives from the city council, Mark Barnes and Kirk Stone. With that makeup, it was currently impossible to place Phil Terrell on the board.

"He can certainly come give input," said Ricky Branch. "Input is always welcome as is new blood and fresh ideas."

The board voted to nominate Jamie Terrell and Dildy to reprise their roles.

Dates for upcoming events in 2026 were discussed, with the idea of getting firm dates on the calendar. While the "Christmas in July" fundraiser may or may not occur, it definitively will not return to the buffet style meal.

Citing the amount of work with diminishing returns, the group mulled the idea of barbecue sandwich meals.



Submitted photos/Jane Fugitt

GROUP VISITS MURFREESBORO ... A chapter of the Eagle Wings Motorcycle Association recently brought approximately forty members on a trip to our fair city. While here, the group visited the Crater of Diamonds State Park and Glen Campbell's gravesite before dining at the Feed Bin Cafe.

The group also knocked around the idea of having a place for food trucks and hosting an event one day a week.

It was noted that a new food truck -- owned by Rick Lacey, former owner of Smokin' Rick's Hickory House in Nashville, and his daughter in law, Heather Cornwell. The truck is expected to open around Memorial Day and will be located in the Gypsy Underground Flea Market parking lot.

The Chamber's Haunted House event at the former Pike County Hospital building will look to run four of the five weekends in October, and will culminate on Halloween on Saturday, October 31. The Chamber's fall festival and trunk or treat event will also be held on Halloween.

Some discussion was held into considering a 5K "Monster Mash" Run that weekend in October as well.

The group, encouraged by the amount of vendors at the recent Nashville Peach Blossom Festival, will seek to draw more to the fall festival event on the square.

Chamber Secretary/Treasurer Jane Fugitt told the group that recently the Eagle Wings Motorcycle Association visited Murfreesboro.

The group features members from Texas, Louisiana Oklahoma and Arkansas, and had a stop on an outing they had headquartered in Hope. The group rode to Murfreesboro to visit the Glen Campbell gravesite and the Crater of Diamonds State Park.

Feed Bin Cafe had been recommended to them for lunch, and the Chamber paid for their dessert at the venue.

"They visited the shops around the square and were a very nice group -- they had a great time here," said Fugitt.

For more information on the Eagle Wings Motorcycle Association, please visit www.ewma-world.org or email ewmamembership@gmail.com.



LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

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

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

CCCUA holds sports awards banquet

DE QUEEN -- University of Arkansas Cossatot held its first-ever all-sports athletic banquet, honoring the 2025-26 athletic season and bestowing season awards upon student-athletes.

The awards were as follows:

MEN'S BASKETBALL:

Teammate of the Year - Isaac Freeman; Most Improved Player of the Year - Issak Helms; Sixth Man of the Year - Devean Newton; Defensive Player of the Year - RJ Patton Jr.; Offensive Player of the Year - Dylan Glover; Freshman of the Year - Amory Arie; Colt Award Outstanding Individual - John Ateny

MEN'S SOCCER:

MVP - Kerry Najera; Offensive Player of the Year - Kerry Najera; Defensive Player of the Year - Kobe Sutherland Jr.; Colt Award - Zamaro Mofford

WOMEN'S SOCCER:

MVP - Angeline Gustave; Offensive Player of the Year - Francesca Dorreus; Defensive player of the Year - Mariana Castillo; Most Improved - Gissel Daravina

SHOOTING SPORTS:

Men's Leadership Award - Luke Floyd; Women's Leadership Award - Laci Litchford

BID NOTICE

Pike County will be accepting bids to rebuild the Glenwood Pike County Fairgrounds Pavilion which is located at 510 N. 1st, Glenwood, Arkansas. All debris removal will be provided by the Pike County Road Department. The pavilion is approximately a 40'x50' (2,287 sq. ft.)

Requirements: The structure to be built will need to be either a wood structure with a metal roof and metal gabled ends or an all-metal structure with metal roof and metal gabled ends. We would need to have an estimate for both types of structures. Pricing needs to include lighting and receptacles. Bids will need to be turned into the Pike County Judge's office no later than Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

Bid packets will be available at the Pike County Judge's Office.

Bids will be opened at 10:00 a.m. on May 21, 2026, at the Pike County Judge's Office.

If you have any questions, please contact Pike County Judge's office at 870-285-2414.

(This publication was paid for by the Pike County Judge. The amount paid for this publication is \$81)

(p.c.j. 44,45)

BID NOTICE

Pike County will be accepting bids to rebuild the Glenwood Pike County Poultry Barn which is located at 510 N. 1st, Glenwood, Arkansas. All debris removal will be provided by the Pike County Road Department. The poultry barn is approximately 32'x90' (2,464 sq. ft.)

Requirements: The structure to be built will need to be either a wood structure with a metal roof and metal gable end or an all-metal structure with metal roof and metal gable end. We need to have an estimate for both types of structures. Pricing needs to include electricity for lights and receptacles. Bids will need to be turned into the Pike County Judge's office no later than Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

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Your Hometown Newspaper since 1975

Located in the County Seat of Pike County • Murfreesboro, Arkansas
Home of the Crater of Diamonds State Park
Little Missouri River • Lake Greason

• John Robert Schirmer, Publisher
• P.J. Tracy IV, Editor
• Christy Coccarelli, Office Manager/Photographer

Published by Nashville Leader Inc.,
418 North Main Street
Nashville, AR 71852

Periodical Class postage paid at Murfreesboro, AR

The Murfreesboro Diamond (USPC 103-230) is published every Wednesday.

Subscription Rates: \$45 per year in area: Pike, Howard, Hempstead, Clark, Nevada & Montgomery counties; \$57 per year elsewhere.

\$35 for 6-months in area; \$45 for 6-months elsewhere.

College Subscriptions- \$30 for 9-months.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Murfreesboro, AR 71958

Telephone: 870-285-2723

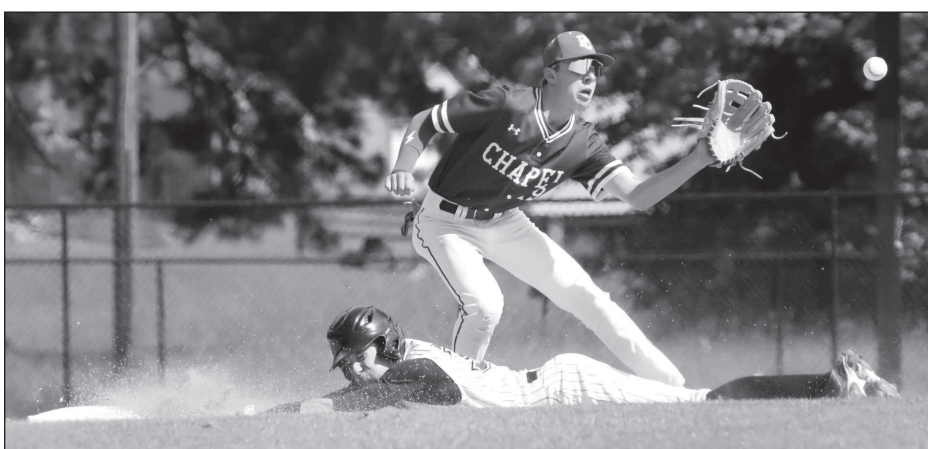
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Any erroneous statement published in the newspaper
will be gladly and promptly corrected if called
to the attention of the management.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE
FRIDAYS AT 3:00 P.M.**



Submitted photos/Pearl Cox

END OF SEASON ... The Murfreesboro Rattlers baseball team lost their first round regional matchup to the Parkers Chapel Trojans 3-1 in Murfreesboro last week. The loss ended the Rattlers' campaign, in which they finished with a 22-4 (11-1 conference) record and the 2026 7-2A regular season conference championship.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONGOING -- The public is invited to drop by the Pike County Extension Office and get some Texas Roadhouse Rolls. The rolls have been cut in price to \$4 a dozen and \$2 for container of cinnamon butter. Call the office at (870) 285-2161 for more information.

MAY 16 -- The Class of 1976 will be having their fiftieth Delight High School reunion on May 16 at 7 p.m., at The Feed Bin Cafe in Murfreesboro. All graduates, their spouses and former classmates are invited to attend. Attending parties are requested to contact The Feed Bin Cafe (870) 285-3122 by May 11th to pre-order from their online dinner menu. Event host contact is Lyn Pilot, text only, (870) 681-2050 for more information.

MAY 17 -- The annual Decoration and Homecoming at Academy Cemetery will be held on Sunday May 17. There will be a potluck meal at noon. Mowing season is here and the upkeep of the cemetery is made possible by your donations. Donations may be given to Basel Cox, Gary L. Cox, or Jimmy Goodwin. Donations may be mailed to:

Gary L. Cox, 27 Bacon Creek Farm Rd., Nashville AR. 71852
 Jimmy Goodwin, 122 Britt Road, Nashville, AR 71852
 Basel Cox, 11 Bacon Creek Farm Rd., Nashville, AR 71852

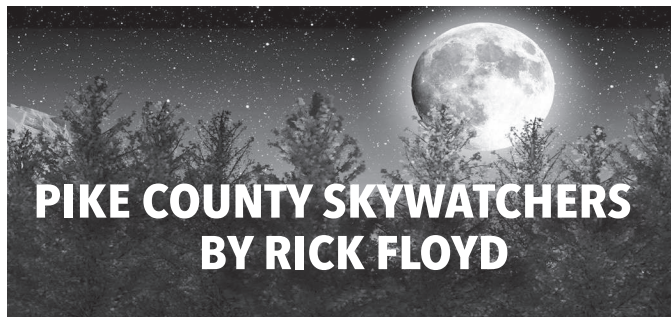
Kirby athlete wins three events at Class A track meet

MINERAL SPRINGS -- The Mineral Springs boy's track team finished second at the Class A track meet, falling just behind Marked Tree High School 91.5 to 82.

Pike County's Kirby High School finished with 33 points in seventh place.

Trojan Alec O'Neal was state champion in three events -- the 800 meter run, 2:08.36; the 1600 meter run, 4:53.86; and the 3200 meter run, 10:43.02.

Fellow Kirby runner Kelton York placed sixth in the 1600 meter run at 5:27.81.



PIKE COUNTY SKYWATCHERS BY RICK FLOYD

Watch the heavens for prominent Venus

The Moon will be a waxing crescent on May 18, and the western sky after sunset will be the stage for Venus and that thin moon crescent (in earth-glow) to come near each other for a little dance.

Venus will be prominent all month, and by mid-May it and Jupiter will be aligned as they move down the western sky. Jupiter is the higher of the two and not quite as bright as Venus. The two planets, if you would like some geometry in the sky, are the base of an almost perfect triangle with the addition of the brightest star in our hemisphere, Sirius. Look to your left as you face west to find it, the point of the triangle. It is a very large triangle, so have a good open view.

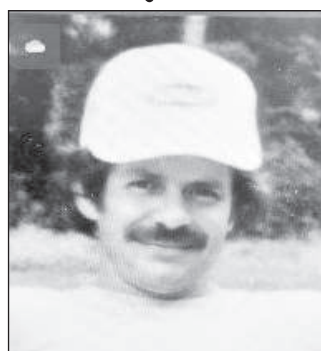
Having mentioned in a previous article that The Farmer's Almanac was ceasing publications after 2026, then learning that there are actually two Farmer's Almanacs I got a copy of this year's Old Farmer's Almanac which is still going strong it seems. This publication was started in 1792 by Robert B. Thomas, and the one closing its doors was established later, in the early 1800's.

The Old Farmer's Almanac has considerable information about what goes on in the sky from astronomy to weather. It is interesting that they include a lot of advice about farming and gardening which includes items about the relationship between astronomical and meteorological events and what we do here on Earth. When the almanac was first established a very large percentage of the U.S. population was engaged in some kind of agricultural work, in contrast to today's mostly urbanized society. Maybe given our continued interest in things sky-wise there is something deeply ingrained in our psyches that keeps us looking up.

This year's edition has an article about the worrisome proliferation of objects orbiting Earth, a somewhat frequent topic in "Skywatchers". Their article is titled "A Crash Course on Space Trash: Journey to the Junkosphere." They also have an interesting bit of information about the origin of the names of the days of the week (in Latin of course) after the Sun, the Moon and the five known planets. European languages, French, Spanish, and Italian still relate to the Latin references, but English reflects influences from Anglo-Saxon and Norse languages. Sunday, for example, was dies Solis (Sol's day) to the Romans, but it was later changed to Lord's Day in European languages. In Spanish it is now Domingo. English borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon word Sunnandaig (Sun's day). Saturday is Saturn's Day for speakers of English, and for Italian speakers it is Sabato, a derivation of the Latin word for Sabbath.

Obituaries

Rayburn L. 'Ray' Johnson



Rayburn L. "Ray" Johnson, passed away on December 31, 2025, after a long battle with diabetes. Ray was born in Manila, Arkansas on September 28, 1950 to Ruben and Ruby Johnson.

Ray was a 1968 graduate from Nashville High School, in Nashville, Arkansas.

He got his first 8 to 5 job from Mr. Bernie Creel at Western Auto on Main Street in Nashville. Ray's work as a licensed electrician took him to many different places in the USA but he loved his family with all his heart and enjoyed coming home to Murfreesboro for family get togethers.

He was preceded in death by both parents; two sisters, Berniece Rogers of Lake Forest, California and Inell Brewer of Kirby, Arkansas; two brothers,

Walter Johnson of Lake Forest, California and Al Thomas (Joe) Johnson of Nash, Texas; his step-father, Hearl Walls and step-brother, Raymond Walls of Murfreesboro, Arkansas.

He is survived by two sisters, Edith Witt of Kennesaw, Georgia and Deronda Daniel of Barling, Arkansas, as well as a daughter, Samantha Couch and granddaughter Sarah Couch of Huntsville, Texas. He was blessed with several nieces and nephews and a host of cousins.

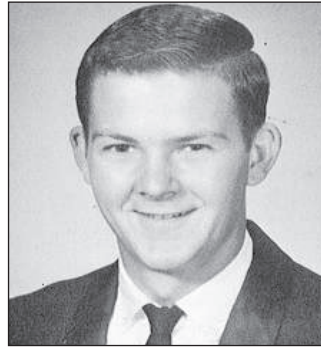
Ray was a strong believer in the Lord and was always prepared to minister the words of God whenever the opportunity arose.

A graveside memorial service will be held at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, May 16, 2026 at Academy Cemetery in Nathan, Arkansas, with Pastor Joe Kelly officiating.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation for maintenance of the cemetery. Checks can be made to Academy Cemetery, c/o Gary Cox, 27 Bacon Creek Farm Rd., Nashville, AR 71852.

To place an online tribute, please visit www.brothertonbrothersfuneralhome.com

James 'Macky' McKnight, 75, Delight



James "Macky" McKnight, 75, of Delight, Arkansas went to be with his Lord and Savior on May 5, 2026, in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. He was born on June 30, 1950, to Raymond Ira and Martha Frances Miller McKnight.

He was a member of Delight First Missionary Baptist Church and enjoyed sharing his faith with others. He and his wife owned and operated McKnight's Grocery in Delight for thirty-eight years, where he enjoyed seeing familiar faces and visiting with friends and neighbors.

He cared deeply about his community and served as President of the Delight Cemetery Association for 16 years, was one of the founders of the Delight Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Delight Lions Club. He supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation through Fun Runs and BBQ Cook-offs and helped grant wishes to wish kids. He believed in serving others and supporting local businesses.

Macky enjoyed the simple things in life, like mowing his yard and spending time with his family. He especially loved going to his granddaughters' activities and being there for them whenever he could. They truly were his "pride and joy."

Macky is survived by his wife of fifty-seven years Rheta Norman McKnight; children Jeff (Melody) McKnight and Celeste (Chris) May; grandchildren Madison (Braden) Healy, McKenzie (Bryle) Fatherree, Jenna May, Coley Caldwell, and Carol Basurto; great-grandchildren Aiden and Alec Basurto, Kannon and Aspen Cain; one very special uncle, Larry Miller; a special daughter, Rosalia Palacios, along with other aunts and uncles, a multitude of cousins, friends and former store patrons.

Visitation were held on Friday, May 8, at Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro.

Funeral services were held on Saturday, May 9, at Delight First Baptist Church, with Bro. Bryan Sellers and Bro. Verlon Wood officiating, burial followed in the Delight Cemetery, under the direction of Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to the Mid-South Make - A - Wish Foundation or the Delight Cemetery.

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

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 Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

UAMS HOUSE CALL

Dr. Bala Simon is an associate professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Q: What causes tinnitus?

A: Tinnitus is an ear condition in which those affected perceive sounds that do not come from an external source, which means others cannot hear them. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders reports that tinnitus is common, with various surveys estimating that condition affects between 10% and 25% of U.S. adults.

It is unclear exactly what causes tinnitus; however, those who have ear infections, head or neck injuries, hearing loss, or extended exposure to loud noises are more likely to be affected. Tinnitus is common in those between the ages of 40 and 80. The condition affects men more than women. Certain medications such as antibiotics, antidepressants, or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are also thought to be possible causes of tinnitus.

While a common symptom of tinnitus is ringing in the ears, other possible noises include buzzing, clicking, hissing, humming, or roaring. Sounds may be heard in one or both ears. They may be present at all times or come and go. Anxiety, depression, fatigue, and headaches are possible complications of tinnitus.

Tinnitus cannot be cured, although there are some treatments that can help lessen the impact. Preventative measures such as using hearing protection when necessary or turning down the volume when listening to music are advised. See your health care provider for an examination if you experience symptoms.

Email your health questions to housecall@uams.edu.

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Lisa Chandler Insurance

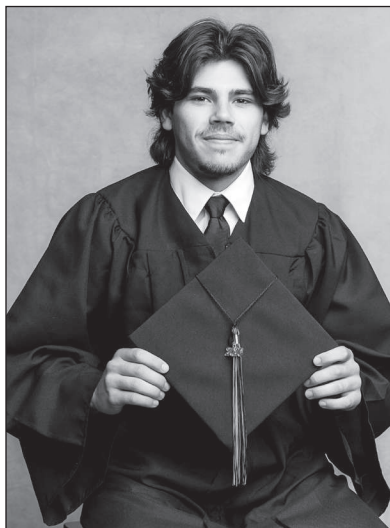
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2026 MURFREESBORO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



HOLDEN ALLMON

Parents/Guardians: Leslie and Jeremy Allmon
 9-12 Honors & Activities: BETA club - Student Council - FBLA Junior Year - Track Athlete
 Concurrent College Hours: 3
 Plans After Graduation: Continuing my dream of professional off-road dirtbike racing



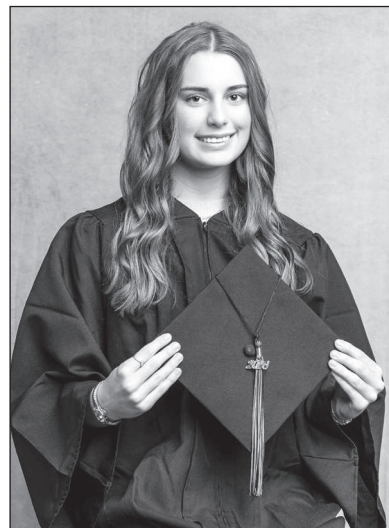
TEEGAN BARNETT

Parents/Guardians: Lacy Womack and Zane Barnett
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Member of beta club 9-10th grade, national qualifier in FBLA, honor roll 9-12th grade, member of the science club, student council president 12th grade year
 Concurrent College Hours: 25
 Plans After Graduation: Attend Texarkana A&M and pursue a degree in business law. From there I plan to transfer to the University of Arkansas to attend law school and later become a educational lawyer for high schools and colleges.
 Scholarships: \$38,700



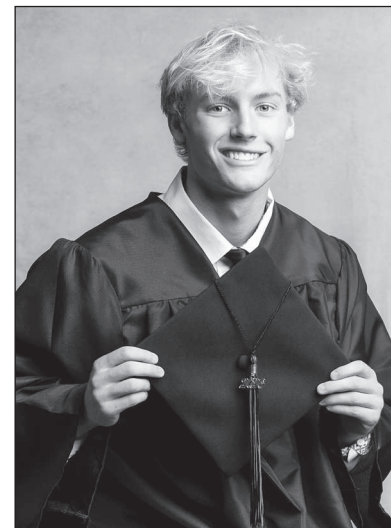
NICOLE BEATY

Parents/Guardians: Robert Beaty and Connie Beaty
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Art Club, EAST, Student Council, BETA Club, and FCCLA
 Plans After Graduation: I am going to National Park College for their 2 year Digital and Media Arts Transfer Program, and I plan to transfer to UALR and finish my Bachelor's in Studio Arts.
 Scholarships: \$7,395



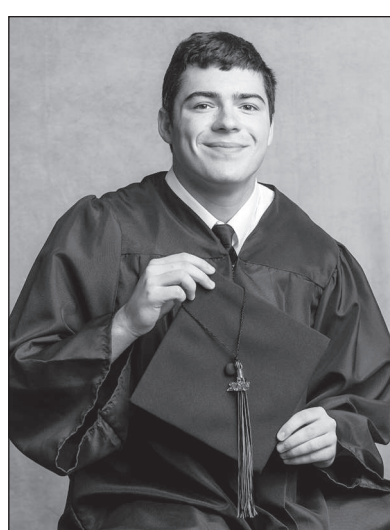
SYDNEY BRADEN

Parents/Guardians: Darren and Brandi Braden
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Second place in district FBLA 9th-11th grade, fourth place in FBLA state 11th and 12th grade, Beta member 9th-12th grade, Vice President of Beta in 12th grade, 3rd place in Beta state in 10th grade, Reporter of Student Council, and Treasurer for Science Club.
 Concurrent College Hours: 24
 Plans After Graduation: I plan on attending Southern Arkansas University and getting my bachelor's degree in nursing.
 Scholarships: \$51,000



KALE BURNS

Parents/Guardians: Jason and Cheyana Burns
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Honors and awards: honor graduate, BETA, GT, 4.0 GPA, class officer, student council, senior class most athletic, Microsoft office specialist certification-word; Clubs and Teams: football, basketball, baseball, golf, chess, quiz bowl
 Concurrent College Hours: 21
 Plans After Graduation: I plan on attending SAU and pursuing a degree in Wildlife Biology.
 Scholarships: \$43,500



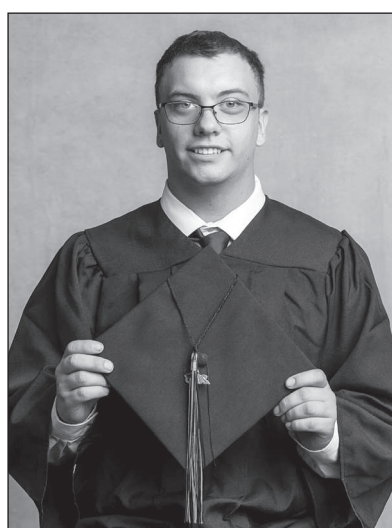
LOGAN BURRUS

Parents/Guardians: Deidre and Justin Wilson
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Football
 Concurrent College Hours: 3
 Plans After Graduation: go to tradeschool and become an electrician
 Scholarships: \$10,000



ELENA CAMPBELL

Parents/Guardians: Larry Campbell, Celina Campbell
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta, Quiz Bowl, Band
 Concurrent College Hours: 12
 Plans After Graduation: Cosmetologist



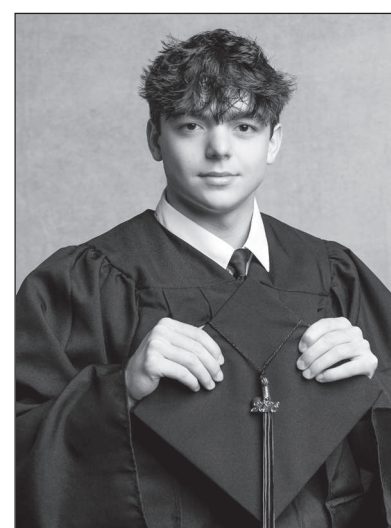
JUSTEN CAREY

Parents/Guardians: Fawn and Kenny Carey
 9-12 Honors & Activities: FFA and Archery
 Plans After Graduation: Work at Texarkana Aluminum and eventually work my way up to maintenance.



EDIE MESHELLE COPELAND

Parents/Guardians: Dawn Humphry and Thom Copeland
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta club, 10th year soloist award at LGSD, 4th place FBLA state and national competitor, EAST competition finalist, psychology award of excellence, best media advertisement, Microsoft office certification, most photogenic and first runner up in Miss Howard county and Most photogenic and first runner up in Miss Pine Tree, Student council secretary, and business completion stamp.
 Plans After Graduation: I plan to attend Henderson State University and receive a bachelors degree in Marketing-Business. Post college graduation I will get my real estate license and pursue a job in real estate.



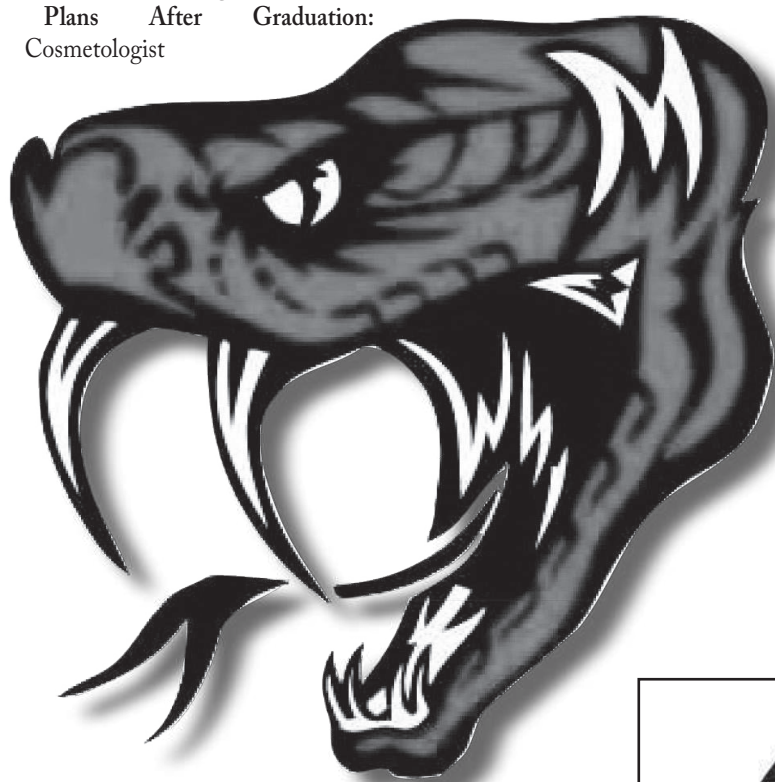
LUCAS CAREY

Parents/Guardians: Micheal and Sirena Carey
 9-12 Honors & Activities: All conference track X2, Microsoft word, edge and PowerPoint certified, East ambassador
 Plans After Graduation: CCCUA, accounting and finance degree.
 Scholarships: \$11,730



KASEY CORNWELL

Parents/Guardians: Heather and Shane Cornwell
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta, Quiz Bowl, Band
 Plans After Graduation: to work with autistic and down syndrome adults



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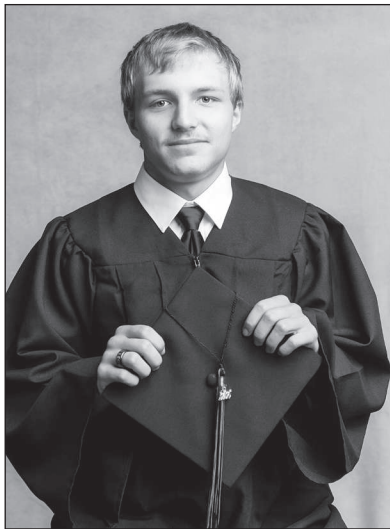
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 Monday-Thursday;
 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM Friday

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Hats Off TO THE Graduate

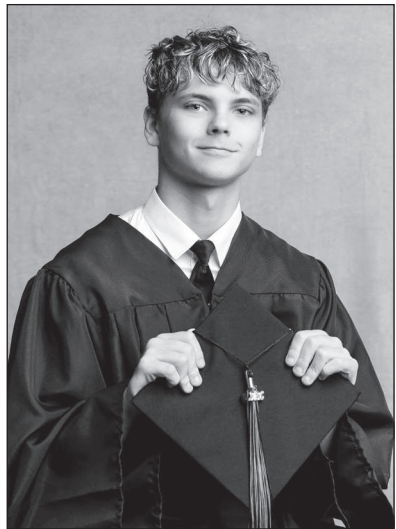
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2026 MURFREESBORO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



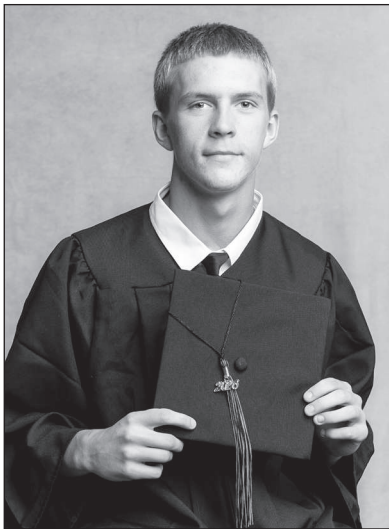
TYLER COX

Parents/Guardians: Brandi Williams and Josh Williams
Plans After Graduation: Work Force



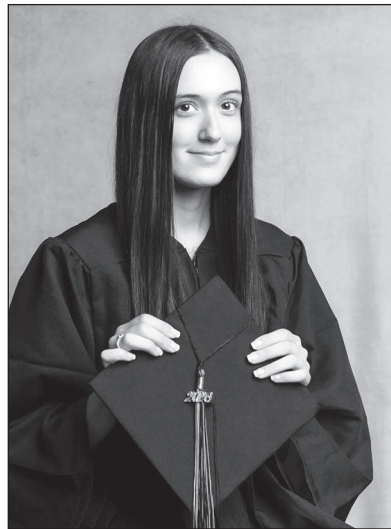
GARRETT DOWNS

Parents/Guardians: Cheryl Cox and Waymon Cox
9-12 Honors & Activities: 2nd place at District FBLA, A and B honor roll
Plans After Graduation: Arkansas Tech to pursue a degree in coaching and teaching.
Scholarships: \$8,000



LIAM EOFF

Parents/Guardians: Stacy Eoff and Holly Eoff
9-12 Honors & Activities: Sports
Plans After Graduation: Trade school for plumbing



GRACIE GOODWIN

Parents/Guardians: Lee and Amanda Goodwin
9-12 Honors & Activities: FFA Chapter President
Plans After Graduation: Southern Arkansas university for 2 years then becoming a vet tech
Scholarships: \$7,800



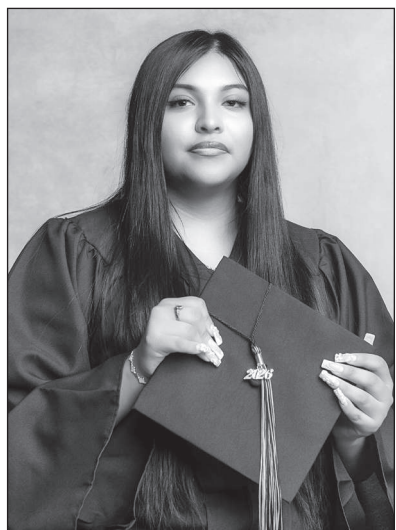
FAITH LENE HENDERSON

Parents/Guardians: Mark and Tabby Henderson
9-12 Honors & Activities: Color Guard Captain, Drum major, Science Club, Beta Club
Plans After Graduation: I plan on attending Cossatot to study Pediatric PT
Scholarships: \$13,000



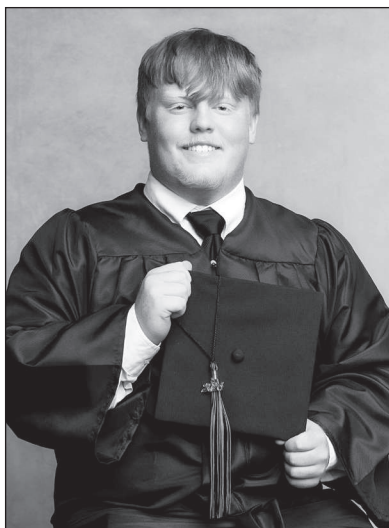
JASMIN HUGHES

Parents/Guardians: Jennifer and Jeremy Hughes
9-12 Honors & Activities: 9th and 11th grade band
Concurrent College Hours: 24
Plans After Graduation: College at Cossatot in Nashville for cosmetology



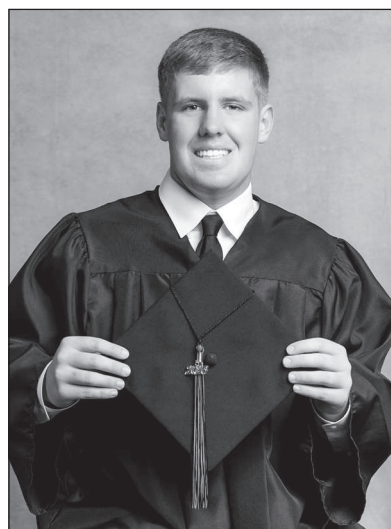
SAMANTHA HERNANDEZ

Parents/Guardians: Teófilo Hernández and Lucy Sánchez
9-12 Honors & Activities: Yearbook, Student Council, FCCLA
Plans After Graduation: Cossatot Cosmetology



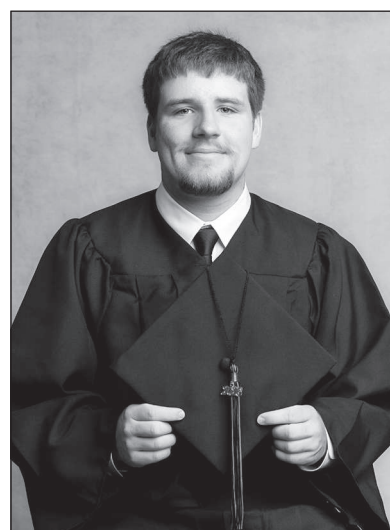
HAWKINS JACKSON

Parents/Guardians: Kyle Jackson and Amanda Hill
9-12 Honors & Activities: BETA club, FBLA, Football, Golf
Concurrent College Hours: 15
Plans After Graduation: Attend SAU for Mechanical Engineering
Scholarships: \$15,000



JOHN PARKER JACKSON

Parents/Guardians: Marc and Megan Jackson
9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta Club, FCA, Football 9-12th, Track 9-11th Senior Class Treasurer, All A Honor Roll 9-12
Concurrent College Hours: 15
Plans After Graduation: I plan on attending Southern Arkansas University and getting my bachelor's degree in nursing.
Scholarships: \$96,000



REID JACKSON

Parents/Guardians: Marc and Megan Jackson
9-12 Honors & Activities: Football and golf
Concurrent College Hours: 8
Plans After Graduation: Attend National Park College Electrical apprenticeship program
Scholarships: \$51,000

A WORD OF WELL WISHES, GRAD!

Hats off to you, graduates, as you celebrate a fine achievement. A world of opportunity awaits, and we wish you happiness and success in all that you do. Thanks for making us proud!

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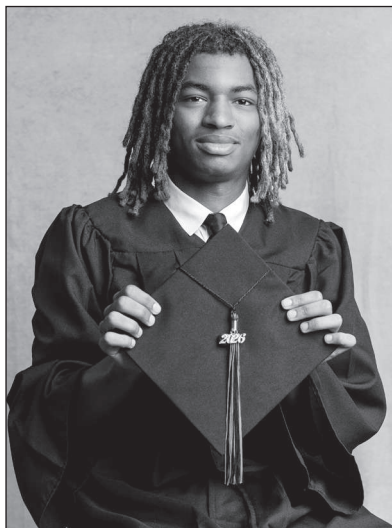
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2026 MURFREESBORO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



DESSERAY JONES

Parents/Guardians: Sharon Walton
9-12 Honors & Activities: Track, band, color guard
Plans After Graduation: CNA Program



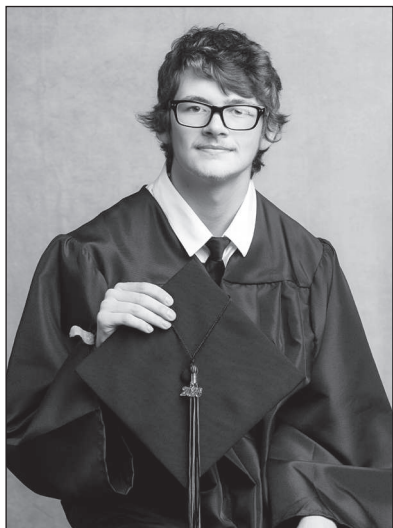
JAMAURI JONES

Parents/Guardians: Sharon Walton
9-12 Honors & Activities: Football and Basketball
Plans After Graduation: going to college and degree seeking
Scholarships: \$1,000



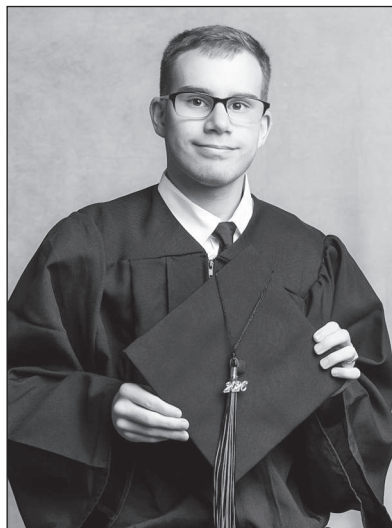
LANDEN JONES

Parents/Guardians: Traci Jones
9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta club, All Honour Graduate, Track and Field, Cross Country
Concurrent College Hours: 3
Plans After Graduation: University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana and get a degree in Computer Science and provide for my family
Scholarships: \$7,500



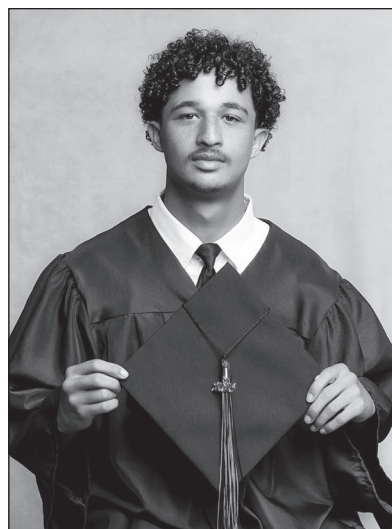
JASON JORDAN

Parents/Guardians: Theresa and James Bradshaw
9-12 Honors & Activities: East Concurrent College Hours: 24
Plans After Graduation: Work Scholarships: \$51,000



REESE ALLEN KIZZIA

Parents/Guardians: Misty Perrin and Al Kizzia
9-12 Honors & Activities: Art Club
Plans After Graduation: Enter the workforce after graduation.
Scholarships: \$43,500



DJAY LEEPER

Parents/Guardians: Son of the late John Wallace Leeper, and the late Jennifer Clark Leeper, and grandson of Connie Clark and the late Dean Clark
9-12 Honors & Activities: MHS athletics, Hospitality & Tourism Completer, Nutrition Science & Dietetics Completer
Plans After Graduation: Carpenter Scholarships: \$51,000



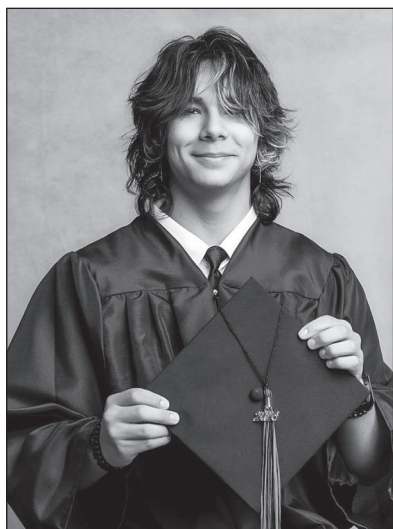
CHLOE MADRID

Parents/Guardians: Mary Ann Hughes
9-12 Honors & Activities: FCCLA
Plans After Graduation: Cosmetology at Cossatot
Scholarships: \$51,000



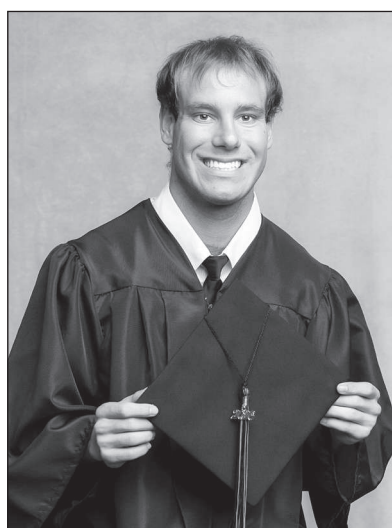
HALEY MARKCUM

Parents/Guardians: Crystal Hawthorne and Sean Markcum
9-12 Honors & Activities: Band
Plans After Graduation: Welding certification



MICHAEL MENDEZ

Parents/Guardians: Michelle Orr
9-12 Honors & Activities: Beta, EAST
Concurrent College Hours: 18
Plans After Graduation: Bachelors degree in Computer Engineering at Henderson State University
Scholarships: \$61,000



GARRETT MOLNAIRD

Parents/Guardians: Melissa Molnaird and Heath Molnaird
9-12 Honors & Activities: archery, track, tennis, Beta Club, FBLA, EAST, science club. Heart of a championship award for archery
Plans After Graduation: UA Cossatot Community College plan on becoming a phlebotomist.
Scholarships: \$1,000

Congratulations to the Class of 2026!
Smokin' Rick's BBQ
 Coming soon to Gypsy Underground parking lot • Murfreesboro

Congratulations to the Class of 2026

Holden,
 We are so proud of all of your accomplishments so far. We can't wait to see what the future holds for you. Congratulations on your graduation. As you race off into the future, enjoy every second, take every opportunity offered and never forget how much we love you.
 Mom & Dad (aka proud parents of Holden Allmon- Sr. 2026)
 Go chase your dreams and remember "Doubt kills more dreams than failure every will"

Congrats Seniors 2026
 The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams

Special Congratulations to our Queen family

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MHS CLASS OF 2026

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 BEST WISHES FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Murfreesboro Diamond • 201 S. Washington • 870-285-2723

CHIMNEY ROCK GROCERY
Congratulation MHS 2026 Seniors
 Special congrats to
Chloe Madrid, Jasmine Hughes & Samantha Hernandez
 301 S. Main • Murfreesboro • 870-925-5669

2026 MURFREESBORO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



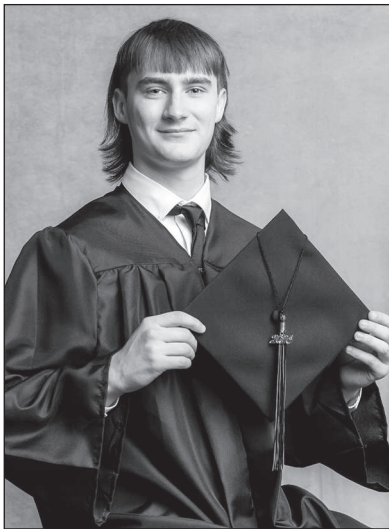
GRACE MOLNAIRD

Parents/Guardians: Heath and Melissa Molnaird
 9-12 Honors & Activities: FBLA, Beta, science club
 Concurrent College Hours: 24
 Plans After Graduation: I plan to Attending the UofA at cossatot to get my RN degree and graduate with an associates of applied sciences, then transfer to Henderson State University to get my bachelor's degree in nursing.
 Scholarships: \$29,580



KINLEIGH MOUNTS

Parents/Guardians: Jeremy Mounts and Wendi and Jason McDonald
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Track, Cross Country, Cheer, FBLA, Beta, FCA, Chem Club
 Concurrent College Hours: 21
 Plans After Graduation: Attend Texas A&M Texarkana and pursue a degree in kinesiology and then become an occupational therapist.
 Scholarships: \$47,500



COLTON ROBBINS

Parents/Guardians: Kari and Jeff Robbins
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Quiz Bowl-9 and 10. FBLA-9-12. Beta-9-12. Tourism and Hospitality Completer. Honor Grad. Football-9-10th.
 Concurrent College Hours: 34 concurrent 61 including concurrent and non-concurrent. (Will have an associates of arts degree before graduaiton)
 Plans After Graduation: Attend U of A in Fayetteville then attend UAMS in pursuit of a doctoral degree.
 Scholarships: \$42,000



ALYSSA SIGMAN

Parents/Guardians: Tasha and James Sigman
 Plans After Graduation: I plan to take classes for computer science, graphic design and to pursue my passion for photography.



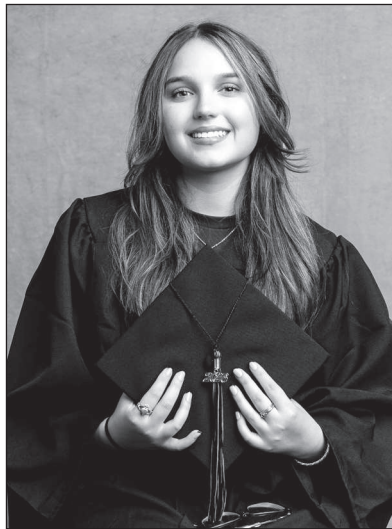
MABREE SWEAT

Parents/Guardians: Kyle and Rachel Sweat
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Clubs: BETA, FBLA, Yearbook, Science Club, Student Council, GT Awards: Student of the Month-2025 Achievement in Anatomy & Physiology- 2025 Excellence in Journalism- 2025 2nd Place Business Ethics, FBLA District- 2025 4th Place Business Ethics FBLA State- 2025 2nd Place- Business Presentation FBLA District- 2024 2nd Place Introduction to Event Planning, FBLA District- 2023 Academic Excellence in English- 2023 2026- fourth place in Supply Chain Management STATE
 Concurrent College Hours: 34
 Plans After Graduation: After graduation, I plan to attend college at Southern Arkansas University and major in Nursing and then plan to become a nurse practitioner or doctor.
 Scholarships: \$59,000



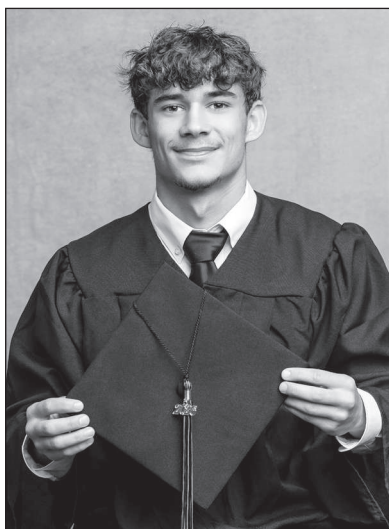
HAILEY SWENEY

Parents/Guardians: Carla Sweney, James Sweney
 9-12 Honors & Activities: Art club, won first place in a few art fairs.
 Plans After Graduation: College seeking or Job seeking. Planning on being an artist or writer.
 Scholarships: \$29,580



MADELIENE WICKER

Parents/Guardians: Erin Durham-Wicker and Shelton Wicker
 9-12 Honors & Activities: FCCLA, FBLA, BAND participant, CBA completer
 Concurrent College Hours: 4
 Plans After Graduation: To go to college and pursue a degree in the medical field.
 Scholarships: \$12,500



CALEB TERRELL

Parents/Guardians: Chris and Karen Terrell
 9-12 Honors & Activities: FBLA, FFA, Track cross country football baseball golf
 Concurrent College Hours: 3
 Plans After Graduation: Go to SAU for Ag business
 Scholarships: \$12,500



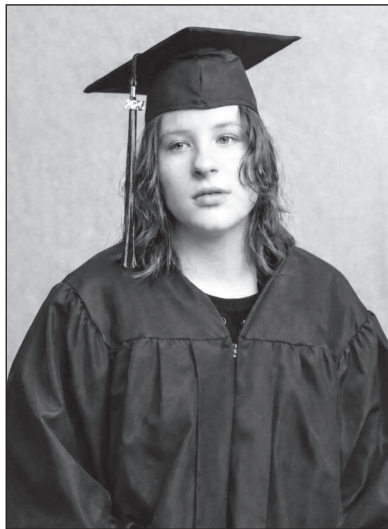
DEBRA FAITH TEEL

Parents/Guardians: Stephanie and Aaron Teel
 9-12 Honors & Activities: 9th- FBLA, Beta 10TH- FBLA, Beta, English 10 award 11TH- FBLA, Beta, Science Club, Anatomy and Physiology Award 12TH- Beta, Science Club
 Concurrent College Hours: 27
 Plans After Graduation: I plan to go to the University of Central Arkansas to major in Exercise Science for my bachelors degree and then go to Graduate school for Physical Therapy.
 Scholarships: \$113,280



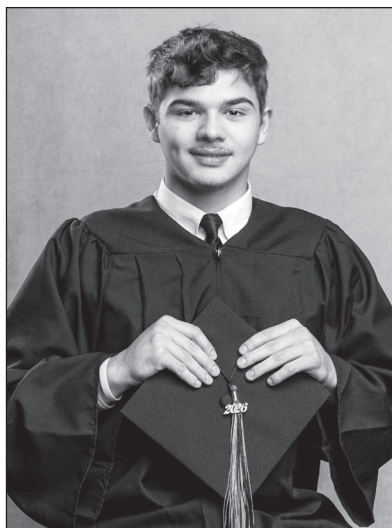
ALYSON TEEL

Parents/Guardians: Brent Teel and Melanie Jackson
 Plans After Graduation: Work



FAYE FANNIN

Plans After Graduation: Living her best life after graduation



LANDON JOHNSON

Plans After Graduation: Entering the Workforce



GRACIE MCMILLIAN

Plans After Graduation: Attending CCCUA

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2026 Seniors
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Congratulations
Class of 2026
Here's to a sweet ending and to new beginnings
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Hope man shows up late to his own trial

MURFREESBORO -- A Hope man who was due to stand trial last week in Pike County for internet stalking of a child and possession of child sexual abuse material is now facing another charge after he failed to show up for his jury trial.

Ronnie Rusher, 63, pleaded not guilty to the new charge Monday and now has an Aug. 3 pretrial date set for both of his cases.

Rusher was originally charged in September 2025 with allegedly falling for the Pike County Sheriff's Department undercover social media account which portrays a 14-year-old female. Contact between the decoy and Rusher began in May 2025 and continued sporadically until August. He was arrested on Aug. 24, 2025 in Murfreesboro after arriving to meet the decoy.

Rusher pleaded not guilty to the sex crime charges and his trial was set for April 30 at 8:30 a.m. He failed to show up at 8:30 as instructed for the scheduled jury trial and when Judge Tom Cooper took the bench at 9:00 Rusher was not present.

Rusher apparently showed up 20 minutes later after jurors had been excused and Judge Cooper had left the building, and was arrested in the parking lot for felony failure to appear.

Charges Pending

Felony charges of residential burglary and theft of property are expected to be filed this week against a Prescott man involving an alleged incident in Antoine.

Roy Jamescott Terrell, 26, was recently arrested and is accused of unlawfully entering a Pike County residence where he had been staying and stole multiple firearms.

Several of the firearms were stashed in a nearby shed and were recovered along with other evidence from the alleged crime.

Terrell remains in county custody this week.

Felony drug charges are also pending this week in Pike County against David Claren Bentley, 61, of Nashville.

Bentley was arrested on May 3 following a traffic stop for an expired license plate. It was discovered Bentley has a search waiver on file and was on parole for possession of a controlled substance. A passenger, Wesley Cummings, also had an outstanding warrant out of Murfreesboro and both men were taken into custody without incident. Cummings has not been charged in the case.

A search the vehicle recovered approximately three grams of methamphetamine.



Staff photos/John Balch

LADY RATTLERS ... The Murfreesboro Lady Rattlers ended their 2026 campaign with a 14-4 loss to Magnet Cove in the first round of the district tournament held last week in Murfreesboro. The team finishes at 7-10 overall and 5-1 in league play, good for a second place regular season finish in 7 2-A.





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'Dear Preacher'

By Buddy Ray, Murfreesboro Church of Christ

GROWING IN THE LORD Hebrews 5:12-14

This requires loving diligence from God's family. The overseers of the church are expected to lead in this very important endeavor. There is no shame in not being skilled in the word if sufficient time has not passed for growth. However, when the maturity rate does not keep pace with the passage of time; we need to be taught to help us get back to the level of service God expects. The real possibility of falling away is present with all of us. This is especially true for those who are only superficially involved in the work of the church. Daily service to the Lord is largely a matter of personal dedication on our part. No one is able to keep tabs on the fervor of our faith; therefore, we must take heed



life. We should be aware of the progress our soul is making. We need to make sure we are trying each moment to make our calling and election sure. The inward man must grow until we die.

It takes time for babes in Christ to come to maturity. They just do not have the knowledge they need to live the Christian life. They need the milk of the word until they are able to digest the meat or solid spiritual food of the Gospel. It takes years of study, direction and service. They need more mature disciples to provide example and encouragement. Support is needed when the winds of trial and discouragement blow. Many times the immature Christian does not know how badly they need that support.

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to the things we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip. Hebrews 2:1-3. Such matters will remain personal and private. No person is able to know the thoughts and intent of our heart. Our spiritual health like our personal health is overseen by the heart that an understanding God has given to each of us. We, therefore, need to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it come the issues of

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SOUTH PIKE COUNTY SCHOOL MENU

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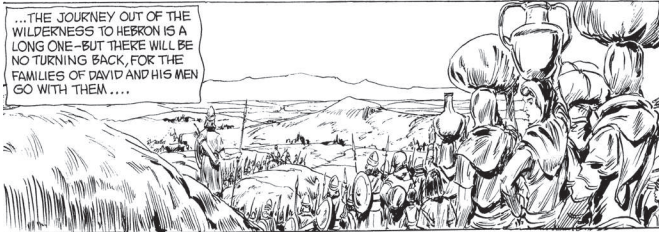
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Facts About The **BIBLE** *BY JOHN LEHTI*


HOW DAVID IS FINALLY MADE KING

WITH SAUL DEAD AT THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES, THERE IS NO KING IN ISRAEL! AND DAVID FOLLOWING THE LORD'S COMMAND (1 SAM. 2:4) LEADS HIS MEN FORTH TO HEBRON...


...THE JOURNEY OUT OF THE WILDERNESSES TO HEBRON IS A LONG ONE—BUT THERE WILL BE NO TURNING BACK, FOR THE FAMILIES OF DAVID AND HIS MEN GO WITH THEM....



...FINALLY, THE DISTANT OUTLINES OF HEBRON COME INTO VIEW....



...AND, FROM THE HIGH-WALLED CITY, THE DUST CLOUD OF DAVID'S CAVALCADE CAN BE DISCERNED! BATTLELINES ARE THROSNED WITH SOLDIERS TO DEFEND THEIR STRONGHOLD, FOR IN THE EARLY ANCIENT TIMES, A DUST CLOUD OF THIS MAGNITUDE CAN MEAN BUT ONE THING—THE APPROACH OF A CONQUERING ARMY!



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MOUNTAINS

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ACROSS

1. Ill-considered
5. Mate
8. "I didn't get the ____"
12. Biblical preposition
13. Down in the dumps
14. Rodgers of NFL fame
15. Proofreader's mark
16. Get bacon?
17. *Any mountain over 3,000 feet, in Scotland
18. *Mount Everest mountain range
20. Research facil.
21. Itsy-bitsy bits
22. Forensic evidence, acr.
23. Relating to sacrum
26. What Cupid did (2 words)
30. Amazement interjection
31. Not victory
34. Eurozone money
35. Whisky measure, pl.
37. Dot-com address
38. Birth-related
39. Auricular
40. Volcanic ash, e.g.
42. Pro baseball's "Master Melvin"
43. Borat's swimsuit
45. Cruel treatments
47. It would
48. Munchausen's title
50. Supernatural life force
52. *Mountain inspiration for a pen name (2 words)
56. You will
57. Icelandic epic
58. Double reed woodwind instrument
59. Like a good singer (2 words)
60. Not quite an adult
61. *Matterhorn site
62. Like a busybody
63. Commercial break contents

DOWN

1. *Mount ____more, South Dakota
2. A in ABS
3. Opposite of stern
4. Balloon filler (2 words)
5. "Vamos a la ____"
6. Sainly glows
7. Carl Zeiss' product
8. *Tallest mountain from base to peak (2 words)
9. European sea eagles
10. Dead, in France
11. Yoko of music fame
13. #11 Down's late husband, e.g.
14. Kind of acid
19. Dump truck quantities
22. Email period
23. Bible's wicked city
24. Blood circulation artery
25. ____ gang
26. Baby powder ingredient
27. Sting Rays and Mustangs
28. Angry
29. Sheds skin, as in snake
32. *World's most climbed mountain
33. Before, poetically
36. *Denali, 1917-2015
38. British East India Company millionaire
40. Fairy tale's last word
41. Scottish clan identity
44. *Vesuvius location
46. Take care of cargo
48. Foreshadowed
49. *World's longest mountain range
50. As opposed to stereo
51. Puffins and guillemots
52. Facebook's parent company
53. Competently
54. Uh-uh
55. British tax
56. Old-fashioned "far"

CROSSWORD												
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

For the Post Office, every interaction matters

I am honored to introduce myself to the community as your new Postmaster. My name is Beulah Cogburn, and I am very excited to begin this journey serving the residents and businesses of Murfreesboro, Arkansas.

To this role, I bring over twelve years of Postal Service experience and a desire to serve. I started my career as Clerk. I have also served in roles as Officer In Charge in Nashville, AR, and Lead Clerk in Mount Ida, AR, prior to transferring to Murfreesboro. I look forward to providing the best customer service possible to our valued customers in Murfreesboro.

As Postmaster, I believe local engagement matters. That means understanding the needs of our customers, supporting our employees, and helping ensure the Post Office remains a dependable part of the community. Whether

someone is running a business or simply stopping in at the Murfreesboro Post Office to mail a letter or package, every interaction matters.

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, it is a good time to reflect on the institutions that have long helped connect Americans across time and distance. The Postal Service is proud to be one of them.

I look forward to earning the trust of this community and serving Murfreesboro with pride. I believe service is strongest when it is local, personal, and grounded in the needs of the people we serve.

Sincerely,
Beulah Cogburn
Postmaster
Murfreesboro, AR 71958-9998

Farm income forecast to drop

BY MARY HIGHTOWER
University of Arkansas
Division of Agriculture

LITTLE ROCK -- Weighed down by low commodity prices, heavy fuel and fertilizer outlays and the costs of war, disease and weather, Arkansas' net farm income is expected to fall for the fourth straight year, with farmers enduring on government support.

The Rural & Farm Finance Policy Analysis Center's spring report is forecasting Arkansas' net farm income to be \$3.38 billion in 2026, relatively stable compared to 2025's \$3.32 billion.

Arkansas' crop and livestock receipts — the value of production — were projected to fall to \$11.8 billion, down \$626 million or 5 percent from 2025 and \$2.2 billion, or 16 percent, from 2022. Crop receipts are projected to decline for the third straight year from a high of \$5.53 billion in 2023 to the current 2026 projection of \$4.17 billion mostly driven by depressed commodity prices.

"Overall, the 2026 farm income outlook reflects a shift away from broad-based market-driven gains toward increased reliance on policy support," the report said.

"It's very concerning," said Hunter Biram, extension economist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, one of the authors.

WARS, DISEASE AND WEAK DEMAND

"Sustained production with no real drivers in demand continues to keep prices low," Biram said.

"From a historical perspective, crop receipts minus expenses have been negative seven of the last 10 years, with the greatest losses being in 2024 and 2025 at around \$1.5 billion each year," Biram said.

"The average negative net farm income for Arkansas

over this span is \$1 billion per year," he said. "The positive crop incomes in the other three years were \$120 million, \$19 million, and \$9 million, respectively, and were driven by elevated prices from strong demand post-COVID."

"Since 2022, crop prices have fallen 30 percent, while production costs have remained elevated — about 20 percent above pre-Russian invasion of Ukraine levels," he said.

Current total production expenses are projected to increase by \$80 million, driven largely by a \$212 million increase in expenses for fertilizer and fuel attributed to the conflict in the Middle East. Arkansas crop margins are, at best, tight with most farmers facing negative margins.

"Many farmers are once again in a year where choosing a crop that has the greatest likelihood of lowest loss is the best-case scenario," Biram said.

"The only increase that is positive that we're seeing in 2026 is going to be for government assistance — an increase of \$1.12 billion to \$1.75 billion total," Biram said. "That \$1.75 billion is the only thing keeping that farm income afloat. It's the best way to put it in 2026."

The \$1.12 billion represents a 179 percent increase over the previous year.

LIVESTOCK

In previous reports, tight cattle supplies and higher meat prices helped buoy net farm income in Arkansas. In this edition, however, livestock agriculture receipts were expected to decline \$424 million, a drop of 5 percent, to \$7.64 billion in 2026. The losses were "driven by a 48 percent decline in egg receipts," Mitchell said.

Mitchell said the livestock numbers should be taken with a grain of salt.

"Some of the decline in Arkansas farm income is attrib-

uted to lower egg receipts," he said. "We expect an upward revision to the forecast for the fall release as it does not currently reflect conditions in Arkansas and is more a reflection of conditions faced by the U.S. egg industry and amid ongoing HPAI impacts."

- Egg receipts were expected to decrease by \$485 million in 2026. Among other livestock sectors:

- Broiler receipts were expected to rise 1 percent to \$5.51 billion in 2026.

- Cattle and calves were projected to rise 2 percent to \$975 million.

- Turkey receipts were expected to increase 4 percent to \$425 million.

In 2027, broilers are projected to increase another 1 percent in 2027; cattle and calves are expected to decline 7 percent and turkey receipts are expected to decline by 5 percent.

The Farm Income Outlook for Arkansas is co-published by the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and RaFF at the University of Missouri. RaFF collaborates with several states to develop farm income projections with local expertise, offering additional coverage of key Midwestern and Southern regions.

The lead author is Alejandro Plastina, director of the Rural and Farm Finance Policy Analysis Center, joined by Biram, Mitchell, Extension Economist Ryan Loy of the Division of Agriculture, and RaFF Senior Research Associate Oranuch Wongpiyabovorn.

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit uaex.uada.edu. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. To learn more about the Division of Agriculture, visit uada.edu. To learn more about ag and food research in Arkansas, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station at aaes.uada.edu.

Arkansas Legislature concludes fiscal and special sessions

The Arkansas General Assembly recently concluded the 2026 Fiscal Session and subsequent Special Session focused on the state budget and tax relief.

During the Fiscal Session, lawmakers approved the Revenue Stabilization Act for Fiscal Year 2027, funding priorities including education, workforce development,

public safety, higher education, and other essential state services. Legislators also approved an increase in the homestead property tax credit for Arkansas homeowners.

"Arkansas is in a strong position because our state has stayed focused on responsible budgeting and economic growth," said Randy Zook, President and CEO of the Arkansas State Chamber/AIA. "The business community appreciates the work of legislators to keep Arkansas moving in the right direction while continuing to invest in priorities that matter to employers and communities alike."

Following adjournment of the Fiscal Session, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders called a Special Session focused on additional tax relief. During the session, lawmakers approved reductions to both the individual and corporate income tax rates aimed

LEGISLATURE Continued on Page 10

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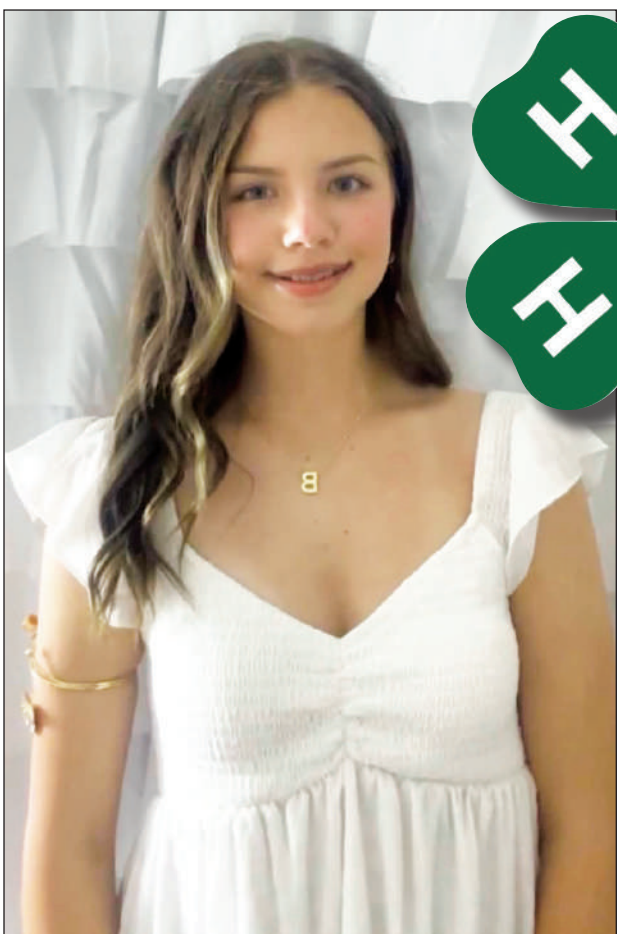
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Submitted photos/PC4-H

TEEN STARS ... (L to R) Joelee Wilson, Hadlee Wilson and Cale Humphry are Pike County 4-H Teen Stars.

Pike County 4-H announces 2026 Teen Stars leading by example

BY SHANNON BALLARD
Pike County 4-H Program Assistant

Local teens Hadlee Wilson, Joelee Wilson and Cale Humphry are stepping up to make a difference in Pike County as Teen STARS! The 4-H Teen STAR program is a youth leadership initiative that empowers high school students to lead, mentor, and serve.

Teen STAR, as part of the nationwide 4-H program, gives teens the opportunity to take on meaningful leadership roles

while helping younger members grow. Participants work closely with their local extension office, often connected to the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, to organize events, lead activities, and support community service projects.

Teen STAR gives young people a chance to find their voice and use it. They're not just participating—they're leading.

Members of the program assist with county fairs, workshops, and club meetings, serving as role models for younger 4-H members. In addition, they gain valuable skills in public speaking, teamwork, and organization—qualities that prepare them

for future academic and career success.

For many teens, the experience goes beyond building a résumé. It builds confidence and gives them a sense of responsibility to their community by combining hands-on learning with service, 4-H continues its mission of "learning by doing." As these teens continue to serve and lead, their impact is already being felt across the community—proving that leadership has no age limit.

State legislature concludes fiscal, extraordinary sessions

STATE CAPITOL WEEK IN REVIEW
Senator Steve Crowell

LITTLE ROCK – Some highlights from the final week of the Arkansas General Assembly's Fiscal Session:

The Senate started the week by passing appropriation bills for departments, divisions, and agencies, including the Department of Health; Parks, Heritage and Tourism; Department of Transportation, UA East Arkansas Community College, and more.

Meeting briefly Monday evening, the Joint Budget Committee voted on HB1034, the Treasurer of State appropriation. The members voted to remove all proposed pay increases.

The Joint Budget Committee met on Tuesday to deal with government contracts, funding requests, out of state contracts, and discretionary grants.

The Senate convened at 1:00 and passed appropriation bills for the Board of Election Commissioners, the Division of Emergency Management, the Division of Environmental Quality, the State Insurance Department, and other departments, agencies, and boards.

The Senate also approved HB1103 to increase the homestead property tax credit to \$675.

On Wednesday, the Senate voted to approve HB1100 to amend the Revenue Stabilization Law. Members also passed the last ap-

and Senator Tyler Dees as the Majority Whip. Due to members who are term limited, the Democratic caucus will wait until after the elections to elect its leadership.

At the conclusion of the day's business, the Senate adjourned sine die, finishing the work of the 2026 fiscal session. Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed the completed \$6.7 billion budget bills Wednesday afternoon.

The crack of bats and the roar of the crowd echoed through Dickey-Stephens Park in North Little Rock on Wednesday night as the Arkansas Senate took on the Arkansas House of Representatives in the inaugural Home Run for Kids' Sake charity softball game. The Senate power hitters were joined by sluggers from the Governor's and Attorney General's offices.

Previous matchups between the two legislative houses have taken place on the basketball court, where the Senate has dominated. This was the first year for softball.

The House edged ahead of the Senate in the final inning, winning 7-6. The real winners, of course, are the recipients of the game's proceeds: Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Central Arkansas and the Children's Advocacy Centers of Arkansas.

You can watch any of the fiscal meetings on demand at <https://senate.arkansas.gov>.

You can read and download PDFs of the bills that were filed for the session at <https://arkleg.state.ar.us/>. Click on "Bills" in the menu, where you can search by keyword or filing date.

END OF SESSION

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued a proclamation on Thursday, April 30, calling the Arkansas General Assembly into an Extraordinary Session, which started May 4.

The governor called the session to, according to the proclamation, "amend the individual income tax brackets and rates to a top rate of 3.7%, effective January 1, 2026, and following tax years." The proclamation further states that the session is also to cover the amendment of "income tax brackets and rates for domestic and foreign corporations to a top tax rate of 4.1%, effective January 1, 2027, and following tax years..."

Previously, the top individual income tax rate was 3.9% and the top corporate income tax rate was 4.3%.

Taxes in Arkansas have steadily decreased since 2015. Legis-

lators have cut taxes in each major session and multiple special sessions, reducing the top personal income tax rate from 7% and the top corporate income tax rate from 6.5% in 2015.

Proponents of the tax cut say that it is important to keep lowering income taxes for the state to maintain economic competitiveness. Critics have shared concerns that such a tax cut will not provide much benefit for most Arkansans and would make the state more reliant on sales taxes.

On Monday, the Senate's Revenue and Tax committee reviewed Senate Bill 1, sponsored by Senator Jonathan Dismang, which outlined the proposed tax rates for individuals and corporations.

The committee heard from several citizens who spoke against the bill. Committee members thanked them for their testimony and stated that the current bill does not diminish any services.

The committee voted "do pass," which is a formal action indicating the committee supports the bill and wants to move it to the full Senate chamber for a vote.

Day two of the special session began with the full Senate meeting to discuss and vote on Senate Bill 1.

Senators Clarke Tucker and Greg Leding spoke against the bill. Senator Matt McKee spoke in favor.

The Senate passed the bill and transmitted it to the House for further discussion and vote.

The Senate Revenue and Tax committee met briefly and voted "do pass" on House Bill 1001, which is identical to the Senate bill, sending it to the full Senate for a vote the following day.

The Senate then passed the bill 27-6 on Wednesday morning to send for the governor's signature.

After the vote, the body honored the senators who are serving their final terms. Senators Fred Love, Reginald Murdock, Kim Hammer, Greg Leding, Blake Johnson, and Jane English were recognized with humor and heartfelt tributes from their fellow senators.

Accomplishing its goals, the First Extraordinary Session of the 95th Senate was adjourned sine die by Lt. Governor Leslie Rutledge, the President of the Senate, after a motion by President Pro Tempore Bart Hester.

Wednesday afternoon, Governor Sanders signed the tax bills into law. Arkansas income tax rates are now at their lowest levels since the tax was enacted in 1929.

LEGISLATURE Continued from Page 9

at strengthening Arkansas's competitive position for business investment and job creation.

"Tax policy matters when companies are deciding where to invest and grow," said Zook. "These actions continue Arkansas's momentum and send a positive message that our state is committed to creating opportunities for businesses, workers, and families."

The Arkansas State Chamber/AIA appreciates Governor Sanders and members of the General Assembly for their leadership and continued focus on policies that support economic growth and long-term competitiveness in Arkansas.

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