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February 29, 2016

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Large turnout in early voting

By Mike Steely
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Not since the Obama-McCain election eight years ago has there been such a heavy turnout in Knox County during early voting and Tuesday's Primary Election Day could reach a total of some 100,000 ballots being cast.

Drawing the turnout is the national primary for president in both parties and several disputed local primary races for Law Director, Property Assessor, County Commission and the School Board.

The final early voting total released by the Knox County Election Commission last Wednesday showed 35,389

voters and Chris Davis, Assistant Director, said that some 2,000 absentee ballots were sent out and about 1,000 of those could still be returned. The number of early voters increased almost every day and ended Tuesday with the largest number of people voting in a single day, 10,369.

The heaviest voting, as

usual, took place in early precincts of Downtown West (9224) and Farragut (6394).

Davis said that Republican voters should be aware that the local races appear at the bottom of the long ballot, below the names for candidates for president and the selection of delegates.

Knox County Board of Education Conducting Interim Superintendent Search

The Knox County Board of Education is now accepting letters of interest from individuals who may wish to be considered for appointment as Interim Superintendent of the Knox County Schools until a permanent replacement is hired. Board of Education member Terry Hill (District 6) has been charged by the School Board with reviewing possible Interim Superintendent candidates and making a recommendation to the full Board of Education.

At its February 17 called meeting, the Knox County Board of Education voted to approve a timeline for hiring an interim superintendent:

- March 7 - deadline to receive letters of interest
- March 8 - review process begins
- April 4 - recommendation presented to the Board of Education
- April 6 - Board of Education to vote on interim superintendent recommendation

Interested individuals do not have to currently be employed by the Knox County Schools (KCS) in order to be considered for the interim post. However, the School Board has developed a list of desired characteristics of the Interim Superintendent, which includes: a background in education, significant familiarity with KCS (including staff and budget), experience in KCS or a system with similar demographics, flexibility, willingness to work collaboratively with School Board and other elected officials and ability to communicate effectively with all stakeholders. The full list can be seen on the Knox County Schools website. Due to existing School Board policy, no person serving the Knox County Schools in the capacity of Interim Superintendent will be eligible to apply for the permanent superintendent position.

Letters of interest and resumes of interested individuals should be submitted to Terri Coatney, Board of Education Executive Assistant, at terri.coatney@knoxschools.org, by close of business on Monday, March 7, 2016.

LWV and South Knox Elementary Host Community Schools Celebration

By Sally Absher
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The League of Women Voters celebrated Knox County's Community Schools Initiative On Thursday, February 25 with a reception and program at South Knoxville Elementary School, one of Knox County's newest Community Schools. Guests included Mayors Madeline Rogero and Tim Burchett, City Council Member George Wallace, County Commissioner John Schoonmaker, Board of Education member Amber Rountree, and over a hundred teachers, parents, students, and community members.

The Community Schools Initiative is a strategy for using public schools as a hub for organizing community resources to improve



Dr. Bob Kronick is honored for his contribution to Knox County's Community School Initiative. He is presented a gift by Community Schools student Riley on behalf of the League of Women Voters as Jamey Dobbs, LWV, looks on.

The Big Read prompts talk on race

By Mike Steely
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Sometimes a book or movie can stir emotions or open eyes and a discussion Tuesday at the Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office did just that. A panel discussion about the book "A Lesson Before Dying" by Ernest J. Gaines saw various members of the community give their reactions, opinions and comments to a large audience of citizens and elected officials.

Tuesday's panel was part of "The Big Read" program of The National Endowment of the Arts. Sponsored locally by the Knox County Public Library, the program runs through June 2016. Other sponsors included the Friends of the Library and the Clarence Brown Theatre, which

is sponsoring a presentation based on the book this Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Carousel Theatre, in the Haslam Music Center at the University of Tennessee.

The book deals with racial issues and the legal system in Louisiana in the 1940s and the fictional story leads to the execution of an innocent African-American. The many issues in the book were addressed by a panel that included Nate Allen, Deputy Police Chief; Daryl Arnold, pastor of Overcoming Believers Church; Andre Canty, Communications Team of the Highlander Center; Ralph Hutchinson of the MLK Commutative Commission; Reggie Jenkins, Director of the UUNIK Academy; Kwabena Miller, former gang member and Outreach Minister; Alice



Jackie Clay of the City's Save Our Sons initiative asked questions of panel members regarding "A Lesson Before Dying" during a "Big Read" event at the Public Defender's Office.

Reid, Director of the city Community Relations; and Mark Stephens, Public Defender.

Copies of the book were

given to audience members for free as they arrived at the Public Defender's office.

After a welcome from

Mayor Madeline Rogero the panel answered questions related to the book as applied to their backgrounds and professions

including some questions from the audience. The questions were delivered by Jackie Clay, Program

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County Commission

Wrecker charges, vouchers and next county budget

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knox County Commission will be talking to the Sheriff's Office to ask about policies regarding wrecker service charges. Commissioner Ed Brantley brought up the matter last week and compared the current system to "the Wild West."

Brantley called on a citizen who had complained to him about a \$500 charge from a wrecker service to haul his damaged car 15 miles.

Paul Johnson told the commission that he had a wreck over the Thanksgiving

holiday and the sheriff's deputy responding to the incident asked if he had a preferred wrecker service. Johnson did not and asked the deputy to call a wrecker for him. He said after the tow he was surprised by the charges and when he asked for a copy of the itemized bill he could not get one and had to take a photo of the invoice with his cell phone's camera.

Brantley said the City of Knoxville has a limit on charges and that wrecker services must be authorized to operate in city limits. He said the county has no

policy at all and wreckers can charge anything they like.

"The customer should know what they are up against," Brantley said.

"Every citizen should be treated fairly. Somehow we've got to come up with what's fair," said Commissioner Bob Thomas.

Commissioner Mike Brown asked if the sheriff's department has a list of wrecker services, asked who's on the list and who sets the cost.

"We need someone from the sheriff's department here next month," Brown said.

Commissioner Brad Anders said creating a policy to govern wrecker service in the county would be "a cost matter" and is not simple.

Brantley said he wasn't suggesting any type of regulation but something needs to be developed where "someone doesn't feel like they are being had."

Chairman Dave Wright asked Brantley to meet with the sheriff's department and report back to the commission.

Commissioner Charles Busler brought up school vouchers and said that although a recent state legislature attempt failed, the county needs to clarify its standing on an existing policy.

"We have school vouchers here," he said, explaining that Knox County has an existing voucher program for disabled students. He said that once a student leaves public schools on a voucher program the money follows the student to a private school. If the student returns to public school the funding remains with the private school.

Busler told The Focus that a senate and house bill passed and became active on June 26, 2015 and provides \$6,000 in funds directly to the parents of

a disabled student for use with a private school. He said the state-wide program could take money from public schools and possibly lead to private or charter schools that only cater to handicapped students.

He said he had met with the county law department and confirmed the existence of the state policy.

The commission began discussing the next budget for Knox County and Knox County Finance Director Chris Caldwell said that Mayor Tim Burchett will present his proposed budget on May 9th.

Caldwell said that Burchett and school superintendent Dr. James McIntyre are working together and that the Finance Department will "start in earnest" this week on a budget. He said that financial growth has been good, sales tax collection is up and the state's contribution to the county is expected to rise.

Wright reminded the commission that a budget needs to be adopted by June 30th and include a public hearing.

In other action the commission approved selling a property at 6412 Tazewell Pike to Kenneth Cantrell for \$350,000. The site was purchased several years ago by the county for a possible site for a Gibbs Middle School and was declared excess property when the new school site was selected.

The proposed Gibbs Middle School's access roads received commission approval for the purchase of six tracks of easement and a survey to design a right turn lane for Gibbs High School and waterline relocation for the middle school. One tract of land was also approved for slope and construction easement for the proposed Hardin Valley Middle School.

LWV and South Knox Elementary Host Community Schools Celebration

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neighborhood health and safety and student academic health. With parent, neighborhood and partner input and involvement, community schools can be a positive center of influence to benefit students, families, and the surrounding community. Research indicates that these benefits include improved student learning, health and attendance, stronger family engagement, improved school climate, and safer neighborhoods.

The celebration also honored three people who have been instrumental to the success of Knox County's Community Schools program.

Dr. Bob Kronick is a professor of educational psychology and counseling at UTK and the director of the university-assisted community schools program. He is also the inspirational leader for community schools in Knox County, having brought the idea to Knox County several decades ago. His model of community schools came to full fruition at Pond Gap Elementary School in 2010, the first fully staffed community school. Pond Gap is one of two university-assisted community schools in the county (Inskip

Elementary was added to the university-assisted community schools program this year).

Buzz Thomas is the President of the Great Schools Partnership, a freestanding non-profit organization formed in 2005 with a shared vision to take Knox County Schools from good to great. Diligently studying the dynamics of Community Schools from local and national sources, Thomas was instrumental in moving the successful pilot work of community schools at Pond Gap to the current 12 site initiative in Knox County. He has leveraged significant private and public sector funding, provided infrastructure, and served as a champion for the successful expansion of community schools into a model for other communities in Tennessee.

Knox Schools Superintendent Jim McIntyre was also honored. It was in the process of visioning and preparation of the first KCS five-year plan designed to achieve Excellence for All Children that KCS first committed to a Community Schools pilot program. McIntyre and staff met with Dr. Kronick and community advocates. He along with Thomas and a number of community members

traveled to Cincinnati to see their community schools model firsthand. This trip set the course for an expansion of the Community Schools project across Knox County. The Knox County Board of Education has solidly backed the Community Schools Initiative since its inception.

Thomas is assisted by Great Schools Partnership Leadership team: Vice President of Operations Stephanie Welch, Vice President of Finance and Human Resources Stephanie Jenkins, Community Schools Field Supervisor Mark Benson, and Parents as Teachers Field Supervisor Yvette Parker. Destiny Glover serves as the Community Schools Coordinator and Nicole Lewis is the Volunteer Coordinator.

Community Schools would not be possible without a dedicated coalition of school principals and School Coordinators. Coordinators include: Jill Atkin (Beaumont Magnet Academy); Tiffany Davidson (Christenberry Elementary); Adam Fritts (Dogwood Elementary); Quineka Moten (Green Magnet); Blaine Sample (Inskip Elementary - UT); Kori Lautner (Lonsdale Elementary); Liz Thacker (Northwest Middle); Karen Hoist (Pond Gap Elementary - UT); Jervece Steele (Sarah Moore Greene Magnet); Susan Martin (South Knoxville Elementary); and Cornelia Reece (Vine Magnet Middle). Norwood Elementary is currently accepting applications to fill this position.

Each community school has a steering committee comprised of parents,

community residents, business and faith-based representatives, teachers and staff, and the school principal. They meet regularly to create a shared vision for the school, identifying resources and needs and a plan to achieve positive results. This allows each school to function with autonomy in addressing the unique needs of their specific student body and community.

Knox County Community Schools are having a positive impact. During the 2014-2015 school year (with only eight community schools), Community Schools:

- served more than 3,000 students and their families.
- offered on-site after-school tutoring and enrichment activities for 679 students.
- leveraged programs and resources from more than 150 community partners, ranging from Art to Zumba.
- held 51 community events with 3,980 attendees and 1,430 parents participating.
- saw a 3.3% closure of the reading proficiency gap compared to the rest of the district.
- served 49,085 snacks and 28,515 meals.
- provided onsite mental health services (through Helen Ross McNabb Center) to 212 students.
- benefited from over 10,800 hours of time contributed by more than 1,000 volunteers.



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Sherry J. Morgan, chair, Knox County Political Action Committee for Education says

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TUESDAY, MARCH 1

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Publisher's Position Sentinel Endorsements... I'll Pass!



**By Steve Hunley,
Publisher**
publisher@knoxfocus.com

The Sentinel endorsement certainly doesn't rank right up there with an Oscar, although to hear some candidates tell it, you'd think it does. Of course if you don't have anything else to brag about,

maybe it helps. All these candidates bragging about the Sentinel's endorsement ought to reflect for a moment on just what all the daily paper has endorsed. The Sentinel has never failed to endorse appointing many of the offices it backs candidates for; in other words, the Sentinel favors allowing politicians to appoint offices you, the taxpayers, have always filled by voting. The Sentinel rails against professional politicians, yet is content to let them fill what used to be elected offices. The best example is the superintendent of schools. I can't recall a single thing Superintendent

Other Sentinel Endorsements

- **State Income Tax**
- **Increasing the Gas Tax**
- **Increasing Property Taxes**
- **The largest proposed Property Tax hike in Knox County history**
- **Appointing School Superintendents**
- **Appointing all other county-wide offices except Mayor**
- **Barack Obama (twice)**

of Schools Jim McIntyre didn't endorse, including wanted that the Sentinel the largest proposed tax

increase in Knox County's history. The Sentinel endorsed Barack Obama in 2008; in fact, the Sentinel gushed it was "happy" to endorse Obama. The Sentinel likes higher taxes - - - well, for you, not for them. The Sentinel got a tax break from the city and county governments to build its new facility, but has always endorsed higher property taxes for you. In fact, the Sentinel endorsed a state income tax for Tennessee, meaning you, the taxpayers and keep in mind the biggest untaxed revenue stream in Tennessee is advertising. Not a penny of sales tax is collected on advertising revenue.

The Sentinel editorialized against Knox County using a delinquent tax attorney, but sees nothing wrong with endorsing a candidate affiliated with a firm who collected a hefty share of dollars from the senior partner being the delinquent tax attorney for Knox County. The Sentinel has endorsed the idea of higher gas prices at the pump as they think the notion of hiking the gasoline tax is a mighty fine idea. Now when you go to vote, you can endorse the Sentinel's candidates, or you can speak for yourself and send the establishment a message.

THE CHALK BOARD

Bits of News About Local Education

By Sally Absher
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Knox County Teachers of the Year Honored

Three Knox County teachers received the Knox County Teacher of the Year award last week at the 2016 Teacher of the Year celebration sponsored by Comcast, Rusty Wallace Automotive, and Kroger. Jessica Stewart (Christenberry Elementary), Jill Gill (Rita Elementary) and Valerie Cagle (Farragut High) were selected as the three overall Teacher of the Year award recipients based on criteria set forth by the Tennessee Department of Education, including: educational history, professional development, community involvement, philosophy of teaching, and contributions to education. A total of 181 teachers were honored for the "extraordinary work they do in the classrooms of the Knox County Schools." The number of Teacher of the Year honorees each school can recognize is


based on overall faculty numbers. Schools are allowed to recognize one honoree for every 20 faculty members so honorees from each school were recognized, but only three honorees—one primary educator (PK-4) and two secondary educators (5-8 and 9-12)—received the Knox County Teacher of the Year award. To be eligible for the Teacher of the Year honor, each candidate must be a full-time, certified Pre K-12 grade teacher who has taught five years or more and spends the majority of the day instructing students. Candidates must also show dedication to teaching and possess a variety of positive personal attributes. Recipients are nominated by their colleagues. According to KCS, "Every day, these three winners and all other honorees help ensure that each of our more than 58,000 students are academically successful, college and career ready, economically competitive, and personally fulfilled. The continual

focus of the Knox County Schools is that every student will have the opportunity to successfully reach their highest potential, regardless of whatever challenging circumstances they may face." "By giving of time, bringing personalized instruction to the classroom, and equipping children for bright and successful futures, these teachers are making positive impacts on our community and our region—they are the ones cultivating Knox County's greatest resource, our future leaders and decision makers, our future parents and stakeholders." **Groundbreaking for new Gibbs, Hardin Valley Middle Schools** After a series of weather-related delays, Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, along with KCS Superintendent Dr. McIntyre, Knox County Board of Education members, Knox County Commissioners, and other elected officials formally broke ground at the sites of the

new Gibbs and Hardin Valley middle schools on February 19. The new Gibbs middle school, to be located on Tazewell Pike just behind Gibbs Elementary School, will be built to accommodate 800 students. Hardin Valley middle school, to be located just behind Hardin Valley Academy and Elementary School, will be able to handle nearly 1,200 students. Rouse Construction received the \$23,631,000 design-build contract for Gibbs, while Denark Construction was awarded the design-build contract for Hardin Valley on a budget of \$34.8 million. **"Rigor" v "Vigor"** A recent post on the Momma Bears blog (mom-mabears.org) mentions that the Constitution of the State of Tennessee has a clause (Section 13) "That no person arrested and confined in jail shall be treated with unnecessary rigor." So, it is against the law for prisoners to be treated

with rigor, but not for students in public schools? Rigorous curriculum, rigorous testing, rigorous schedules with little to no recess... The blog points out that politicians, testing companies, reformers, and some school district administrators seem to love that word. About two years ago, Momma Bears wrote about this, stating, "This world can be a cold, cruel place, but our children's classrooms shouldn't be. Schools should be a place of warmth, of joyful learning, and of respect for each unique child and their needs. Rigor is not a nice word, but reformers keep saying "rigor" as if it is. www.Dictionary.com: rigor [rig-er] noun 1. strictness, severity, or harshness, as in dealing with people. 2. the full or extreme severity of laws, rules, etc. 3. severity of living conditions; hardship; austerity: the rigor of wartime existence. 4. a severe or harsh act, circumstance, etc. 5. scrupulous or inflexible

accuracy or adherence: the logical rigor of mathematics. They suggested, how about using the word Vigor instead? www.Dictionary.com: vigor [vig-er] noun 1. active strength or force. 2. healthy physical or mental energy or power; vitality. 3. energetic activity; energy; intensity: The economic recovery has given the country a new vigor. 4. force of healthy growth in any living matter or organism, as a plant. 5. active or effective force, especially legal validity. Indeed, let's hear less about rigor and more about vigor, as well as joy, enthusiasm, respect, creativity, flexibility, valuable, and worthwhile when describing our children's schools. **ESK Announces Expansion** The Episcopal School of Knoxville will break ground next week on a \$6.5 million **Continue on page 4**



Jennifer Owen

District 2 - School Board

ELECTION DAY: March 1st

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« Please help me rebuild community confidence by electing me to the Board of Education, where I will work to ensure the interests of students guide every decision we make. »

Web site: Owen4Schools.com

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Council considers valet services, playground equipment

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Tuesday may be Election Day but Knoxville City Council members will still be meeting in regular session to hear some interesting requests.

County MPC member Kevin Murphy, who has been appearing at various city and county meetings to oppose or suggest changes to planned Dollar General stores, is asking the city to approve his appeal of a variance granted to JMP Investments for a 14-foot setback for a Dollar General store at 1612 Elm Street.

The council will also look at an

agreement to build a KAT Kirkwood Bus Stop and discuss thanking Aslan Foundation for committing about \$800,000 for a greenway at Fort Dickerson Park to enhance the entranceway and public space there.

It may also amend the city code dealing with valet services in the city and may add about \$12,000 to the police department's canine training facilities.

The Fountain City Lions Club may get \$4,600 to help maintain the Fountain City Park and the council may authorize the mayor to apply for Let's Play Rigamajig or Indigenization Playground grants.



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY.

Penny Pawn's Pantelis Merianos invites you to come in and look at the wide selection of gold and silver jewelry. The store buys and sells jewelry and coins and offers lots of other things like cartoon and movie memorabilia.

Penny Pawn is more than just a pawn shop

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

If you live in North Knoxville and drive Broadway you'll likely be familiar with Penny Pawn at 4821 North Broadway but you may not know that the popular shop has been there since 1985.

Founded by Mildred Mason and now owned by Pantelis Merianos, the family business specializes in gold and silver jewelry and coins. It offers "the best prices" and jewelry repair is also available.

The shop is more than just a pawn shop. It's a place that continues to have customers who have shopped there since the store was founded—a place where relationships are made.

Terry Merianos, the niece of Mrs. Mason, says the family store has a little bit of everything. She operates Martha Lee's Jewelry on Clinton Highway.

Pantelis invites everyone to come by the Broadway store and take advantage of the great sales on the gold and diamond jewelry which includes rings, bracelets, necklaces, gold and sterling silver chains and several vintage 14 karat gold watches. Pantelis wants to remind everyone that

they buy Rolex Watches also.

Penny Pawn also has antique glassware, crystal, sterling silver, turquoise and silver jewelry, and even Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle figures. Penny Pawn has band instruments, guitars, collectables and antique fishing equipment. There's a large selection of men's jewelry. It's an ideal place to browse for gifts, or sell your silver and gold for the best price. There's a large selection of silver coins and you'll also find antiques that other pawn shops don't offer.

Penny Pawn was North Knoxville's first pawn shop and is ready to serve you whether you want to buy, sell or trade. The shop has been an asset Fountain City and has strived to provide the highest quality of service and trustworthiness to their customers for the past 31 years and plans to do so for many years to come.

Opening at 10 a.m. each day, Monday through Saturday, Penny Pawn can be reached by calling 687-1985. You'll also find Penny Pawn on Facebook and at www.knoxvillepawnshops.com.

The Big Read prompts talk on race

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Manager of the City's Save Our Sons initiative.

Each panelist brought something different from their reading of the book.

Asked about the bystander in the book being arrested and convicted of murder Stephens explained "felony murder" and how that charge can be used against anyone who participates in a criminal act that results in murder, even if they had nothing to do with the death.

In the book the main character felt like a "hog" rather than a man and Miller said he understood that feeling. The former gang member said, "I know what it is like to feel less of a man."

Jenkins said that he disagreed with the final part of the book where the unjustly sentenced character walks with pride to be executed.

"He wasn't given justice, manhood is fighting for justice," Jenkins said.

Deputy Police Chief Allen, referring to current relations between the police and the African American community, said he sees that situation from both sides.

"I'm a policeman and a black man. When I get called out I must wear my uniform because I'm a black man with a gun," he said.

Asked about how the main characters interacted with women in the book Avice Reid said it reflected on the strong African-American women back then and now. She recalled her grandmother's guidance. She said the main female character "did everything she could do but it wasn't enough. That's typical of African-American women."

Rev. Arnold was asked about religious symbols in the book and said that "a measure of faith" doesn't mean a person isn't religious just because they attend church.

"A person in a garage doesn't make him a car," he said, adding, "Faith is a process."

Asked about "white man's justice" Jenkins said that people should look in a mirror explaining, "If you are white you benefit from being white."

In an audience question about the book and gangs in Knoxville Miller said that youths who join gangs are looking for acceptance and belonging.

Rev. Arnold said that all gangs are not located in East Knoxville and referred to an incident in Hardin Valley where his daughter attends school. He said children from her school are banned from a supermarket parking lot because of fighting there and added had the incident taken place at Austin-East it would have been a new story.

"A Lesson Before Dying," by the author of other books including "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," is prompting conversations in Knox and surrounding counties about current race relations, justice, the courts and law enforcement. The dialog in The Big Read program is only one part of that ongoing discussion.

Information about the Carousel Theatre "Family Feast" can be found at www.clarencebrowntheatre.com or by calling 865-974-5191. Dinner starts at 6 p.m. and the presentation begins at 7:30. There is an admission charge. You can also get more information by emailing Hana Sherman at "hsherman1@utk.edu."

THE CHALK BOARD

Continued from page 3

expansion of its campus, enhancing academic and student support.

The project, which will be commemorated with a groundbreaking ceremony at 1 pm on March 1, will feature a new 25,000-square-foot middle school athletics and fine arts facility. The building will allow the school to reconfigure its middle school program to include fifth grade, and expand its junior kindergarten enrollment.

ESK will be creating a 5th-6th grade program and a 7th-8th

grade program. Fifth-grade students will be introduced to additional class offerings including world language, performance music, and critical thinking course components.

ESK has nearly 350 students. It offers an interdisciplinary curriculum, daily chapel, three foreign languages, a range of courses in the arts and a full sports program. The nationally accredited Episcopal School is affiliated with the Episcopal Church and offers a faith-based environment, but actively seeks children of all faiths and backgrounds.

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Our Famous Folks

Cas Walker



From State Representative Harry Brooks

This week I would like to turn your attention to the proposed 2016-2017 fiscal year budget. The total amount for FY16-17 is \$34.8 billion, with \$16.4 billion coming from state appropriations, \$13.2 billion coming from federal funds, and \$5.2 billion from other departmental revenues. This is an increase of \$833.6 million in total funding, but know that federal funding has increased by \$429.8 million. It is my great pleasure to tell you all that no new state debt has incurred in the proposed budget, but we actually have a surplus and a healthy rainy day fund. I would like to highlight certain aspects of the budget, especially a number of items that assist our education efforts. Governor Haslam has set objectives for our budget this year which are: to be realistic about revenue growth; to achieve operational efficiencies; to reward employee performance and improve market competitiveness of our cash compensation. He also wants the budget to support his priorities of education, health, child services, and social services. These ideas and priorities reflect the Governor's priorities now and in the past.

In regards to education, the proposed budget has allocated \$10.4 billion dollars to the operation of our schools. \$6 billion has been recommended for K-12 education, while \$4.4 billion to our higher education system. With our local school boards assistance, teachers should experience a new pay raise to the extent that they have not experienced in recent years because we are allocating \$104.6 million to their salary component in FY16-17. Other increases in the budget that has

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By Mike Steely
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Knoxville and Knox County have produced some national heroes and personalities known around the nation; people who are from here or lived here before becoming famous. Folks like Dr. Bill Bass, founder of The Body Farm and noted author, and Jack Hanna of TV's wildlife series. There's also folks like Bill Williams, noted TV anchor and minister, Banker Jake Butcher, the Haslam dynasty, the Sterchi brothers, Peter Kerns, Margie Ison, and former local TV anchor Bob Gray.

Some people are known locally and nationally, like "Survivor" winner Tina Wesson or fellow "Survivor" contestant Benjamin "Coach" Wade. Others include the departed and current people like artist Lloyd Branson, architect George Barber, George Dempster inventor creator of the Dempster Dumpster, comedian Archie Campbell, Chris Whittle who founded Channel One News, and actors David Keith, Polly Bergen, John Cullum, Johnny Knoxville, Patricia Neal, Brad Renfro, and Quentin Tarantino.

Our local musicians that

have reached national and regional fame include Dolly Parton, the Everly Brothers, Kenny Chesney, Grace Moore, Con Hunley, Roy Acuff, Maria Costa, and Chet Atkins.

But for local fame no one outshines the late grocery tycoon, TV personality and local political boss, Cas Walker. Some of the other personalities crossed paths with Walker, including Dolly Parton, Ernie Ford and the Everly Brothers.

Cas Walker was a force of nature. Love him or hate him the imprint that Mr. Walker left on Knox County and East Tennessee marked all of us older citizens whether we ever saw or talked to the man, shopped at his many grocery stores, listened to him on radio, watched him on TV or faced him in politics.

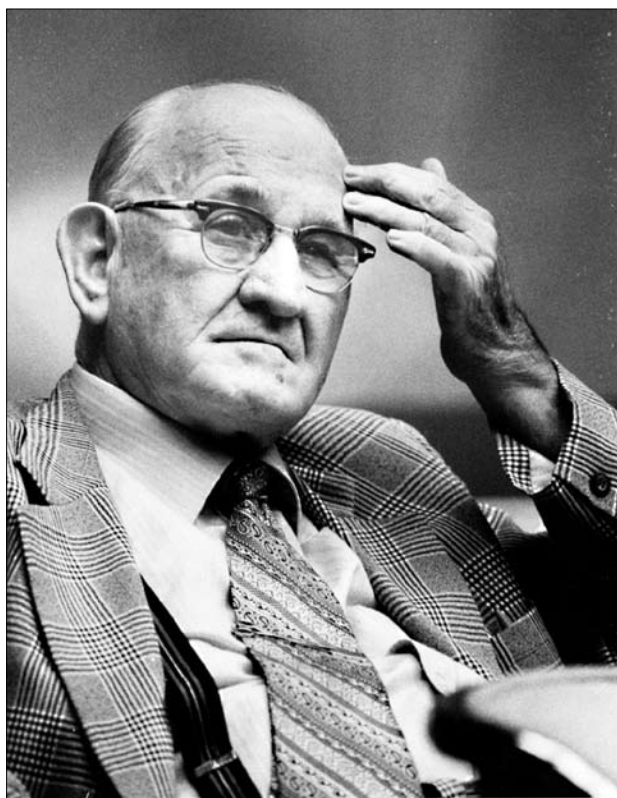
Walker spoke his mind publicly and cared little about what you thought of his opinion. Even though some said he was difficult to work with, Dolly Parton saw fit to have a building constructed to honor him at Dollywood. She first appeared on Walker's "Farm and Home" hour at 9 years old.

I may have mentioned in a past story that I had a chance to interview Mr.

Walker years ago when he opened a store back in the 1970s, in Rogersville, Tn. It was a modern facility right on one of the primary streets leading into the Hawkins County seat. He greeted me at the door and give me a tour, explaining why certain goods are placed where in the store. Having seen him on television as a child I was impressed by the aging businessman's knowledge of his shoppers, what they wanted, and how to sell them things they may not have even wanted.

The Cas Walker stores were the forerunners of all the modern supermarkets. He knew exactly what he was doing and how to make a profit. At one time there were 27 stores scattered across our region in three states.

Walker came from a very humble beginning in Sevier County. He had very little formal education, and worked here and there including the coal mines in Kentucky. He saved his money and, in 1924, bought into a grocery store. By the time of his death in 1998 at age 96, Walker had become a very wealthy man. He had also become a political force in Knoxville and Knox County.



Cas Walker often referred to himself as "The Old Coon Hunter" and considered himself a common man, but he became a local legend, a powerful politician, and the owner of 27 grocery stores in three states.

Elected to city council in 1941 and serving briefly as mayor in 1946 before being ousted in a recall election Walker jumped right back into that fight and was re-elected in 1947. From 1940 until 1970 Cas Walker played politics and most often was victorious in his causes. At one time he supported combining the city and county government

and then, 20 years later, turned around and helped defeat the unification of both jurisdictions. On his death Knoxville Mayor Victor Ashe ordered flags in the city to fly at half-mast. Walker left this life with about \$1.3 million in his estate. "The Old Coon Hunter" is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Safety Center survey created

By Mike Steely
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Community activist and Safety Center Committee member Vivian Shipe has created a survey to get opinions of a proposed Safety Center in Knox County. Shipe, a vocal supporter of the center, which would serve mentally ill people arrested for minor offenses, is circulating the petition online and on Facebook and is hoping to get some response from anyone interested.

"I created and prepared the survey. It is designed to raise awareness of the number of people in jail who are mentally ill. It gives us an idea of the support

from the citizens for a center and asks for their input on ideas and concerns," Shipe told The Focus.

"Citizens can contact their county commission and can mail the survey to Box 1973, Knoxville, Tn. 37901."

She said that citizens have the resources and suggestions that would help and added, "We all see through different eyes."

"When we collected names in 2014 many people indicated a willingness to be a group home or temporary housing in the community," Shipe said.

"As a community representative I have to try to reach all venues to be fair," she said. The next

meeting of the Safety Committee is set for March 14th in the City-County Building. Before then the county mayor and sheriff are planning a meeting with Governor Haslam's administration to see how the state may get involved. Questions remain if such a facility would be county, regional, or state funded and operated.

Shipe said respondents do not have to provide a name or contact unless they choose to do so.

Questions on the survey include:

- Are you aware that 25% of the jail population in Knox County is mentally ill?
- If there was a Safety Center

were the mentally ill could be taken for care instead of jail would you favor such a facility?

- Do you know of individuals who suffer from mental illness that would benefit from a Safety Center?
- Do you feel there should be state, city and county funds committed in development of a Safety Center for the mentally ill?
- Do you have any suggestions or input to share with the commission concerning the development of a Safety Center?



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Rosie's World

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kind thou art!
 How good to those who seek!...
 Jesus, our only joy be thou,
 as thou our prize wilt be,
 Jesus, be thou our glory now,
 and through eternity."
 These beautiful words were transcribed by Bernard of Clairvaux. Who? you ask.
 Bernard was born in 1090 to parents who both belonged to the highest nobility of Burgundy. He was the third of a family of seven children, six of whom were sons. He had a great taste for literature and devoted himself for some time to poetry.
 His mother died when he was nineteen and at the age of twenty-two he was at prayer in a church and felt the calling of God to become a monk. Three years later he and twelve other monks founded a monastery which Bernard called Clairvaux. His father and brothers

all entered Clairvaux to pursue a religious life. He composed many and varied spiritual works that still speak to us today.
 "Love has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. This is what love looks like."
 Written by Augustine of Hippo (Algeria) also known as Saint Augustine, who was a Christian theologian and philosopher. At the age of thirty-one he converted to Christianity. His conversion was prompted by a childlike voice he heard telling him "to take up and read" which he took as a divine command to open the Bible and read the first thing he saw. The specific part to which he opened his Bible was Romans, chapter 13, verses 13 and 14.
 It is remarkable to me that through the centuries, through the

Crusades, through the persecution of Christians, there were men such as these two who stood firm in their beliefs, who loved God with all their soul and passed to future generations, the fruits of their labors. We are able to enjoy their writings, their music, their poetry and their spiritual moments.
 They were and are a blessing.
 Thought for the day: Five Jewish men influenced the history of Western civilization: Moses said the law is everything. Jesus said love is everything. Marx said capital is everything. Freud said sex is everything. Einstein said everything is relative.
 Send comments to: rosemerrie@att.net. Thank you.

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Foul weather and foul moods

Here we are stuck in another winter. Punxsutawney Phil lied, although no human ought to put stock in anything a groundhog does or doesn't do. I don't understand why anyone would declare that winter is his or her favorite season. What I've noticed of late is that this cold



By Joe Rector
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weather has a negative effect on most of us.
 Dogs seem to know how much we humans hate cold, raw, wet weather. They lie in wait for their humans to fall into the deepest stages of sleep. Then they begin whining and pawing and barking, signals that it's time to go outside to take care of business. So, humans fall out of bed, put on something warm, and brace themselves for the trek to those favorite spots our pets have. When they finish relieving themselves, those canines decide the time is right to sniff out critters in yards or wooded areas nearby. Owners tighten the leash and drag the animals back toward the house. If the dog is especially in an ornery mood, it will begin the cycle again at least one more time before dawn.
 Folks who work don't have much love for winter weather. Overnight snow or sleet or ice cause havoc. People rise at the usual time and turn on the television to find out if their worksites are closed for the day. Some bosses make decisions early enough so that employees can hit the road or hit the sack again. Parents hold their breaths as they watch the screen for school closings. If weather shuts schools or delays opening, moms and dads scramble to find childcare. If all else fails, a coveted vacation day is burned.
 Workers seem to be trapped in perpetually foul moods during the

winter. They wear frowns and scowl about everything. The camaraderie that is present during spring and summer hibernates during winter and is replaced with a "Bah, Humbug" attitude. Kindness is in short supply; it's replaced with stinging retorts that come about inconsequential comments and icy stares that could give winter's temperatures competition.
 People withdraw from the world during the cold season. Instead of participating in activities or visiting with friends, many adults choose to stay home. They wrap up in a warm blanket and stare for hours at the television or computer screen. Others catch up on reading books by their favorite authors. Some who are like me find staying awake almost impossible. My bedtime is embarrassingly early because the bed is one place where I can warm my frozen feet and hands.
 The winter also is responsible for poor personal health. People don't feel like exercising. Instead, they would rather sit at home and eat "comfort food." We load up on carbs but never take the initiative to burn the stuff up through exercise. If only sleep could serve as a weight control, those of us who shovel in the food during winter could maintain our weight or have it rise just a bit.
 Right now, few things bring a little light and warmth to my world. My and the kids always spread happiness and fun to the cold weather. Although it takes a toll on my already aching body, work is a good place to be since I can share time and cut up a little with other workers. Coming home, I can look forward to the love and excitement that canine Sadie offers. We play and lie around on the couch like lumps.
 In no time, the days will grow longer and temperatures will warm. More outside time is coming, and with it are an endless list of jobs. Still, I'll take that any time as long as I can wear my shorts and enjoy the sweat that comes working in the yard. I'm just trying to hold on right now. What about you?

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Newell Sanders

Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill
rayhill865@gmail.com

For a time, there was no more influential Republican in the State of Tennessee than Newell Sanders. Sanders was a Republican at a time when the GOP was at a distinct disadvantage in the Volunteer State, yet he helped to build his party and became a power in the national councils of the GOP. Extraordinarily successful in business, Newell Sanders was a devoted family man. Once when being interviewed by a reporter, Sanders said, "I don't want a word to go out about myself." Newell Sanders explained he preferred not to have anything at all written about him unless his wife was mentioned as well.

"While I worked, she saved," Sanders told the reporter. "She is entitled to as much credit for whatever I may have done in every relation of life as I am."

Kenneth D. McKellar, who was a congressman from Memphis when Newell Sanders briefly served in the United States Senate, later recalled that Sanders was "devoted" to his wife and their married life was "very beautiful." The two were also diametrically opposed politically and would contest one another in 1922 for the U. S. Senate.

Newell Sanders was as bitterly a partisan Republican as McKellar was a Democrat. When appointed to serve in the United States Senate in 1912, Sanders served alongside Luke Lea, one of the most controversial political figures of his time. Yet the two men were personal friends while fighting one another vigorously politically. Both men were strong advocates of "temperance," meaning they favored prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

Newell Sanders was not a native Tennessean; in fact, he was a Hoosier, having been born in Owen County, Indiana on July 12, 1850. After attending college, Sanders operated a small bookstore, which he closed in 1877 when he moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Sanders later laughingly recalled the bookstore had been the very definition of a failed business.

It was in Chattanooga that Newell Sanders first experienced real success in business and eventually owned several factories that manufactured farm equipment. Sanders rose in the business world and participated in the community and political life of his adopted city. Sanders served on the local Board

of Education and as a city alderman. With business success, he was invited to join the board of directors of several enterprises, not the least of which was the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railroad. Sanders was also president of the Chattanooga Steamboat Company.

Eventually Sanders would come to wield so much influence inside Tennessee's Republican Party that he was denounced as a "boss".

Sanders was not afraid to fight for his convictions and some of the Republican state conventions became rather violent affairs between rival factions. Newell Sanders was a strong proponent of H. Clay Evans from Chattanooga and was attacked by a fellow delegate who was committed to the rival faction of the Tennessee Republican Party, headed by Walter P. Brownlow. The two exchanged heated words until, according to the New York Times, Sanders was "almost choked into insensibility."

The two factions were feuding when the national Republican Party split between President William Howard Taft and former president Theodore Roosevelt. Sanders, as Chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party, had been warned the faction led by Congressman Walter P. Brownlow was "inflamed" by whiskey, rowdy and just down right dangerous. Friends told Sanders his personal safety was at risk but the chairman ignored the warnings and tried to open the convention. Sanders was assaulted with one eyewitness recalling the senator's suit coat being torn off his body and shredded. His pocket watch and wallet were later found lying on the floor where he had been accosted. It took Sanders an hour to reach the podium, but reach it he did, albeit bloody and battered.

Once at the podium, Sanders was attacked again and a group of Brownlow supporters literally tried to throw the Chattanooga off the dais. The situation became even more dire when one fellow produced a hatchet and raised it above his head, intent upon doing even greater harm to the bleeding Sanders.

Bob Sloan, a local sheriff, intervened, whipping out his pistol and barking, "If anyone dares touch Newell Sanders, I'll kill him, so help me God."



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION.

Senator Newell Sanders of Tennessee, 1922.

It was not an idle threat and perhaps saved the life of Newell Sanders.

The Brownlow adherents sobered up and melted away that same night. The next day, Sanders presided as a delegation committed to the renomination of President Taft was elected.

Despite having been literally kicked, beaten and mauled, Newell Sanders, who knew the men who had attacked him, never uttered a single word of condemnation against any of them.

It was Newell Sanders who managed H. Clay Evans' gubernatorial campaign in 1894, a campaign the Chattanooga almost surely won, but the election was brazenly stolen by Governor Peter Turney's supporters.

Even his opponents recognized Newell Sanders' determination. One friend said of Sanders, "When Newell Sanders starts he knows whither he is bound and he keeps going. It may take him two years or five years to get there, but he invariably arrives at his destination. If he were not a good Baptist I would say that all hell couldn't stop him."

Newell Sanders promoted the candidacy of Ben W. Hooper for the GOP nomination for governor in 1910. The normally dominant Democratic Party was torn asunder by infighting, which was largely over the highly divisive issue of prohibition. The 1908 gubernatorial primary had been a brutal affair with Governor Malcolm R. Patterson challenged by former U. S. Senator Edward Ward Carmack. Senator Carmack was the champion of the more rural areas and was adamantly

against liquor and spirits. Governor Patterson who freely admitted he enjoyed a drink now and then, was personally and politically "wet". Patterson won and Carmack, a newspaper editor by trade, began writing vitriolic editorials verbally assaulting the governor and many of his friends. One such friend was Colonel Duncan B. Cooper, who profoundly resented being skewered in print regularly. Colonel Cooper demanded Carmack cease his attacks, but the stubborn redheaded editor refused. Carmack met Colonel Cooper and Cooper's son Robin on a Nashville street corner. Shots were fired and Edward W. Carmack lay dead in the gutter.

Carmack's assassination completely blew apart Tennessee's Democratic Party. Governor Patterson's pardoning Colonel Cooper caused an even deeper rift. Sanders helped to engineer the nomination of Ben W. Hooper over veteran Republican warhorse Alf A. Taylor. As Sanders had guessed, the intraparty warfare between Democrats gave the Republicans the opening they needed to win. Ben Hooper defeated Senator Robert Love Taylor in the general election.

Hooper had been an orphan, the result of an affair and was selling newspapers as a boy before being put into an orphanage. Hooper was later adopted by a physician who was in reality his biological father. Hooper had gone to Oklahoma for a time and reputedly made \$150,000 by trading in real estate in the Sooner State. It was an enormous sum for the time, more than \$3,500,000 in today's currency. The former waif

had been elected governor of Tennessee, which had been managed by Newell Sanders.

When Senator Robert L. Taylor died on March 31, 1912 following surgery for gallstones, Governor Hooper appointed Newell Sanders to fill the vacancy. Sanders was the first Republican to serve Tennessee in the United States Senate since William G. Brownlow in 1875; Sanders was the last Republican to serve in the U. S. Senate from Tennessee until Howard Baker's election in 1966.

As an ardent prohibitionist, Senator Sanders sponsored a bill which prohibited interstate shipment of alcohol into dry states. The bill passed Congress and Sanders was aghast when his bill was vetoed by President Taft. Undaunted, Sanders helped to override the president's veto and the bill became law.

Sanders served in the Senate until the legislature elected W. R. Webb, who only served from January 24, 1913 until March 4, 1913. Newell Sanders returned to his business interests and Republican politics. The GOP swept Tennessee in 1920 with seventy-two year old Alf Taylor finally winning the governorship. Republicans won congressional seats in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Seventh districts. Warren

Harding carried Tennessee as well.

Perhaps thinking 1922 might be an equally good year for Republicans, Newell Sanders announced he would be a candidate for the United States Senate. Sanders challenged incumbent Kenneth D. McKellar, who had been the first U. S. senator elected by popular vote in Tennessee.

Sanders ran as a conservative, accusing McKellar of dangerously liberal sentiments. McKellar had perfected the art of constituent service and easily dispatched a robust challenge inside the Democratic primary, winning by a far greater margin than many supposed possible. During the course of the fall campaign rumors were rampant that Tennessee's senior U.S. senator, John Knight Shields, would be appointed to the United States Supreme Court by President Harding. Senator Shields, a former justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, very much desired to serve on the high court. Newell Sanders was rumored to be Governor Taylor's choice to serve in the Senate should John Knight Shields receive the appointment to the Supreme Court. The rumors did little to aid Sanders's actual Senate campaign. Already past seventy, Sanders was not able to wage an especially energetic campaign. He did have a core of support in the state as he controlled most of the federal patronage.

McKellar almost leisurely defended his record in the Senate and even those who did not admire the senator felt sure he would be reelected. Governor Taylor was defeated by Clarksville attorney Austin Peay and Senator McKellar beat Newell Sanders overwhelmingly. Sanders won 32% of the vote.

Newell Sanders remained active in business and political affairs, but his health became increasingly frail as he aged. He self-published a book of memoirs, mostly for his grandchildren. For the last several years of his life, the former senator suffered a variety of ailments. Sanders died peacefully at his home on Lookout Mountain on January 26, 1939 at age eighty-eight.

Newell Sanders held just about every office available to a party leader in his adopted state. Sanders was a man of strong opinions and convictions and he remained true to his beliefs. Newell Sanders held the respect and affection of his friends and the love of his family. Few could ask for more.

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Connecting With Words

By **Ralphine Major**
ralphine3@yahoo.com

The package arrived shortly before Christmas. Certainly, the sender had made it look special in a "Peanuts" mailer. When I tore into it, it was special! Three framed photos. Instantly, my mind drifted back to the day they were made. Several years ago I had the opportunity to audio tape a commercial for my dentist, Dr. Tim Williams, who was in private practice at the time. I remember sitting in front of that huge microphone at the radio station. It was so much fun, and I felt like I was in my element! Thankfully, Irene Hodges met me there and had the presence of mind

to bring her camera. From my high school graduation speech, "The Next Step," so many years ago through years of church leadership roles to writing this true, human-interest column, I have learned that speaking and writing are much alike. The goal of both is to connect with the audience. Five years ago I began this column with "The Real McCoy," published February 7, 2011. Dr. Kyle McCoy is the cardiologist who treated our mother when she had a heart attack. I did not plan the story—it just came to me in the emergency room. A few months earlier, the same thing happened with "Life

is a Gift." The story came to me after I learned of Zane Daniel's death. Zane and John J. Duncan, Jr., were the attorneys I worked for during college. As Focus readers may recall, I have written about many people, places, pets, events, and projects. I have so many more stories promised yet to write. This is column No. 268. Great stories are all around us in our everyday lives. Many of you have let me know that my columns have, in some way, been a connection for you. Thank you for being a faithful reader of the Knoxville Focus and, particularly, of my columns for the last five years! God bless!



Picture of Ralphine Major, courtesy of Irene Hodges

Harry Brooks

Cont. from page 1 — been proposed range from special education to professional development. An important provision in the budget is the payment of the twelfth month insurance premiums, which will free up money in school systems who currently provide the twelfth month of insurance. As policy stands now, the state only funds 11 months of health insurance, but with a \$45 million dollar investment our teachers and staff will now be covered for the full twelve months by the state. Over the past few years Tennessee has focused a lot of time and money on higher education,

graduation rates, and college readiness. It is our belief that for us to achieve more college degrees, we have to focus on our high schools. To do this, we have continued to fund programs such as Drive to 55 Initiative and LEAP 2.0. In FY16-17 we have proposed to invest \$15.3 million into these programs to help us get to 55% of Tennesseans with a college degree. The last idea is our efforts concerning the rainy day fund. One of the main priorities is that Tennessee should replenish this reserve fund that dried up due to the economic crisis in 2009. In 2008, Tennessee had an

allocation of \$750 million in this fund, but from 2008 to 2011 it had dropped to only \$284 million due to economic crisis. However, we are on a good path to restore our rainy day fund with \$668 million established in case of another economic crisis like we have had in years past. In addition, it is important to report a healthy surplus this past year. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or if I can be at any help to you. I can be reached by email at rep.harry.brooks@capitol.tn.gov or by phone at 615-741-6879. It is an honor to be your representative.



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Three Powell players sign college papers

By Ken Lay

Three Powell High School athletes recently finalized plans to continue their respective sports careers in college.

Baseball players Peyton Alford and Cameron Payne and football player Cade Trusley each signed a National Letter of Intent at a ceremony in the Powell High School Auditorium before teammates, friends and family on Wednesday, Feb. 17.

Alford will play college baseball at Walters State Community College in Morristown while Payne will move on to Cleveland State Community College. Trusley will continue his football career at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg Kentucky.

Alford, whose brother Tyler played at Powell and

in college before moving on to graduate school in St. Augustine, Fla., said that he already has friends on campus in Morristown and noted that he is happy to begin his collegiate career close to Knoxville and the Powell Community.

"I already have a few friends there so, it's not like I'm really going to be there by myself," Alford said. "It's close to home and I wanted to stay pretty close. I didn't want to go across the country."

"I really liked the coach and I liked the facilities. I liked the small classes. I've never really been in a big class."

Alford is a pitcher and first baseman for the Panthers. Along with Payne, he's helped Powell win

Cont. on page 2



Powell High School student-athletes Cameron Payne, Peyton Alford and Cade Trusley signed National Letters of Intent at a recent ceremony at Powell High. Pictured with these athletes are baseball coach Jay Scarbro, assistant baseball coach Eric Turner, football coach Rodney Ellison and athletic director Chad Smith.

Chuck Comer, This Milk's for You

After cutting down the net following his team's Knox County Middle School tournament championship, veteran West Valley basketball coach Chuck Comer takes a verbal jab at Peyton Manning's Super Bowl post-game "Budweiser" comment.



By Steve Williams

West Valley boys basketball coach Chuck Comer took exception to a Super Bowl post-game comment made by Peyton Manning and expressed it after guiding his Wolves to the Knox County Middle School tournament championship Feb. 16.

When he finished the traditional cutting down of the net following a 47-41 win over Northwest, the veteran coach turned around on the ladder and told the fans, "I'm going to go home and hug my wife and have a big glass of milk."

Comer's comment was in reaction to Manning saying he was going to drink a lot of Budweiser to celebrate the Denver Broncos' Super Bowl win over the Carolina

Panthers Feb. 7.

As he was interviewed by CBS' Tracy Wolfson after the game, Manning said: "I've got a couple of priorities first. I'm gonna go kiss my wife and my kids. I want to go hug my family. I'm gonna drink a lot of Budweiser tonight Tracy, I promise you that."

Comer pointed out Manning mentioned "Budweiser" twice on national television and is concerned about what kind of influence that could have on young quarterbacks across the country who look up to Manning.

The former University of Tennessee quarterback did receive some negative criticism on the national scene for his comments.

It is believed Manning

mentioned the beer because he reportedly owns a stake in a Budweiser distributor in his home state of Louisiana.

The value of mentioning Budweiser as Manning did climbed to \$13.9 million by the morning after the Super Bowl, according to one estimate. A spokesperson for Budweiser said the company did not know Manning was going to name the product on the air.

DANDY DEFENSE: Coach Comer credited his defense with carrying the bulk of the load as West Valley broke away from a tie after three periods and defeated the two-time defending champion Rangers.

"All tournament long we wanted

Continue on page 3

Elect

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Defending champs have old faces in new places

By Ken Lay

When Hardin Valley Academy hits the baseball field to open the 2016 season, it will do so in a different role.

The Hawks shocked the Tennessee high school baseball world by winning the Class AAA State Tournament.

That makes HVA the hunted after it spent the first few years of its brief existence as the hunter.

And Coach Joe Michalski said that his team must now avoid being content with last year's lofty accomplishment.

"We have to avoid complacency," said Michalski, who guided the Hawks to a 30-15 record last season.

"We lost so many seniors and we'll have to battle complacency every day at practice and in our games.

"We enjoyed the ride last year and we didn't get too high or too low."

Avoiding complacency is big for any defending champion but it may be especially crucial for the Hawks, who play in the most competitive and deepest league in the state. District 4-AAA features HVA, state tournament regular Farragut (which has won multiple titles and lost to

Hardin Valley in last year's title game in Murfreesboro); Maryville, which has a solid program and will feature a new coach in former Catholic head man Adam Sullivan (who led the Irish to two consecutive Class

AA State Championship Games before departing for Blount County) and Bearden, which reached the state title game in 2012. Heritage and William Blount also boast competitive programs. Coach Buzz McNish has West High heading in a positive direction while Lenoir City will also look to improve.

Michalski said he knows that the Hawks won't take anybody in the league by surprise in 2016.

"You have to show up ready to play every night in this district and

there's simply no doubt about that," he said. "You have Farragut and Bearden. Maryville has that winning mindset and Adam is a great coach.

"He's walking into a situation where he'll soon have some great facilities. Heritage and William Blount will also be good."

Top returners for the Hawks include: Dylan Harris (senior, pitcher/center field); Ryder Green (sophomore, pitcher/infielder); Tyler Thompson (senior, pitcher/outfielder/first baseman); Matt Martin (a senior who will make the transition from the outfield to shortstop) and Landon Beyer (senior, catcher/designated hitter).

Those players were all around for last year's Cinderella State Championship run, but many will now be thrust into different roles and some will become starters for the first time.

"We have guys in different positions and we lost a lot of seniors but we have guys who were around last year," Michalski said. "They will now have to step up and make significant contributions.

"It's their turn now."

Top newcomers include: A.J. Johnson (a junior utility infielder) and Kevin Marth (a senior pitcher who will be relied upon heavily after being injured last season).

Michalski is still getting acquainted with his 2016 squad. But he has plenty of old faces playing and new places.

"We have a lot of question marks," he said. "When you come to see us play, you'll see guys in different spots.

"Matt Martin has never played shortstop. Landon Beyer was a DH last year and now, he'll have to step up and catch but he receives the ball well. We'll move A.J. all around the infield. Tyler will also see some time at first base."



PHOTO BY DAN ANDREWS.

Bearden senior Anajae Stephney (30) lunges to defend a shot by William Blount's Abbey McGuire in last week's district championship game at West High. The Lady Bulldogs notched a 58-53 comeback to win the title.

Lady Bulldogs rally to win district title

By Ken Lay

A top seed in the District 4-AAA girls basketball tournament didn't come easily for the Bearden Lady Bulldogs.

Nor did a district tournament championship.

Bearden found itself down early but rallied back to nab a title when it outlasted William Blount 58-53 in the district championship at West High School on Monday, Feb. 22.

The Lady Bulldogs (25-5) faced a 43-38 deficit heading to the final quarter before finally getting things together in the final frame.

"We knew that we were going to get their best," Bearden coach Justin Underwood said. "Our seniors knew the scene. They've been in these situations before and they've played a lot of basketball.

"They've played a lot of games in a championship atmosphere and they came up big for us tonight and I'm just blessed to be able to coach them."

Bearden's senior trio of Chanler Geer, Anajae Stephney and Holly Hagood were key to the Bulldogs' comeback effort. Geer had a key offensive rebound and putback to pull Bearden to within 43-42 early in the fourth quarter and later knocked down a huge shot to trim the Lady Governors' advantage to 48-47 with 4 minutes, 45 seconds remaining.

Stephney had some clutch buckets, crucial rebounds and made a late steal to set up a bucket by Hagood. Hagood, Bearden's senior point guard, who sat out several games due to a back injury, scored off

Stephney's steal and later hit a 3-point shot with 2:02 left to give Bearden a 55-51 lead and put the game out of William Blount's reach.

Geer, who finished with 12 points (and had 16 in the semifinals against Hardin Valley Academy), was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Hagood, who scored six points over the final eight minutes, was named to the all-tournament team along with Stephney and sophomore guard Trinity Lee, who scored 17 points and knocked down three jumpers from beyond the 3-point arc.

Hagood, who returned to the lineup recently, was ecstatic after the Bulldogs claimed the district championship.

"This feels really good because this was a really big, really good team win," Hagood said. "We knew what we had to do tonight and we had each other's back."

Things went Bearden's way in the end but Geer said that the Bulldogs weren't all that sharp early.

"We weren't playing our game and we had 12 turnovers at the end of the first half and that just wasn't us," Geer said. "We definitely weren't playing our game but once we calmed down and starting using our strengths, we were able to dig ourselves out of that hole and come back.

William Blount coach Todd Wright was able to keep his team fresh early as he made wholesale substitutions throughout the contest and Geer said that made the Lady Governors (22-9) difficult to deal

with. "They're tough to play because they just don't get tired," Geer said. "They can all play hard for about two or three minutes at a time and they don't have to worry about getting tired."

William Blount certainly didn't seem too fatigued. It was able to open a 46-42 advantage when Lexi Campos knocked down a 3-point shot with 6:10 to play. The Lady Governors led until Stephney, who finished the game with nine points, gave the Lady Bulldogs a 49-48 lead midway through the final stanza.

After that, Bearden never trailed again.

Roddy led William Blount with 16 points and Campos finished with 14 for the Lady Governors, who were their own worst enemy at times last Monday night. William Blount was an abysmal 4-for-16 from the free throw line and Wright said that was the difference.

"After we shook hands, I asked the girls what the difference in the game was and they all looked at me and said 'free throws.' Those are things that we can control," Wright said. "I think our girls did a good job executing our game plan and I think they played great.

"This stings because you're playing for a championship and nobody can take [a championship] away from you."

Both the Lady Governors and Lady Bulldogs advanced to host home games in the Region 2-AAA Tournament Saturday but results were not available at press time.

Three Powell players sign college papers

Cont. from page 1

consecutive District 3-AAA Tournament Championships. Both are eagerly awaiting the 2016 season. The new campaign looms around the corner and the duo is anticipating the chase for a third straight district title.

Like his high school teammate, Payne was impressed with his future college coaches.

"I just wanted to play baseball," Payne said. "I

really liked the coaches [at Cleveland State]. I felt like I could talk to the coaches and it was a good fit."

Trusley, a football player for the Panthers who recently played in the Border Bowl (a high school all-star game which features the best prep football players from Tennessee and Kentucky), said he's happy to be going to college and playing the game he loves close to East Tennessee.

"I'm an hour away from home," he said. [Staying close to home] wasn't a direct concern for me and that didn't really affect my decision."

He said that Cumberland was the right place for him.

"It's not too big and it's not too small," Trusley said. "It felt like home and it was the place where I wanted to spend the next four years."

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'The will to win' carries Heritage boys to first district crown

By Steve Williams

Through a lifetime of coaching, Bill Duncan knows something that's hard to beat.

"Everybody talks about winning," said Duncan, Heritage High's veteran boys basketball coach. "It's not about winning. It's about the will to win."

Duncan said his players had just that going for them as they pulled out a 67-64 overtime win over No. 3 seed Bearden in the District 4-AAA tournament championship game Tuesday night at West High School.

"The last three weeks we decided we had the will to do that and we worked hard," he added.

The reward was the Mountaineers' first-ever district title.

"This is the second time in two years we've been in the district championship - another school record," noted Duncan, who is in his fourth season at Heritage and 43rd year overall. "We've averaged 20 wins a year the past three years. I'm really proud of them. We've come a long way."

Actually, Heritage and Bearden didn't get to play the title game last season due to a string of postponements created by wintry weather. That wasn't the case this year and the nip-and-tuck contest went right down to the wire.

With his team clinging to a one-point lead, Heritage's J.P. Pearson, a 5-9 junior, took a charge with 11.4 seconds remaining - one of the biggest defensive plays in the game. Teammate Blake Ervin was fouled right away and made two free throws to up the Mountaineers' lead to three.

Quez Fair's 3-point attempt to tie hit off the back of the rim. The Bearden senior guard had made a 3-point shot from the left wing with five seconds to go in regulation to tie the game and force overtime.

"It was a great high school game," said Bearden coach Mark Blevins. "It was almost like every possession

was critical. Hats off to Heritage. They played an outstanding game, Coach Duncan did a sensational job and all their kids played well. And our kids did, too."

Ervin, a 6-3 senior, scored 26 points, including 10 in the fourth period and eight in overtime, to lead Heritage, 22-12 and the No. 5 seed in the tourney. Brandon Davis added 15 points, tournament MVP Cameron Allison 14 and Lee Yates 10, including three big 3-pointers.

"When Lee comes off the bench and makes two 3-point shots in a game, we never lose," revealed Duncan.

Fair, the Bulldogs' senior point guard, took individual scoring honors with 32 points, including nine in the fourth and seven in OT. Trent Stephney, standout freshman guard, chipped in 16 points and senior post Jason Smith 15.

"You can't say enough about Quez Fair," said Blevins. "He's held this team together through all the adversity we've had this year. He's some kind of leader."

Bearden led 14-13 at the end of the first period.

Yates' 3-point shot from the right wing with one second to go in the first half kept Heritage within one (26-25) and gave the Mountaineers momentum going into the dressing room.

The lead swapped hands eight times in the third period. Smith's hook shot in the lane gave Bearden a three-point advantage (40-37) and Heritage couldn't get a shot off in the period's closing seconds.

The Bulldogs stayed in front or tied until Yates swished in a 3-point shot from the left corner with 3:35 to go in the fourth period. Heritage nursed a slim lead down the stretch until Fair's dramatic trey evened the score.

Two foul shots by Allison gave Heritage a four-point lead (63-59) with 1:15 left in the extra period.

Bearden sophomore guard Dakota McGowan, however, made two outstanding defensive plays to keep



PHOTO BY DAN ANDREWS.

Bearden's Dakota McGowan (1) and Heritage's J.P. Pearson battle for a loose ball in Tuesday night's District 4-AAA Championship. The Mountaineers outlasted the Bulldogs 67-64 in overtime.

his team in it. The first gem had him intercepting the ball and throwing it off a Heritage player's leg and out of bounds.

Fair cashed in with a layup and free throw to make it 63-62.

McGowan then dove to the floor to come up with a loose ball. Fair again capitalized with two foul shots to put Bearden ahead 64-63.

After Duncan called timeout with 35 seconds left, the Mountaineers displayed their will to win, with Ervin making a layup, Pearson absorbing a charge and Ervin hitting two clutch free throws.

Heritage and Bearden both earned home court berths for Region 2-AAA first-round games, which were scheduled this past Saturday. Heritage was to host Central, while Bearden was to entertain Powell.

ALL-TOURNEY: Blake Ervin, Brandon Davis, Calvin Keeble and Cameron Allison (MVP), Heritage; Quez Fair, Trent Stephney and Jason Smith, Bearden; Easton Upchurch and TD Blackmon, Maryville; Nick Rogers and Alexander Rather, Farragut.

Fulton captures district title and faces tough region

By Steve Williams

Jody Wright will be trying to take Fulton to the TSSAA state basketball tournament for the 16th time this season, but the veteran coach first must get through a region full of roadblocks.

"This team has the potential to get to Murfreesboro, but so do about three other teams in our region," said Wright via e-mail Friday. "It will be a tough road to make it out of the region, but the post-season is always tough."

The Falcons were scheduled to host Kingston in the

Continue on page 4

Maryville smothers Admirals, 50-25, to salvage third place

By Steve Williams

Maryville's sticky man-to-man defense never let Farragut get comfortable in the District 4-AAA basketball tournament's boys consolation game.

How sticky was it?

If the Admirals' Nick Rogers, the district's MVP in the regular season, was chewing gum in last Tuesday night's contest, also known as The Game to Avoid Oak Ridge, the Red Rebels could tell you the flavor.

Maryville held Farragut to 10 points in the first half en route to a 50-25 victory. The Admirals labored to get off decent shots in the 16 minutes before intermission, much less make shots.

"They were up on us," said Rogers, describing the Maryville defense. "With it being the district tournament, most teams are going to amp it up a little bit. I think they did."

"That offensive total was probably as low as it gets for us this season. We couldn't hit the shots."

Rogers, who scored 31 in the previous game between the two teams, said Maryville did a lot of hand checking. "The referees called it closer earlier in the season. They were just letting them play tonight."

Brothers Easton and Tristan Upchurch scored 17 and 12 points, respectively, to lead top seed Maryville (22-6) to third place. They also combined to make seven of the Rebels' 10 treys.

Rogers, a 6-2 junior guard, was Farragut's lone double digit scorer with 11 points, 10 below his average.

Maryville led 13-6 after the first stop. Farragut reserve Shawn McKay hit a 3-pointer from the right corner to pull the Admirals within four early in the second period, but they would manage only one point the remainder of the quarter, while the Rebels piled up 15 points.

It was 36-18 at the end of three.

"It was more of taking away Nick Rogers than their man-to-man," said Farragut Coach Chris Cool. "Every time he touched the ball, they would double team him. He averages 21 points. He's the heart of our offense. I'm surprised other teams haven't done it until now."

"And their defense was being real physical with him, too."

Cool figured about three times as many fouls were called in his team's semifinal game against Bearden. "You have to adjust to how the game is being called," he said.

Despite the fourth place finish in the tourney, Rogers said the Admirals had exceeded expectations this season.

"I think they picked us sixth," said Rogers. "We just went game by game. I think we did pretty good this season and it's not over."

Farragut was scheduled to play at highly regarded Oak Ridge, the District 3-AAA champion, in opening round Region 2-AAA action this past Saturday. Maryville was slated to play at Karns, the 3-AAA runner-up.

Chuck Comer, This Milk's for You

Cont. from page 1

to be the best defensive team in the gym every night and I think we played pretty good defense the whole tournament," said Comer. "That helped us and we had some good offensive trips down the court, too. But overall I think it was our defense."

LOT OF DEPTH: "They're a good group of boys," said Comer, who completed his 17th season at West Valley. "They like each other. They play hard for each other."

"I really think we were successful this year because of the depth we had and they had to work against some good players at practice day in and day out. I think that really helped us prepare for games like the finals."

INSIDE JOB: "We really needed to be fundamentally sound in boxing out because their bigs get a lot of passes thrown to them and offensive rebounds," said Comer, "so we needed to box them out or we were going to be in trouble."

Northwest handed West Valley its worst loss of the season, a 17-point defeat in November, Comer said.

BALL IN THE FAMILY: London Stephney, West Valley guard who was named the MVP of the Knox County boys tournament, has an older sister, Anajae, and brother, Trent, who play at Bearden High.

Anajae is a senior center for the District 4-AAA tournament champion Lady Bulldogs and has signed with East Tennessee State

University. Trent is a standout freshman guard for the Bulldogs, who were district runners-up.

SO CLOSE: Cassie Norris scored a basket inside with 55 seconds remaining to put Halls ahead by two (39-37) in its battle down to the wire against Cedar Bluff in the Knox County Middle School girls title game. The Lady Giants answered the challenge, however, and edged the Lady Demons 41-39 to take the gold.

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Public Relations: Tennessee's Constant Failure

By Alex Norman

It. Just. Keeps. Getting. Worse. Over the past few weeks, the University of Tennessee has made mistake after mistake in the eyes of the public. Some of those errors are serious in nature, others are fairly inconsequential, and others are out of their control.

But the hits, like the Led Zeppelin IV album, just keep on coming.

On February 8th, a Title IX lawsuit was filed in federal court, stating that five former Tennessee student-athletes (four football, one basketball) and one non-athlete assaulted six women (the plaintiffs in the suit), and that the University of Tennessee did not take claims seriously.

"UT administration (Chancellor Jimmy Cheek), athletic department (Vice Chancellor and Athletics

Director) Dave Hart and football coach (Butch Jones) were personally aware (as 'appropriate persons' under Title IX) and had actual notice of previous sexual assaults and rapes by football players, yet acted with deliberate indifference to the serious risks of sexual assaults and failed to take corrective actions."

Tennessee's legal counsel Bill Ramsey responded thusly. "In the situations identified in the lawsuit filed today; the University acted lawfully and in good faith, and we expect a court to agree. Any assertion that we do not take sexual assault seriously enough is simply not true. To claim that we have allowed a culture to exist contrary to our institutional commitment to providing a safe environment for our students or that we do not support those who report sexual assault is just false."

On the morning of February 16th UT President Joe DiPietro gave his "State of the University" speech. He refused to comment on the Title IX lawsuit, instead deferring to the statement made by legal counsel.

"If you are affiliated with UT, there is a lot to be proud of," DiPietro said. "But, in spite of these successes, we recognize that, currently, there are many issues that are overshadowing our progress and our efforts to advance our university's mission."

This is where DiPietro needs to lead, not hide behind their lawyers.

Peyton Manning has been mentioned in that Title IX lawsuit for an incident involving a trainer back in 1996. The lawsuit goes back more than two decades, trying to hammer home the fact that Tennessee has struggled in this area for years. Having the most well known

representative of the University is awful for both sides.

Then, on the evening of February 16th, former Tennessee offensive lineman Mack Crowder was arrested on child sex charges in Florida, reportedly admitting to police that he solicited sex several times with an undercover deputy he thought was 14 years old. Crowder's final season with the Vols was in 2015. He at one time was thought of so highly that he represented Tennessee at SEC Media Days.

On February 17th, former Tennessee lineman Cosey Coleman was arrested in Florida and charged with felony counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and battery. Coleman played on the Vols 1998 national championship team.

Those players are obviously no longer with the program. But then the

evening of February 17th, Tennessee defensive lineman Alexis Johnson, a JUCO transfer that enrolled at Tennessee a month ago, was arrested and charged with aggravated assault by strangulation and false imprisonment of a woman. He was suspended from team activities by Butch Jones immediately and will reportedly plead not guilty.

So in a 24 hour period Tennessee had a recent alum, a long time alum, and a current player arrested, all on serious charges.

And while all of this was going on, the silence from Butch Jones and Dave Hart has been deafening. This is when they need to say something... anything... about how Tennessee is a safe place for women, and how they teach their student-athletes to be respectful of women. Even a simple press release would be more than what they have done to date.

Jones finally spoke to the media briefly before the Tennessee/LSU basketball game on February 20th, at which the football team was scheduled to be honored for its win in the Outback Bowl. Jones said, "There's no culture problem." Then, on February 23rd, all 16 varsity coaches spoke in a rare joint press conference. They said that the culture at Tennessee is good and many of the perceptions that have formed are inaccurate. Conspicuous in his absence was Dave Hart. UT Chancellor Jimmy Cheek wasn't there either, nor was any other UT official.

Contrary to popular belief, you can major in Public Relations at the University of Tennessee.

Maybe one of these days the University of Tennessee will stop giving those students so much to discuss during lectures.

Fulton captures district title

Continued from page 3

Region 2-AA quarterfinals this past Saturday night. Other Region 2-AA games were to match Austin-East at Catholic, Gatlinburg-Pittman at Christian Academy of Knoxville and Alcoa at Union County.

Fulton defeated Union County 78-54 in last week's District 3-AA championship game. CAK edged Catholic 75-74 for the District 4-AA title.

"We played well in the district," said Wright. "I was pleased with our effort and energy in both games. Kentel Williams and Joe Kimber both had good games for us, as well as DaShaun McKinney and Josh Berry.

"The challenge for the region is to continue to play well and focus on one game at a time. You cannot get ahead of yourself this time of year."

Fulton has enjoyed much success on the hardwood through the years under Wright. His teams won Class AA state championships in 2008 and 2009 and were runners-up in 1996, 1998 and last season.

Fulton also finished second in the state tourney under Coach Bob Fry in 1962 when there was only one classification.

The Falcons lost to the Haywood Tomcats 47-33 in last year's title game.

In other district finals involving local boys teams, Oak Ridge topped Karns 88-62 in 3-AAA. Meigs County held off Grace Christian Academy 69-66 in 3-A.

In girls' championship games, Oak Ridge rolled past Campbell County 52-34 in 3-AAA, Grainger captured the 2-AA title with a 70-60 win over Chuckey-Doak and Alcoa downed CAK 53-46 in 4-AA.

Webb School's boys took top honors in the Division II-A East/Middle Region tournament with a 65-49 win over Franklin Road Academy. The Spartans were scheduled to host University School of Jackson Saturday in the Division II Sub-State.

Webb's girls, who finished third in the region, were scheduled to play at Harding Academy Saturday with a state tourney berth on the line.

Versatile Bulldogs look to take next step on diamond

By Ken Lay

When Bearden High School baseball coach John Rice looks at his 2016 roster the biggest thing that sticks out is versatility.

"We have a little bit of speed and we have several guys who can play multiple positions," Rice said.

"We have at least three or four guys who can consistently play three or four different positions and if you can hit, then I have to find a place to put you in the lineup.

"I'm lucky to have guys who can play several positions. I've had guys who played in the outfield when they were freshmen and moved to the infield and never played in the infield again.

The Bulldogs, who went 22-12 in 2015 and finished second in District 4-AAA before losing to eventual Class AAA State Champion Hardin Valley Academy, have also been through the battles and are looking to draw upon their experience to achieve success this season.

Bearden plays in a league that features the likes of the Hawks, state tournament regular and 2014 champion and 2015 runner-up Farragut, Maryville, William Blount and

an up-and-coming West High squad. Rice makes no bones about the fact that his Bulldogs may need a little help from Lady Luck at times this season.

"We're going to have to have some bounces go our way and we're going to have to stay on an even keel all season," Rice said. "We're going to have to avoid that emotional roller coaster. We just can't afford to play that way and we're going to have a little luck."

Bearden has a bevy of savvy veteran returners including: David Beam (a junior who is the reigning district player of the year. He's a top left-handed pitcher who logged 39 innings on the mound. He also plays in the outfield and first base. He hit .459 and drove in 42 runs in 2015); Bryson Ford (a senior and three-year starter. He's penciled in to start at shortstop but Rice said he can play anywhere on the diamond); Brady Duncan (senior pitcher/infielder); Brandon Trammell (junior, third baseman); Clark Poynter (junior, outfielder who can also play in the infield); Paul Underwood (senior, pitcher); Sean Walsh (senior, pitcher); Tyson Beach (senior, catcher).

Rice said that he will also rely heavily on sophomores Ross McKenry (catcher) and Thomas Wilson (pitcher/infielder).

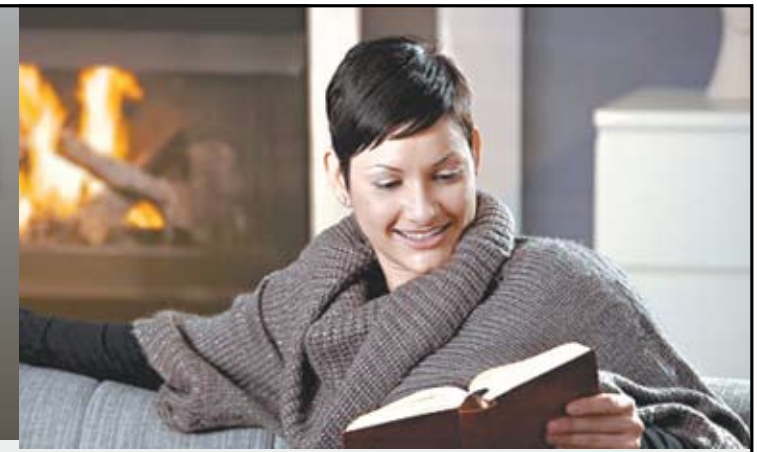
All of Bearden's returning players made significant contributions when called upon last season. They delivered timely and clutch hits. They played solid defense and came up in key spots on the mound last year.

Bearden is looking to advance out of the district year but that might be a tall order with teams like the Hawks, Admirals and the Rebels from Blount County, who will have a new coach this year in Adam Sullivan.

Sullivan, who replaces longtime coach Jim Gaylor, comes over from Catholic where he guided the Irish to two consecutive appearances in the Class AA State Championship Game.

"Nothing is easy in our league. It's the toughest in the state and you have good coaches," Rice said. "Maryville is good. Farragut is good and Hardin Valley is good. Then you have William Blount and Heritage who are both tough. I'm sure that West and Lenoir City have improved."

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The Doctor is in

a weekly column by
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Appearances

"You look good, Dr. Ferguson," a patient recently told me. She then asked, "How do you feel?" Perhaps the latter was just a pleasantry of conversation - something we all do. None of us really expects or wants to hear about another person's aches and pains - sometimes even doctors tune out.

Though English is my native language, my grade school teachers were never able to convince me of the importance of studying a language I'd already "mastered." I am more of a grammarian than I used to be. Perhaps this is why I no longer awaken in a panic having dreamed I was to be tested on the Harbrace English textbook! I did notice that my friend and patient used vernacular phrasing in complimenting me on my appearance. It would have been impolite though and downright catty to tell her she had incorrectly used

the adjective good instead of the modifying adverb, well. So I just thanked her for the compliment and said, "I'm doing fine." You be the judge from the recent picture above.

A weeks ago I saw a friend who has gone through the "valley of the shadow of death" due to cancer, radiation and chemotherapy. It was her sallow complexion which told me of her journey. Doctors are trained to notice such things, but I believe all of us intuitively recognize a rosy, healthy complexion, and one that is not.

Body language is often more telling than our verbiage, at least for those of us who are sighted. The fictional Superman was said to have X-ray vision. What pubescent boy has not fantasized similarly! More telling was Jesus' ability to see into the heart of a man and his motives. I believe the Master's ability was more

than just the honed skills of observation and more than Bobby Drinnon's skills of "seeing" through empathy.

I have two friends who lost their vision as adults and now work with young blind people to teach them the characteristic body mannerisms of the sighted. During conversation, sighted people receive nuanced information beyond words. As an example, every man knows when he's said something wrong; his wife's reaction is more telling than any vocal disapproval. My friends who are blind have learned to listen more carefully. Too often during conversation I don't listen carefully because I'm busy thinking of something to say or just trying to avoid a social faux pas. My friends amaze me with their listening skills and their conversational mannerisms as they "look" directly at me.

When I was in medical school my peers and I often played a game of observation to hone our clinical skills. In a non malicious way we would observe the public and suggest diagnoses. A more recent example is the man who almost fell on me at the Pops concert while descending stairs in the semi-darkness. His shortened, festinating (hurrying) gait, reduced arm swing and tremor led me to the diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease. I couldn't

see his facial expression, but I'm sure it would have been masklike, as is typical in this neurodegenerative disorder.

I've always been interested in clinical diagnostic skills. You often need these skills in the middle of the night or in the central highlands of Guatemala where CT scans aren't available. Even non doctors draw conclusions from their observations, sometimes asking my opinion of their diagnosis.

I'm especially interested in gait issues in my geriatric patients where falling is a big problem. Gait issues are also on my mind as I watch my granddaughter Josie learn to walk. You can see her working to develop the neural connections in her cerebellum which will one day produce fluid and coordinated movements. Pathologically, stroke patients can have similar disorganized movements and coarse shaking as Josie now manifests due to her immature brain.

This essay is not meant to make you a neurologist or even an internist who once stayed in a Holiday Inn Express. However, if you see someone unable to easily get up from a chair, especially if they must use their arms to push themselves to a standing position, you should assume these folks are at high risk of a fall due to weakness in

their quadriceps (thigh muscles). Similarly, weakness of those muscles on the back of the thigh (hamstrings) which ease us down into a chair also raise the risk of a fall. Older folks sometimes find walking painful and therefore become more sedentary. This contributes to weakening of the thigh muscles which must be resisted. Use those muscles or lose them is good advice.

We've all seen people with "inner ear" problems who seem to veer off course. Obviously, this can be dangerous. And others with nerve damage may find it difficult to raise their feet and compensate with a high stepping gait in order to prevent tripping. Throw rugs in a home add warmth and are beautiful, but can contribute to falls in folks with muscular and neurologic disorders.

An important and common problem in older folks is what I call disequilibrium syndrome (dysfunction of equilibrium). Patients often report that they're unsteady or dizzy, but this is not vertigo. As we age the collection and transmission of sensory information becomes impaired. Our hearing decreases, the sense of smell and taste diminish and our vision weakens. Often many of us need bifocals later in life and sometimes trifocals.

When you first put on bifocals you understand lack of depth perception and how disconcerting and problematic this can be. Lastly, some older folks have difficulty sensing their toes, and compensate by watching where they step. People with neuropathy often learn forward to watch their step, lifting their feet higher as they walk. Watching their difficulties is even unsettling for me.

Strokes cause additional gait issues beyond just the paresis which contributes to falls. Patients may have spasticity where their toes turn inwards and scrape the floor producing excessive wear of the tips of shoes. Stroke victims may also have an inability to adequately lift the affected leg producing an audible scuffing of the floor and a visible widened compensatory swinging of the leg called circumduction. Obviously, these debilities increase the risk of falls.

Broken hips, a fractured pelvis or crushed lumbar vertebrae can be life threatening and cause misery. You've heard that appearances can be deceiving, but they can also be revealing. Let's pay attention and do a better job looking after each other and protecting the frailest among us.

You may email Dr. Ferguson at fergusonj@knoxfocus.com

Dog Flipping 101

To stop the rising trend of dog flipping, we must first understand the crime and ways to prevent it from happening. Dog flipping is on the rise and it's cruel, heartless, inhumane, and it is a crime. Stealing a person's dog and selling it on Craigslist is cowardly with disregard to their victims. You see, it is a crime against a family. There is the individual, young and old alike, then there is the dog. Yes the dog, I do not see the dog as a piece of property, but as members of the family and I treat them as such. A friend once suggested that dogs only live in the moment and I could not disagree more. Dogs know and remember their families and are the silent victims of this cowardly crime. Dog



By **Howard Baker, RN BSN**

flipping can be as easy as taking candy from a baby unless you take a few easy steps to protect yourself and your family pet.

Let's face it, dognapping, dog flipping, or whatever you want to call it, it's a crime. This type of crime goes further than sentimental;

it's emotional because there is a living breathing life involved. This is a crime against a family making it super personal and emotional. The thieves see it as an easy way to make a buck at someone else's expense. Many times stolen dogs are sold to research laboratories, dog fighting rings, and puppy mills. In an HBO documentary titled "Dealing Dogs" it is estimated that there are nearly two-million companion animals stolen each year. That

means every sixteen seconds a companion animal is stolen and in contrast there is an automobile stolen every forty-four seconds in the United States.

4 Steps to Protect Your Pet

1. Keep a watchful eye on your pet even in your yard.
2. Don't leave your dog unattended outside of a shop, public area, or in a vehicle.
3. Microchip or tattoo your pet for identification.
4. Spay and neuter your dog to prevent puppy mill breeding.

These four steps are the staples of keeping your pet safe while lowering their risk for petnapping. Consider keeping your routines mixed up and out of the

norm. Thieves of all types usually case the neighborhood and learn routines. Remember, every sixteen seconds a pet is stolen. Never leave your pet unattended; it only takes a second for them to vanish, and your pet is counting on you to keep them safe.

If you find your pet missing and you think you are a victim of theft, make sure your pet is not out touring the neighborhood. If you determine your pet has been stolen, gather as much information as you can from people in the area, possibly security cameras. Do your detective work and due diligence. Call the police and file a report. Post recent photographs of your pet on social media, notify animal control, veterinarian offices, animal shelters, newspapers and radio stations. You may not be alone. The important thing is to get the word out and get it out fast. Never underestimate the

power of flyers and posters. Many people are not on social media.

Dog flipping is a heartless crime and by being aware and mindful you will decrease your chances of being a victim.



Hobo is a rescue dog making a difference in animal rescue and education. Please follow Hobo at Hobo the Wonder Dog on Facebook or contact us at: howard@howardsbaker.com

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