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# News

APRIL 2023

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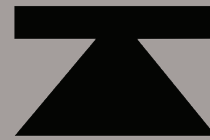
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Education in Bloom

Educators give students the opportunity to bloom like a seed in a greenhouse.

I THINK OF education the same way I think of the spring season. In that time of year, out of season and lifeless-looking trees begin to bloom and become like new. The new nutrients, new water, and new sunlight create new opportunities. They drop seeds, give us food to eat, and give a place to call home for squirrels and birds. When all of these things come together perfectly, these plants—that seemed like they had nothing left to offer—in fact were hiding beautiful colors, growth, petals, and leaves. The brownish grays and mossy splinters turn into pinks, whites, and greens. The snow and frozen limbs are exchanged for new growth and sunlight.

Education does the same thing. It is like having a new lease on your fu-

ture. It can change us for the better, and when we pass this education on and carry the torch, we change the lives of those around us. Education expands our lives. The classroom is like a greenhouse, and we're the ones who get to soak in the nutrients, the sun's rays, and the pure water. This issue of Good News celebrates the educators in our lives that help us bloom. We thank you for your hard work and endless compassion. You give students in our communities the opportunity to bloom. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,  
MANAGING EDITOR

## From our readers



Do you have family and friends in Fayetteville who would enjoy Good News? Sign them up for free at [goodnewsmags.com](http://goodnewsmags.com)

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Good News reader

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## CHAPTER 1 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local positive news you may have missed.

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◀ Ryleigh Grissom, Emily Cummings, Aydin May, Scarlett Fuson, Laura Peirce, Heather Vaughn, Payslee Beard, Natalie Pinnix, Natalie Vaughn, Kate Meeks, Kennedy Sublett, Grace Haapoja, Olivia Bobo, and Oliva Simmons



▲ Deborah Chaplin, Meghan Murr, Sherie Jacks, Valorie Nickels, and Kenzie Mitchell

## Local people celebrate our libraries.

National Library Week is on the way: April 23-29.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**M**EMORIES OF books, card catalogs, and hushing librarians come to mind when we recall the libraries of our childhood. We can almost smell that perfect mixture of paper, dust, and nostalgia. Those places full of books were safe havens for young readers, who felt a sense of wonder looking at books with exciting covers or reading stories that seemed out of this world. The books broadened our understanding of each other and the world around us and offered places to go without leaving home. As time passed and technology advanced, our libraries grew with us, but our connection to the libraries of our past survives.

America's first public library opened in Boston in 1854, according to encyclopedia.com. Books had to be requested at the desk and then retrieved by the librarian; the public could not access the stacks or browse the shelves. In the early 1900s, however, libraries began to transition to open stacks, changing the role of the librarians from gatekeepers to research supporters.

Campaigns sent books and periodicals to American troops during World War I and II. The Library Service Act of 1956 continued the spread of literacy, education, and entertainment when it put the library's services on wheels and made

books available to rural communities and underserved areas.

As technology evolved, libraries grew to include much more than books and periodicals. Tape recordings, microfilm, and microfiche created searchable archives. Soon, books on tape and compact discs put our favorite books on the road again, this time in our vehicles and homes. Video cassettes took us to exotic lands, taught new skills and hobbies, and entertained us with movies at no charge.

As computers became a part of our everyday lives, libraries created computer labs and loaned time and internet access to their



▶  
Deborah  
Chaplin

and Mathematics (STEAM) projects or adults collaborating on a project.

In the present economic times, our local libraries offer free resources that include something for every household, interest, and age group. Check them out. While you may not hear the dull clunk of the old card machine dating your return card, something old might just find you among the new. **GN**

---

Visit the Fayetteville-Lincoln County Public Library at 306 Elk Ave. N., Fayetteville.

For more information, call (931) 433-3286 or go to [flcpl.org](http://flcpl.org).

Other online resources:

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(and available in your app store)

patrons, many experiencing technology for the first time. Classes on utilizing technology, both then and now, enabled users to make the most of their personal computers and devices offsite.

E-books burst onto the scene, and libraries again stepped up to give patrons access to the digital reading realm. Your library card allows you to check out books today and read them on your tablet, laptop, phone, or favorite e-reader.

Genealogists have long haunted the history rooms of local libraries, and today can access a literal world of information online through portals like the Tennessee Electronic Library. Students can use the site's resources to prepare for tests, and history buffs can view the state's photographic library containing a wealth of detailed information.

Most, if not all, area libraries now offer free public Wi-Fi, work areas, and meeting rooms. The hushings of our childhood memories are less likely to be heard, and in their place is the laughter and conversation of students deep in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts,





## Fayetteville City Schools embrace motto, ‘Big enough to make a difference ... small enough to care’

Award-winning school system builds relationships, provides strong foundation for student success.

Article and photos submitted by Fayetteville City Schools

**R**ECOGNIZED ON a national stage through the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, while still retaining the family atmosphere where students are not just a number, Fayetteville City Schools is a true reflection of its motto, “Big enough to make a difference ... small enough to care.”

Fayetteville City Schools boasts two Lighthouse Schools, Ralph Askins School and Fayetteville Middle School, and a Beacon School moving toward Lighthouse status in Fayetteville High School. This recognition through Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence demonstrates our

system’s commitment to meeting and exceeding performance areas indicative of high-achieving schools.

We are not content to rest on our laurels, striving each day to continually improve our schools and welcoming input from stakeholders in order to best serve our Tigers.

With a low pupil-to-teacher ratio of 14:1, our teachers know children individually; however, our small size doesn’t mean small offerings. Students in all grade levels across all three of our schools are offered the opportunity to participate in drama classes designed to engage stu-



dents in the performing arts and theatre. We offer numerous clubs and activities in all schools, allowing our Tigers to find their niche. Students in many of our organizations, such as Beta Club and Future Farmers of America (FFA), compete with their peers statewide, often advancing to nationals.

Fayetteville City offers a robust curriculum, including honors courses, Advanced Placement programs and dual credit/dual enrollment opportunities on the high school level.

Our Career Technical Education (CTE) program is changing lives, providing our students with the necessary skills to pursue well-paying jobs after high school. Thanks to our community partnerships with institutions such as Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), Fayetteville High students are training for their careers in high-skill, high-demand areas while completing their high school diplomas. Our Cosmetology program is recognized by the state of Tennessee Board of Cosmetology, resulting in professional training while our students are still in high school. One of our newest offerings, Medical Science, is an excellent option for students with interest in the healthcare field. FHS has partnered with local organizations to provide job shadowing and certification opportunities, and we have had students earning industry certifications and job placements already. Additionally, our outstanding criminal justice program is preparing our students for careers in the legal field or law enforcement.

Fayetteville High School's Project Lead the Way Engineering program is nationally certified – one of the first in the State of Tennessee to be certified – and we boast a number of FHS graduates in our short history who are enjoying careers in

engineering fields thanks to the foundation laid during high school.

Our Fayetteville City graduates who have now moved on to the next stages of their careers almost exclusively say that the small environment and the personal attention from teachers who cared about students helped shape the adults that they have become today and played a key role in their success after high school. That personalized attention afforded in a small school environment by career counselors advocating for our students continues to help our Tigers pursue their dreams – last year's graduating class was offered \$3.4 million in scholarships and awards upon graduation, an average of \$42,937 per senior.

We are blessed to have a diverse student body in Fayetteville City Schools reflective of our city's overall diversity, along with some of the finest educators in the field. Our teachers are invested in each one of our Tigers and want to see them succeed in whatever paths they choose after high school. We value our partnerships with our Tiger families and foster communication and teamwork with our parents and families to ensure students' success.

We appreciate our parents trusting us with their children. We know families have a choice when it comes to educating their children, and we appreciate the opportunity to help make a difference in the lives of these young people. Fayetteville City is truly a special school system, and we invite new and existing residents to join our Tiger family on our journey to success.

The Fayetteville City School System offers open enrollment throughout Fayetteville and all of Lincoln County. Whether you live in the city limits or not, come meet us and see if being a Tiger is the best fit for your student and family. As always, go Tigers! **GN**



- Recognized nationally by Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence
- Low pupil-teacher ratio of 14:1
- Numerous clubs and organizations help Tigers find their niche
- Robust curriculum offers honors courses, dual enrollment
- CTE program changing lives, preparing students for high-skill, high-demand jobs
- Project Lead the Way Engineering nationally certified
- Graduates credit small school environment, caring teachers for successes
- Career counselors advocating for students aid in securing \$3.4 million in scholarships and awards offered to Class of 2022
- FCS values partnerships with Tiger families, community
- Fayetteville City welcomes new, existing residents to join in the journey to success



▲ Emily Cummings, Ryleigh Grissom, Olivia Simmons, Scarlett Fuson, Olivia Bobo, Gigi Groce, Kate Meeks, Kelli Grissom, Natalie Pinnix, Kennedy Sublett, Grace Haapoja, Natalie Vaughn, Aydin May, Payslee Beard, and Heather Vaughn

## Local Girl Scout Troop continues to build local leaders.

Lincoln County has a bright future.

By Tina Neeley // Photos submitted by Heather Vaughn

**Y**OUR FIRST thoughts when you hear “Girl Scouts” may be of Thin Mints and Tagalongs®, and who could blame you? Hold that thought because your favorite limited-time treat does much more than satisfy your craving; it enables girls to grow to their fullest potential while building skills and relationships and learning positive values and community involvement.

Locally, your cookie purchases go back into the Girl Scout service unit of Lincoln County. Within this unit is Girl Scout Troop 1856, led by Heather Vaughn and

Kelli Grissom and locally referred to as the “Petersburg troop.” The troop comprises Unity and Riverside Christian Academy students and the Boonshill, Hot Rock, and Dellrose communities.

The Petersburg troop was formed in 2019 when the annual Girl Scout recruiting program didn’t have enough troops to support the interest of all who wanted to participate. Vaughn volunteered to assist with the new troop and has been actively involved since that time.

She has seen firsthand the change in the girls through the program.

“At every meeting, we lead the pledge and give each girl opportunities to be responsible for something. It may be nothing more than holding the flag, but I’ve seen those girls go from being so nervous holding the flag to standing up in front of a group of people and reading about a country we pick for world thinking day to walking up and asking someone to buy cookies. They gain self-confidence without even realizing it. My daughter was very nervous when she was younger and had to speak to people, and now I see her stand up in front of a crowd on stage, speaking loudly and

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clearly. And I know [scouting] has her feeling better about herself and more confident,” said Vaughn.

Community service projects are funded by sales programs twice a year. The fall sale consists of candy, nuts, and magazines; the other is the cookies early in the new year. A portion of the funds raised goes to community service projects chosen by the troop. Past projects have included adopting angels at Christmas, military care packages, Clothe Our Kids donations, Junior’s House, and the Petersburg blessing box.

Vaughn said, “One year, we put flags on the veterans’ graves at Wright’s Cemetery near McBurg.”

Girl Scouts impacts everyone involved, from the troop leader to the members, to the community.

“There is a lot of love that goes into what we do in Girl Scouts. Everyone involved is a volunteer, all the way up to the service unit. It can get a bit stressful sometimes, especially during cookie season, but we know, at the end of the day, that it’s helping to support our troops and helping them earn new opportunities. Girl Scouts in Lincoln County provides a wealth of knowledge for girls and is helping them grow into mature young adults with confidence and care for others,” she said. **GN**



▲ Natalie Vaughn, Ryleigh Grissom, and Sora Sampson

For information on Lincoln County Girl Scouts, contact the service unit manager, Charlotte Bartelt, at (931) 625-8428 or email [girlscoutsoflc@gmail.com](mailto:girlscoutsoflc@gmail.com).

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▲ Deputies Wayne Graham, Ashton Twyman, and Justin Christmas

# Trio enforces lightheartedness

Courthouse deputies direct with kindness and heart.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**D**RIVING TOWARD the Fayetteville square, the Lincoln County Courthouse stands like a sentry over the community. It's an architectural dream, breathtaking in the glow of early morning or against an ombre sunset. Some drop in just to walk its halls, while others wander inside, searching for offices to pay taxes, renew tags, or register deeds. Attorneys, judicial officials, law enforcement officers, plaintiffs, and defendants appear at appointed times. All enter through the east door and exit the west under the watchful care of Lincoln County Sheriff Department Deputies Wayne Graham, Justin Christmas, and Ashton Twyman.

Together, they have nearly 40 years in law enforcement, but their time walking the courthouse halls are at the top of their favorites list.

Graham, who has been on courthouse duty the longest, also manages other responsibilities. "I take care of all the guns in the department and install the GPS in the new vehicles, plus I also take the old cars apart so they can be sold. And I used to be the crime scene photographer," he said.

The trio feeds off each other throughout the day, interacting with the community they love.

"You get to see every person in the whole community at least one time," said Christmas.

Four to five hundred people pass through the courthouse on any given day, and at certain times of the year, it surges to double that number.

Graham said, "There are certain times of the year when taxes and tags and everything happens all at once. We have had 1,016 people through the door in one day."

Through the doors or in the halls, Christmas will make you laugh — count on it.

Twyman said about Christmas, "He'll call someone the wrong name or tell them their tag can't be renewed today because they've got the wrong color car."

But Christmas equally enjoys helping an elderly couple put tags on their car and interacting with those coming in for more serious matters. He says to those coming in for court, "It's all going to be okay. It's all going to work out."

Graham, Twyman, and Christmas aren't co-workers; they're family. Their rapport is as easy as their demeanor. Sharing a common goal has that effect on you.

Your safety is their common goal and responsibility — one they don't take lightly.

Twyman said, "We enjoy cutting up with our community, but we still must be conscious of our surroundings. Many people come to this courthouse to get a divorce, fight for custody of their child, fight for an estate of a loved one, or fight a criminal charge. We have to be conscious of what comes through the courthouse doors and what is happening on the courthouse lawn. There are many times the metal detector buzzes, and we have to wand people down to see exactly what is causing it to buzz."

The deputies are always there for the community, to serve and protect.

As you pass through the exit doors, no matter why you came through the metal detectors at the entrance, you'll likely be glad you came. Thanks to your courthouse deputies, your day looks a little brighter, even if the skies are gray. **GN**



CEO/General Manager Britt Dye with the 2022-2023 Student Utility Board. Back row, from left: CEO/General Manager Britt Dye, Landon Gardner, Will O'Neal and Nathan Boaz. Front Row: Lauren Buntley, Sierra Arguello, Isabella Martin and Allie Richardson.

# FPU's Student Utility Board *thrives*

In 2010, Fayetteville Public Utilities' (FPU) CEO/General Manager Britt Dye envisioned a project to help generate awareness of the utility company and its role in the community. Dye's idea grew into a program known as the Student Utility Board (SUB). Thirteen years later, the program is a thriving example of how innovative thinking engages future employees, builds interests and creates ambassadors.

With seven members, the Student Utility Board mirrors FPU's Board of Directors. The student board consists of three seniors from Lincoln County High School, three from Fayetteville High School and one from Riverside Christian Academy. Like the school year, terms run from August to May. Throughout the term, FPU's student board meets monthly for an overview of each department and a guided tour of the services FPU provides. Students gain a broad knowledge of the electric, natural gas, water, sewer, telecommunications, customer service, billing, accounting and marketing departments.

"The Student Utility Board offers students great educational opportunities through firsthand observations of the services we provide," says Dye. "We want them to have an authentic experience when learning about FPU and what we do for the community. These students are our future leaders



and utility customers, and through their involvement, we gain excellent feedback and a valuable student perspective.”

**“The Student Utility Board offers students great educational opportunities through firsthand observations of the services we provide.”**

*FPU CEO/General Manager Britt Dye*

Beyond the lessons students learn through experiences with FPU’s departments, SUB members participate in community service projects and events. Projects include raising money for local charities through a ribeye sandwich sale, packing and distributing food for the Hands of Mercy Outreach Center, delivering nonperishable food to the Good Samaritan Association of Lincoln County and packing and delivering gifts to children enrolled in the Amana Head Start program.

“While most Student Utility Board meetings concentrate on our FPU departments and the services we offer, we want students to realize that FPU exists not only to provide safe and reliable utilities but also to make a difference in our community by being involved and giving back,” states Dye. “Service to our community is an important part of what we do at FPU, and we are thrilled to include our student board in our community projects.”

Throughout the year, SUB members earn points by participating in monthly meetings and community events. At the end of the year, points are totaled, and FPU awards a \$1,000 scholarship based on points the student earned for active participation in the program and written responses provided on the scholarship application and essay.

The SUB program cultivates connections and encourages communication between the utility and students. “Students serve as representatives,” adds Dye. “They represent FPU by engaging with the utility

and sharing the skills and knowledge they have gained with family and friends. Members also represent their peers. Through collaboration with employees, students contribute valuable insight and ideas to help shape the future of the utility.”

Over the years, the SUB program has fostered relationships and developed into a recruiting tool. “Many of the students who participate in the student board end up working for FPU on a part-time basis while in college,” Dye commented. “Currently, FPU employs a Middle Tennessee State University student pursuing a degree in graphic design and a computer science major seeking a career in cybersecurity, both of whom

served as SUB members. In addition, a former student board member is employed as a full-time dispatcher for the utility.”

When the idea of a Student Utility Board materialized, Dye could only imagine the full extent of its value. Thirteen years later, the program is thriving and making a difference. According to Dye, “FPU focuses on providing services that not only meet the needs of today but also prepare for the growing needs of our future. Through their involvement, the SUB members are given the opportunity to experience the difference FPU makes in our community, and we gain insight about how we can better serve the next generation of FPU customers.”

Right: During a monthly meeting of the Student Utility Board, FPU CEO/General Manager Britt Dye explains to students the vital role dispatchers play in the utility’s operations. Bottom: The Student Utility Board delivers a portion of the food donations from FPU’s Harvest of Hope Food Drive to the Good Samaritan Association of Lincoln County.







CHAPTER 2 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local people or businesses you need to know about.

- 28 Shattering stigma and breaking down walls
- 36 Buzzing with positive change
- 42 Education in bloom

Our stories are based on submissions from local people.

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◀ Sora Sampson, Delilah Bearden, Sadie Vandagriff, Clara Mann, Trey Locke, and Holly Albert



# SHATTER- ING STIGMA AND BREAK- ING DOWN WALLS



Life with  
autism  
spectrum  
disorder is  
beautifully  
different.

By Tina Neeley



## SOMETIMES LIFE JUST ISN'T WHAT IT SEEMS.

There are situations where we view each other through the fishbowl of life. We watch from outside, sure of what we're seeing. Meanwhile, inside, life is its own reality, and the days pass with the feeling of someone else watching. What someone else sees and understands may not quite be the reality of life inside. Such is often the case with families living with an autism diagnosis.

According to [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. Some

people with ASD have a known difference, such as a genetic condition. Other causes are not yet known. People with ASD may behave, communicate, interact, and learn in ways that are different from most others. There is often nothing about how they look that sets them apart from others, and the abilities of people with ASD can vary greatly.

April is National Autism Awareness month, a great time to shatter the glass separating us from families managing life on the spectrum. Two families offer their perspectives from the inside.



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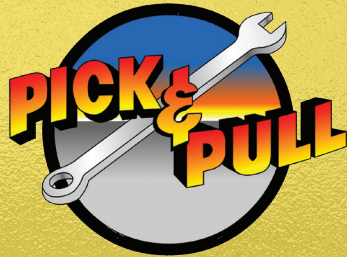
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## LIFE ON THE SPECTRUM — ONE FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE

*Amanda West shares her family's journey with ASD:*

We begin to ponder the life we lived just one day before. Like permanent bookmarks, the diagnosis of ASD separates the pages of our lives into categories of before and after.

"Your son has level one, high-functioning autism spectrum disorder," the team of psychologists reported. My husband and I took several days to process the information together privately before we shared the diagnosis with our nine-year-old son. He was sitting at his computer desk designing an elaborate video game. When I told him, his fingers froze on his keyboard. He looked right at me and said in his matter-of-fact way, "Well, that explains it," then turned toward the screen and kept right on typing. Later that evening, he and I watched the movie "Temple Grandin."

"Mom," he said, "she has autism like me, but I don't act like her."

I explained that if you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.

Although I know everyone's experience with ASD is different, the last seven years have been years of temporary regression, enormous growth, physical and emotional maturity, and, most of all, lots of therapy. He underwent occupational and speech-language therapy to recognize facial expressions, decipher body language, and understand idioms and words with double meanings. He underwent physical therapy to strengthen his fine motor skills and overall coordination. Our family feels blessed that he was able to have these necessary interventions provided by Jones Therapy in Shelbyville.

As a 16-year-old, he is a witty honor roll student, a member of the National High School Honors Society, has a steady group of friends, is still highly creative, and is working toward earning hours toward his driver's license.



# FROM THE INSIDE OUT — WHAT THEY'D WANT YOU TO KNOW

Anna Sapach, a single mom to a young child on the spectrum, clarifies things the bowl has distorted from our view and our understanding of those with autism:

From the outside perspective, ASD can be embraced or judged in various ways. It can be embraced by acknowledgment and kindness or judged by silent stares and gawky remarks.

There's a multitude of degrading false information that has distorted the image of individuals with autism. Information and education are powerful tools that can guide or mislead us. The volume of errors and misdiagnoses throughout history, even with advanced testing and medical progression, has left a paper trail so long that it can collectively fill enough books to build a library. That happens when we judge the cover without picking apart the pages first.

If I were to ask you, the reader, what autism looks like to you, what would you see? Without education or background, where would your mind lead from only what the eyes can see? Would you see a child stimming (arm flapping, spinning in circles, tugging on clothes or ears)?

Would you see a child trying to self-soothe in an environment that sets their senses on fire? Or better yet, an environment that they're enjoying, and offer them a smile accompanied by a wave? Would you see an adult in sensory overload (nail biting, popping knuckles, repeating words) at a music store and presume they're behaving oddly? Or, would you see someone trying to manage anxiety in a loud place because they wanted to bravely learn how to set their noise-canceling headphones aside and embrace change?

With this insight, do we embrace a change in our neurotypical day-to-day environment, or do we scratch our heads and turn away?

Coming from a mother to a son with autism, all we ask is that you show kindness. You don't have to read every article or order a stack of books on ASD to become aware or understanding.

If it weren't for my son, I wouldn't have the knowledge I do today on autism. He saved me from the ignorance I held for years, unknowingly blinded by the social stigmas these adolescents had been painted by.

Misguided mindsets distort the beautiful picture that is the wonderful and complex world of life on the spectrum.

## NO MORE WALLS

Shattering the walls that separate us from ASD families and coming together as a community that longs to enter their world's beauty and struggles is a priceless gift. It's a gift to them and a gift we receive from them when we allow them to share our lives.

Be on the lookout for opportunities to share life on the spectrum. **GN**



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# BUZZING

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*By Tina Neeley  
Photography by  
Brooke Snyder*

**L**IKE THE electricity powering your home's heating and cooling, you can't see it, but you can feel the results of it. At Highland Rim School, that thing you feel is the energy and effect of life in the House of Hornets.

The 2022-23 school year is buzzing with positive change.

Last year, Highland Rim teachers and administrators expressed their desire to see students develop life skills and build relationships with one another. They wanted ways to have conversations and teach responsibilities. Over summer break, they built upon a program that began the prior school year to do all that and more, and students and staff are seeing the results and feeling the shift in the school's culture.





Nicole White  
teaches her  
students about  
achieving  
goals.



Amanda Pickens and Will Harbin know the importance of teaching students to LEAD.

Assistant Principal Will Harbin said, “For some students, this is their only safe place, their only sense of normalcy. We want to teach students to be proactive, be great people, and respect themselves and the buildings here. We focus on little things and finding a way to teach them how to get along with others and work well in groups with each other.”

They are teaching students to LEAD. In the program’s stages, students progress from learning to empowering to achieving and finally discovering how to be the best for themselves and everyone around them.

Imagine a giant hive where everyone goes to learn and grow together and helps and looks out for each other. There — you have a picture of the House of Hornets.

Within the hive are 900 staff and students grouped into six house families of students and staff from pre-K through eighth grade. Upper-grade students are paired with lower-grade students, and everyone works together on projects as a house family.

“They’re all unified toward whatever we’re working on, creating those bonds and being a family,” Harbin said.

Homeroms in each grade gather for 30 minutes each Friday to work on the program’s principles. Although students are in different grades, all are working on the same principles or themes.

Once every nine weeks, the hive buzzes even louder when all the house families gather in the gym for House Day activities and awards. It’s a special day for every member of the family. Special sweatshirts are handed out during House Day to a student in each grade nominated by their teacher for exemplifying all of the traits represented by the program.

Harbin said, “You have to earn it. It’s for the student who respects others, takes care of something, notices trash on the floor, and picks it up. The student who exhibits all of those traits is surprised with a sweatshirt on House Day. It’s a big deal. They will scream, holler, and cheer. Administrators also do this for the teachers on House Day. But it’s all about finding those students and teachers who work on relationships and really get in the nitty-gritty of being a good human.”

It’s a positive change and way of life, where students and staff are happy to go to school every day. And the shift is being noticed outside the hive as well.



“The parent interaction has increased. At Walmart, someone says, ‘Hey, what you all are doing is really awesome. I can’t believe my child’s started talking more. I can’t believe they are becoming more independent. It’s noticeable.’ You go to a ballgame or out somewhere and see a kid making a difference or doing something kind for someone else. If you ask them to go help a person, you’ve got 10 kids running at the same time,” Harbin said.

And it’s more than helpfulness and kindness that’s spreading.

Harbin continued, “Discipline has decreased, attendance has increased, and there’s data to back that up. Something’s working. The school culture has improved, the climate has improved, and the community sees it. A lot of good is happening, and even better things are yet to come.”

It’s foundational and something to build upon going into the future.

“For our eighth graders who are leaving, we set them up for high school. For every other student here, we can build upon what we’ve done this year and continue that next year. We’re just going to take what we have and keep building and make it better,” Harbin said.

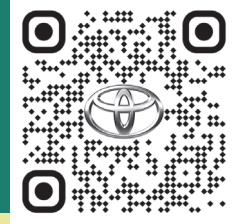
At the end of the day, it’s about bonding and relationship building, and it’s working.

Harbin said, “Everyone is excited to come to school, both the adults and the students. We’re happy to see your face when you walk in the door.”

Who couldn’t use a lot more happiness in their day? GN

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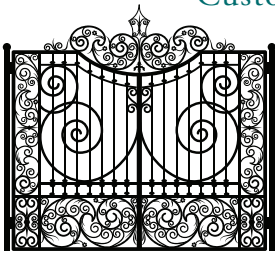


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# EDUCATION

in BLOOM





**A**S SPRING approaches and new blooms open to the world, students prepare for the end of the school year. Each student is a new bloom that takes on the world. After 18 years of education, studying, and building relationships, those students are almost ready to leave their mark on our community. But these students would not be the blooms they are without our educators. Our educators are the water, nutrients, and soil that students need. They leave lasting impressions and mold the next generation.

This issue of Good News celebrates our educators who help us bloom. **GN**



THOMAS  
HASTINGS

---

# DEEP ROOTS

Local teacher is a  
fourth-generation  
educator

By Tina Neeley  
Photography by Brooke Snyder



## Teaching is the essential profession that makes all other professions possible.

- David Haselkorn

**A**S A small boy, Thomas Hastings learned the letters of the alphabet as he helped his dad change the sign outside Lincoln County High School. He grew up surrounded by a family of educators. It's all he's ever known or wanted to know.

"I would help my father [with the sign] some afternoons or Saturday mornings, and that's where I learned my letters, spacing them out on the floor of his classroom to spell Falcons or other words. I grew up watching my parents attend school events and participate in school activities," Hastings said.

Hastings is a fourth-generation educator. His paternal great-grandfather, Carl Hastings; maternal great-grandmother, Alice Duggin; paternal grandfather, Ralph Hastings; and maternal grandfather, F.C. Duggin, were educators ahead of his parents, Joel and Debbie Hastings. Thomas Hastings works to continue their legacy in Lincoln County, which is an honor and a calling.

Hastings said, "Seeing how excited former students were to see them and how they were treated and perceived spoke highly of their impact in the profession. Teaching, like the medical profession, ministry, and military service, is a calling. In some of those professions, teaching included, you're doing God's work daily, and I think most teachers have that mindset."

Hastings earned his bachelor's degree in history at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. He then obtained his master's degree while student teaching in Knoxville, but like his own doctor and high school Sunday school teacher, Dr. Bill Jones, he knew he wanted to come home to Lincoln County.

"Dr. Jones told me he wanted to return to his community, the place that brought him up and helped make him who he is and that he wanted to give back to his hometown. I wanted to come home and contribute to my community in a similar manner," said Hastings.



Hastings taught for two years in Knoxville, followed by six years at Fayetteville Middle School, during which time he earned his Education Specialist degree. He has been at Lincoln County High School (LCHS) since 2011. LCHS feels like home for many reasons.

Hastings is a graduate of LCHS. In his earliest years teaching there, some teachers still on staff had been his teachers. Now, his students are returning to teach at LCHS, creating a full circle.

He said, “I think teaching is unique for two reasons: Everybody was a student at one time, and when we have young people not just choosing teaching as a profession but choosing to return here as former Falcons, that adds continuity to the school culture. To think about their experiences and positive relationships and memories and have them want to come and provide that for current students is a big positive.”

Hastings knows that a teacher’s childhood education influences how they relate to their students.

“Because everyone [who teaches] was a student at some point, they have insight into the profession, both good and bad. Our fa-



**To think about their experiences and positive relationships and memories and have them want to come and provide that for current students is a big positive.**

- Thomas Hastings

favorite teachers make a positive impact. Whether it's their classroom management techniques, how they presented material, or how they related to the students, imitation is the biggest form of flattery." said Hastings.

Wisdom from an extraordinary coach, principal, or teacher can become the motivation of a lifetime.

He said, "When I was teaching at City, Mr. Billy Joe Evans, a former coach, would remind us at the beginning of each school year that we either get better or worse than the year before and that the students deserve whatever is the best version of ourselves. And that has always stayed with me. It's a challenge."

He continued, "As a social studies teacher, I try to impart respect for our country, the democratic institutions, and the rule of law. I strive to make them interested in current events, their community, and political participation. Besides presenting the material, I hope to create more civic-minded people when they leave the classroom."

Hastings and his family have roots that grow deep, not just in education but also in agriculture. It's another connection to Lincoln County and LCHS students in particular.

"I love that we're a rural county and that we still have a heritage and traditions in agriculture. My family lives on a century farm, which continues as a working farm. Those traditions and heritage continue with our students. So many of them are good rural kids, and I think it means a lot that they have that common interest and a lot of common backgrounds. They're easy to relate to because you not only know most of the families, but most people have similar, shared interests and backgrounds — common goals and values," said Hastings.

An expression Hastings ran across recently reminds him of the importance of his work.

"The best thing about being a teacher is that it matters. The hardest thing about being a teacher is that it matters every day."

It's a challenge accepted by four generations and counting. GN



JO ELLEN  
HONEY

---

# RECIPE FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Unity School teacher  
knows the ingredients.

By Tina Neeley  
Photography by Brooke Snyder



**L**IKE BAKING friendship bread, teaching requires patience, dedication, and the love of working with the ingredients: curious students, challenges at school, and a supportive community. Teaching encourages growth through the continual kneading, stirring, and baking of small successes each school year. Jo Ellen Honey knows a little about both.

Honey has been in school for 46 years. While many are anxious to retire or explore less-demanding careers, she has no plans to slow down. In fact, the pace of her life is the key to her vitality. It's not the fountain of youth, but she knows the secret to aging gracefully, and she's more likely to share it than the recipe for her specialty bread.

"I get up every morning, pick up grandchildren on the way to school, and sometimes on the days their parents have to go into the office, I pick them up at 6 a.m. We quickly eat breakfast and head to school, and I get some things done there in the classroom. But when school's over, I've got to be ready to come home and deliver six grandkids back to different homes and get home because I've usually got to bake. On the nights I'm not baking, I'm following grandkids to a baseball, softball, or basketball game. I've always heard a body in motion stays in motion, and I believe that's true," Honey said.

Honey knew she wanted to become a teacher in third grade and was babysitting by sixth grade. She loved being with younger children and believed her future career was never a question. She said, "I think God put me here today."

She admits teaching grows more challenging each day, but her love for the children frames her strategy for remaining in the classroom.

"Here's my secret to that: I have been able to separate the two. I decide what I love to do is on this side of the line. These are my kids that I love to teach, and I love sharing with them. On the other side of this line are the hoops I have to jump through to do what I love to do. And I just keep it separated in my mind. I'm still willing to jump through those hoops to get to where I want to be," she said.



On the nights I'm not baking, I'm following grandkids to a baseball, softball, or basketball game. I've always heard a body in motion stays in motion, and I believe that's true.

– Jo Ellen Honey





You might say she's a fixture at Unity School. She was among those teaching when its doors first opened and, today, is the last remaining from the first year's staff. It would only make sense that the staff and students are her extended family.

She said, "The fact that it's a small school in a rural community, it's just like a big family. And we all kind of take care of each other and each other's kids — all the kids. I refer to my students as my kids, and that's how I feel about them."

And like families, her Unity family is multi-generational.

"I've taught a lot of children of former students, but now I've had two or three families of three generations," Honey said.

Like her Unity family, her own family has grown exponentially over the years. After her first husband passed away at an early age, Honey met her husband, Rickey, at a ballgame. He asked if they could go out sometime, and her answer was yes, provided she didn't have a ball game because her kids come first. He agreed his children came first, too, and three months later, they finally found a ballgame-free night. Where did they go? A ballgame, of course, and they've been a fixture at area ballparks and gyms ever since.

Their growing number of grandchildren led her to start a baking business. Christmas gifts for twelve grandchildren aren't cheap, so she created The Daily Bread to fund her Christmas account.

She began with a basic Amish friendship bread she received as a gift from a student and perfected her 50 varieties. She added a mid-week dinner offering called the Hump Day Helper that makes meal time a breeze with her heat-and-eat hearty meals. Add a sweet treat from her menu, and you've got a recipe for comfort.

Food connects us immediately to our fondest memories. Jo Ellen's cafeteria rolls will transport you to your childhood and the walk from class to the cafeteria, where the aroma of bread baking wraps you in its sweet embrace.

She said, "It gives me so much joy to see somebody enjoy my food. Eating is comfort, and it



brings joy. It's what brings people together when you sit around a table with your family or your friends. There's just nothing better. I love to cook. I do what I call country grub, and I love putting a big meal of meats and vegetables together."

With everything on her plate and everything that she puts on others' plates, is she planning to slow down anytime soon?

Jo Ellen answered, "I hope not. Not as long as I'm still happy doing what I'm doing and as long as I feel like I can give the kids what they need. I just want to stay busy. I've seen too many teachers retire after teaching a long time, and their health goes down. As long as I still feel good and still feel good about what I'm doing, I'm fine just like I am." GN





SCOTT POSEY

---

# FOCUS FORWARD

Flintville teacher  
enjoys every day.

By Tina Neeley  
Photography by Brooke Snyder



**L**AID OFF for the second time from his factory job and newly married, Scott Posey considered a career change. He decided college would broaden his opportunities and attended Motlow State Community College and graduated, still unsure of an exact focus as he entered Athens State University. His wife, a recent college graduate working as a certified public accountant, talked about the options available in her field, and he decided to explore it, too. After about a year, Posey knew it wasn't for him. Again, talking through things with his wife helped clarify his vision.

Posey said, "My wife asked what I thought I'd like to do. At the time, I was working as the youth leader at church, and I really enjoyed doing that. Athens State has an incredible teaching program, so I got into that. It was very scary at the time because we had recently gotten married, and I felt like I needed to provide for my family. And so it was very scary at the time."

Every school day allows him to grow continuously and stay on top of the latest trends. Working with first graders keeps him sharp and allows for endless possibilities.

"It keeps my mind young. As the kids are talking about fads and things of that nature, I've got to be with it. As a teacher, I should always be a lifelong learner, whether it's something in education, something that's fascinating to me, or just what's happening in our world today," he said.

Posey began his teaching career at Ralph Askins school, where he spent seven years each teaching second grade and kindergarten, and was the 2011-12 Fayetteville City Schools Elementary Teacher of the Year. From there, he taught fifth grade at Fayetteville Middle School for four years. He is now in his third year as a first-grade teacher at Flintville Elementary and was the Flintville School Elementary Teacher of the Year for 2021. Like his first-graders, he is rarely still.

In addition to teaching, Posey is in his third year as the Flintville Middle School football coach. But it's more than a game; it's about taking advantage of the opportunities to influence and impact young lives now and for their future.

"I've got the best of both worlds. Dr. David Golden, our principal administrator, has been so helpful and provided everything we need, not only as teachers but as coaches. It's an incredible journey to be a part of the lives of these young men playing an intense sport and see the camaraderie and the friendships that are being developed. We strive to be a better person today than yesterday, a better student today than yesterday, and finally, a better football player today than yesterday. I want these guys to be great husbands, great dads, and great leaders in our community, all because we tried to set an example for what it means to do things the right way," he said.

Never one to sit and watch life go by, Posey is passionate about making the world a better place. Mu-





“

I've gotten older and learned to enjoy every day and every moment. Life is short, so we need to appreciate the small things. Life gets away so fast, and we really just need to enjoy every passing moment that we have.

– Scott Posey



sic brings him and his wife, Kim, together as they serve in their church's music ministry, where he is the worship leader.

Scott said, "As the saying goes, behind every good man is a great woman. Kim is our piano player at church. She's always worked with me and knows music much better than I do, so we collaborate. I began playing guitar about 45 years ago, mostly at church."

Music is another subject in his learning toolbox. Unless physical limitations make it impossible, he sees music as something he can do indefinitely, always seeing room for improvement and growth.

Scott and his wife cherish every moment they can spend with their son, Matthew, and his wife, Morgan, who live in Murfreesboro, and their son Nathan, a student at Middle Tennessee State University. Their time together is more intentional, and they recognize the changing seasons of parenthood.

"They're becoming young men and building their careers, and there just comes a time where you have to turn them over to the Lord and say, 'Lord, they're yours,' and trust they're going to do the right thing and that the Lord's going to keep them safe," he said.

Scott's focus is now on being present and cherishing all of life.

He said, "I've gotten older and learned to enjoy every day and every moment. Life is short, so we need to appreciate the small things. Life gets away so fast, and we really just need to enjoy every passing moment that we have." GN



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# Good Times

## CHAPTER 3 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local things to do.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER

◀ Brent & Rebecca Buillon  
of Rocket City Popperz

# BACK AND EVEN *better!*

“THE NUTCRACKER OF LINCOLN COUNTY” RETURNS AFTER A FOUR-YEAR HIATUS.

BY KALI BRADFORD // PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY JAMES JORDAN

A FOUR-YEAR HIATUS of theater or musical production almost always means the end of it. People grow up, move on, or do not wish to revive what was put on hold. It takes dedication, devotion, and determination to bring such back into the spotlight and to bring it back with success. Melvie Myrick has that devotion for such. Through her dedication, along with that of her staff, dancers, and the community, they were able to bring back the well-known ballet production, “The Nutcracker.”

Myrick, the owner of Backstage Performing Arts (BPA), presented the seventh production of ‘The Nutcracker of Lincoln County’ during the 2022 holiday season. The show has been on hiatus for four years due to COVID. Myrick brought the production to the local community in 2010, and she understands the importance of keeping such a production alive.

“I wanted to bring ‘The Nutcracker’ to Lincoln County,” she said. “I had helped with a production in Georgia and enjoyed my time there. I wanted to bring that experience here because I found that the kids in the dance classes didn’t know what ‘The Nutcracker’ was and had never seen it. After the first few productions, we noticed just how much the children enjoyed it and how much they grew in each performance. We did it for three years in a row, and then I decided to do it every other year because it’s a huge undertaking.”

After the 2018 production, Myrick and her crew began preparing for the 2020 production, which came to a halt when the pandemic hit. When deciding to return in 2022, Myrick said it was as if she was starting from scratch.

“It was almost like starting over,” she explained. “All the dancers who participated every other year would move into the next character, so they grew up with it. They would start with the younger characters, like little angels or Arabians, and then grow into the next older character. They would progress through the levels and were able to do each character. When we started

back, everyone was moving into new roles, which gave us a chance to revive our choreography. We made it all fresh with new dances, choreography, and backdrops. It was a blessing because we could refresh it and bring a brand-new life.”

This year’s show featured 100 BPA dancers and special guest dancers from the Alabama Youth Ballet. It featured new choreography from Myrick, John Bozeman, and Jordan Allen. Myrick said the community also stepped in to help and give back to the production.

“We had to create new backdrops this year,” she said. “Jennie Roles-Walters, with the art department at the high school, helped us with that. Several high school students came in one Sunday afternoon and built the props. They hammered, nailed, and put together everything for the backdrop. It’s gratifying and touches my heart. This is why I do it — to see everybody coming together.”

The production also saw record attendance numbers in their newest performance spot at Lincoln Central Academy (LCA), where both shows were almost sold out.

BPA’s next performance will be their 33rd Annual Dance Recital, “A Night at the Museum,” on May 13 at LCA. For more information, visit online at [backstageperformingarts.com](http://backstageperformingarts.com). **GN**





# COMMUNITY EVENTS



▲ Karen Welch

## Nothing is better than a friend unless it is a friend with chocolate.

Photography by Brooke Snyder

Folks took to downtown Fayetteville for the annual Chocolate Walk to celebrate the season of love and support local businesses. Patrons strolled the streets of the historic downtown and received free chocolate from participating establishments.



◀ Lori Pigg and Cynthia Lambert



◀ Mary Gentry Byrd and Neely Pigg



▲ Tina Osgood and Kathy Hobson

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# EVENTS CALENDAR

## March 25

**8:00 pm Steel 6 Rocks Mickey's Garage**  
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## March 30

**7:00 pm Anastasia the Musical**  
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## April 1

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For more information visit [slawburgerfestival.com](http://slawburgerfestival.com)

**April 22**

**1:00 pm Spur Spankin' Invitational 2023**

Lincoln County  
Fairgrounds  
1003 Hedgemont Ave.

Live music, food, drinks, turkey weigh-in, bounce houses for the kids, raffles, and more!

Cost for event is \$30. For more information visit [spurspankin.com](http://spurspankin.com)

**April 29**

**10:00 am Our Town Fair**

Morgan Cultural Center  
103 Alumni Lane  
Petersburg

If you have questions or wish to register as a vendor for the Little Miss/Mr. Our Town or Our Town Idol, call (931) 675-7111, email [admin@petersburgccc.com](mailto:admin@petersburgccc.com) or visit <https://fb.me/e/3Yw9INqGZ>

**For more events and to submit an event visit:**

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# Lincoln Health

## Cardiology

Cox, William	931-433-2909
Jackson, Ann	1-800-345-5016
Fahrig, Stephen	1-800-345-5016
Kerrigan, Jimmy	1-800-345-5016

## Family Practice

Barnes, Larry	931-433-9900
Cline, Richard	931-438-4111
Edwards, William A.	931-438-4111
Gafford, Christopher E.	931-433-7778
Gray, James A.	931-438-4111
Hughes, William D.	931-438-4111
Jones, William R.	931-433-2551
Loiacono, Mike	931-433-2551
Sain, Paul D	931-443-2551
Thelen, Sarah	931-227-4984

## Family Practice/OB

Morrison, Theresa T	931-433-2229
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## Gastroenterologist

Mallipeddi, Dayaker	931-388-8302
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## General Surgery

Crump, David B.	931-433-0892
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## Hospitalist

Nedumthottathil, Thomas	931-438-1100
Uzzi, Idowu	931-438-1100

## Internal Medicine

Kidd, Charles A.	931-433-2551
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## Neurology

Capps, Raymond	931-433-2909
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## Obstetrics & Gynecology

Nobles, Michael	931-433-1105
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## Orthopedics

Bryant, Ginger	931-433-1102
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## Pediatrics

Kidd, Charles A.	931-433-2551
Spears, W. Kyle	931-433-2551

## Podiatry

Mitchell, Jeffery	615-814-0885
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## Pulmonary/Sleep Medicine

Patel, Prakashchandra	931-536-4149
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**Lincoln Medical Center**  
**Donalson Care Center & Short Stay Rehab**  
**Patrick Rehab - Wellness Center**  
**Lincoln Medical Home Health and Hospice**  
**Lincoln Ambulance Services**

931-438-1100  
931-433-7156  
931-433-0273  
931-433-8088  
931-438-7407

**In the case of an emergency, dial 911**

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