

Good News

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Unveiling the Heart
of Downtown
Bowling Green



Eric Leach
on Leaving a
Lasting Legacy

selfless

shining a light on Bowling Green's best

Meet Johnny Webb, Suzanne Ogawa, & Doug Wiles

ISSUE 1 2023

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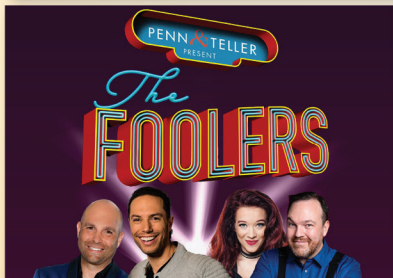
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Selfless

Instinctual sacrifice for a better world

THE MERRIAM-WEBSTER dictionary defines the word selfless as “someone who has no concern for self, or unselfish.” As the world keeps turning, it may feel like selfless people are few and far between. It can be rewarding to fight with your elbows in a dog-eat-dog world where unapologetic selfishness gets you to the top. Just because a certain type of behavior is more visible and more noticeable doesn’t mean that all hope is lost. In fact, there is so much more to celebrate.

In this issue, I can’t help but think of dolphins going out of their way to help each other. They watch out for other dolphins... and they watch out for other species as well. As reported in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, a wide variety of animals have shown something called ‘altruistic behavior.’ Altruistic behavior basically means animals in the wild—even when it could be dangerous—go out of their way to help other animals.

Stanford’s text reads, “Altruistic behavior is common throughout the animal king-

dom, particularly in species with complex social structures. For example, vampire bats regularly regurgitate blood and donate it to other members of their group who have failed to feed that night, ensuring they do not starve” (2003).

That selfless behavior is not a learned behavior. It’s something instilled in them from birth, just like an instinct. Why would it be instilled in species of animals across the globe and skip humans? I believe — even in the darkest of times — that we humans also have a natural instinct for altruistic behavior. There are people who are just simply... good. Just because that’s who they are.

For this issue of Good News, I want to highlight people in our community who show selfless behavior. Even when we don’t notice it, we’re surrounded by people who would sacrifice if it meant that we got to live a better life.

To those selfless people, those we write stories about and those we don’t, we thank you. **GN**


Wesley Bryant,
MANAGING EDITOR

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PUBLISHING PARTNER Mark Mahagan

MANAGING EDITOR Wesley Bryant

VP OF SALES Ken Holtzinger

LAYOUT ARTISTS Brianna Brubaker, Melissa Davis

PHOTOGRAPHERS Brooke Snyder, Ashleigh Newnes

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Tina Neeley, Sara Hook,
Kali Bradford, Jeriah Brumfield, Gabriel Huff, Paige Cushman,
Amanda West, Adara Huntley

PROOFREADER Michelle Harwell

ART PRODUCTION MANAGER Todd Pitts

PRINT AD DESIGNER Ben Adams

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Lorri Allen, Faith Cashion, Amanda Cox,
Kevin Maples, Janet Mullins, Matt Scott, Sissy Smith, Sandra Thomas

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DIGITAL ASSISTANTS Ginger Jones, Marisa Thornton

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DIGITAL DESIGN DIRECTOR Clinton George

WEBSITE DESIGNERS Crystal Melhaff, Ashley McMurry

SEO CONTENT WRITER Anna Sharp

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNITY MANAGER Sarabeth Bray

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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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Submit a positive story on our website:



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Photography by Brittany Johnson



Breast cancer detection app created by Western Kentucky University alumna.

IN 2003, while taking a shower, Jessica Baladad noticed a lump in her breast, which led to its removal, and she began conducting regular breast self-exams. In 2018, following a medical dismissal, the self-exam saved her life, leading to her developing the “Feel For Your Life” social media campaign and app. She created the app because she realized women weren’t conducting self-exams due to fear, lack of instruction, or shame. The app allows users to set self-exam goals, learn how to conduct exams, access risk-reducing tools, track progress, and receive monthly reminders. Since its release in 2021, the app has been downloaded over 10,000 times. GN



Thomason kicks off the school year with a new position as principal.

DR. LYNDSEY Thomason was recently named principal of Richardsville Elementary School. Thomason is a seasoned educator with over 13 years of experience in the Warren County public school system. She has spent the past four years at Richardsville Elementary School, serving as the student services coordinator and the dean of students. Before that, she worked as a physical education teacher for nine years at Briarwood Elementary. A life-long lover of education, Thomason said she is excited about this opportunity. GN

Madison receives a \$40,000 wheelchair thanks to NHRA legend.

DARRELL GWYNN, a National Hot Rod Association hall-of-famer, returned to Beech Bend Park’s dragstrip raceway, where he celebrated his first national victory 42 years ago. This time, however, he was there to witness another man’s triumph. Kent Madison, paralyzed from a spinal cord injury after a car crash 16 years ago, needed a new wheelchair, which Gwynn and Michael Bartone of Bartone & Lebor Racing donated. The \$40,000 ride, custom-fitted for Madison, allowing him to stand up, resulted from a partnership between Gwynn and Bartone. Madison was thrilled with his new wheelchair. GN



Warren County archers excel in Scholastic 3D Archery National Championship

The Warren County archers competed in the 2023 Scholastic 3D Archery National Championship in Rend Lake, Illinois, with all three archers making it into the top five finals and advancing to elimination rounds. Ava Jones was crowned National Barebow Champion for the second consecutive year. At the same time, Rush finished as National Runner-up for compound bow, and Alex Jones placed fourth in the nation in barebow recurve. Coached by Tom Patterson and Shaun White, all three shoot for Western Kentucky Bowhunters. GN

Bowling Green celebrates diversity with International Festival.

CIRCUS SQUARE Park will transform into an international paradise of nationalities on Saturday, September 30, for the annual Bowling Green International Festival. Sponsored by Service One Credit Union, nationalities will come together to share their cultures and honor the heritage and diversity among the city's residents through music, dance, demonstrations, authentic foreign foods, "edutainment" activities, cultural displays, and an international bazaar. GN



Kentucky State Police marks 75 years of service with celebration of progress and growth

KENTUCKY STATE Police celebrated 75 years of service on July 1, marked by a celebration of its progress. Established in 1948, KSP has grown to nearly 1,900 employees, and with initiatives like the Angel Initiative, Safe School programs, and Internet Crimes Against Children division, it continues to serve the Commonwealth. The anniversary serves as a time for troopers to reflect on their history and strive toward continued growth for better service to Kentuckians. GN



Russellville athlete, Lee Dockins, represents Kentucky at 2023 Special Olympics World Summer Games

THREE KENTUCKY athletes, including Lee Dockins of Russellville, competed in the Berlin Special Olympics World Summer Games. This was Dockins's fifth trip to the games, having won more World Games medals than any other Kentucky Special Olympics athlete since her first trip in 2007. The event ran from June 17-25, during which Lee competed for two days. GN



Stuff the Bus Family Run raises funds for local students

A RECORD 200 participants participated in Bowling Green Athletic Club’s seventh annual Stuff the Bus Family Fun Run at Chaney’s Dairy Barn. According to Stuff the Bus founder Tony Rose, the annual event raised funds to “level the playing field” for children on the first day of school. The event is a part of the organization’s giving campaign, which aims to collect school supplies, allocate grants to classrooms and teachers, provide scholarships to deserving students, and more. GN

Kentucky Museum and Folklife Program to showcase “Sonic Landscape” with \$75,000 grant

THE KENTUCKY Museum and the Kentucky Folklife Program are set to launch the “Sonic Landscape” exhibition in early 2025 to celebrate the rich musical heritage of Southern Kentucky. Supported by a \$75,000 grant from the Bowling Green Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, the exhibit showcases artifacts, audiovisual stories, photographs, and other mementos not seen before. The project, an outgrowth of years of oral history interviews and documentation efforts, seeks to share South Central Kentucky’s musical tradition and legacies with visitors in an immersive and engaging way. The exhibition will also become a resource for sharing ongoing work and studies. GN

Following news snippets by Deborah Highland West, City of Bowling Green Public Information Officer



Duncan Hines Days draws visitors from 28 states into Bowling Green.

FOOD, MUSIC, and other family fun drew 16,000 visitors from 28 states into Bowling Green for Duncan Hines Days in June. Planned and organized by the city of Bowling Green, the weeklong festivities included a parade, restaurant week, concerts, canoe/kayak race, and many other family-friendly events. Duncan Hines Days celebrates Bowling Green’s own Duncan Hines, the man behind the cake mix, one of the country’s first food and lodging influencers. GN



Downtown BGKY Harvest Festival is nearing.

BOUNCE HOUSES, pumpkin smashing, and food make for an entire day of family fun beginning at 10 a.m. October 14. Plan to visit Circus Square and Fountain Square Parks along with Soky Marketplace. GN



Construction crews began work on the College Street Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation.

Construction crews began work on the College Street Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation. The historic bridge, downtown in Riverfront Park, was originally built prior to the Civil War and later rebuilt after soldiers destroyed it. A \$1.6 million state grant and \$400,000 in city funds will pay for the rehab project expected to be complete in the fall. GN

The Bowling Green Police Department is celebrating 200 years of service in 2023.

THE AGENCY'S 19th police chief, Michael Delaney, said the department's "commitment to service, integrity, and respect has remained steadfast" for 200 years. Officers serve the city's 42 square miles. GN



Bowling Green residents and business owners will soon see new faces in the city's police department.

BOWLING GREEN Law Enforcement Academy Class 6 is scheduled to graduate on September 29, 2023.

The graduation ceremony will include a procession from the police department to the Capitol where the new officers will be sworn in. GN



Construction began on Bowling Green's first-ever joint fire and police training center.

CITY OFFICIALS held a ceremonial ground breaking for the \$16 million facility in May. Of the \$16 million, \$10 million in funding came from the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Completion is expected next year. GN



Impractical Jokers and Misery Index Star, Sal Vulcano to perform Friday, September 29 at Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center (SKyPAC.)

On Friday, September 29 at 7 p.m., Impractical Jokers and Misery Index Star, Sal Vulcano will bring his 2023 comedy tour to the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center (SKyPAC). Vulcano is an improvisational and stand-up comedian, actor and producer, that is a member of the Tenderloins-a comedy troupe that includes Impractical Jokers co-stars: James Murray, Brian Quinn, and formerly Joe Gatto.

Sal Vulcano will embark on his solo tour and bring a night of comedy to audiences everywhere. Tickets go on sale to the general public on Friday, July 14, and are available online at www.theskypac.com, by phone at (270) 904-1880, or in person at 601 College Street in downtown Bowling Green. The SKyPAC Box Office is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.

ABOUT SAL VULCANO

Staten Island native Sal Vulcano is best known for creating and starring in truTV's long-running hit "Impractical Jokers," and for "The Misery Index" on TBS. In addition to performing as part of The Tenderloins Comedy Troupe to sold-out arenas, Sal

founded the No Presh Network in 2020, hosting "Hey Babe!" and "Taste Buds" podcasts.

ABOUT ARTS OF SOUTHERN KENTUCKY

In 2020, with the assistance of the Warren County Fiscal Court and Judge Michael O. Buchanon, Orchestra Kentucky assumed management of the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center (SKyPAC). The new organization, which also includes BG Onstage and the Ramsey Theatre Company, is titled Arts of Southern Kentucky, and is led administratively and artistically by Jeffrey Reed.

The Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center is a premier performing arts venue located in downtown Bowling Green, KY. The facility includes the Rita and Jim Scott Concert Hall, a 1,700-seat state-of-the-art auditorium; the Goodwin Gallery, the primary art exhibition space; the Renshaw Education Center which houses the Carol Wedge Studio Theater - a flexible 2,600 sq. ft. space for intimate productions and gatherings; several multi-functional rehearsal halls/classrooms; and the Denny and Carol Wedge Children's Art Gallery. GN



Bowling Green Board of Commissioners recognized the Bowling Green Police Department for 200 years of service to the city.

THE CEREMONY began with BGPD Honor Guard presenting the colors as a trumpeter played the National Anthem on June 2, 2023.

Deputy Chief Penny Bowles emceed the event and told attendees in 200 years, the police department has been served by only 19 police chiefs before calling to the podium the City's 19th Police Chief Michael Delaney.

Delaney first recognized all of the department's retirees in attendance thanking them for their service.

He acknowledged the City's status as the fastest growing city in Kentucky and attributed that growth to the safety of the city.

"[People] want to come to Bowling Green. They want to bring their families. They want to bring their friends because they feel safe," he said.

"Some things have changed over the last 200 years but our commitment to service, integrity, and respect has remained steadfast," Delaney said.

Retired BGPD Sgt. Shane West, the department's historian, provided a glimpse into the history of the department beginning in 1823 with part-time officers, who were called watchmen, to the present day officers serving Bowling Green's 42 square miles of city limits.

State Rep. Kevin Jackson presented the department with a legislative citation.

"No community will continue to grow and prosper if its citizens don't feel safe," Jackson said.

"Chief Delaney it's my honor, on behalf of the Kentucky House of Representatives, to present you and the Bowling Green Police Department with a Legislative Citation for 200 years of service to the Bowling Green Community. Chief thank you, and may God bless you, and the men and women who wear the blue," he said.

Mayor Todd Alcott, flanked by Commissioners Dana Beasley-Brown, Melinda Hill, and Sue Parrigin closed out the ceremony with a Proclamation reading recognizing the police department's bicentennial.GN



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BOWLING GREEN

HOT RODS





CHAPTER 2 OF 3

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

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Our stories are based on submissions from local people. Submit yours here:



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Photography by Amanda Guy

LEAVE THEM BETTER THAN YOU FOUND THEM

Eric Leach takes pride in influencing the lives of others.

By Kali Bradford // Photography by Brittany Johnson

ERIC LEACH is a busy guy. A father of two boys, husband, community servant, and successful businessman, his days often start early and end late. While his responsibilities are many, you'll never find him too busy to take a minute for someone. He knows the value of taking time to listen and the importance of connection. While being successful in each area of his life, Leach knows that real success is leaving those he comes into contact with better than he found him.

Sports has always been a mainstay in his life. As the youngest of four siblings, Leach said they were required to be involved in a sport and music.


"There were two things we were required to do for a period of time as far as extracurricular: music and sports. Both helped to challenge us in different ways," said Leach.

Leach's love of sports would follow him into adulthood, where he would land a job working in minor league baseball. His longest stint to date has been with the minor league team, the Bowling Green Hot Rods, which he has called home for almost a decade as president and Chief Operating Officer.

"Some of the things that I'm most proud of is winning three championships in four years in the nine completed seasons I've been here," he said. "But it's much more than winning; it's about the relationships with our partners, season ticket holders, and the fans. If I could hang my hat on one thing, it's everything we've been able to do for the community as a venue. At the end of the 2022 season, we did about 160 events on top of Hot Rods baseball. We had a goal of making this ballpark what I like to call 'a beacon for Warren County.'"







**“IT’S MUCH MORE THAN
WINNING; IT’S ABOUT THE
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR
PARTNERS, SEASON TICKET
HOLDERS, AND THE FANS.”**

-Eric Leach



Leach's success with the Hot Rods attracted the attention of the Mid-South Conference. In early 2023 he was offered the commissioner position for the 12-team conference with member institutions in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio.

"I have mixed emotions," he said. "I'm excited about the new opportunity with the Mid-South Conference. It's also bitter-sweet because I'm leaving Hot Rods after 10 years, and that organization has just become such a part of my life. I have two boys, 12 and 9, and I think I started working here before my 9-year-old was born. You leave a part of yourself when you've been with an organization that long."

Now embarking on this new journey, Leach is excited to build new relationships.

"I told the schools when talking to them that I don't necessarily want the biggest conference, but I want the best conference and just to make sure that all the member schools are healthy, thriving, and vibrant," he said.

“I TRY TO WAKE UP EVERY DAY AND DO MY BEST. I GENUINELY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE.”

-Eric Leach



While success has certainly followed Leach in his career, challenges have also been a part of Leach's life.

“In 2002, I started experiencing facial twitching and just this intense and sharp pain. The doctors diagnosed me with Bell's palsy, which was interesting because the pain was extreme, and one doesn't have pain with Bell's palsy,” he explained.

When the facial paralysis and pain returned, Leach visited an ear, nose, and throat specialist after moving to Virginia.

“I was properly diagnosed with a Schwannoma tumor at the University of Virginia. I went in for a seven-hour surgery that went 11 1/2 hours,” he said.

Non-cancerous, Schwannoma is a rare type of tumor that forms in the nervous system. Leach later learned that the tumor was much larger than anticipated and had grown into the base of his brain. A second surgery to remove more of the tumor would leave Leach with permanent facial paralysis, some vision loss, and only about 10% of hearing in his right ear.

According to Leach, due to dedicated physicians at Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, he underwent a game-changing third surgery that restored his hearing to around 80%.

Leach said his faith and relationship

with God helped him through this challenging season.

“I had a conversation with God after my surgery and told him I was here to do whatever he needed me to,” he explained. “It changed me and how I dealt with others and treated people. I realized that this life is a precious gift. Years later, people ask if I would change things, and I don't know if I'd go back because it shaped me into the person I am today. There are difficult times, but it's overcoming that. It's interesting because people who know me say they don't even notice it anymore because they say it's just me they see, not the paralysis.”

Whether overseeing a National Sports Conference, serving for a nonprofit, or being a devoted father and husband, Leach said it's all about doing his best each day.

“I'm just me,” he said. “I try to wake up every day and do my best. I genuinely care about people. It's interesting because I am a diehard introvert and like to be alone to recharge. However, I'm in a very extroverted job. I love investing in people, trying to bring out positive change, and always leaving people better than I found them. And a lot of that's just my upbringing. My dad and mom were the same way. It's the example they set that I can carry out and try to do as well.” GN



Hometown Girl

Telia Butler shows pride for Bowling Green
as downtown development coordinator

By Kali Bradford // Photography by Amanda Guy

THERE'S SOMETHING special about people who love their hometown. They are deeply connected to where they grew up, with memories of childhood friends, local landmarks, and cherished traditions. Home is more than just a physical location for these individuals — it's a source of pride and identity. They're passionate about preserving the local culture, supporting small businesses, and building a strong sense of community. Whether they live there their entire lives or move away, the love for their hometown never fades. This enduring connection makes them unique and inspires others to appreciate the beauty of their hometowns.





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better place than I
found it – precisely
what my parents,
grandparents, and
men before them
have done."*

-Telia Butler

For Telia Butler, there is always time for her to share how amazing her hometown of Bowling Green is. Whether she's pausing for a quick bite, stopping at one of her favorite downtown spots, or on duty as the Bowling Green Downtown Development Coordinator.

Born and raised in Bowling Green, Butler has a family that goes back to the early 1800s. From a young age, Butler knew she would always call Bowling Green home.

"I did not want to leave," she said. "My family has a small cattle farm just outside of Bowling Green, and I've always been a family-oriented, small-town kind of person. My family all live either on the farm or directly across the street from the farm. We are blessed to have that beautiful Kentucky rolling hill background in our backyard."

A graduate of Western Kentucky University with degrees in history and news journalism, Butler ventured into the workforce looking for a way to use both. She also hoped to be able to promote her much-loved city. Throughout her career, Butler has served in several positions that have promoted Bowling Green, such as Public Relations (PR) Director for the Bowling Green Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Marriott Area Director of Sales for Anderson Hospitality, and Throwback Thursday reporter for WNKY NBC/CBS, along with Membership & Marketing Director at The Club at Olde Stone.

She is also active as the secretary of the Southern Kentucky Hospitality Association and is a founding member and past president of the American Marketing Association of Bowling Green.

In December 2021, Butler stepped into the position of downtown development coordinator for Bowling Green. The position

did not exist before 2021, and Butler would be the first person to hold such.

Her role would be to create a superior downtown experience for locals and visitors. She would organize events, share news on digital platforms, and use tourism, hospitality, and marketing skills to invest in improvements. She would also aid tourism and economic development efforts to help expand a prosperous downtown area in Bowling Green.

"I was hired because of my tourism background to promote and better build downtown into a destination and preserve Bowling Green's identity in the process," explained Butler. "I get to return to my journalism roots and run our downtown social media and part of our city's social media in telling stories about Bowling Green characters, events, landmarks, and history. I also have the blessing of having relationships with our Bowling Green media. Because I had those relationships 10 years ago, when I built them working at the visitor's bureau doing PR for Bowling Green Tourism, I get to go on television or radio or talk to the paper and brag about my hometown and its greatness. The idea is to build the downtown Bowling Green brand and identity, keep it alive, and inspire the rest of Bowling Green and the counties that touch us to embrace that as well."

Butler said that since taking the position, it is still somewhat surreal, but she sees it as an opportunity to honor and preserve a town she loves so much while helping promote all the great things in it.

"The role and the concept did not exist," she said. "Sometimes it's hard to believe it's all happening, but we are moving forward beautifully. The community has also

stepped up, took the ball, and ran with it. We are all just in awe of how well received this was and if this indicates how downtown's brand and the downtown feeling and energy is making its way through the rest of the community."

As she continues navigating and growing through her position, Butler said she hopes to show others Bowling Green's past, present, and future through her eyes. Those same eyes witnessed the good of what her parents, grandparents, and ancestors did and the same good she hopes to leave for those to come.

"I grew up in a family of people who loved what they did because it was close to their hearts," she said. "My aunt always told me to find a job where I could be a tourist and tell stories. I found this opportunity by accident and fell into it. My family taught whole generations of kids in our community growing up, and I'm just sharing that same value and importance of the community in a different capacity. I want to leave this community in a better place than I found it — precisely what my parents, grandparents, and men before them have done. If I can leave the entire community better than the way it was in 1990 when I was born into it, then I'll be happy, and my job is done." GN



education that comes with celebrating Dairy Month. Steve and his wife Kara started dairy farming in Tennessee. It's a way to get behind the scenes of agriculture. For many people, high-energy, high-producing farmers do a lot of work in terms of raising and caring for cattle, being on the farm, and wear-

work goes into dairy farming. The Nash family started in 2020. "We'd al-



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stories of local people who are putting others before themselves.



doug
wiles

by jeriah brumfield
photography by
Amanda Guy

the driving force behind bowling green's lacrosse revolution

doug wiles's pioneering role in bowling green lacrosse

STEP INTO the heart of our close-knit town, and you'll discover incredible experiences and exciting activities that bring our community to life. But our neighbors' dedication and hard work truly make a difference, enriching lives one day at a time. One shining example in the Bowling Green community is Doug Wiles.

Wiles joined the community with his family in 1984 and has lived here ever since. As a proud graduate of Western Kentucky University (WKU), he felt a deep desire to give back to his alma mater. For 30 years, he dedicated himself to his craft, and after retiring, he decided to work for the Warren County Sheriff's Office and our city's parks and recreation program.

With two sons, Gabriel and Alex, who were deeply involved in martial arts for

several years, they decided to expand their horizons, and Wiles and his wife encouraged them to pursue lacrosse. The two boys immediately fell in love with the sport and joined a travel team and the region's only youth lacrosse team.

When Wiles's oldest son started attending Bowling Green High School, he eagerly joined the inaugural lacrosse team. However, his younger son, who was in middle school then, lacked the same opportunity. Wiles organized after-school lacrosse practices to ensure his youngest son and his friends didn't lose their skills during the off-season and had a chance to play in high school.

What started with Wiles's son and three friends quickly blossomed into a team of 40 enthusiastic kids. Encouraged by this response, Wiles revived the travel

team and sought assistance from Bowling Green Parks and Recreation to secure practice locations and field rentals five years ago.

Wiles remarked, "I began working with Bowling Green Parks and Rec to rent fields and set up practice locations, and then I was able to host games by renting fields from them. After some time, the city parks and rec were familiar with my program, and they asked me to come on board with them and set up a middle school program for parks and rec. So I was happy to do that."

Despite having no prior experience, Wiles played a crucial role in spearheading local lacrosse programs. Today, our city's parks and recreation department proudly supports six lacrosse teams from kindergarten to eighth grade, engaging in



thrilling games against teams from various towns. They also hold exhibition games with the South Warren Middle School lacrosse team.

Our city offers spring, summer, and fall leagues to keep our community's children active and engaged. Three teams in each division compete in regular leagues each season, playing eight games throughout the season. Additionally, they hold weekly practices a couple of times a week.

The lacrosse program saw an impressive turnout of 75 to 100 kids eagerly participating this past spring and fall. During the summer, a smaller developmental league allows 35 to 50 kids to maintain their skills and stay connected to the sport they love.

Numerous athletes have progressed from the recreational league to high school and college lacrosse.

Wiles said, "All our programs are geared toward enabling the boys and girls to transition to high school lacrosse and continue to play. And we've had great success with that."

Former college players and current high school coaches have also returned to the program, strengthening its foundations and sharing their invaluable expertise.

With heartfelt joy, Wiles said, "I really enjoy watching the kids continue their high school career and then advance to the next level."

Lacrosse has a unique way of captivating athletes from various backgrounds,

drawing them into its exciting and dynamic realm.

He explained, "Players often come from a soccer, baseball, or football background. They transition to lacrosse and, often, find that the game is much more exciting than they expected it to be. It's a fun sport to watch, play, and be involved in."

Wiles's remarkable journey has inspired other parents to step up as lacrosse coaches, witnessing the transformative impact on their own children who played in the recreational league. The program now boasts a former University of Kentucky women's lacrosse goalie as a volunteer coach.

Starting a recreational league of any kind presents its fair share of financial challenges and logistical hurdles. Fortunately, Bowling Green Parks and Recreation does everything possible to provide assistance.

Exciting news awaits local lacrosse enthusiasts as the Kentucky High School Athletic Association recently voted to sanction lacrosse as an official high school sport starting from the 2025 school year. This development will undoubtedly drive increased participation and boost morale for the sport in our city. Wiles envisions a program with both boys and girls lacrosse teams in the near future. **GN**



"I really enjoy watching the kids continue their high school career and then advance to the next level." - Doug Wiles

inspiring change and leaving a legacy

former mayor johnny webb's
enduring commitment to
community innovation

WOVEN INTO the very fabric of our identities as proud community members are the legacy of former mayor and chairman Johnny Webb's Operation Paint, Repair, Improve, Develop, and Enjoy (PRIDE) — a special beautification effort that has left a mark on our hearts. This initiative has taken our community from the depths of economic struggle to a thriving hub of innovation, entrepreneurship, economic growth, and pure excitement. Project PRIDE embodies the transformative power of an unwavering passion for community development.

After completing his studies at Western Kentucky University in the 1960s, Webb initially ventured into the business world, selling visual products for 3 1/2 years. But his entrepreneurial spirit soon led him to establish Southern Schools Supply, a retail chain known as Parent Teacher Stores. This endeavor flourished for 25 years, solidifying Webb's reputation as a thriving regional business owner.

The businessman remarked, "I started with basically nothing and turned it into a rather large company where we had 28 salespeople traveling in about seven states and the retail stores."

But fate had something unexpected in store for Webb as his business neared its final chapter. Approached with the idea of running for mayor, he initially brushed it off, considering it a mere passing thought. Yet, persistent voices and a growing belief in his capacity to effect positive change slowly swayed his heart.

In 1992, Webb assumed the role of mayor, committing to serve a single term and make tough decisions guided solely by his unwavering dedication to the community's best interests.

johnny
webb

by jeriah brumfield
photography by
brittany johnson





Project PRIDE embodies the transformative power of an unwavering passion for community development.





“We have grown. The growth has been phenomenal.”

- johnny webb

Stepping into leadership during challenging times, Webb inherited a city plagued by low employee morale and neglected residential and commercial properties that hindered industrial recruitment.

“One of the things I did when I was mayor is that I got involved with economic development, and then our city had fallen into disrepair. Residential and commercial properties were not being maintained. And that was hurting us as far as industrial recruitment. So I started a beautification nonprofit called Operation Pride,” he remarked.

Undeterred by the daunting task ahead, he and a strong team of dedicated community members embarked on a mission to rejuvenate Bowling Green. Webb’s unwavering passion for economic development led him to establish Operation PRIDE — a nonprofit organization that enhances the city’s aesthetics and fosters a deep sense of community pride.

Operation PRIDE revitalized Bowling Green through various initiatives. Notably, they rescued and restored the historic L&N Train Depot, which had deteriorated and served as a refuge for the less fortunate.

Recognizing the depot’s significance to the city’s rich heritage, Webb and his team, with the help of our community, successfully acquired the property and restored it, investing approximately \$6 million in the endeavor. Today, the revitalized depot stands proudly as a museum, housing a historical collection of rail cars and educational exhibits that captivate school groups and tourists alike.

Operation PRIDE’s efforts went beyond the train depot. The initiative initiated a grand beautification campaign, focusing on the city’s main passageways. This involved cleaning, enhancing, and standardizing street signs. Landscaping ef-

forts added vibrancy with newly planted trees and carefully cultivated wildflower beds.

Webb and his team had an innovative vision for I-65 interchanges. They raised \$4.6 million in private funds to attract travelers to Bowling Green. Operation PRIDE maintains all five interchanges and a 10-mile stretch of the interstate. The result was a captivating city gateway with stunning stone walls and bold letters showcasing Bowling Green’s identity. Fluttering American and military branch flags greet visitors, honoring our patriotism.

“And it’s not over with yet. We’re still going,” the former mayor said.

Over the last decade, Bowling Green experienced a remarkable renaissance. The city’s economic growth has been nothing short of phenomenal, with the creation of thousands of new jobs and a flourishing local economy.

Webb continues to volunteer his time and actively contribute to the betterment of our community. His impact on Bowling Green serves as an inspiring example of how a passionate leader can rally a community, inspire change, and leave a lasting legacy of progress and pride.

So come, wander through the hills of Bowling Green, and witness the profound impact that dedicated leadership and an abiding love for the community can have on the very fabric of our lives.

“We have grown. The growth has been phenomenal. We’ve got about 7000 jobs here that we need people to fill. The economy is booming here in Bowling Green, Kentucky. So, we’re working hard on developing workforce housing and trying to get out in front of that and working toward improving our infrastructure to accommodate the growth that we anticipate 20 years from now. We will double the size of our city,” Webb said. **GN**



suzanne
ogawa

by tina Neeley
photography by
brittany johnson

 CDR Micheal G. Hoff
MIA 1/7/1970

a mother's fight; a daughter's mission

suzanne ogawa carries
on her mother's legacy
of service.

WE'VE SEEN it countless times and may appreciate its significance. We may have looked at it close enough to allow its somber black-and-white design to fill us with some sense of loss or appreciation for the sacrifices made to secure our freedom. Or we may have hurried past it, accustomed to seeing it flying below our beloved American flag.

The National League of Families Prisoner Of War (POW)/Missing In Action (MIA) flag is more than printed nylon; it's a fabric whose threads are the more than 81,000 Americans who remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf Wars, and other conflicts.* It represents the families that grieve their loss and whose lives were changed by a telegram, a phone call, or a knock on the door.

It exists due to the fight of one woman for families unable to display a service banner symbolizing the sacrifice of their service member. It represents wives of missing Vietnam soldiers writing letters, making calls, and pressing for answers when told not to ask questions. And it represents a legacy of service to others who need to know they are not forgotten.

Suzanne Ogawa was 2 years old in 1970 when her mother, Mary Hoff, received word that her husband, U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael G. Hoff, had been shot down over Laos, leaving her to raise five children alone. It left her with no personal effects, body to bury, or details surrounding his mission. When her world crashed to the ground, like the plane her husband piloted, Hoff's mission began.

Her own life of service started at home and broadened from there. She sacrificed and sent her children to a private school to receive an education that would become the foundation of Ogawa's faith. At the same time, Hoff quietly worked with the families of the missing and with Vietnam veterans as they returned home, service fueled by faith and peace restored to Hoff following her husband's disappearance.

"I have such great examples of service in my parents because [my dad] sacrificed his life for our country," Ogawa said. "But my mother sacrificed everything for us. She fought for them and my dad. She supported our veterans because they weren't welcomed home. They were spit on and had no support."

Hoff assisted her son during his battle with brain

cancer and spent 25 years serving people experiencing homelessness. Her last battle was with Parkinson's disease, and again, she fought faithfully and with a joyful spirit. She passed away in 2015.

In the early 2000s, she asked Ogawa to represent the family at a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) update meeting. It was an opportunity to review a three-inch file on her mother's efforts and a small bit on her father's disappearance. Ogawa saw the depths of her mother's battle with new eyes.

"There was a Western Union telegram that my mother sent to Henry Kissinger and letters and Freedom of Information Act [requests] that she filed for us because there was lots of cover-up at the time. My dad was shot down over Laos, and we weren't supposed to be at war with

Laos. Anger came across [through the file contents] that I'd never really witnessed in my mother because, thank goodness, she rediscovered her faith in God and was able to reconcile and find peace with it, even though she never stopped fighting to bring him home," Ogawa said.

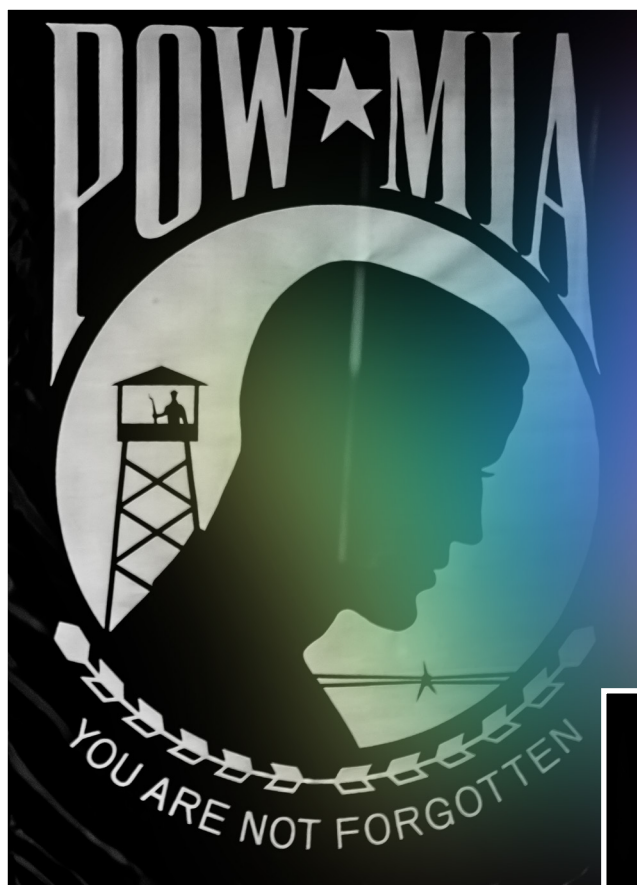
There are many layers to Hoff's story and her fight to let the forgotten know they're seen, but it's not the true heart of the matter. The heart is the heart of the matter, encouraging others to find their calling and service to others and walk in it.

"To me, it's really more about educating people; it's a history lesson, but I also hope it inspires people to think about how they can serve," Ogawa said. "People have losses for different reasons. We're not alone in this; we're all trying to live the best way we can. Arthur Ashe, one of our favorite tennis players, said, 'True heroism is remarkably sober and very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.' Anybody that serves anyone in any capacity, no matter how big or small it is — that's what we're here for."

Ogawa continues to support POW/MIA families, and every time the remains of one missing are returned, it stirs hope.


She said, "Every time I read about another one being brought home, regardless of the conflict, it's a wonderful thing. It gives us hope. I was there with a fellow MIA daughter [at the burial of the remains of one MIA], and we both shed a tear because we hope one day we get this kind of closure. Even though you'll still have the loss, it's nice to have that closure and give them the proper burial you want for your loved one."

Letting someone know they're not forgotten gives hope for every kind of loss. Where might you offer hope today? GN





"True heroism is remarkably sober and very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost." - Arthur Ashe



Mom, I'm hungry!

After-school snack time issues are solved with these delicious and nutritious recipes.

By Kali Bradford

KIDS ARE barreling through the door after school, complaining that they are starving! It's the age-old gripe of children, no matter how old. We all know that kiddos often get hungry between meals. Unfortunately, many packaged snacks for kids are very unhealthy. They're often full of refined flour, added sugars, and artificial ingredients. Snack time is a great opportunity to sneak some extra nutrients into your child's diet. Instead of highly processed snack foods, fill your child's tummy with whole foods that provide energy and nutrition. Check out the following kid-friendly snacks that are both healthy and delicious. **GN**

Veggie Dip

Submitted by Sherry Bell

- 1 c. sour cream
- 1 pkg. cream cheese, 8 oz., softened
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/2 c. parsley, chopped
- 1 c. salad dressing
- 1/2 c. green onion, chopped

In a blender, combine sour cream, cream cheese, garlic, parsley, salad dressing, and green onions. Blend until mixed. Refrigerate until chilled.



Yogurt Parfaits

Submitted by Rosina Eicher

1 pkg. cream cheese, 8 oz., softened
1/2 c. powdered sugar
1 box white chocolate pudding mix, 4 oz.
1 c. milk
32 oz. plain yogurt
1 tub whipped topping, 8 oz.
fresh fruit
granola

In a bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar. Add pudding and milk; mix well. Add yogurt and whipped topping. Layer with fresh fruit and granola in individual clear cups.



Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

Submitted by Faye Bonner

2 c. sugar
2 T. cocoa
1 stick margarine
1/2 c. milk
1 c. nuts
2 T. peanut butter
2 t. vanilla
2 c. oats

Mix sugar, cocoa, margarine and milk in a skillet; boil 1 minute. Stir in nuts, peanut butter, vanilla and oats. Drop by spoonfuls onto waxed paper.



Just as you are

By Kali Bates

FOR OVER 30 years, children's television host Mister Rogers came into the homes of millions via our television sets and told each of us one of the most important things a person could say to us.

"I like you just the way you are."

There are over 900 episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," which means he told us he liked us just as we are approximately 905 times.

I was one of these people. I was born in 1983 and can vividly remember watching Mister Rogers on PBS while visiting my grandparents in Nashville.

In my mid-30s, I was reintroduced to "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" through what seemed to be a national reemergence of popularity for the late children's television host. A movie was made, a documentary was released, and so were a few podcasts, among other things.

Jumping on the trend, I downloaded a podcast called "Finding Fred" that delved into the life, thinking, and work of Rogers. I immediately fell in love with all the things I had felt were so uninteresting to me as a child.

For example, the way he talked. He slowed his cadence to make sure that children could understand him better and feel that they were in a conversation with him and not being talked to.

The puppets he used helped children identify with different emotions and personality traits. He also spoke about adult topics, such as death, assassination, and race. He helped children to be able to process and understand these difficult topics.

Finally came the real tear-jerker. The thing that, even now, makes me tear up just writing it. That fact that Mister Rogers liked us just as we are. We didn't

need to be anything else but ourselves. We were loved and accepted just for being us—such a simple statement with profound meaning.

Imagine, if you will, someone telling you that they like you just as you are—genuinely meaning that you are loved completely through all your pain, suffering, joy, weariness, flaws, and imperfections.

In a world where we are constantly bombarded with the need to be anything but ourselves, Rogers wanted us to know that being ourselves was all we needed to be.

It's important to note that Rogers wasn't the originator of this message, and he wouldn't want to be. As an ordained Presbyterian minister, he learned it from a much higher power who calls us daily to remember that he, too, loves us just as we are. God loves us so much that he sacrificed us through Jesus' death.

What a truly wonderful and humbling feeling that we are loved just as we are, in our brokenness and flaws. We are embraced and reminded that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.


I'd like to think that Mister Rogers knew the seeds of acceptance he was planting. He knew they would grow and bloom long after his work was done.

I am relistening to the podcast now and being reminded of how significant the impact was from his little show on public television. I am also reminded of just how important kindness is and how vital being kind and present in the moment is to the very essence of being human.

We should all take time to remember the power of kindness and accept each other just as we are. And remember that God's love is gracious, and He loves us just the way we are. **GN**





A blurred background of a building with a red object in the distance and a blue sleeve in the foreground.

Telia Butler



education that comes
celebrating Dairy
his father Steve, his
and his wife Kara
family started dairy
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problems, and wear-

ork goes into dairy
n. The Nash family
of 2020. "We'd al-



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Good Times

CHAPTER 3 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local things to do.

60 Community Events

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Photography by Amanda Guy

Sports and Biz Luncheon - July 18, 2023



Photos submitted by Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce

The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the inaugural Sports & Biz Luncheon. This luncheon aimed to highlight the local sports and business communities, creating connections, and facilitating new opportunities.



1. Camron Justic, Julie Milam, and Atlee McHeffey 2. Coach Travis Hudson, Rick Wilson, Kyle Wolz, Todd Stewart, and Coach Tyson Helton
3. Jim, Amy, and Justin DeCesare with Caden Mattingly 4. Parker Ciampa and Verne Moore
5. Lauren Turner and Sarah Vaughn 6. Mason Towery and Taylor Manning

Bowling Green Police Department Bicentennial - June 2, 2023



Photos submitted by
Deborah Highland West,
City of Bowling Green
Public Information Officer

The Bowling Green Board of
Commissioners recognized the
Bowling Green Police Department
for 200 years of service to the city.







◀ Kim Myers and Hannah Russell enjoying the Sports and Biz Luncheon

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

August 30

**4:30 pm August Start-Up
Garden**

For more information
contact Lauren Turner
(270) 901-4610
lauren@bgchamber.com

September 1

**11:00 am Celebrating
10 years of business**

Bowling Green
Fireplace & Grill
1427 River St., Ste. C
Bowling Green

September 8

**9:00 am Harvest Fest
@ The Barn**

The Potter Farm Events
& Wedding Venue
1100 Rich Pond Rd.
Bowling Green

Friday and Saturday.
Vendors, food, fun,
and more!

September 9

**7:00 pm Exile LIVE
at the Capitol**

416 East Main St.
Capitol Arts Center

Price: \$38-\$88
For more information
(270) 904-6040

September 10

**12:05 pm Greensboro
Grasshoppers at
Bowling Green
Hotrods**

Bowling Green Ballpark
300 E. 8th Ave.
Bowling Green



September 16

12:00 pm Michael Scott
 Harley-Davidson
 Bowling Green
 251 Cumberland Trace Rd.
 Bowling Green

September 17

**3:00 pm Rain Man:
 35th Anniversary
 (Fathom Event)**
 Regal
 323 Great Escape Dr.
 Bowling Green

6:00 pm **Worship, Prayer, & the Word**

NewLife Church
 1423 Scottsville Rd.
 Bowling Green

Come join us as we
 worship, pray, hear hear
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For more information
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