

The Murfreesboro Diamond

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Chamber to host 'Gig Ready' event

MURFREESBORO -- Kinetic, formerly known as Windstream, will hold a ribbon cutting event in conjunction with the chamber to celebrate Murfreesboro becoming a "Gig Ready Community."

The event is set for March 13 at 11 a.m. in Murfreesboro City Hall. City Hall is located at 805 North Washington Avenue.

Light refreshments will be served. For more information about Gig Ready Communities, scan the QR code below.



Group seeks donations for garage sale benefit

NASHVILLE -- Operation Christmas Child's (OCC) semi-annual garage sale will be held Friday, March 21, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday, March 22, 8 a.m.-Noon in the Family Activity Building (FAB) of the First Baptist Church in Nashville, located at College and 2nd Streets.

In order for this garage sale to be successful, the effort 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 your donations at the FAB, Monday-Thursday, March 16-20.

"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.

School board filings set

MURFREESBORO -- Filing for school board positions in Pike County closed on Monday at noon with no contested elections needing to be held.

- The four candidates filing include:
- Lisa Wright, Centerpoint School District At Large Position, incumbent
- * Brian Caldwell, South Pike County School District Zone 3, filling Scott Maroon's exit from board after fulfilling his elected term
- * Wes Campbell, South Pike County School District Zone 6, formally filling position he was appointed
- * Christopher Fortner, Kirby School District Zone 5, formally filling position he was appointed

School board elections would be scheduled for May 13, but since all positions are unopposed, school district boards may vote a resolution to do "election by candidate" in which the candidate come in to vote for themselves and the annual millage, as opposed to holding a full election in each school district, or even early/absentee elections at the Pike County Clerk's office as has been employed in recent years.

According to Pike County Clerk Randee Edwards, the "Election by Candidate" law was passed in 2021 (ACA 6-14-102 (c)) and only applies in odd-year school elections when there are no contested races and there is no millage change.

The law allows for conducting such election by only having the filed uncontested candidate vote a ballot and the election is done and valid. There need be no absentee, early vote, or election day and therefore no voting machine programming or printing of multiple ballots.

Man shows up to court late, charged with contempt

MURFREESBORO -- The former Pike County sheriff's deputy who is charged with hocking two county-issued weapons has now been found in contempt Monday after arriving more than an hour late to his court date.

Judge Bryan Chessir issued the misdemeanor order against Brandon M. Vines, 30, Glenwood, and sentenced him to 72 hours in the county jail. Vines had previously plead innocent to the felony charges related to the county weapons and was due in court Monday. Court officials said Vines had informed them he was not coming to court due to him just being released from the hospital. The official said Vines' bail bondsman likely called his client and urged him to

show up for the court date, which he did, more than one hour late.

Vines was employed with the county 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 his assigned equipment to the county but did not return a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun and a Colt M-16 .223 rifle. He advised that 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 belonged to the county and the weapon was recovered the next day.

The shop owner told the Arkansas State Police 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. 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.



Submitted photo/Jillian Caldwell

SEASON ENDING ACTION ... The Murfreesboro Rattlers concluded their season with a 83-70 loss to Fordyce in the regional tournament at Poyen. Pictured (above left) is James Silva scoring two of his team-high 26 points, while (above right) Kooper Caldwell looks to get off a shot after entering the lane. (Below) Caden Dixon (left) and Laytan Wilcher (right) look to make plays in the paint against the Redbugs.

Rattlers finish season with loss at regional tournament

MURFREESBORO -- The Murfreesboro Rattlers senior high basketball team ended their highly successful season with an 83-70 loss to Fordyce in the first round of the regional tournament at Poyen.

MHS found themselves in a hole early, down 28-15 at the end of the first quarter and 52-34 by halftime.

In the second half the team would rally, closing the gap to 68-53 by the end of the third. The team would go on to cut the deficit to nine in the fourth quarter before the remaining time forced them to send Fordyce to the free throw line late.

James Silva would lead the team in scoring with 26 points on 11/19 shooting. Kooper Caldwell added 15 points, while Caden Dixon and Laytan Wilcher contributed 13 points each.

The team turned the ball over 24 times and shot 41% (23/56) from two point range and 5/16 from three point distance. They were also 9/17 from the free throw line in the game (53%).

Silva would also record 18 rebounds – 13 on the offensive side of the ball – and had a pair of blocks.

Kale Burns and Caldwell each had three steals in the contest.

The Rattlers finished the season with a 18-6 record overall and a 12-2 conference mark that saw them win the regular season conference title.

Rattler head coach Buster Bonner agreed that the season didn't end as well as many had hoped.

"It was a great season, it just didn't end up

like you would have hoped."

Bonner said Fordyce had great speed, and that the Rattlers didn't adjust well until half-time.

I saw Fordyce last Monday, and I told the boys, but it's different seeing it for yourself. The passes we made on offense all year long, you just couldn't make those passes [against Fordyce]. They had to be sharp, quick passes – you couldn't just lob the ball, or they would be going the other way. It really took us a half to adjust. We outscored them in the second half, but after the first half when they had a 23-point lead, it's just hard to overcome."

Bonner said he was proud of his team not quitting after digging themselves a fairly deep

BASKETBALL Continued on Page 2



BASKETBALL Continued from Page 1

hole.
 "You just can't play quality teams like that and have 16 turn-overs in the first half, and that's what we did. However, the didn't have any quit in them, the came back and played hard. It would have been easy for them to lay down, and they didn't. I was proud of their heart."

Bonner said his team was "running out of gas" toward the end and that Fordyce's depth was simply too much to overcome.

On the total season outlook, Bonner described it as a "really good year" and that he enjoyed it immensely after coming out of retirement.

"I told they boys they gave joy to an old man's life," he said of his return from retirement. "Not every [coach] gets to do that. I really enjoyed getting to come back and being around the young people. It was just an exceptional squad."

He admits with a laugh that it might not have been as much of a rewarding experience had the squad's record been reversed.

"These are good kids, the community and parents have reason to be proud of them - not only with the way they performed on the court, but also off the court. They are just really fun to be around. I wish I could have had more time with them through the years."

He also complimented the team for the work ethic that saw the team go through most of the season with only a single defeat to Nashville in a holiday break tournament.

"Success can be a two-edged sword - it can give confidence or it can give overconfidence. For us, it was a confidence builder. I don't think they ever got the big head. In our conference there were five teams that could beat any of the others on any given night. So, only splitting with Caddo Hills and Cutter Morning Star during the regular season was good. We just weren't counting on the last two losses (conference and regional tournaments) coming when they did. The Spring Hill game was really a let down for the boys and myself - we all know we should have won that game. We probably looked past them a little bit, but they were coming on and playing better ball, and we maybe weren't playing our best ball at the time."

Adding that excuses were irrelevant, he did confess that the weather delay in the conference tournament did not play in the team's favor.

Had the team won that game versus Spring Hill and getting a different draw in the regional tournament, Bonner thinks the outcome may well have been different.

"Spring Hill ended up being the one seed and playing Hampton, who we beat by 21 points in the regular season [Dec. 12]. So yes, we should have been in that spot, beating Hampton and going to the state tournament this week. But, like I told the boys, we can't cry over spilled milk."

He adds that the thing he was most proud of this season was the kids' behavior.

"I had a great bunch of kids, and this could have been a totally different situation - they way they handled and conducted themselves ... late in the season a lot of teams had technical fouls and disruptions, but we didn't have any of that. They kept their composure and played well. They represented themselves, the school and the community well, and I am very proud of that and glad to be a part of it. I told them that whatever they do in life, their reaction to adversity will serve them well. Life is going to knock you down, and they showed they will get back up, look it in the face and take it on."

On Monday, Bonner officially handed in his resignation after debating about a possible return next year. South Pike County Schools Superintendent Tanya Wilcher said that the job listing would be posted later Monday to begin attracting candidate applications.



Submitted photos/PCUAE

HOMESTEADING EDUCATION ... The first Southwest Arkansas Homesteading conference hosted by the Howard and Pike County Extension Offices was held recently at UA Cossatot. There were over 60 attendees, 14 different sessions -- including topics from rain barrels, garden prep, flour milling, soap making, dehydrating foods and intro to backyard poultry -- with 18 different speakers. Sponsors for the event was Pike County Farm Bureau and Diamond Bank of Murfreesboro while catering was done by Patacakes. Extension participants included Samantha Horn, Howard County CES Staff Chair/4-H Agent; Eva Langley, Pike County CES Staff Chair/FCS Agent; Codie McAlister, Pike County CES Agriculture Agent; Dawson Bailey, Howard County CES Agriculture Agent and Christina Myrkle Pike County 4-H Program Assistant. Also included was networking opportunities for attendees to connect with Howard County Farmers Market and Master Gardeners.



BID NOTICE

The Delight Cemetery Association is accepting bids on the mowing of roughly 24 acres of cemetery within Delight. Bids for this must be postmarked NLT 15 March 2025. A General Certificate of Liability will be required and Certificate of Insurance will need to be provided to the Association, upon award of contract.

Bids are also being accepted for an experienced zero turn mower operator for the mowing roughly 24 acres of cemetery within Delight. Bids for this must be postmarked NLT 15 March 2025. A General Certificate of Liability will be required and Certificate of Insurance will need to be provided to the Association, upon award of contract.

Hand carried bids will be accepted until 15 March 2025, by first contacting Jimmy Williams, phone 870-681-0781 to arrange for submission of bids.

(d.c.a., 35,36 pd.)

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PIKE COUNTY, ARKANSAS
 PROBATE DIVISION

IN THE MATTER OF
 THE ADOPTION OF:
 JAYDEN ALEXANDER
 ROWTON, a minor child 55PR-21-68

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO: QUALYN LUSTER

On Monday, March 17, 2025, commencing at 9 a.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard, a hearing will be held on the Petition for Adoption in the above-styled matter.

This Petition is filed by DALTON WAYNE ROWTON and BRANDI DAWN MARTIN, and is a formal request for legal action to seek the adoption of the above-listed child and thus termination of your rights. This hearing will take place at the Pike County Judicial Center, Courtroom, located at 305 Industrial Park Dr., Murfreesboro, AR. 71958.

If you object to the Petition, you should file a written response with the Clerk of Pike County, Arkansas.

If you fail to appear at the hearing, a Judge may enter orders or decrees which terminate your rights to the children referenced above.

TISHA MARTIN, ABN 2018105
 Post Office Box 1066
 Nashville, AR 71852
 (870) 686-0074 - Telephone
 (870) 455-0045 - Facsimile

(t.m. 181w., 32,33,34,35)

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

Murfreesboro Diamond

Your Hometown Newspaper since 1975

Located in the County Seat of Pike County • Murfreesboro, Arkansas
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- John Robert Schirmer, Publisher
- P.J. Tracy IV, Editor
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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Murfreesboro, AR 71958
Telephone: 870-285-2723

Business Hours: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Wednesday 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 Friday 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Please Send Change of Address Information to:
 Murfreesboro Diamond
 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.**

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PIKE COUNTY, ARKANSAS
 CIVIL DIVISION

DEBRA COX and TOMMY TILLEY PETITIONERS

VS. CASE NO. 55CV-25-10

IN REGARD TO: PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED IN PIKE COUNTY ARKANSAS, TO WIT:

Beginning at a point 762 links North of the Southwest Corner of the Northeast Quarter of Section 34, in Township 8 South, Range 24 West, thence North 1738 links; thence East 2000 links; thence South 1738 links; thence West 2000 links to the Point of Beginning, containing 34.75 acres, more or less.

NOTICE OF QUIET TITLE ACTION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that there has been filed in the Circuit Court of Pike County, Arkansas, a Petition to Quiet Title to lands in Pike County, Arkansas, described as follows, to-wit:

Beginning at a point 762 links North of the Southwest Corner of the Northeast Quarter of Section 34, in Township 8 South, Range 24 West, thence North 1738 links; thence East 2000 links; thence South 1738 links; thence West 2000 links to the Point of Beginning, containing 34.75 acres, more or less.

Any and all person/s claiming said lands or any interest thereon are hereby warned to appear in this Court within thirty (30) days from the date of first publication of this Notice and answer said Petition and show cause why the title to said lands should not be quieted and confirmed in said Plaintiff or be forever barred from answering or asserting his interest.

WITNESS my hand and seal as Clerk of the Circuit Court of Pike County, Arkansas, this 12th day of February, 2025.

Sabrina Williams
 Pike County Circuit Clerk
 (v.m. 269w., 33,34,35,36)

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

In addition to the notices printed in local newspapers and e-editions, you can search Arkansas's public notices online for no charge at arkansaspublicnotices.com.



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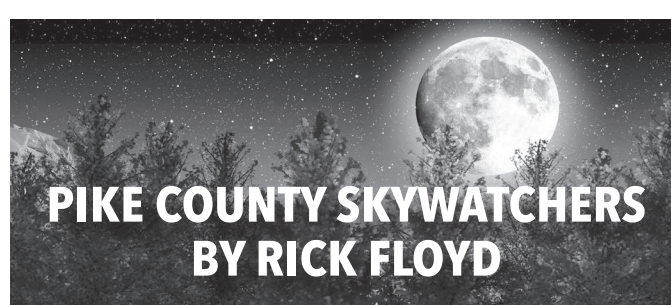
Chamber banquet set for Thursday

Meal starts at 5 p.m., program begins at 6 p.m.

MURFREESBORO -- The Murfreesboro Chamber of Commerce is preparing for their 2025 banquet that is set for March 6, 6 p.m., at the Murfreesboro Senior Center. Tickets are available by contacting a chamber board member -- Lisa Harvill, Jane Fugitt, Jimi Scarlett, Kailee Parker, Diane Carroll, Ricky Branch, Angie Branch, and Jean Floyd -- or by calling (870) 557-1860. Remaining tickets will be

available at the door on the night of the event. Tickets are priced at \$25 each or a table of six for \$125. The event will again hold a silent auction, door prizes and the "Taste of Murfreesboro" meal that will feature selections from local favorite eateries Feed Bin, Terri's Place, Telinga's Mexican Restaurant and Branch Oil. Dinner will be

served from 5-6 p.m. before the festivities begin at 6 p.m. The theme will be "Mardi Gras" and festive t-shirts are being prepared for attendees. Mayor Jim O'Neal will make a "State of the City" presentation, while Crater of Diamonds State Park Superintendent Caleb Howell will be the keynote speaker.



Starting out can be as easy as simply looking up

How to get started in astronomy as a hobbyist or as a serious amateur is not easily answered in a short newspaper article, but a few basic pointers can be offered.

First, you do not need a lot of equipment to become a stargazer. A good reclining camp chair and your eyes, leaning back in your yard, or at a local park, or some more remote location away from bright city lights will do.

A star-chart or planisphere (a dial type constellation locator) will help you learn the names of constellations and stars. Also, there are good apps that will locate stars, constellations, planets and other things in the sky over your location, but don't let the app do all the work, learn as you go.

Binoculars are a good start when you are ready to have some equipment on hand to augment your experience. They are, compared to telescopes, less expensive, very portable and easy to use.

The ones you already have will do, and there are astronomy-grade ones available too that have very good optics. Look at the numbers on the binoculars such as 7x50 or 10x50. The first number is the magnification and the second indicates how wide the front glass is. The more magnification means your field of vision is narrower, but fainter stars or more details on the moon can be seen. The larger the front glass means more light is getting to your eyes. Stabilizing binoculars are great for cutting down on the wobbling as you look, but they are more expensive. Remember also, the bigger the binoculars the heavier they are.

Telescopes are a marvel, and allow you to travel to distant places. It is not impossible to find the first scope that is best for you. There are numerous sites on-line that offer good advice for picking a good one in your price range. People are tempted, especially when buying a scope for a child, to start with a semi-toy that is not on a sturdy mount and does not have good optics. When you get your first scope pick one that you and your family can grow into.

One of the best pieces of advice to the question, which is the best telescope, is that it is the one you enjoy using. Some people dive in getting a large, complicated scope and mount that become a hassle to set up, and therefore end up gathering dust. It is now possible to get an attachment that allows you to take pictures through the telescope eyepiece with a phone.

Amateur astronomy is one of the fastest growing hobbies, so it is a good time to get started.

Charges issued following shooting

MURFREESBORO -- More charges have been filed in Pike County in connection with a Glenwood shooting that took place in December and injured one person.

Kaiden Evans, 18, of Glenwood, who is already charged in the case with allegedly intimidating a witness, is now facing another charge of possession of a defaced weapon. Evans has plead innocent to both charges and is being held in the county jail on \$250,000 bond. A July 7 pretrial date was set for both cases.

According to case information, agents with the Arkansas State Police responded to a call on South Second Street in Glenwood on Dec. 26, 2024 in reference to a shooting at a camp trailer. The agents found 15 bullet holes in the east wall of a trailer and an occupant, identified as Kierra Stenstrom, had been shot in the up-

per torso. Stenstrom was treated at a nearby hospital for non-life threatening injuries.

On that same date, a subject named Lindsey Brooks was interviewed in reference to the case and began receiving threats over text message that aggressively accused her of "snitching" to the police. Also on that same date, Evans was interviewed with his mother's consent and he denied any involvement in the shooting but did admit to sending the threatening messages to Brooks.

According to case information filed Feb. 27, Evans was arrested on Jan. 31 after a search his home found a Taurus Millennium G2 handgun that had the serial number defaced.

Also in connection to the shooting, Nathan Bankhead, 19, of Glenwood, has been charged with hindering apprehen-

sion or prosecution. He plead innocent to the charge Monday and a July 7 pretrial date was set. Bankhead is also being held in the county jail on a \$250,000 bond.

According to case information, during the ASP investigation into the shooting it was determined that Bankhead had involvement in the shooting and that the weapon involved was a 9 mm rifle.

During a January interview with the ASP, Bankhead said he did not have a 9 mm rifle but did have a 9 mm handgun that a relative kept for him at their house. However, on Feb. 10, the ASP received a video of Bankhead holding and talking about a 9 mm carbine rifle. The video had allegedly been sent by Bankhead to unknown receivers four days prior to the shooting.

Docket full for court this week

MURFREESBORO -- Monday was a busy docket for Pike County Circuit with 10 defendants being sentenced and more than a dozen others making appearances.

Those sentenced Monday included:

Brandon Davis, 29, Little Rock, plead guilty to charges of possession of controlled substance and paraphernalia; sentenced to 10 years in the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) with five years suspended.

James Smillie, 35, Delight, plead guilty to two counts of residential burglary; sentenced to 17 years in the ADC with 10 years suspended.

Natasha Homan, 38, Glenwood, plead guilty to possession of controlled substance; sentenced to four years of probation and fined \$1,500 plus related court costs.

Marion Reid, 63, Glenwood, plead "no contest" to possession of controlled substance and drug paraphernalia; sentenced to four years of probation and fined \$2,500 plus related court costs.

Jim Haddox, 41, of Caddo Gap, plead guilty to possession of drug paraphernalia; sentenced to four years in the ADC with two years suspended.

Michael Shane Cox, 47, Hensley, plead guilty to possession of controlled substance; sentenced to five years of probation, 60 days in the county jail and fined \$2,500 plus related court costs.

Delia Garza, 33, Glenwood, plead guilty to possession of controlled substance; sentenced to 15 years in the ADC.

Jeffery Wilkerson, 62, Caddo Gap, plead "no contest" to possession of drug paraphernalia; sentenced to four years of probation and fined \$2,500 plus related court costs.

Aireal Christina Spears, 22, Glenwood, plead guilty to the charge of rape; sentenced to 15 years in the ADC with 15 years suspended.

Michael Lerma, 27, De Queen, plead guilty to possession of a controlled substance; sentenced to four years probation and fined \$3,000 plus related court costs.

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Westerman announces office hours for casework

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-04) has announced casework-specific office hours in district office locations across the Fourth District for the month of March, to assist with issues for constituents specifically addressing Social Security, Medicare, IRS, USCIS, and passports.

For casework specifically related to Social Security, Medicare, IRS, USCIS, and passports, the following dates and locations are available:

- HOT SPRINGS**
9 a.m.-4 p.m., March 11, 101 Reserve St. Suite 200
- TEXARKANA**
9 a.m.-4 p.m., March 25, Miller County Courthouse: 400 Laurel St., Texarkana

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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 is the purpose of bone marrow?

A: Bone marrow is the soft tissue inside of bones. Healthy bone marrow is a key component in the overall function of the body.

There are two types of bone marrow -- red and yellow. Red bone marrow produces red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets. Yellow bone marrow contains cells that store fat for energy and creates bone, cartilage, muscles and fat cells for the body.

Anemia, leukemia, and myeloma are conditions that can affect bone marrow. Anemia is often the result of low iron or low vitamin B12, which affects the production of red blood cells. Leukemia occurs when the bone marrow produces an abnormal amount of white blood cells, which adversely affects the body's ability to fight infections. Myeloma is a blood cancer which forms in the plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.

Symptoms of abnormal bone marrow include frequent bacterial infections, excessive bleeding, fatigue, muscle weakness, bone pain, bruising or tiny spots of blood under the skin. Treatments for bone marrow conditions include antibiotics, blood transfusions, iron or vitamin B12 supplements, or such cancer treatments as chemotherapy, bone marrow or stem cell transplants. Contact your health care provider if you have questions.

Email your health questions to housecall@uams.edu.

Lady Rattlers end basketball season with growth and heart

MURFREESBORO – The senior Murfreesboro Lady Rattlers concluded their basketball season with a 15-10 record.

Head coach Nicole Martin said a pair of quality wins in non-conference games over Mount Ida and Kirby propelled the girls with confidence into the district tournament.

Once there, the girls handily defeated Caddo Hill before ultimately falling in close fashion to Mountain Pine 61-48.

“We were practicing really well, putting the ball in the basket after having come out of our shooting slump. We came into the Caddo Hills contest really confident. We had only beat Caddo Hills by three points the previous times, so to beat them on a running clock [mercy rules by a 53-23 score] was really good.”

After a two-day delay for weather concerns, the girls faced off against Mountain Pine, who had thoroughly defeated them in a pair of regular season contests.

“The girls were really confident in where we had gone as far as development, we were playing some of our better ballgames [of the season]. I knew they wouldn’t be scared or back down from Mountain Pine, but they are a really good team. They have really good scoring threats. If they can get you into a little bit of foul trouble, or you can get them in foul trouble, the game can be kinda persuaded in one way or the other.”

Holding the game tight through three quarters, Lady Rattlers Natalie Perrin and Sydney Braden fouled out of the game, forcing a “loss of rebounding” and allowing Lady Red Devil Shyanne Cardenas “to go to work.”

“Hats off to her, she’s a senior that for three ballgames was super hard to keep off the boards. For three and a half quarters we did it, and then just couldn’t do it any more. They hit some big threes – especially Carley Shaw – in the fourth quarter that kind of sealed the deal after it was 41-41 in the fourth quarter. We were right there in the ballgame, and you want to give yourself a chance to win. I thought we did that, but we just didn’t win the fourth quarter. That’s just how it falls sometimes, but when you empty the tank and finish at full-throttle giving everything you have against a better team ... for the season or that day, whatever ... obviously it’s not fun that your season ended, but you can label it as going out the right way as far as the fact we didn’t shy away, have attitudes, or go into the game believing it was over before it started. I’m really proud of them for that, especially the seniors going into the game very confident.”

Martin added that Mountain Pine and Cutter Morning Star were the two teams out of four from 7-2A that made the state tournament after Dierks and Horatio concluded their seasons at the regional tournament.

She applauded her five seniors – Perrin, Jo-

cee Holt, Chloe Scoggin, Jenna May and Jamie Howell – as well as the two senior manager, Reid Spradlin and Alyssa Ruiz, for their efforts all season.

“Both managers had been a part of our program and knew what our culture was. All five seniors had started at some point during the season. Then you had the junior class, Sydney and Faith [Teel] ... Sydney really got some great minutes – almost every single game she was our leading rebounder, averaging around eight per game.”

Martin said the sophomore class had to come in and “learn the ropes real quick ... we were able to get some minutes out of them, especially in the post area.”

She credited the team with the ability to be coached as well as the ability to learn.

“One of the things I was most proud of this season was our ability to get better at things we were weak at. If you watched our first couple of games you saw there was things we were good at, and then things we were really bad at. The first couple of conference games there were things we messed up really bad, but by the end of the season those weren’t becoming issues.”

Martin confesses the team was a “bit undersized” in conference play, but said that the reclassification cycle really brought that issue to the forefront.

“They brought the Hot Springs schools in, so that they way the Arkansas Activities Association set it, and that’s how the cookie crumbles sometimes. You just have to take it.”

The team went 9-0 in non-conference play and were “more relaxed” in those efforts.

“Sometimes we were a little uptight in conference play, just because we knew the difference in seeding and the game being a big task. I don’t know if we put too much pressure on ourselves for that.”

Martin also points to the top three teams in conference – Dierks, Mountain Pine and Cutter Morning Star – all having 20-plus wins and all being ranked by a poll at some point during the season.

“Plus Horatio that plays really good defense and Spring Hill with a really good senior and junior class. Going 15-10, I know that we could have done better in conference play, and obviously you want to make regionals and state [tournaments] which were two of our preseason goals, but I think the seniors got a lot better at leadership and becoming scoring threats as well as their defense. They all took on new roles for the team – we got a lot of productivity out of that senior class.”

She said she would ultimately view this campaign as a successful season in terms of growth on and off the court, mentality and leadership by the girls.

“Some of them really grew, learning how to

carry themselves. We got better in that as the season went on, as well as in concepts on the court that we struggled with early and got exposed with in December. Its really hard to take wins and losses to say if a team is successful and all of that. Yes, you didn’t meet some goals, but to me it was a success because of the overwhelming amount of growth and the senior class doing exactly what they needed to do. Everybody matured or got better at something that they were weak at ... every individual improved.

Martin added the team was enjoyable to coach.

PIKE COUNTY PUBLIC RECORD

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

DR-25-7 -- Karen Stout, vs. Rodney Stout, divorce, Feb. 3

DR-25-8 -- Velvet Pilot, vs. Lyndell Pilot, divorce, Feb. 4

DR-25-9 -- Benjamin Hardage, vs. Vanessa Hardage, divorce, Feb. 12

DR-25-10 -- Kyle Dewayne Morton, vs. Faith Cordella Harvey, paternity, Feb. 18

dR-25-11 -- Patrick McDade, vs. Bobbilynn Bishop, divorce, Feb. 20

DR-25-12 -- Taylor Nicholas, vs. Jessica Flud, paternity, Feb. 24

DR-25-13 -- Ashline Harr, vs. Raymond Harr, order of protection, Feb. 15

CIVIL

CV-25-9 -- First State Bank, vs. Jose Zacarias, ET AL, mortgage foreclosure, Feb.4

CV-25-10 -- Debra Cox and Tommy Tilley, vs. Any interested person, real property/other,

Feb. 12

CV-25-11 -- American Express, vs. Brittany O’Neal, contract/other, Feb. 13

CV-25-12 -- Crown Asset Management LLC., vs. Clark Kinzler, debt collection, Feb. 20

CV-25-13 -- Discover Bank, vs. Bryan Thom- as, debt collection, Feb. 21

CV-25-14 -- Discover Bank, vs. Toby A. Tigue, debt collection, Feb. 21

CV-25-15 -- LVNV Funding, vs. Stephen Tigue, debt collection, Feb. 21

CV-25-16 -- Credit Acceptance Corp., vs. Cynthia Vincent, contract/other, Feb. 27

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Michael Shondell McKinnon, 49, Delight; April Danielle Cooper, 43, Delight, Feb.12

Benjamin Henry Francis, 27, Delight; Brianna Dawn Avery, 23, Delight, Feb. 12

Felipe Armando Moreno, 25, Crestview, FL.; Desiray Lavon Greer, 26, Crestview, FL., Feb. 14

School board votes to extend principals

Superintendent says ‘finger crossed’ that new complex opens soon

BY JOHN BALCH

Nashville News-Leader staff

MURFREESBORO -- The South Pike County School Board voted in its February meeting to extend the contracts of the district’s two principals.

The employment of Elementary Principal James Riley and High School Principal Davey Jones was extended to the 2025-2026 school year. The vote followed a closed executive session of approximately 15 minutes.

The board also held a short closed expulsion hearing for a seventh grade student. The board voted to accept Superintendent Tanya Wilcher’s recommendation the student be expelled for the

remainder of the current school year.

In other business, a “board to board transfer” of a ninth grade student to the Blevins School District was approved. Wilcher explained that the Blevins School Board must now accept the transfer.

Wilcher also updated the board on progress of the baseball/softball complex currently under construction. She said she is keeping her “fingers crossed” that the Murfreesboro teams will play on the new fields sometime soon, as the project has been hampered by adverse weather with the latest being the ground is too wet to support the facility’s light poles.

SCHOOL BOARD Continued on Page 5

‘Dear Preacher’

By Buddy Ray, Murfreesboro Church of Christ

WHEN LOVE IS BAD

Even though Jesus taught that love is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), we are also warned that there are certain types of love that are unprofitable and evil. The following are examples of love that we should not have:

Love of money – “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Love of the world – “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15)

Love of prestige – “It is not good to eat much honey: Therefore, for men to search their own glory, is not glory” (Proverbs 25:27); “For who-soever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted”



(Luke 14:11)

Love of idols – “Thou shalt fear the Lord your God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, or the gods of the people which are round about you” (Deuteronomy 6:13, 14)

Excessive love of self – “For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Timothy 3:2); “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15); “...In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3,4)

Love of strife – “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is as contentious man to kindle strife” (Proverbs 26:21); “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:14-16)

Love of sin – “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:12); “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:32)

Paid Advertisement

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Hwy 27 N. Murfreesboro

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

Bro. Curtis Abernathy

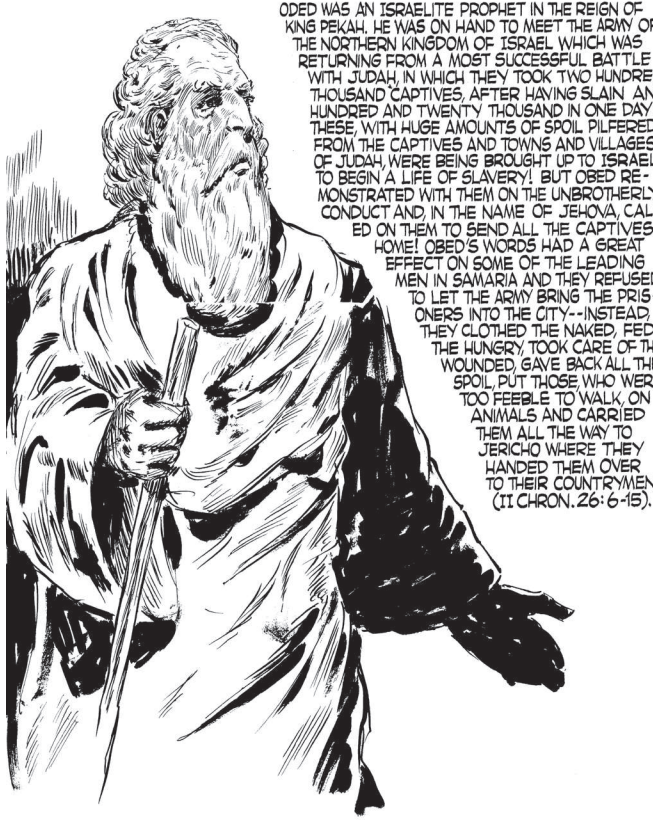
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Facts About The BIBLE

ODED – THE FAIR-MINDED PROPHET!



ODED WAS AN ISRAELITE PROPHET IN THE REIGN OF KING PEKAH. HE WAS ON HAND TO MEET THE ARMY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL WHICH WAS RETURNING FROM A MOST SUCCESSFUL BATTLE WITH JUDAH IN WHICH THEY TOOK TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND CAPTIVES. AFTER HAVING SLAIN AN HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND IN ONE DAY! THESE, WITH HUGE AMOUNTS OF SPOIL PILFERED FROM THE CAPTIVES AND TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF JUDAH, WERE BEING BROUGHT UP TO ISRAEL TO BEGIN A LIFE OF SLAVERY! BUT ODED REMONSTRATED WITH THEM ON THE UNBROTHERLY CONDUCT AND IN THE NAME OF JEHOVAH, CALLED ON THEM TO SEND ALL THE CAPTIVES HOME! ODED'S WORDS HAD A GREAT EFFECT ON SOME OF THE LEADING MEN IN SAMARIA AND THEY REFUSED TO LET THE ARMY BRING THE PRISONERS INTO THE CITY--INSTEAD, THEY CLOTHED THE NAKED, FEED THE HUNGRY, TOOK CARE OF THE WOUNDED, GAVE BACK ALL THE SPOIL, PUT THOSE WHO WERE TOO FEIBLE TO WALK, ON ANIMALS AND CARRIED THEM ALL THE WAY TO JERICHO WHERE THEY HANDED THEM OVER TO THEIR COUNTRYMEN. (II CHRON. 26:6-15).

310

SAVE THIS FOR YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL SCRAPBOOK

Murfreesboro church of Christ

305 S. Second Ave.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 • Worship 10:20
Sun. eve. 6 p.m. • Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.

Radio Broadcast B99.5 @ 8:30 a.m.

Bro. Buddy Ray

Attend Church
This Sunday!

HAVE AN ITEM YOU'D LIKE TO
SEE INCLUDED?

email us at

mdiamond@windstream.net

MARCH MADNESS
*- Theme Related Clue

ACROSS

- 1. Giant Himalayan
5. *M in MAC
8. Bath tub libation
11. Joie de vivre
12. Do like fly fisherman
13. East side of Jersey
15. Tucked in
16. Diva's solo
17. Length of a forearm
18. * Sunday
20. Osiris' wife
21. Freshwater fish
22. Stir fry pan
23. Victorian era overcoat
26. Smallest
30. *Like attending band at the NCAA Tournament
31. Kaa of "The Jungle Book"
34. Great Lake
35. Prep mushrooms for steak, e.g.
37. Cooking fat
38. Bible song
39. Second to last word in some fairytales
40. False
42. Dip oreo into milk, e.g.
43. Tiresome
45. Hoariest
47. NBC's sketch comedy show
48. Misrepresent
50. South American monkey
52. *2025 NCAA Championship game venue
56. Renaissance fiddle
57. "To ___ and to hold"
58. ___-friendly
59. Founding Father Thomas ___
60. Damien's prediction
61. Reunion group
62. Bancroft to Hoffman in "The Graduate"
63. Agreement word

64. Ages and ages

DOWN

- 1. Nay opposers
2. River in Bohemia
3. 1.3 ounces, in Asia
4. Owes money (2 words)
5. Angelina Jolie's 2024 singing role
6. "Kick the bucket," e.g.
7. * ___ Smith, coach of 2 champs and 11 Final Four teams
8. Mongolian desert
9. Fleur-de-lis
10. *Cut down at end of last game
12. Like rheumy eyes
13. Descendant
14. *2024 winners
19. Thin pancake
22. * ___ and move on
23. *Cinderella's victory
24. Furlough
25. Spew, past tense
26. Cough syrup balsam
27. Use other end of pencil?
28. Farm structures
29. Dangle a carrot
32. * ___-up or evenly matched game
33. Step on it
36. *2024 Most Outstanding Player Newton
38. Paralyzing disease, for short
40. Afghan monetary unit
41. Neolithic tomb
44. "Reunite _____, that's nice"
46. Figure out
48. Scapegoat's due
49. Roof overhang
50. Salty drop
51. Avian wader
52. Sailor call
53. Capital of Norway
54. Statistics calculation
55. Sea eagles
56. Dashboard acronym

CROSSWORD grid with numbers 1-64.

Consumer Cellular advertisement featuring a \$25 offer and contact information: 888-804-0913.

Get moving and improve your health with Extension's 'Walk Across Arkansas'

MURFREESBORO -- The Spring Walk Across Arkansas is back!

It runs from March 10-May 4, and it's a fantastic way to stay active and healthy while having fun with friends.

This event is organized by the Cooperative Extension Service, part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, and it's aimed at helping Arkansans improve their health through physical activity.



PIKE COUNTY EXTENSION

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

You can start slowly and gradually build your exercise routine. The team aspect helps keep everyone motivated and accountable, and some friendly competition can make it even more enjoyable.

The event is free, and you can register online individually or join the Pike County Extension team, "The Pike County Steppers."

If you need more details, feel free to contact the Pike County Extension office at (870) 285-2161.

Additionally, here's an easy recipe that will provide important protein, very few carbs and lots of flavor! Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Tablespoon Cajun seasoning or blackening spice blend
4 catfish fillets
1 Tablespoon butter
2 teaspoons chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Sprinkle seasoning on both sides of fish. Refrigerate 1 hour (if you have time.)
2. Melt butter in large heavy skillet or griddle over high heat. Add fish and cook about 8 minutes, turning fish two or three times until thickest part of fish flakes.
3. Serve hot, garnished with chopped parsley and lemon.

Serving size -- 1 fillet
Calories 205, Carbohydrates 2g, Protein 22g, Fat 12g, Sodium 700mg



SCHOOL BOARD Continued from Page 4

Wilcher also discussed the current legislative session where new bills concerning public education are on the agenda, including the "Bell to Bell" ban on cellphones for students on campus.

The board also voted to change the next board meeting date from March 17 to March 18 at 6 p.m. and heard building reports from Riley and Jones.

Both principals mentioned their "Teacher of the Year" award winners with Jane Caldwell being selected for the elementary honor and high school agri teacher Blake Simmons being named for the high school honor.

STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS

Call Neil McConnell at (501) 374-1500 to place your ad here!

Advertisement for Statewide Classifieds listing various services like dental insurance, water damage cleanup, and real estate services.

STATE CAPITOL WEEK IN REVIEW

Senator Steve Crowell

LITTLE ROCK -- The Senate has approved a package of bills with tougher regulations for the signature-gathering process by which citizens can place issues on statewide ballots.

In recent years the legislature has passed numerous new laws to prevent voter fraud and protect election integrity.

However, he gave Arkansas poor grades for the security of our signature-gathering process, saying that wealthy out-of-state groups "are able to get almost any issue on Arkansas ballots."

His report stated that "almost all petitions provided to the Secretary of State's Office contain tens of thousands of invalid signatures and thousands of duplicate signatures."

The Senate has approved a package of bills to prevent deceptive practices when canvassers collect signatures from registered voters, in order to place an issue on the ballot.

Senate Bill 207 would require canvassers to inform people, before collecting their signatures, that petition fraud is a Class A misdemeanor. The disclosure could be verbal, or in a separate

written document that would be shown to people before they sign.

SB 208 would require canvassers to view a photo ID of each person signing the petition. If canvassers are unable to verify someone's identity, they may not collect a signature.

SB 209 directs the Secretary of State to not count signatures on a petition if a preponderance of evidence indicates that the canvasser has violated state laws or provisions in the state Constitution regarding canvassing, perjury, forgery or fraudulent practices in getting signatures.

LEGISLATURE Continued on Page 6

FAGAN ROOFING advertisement listing services and contact information for Greg (870) 356-8934.

Classifieds advertisement for MINI STORAGE in Murfreesboro, contact (870) 285-2723.

STEPHANIE LOCKHART Certified Public Accountant, 410 N. Main St., Suite 1 Nashville, 870-455-8093.

MILLWOOD CORPORATION BUYER OF TIMBER & TIMBERLAND advertisement with contact info for Matt Tolleit, Jason Porter, and Johnny Porter.

Word search puzzle grid with words like YETI, MID, GIN, ELAN, WADE, SHORE, ABED, ARIA, CUBIT, SELECTION, ISIS, BREAM, WOK, ULSTER, TINIE, EST, PEP, PYTHON, ERIE, SAUTE, OIL, PSALM, EVER, PSEUDO, SOP, TEDIOUS, OLDEST, SNL, BELIE, TITI, ALAM, DOME, REBEC, HAVE, USER, PAINE, OMEN, CLAN, MRS, YES, EONS.

Martin coaches final Lady Rattler game, to stay in-district for new opportunity

MURFREESBORO – After the Murfreesboro Lady Rattlers were eliminated from the conference tournament, the pieces quickly fell into place and Nicole Martin, coach since the 2014-2015 season, announced that she was moving on to other opportunities.

In a social media post to announce her decision, Martin wrote “14 years of coaching. Anything and everything. Cross country, softball, track, and basketball. It has been a blast with every player I’ve had the privilege to coach. No matter the sport. Coaching has been a passion and a lifestyle for a decade now at my alma mater, Murfreesboro. Being a Lady Rattler and then coaching this program has been so special. I wouldn’t trade those years for anything.”

Martin will be staying on inside the district as the elementary physical education teacher, as well as the director of the expanding school-based pee-wee sports program.

“I will miss my players the most and the relationships you build watching them grow up and compete. It is definitely a bittersweet feeling but I am excited for more family time, seeing all the things my nieces are involved in at Harding Academy, and taking on a new chapter at the school I love most. Thank you to all of the mentor coaches I’ve had along the way. Thank you to everyone who’s helped our programs and all the co-workers I’ve been able to coach with. And thank you to every one of my players I have gotten to coach. You’ve made it all so rewarding. Once a Rattler, always a Rattler,” Martin concluded on the post.

In an interview with the Diamond, Martin said she had been praying about the idea for a while, noting that her oldest niece was an eighth grade volleyball player in Searcy, and the only way she could keep up was through videos.

“They were playing 4A and 5A schools an hour away from Searcy, and I decided I needed to talk to Tanya [Wilcher, school superintendent] about not being at football games so I could go see her. I was going to have to map out how I could be there for my nieces (also a fifth grader and a kindergartner) for tee-ball and softball. Only seeing it through videos, I told myself it might be a sign. So I went and talked to Tanya about the possibility of being involved in sports in another fashion, and she brought up the idea of the pee-wee director. She got a gameplan together, left me alone during the season, and told me she would present some stuff at the board meeting. I accepted the package they presented ... my biggest thing was that the girls would be taken care of, and that I was the one that got to tell them. By doing this now, it gives them the time and opportunity to get the best of the best coach in here. I didn’t want to drag it out and the position still not be settled in May. I just wanted to rip the band-aid off and make it as easy for the district as possible.”

Martin said the Lady Rattlers took the news well.

“The girls were so understanding – when I broke it down explaining I needed more family time. I absolutely love coaching here and this school district. I graduated from here. I love working for Tanya. So, I wanted to stay here, so when this all lined up, I felt like it was the way to put my family first. This is a great group of girls seventh-twelfth grades with awesome mentalities and competitiveness. They have great parents, no griping about playing time – they enjoyed watching their kids play.”

She said that the future was bright for the next coach.

“The junior high group have a lot of potential, the seventh grade group is really solid this year. There were four eighth graders in the [junior high] rotation. I think Blaklee will have an awesome year, she was behind some freshmen on the depth chart, but that kid is ready to go. Shayla, Kendall and Macie moving up and getting quality minutes this year, and will help the athleticism of the senior high team next year. Faith is ready and has proven that for next year. I’m excited for them.”

Martin said that if there was a time to move along, now was as good as it would get.

“Now is the perfect time for somebody [else] to come in, and be able to build what they want to build up with the nucleus of



Staff photo

FINAL DIRECTIONS ... Lady Rattler head coach Nicole Martin is pictured above during a timeout in her final game as coach in the Lady Rattlers’ loss versus Mountain Pine.

lead, we can provide them an avenue to have support, and I’m really excited about where we can go with that.”

Martin joked that people have commented that her physical education classes would start with proper basketball shooting form on the first day.

“That’s just funny stuff people have said ... at Horatio out of college my first two years I did elementary p.e., and it was awesome, I just loved it. I loved that age group -- I’ve done K-sixth grade and they will wear you out, and your immune system better be ready, because it’s a lot different than the high school,” she said with a laugh.

She also said the energy of the elementary school was enticing, with stuff that James Riley was implementing.

“Everything they are doing over there is exciting, so I’m looking forward to it. A lot of mothers over there are kids that I coached, so I have known a lot of these people for years. It will be a transition -- I will miss my high school coworkers, but I am literally only going to be 200 yards away.”

She said that some of her former players had made the comment that they would have been mad if she had left for another program, but since she was staying in some form, it would be okay.

“I understand,” Martin said. “They girls were really appreciative I told them before offseason. I didn’t want to drag my feet on that and make them think that I was prepping them for next season.”

So, while it came as a surprise to many, she feels the new duties will suit her well.

“I know it was really quick, and if I get the itch to coach again, my first avenue is to do a tournament team comprised with kids from local schools.”

However, what if she wakes up one morning and can’t stand the idea of not coaching again?

“If that happens, I’ll make decisions on stuff, but right now I’d love to finish my career out here ... I love everything about what South Pike County schools are doing. I moved from Nashville to here in the fourth grade -- coming over here was just a totally different atmosphere and I loved every second of it. I am very glad there was an opportunity to stay in this district and get almost everything in my boxes checked that I had been praying about. It was crazy how it just opened up and fell into place. Yes, it was my decision, it was a very difficult decision, but Tanya has been super supportive about everything, and I’m thankful to the school board for thinking outside of the box on the school affiliated pee-wee program. I’m just excited for the opportunity.

In her coaching career at MHS, Martin has 157 wins on the varsity level, with a district championship and conference tournament runners-up in 2021. Her 2019 squad finished second in district in 2019.

Her varsity squads qualified for regional tournaments in 2017-2021, and 2023-2024. She led teams to the state tournament in 2018-2021 and elite eight teams in 2019 and 2021.

She also coached MJHS to to a district championship in 2015, and district runners-up in 2016-2018.

In track, Martin had district championship for MJHS in 2017-2018 and senior high district runners-up in 2018.

As a softball coach, Martin had 42 wins in three seasons and a 1-0 record when covid shut down the 2020 season.

Her softball teams finished as district runners up in 2019 and 2021, regional qualifiers in 2019 and 2021-2022, and state tournament qualifiers in 2019.

“Those numbers are much more about the kids than me,” Martin said humbly. “They made my job so much easier.”

To conclude, Martin did name the thing that meant the most to her over the past 14 years of coaching.

“The think I have enjoyed -- and will remember this part more than I will the X’s and O’s and the wins and losses -- it is so enjoyable to be on Facebook, to get a text, to go to a wedding or get an invite to a baby or wedding shower or seeing dean’s list or seeing graduations from pharmasuctial school or new mother from my former players. It is so amazing, and just seals the deal that while they might not have learned every single part of who they are from sports, but hopefully some consistency in what they are doing. It is so rewarding -- I know people tell you that all the time, but it is. To see what these young female athletes go out and do and accomplish after they put the ball down. We’ve had a couple go and be college athletes and they’ve had to hang it up, but they are still right there in nursing, coaching, education and all of it. It’s really neat to see how many of them go out and are successful in whatever their next chapter is. Be it a mother, a wife, getting into the workforce or starting their education process at the college level. I’m just so proud of all of my graduates and I know I will see it with this new group of seven seniors -- they will go out and do awesome things. I’m excited to get to keep up with them as well. I know a lot of them learned valuable lessons from sports -- be it basketball, softball or cheerleading -- but there were valuable moments from it, and it is so neat to be able to see them use that while going out and becoming successful in whatever their next chapter is. I love scrolling Facebook and seeing all the things they have going on, where they are living and all that. It is just awesome.”

When asked about a timeline to hire a coach, Wilcher stated that when the right applicant came along, a hire would be made. She noted that a job listing had been posted digitally.

Tooth Fairy still generous In Arkansas, bucking national trend

SHERWOOD -- Good news for Arkansas kids: Losing a tooth is still profitable!

While the Tooth Fairy has been tightening her purse strings across the country, the South remains an exception. According to the Delta Dental 2025 Original Tooth Fairy Poll, the region now leads the nation with an average cash gift of \$5.71 per tooth, up from \$5.51 in 2024—the only area to see an increase this year.

Meanwhile, the national average for a lost tooth dropped by 14% from \$5.84 to \$5.01, marking one of the most significant declines in the poll’s 27-year history. Even for a child’s first lost tooth—often a more celebrated milestone—the Tooth Fairy has been cutting back, with the average gift falling 12% from \$7.09 to \$6.24.

“The annual Tooth Fairy Poll adds a bit of fun to the serious business of children’s oral health,” said Dave Hawsey, vice president of marketing at Delta Dental of Arkansas. “The Tooth Fairy is a trusted ally in encouraging kids to build lifelong healthy habits, including daily brushing and flossing. Every lost tooth is a reminder that healthy smiles start in early

childhood.”

REGIONAL TOOTH FAIRY PAYOUTS

- South (\$5.71): The only region to see an increase in the past year, now leading the nation.
- West (\$5.69): Despite staying above the national average, the region saw a 33% drop from last year.
- Northeast (\$4.59): Fell below \$5.00 per tooth for the first time since 2020, dropping 33%.
- Midwest (\$3.46): Continues to lag behind other regions, staying under \$4.00 per tooth.

THE ORIGINAL TOOTH FAIRY POLL AND THE ECONOMY

The Original Tooth Fairy Poll has historically mirrored economic trends, often aligning with the Standard & Poor’s 500 Index (S&P 500). However, over the past year, the average value of a lost tooth dropped 14%, while the S&P 500 climbed 26% over the same period.

Even with these fluctuations, the Tooth Fairy remains a cherished tradition, reinforcing the importance of early oral health habits while sprinkling a little magic under pillows across the country.

ABOUT THE POLL

The Original Tooth Fairy Poll was conducted between Jan. 10, 2025, and Jan. 23, 2025, among 1,000 parents of children ages 6 to 12. The margin of error is +/- 3%.

The January 2024 S&P 500 average was 4,746 and increased to an average of 5,960 for Janu-

ary 2025, consistent with the timing of the Original Tooth Fairy Poll.

For more information about the Delta Dental-sponsored survey and oral health tips for infants to pre-teens, visit www.deltadental.com/us/en/tooth-fairy.html.

LEGISLATURE Continued from Page 5

SB 210 would require people to read the ballot title of a ballot issue before signing the petition. The ballot title is a summary of all the provisions in the proposed constitutional amendment or initiated act. The bill allows for the ballot title to be read to the person signing, in the presence of the canvasser.

SB 211 would require canvassers to submit a sworn statement that he or she has complied with all state laws governing the collection of signatures, and with the Constitution. Unless the canvasser submits the sworn statement, any signatures he or she turns in will not be counted by the Secretary of State.

One bill in the package has not been voted on by the full Senate. It is SB 212 to create a new office within the Secretary of State’s office, known as the Document Validity Division.

In other news, the Senate Committee on Revenue and Taxation endorsed legislation that would save Arkansas homeowners more than \$56 million. It is SB 263 and it will take effect in 2026, when it raises the homestead property tax credit by \$100. The credit is currently \$500. A spokesman for the state Department of Finance and Administration said that about 708,000 homeowners would benefit from the bill.

The Senate approved SB 223, known as the Religious Rights at Public Schools Act of 2025. It would put into one law all the various religious rights of students, teachers and school administrators. The act will be distributed to all students and staff at the beginning of each school year.

Attorney General issues a consumer alert on toll road scams

‘If you get one of these texts, please fill out the robocall reporting form on my website, and do not send payment to any entity that only contacts you via text’

LITTLE ROCK -- Attorney General Tim Griffin issued the following statement alerting consumers to a scam that has recently been on the rise in Arkansas:

“Last year, Arkansas saw a new ‘smishing’ scam—a combination of ‘SMS’ (texts) and ‘phishing’— come to our state. In these scams, criminals attempt to steal consumers’ personal information and trick consumers into handing over funds by impersonating a state toll service. We’ve received numerous reports that this scam is again on the rise.

“While Arkansas does not have toll roads, many Arkansans may have traveled during the winter holidays to states that do impose tolls on certain roads. Because of heightened holiday travel, some Arkansans might be more easily tricked into thinking these are legitimate texts about unpaid toll fees.

“If you get one of these texts, please fill out the robocall reporting form on my website, and do not send payment to any entity that only contacts you via text.”

The robocall reporting form can be found at <https://arkansasag.gov/resources/contact-us/robocall-reporting-form/>.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS SCAM:

Pay your FastIrak Lane tolls by X date. To avoid a fine and keep your license, you can pay at (link)

(Please reply Y, then exit the text message and open it again to activate the link, or copy the link into your Safari browser and open it)

Below are some tips to recognize scams and

keep yourself safe if you receive a text message claiming to be from a state toll service:

- Do not click on the link.
- Delete the text message and report it as junk.

If you have reason to believe the message may be legitimate, contact the state’s tolling agency. Be sure to use a phone number or website that you know is legitimate and not the information in the text message.

If you did click any link, take steps to protect your personal information. Change your passwords, monitor your financial accounts, and dispute any unfamiliar charges.

For more information or to file a Consumer Complaint, please contact the Office of Attorney General at (501) 682-2007 or oag@arkansasag.gov, or visit the website www.ArkansasAG.gov.

**NEWSWORTHY
ITEMS?**

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