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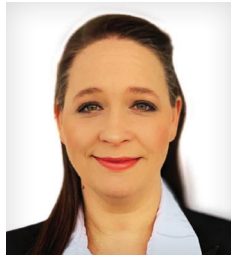


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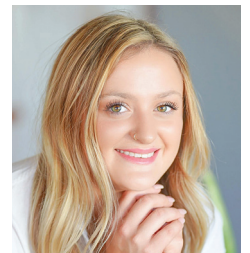
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*4th of July*

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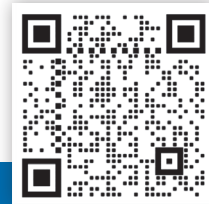


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## The Future is Bright

The next generation is made of strength, light, and courage.

WHEN I think of the next generation, I feel excitement. I want this issue of Good News to be a joyous celebration of the young adults who will be the leaders of tomorrow, carrying the torch of progress and making our community and the world a better place. I am confident that the future is in good hands.

We live in a time of uncertainty; it's easy to succumb to worry and doubt the next generation. However, when we truly examine the next generation, we witness a source of boundless optimism. These young men and women are driven, compassionate, and brimming with innovative ideas. They possess a remarkable ability to empathize with others and understand the challenges that lie before them.

Our communities will flourish and thrive because of these remarkable individuals. They have shown us what it means to be resilient, resourceful, and committed to making a positive impact. With each passing

day, they inspire us with their determination, their unwavering belief in a better future, and their tireless efforts to bring about meaningful change.

I am humbled by the energy and passion radiating from these future leaders. They remind us that we must nurture their dreams and provide them with the support and guidance they need. By doing so, we can ensure that their potential is unleashed and that they have every opportunity to flourish.

The world may face challenges, but I firmly believe that with the next generation at the helm, we have every reason to be hopeful. They possess the ability to bridge divides, find common ground, and create innovative solutions to the most pressing issues of our time. They are determined to leave a lasting legacy of compassion, equality, and sustainability.

From someone who is a part of the next generation, this issue features young adults under the age of 35 who are making a lasting impact on the place we call home. GN

  
Wesley Bryant,  
MANAGING EDITOR

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# FRANKLIN COUNTY JUDICIAL CENTER





CHAPTER 1 OF 3

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

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- 18 Franklin County Chamber of Commerce prepares for the 21st annual youth leadership program
- 22 Retired firefighter and wife establish residential childcare

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◀ Chamber Junior Leadership Program



▲ Mountain View

## A family-owned manufacturing company invests in the community through job opportunities.

Mountain View strives to create a successful workplace through core values and employee growth.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by Gina Eicher

**I**F YOU ask Norman Eicher what makes his family-owned company different, he'll tell you it's simple: Mountain View is driven by its people and values. According to their shared purpose statement, the company strives to create a workplace that achieves more meaning and success through teamwork and relationships, underpinned by five core values: communication, integrity, excellence, people, and confidence.

Opened in the fall of 2009, Mountain View specializes in manufacturing portable buildings, including sheds and other structures. They have expanded their offerings to include wood roof and floor trusses, roofing, siding, metal profiles, and even post-frame buildings or pole barns, including barndominiums.

But what sets Mountain View apart from others is more than just its comprehensive list of products and

services. This family-owned company has built an inclusive culture that values its more than 40 employees in Franklin County, ranging from skilled laborers, mechanics, truss and building designers to construction workers and a constantly growing sales team.

With a focus on seeking out the best employees, Mountain View provides training for various skills, experiences, and work opportunities and actively promotes from within. This emphasis on internal growth, responsibility, and recognition creates a familial atmosphere that fosters loyalty, pride, and dedication.

The company recently hired an employee at the front desk, creating a pathway to other areas within the company. They hired another employee as a truck driver, but he was given the opportunity to be trained to become a truss designer.



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-Norman Eicher



◀ Norman Eicher

Eicher said, “We had been looking for someone to fill a design position, and he took some interest in it. And through some training, he’s done a phenomenal job.”

The family dynamic runs deep in Mountain View’s employees, which they recently exemplified by hiring a female truss designer whose father and grandfather work for the company.

When the family established Mountain View, there wasn’t a local company specializing in post-frame buildings, which led the company to identify this niche early on. Eicher explained that the company developed the rest of Mountain View’s offerings based on the community’s needs.

“We want the community to know we take pride in the products we manufacture and sell and strive to uphold our vision,” he said.

That vision includes the company’s commitment to providing full healthcare benefits to its employees. This change has been overwhelmingly positive and has improved the employees’ quality of life both in and out of work.

Mountain View continues to show its commitment to its employees’ growth and development by hiring a business coach, Colby B. Jubenville, Ph.D., who offers valuable insights, challenges, and ideas for enhancing productivity and efficiency.

Additionally, the company has constructed a new lumber shed this year, expanding its service offerings to customers with the inclusion of engineered wood.

When asked about the change, Eicher stated, “Healthcare is vitally important to the well-being of our employees. It was something they asked for and was a priority for us. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to continuing to improve their quality of life both in and out of work.”

Eicher, who was born and raised in a rural area in Ontario, Canada, brings a strong work ethic and community-minded values to his company. He met and married his wife, Emily, when he moved to Illinois in 2003. They now reside in Belvidere with their three children, family dog, Clyde, and a love for cooking and the outdoors. **GN**

---

Mountain View is open from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday. Be sure to visit their Franklin County location to see firsthand how values, family, and community merge seamlessly.



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## Franklin County Chamber of Commerce prepares for the 21st annual youth leadership program.

Shaping the leaders of tomorrow through the junior leadership program

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by Franklin County Chamber of Commerce

**T**HE FRANKLIN County Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for this year's annual junior leadership program. The adult program is in its 26th year, and the youth program is in its 21st year. The program expanded from what was once an adult program into a program where adult business professionals are assigned a youth program member to mentor.

Kayla Doney, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce executive director and Leadership Franklin County program administrator, reported that the Franklin County Junior Leadership Program recruits and prepares existing and emerging leaders for responsible public decision-making and volunteer service. It motivates and directs them toward achieving their desired community goals.

Through this program, the youth within the Franklin County community are exposed to different parts of the county that they may only see if they were somehow involved in county leadership.

Doney said the program accepts rising high school juniors. Students who want to participate in the program must pick up an application from the chamber office or their school, fill it out, and turn it in by August 11. The program's leadership team will select students based on their applications.

Doney said she is optimistic that students are learning and enjoying their experiences during the program and are learning tangible skills that will help them in the future.

"We hope the students are inspired by all that Franklin County offers from education, agriculture, history, economic development,

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and health care. We want the students to be inspired to stay local and continue living, working, and playing in Franklin County.”

During the program, the youth experience five months of hands-on discovery, exploration, and experience.

From September until February, they learn everything from county history to leadership skills, education, healthcare, agriculture, county government, and much more. They take trips to hospitals, farms, utility facilities, courthouses, and the state capitol.

The Franklin County Junior Leadership Program challenges the students and helps them explore their untapped potential through creative and hands-on activities.

Doney said, “We strive to teach them leadership traits and skills and how to make smart decisions and to always have integrity and a strong work ethic.”

Program leaders can watch the teens blossom into firm and confident leaders.



◀ Robbie, Penny, and Riley Morris with Sydney Smith



▶ Savana Pendergraft and Addyson Gebelt

Doney explained that many students use what they’ve learned during their time with the program to transform into leaders that positively impact their generation through well-informed decisions.

She said, “We can tell a big difference in their confidence and how they kind of step out of their box. By the end of the program, they’re ready to speak up and ask questions. And they’re more knowledgeable about how the county operates.”

Doney also said it’s common for the youth to return and participate in the adult program 6-8 years after graduation. The program isn’t just for enrichment but a place where camaraderie is present.

“A lot of the students we do keep in contact with send us graduation invitations the next year when they’re seniors in high school. And we also give them reference letters to enter college and gain scholarships.”

The Franklin County Junior Leadership Program is currently accepting applications for rising high school juniors and adult business professionals. Applications are due by August 11, 2023, and the program proceeds in September. **GN**

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▲ Brent and Lisa Poole, owners of Ponderosa Playcare, with Everleigh

## Retired firefighter and wife establish residential childcare.

Brent and Lisa Poole turned their Tims Ford Lake home into a faith-based, age-appropriate, nurturing environment for children.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by Ponderosa Playcare

**W**HEN BRENT and Lisa Poole set out to find a place to call “home,” they knew they wanted a place where they could share in the community’s journey. Brent, originally from the vibrant state of California, and Lisa, from the bustling city of Huntsville, knew they wanted a quieter, more serene life.

They found their oasis in Winchester, a quiet and tucked-away city where they could build their dreams and fulfill their purpose.

Lisa said, “We saw it as a place for opportunities to serve our community and feel our way through what we want to do, but ultimately knew we wanted to do it in a smaller town.”

After serving as a fire captain in Los Angeles for 30 years, Brent was ready to live out his retirement with his wife. The couple began their entrepreneurial journey by giving back to the community by establishing Ponderosa Playcare Residential Center atop the beautiful Tims Ford Lake.

Brent recounted that he and Lisa made frequent summer trips to Tims Ford Lake to rent homes in various areas before moving to the city. When Brent acquainted himself with the area, he told his real estate broker they were finally ready to move and settle down on one of the lake’s most beautiful properties.

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▲ Ponderosa Playcare 'Emotional Support Staff'

Lisa, a licensed realtor in Tennessee, began working under Sam Hatfield, the broker that helped them purchase their house.

The need for more personalized daycare became especially evident to the couple as they saw their loved ones constantly placing their names on waiting lists and taking off work because they had no suitable childcare facility in the area.

Brent and Lisa's decision to fulfill this need was born of a desire to give back to their loved ones while creating an invaluable service for the community. They opened the doors to their residential center in May, and every day, they're adding names to the waitlist.

Lisa added, "It's fulfilling a need to serve our community, and it's fulfilling a need to help take care of our family, too. So that's what ended up sealing the whole deal."

Ponderosa Playcare Residential Center is a residential child care center dedicated to the care and development of every child that comes through its doors.

The couple's experienced daughter-in-law serves as the primary caregiver at Ponderosa Playcare Residential

Center. Their goal is simple yet noble: to provide a safe, faith-based, and age-appropriate developmental environment with nutritious meals and ample opportunities for fun outdoor playtime.

Brent said, "We just want people to know that this is going to be the best, safest, cleanest, and most loving place where you can leave children."

The Poole family's ideal outdoor "soul healer" oasis led visitors and family members to call their pool the "Poole Ponderosa" with an endearing familiarity.

Lisa said, "We're really blessed to have something that has become a place of relaxation and restoration for people."

She added, "Years ago, everybody started calling it the 'Poole Ponderosa.' So it's more of an endearing emblem."

Ponderosa Playcare is profoundly impacting families and children in the community. Their commitment to faith-based values ensures a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Brent said, "Lisa and I are both keenly aware that this is the Lord's place, and we just pray that we are always good stewards of it." **GN**



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CHAPTER 2 OF 3

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

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER



Dr. Cary Holman

# From CLASSROOM to DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Examining Dr. Cary Holman's unwavering  
commitment to improving the education system.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by Dr. Cary Holman

**D**R. CARY Holman, director of Franklin County Schools, embodies excellence from his visionary outlook to his relentless pursuit of education and deep love for his community. Born and raised in Franklin County, he was raised entirely within the county's school system. After graduating from Franklin County High School in 1989, he ventured out for his higher education, later returning to his hometown as a teacher at his old elementary school in Decherd.

The central office soon hired Holman to work with at-risk North Middle School and South Middle School students. After serving there for a year, he realized his true calling was in the classroom.

He served as assistant principal at North Junior High School for two years, but it was only a short time before he earned the distinguished principal position at Clark Memorial Elementary School.

Throughout his academic journey, Holman had a strong support system in the form of his family, especially his loving mother.

"My mom was tapped into our well-being. She wanted to make sure that we did well in school," he recalls.

"We didn't have a lot growing up, but she was very persistent in creating a loving family. So the backdrop of my experience continues to motivate me to strengthen my own educational pursuits."

A tenacious educational leader, Holman began his higher education journey at Motlow State Community College, where he earned his associate degree. He then obtained his bachelor's degree at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga and his master's degree at Tennessee State University.

He later attended Middle Tennessee State University, receiving his educational specialist degree. In 2020, he earned his doctorate from the prestigious American College of Education.

Holman's extensive experience in the field includes teaching first, fifth, and sixth grades and serving in various director and administrative roles.



Corbin Reynolds, Colin, Rolanda, Cary, and Yuri Holman

"I have always been an educational diehard. I love everything about education and believe it is truly the foundation of everything that exists. It is the most noble profession there is," he remarked.

Holman is also a servant leader who works in ministry and believes wholeheartedly, "If you're going to do something, do it to the best of your ability and with compassion. Do it with the desire that you are impacting not just yourself but others as well."

When Holman was an administrator in Rutherford County, he had a powerful vision to connect the school and the community. He brought that vision to life with Project Feed, leading a canned food drive and providing a hot meal for everyone every Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

For 15 years, the team served at least 1,000 meals annually. Though the event received a lot of positive news coverage, their real reward was honoring the community. Many of the children continued the program in high school, sparking and expanding a beautiful tradition.

When the opportunity to serve as director of Franklin County Schools presented itself, Holman immediately decided to pursue it.

"Franklin County Schools worked for me, so why not go and work and lead the Franklin County School District? So hence, me being named director of schools there," he said.

Holman did his doctoral dissertation on a school counselor's perspective on how student behavior affects school culture and climate, a premise he would later use to start organizations and shift school cultures, leaving a lasting legacy on students, educators, and staff all over Tennessee.

With a heart full of passion for the growth and development of students, Holman has graced state and national conferences, weaving tales of their experiences and breakthroughs surrounding student relationships, school culture, and educational leadership.

Armed with effective research-based strategies and insights, Holman is a beacon of light, guiding leaders toward creating impactful environments that inspire students to thrive.

"What I have found in my years of service is that there's a significant amount of power that a person is able to establish when he or she takes the time to build relationships and connect with children," he said.

Holman humbly credits his fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Charlene Simmons, as a beacon of hope in his life. He said his teachers contributed immensely to his growth and development, each bringing their unique flavor to the table. Holman also noted that his leadership style is a culmination of valuable lessons learned from working with excellent principals in the past.

As the leader of Franklin County Schools, Holman is determined to help the Franklin County community reach new heights in their educational journey. Although he recognizes that challenges are on the horizon, he views them as opportunities to grow and improve.

One of his primary leadership principles is to turn problems into opportunities while building transparent connections within the community. Holman aims to empower, encourage, and enhance all stakeholders, including teachers and students, to achieve statewide and nationwide recognition for Franklin County Schools.

"Having that desire, that vision, that role — then as a leader, I've got to make sure that we have the resources and the connections that it will take to continue to accelerate our school district." **GN**

“

*I have always been an educational diehard. I love everything about education and believe it is truly the foundation of everything that exists. It is the most noble profession there is.*

*-Dr. Cary Holman*





# TODAY'S LEARNERS... TOMORROW'S LEADERS.

The Franklin County Educational Foundation is committed to investing in today's youth and the future leaders of our community.

*By Jeriah Brumfield  
Photos submitted by Linda Stewart*





▼ Student tries VR goggles



**WHAT BEGAN** as a small gathering of people, at the request of director of schools Amie Lonas, in late 2016, soon expanded to a large group of business people, professionals, and community leaders to establish an educational foundation that would support the Franklin County School System with big and bold educational enrichment opportunities, not funded by state and local revenues, for *all* students in the Franklin County School System. In 2017, after much discussion and planning, the Franklin

▼ Students learning code programming



County Foundation for Excellence was established. Retired Chancellor Jeff Stewart and Alex Barnett are two of those people.

The foundation provides educational funding opportunities and resources to Franklin County public schools through grants and donations. This nonprofit organization has been granted tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3). The foundation's all-volunteer board of directors is committed to fundraising initiatives that promote the learning of all students from pre-K to 12th grade in the Franklin County School System.

To successfully expand upon basic learning principles, the organization integrated "art and reading" into the core principles of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), calling it Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering,

▼ Students using an electric snap circuit board



and Math (STREAM). In 2018, Nissan donated monies providing the foundation with the means to purchase a van. Thanks to generous donations from other businesses and individuals in the community, the foundation was able to give the van an exciting exterior and make it an exceptional learning tool by stocking it with resources to support the students' learning endeavors. Some examples include Ozobots, Spheros, coding mice and Botley bots, electrical snap circuit boards, straw rockets and launchers, balloon car kits, and do-it-yourself microscopes. Also available are classroom sets of virtual goggles, which one fifth-grade teacher used to wrap up a space unit with a virtual trip to the sun. Students were able to see the asteroid belt, stars, planets, and constellations in 3D. The van services eight elementary schools in the school system, where teachers can access the collection of STREAM tools and training on how to use them.

The foundation recently awarded innovative teachers \$15,000 in grants to support their classroom students — from "Student White Boards" to "Building Uku-

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lees.” One of the foundation teacher grants was awarded to Huntland’s hydroponics STEM class to support their growing and selling of microgreens to area restaurants. The foundation further invested in music endeavors through a \$5000 grant and purchased wireless microphones for student performances. In April, the foundation gave \$15,000 to purchase band instruments for middle and high school students to help combat the nationwide epidemic of limited school system funding.

Through the Educational Foundation for Excellence, Stewart, Barnett, and the other foundation board of directors, are carving out a new path in educational funding for generations to come, aligning with their aspiring motto of “Today’s learners... tomorrow’s leaders.”

Stewart, president of the foundation, has a passion for education. He was born and raised here in Franklin County with

a strong family background in education. Stewart is passionate about providing the highest quality of education to the children in the community.

Stewart said, “I think, speaking for our entire board of directors, we all have a passion for education and a desire to see all students of Franklin County receive the best educational enrichments we can provide.”

Alex Barnett, vice president of the foundation and an esteemed businessman and partner at Russell Barnett Automotive Family, joined Stewart, helping to create and fund a foundation that soon became an opportunity for all community members to

become involved, positively impacting numerous children within the community.

Barnett shares a similar passion for the organization’s cause.

“Our family is a big supporter of all things community. And we have a passion for education. And we want to equip our young people with all the information, all the tools they can have to be well-rounded,

▼ STREAM van with board members





and all the things they need to become good students and, in turn, good employees, citizens, and family members.”

Barnett also stated, “You have to think big and beyond. I want people to have big dreams that they can become the best at whatever they want to be. I want to see people reach their goals and become better than they are. And always becoming better, not being complacent.”

Stewart said, “The funding opportunities require fundraising on an annual basis. This, of course, can be exhausting to accomplish. So, in 2022, the foundation was joined by hall-of-fame coach and Franklin County Schools’ graduate Phillip Fulmer to establish a permanent endowment fund of 1 million dollars to provide an annual source of funding that keeps on giving for years to come. Other school systems’ foundations have done this in Tennessee. We are more than halfway there. In addition, after COVID, we have added an annual “Game Changers” fundraising event hosted by our foundation.”

Stewart and Barnett, on behalf of the foundation, want to thank all those who have made this endeavor for Franklin County students a reality. **GN**

▼ Students at the Huntland Thanks Ed Foundation for STEM Night Funds



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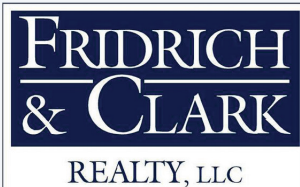
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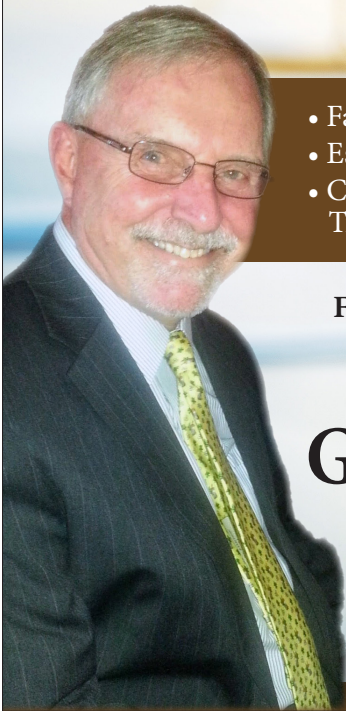


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A photograph showing a globe of the Earth being held up by many hands of diverse people. The hands are reaching from the bottom and sides towards the center where the globe is. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The overall tone is positive and collaborative.

# THE NEXT GENERATION





## The future is bright.

**I**N A world that often grapples with uncertainty and challenges, there exists a fountain of hope and inspiration: the next generation. These young adults, poised to become the leaders of tomorrow, are a testament to the strength and power that lie within them. Their unwavering determination, compassion, and innovative thinking assure us that the world is in good hands. As we witness their remarkable potential, it becomes clear that our communities are better, brighter, and filled with promise.

The next generation embodies resilience in the face of adversity. They possess an innate ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and their unwavering belief in a brighter future serves as a guiding light. These young leaders refuse to be defined by the challenges that precede them; instead, they transform obstacles into opportunities. Armed with an unwavering sense of purpose, they forge ahead, breaking barriers and redefining what is possible. Their visionary thinking and capacity to tackle complex issues with fresh perspectives instill confidence that they will navigate the intricacies of the world with poise and wisdom.

The next generation represents a beacon of hope and inspiration. With their resilience, visionary thinking, collective empowerment, and unwavering commitment to shaping a brighter tomorrow, they instill a sense of confidence and assurance. The world is in good hands as these young leaders emerge, poised to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. Their strength, power, and unyielding determination serve as a testament to the incredible potential within each of us. As we embrace their passion and support their endeavors, we forge a path forward marked by hope, progress, and a better future for all. **GN**

---

# THE POWER OF FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE

By Jeriah Brumfield

Photography by Brooke Snyder

**Kaleob used roadblocks as building blocks to live the life of his dreams.**



**K**ALEOB ASHLEY learned about the power of faith and perseverance at an early age. The 23-year-old Airbnb owner, coach, real estate investor, minister, and Huntland alum earned his undergraduate degree at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, where he graduated in three years with two bachelor's degrees: a business management degree with a minor in agriculture and another bachelor's degree in finance with a minor in social sciences.

Kaleob learned the importance of perseverance by observing how his father, Jerry Ashley, effectively coped with the adverse emotional, physical, and financial consequences of Kaleob's mother's debilitating drug addiction. He admired his father's ability to navigate life during such a difficult time in his and his children's lives.

"I remember as a kid seeing my dad work so many long workdays, so many long hours, a physically taxing job here at the sawmill and working on people's vehicles and cutting timber and things like that just to try and make ends meet," said Kaleob.

Kaleob did not have a strong relationship with his mother as a child, but when he was in high school, she joined a rehabilitation program, and during the last nine years of her life, they worked to rekindle their relationship.





▲ Jerry, Kaleob, and Davie Ashley

After battling a few relapses in between recovery, his mother passed away in January 2023. The strength and perseverance he saw in both parents would later help him navigate hardships as a young adult.

Amidst an already challenging season, Kaleob and his wife Megan received the news that Megan was diagnosed with cancer, but out of the storm always comes a rainbow. The couple expects a new addition to the family, Canaan Dale, in August.

The name “Canaan” came from the manifestation of God’s promise to His chosen people, which was “The Promised Land,” or “The Land of Canaan.” “Dale” is the middle name shared between Kaleob and his father.

With every happening in his life, Kaleob takes daily strides to remain encouraged and encourage others along the way.

“I apply those early examples of strength and perseverance now. Just take one day at a time. Then, take the next step, and then worry about the next step when it comes.”

Kaleob’s faith in God is a cornerstone of his identity, and he feels grateful for the deep-rooted Christian faith shared by his family.

Kaleob said his father always pushed him to become his best academically and in sports activities, but one of the biggest lessons he instilled was the importance of keeping his faith in God.

When he isn’t working or spending time with his family, he is preaching and spreading love to people no matter who they are or where they are from. His unwavering faith has driven him to devote much of his life to spreading the message of Jesus Christ.

“If there’s anything that anybody takes from me and my life, it’s that the kingdom of heaven is the most important thing. And there was a perfect creator, Jesus Christ, willing to lay down His life in our place,” he said.

Kaleob works full-time at his father’s sawmill company, Davie Ashley Sawmill LLC, and owns seven properties, 6 of which are investment properties, and 5 are vacation rentals.

At Davie Ashley Sawmill, Kaleob finds ways to solve problems by welding or fabricating for trucks, trailers, equipment, and production lines and fulfilling electrical maintenance needs.

Kaleob’s grandfather started the business in 1972, and the family celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022. The company has



▲ Kaleob and Megan Ashley



**“I apply those early examples of strength and perseverance now. Just take one day at a time. Then, take the next step, and then worry about the next step when it comes.”**

- Kaleob Ashley

taken a complete 360 since its beginning, and its growth, along with the hard work and dedication of his grandfather, father, aunt, and uncle — Davie Ashley, Jerry Ashley, Jana Smith, and Peanut Ashley — inspired Kaleob at a young age.

Kaleob said, “They took it, and they’ve grown it a lot over the last couple of decades. And from an early age, I saw a group of people who believed in God and their own personal ability to influence the community and other people. And that’s kind of where it all comes from.”

Kaleob attributes his success in business and passion for coaching children’s sports to the Franklin County community for guiding him and showing him how to use his talents to pour into his community.

“It was family members, teachers, guidance counselors, and even police officers, and people like that, loving me enough to steer me in the right direction that enabled me to steer other people in the right direction. It was basketball coaches that helped refine the things that I have and me as a person and as a player that allowed me to refine kids now into their best selves. And it was people in our community. It all has to come from understanding what the community has already done for you.” **GN**

---

# THE BEAT WITHIN

By Jeriah Brumfield

Photography by Brooke Snyder

Explore the musical roots and evolution of self-taught musician Zachary Brooks, from drumming pots to winning hearts.

---

**G**OD GAVE him the gift of music. Zachary Brooks spent his high school years performing music he created, using live instruments like the piano, drums, and sounds that captivated his audience.

Inspired by greats like Michael Jackson, Fred Hammond, and the Christian contemporary group Mercy, which his father was a part of, Zachary has built his career creating soul-stirring jazz, gospel, and neo-soul beats. He is a self-taught musician, and his passion for music was evident even before he was born, a sign that he was destined to be a musician.

“If I’m letting my mom tell it, I’ve been playing since before I was born. When I was in the womb, anytime she would go around the house playing music, that’s when I started kicking. So I already knew I would play music early on.”

**“If I’m letting my mom tell it, I’ve been playing since before I was born.”**

- Zachary Brooks



▲ Zachary Brooks



When the Winchester native was 5 years old, his family could hear him vividly clanging pots and pans together, making sweet music.

The drums are Zachary's "thing." You might find his drum covers to songs by artists like Red Hot Chili Peppers, Busta Rhymes, and Tupac.

The self-taught musician recently took a liking to the piano, playing the organ in church during worship services.

Zachary said he and his sister and musician, Ashley Brooks, got their start in their youth vocal group known as Faith. They later branched out to become autonomous musicians.

Today, you can find Zachary producing eclectic sounds for

Ashley or working in his home studio, where he records his own beats. You can also find his music on streaming platforms like Soundcloud, Apple Music, YouTube, and Spotify.

Zachary credits a few people, aside from his parents, for molding him into the creative musician he is today: pianist Kenny Dedrick and drummer Charles Russell, both former members of Mercy.

Zachary recalled the first time he ever entered the big stage. A festival in Nashville left him encouraged and motivated to take on a life of music production at just 17 years old.

"My cousin, Tom, who I just recently met — I found out he was a rapper, and he showed me a few things. We ended up just



playing around, and then eventually, he told me about a show he was doing out there, and said it was like a festival or something, and he took a liking to my sound,” the musician said.

“So that was probably my first big stage experience — being in that limelight in Nashville.”

Zachary shared the stage alongside talented former American Idol performers like Skylar Dixon, the sister of Christian contemporary artist Colton Dixon, and Jeremy Rosado. He played alongside Sam Magill in Tennessee and venues around Huntsville, Alabama.

Creatives typically feel the most creative when lying in bed, and their brain has settled down for the day. Zachary is no different. The long-time musician said he feels the most creative when he’s alone in his studio with his drums.

For Zachary, music is not just a hobby but a way of life. He said he feels the most at peace pouring his emotions into church worship sessions.

Despite facing challenges as a neo-soul musician, the producer and musician did not let that deter him from living out his childhood dreams and blessing others in the process.

“Sometimes, you can feel like at times it might not be received as well in some areas. And that’s okay because, especially for the music that we do, this is different. So sometimes, people might not catch on to it right away, but eventually, [they] end up liking it. But, being black in Franklin County, as an artist, you don’t really see a whole lot of us doing it on a major scale,” said Zachary.

If you ask Zachary what advice he would give to young, blooming artists with more eccentric music tastes, he’ll tell you to “keep going.”

“Never stop practicing. Never stop learning. Always learn about your area, too. Just perfect your craft, even if people are not listening, or even if you [have] one person who is moved by it, keep going.”

The Franklin County native said he loves his family and community, who helped shape him into the musician and man he is today.

Self-made musician Zachary Brooks is an undeniable force in the community, a hometown hero who has stayed true to his roots even as he has risen to new heights. His music speaks to the soul and tells a story that only he can tell — a true testament to the power of God-given talent. **GN**



**“Never stop practicing.  
Never stop learning.  
Always learn about your  
area, too. Just perfect  
your craft, even if  
people are not listening,  
or even if you [have] one  
person who is moved by  
it, keep going.”**

- Zachary Brooks

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# THE NEXT GENERATION JOINS THE BUSINESS

By Jeriah Brumfield

Photos submitted by Mary L. McConnell

## The Thompson family legacy continues.

---

**T**HOMPSON APPALACHIAN Hardwoods began in 1993 with “a vision and a prayer” that would stretch beyond three decades. The reputable family business began with Nordeck Thompson’s decision to branch out on his own, fortifying the foundation laid by his father’s sawmill in South Georgia. Following his uncle’s advice, Thompson researched and found a small green sawmill in Huntland, Tennessee, with the natural resources ready for harvesting. He, his wife, Mary Claire, and their six children uprooted themselves and settled in Huntland, running the mill with about 14 employees on one shift.

They expanded their business to become a fully integrated and self-sufficient supply chain as time progressed. Investing in improvements and taking strides to expand their business has become a cornerstone of their work ethic. Today, they employ over



▲ Mary Lee and Rob McConnell



▲ Nick Thompson, Claire Getty, Mary Lee McConnell, Mary Claire Thompson, and Nordeck Thompson



▲ Drew Getty and Rob McConnell

100 individuals and support numerous contractors, being good stewards of the area and fulfilling their initial vision and prayer.

Now, the next generation has taken on the business and is moving toward expanding it even further. Nordeck and Mary Claire Thompson's children and spouses serve on the executive team. Claire T. Getty is the chief financial officer, Drew Getty is the vice president of procurement, Mary Lee McConnell is the chief administrative officer, Rob McConnell is the vice president of operations, and Nick Thompson is the president and chief operations officer.

"We wake up every day with the mindset that God has a plan," said Mary Lee.

Every day the family leads with the knowledge that God has a bigger plan than they could ever fathom. She referenced a plaque on her father's old desk, now her own, that reads the bible verse, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path." (Proverbs 3:6)

Mary Lee described her siblings' journey to becoming the executive team as "organic growth." Each child had the space to explore their own talents and attend school before returning to contribute to the family legacy at Thompson Appalachian Hardwoods.

"We were able to come back in our own time," said Mary Lee.

The three siblings have an intriguing past, as each honed in on their own individual skills to make the company what it is today.

**“The word ‘rooted’ comes up frequently in our group — that we are rooted firmly, we have a firm foundation, but we are growing.”**

**- Mary Lee McConnell**

“We all came back into our roles and found our own space where we have our own strengths that really fit well with each other,” she said.

Nick Thompson, who grew up in the sawmill, graduated with a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Georgia in Athens and was the first to return after graduation in 2011.

Their sister, Claire Getty, and brother-in-law, Drew Getty, transitioned to Huntland in 2012. Prior to both meeting and completing their master’s degrees at Georgia Institute of Technology, Claire also received a professional degree in landscape architecture from the University of Georgia. At the same time, Drew graduated from Clemson University with a degree in natural resources management.

Mary Lee graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in service management and returned to Franklin County, engaged to her now-husband, Rob. Rob was Drew’s roommate and graduated from Clemson University with a degree in print production and design.

Mary Lee jokingly remarked, “Rob proposed to me, and then shortly after, my dad proposed to him, so we came back about eight years ago ready to get to work.”

The three siblings and their additional three siblings were raised in a family that emphasized the importance of teamwork and family unity.

“As we grew up, [our mother] was adamant that we work together as a team and that we are a unit. We are a family that loves each other,” she said.

The children grew up attending leadership camps and programs that exposed them to new ideas about leadership and team unity, and their faith was at the center of it all.

If you ask Mary Lee to describe her family’s dynamic in one word, she’ll tell you “rooted,” representing their firm foundation and unwavering faith in God. Another is the word “overcomer.” Even when faced with challenges, such as losing their home to a house fire in 2005, and a mill fire in 2019, the family persevered with Nordeck and Mary Claire’s guidance, instilling in their children the resilience to overcome any obstacle.

“The word ‘rooted’ comes up frequently in our group — that we are rooted firmly, we have a firm foundation, but we are growing. We are firmly planted, but we are also going to bloom. We will not be stagnant.”

For Mary Lee, watching her children stand in the log yard watching the large loaders pass by serves as a reminder that staying grounded and maintaining faith can lead to extraordinary outcomes. The culture of the company is founded on teamwork and creating lasting memories.

“We have a fun culture here. We enjoy what we do, but the people we work with really make it what it is.” **GN**

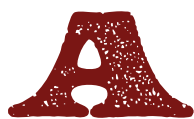




SAVOR SUMMER'S  
**EASY  
LIVING**

Family and friends sweeten the season.

By Tina Neeley



**A**S SUMMER heats up, so do our grills and smokers, giving our kitchens a well-deserved break. Casual worknight dinners, weekend celebrations, and holiday parties bring together families for good food and, sometimes, fireworks. Plates filled with barbecue, burgers, and dogs, joined by potato salad, cole slaw, chips, and dips, are balanced as we gather in lawn chairs or sit by the pool. Homemade ice cream and cookies sweeten the occasion. Summer living — and its foods — are easy! **GN**



## **TANGY GRILLED BEEF**

*Submitted by Rosalind Lindsey*

- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1/4 t. dried thyme leaves, crushed
- 2 t. packed brown sugar
- 2 t. lemon juice
- 2 t. vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 lbs. boneless beef sirloin steak, cut 3/4" thick

In a large bowl, mix soup, sugar, lemon juice, oil, Worcestershire, garlic and thyme. Brush mixture on both sides of steak. Place steak on hot grill and cook until golden brown and slightly charred. Turn steak over and continue to cook until desired level of doneness. Bring remaining soup mixture to a boil and serve with steak.

## **ROASTED CORN ON THE COB**

*Submitted by Betty Pirtle*

- 8 ears fresh corn in husks
- 1/3 c. Italian dressing
- 2 1/2 T. water
- 1 T. chili powder
- 1/8 t. ground red pepper

Carefully peel back husks, exposing corn. Leave husks attached. Remove and discard silks. Combine Italian dressing, water, chili powder, and red pepper in a small mixing bowl. Stir well and brush over corn. Return husk to original position and tie the tips with wire twist-ties. Grill corn over medium hot coals for 30 minutes or until the corn is tender. Turn corn every 5 minutes.

## **OLD FASHIONED ICE CREAM**

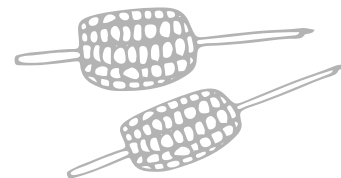
*Submitted by Keith Hamner*

- 6 eggs
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 qts. whipping cream
- 2 T. vanilla
- approx 1 qt. milk

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs. Add sugar and beat until creamy. Stir in whipping cream and vanilla. Pour into ice cream freezer. Fill container with milk to reach 3-4 inches from the top. Cover and place in freezer bucket. Fill bucket with alternating layers of crushed ice and rock salt. Freeze according to freezer directions.



*Submit your recipes to be included in Good News Magazine and the Exchange Cookbook:  
[www.southernaprons.com](http://www.southernaprons.com)*







# The power of perspective

Consider a larger view.

By Tina Neeley

**W**E SAW the sky but little else through the window in the room where we sat. The gray and white clouds marched briskly by as blues and grays traded places.

She was convinced the clouds would bring rain later in the day and said so every few minutes.

“No, I think they’re moving out, not in. That blue sky peeking through is going to bring sunshine,” I said, and for a minute, it seemed we’d settled the forecast.

Turning her eyes back to the clouds, she said, “I think it’s going to rain later today.”

“It looks like it, but I think they’re moving out, not in,” I said, as if for the first time.

Our seats in the memory care facility limited our view. Walls and locked doors stood between her and a larger view. I had the benefit of the morning’s forecast — a different perspective based on the training of a meteorologist, an authority

in the field. Her ability to grasp the good news of improving conditions was limited by more than the walls and doors of the facility. Dementia had stolen her ability to hold on — even for more than a minute — to reassurance that a brighter day was promised and the blue in the morning sky would spread, not diminish.

Aren’t we often the same?

So many times, life’s circumstances feel like they should come with storm warnings announcing their arrival and promising their departure. Struggles, as numerous as the clouds, obscure our view. Weariness from the realities of the weight of parenting, caring for others, paying bills in today’s economy, and responsibilities at work and home distract and overwhelm us. Grief, anxiety, and depression can also block the light of hope.

We can’t always trust what we see.

We have an enemy who loves to see our busyness confuse our thinking like

the clouds of dementia. We are not his prisoners, confined to the locked doors and walls of this world. The devil hopes we forget our direct access to the true authority and the truths of His Word. We are beloved children of the one who fulfills His purposes for us and provides rest and strength for our next steps.

He who sits above the clouds sees the beauty and promise of our days, our moments. He loves us. He is with us.

Isn’t the sun always shining despite the clouds?

Now, that’s worth repeating! **GN**

---

## **AFTERTHOUGHTS:**

*“In the shadow of your wings, I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.”*

-Psalm 57:1-2





CHAPTER 3 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local things to do.

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PHOTO SUBMITTED BY THE SOUND



**the sound**  
*God is Real*



The Sound  
Levi, Jacob, and Rob Mills

# The Sound

## event at First Baptist Church in Estill Springs

Clinton Vincent discusses the significance of concerts like The Sound at First Baptist.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by The Sound

**T**HE SOUND of music fills the air as the audience closes their eyes and lifts their hands, lost in the moment. Christian music concerts offer an unparalleled experience that touches the soul and invokes emotions beyond words. The melodies that echo through these hallowed halls have the power to uplift, inspire and connect us to the divine. It's a truly otherworldly experience that stays with you long after the concert has ended, leaving you with a renewed sense of faith — and an overwhelming feeling of joy.

Clinton Vincent, the interim worship leader at First Baptist Church in Estill Springs, said, "I believe that music begins your worship. Music is a way to share with others the love of God. Music has a way of getting into our souls. And it assists in our expression and response to God in the church."

Visitors from Nashville, Murfreesboro, and even as far as Huntsville travel to attend concerts held at First Baptist Church in Estill Springs.

The Sound music concert is just one of the church's many Christian concerts. And this is the third year that First Baptist Church has held concerts and had groups such as Brian Free and Assurance, The Kingsmen, and Gold City Quartet.

The concert on Saturday, July 22, will feature The Sound. This Dove Award-winning family band includes Jacob, Levi, and Rob Mills, who perform their country-pop worship music for a time of worship and connection with God and his beloved children.

The band is well known for its ability to combine genres like country, pop, and gospel into a compelling melody, producing spiritual lyrics that deeply connect each individual with the Holy Spirit. Their lyrics don't just resonate with its

concert audiences but with the Christian industry as a whole, earning various accolades.

The Sound's 2022 album, *God is Real*, won the 2022 Dove Award for Country Album of the Year. The group released their album in April 2022, and five months later, the album received over 3 million digital downloads and numerous accolades from within the Christian music industry.

According to Vincent, all concerts the church hosts are free, but visitors can give a love offering.

"What's unique about these groups is that they travel Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. And this is how they make their living. They go around and sing at churches, other venues, festivals, and things like that," he said.

"So when you think about all the expenses with traveling, it takes a lot of money to do that. And so we want to be able to support them in their efforts of sharing the gospel through that love offering."

After the concert, The Sound will have a product table to purchase CDs, T-Shirts, and other merchandise.

Vincent noted that visitors could visit the group after the concerts, receive autographs on their CDs, take pictures, and enjoy a time of fellowship.

Attending concerts at First Baptist Church in Estill Springs allows the community of believers to worship together. We also have an open invitation for anyone to come and enjoy the music and worship.

Vincent said, "They're not just our locals, but our broader community. Someone might come to the concert broken, and they may find renewal in either a testimony from one of the singers, through a story, or just the presentation of the gospel, which could change your life." **GN**

# COMMUNITY EVENTS



## A Spudtacular Event!

Photography by Brooke Snyder

Potato lovers big and small came out for the annual Decherd Potato Festival. Patrons enjoyed food, live music, entertainment, and local shopping. The annual celebration honors the history of Decherd when the city provided the country with potatoes.





## Spending today with some-bunny special

Photography by Brooke Snyder

Kiddos and Easter lovers of all ages enjoyed a day of brightly colored eggs and supporting local businesses at the Cowan's Spring Pop-up Market & Egg Hunt held at the Monterey Station in Cowan. The day's events included an egg hunt, craft vendors, and photos with the Easter Bunny with Paige Michelle Photography. The event was free and open to the public.



Memphis Snyder



# Get a good look



We wish we could publish all the photos we have, but we have too many! Browse our online gallery for free or purchase photos to be mailed to your home. All proceeds from photos go to local nonprofits.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### June 16

**5:30 pm The Rain  
Teen Center**  
1910 Sharp Springs Rd.  
Winchester

Dinner, snacks, activities,  
and games provided  
for your teen and their  
friends between 6th and  
12th grades.

### June 17

**10:00 am Children's Miracle  
Network**  
Old Franklin County High  
School football field  
839 Dinah Shore Blvd.  
Winchester

Events will include the  
annual car, truck, and  
motorcycle show as well  
as craft and food vendors.

**9:00 pm Last Rebel Live**  
VFW on the lake  
6200 AEDC Rd.  
Estill Springs

### June 24

**7:30 pm The Black  
Jacket Symphony**  
Twin Creeks Village  
1260 Lynchburg Rd.  
Winchester

Fleetwood Mac's  
"Rumours" will be  
performed by the  
symphony.

### July 1

**6:00 pm Franklin County High  
School Class of 1983  
40th Reunion**  
Franklin County  
Country Club  
912 Country Club Rd.  
Winchester

Contact Cheryl Posey  
(931) 580-9915  
for more information.

**8:00 pm Sixwire**  
Twin Creeks Village  
1260 Lynchburg Rd.  
Winchester





**8:00 pm School of Rock**  
Twin Creeks Village  
1260 Lynchburg Rd.  
Winchester

A film about one burning-low rocker, Dewey Finn (Jack Black), who's fired from his own band. Under the pressure of debt, he takes a job in the prestige school of Horace Green where he teaches the kids how to rock.

### July 14

**7:00 pm Badfish – Sublime Tribute**  
Twin Creeks Village  
91 Slip-A Way  
Winchester

Badfish, a Tribute to Sublime continues to channel the spirit of Sublime with a fury not felt for some time. Badfish makes their mark on the audience by playing with the spirit of Sublime. They perform not as Sublime would have, or did, but as Badfish does!

### August 4

**6:30 pm Gospel Singing**  
Huntland Community Center  
100 Moore Lane  
Huntland

Groups performing will be Carol Henshaw & Company, the Sims family, and The Gardners.

Admission: Love Offering



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# Men: Step up with a **check-up.**

## June is Men's Health Month.

There is no better time to start taking better care of yourself. Eat well, exercise, get plenty of rest and don't forget to schedule your annual wellness exam. Take the time to talk to your provider about any health concerns you may have and to ask about important preventive health screenings like a colonoscopy, prostate exam, diabetes test and heart check. **Step up with a check-up!**

To find a provider, visit  
**[SouthernTnWinchester.com](http://SouthernTnWinchester.com)**



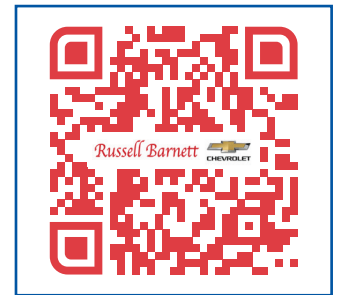


*"We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future."*

*- Franklin D. Roosevelt*



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