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On the Cover: Oldham's Theater at Night, Photo Contest Best of Show by David E. Cantrell

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CLEAN HEARTS CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES AND PREGNANCY CRISIS CENTER RECEIVES AWARD

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

In April 2021, Sparta's Clean Hearts Christian Ministries and Pregnancy Crisis Center was recognized for the support they provided to families during the COVID-19 pandemic and for finding innovative ways to ensure they were able to continue supporting the community.

"This Blue Ribbon Award is in recognition of the support they provided to the families in White County during the pandemic," Deborah Goodwin, the family resource specialist for the Stephens Center, said when presenting the award. "They helped anytime we showed up and said we needed diapers for a family. They allowed us to come here and serve families when we couldn't do outreach. We could come here and stand in the doorways or however we had to do it. Ms. Susan made it work. There were days when she couldn't allow people in here to her center, so she was standing in the doorway giving stuff to the women and who needed items for their young children. She was letting them know that we were still there for them during the pandemic."

The Stephens Center itself is an early education parenting center for first-time parents, and Goodwin said her organization aims to support families as they navigate a new life as parents.

"We support the family through education as well as providing resources for them," she said.

Those resources can come in the form of transportation to doctors' appointments or early childhood screenings as well as through partnering with organizations like Clean Hearts to ensure that the needs of both mothers and children are being met.

Susan Colquitt, Clean Hearts administrator, said the recognition from the Stephens Center was unnecessary as the work that she and other volunteers do is done as an outpouring of the love they feel for children and young families.

"I love to network with other organizations to get the best I can for these parents," she explained stating she often works with not just the Stephens Center but also with Seeds of Hope, the Crossville Pregnancy Center, and many area churches to ensure that she is finding the resources that are needed to help the families who come to her. "We also have a program where a representative comes here twice a month to help the women find employment."

The Clean Hearts Christian Ministry's Crisis



Pregnancy Center doesn't just help women make decisions about how to navigate through the months leading up to the birth of their child. Their goal is to help mothers from the moment they find out they are pregnant until their young child is no longer in diapers.

"We talk to the girls and go over their options, we aim to support them in any way we can," Colquitt said. "Mostly, though, we take care of the baby. As long as the child is in diapers, our programs seek to meet the needs of the mother and the child."

Colquitt said Clean Hearts Christian Ministries offers prenatal classes as well as developmental classes to help mothers know what to expect and how to help their babies through their first year. They also offer a Department of Children's Services approved parenting class called "Breaking the Cycle" to help mothers who may not have had the guidance or childhood they hope to offer their own children.

In addition, Colquitt works to help expectant mothers find healthcare and has even found ways to help them visit mobile ultrasound units so that they can see a picture of their unborn child as she understands that

making an early connection with their baby is a need. She also partners with area churches to provide expectant mothers with what she calls a layette and describes as a mini-baby shower to provide some nice gifts to welcome their new baby home.

"Once the baby is born, we help with the needs that come with having a new child," she added, saying that all of the needs, both physical and emotional, as well as all of the classes and programs that are provided by Clean Hearts come at absolutely no cost to the families that they serve, and that the center functions on donations from area churches, businesses, and individuals. "We provide diapers and wipes and formula and bottles for the babies. We help with clothing in sizes ranging from newborn to 2T. We will even make sure that mothers have car seats and playpens and bathtubs for their new babies."

"It is a true community involvement," Colquitt said. "We hope that these mothers and their babies feel that they are supported and loved."



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STATE OF THE COUNTY UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE **DENNY WAYNE ROBINSON**

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

"As we start 2022, White County's economy is as good as it has ever been," White County Executive Denny Wayne Robinson stated, as he reviewed the progress the county has made in the past year despite the hardships that living and working through a global pandemic presented.

"We saw a short-time dip in over-all economic health as the pandemic started, but, by deciding to keep White County open and by not making knee-jerk decisions like other many communities, our dip was short and negligible compared to others," Robinson said.

He further stated the decisions White County leaders made over the past two years are what has ensured the county would continue to be successful and continue on a course of growth rather than recession.

"White County has had several new businesses open in the past year, with a few more still to come," Robinson said. "There is a job for everyone in White County that wants one. As the number of jobs continues to grow so does our work force and population. This growth is good for our local businesses and economy," Robinson said. "Traffic and business at our local airport have grown, which has brought even more revenue to our local businesses."

"We have learned to adapt to new ways of conducting business and accomplishing our goals," Robinson continued, and mentioned that some things learned through the past year and a half will continue to benefit the county. "Some changes were absurd and over the top, those changes are dropping off, but some changes have been supportive and beneficial and have been integrated into our society."



Despite the positive impacts that the county's economy has seen in the past year, Robinson said he understands the COVID-19 pandemic is real, and there have been moments of heartbreak for the community.

"White County has had heartaches due to the COVID outbreak," he said, but then added that he hopes that despite the loss, the community will heal and keep the memories of those that were lost alive. "As a community we all share in the grief and sadness of those we lost, but we also honor them with a smile when we think of that memory or moment that was so special."

Robinson then looked forward to the next year, mentioning more changes and improvements he hopes will keep the county progressing and growing for years to come.

"As we move through this year, expect to see work being done to update, expand, and improve the water system in White County," he

said. "Our existing water supply infrastructure is old and antiquated, while some areas have no service at all."

"Updates and improvements will be made in the Solid Waste Department that will include a new building dedicated to recycling. No longer will we be at the whim of a third party when it comes to recycling; we will have our own system that we control."

Robinson addressed one of the county's other departments he says will be the beneficiary of some much-needed improvements.

"I am proud to announce that even above and beyond the near one-million-dollar increase in the sheriff's budget, additional upgrades and improvements in technology are scheduled for the Justice Center to improve the working environment and conditions of our everyday heroes," Robinson said.

Robinson also discussed the county's roads, saying he hopes to keep the recent resurfacing projects moving forward.

"In 2021, we increased the number of miles that we resurfaced, and we anticipate continuing that progress in 2022," he said.

According to the county executive, the biggest positive to come out of all of the improvement projects is there will be little - to no - financial obligation to the residents of White County

"All of this will be accomplished with grants and incentives. I see no need for a county tax increase this year," Robinson said in regard to the improvement projects on the county's calendar, before summarizing the state of the county as a whole. "Fiscally and economically, White County is at the top of its game, and 2022 looks to only get better. There is no place better to be than White County, Tennessee."





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CIRCUIT COURT CLERK, BEVERLY JOLLEY



BY RACHEL AUBERGER

While Circuit Court Clerk Beverly Jolley maintains the paperwork for seven different courts and five different judges, her office provides services that extend beyond court fines and costs for the people of the White County community.

"There is a lot of paperwork that people need for different circumstances," Jolley said.

Jolley stated that she and her staff spend a lot of their time helping people get the paperwork they need to take steps into their future.

"For example, there are certain papers a person needs before being able to draw his/her Social Security. For instance, if you were ever divorced, you have to show proof of the divorce to the Social Security office before you can draw. If you were divorced with children, you have to show proof when the child turns 18 so the child support will stop. Criminal cases also involve paperwork that will be needed that pertains to driver's license, applying for a job, etc."

Jolley said people can be nervous about

coming to her office. However, she hopes that eventually people will understand she and her staff do so much more than handle paperwork and fines for criminal cases.

"Most people don't like to come to my office because they think you have to be in trouble to come see me," Jolley said and further explained that her office also handles traffic fines as well as other court cases. "We don't just deal with criminal cases; we do civil cases as well.

"Since most people have never been involved in the court system, they don't understand how the court system works and how to handle the situation. I and all my employees try to explain, when someone comes to our window, the process of each court, but we are not attorneys, so we can't get into the law part of it."

The past two years have kept Jolley busy, and her office staff has worked diligently to keep on top of the paperwork for courts and assist customers who stop by their office.

"Our office never closed due to COVID," Jolley said. "The state mandated that we stay open.

Jolley stated that many courts were held virtually or postponed, meaning more paperwork for her office.

"It did cause us an overwhelming overload on our trials and court cases," she said. "It has been rough keeping up with the large dockets resulting from courts being shut down due to COVID.

"My office takes care of seven different courts, with five different judges. This includes all paperwork that is associated with each individual court and anything that happens in each case of each court."

Jolley said she is not complaining and that she enjoys her job and helping her community.

"I have always loved being around people and talking to them," she said. "I love my job as Circuit Court Clerk and I love the citizens of White County. I will always do my best to help anyone that comes to the office to ask a question or just for information they need to know about a case."

Regardless of how busy she or her staff get, Jolley said they are there to help the community and guide them through some of their tough questions.

ELECTION COMMISSION, DORCAS MARCUM

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

As the administrator of elections, Dorcas Marcum and her office staff have a lot of work to do to prepare for three elections in 2022.

"The election commission is responsible for all elections in White County, including the City of Sparta and the Town of Doyle," Marcum said.

Marcum was appointed to her position by the White County Election Commission. The election commission is made up of five election commissioners who are appointed by the State Election Commission and consists of three Republican members and two Democrat members.

"Their job is to make policies that are necessary to aid the personnel of the election office in the performance of their duties with regard to the promotion of voter registration and the election process," Marcum said.

She then talked about the process that White County voters use when completing their ballots.

"I want to ensure White County voters that our elections are secure," Marcum said. "We began using paper ballots in 2020. The ballots are hand marked by the voter, then the completed ballot is sent through a scanner by the voter where it drops into a lockbox."

Marcum also addressed the security processes in place to ensure each vote is counted correctly. She added that every person who votes must show their Tennessee state or United States federal ID before being given a ballot.

"The scanner will not read the same ballot a second time nor will it read a copy of the ballot," she said. "There are many checks and balances to our system – such as the number of voters we check in must match the number of ballots scanned on the scanner."

"As far as absentee by-mail voters are concerned, we have a very strict signature verification process, and now the state legislature has passed that each absentee ballot issued will have a watermark on it that will not be able to be reproduced and will have to be verified by our election officials prior to the ballot being counted," years.

For the second time in just two years, Marcum expects some changes in the way that voters are allowed to access the polls at election time.

"COVID definitely made the elections in 2020 more difficult for us," she said. "We worked very hard to protect both our workers and the public. While I don't anticipate all of the same precautions in 2022, I'm sure that there will be some in place."

"The State of Tennessee provided us with all of the PPE that we needed in 2020, and I believe they will be doing the same for us this upcoming election year. I plan to encourage the public to use whatever precautions that make them feel comfortable when they come to vote, and our workers will do the same."

Marcum said that even in non-election years, she and her staff have plenty of work to do for the county.

"The off-election years provide us the opportunity to do the maintenance procedures that the state requires us to do, such as contacting voters who haven't voted in several years or who have moved," Marcum explained. "Of course, this past year we worked on redistricting which is a huge task."

Marcum credits her former boss with teaching her the intricacies of the



job and helping her prepare for the seriousness and importance of being the administrator of elections.

"I was very fortunate to be hired by the former administrator Kathy Bailey as her deputy and then was appointed as administrator when she retired," Marcum said. "I believe working with her and my previous background as a legal secretary has helped me with this job tremendously."

Marcum said there is work for voters to do in non-election times as well and that preparing to vote is an important role for them, from learning about candidates and their stances on topics that each individual voter deems important to being sure they are registered to vote in the correct district.

"If you've moved, please let us know before election day," she said. "It's easy to register, change your address, or view your registration information online at www.govotetn.com."

Marcum said she and her staff are happy to assist White County residents with any of their questions or concerns about voting.

"If you wish to register in person, come by our office anytime," she said. "I enjoy getting to know people and being able to help them with something as important as voting."

ASSESSOR OF PROPERTY, JUNIOR JONES

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood offices in the county courthouse is that of White County Assessor of Property.

"The most important thing that I wish everyone knew about my office is that I cannot raise your taxes," Junior Jones, assessor of property, said, adding that his office is often mistakenly called the 'tax assessor's office.' "Neither the State of Tennessee nor the assessor of property determines your tax rate or the amount of taxes you pay. The city aldermen (for Sparta) and the County commissioners (for White County) are responsible for setting your property tax rate amount each and every year."

Jones went on to say that a reappraisal is performed once every five years, but according to Tennessee's Constitution, that reappraisal must be a revenue neutral process.

"The tax rate for Sparta and White County is always lowered by the State the same percentage amount as the market value percentage increase during each reappraisal year," Jones explained. "That way the tax revenue amount for the reappraisal year will be the same as what was collected in the prior year."

While Jones and his staff do not set tax rates, they do have plenty that keeps them busy.

"As the assessor of property, I and my staff are responsible for many things regarding all real and personal property in White County," he said. "Some of the many responsibilities tasked by this office are the on-site review of nearly 18,000 parcels of land in Sparta and White County over a four-year period with the fifth year being our 'reappraisal' year. [We are



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also responsible for] monitoring White County for any new construction and adding that to the County's tax base. Our office is responsible for monitoring and recording all personal property belonging to all businesses in the county for taxation. Changing ownership of property through deed transfers and correctly mapping all property is also one of the many responsibilities met by an incredible team in the assessor's office. Those team members include Christy Hampton, deputy assessor and computer keying; DeLisa Cantrell, personal property specialist; Ty Walker, mapping specialist; and Cody Briley, field review specialist."

Jones said that while his office is its own entity, he and his staff do work regularly with other offices in the courthouse.

"My office works closely with the office of register of deeds to ensure a smooth transaction of all property transferred through warranty or quitclaim deeds, wills or other processes," Jones said. "I also work daily with our county trustee to maintain proper mailing addresses and any updates they might receive."

While there is a lot of work that comes with being the county's assessor of property, Jones doesn't mind, in fact he feels as if he is fulfilling his life's calling.

"Not everyone is called to be a public servant, but that's exactly what happened to me," he said. "I absolutely love this responsibility that I have to all the citizens of White County and really enjoy talking with them about anything regarding how this office functions or questions about their property. We will never forget who we work for, and we will always strive to improve daily the functions of the assessor's office. When you walk into my office, to us, you are the most important person in the courthouse. The only thing that I love more than this wonderful county we live in is the precious people that live here in it with me."



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MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL OPEN INSIDE SPARTA CITY LIMITS

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

A new attraction opened in Sparta during the early spring months of 2021, with the hopes of providing hours of active fun for people of all ages.

Sparta is home to a mountain bike trail. While the trail is only one mile in length, Greg O'Neal, the man behind the trail's design, hopes it will bring families outside and spark an interest in the sport of bicycling.

"The plan was to have a mountain bike trail in the city," O'Neal said, admitting that there are other trails located around White County but this will be the first to be inside city limits. "The purpose being we thought that this property being near a greater population might get more children and adults interested in mountain biking and walking in the outdoors."

The trail is located at 443 E. Bronson St. The trail design and its completion, including the clearing of land and cleaning of property and erection of signs and fences, was all completed by volunteers led by O'Neal and David Zuber.

"The city of Sparta's mayor and alderman allowed us to use the city property, and they also donated money that was used for purchasing fencing supplies and signs," O'Neal said. "It has taken us a little over two years to complete the project, but it was done 100 percent by volunteers."

The trail officially opened on March 20, 2021 and was made available to the public from dawn to dusk 365 days a year. O'Neal explained the only closures would be for maintenance or damaging weather-related events.

"This is a mountain bike trail, so all riders should expect some levels of difficulty in certain parts of the trail," O'Neal said. "We would also ask that all bike riders and participants follow the posted rules and regulation, be responsible and wear safety gear for mountain biking, and do not ride during times that could damage the trail. We would also like to say a big thank you to the City of Sparta and to all the volunteers and donations to make this happen."





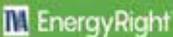
ARBY'S IN SPARTA OPENING SOON

On Dec. 6, 2021, Arby's, a fast food restaurant chain, officially acquired permits from City of Sparta to begin the remodeling of a structured that was the former location of Bojangles', at the corner Roosevelt Drive and Highway 111, in Sparta. According to Arby's officials, the plan is to have the restaurant open in March 2022.

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FINANCE DEPARTMENT, CHAD MARCUM

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

The White County Finance Department works alongside all of the other county departments to make sure White County maintains a sound fiscal position and is poised to be successful and continues to grow long into the future.

"That is my primary goal," Chad Marcum, White County finance director, said. "We work hard every day to make wise financial decisions for White County, ones that will keep it in a sound financial position."

To support all of White County's departments, White County School System, and White County Highway Department, Marcum and his staff spend their days reviewing accounts, discussing spending, and monitoring procedures. According to Marcum, the White County Department of Finance is responsible for budgeting, accounting fiscal procedures, payroll accounting, purchasing, cash management, fixed assets, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and industrial development loans.

"We really do work for everyone," Marcum said, as he described a 'normal' morning in the county's finance department. "In a typical day, we may go from talking about purchasing textbooks for second grade at 8 a.m., to issuing a bid for ventilators for EMS at 8:15, to determining how we are going to pay for repairing a bulldozer at 8:30. We cover and work with all facets of the county."

But Marcum gives credit to all of the county's departments as to what has kept White County in a sound fiscal position and moving forward.

"We work hand in hand with everyone and couldn't do what we do

without the cooperation we receive from all departments," he said.

Marcum doesn't mind the hard work or the long hours or the teamwork with the other departments throughout the county. In fact, he said it is work he looks forward to and hopes he is making a difference in his hometown.

"I enjoy helping people, whether that be other county employees or the general public. I chose to apply for this job because I wanted to make a difference in my community," Marcum, who is a lifelong White County resident, with deep family roots in the area, said. "I want to leave White County a better place to live and work for my children."

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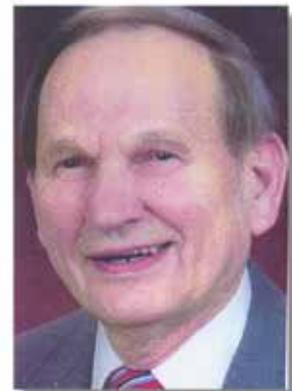
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CLOCK SHOP

SALES & SERVICE



The year 2022 finds the Clock Shop in Sparta, Tennessee in operation of clock sales, clock service and clock time for many years. White County citizens, Upper Cumberland citizens and Tennessee residents appreciated their clock would tick-tock again. Kenneth Pippin begins his skills in time keeping, clock service and sales in the early 1990's. However his skill in clocks began in an early age.

Clocks have been a great asset as to time keeping. Study of time goes back to days when the sun gave the pioneer sense of time. The hour glass was used centuries ago, also for time keeping.

Clocks were on the move as Seth Thomas, New England, New Haven, Waterbury and other clock makers. These companies were mostly located in the North East of the United States. Many of the older clocks are still running with their tick-tock today.

"History of clocks is interesting," says Pippin. However, and clock has its unique synchronized power for keeping time. One must note that an incorrect clock beat is the major cause of clock stoppage.

"Clocks ask for little. They are your companions for life. They will ring in goof times and with you throughout strife," says Pippin.

"Thirty years in service to my many customers have been rewarding," says Pippin. He and his wife, Thelma, have greatly appreciated the kindness and love they have received from their customers so far and near.

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TORO NUTRITION OPENS IN SPARTA

Sparta-White County Chamber of Commerce hosted a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, on June 1, 2021, at Toro Nutrition, at 392 W. Bockman Way, in Sparta. They offer low calorie and low carb meal replacement shakes as well as loaded herbal energy teas. Stop by or call (931) 837-0392.

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- Veterans Museum
5 W. Maple Street
836-3595




STATE OF THE CITY WITH MAYOR JEFF YOUNG

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

While many cities across the country have struggled to keep their economies flowing and their businesses open at the same time as balancing the health and safety of their residents over the past 18 months, Sparta's mayor and aldermen have kept their city not just operating but thriving.

"Our city is still enjoying some of the best economic times we've ever had," Mayor Jeff Young said. "We are grateful to all of our employers for providing the means for us to provide for our families. Even COVID could not keep us down. Our community will always rise to the challenge when our friends and fellow Spartans need help of any kind."

Along with the continuity of employment and services that Sparta saw throughout the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Young pointed to the growth that the city has seen, saying that the changes are indicative of both the resiliency of the community as well as the potential that Sparta has to rise and continue to be a favorite place to both visit and live in the Upper Cumberland.

"Our city is being revitalized in many ways, from new home construction to the renovating



of buildings in our historic downtown and the paving of many streets," he said. "At the present time, we now have four restaurants on the downtown square. We were just awarded our second, one-million-dollar Tennessee Department Of Transportation multimodal access grant from the state. This [money will be used to] provide safe pedestrian sidewalks on North Spring Street. These sidewalks will also make our city look much more inviting to

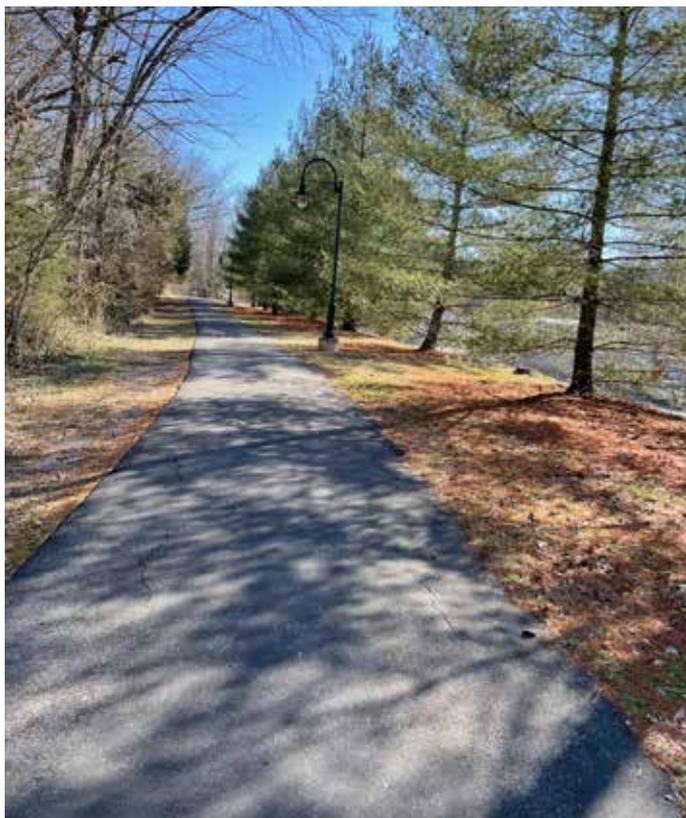
tourists and individuals wanting to relocate here."

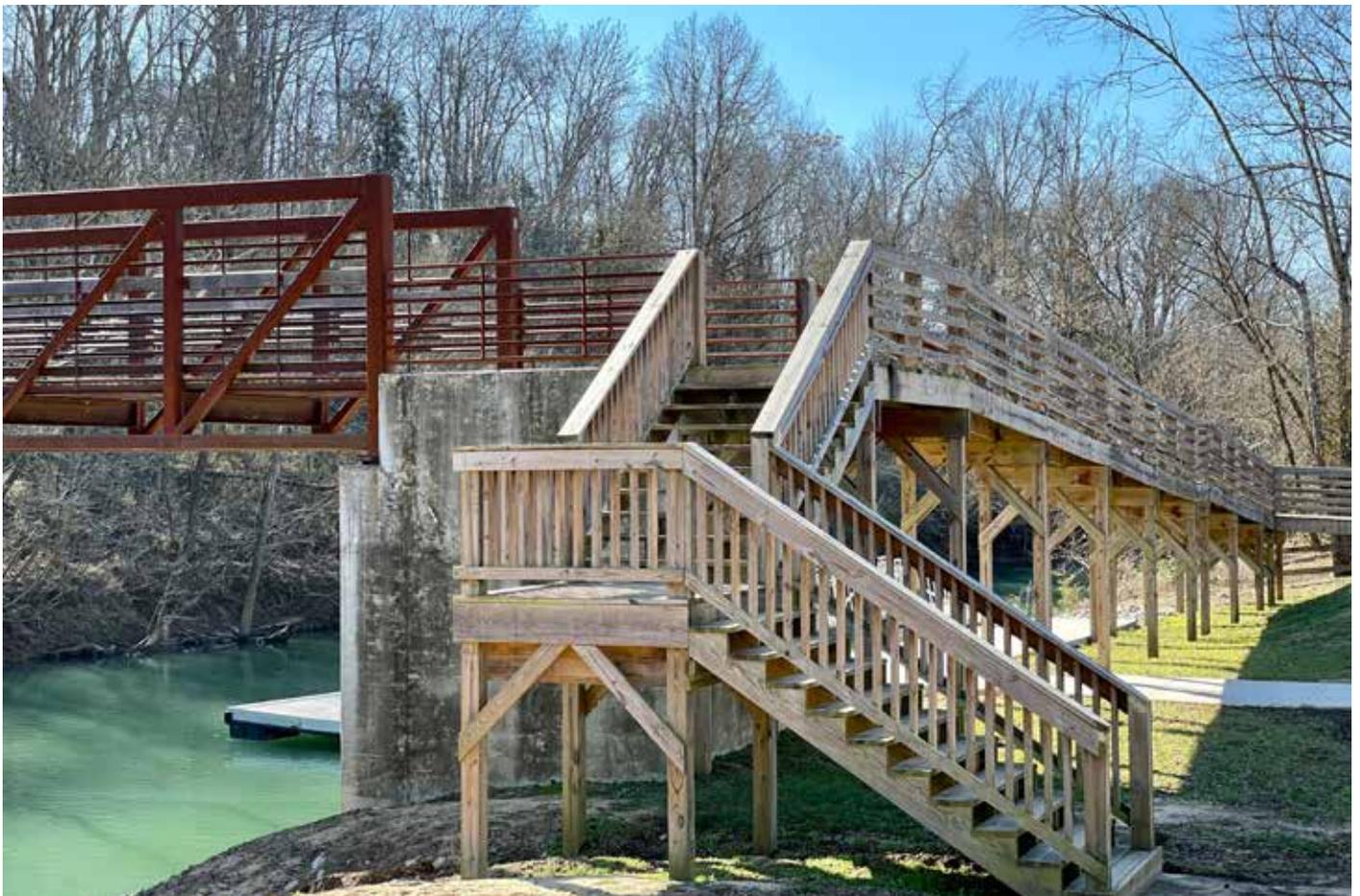
Young talked about the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep the city thriving and providing spaces of which the residents can be proud.

"We are always striving to improve the quality of life in Sparta by making sure that we have a safe community for our families and by providing many activities here for everyone such as walking trails, hiking, biking, kayaking several parks and many waterfalls to enjoy," he said. "We also take pride in being known as Bluegrass USA, the home of Lester Flatt. Our rich music heritage here in Sparta is something that any community would be very proud of."

Sparta's mayor went on to say that the city's future looks good and attributed the success of Sparta not just to the businesses and leaders but to its residents.

"Overall, the future for the city of Sparta is very bright," Young said. "Sparta is a place you can be proud to call home. We are very blessed to have such a kind, caring and faith-based community to live in. There are no limits to the growth and success that I see in our future for Sparta and White County. I am truly honored to be your mayor."





EMS AND E-911

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

"We are here for the citizens 24/7 – our hearts are to serve," E-911 director Suzi Haston said. "If you need us, call. We will help you."

Despite a global pandemic that has caused changes, the need for extra precautions, and concerns for emergency service workers, White County E-911 and White County Emergency Medical Service have combined to keep providing quality care and responses for their community.

"We are your first responders - we are the first one you will talk to when you have an emergency, and we are here to help in every situation," Haston explained. "It's not just a job for us. Being a 911 dispatcher is not what we do, it's what we are."

Haston said the county's 911 unit has not been spared from the horrors of COVID and that the virus affected the 911 family.

"We have had some that have experienced it themselves," she said. "We have lost friends and loved ones."

Haston said they had to close their lobby indefinitely to keep their employees safe. However, through it all, knowing that they can provide help and hope for members of their community has been what has kept them moving forward.

"We are blessed to be able to be here for

people we may only speak to once, for people who will never know our names," she said. "We get to speak to people in their most vulnerable, hurting times and be a light and a help."

White County Emergency Medical Service, headed up by Mike Kerr, has also stayed the course through the past two years and understands the vital role they play in the community's health, safety, and future.

"We provide emergent and non-emergent pre-hospital care to the citizens of White County," Kerr explained. "We also transport [patients] to out-of-town hospitals."

The county's EMS department and its employees know they are at high risk every day, but, still, they report to work to serve the people of White County.

"We added UV lights to the back of the trucks, and we wear n95 masks with all patient contacts," Kerr said about some of the ways the department has equipped themselves to battle COVID-19. "In addition, we wear hospital gowns when working with a patient that we have been informed is COVID-19 positive."

While White County EMS responds to between 5,000 and 6,000 calls each year, using three ambulances during the day and two at night, ambulance driving is not the only function of the department.

"We have four levels of providers: EMT basics 1 semester, EMT advanced 1 semester,

Paramedics 3 semesters, and Critical Care Paramedics 1 semester," Kerr said, listing the levels of providers and the amount of additional training each provider must complete. "We provide care from simple wound care to advanced cardiac care, chest tubes and surgical airways. We also carry a wide assortment of live-saving medications."

Despite the long hours, stressful situations, and health and safety risks to which they subject themselves, White County EMS employees and 911 dispatchers keep showing up for the people in their community.

"We get to help people every day – what could be better than that?" seems to be the unanimous feeling of why these heroes keep doing what they do.

"We are a family. We are all called to serve our fellow citizens, and that's what we get to do every day. We have great relationships with our fellow agencies," Haston said, talking about the work she and the E-911 dispatchers do in conjunction with EMS, Sparta Police Department, White County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee Highway Patrol, Sparta Fire Department, and all the volunteer fire departments. "We pray for our county and its citizens every day. When you feel there is no hope, have faith. There are people who care about you and want to help."





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WHITE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEMS, **KURT DRONEBARGER**

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Providing the White County School System’s 3,854 students with educational guidance, along with protecting the health and safety of those same students and the faculty that serves them, has presented a challenge over the past two years. However, according to director of schools Kurt Dronebarger, White County schools and students are succeeding.

“I am most proud of our district’s Level 5 Growth Score,” Dronebarger said.

The director of schools stated that the diligence of teachers and students alike is reflected in the scores the district received this past year.

“This is the highest level of growth that can be achieved, and White County reached this level in the most difficult of circumstances,” he said.

Dronebarger said White County did not see the same level of learning loss that other districts across the state experienced because of interrupted in-person learning during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years.

“Despite the challenges of the past couple of years, our scores have stayed at or above the state levels in grades 3-5,” Dronebarger said. “The recent winter benchmark data did show a slight decrease in student scores from the fall, but this slight dip is expected, and the common trend is that we see these scores rebound in the spring semester.”

Dronebarger has been a strong supporter of the idea that students need to be in the classroom rather than remote learning, but he has also acknowledged that it hasn’t been the easiest path for the district to take.

“Academically, it is much better for (most) students to receive in-person learning at school. So, to be back at school this year has been positive from an academic perspective. However, the ever-changing guidance surrounding health concerns has made it difficult to have consistency and confidence,” he said, and then added that he, along with everyone in the school system, has hopes for the future of education in White County to be centered on student growth. “We are hoping for better health. We spend so much time addressing things outside of education these days. Our prayer is for health concerns to diminish and for our focus to be centered on student learning.”

While in-person learning has been the goal for White County schools since they were forced to close early in spring 2020, Dronebarger said the changes that took place in the early stages of learning how to meet students’ needs during a pandemic helped propel the district into a

more technological world. Many changes were actually positive and those impacts are still being felt today, despite a return to “normal” classroom settings.

“We learned to use technology much better as a result of the pandemic,” Dronebarger said. “We hold many more virtual meetings than ever before, and we can still connect virtually with students when they are out of the classroom. I believe that these new practices are beneficial [and] here to stay.”

Dronebarger said many of the changes seen in the school systems this year have been thanks to federal monies that have been poured into education to ensure that students still have access to the best education possible, despite having to deal with living and learning through a global pandemic.

“White County has received over \$14 million in federal assistance in the past two years in response to COVID-19,” Dronebarger said, adding that a breakdown of that spending can be found on the district’s website, www.whitecoschools.net.

He also said some of the highlights from these grants include various materials and supplies in response to COVID-19, a new addition to BonDeCroft Elementary, tutoring programs, mental health support, technology enhancements, numerous facility upgrades, and much more.

“These grant funds will allow us to improve our buildings (without raising taxes), provide extra academic interventions and tutoring, and alleviate the pressure on our current and future budgets,” he said.

While there are still a lot of uncertainties surrounding a post-COVID-19 future or at least one in which the virus is managed and is not the factor on which decisions are based, Dronebarger said he believes parents and students agree with White County faculty that the best option for the future of education is in the classroom.

“I believe that parents, staff, and students (whether they admit it or not) actually missed traditional school days,” Dronebarger said. “For the most part, people are happy to be back in the buildings and moving toward normalcy.”



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LAUREN PHIFER- DOYLE
REPRESENTING GRADES PRE K-3

"Mrs. Phifer is an encourager and makes her students feel loved and important the moment they walk into her classroom. She wants her students to be successful in all that they do."
 - Doyle principal, Melea Johnson.



ALETA APPLE- WOODLAND PARK
REPRESENTING GRADES 4-8

"Aleta Apple is a tireless worker who doesn't expect to be noticed for her devotion to the students and staff of Woodland Park. She is quick to volunteer when there is a need and her work is detailed, thorough, and extensive. She has an incredible ability to communicate with her students and to support her colleagues. Mrs. Apple is an extremely talented educator and a wonderful person. She truly represents the very best of Woodland Park."



SYDNEY HOWARD- WHITE COUNTY HIGH
SCHOOL- REPRESENTING GRADES 7-12

"Ms. Howard loves her students and WCHS. She is a great asset to our school and our community. There is no task that she will not tackle and complete! "
 - Greg Wilson, WCHS principal.

DANYELLE HAWKINS SERVES AS DIRECTOR FOR MOTLOW'S SPARTA CAMPUS



BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Danyelle Hawkins took over as Motlow State Community College's Sparta campus's site director and expressed excitement about the future of the location and the school's ability to reach students of all ages throughout the Sparta community.

"Motlow's goal is to grow enrollment. If enrollment grows, then people are being educated and learning," Hawkins said, addressing the college as a whole and then narrowing the mission down to her location. "My goal for Sparta is Motlow's mission - Student Success. The Sparta location now offers Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) certificates. We have seen outstanding success with these programs and hope to add Paramedic classes in the future. Through partnerships with industry and other education institutions, I am excited about the future and how Motlow's Sparta location will benefit students, industry, and the community."

She went on to say that, specifically, her hopes are to have the Sparta campus full of students learning in-person and taking advantage of the many opportunities for higher education offered in her hometown.

"Motlow has been the economic engine that drives its 11-county service area for over 50 years, and our possibilities in emerging technologies are growing. We are increasing apprenticeship and internship opportunities, offering more courses remotely, and improving our communications strategy," she said.

Hawkins then elaborated on the educational opportunities within the school and how educating students through a pandemic helped the school become innovative in the ways that they interact with their student body.

"The last year has taught all of us alternative ways to communicate effectively, and I'm excited about using our knowledge gained to increase student success," she said.

Hawkins also discussed the many ways students can access all of the opportunities that Motlow offers, regardless of the economic hardships that many families are finding themselves facing right now.

"Adult learners may qualify for Reconnect, a tuition-free scholarship program for adults without degrees," she said. "The Adult College Express (ACE) program is an adult-centered program where students can take one class every five or 10 weeks."

Hawkins also said that high school graduates may be eligible for up to five college

semesters of free tuition with the Tennessee Promise Scholarship and that Motlow has opportunities for high school students as well through their dual enrollment and other college opportunities as well as offering scholarships for high school students

Hawkins said while she hopes to have the campus full of students, she also knows that in-person learning isn't always an option for a busy world. Where work, parenting, and a host of other life obligations once kept people from attending college, online learning has removed those hurdles, and Motlow continues to strive to

meet the needs of all learners.

"Many courses are offered remotely, with little or no on-campus requirements," she added. "Motlow offers one-year certificate programs in high-demand, high-wage fields such as Mechatronics, Robotics, Medical Lab Technology, and more."

Hawkins said she is excited to be coordinating classes and working to bridge the path between students and faculty and between learners and the workforce. However, she is aware there is a lot of work to do to be the positive influence she desires to be.

"Motlow is a large entity, and I have much to learn. My professional goal is to educate myself first, then the citizens of Sparta and White County, about the opportunities that Motlow provides," she said. "Knowledge is power, and the more knowledge I can distribute about Motlow, the more lives that will be changed for the better."

Hawkins urged prospective students and members of the community to contact her to learn more about the opportunities Motlow's Sparta campus and all of their campuses have to offer.

Contact Hawkins at (931) 837-3341 or dhawkins@mscc.edu and visit the website at mscc.edu.

PEACOCK WINE & SPIRITS EXPANDS TO A NEW LOCATION IN SPARTA

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Peacock Wine & Spirits opened Oct. 29, 2021, on the corner of Bockman Way and North Spring Street, in the building that once housed Rite Aid Pharmacy.

"We always planned to move here," Raj Patel said. "We had a contract on this building but had a lot of improvements we wanted to make before moving in."

Those improvements included a whole new look for the store that will tie into the ownership's company name. The new store will include 75 feet of cooler space as well as a cooled Beer Cave. The added space in the store, as well as the added cooler space, will allow for increased stock and selections that include beers from area breweries and wines from some of the Upper Cumberland area wineries.

"One of our favorite new features is our wine tasting bar," Patel said. "We have named it the 'Bluegrass Lounge' to represent the city's musical heritage."

The Bluegrass Lounge, which is located inside Peacock Wine & Spirits, will host wine tastings and other events in the near future.

In addition to the new bar, Peacock Wine & Spirits houses a cigar room complete with humidor and feature premium cigars as an upscale product to the mainstream tobacco products they already sell.

"The city has done great with events and activities, but we would like to see growth with either doing things a little later in the evening or having things on this side of town," Patel explained. "This road has a lot of traffic every day, and this town has a lot of people come through. We would like to add to that and be a part of sharing the city of Sparta with people in the community and with people who come here to visit or even are just passing through."

According to Patel, while the aim of the store is to be a 'one-stop shop' providing chips, candies, sodas, and paper products to go with the wine, spirits, and beers they sell, the hope is that people will feel comfortable and will consider the staff friends.

We hope that we can be a place where people want to come to talk, to visit, to share their stories," Patel said. We are embracing this community, and we really are honored that they have been embracing us."



WHITE COUNTY TRUSTEE, **KATHRYN ADCOCK**

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Kathryn Adcock is the White County Trustee, and she took the time to talk about her office, taxes, and her love for White County in general.

What most residents know is the county trustee's office collects the property taxes for all county properties and maintains records for all of the tax payments, but Adcock said the office is more than just a cashier.

"The trustee's office is the 'bank' of the county," Adcock explained. "This office receives and disburses funds for the operation of general government departments in White County."

Adcock said her office works closely with the register of deeds and the assessor of property offices to ensure all properties are taxed correctly and fairly.

"I appreciate the trust the people of White County have placed in me, and I pledge to continue to serve to the best of my ability as trustee," Adcock said.

Adcock, who said she loves helping people, strives to make sure White County's property owners know all of the options they have when it comes to taxes.

"The tax notices are mailed out by the state the first Monday in October and are due by the last day in February of the following year," Adcock said.

Property owners are notified five months in advance of their upcoming tax payment, and they have multiple options for paying them.

According to Adcock, tax payments can be made in person at the trustee's office located in White County's courthouse, or they can be made online.

"Checks may be made out to White County Trustee. Credit/debit cards are taken; there is a 2.5 percent convenience fee to use a card," Adcock said. "You may pay online at www.tennessee trustee.com or call 1-866-413-9566."

Adcock said when paying taxes in person, she offers options for those who may not be comfortable being in an office, whether because of concerns about illnesses or because of physical limitations of their own.

"We tell people that we will happily come out to their vehicle if they do not want to come inside the building," she explained.

"Another important fact people may not know is that the state of Tennessee offers an income-based tax relief program for the elderly

(65 and older), for the disabled, and for veterans who are 100 percent disabled," Adcock said, adding that she and her staff are happy to direct property owners on how to access this program and help them obtain the benefits for which they are eligible.

"I love people, and I love helping people. I love going to work every day. I am super blessed," Adcock said about her job and providing assistance to the people of the community she loves. "I would say 'thank you' to the people of White County. White County is a great place to live."



WHITE COUNTY CLERK, **SASHA WILSON**



BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Twenty-one years in the same office, and Sasha Wilson is still in love with the job she has serving the people of White County through her position in the White County Clerk's Office.

"I love people. I love seeing people and talking to people," Wilson, who is a self-described social butterfly, said.

Wilson said she had no idea what she wanted to do with her life when she started working in the clerk's office 21 years ago.

"I grew to love seeing all of the customers and their kids and families," she said. "I don't

know what I would do if I weren't in this office."

Wilson said most people know that her office is where they need to go to register their vehicle or to renew the tags on their existing vehicles, but there are other aspects of the job description. Wilson said the clerk's office is also responsible for boat registrations, marriage licenses, business licenses, and permits for things like fireworks and peddlers.

"We also provide notary services," Wilson said, adding that it's a service people often say they don't know is available. "We notarize for free. People don't always realize that."

Over the past two years, while COVID-19 sent many government offices scrambling and finding ways to operate remotely, Wilson and the staff in the White County Clerk's Office stayed diligent to the people of White County as they knew their office was essential to the people of White County continuing their way of living.

"We stayed open during the pandemic with our new 'walk up window,'" Wilson explained.

The county created a set of stairs and a small deck outside the courthouse and leading to a window that allowed her staff to keep providing services to the people of White County, while simultaneously keeping both parties safe with the window in between.

"We were able to help customers during COVID when most other businesses were shut down," she said. "We were actually very busy during this time."

While many of the changes to the way offices conducted business over the past two years were temporary, the walk-up window in the White County Clerk's Office is here to stay, and Wilson said some customers still prefer using it to coming into the office, much like a drive-through window at many utilities departments.

Wilson also said she works closely with the State of Tennessee to ensure her office is providing daily up-to-the-moment information to their customers as well as keeping all of their records on file with the county and the state and making sure that licenses are filed correctly.

"We are human, and we do make mistakes," Wilson said of herself and her staff, adding that she hopes her customers know that any mistakes are unintentional, and she works diligently to eliminate them. "But, we try really hard and always go out of our way to help our customers."

Wilson went on to say the best part of her day is greeting customers and knowing she and her staff were able to help them with whatever license, registration, or professional needs they might have.

"Thank you all so much for being such great customers and for being patient with us," she said. "We love to see your smiling faces. We hope you always have a sense of satisfaction when you leave here."

WHITE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

The White County Jail and White County Sheriff's Office have undergone some major changes over the past couple of years, but those changes have, according to some deputies who have worked at the department for the better part of two decades, created a better system and department than the county has had in 20 years.

"I've been here for 15 years, and this is the best I've ever seen the department," Capt. Nick Theiss, Operations / Patrol Division / Warrants Division / Court Security, said.

Several other deputies agreed.

When Sheriff Steve Page took office over three years ago, the jail was being operated under a Plan of Action from the State of Tennessee and needed to make several critical improvements in a short amount of time to be compliant. From overcrowding to deteriorating building conditions and failing systems, the current administration inherited a lot of work.

However, in May 2020, in the beginning stages of a global pandemic, the White County Jail was taken off of the Plan of Action and was certified by the Tennessee Corrections Institute.

"The jail was the most important thing we needed to take care of," Page said, indicating he assessed both the sheriff's office and the county jail when he took office. "And now, we have the state saying that they wished everyone ran their jails the way we do."

Along with the obvious changes to jail population and building repairs, the jail also installed a new system called Life Check. According to Page, the system monitors all systems within the jail, making sure inmates who have health issues or might be on a suicide watch are physically monitored by a correction officer on a set schedule.

"The system monitors everything from inmates to the temperature of the food in the kitchen," Page explained.



He said the monitoring system helps keep correction officers accountable and on task, while at the same time providing a level of protection for inmates and officers alike.

"It also works as a bodycam for our officers who are checking on, walking among, working with the inmates," Page said. "We have a record of everything that is going on in our jail."

The jail also provides learning programs for inmates so they can begin the process of creating a better life for themselves.

"We have programs for inmates that will help them to earn their GED,





12-step programs to combat addictions, and programs to help with re-entry to society and the workforce,” Page said.

As well as maintaining the jail, Page said the sheriff’s office has gone through some much-needed upgrades and changes over the past couple of years.

“With an OCJP (Office of Criminal Justice Programs) grant that the sheriff’s office applied for, we have replaced an outdated report management system and jail management system,” Page said. “With this update, deputies no longer have to come to the Justice Center to do their reports. They can stay in their zone and do them in their patrol cars, making response times faster to the next call that comes out.”

With the help from the grant, Page said the sheriff’s office will make another change to the way deputies work in the field as they transition to E-Citation this year.

“It makes traffic stops shorter, getting the deputy and violator off the side of the road faster,” Page said. “There is always a risk of the deputy being struck by a passing vehicle during every traffic stop. Statistically, there are between 10 and 20 officers across the state of Tennessee struck by a passing vehicle every year. We don’t want our deputies to be included in that statistic.”

Other programs the White County Sheriff’s Office has implemented in the past year include SSAFE program and ALICE Active Shooter program.

“The SSAFE program plays a vital role for our school resource officers,” Page said. “It is of the utmost importance that we educate our children on the dangers of addictive substances and at the same time create a trusted relationship between them and our officers. Education is the key to changing the drug problem in our community. If we don’t educate them, someone else will – and they might be giving them false information.”

As for the ALICE Active Shooter Program, Capt. Theiss has been certified to conduct training sessions for organizations within the community. Churches, businesses, industries, and other organizations are encouraged to call the White County Sheriff’s Office and schedule a training session so that they and their staff are prepared in the event an active shooter were to be on their premises.

“We also have the number one ranked training officer in the state,” Page said of the department’s ability to train their staff. “Lt. Jacob Hillis has recently been named as the top training officer in Tennessee.”

While many changes have taken place at the White County Sheriff’s Office and the county jail, Page said the improvements aren’t finished. Recently, the county received a Tennessee Department of Health grant that will be used to upgrade the HVAC units and the phone systems at the jail as well as for the purchase and implementation of a full-body scanner for persons entering the jail and courts.

“With another OCJP grant, we are adding a victim safe room at the Justice Center,” Page said. “Victims of domestic violence, sexual assaults, or individuals making a report or seeking an order of protection can come and make a report in a relaxed and secure setting. Also, during the court proceedings, they will no longer have to be in contact with the defendant. Oftentimes, they are intimidated or harassed in the courtrooms or hallways by the offender or their family members.”

While there have been many upgrades, improvements, and changes to both the jail and the sheriff’s office, Page knows there is still work to do.

“I want a sheriff’s office that the county is proud of,” Page said. “We have made mistakes over the years, but we have learned from those mistakes, and we are still working for the people of White County.”



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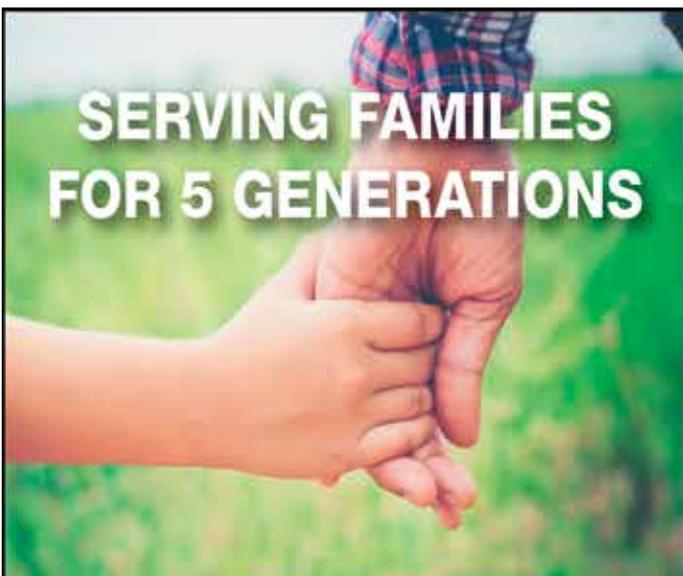
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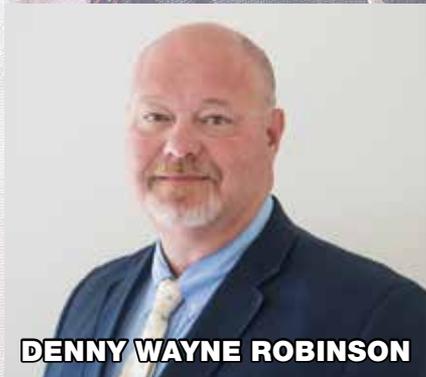
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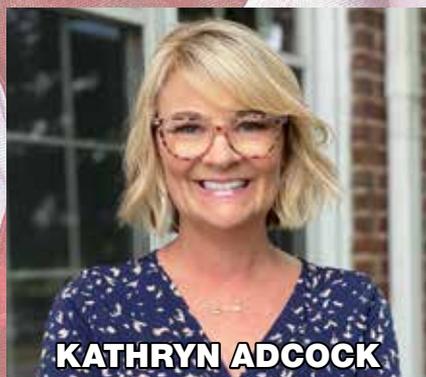
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Caroline Sapp



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Generations

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2022 PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Holidays/Seasons



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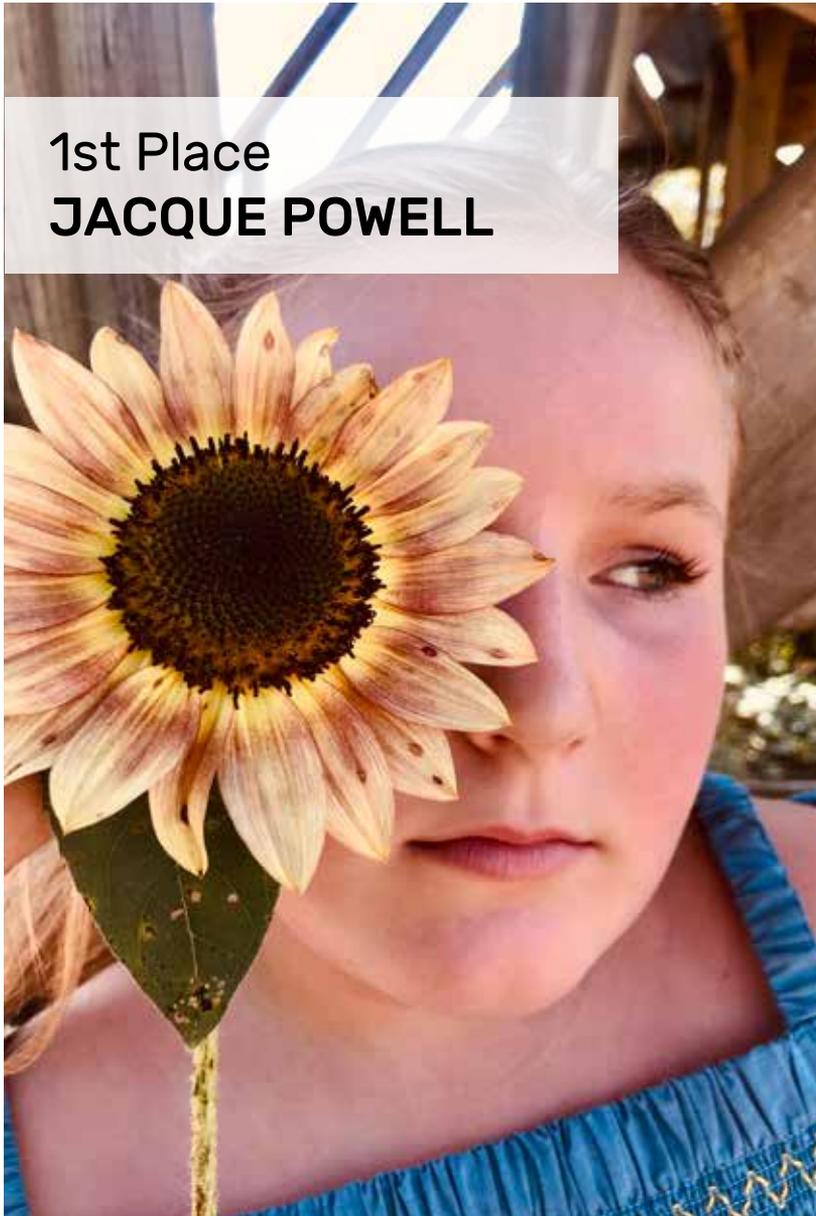
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Karen Seals

3rd Place
Crystal Sapp



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Children



1st Place
JACQUE POWELL



2nd Place
Adam Whitman

3rd Place
Ashten Meyer



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Sports



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SHANNON FISHER

2nd Place
Jacque Powell



3rd Place
David E. Cantrell



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2nd Place - Adam Whitman



3rd Place - David E. Cantrell



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Shirley Robinson



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Landscape/Nature

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ADAM WHITMAN



2nd Place
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3rd Place
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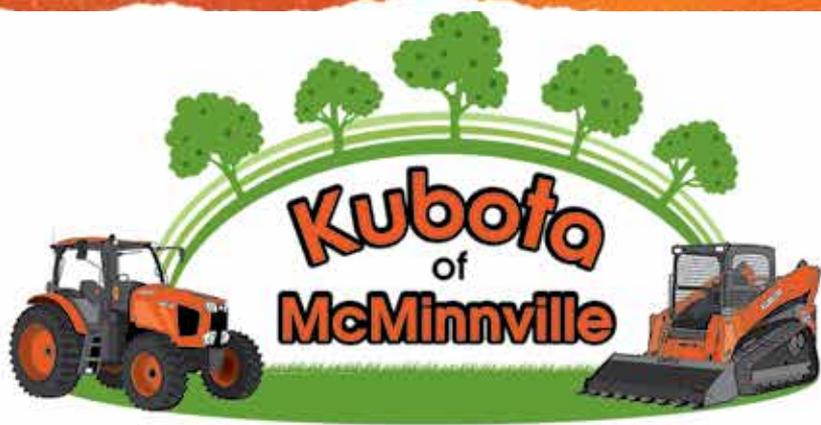
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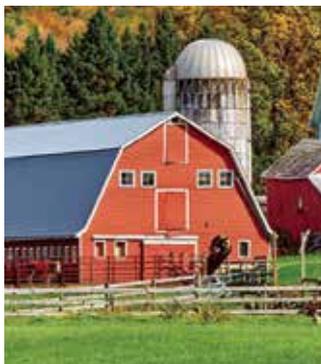
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