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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Ahead of the Curve

The thrill of the learning curve coaster makes the ride to the future worth it.

THE METAL beams *tick, tick, tick* with every inch the cart climbs to the top of the hill. The experienced thrill-seekers in the front cart raise their hands as the coaster inches toward the climax of the ride. Experienced or not, every heart on the ride starts beating faster. *Click.* And the cart takes a dive. The winds move fast, but your stomach drops faster. The speed reaches new levels, then slows with a squeaking halt. The heart rate may still be elevated, but it will come down in due time. The curve may be scary, but mastering it is worth it.

Like turning in a test, the scary part is over. Now all you can do is wait.

“Please raise your hands,” the conductor in uniform announces over the ride’s speaker system.

Our educators are the conductors of this exhilarating ride, guiding our children over the peaks and through the valleys with wisdom, patience, and an unwavering commitment to progress. To be “ahead of the curve” is to lead, to innovate, to blaze trails where others will follow. It’s a place where our local educators stand not just by profession but by calling. With each lesson they teach and every question they encourage, they’re not only transferring knowledge — they’re transforming the future, one curious mind at a time.

In this issue, we celebrate the torchbearers of the classroom, who keep the flame of enlightenment dancing even in the strongest winds of change. They map the topography of young minds and chart courses that will navigate them through life’s myriad complexities. These are the mentors who recognize that the steepest part of the curve is often where the most learning takes place, where character is built, and where perseverance is learned.

Thank you, educators, for every moment spent drafting the blueprint of intellect and character within the halls of learning. You are the architects who draw out the talents within our youth, nurturing not just scholars, but citizens of the world. Your classrooms are incubators for innovation, where “ahead of the curve” isn’t just a measure of academic pace, but a holistic approach to fostering leaders, thinkers, and dreamers.

With gratitude and admiration, we dedicate this issue to you — may you always lead the charge, and may your students always be inspired to stay ahead of the curve. GN

Wesley Bryant,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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# Goodwill

## CHAPTER 1 OF 3

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

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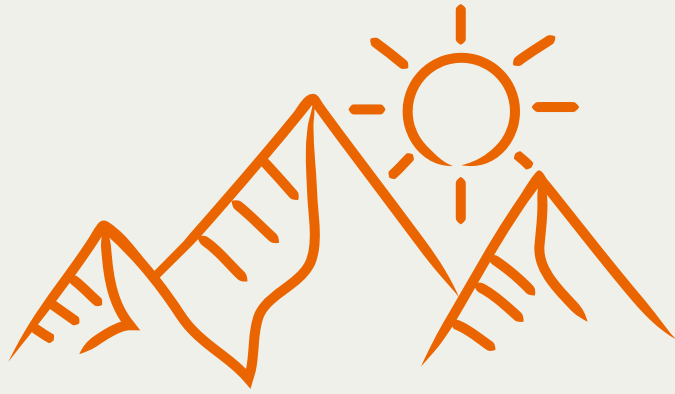
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# Igniting *POTENTIAL*

Cubmaster Robert Harvell  
sparks connections to nature and the world.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder





Cubmaster Robert Harvell



Branch and Robert Harvell

**B**OOTS CRUNCH over dead leaves, a symphony of anticipation echoing in the tranquil woods as sunlight flickers through the canopy, speckling the faces of young explorers eager for knowledge lost in the digital age. Their classroom: a mossy forest floor, alive with the rustle of unseen creatures and the whisper of ancient trees. No Google Maps guided their paths here, only compass and map, instruments of self-reliance in a world increasingly tethered to screens. Birdsong, no longer background noise, becomes a language to decipher, whispering stories of unseen wings and hidden nests. And fire, coaxed from the heart of flint, pulses like a living heart, teaching lessons older than smartphones — patience, resourcefulness, and the spark of human connection. This isn't just camping; it's an invitation to today's youth to step away from the glow of screens, where today's generation learns to navigate by starlight, not hashtags, brightening their hearts by the embers of the world of nature through Scouting.

Yet, the lessons of the woods extend much farther, according to Robert Harvell, Cubmaster of BSA Cub Scout Pack 329.

He said, "Pack 329 promotes family values. Scouting is non-denominational, and faith has been part of the Scouting movement since it was founded. Each den has a requirement, for example, 'Fellowship and Duty to God' (Bears) or 'Duty to God and You' (Webelos). I enjoy incorporating citizenship and faith into what we do. I think that's so important for our kids today. We open every pack meeting with the Scout Oath, Scout Law, and the Pledge of Allegiance. These are the principles we try to live by."

The pack learns the guiding principles of the oath, laws, and pledge. Harvell learned them through his childhood Scouting

experiences, like his father before him, an Eagle Scout who was very involved and influential in Harvell's Scouting journey.

Harvell entered the program in 1985 in what was then called the Tiger Cubs. He advanced through the Cub Scout program, earning the Arrow of Light, and moved to the Boy Scout troop as a 10-year-old in Troop 83 in the Chickasaw Council in West Tennessee. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 1997.

As he leads Pack 329 today, he advances Scouting's mission of preparing young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. And the pack has grown substantially in the past two or three years. Lincoln County's packs consolidated; there were only six to eight active cubs when Harvell volunteered as Cubmaster in 2021.

"I think we have grown organically, through word of mouth, and because of the involvement of all the parents who help out. Honestly, Pack 329 wouldn't be anything without our parents. I am so grateful for their support of what we are doing and their involvement. We are up to 47 registered Cubs now and growing," Harvell said.

Although many things have changed since he entered Scouting as a boy, it's the same program at heart.

"Everything changes with time in one way or another. One main example is the inclusion of girls into the program, but the fundamentals and values are the same," he said. "The Scout Oath and Scout Law have not changed."

Adventure isn't a one-size-fits-all affair. Each Cub, from wide-eyed kindergarten Lions to seasoned fifth-grade Webelos, belongs to a den, their own little pack within the pack. Kindergartners, still roaring with lion-hearted curiosity, learn the ropes as Lion Cubs. First graders, proud as Tigers, hone their skills to earn their stripes. Wolves, howling with teamwork in second grade, tackle challenges to achieve their rank. Bears leave their paw prints on the path to their Webelo year, which culminates with the Arrow of Light, the highest Cub Scout honor. Each rank is a stepping stone, each den a family, guided by the same unwavering star — the Scout Oath and Law.

The Scouts meet every other Monday throughout the school year and plan at least one monthly outing. In addition to campouts, past events include building wilderness survival shelters, sessions with local first responders, partnering with the local Veterans of Foreign Wars to clean veteran grave sites in Lincoln County cemeteries, training in fire building and safety, and the classic pinewood derby where the Cubs build and race their cars.

Harvell said, "My goal is to get the kids outside having fun together in experiences some of them may never have had the





opportunity to without Scouting. We teach skills that may be lost in a generation or two: fire building without matches or a lighter, knot tying, tree and plant identification, finding your way with a compass and map, or cooking with a Dutch oven over an open flame. Hopefully, we're planting seeds for a lifetime of loving the outdoors."

And the more who are involved, the greater the harvest. Harvell's time with the pack began with him and only a few other adults. He's thankful for the growth of all ages involved today.

"New parents are stepping up and asking what they can do; some are even

registering as adult Scouters! This is very cool. I tell people, you will get out of Scouting what you put into it," he said. "The families joining now are putting a lot of effort into making sure the program is fun and successful. We're all reaping the rewards and loving the experiences."

As the Scouts advance through the program, they carry newfound skills — knots tied with confidence, maps read with understanding, fires coaxed from flint and tinder. But more importantly, they take the embers of values like self-reliance, respect for nature, and the strength of community. Their values will continue to guide them

long after the campfire flames fade. This is the true legacy of Scouting, not just teaching lost skills but planting seeds of character that will flourish throughout their lives, making them good Scouts and good people. **GN**





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# *Rural roots reach* **IVY HEIGHTS**



Lainie Harrison



Edie Martin

Two local educators receive Yale Educator Awards.

By Tina Neeley // Photos submitted by Lainie Harrison and Edie Martin

**W**HEN JAY Simms moved to Yale University's campus last summer, he took more than his hopes, dreams, and dorm furniture; he took the influence and inspiration of his former teachers and counselors. It's not something Simms or Yale take for granted. Both celebrate the educators' investments — the university through its annual Yale Educator Awards (YEA) and Simms through his nomination of Edie Martin and Lainie Harrison for the honor.

Amongst 385 outstanding educators from 43 states and 28 countries, 80 teachers and 32 counselors earned the distinguished YEA recognition. Remarkably, each honoree came from a different school, with only Martin and Harrison and another pair as exceptions.

Simms' YEA nomination for Martin and Harrison wasn't just a formality but a way of tracing the footprints they'd left on his educational path. Their influence clearly led him toward his goals.

"Mrs. Edie inspires me to be a better person and contribute to my community. She showed me that positivity can be found in any situation through compassion and acceptance. Each day, Mrs. Edie not only brought positivity into my life but into the lives of so many students at Lincoln County High School (LCHS). I felt [that] nominating Mrs. Edie was an obvious choice because of her caring attitude toward each LCHS student," said Simms.

The honor surprised and amazed Martin, an English teacher, and Harrison, a guidance counselor.

Martin said, "I struggled with a combination of gratitude and disbelief, ultimately a feeling of unworthiness at being recognized. It's Yale, and I'm Edie — we couldn't be more polar opposites. What an honor to be chosen among so

many brilliant educators! That he would take the time and trouble in the midst of a busy transition period to nominate us just filled my heart."

"I don't quite have my mind wrapped around the scope of the 'nation-wideness' of this award. [There were] external and internal smiles for days and days," Harrison said.





*I'm fiercely protective of my students, and sometimes, it feels as though classroom educators are battling alone. I don't want to let them down.*

-Edie Martin

Harrison's dedication to the success of the students is evident.

"Mrs. Harrison was truly always there for me, and I cannot even begin to describe how dedicated she is to her job. Every classmate I spoke with about Mrs. Harrison agreed that she was always there to answer any question we had and guide us down our own roads of success," said Simms. "Whether it be responding to an email at midnight, helping someone through a hard time, or just giving someone a hug, Mrs. Harrison is passionate about helping every individual student at LCHS."

The award and Simms shine a light on the impact and influence of Lincoln County educators. Education becomes the conduit for building relationships that propel students' success.

"Both Mrs. Edie and Mrs. Harrison are representatives of how amazing the Lincoln County School System has been to me and are just two of the countless teachers, administrators, and staff that inspired me and inspire students each day to achieve their goals," Simms said. "There are so many people who have become not just high school advisors but true friends to me over the years, and I couldn't have gotten that anywhere outside of Lincoln County, Tennessee."

These lines in Brad Paisley's song, "Letter to Me," strike a chord with Martin: and you should really thank Ms. Brinkman/She spends so much extra time/It's like she sees a diamond underneath/And she's polishing you 'til you shine.

Martin said, "I want to always be Ms. Brinkman. I'm fiercely protective of my students, and sometimes, it feels as though classroom educators are battling alone. I don't want to let them down. [I'm challenged] to find it in myself to do what's best for my students in spite of the current climate surrounding public education."

Harrison agrees. "From time to time, it feels like public education and higher education are being cast into a shadowy place. I feel Mrs. Martin and I are thankful to work at a high school in a community filled with positives, and the perception of education from here in the community is positive and supportive," she said.

The award is a nod to all that is good in education in Lincoln County.

Amy Clemons, LCHS assistant principal, said, “We are fortunate in Lincoln County to have so many wonderful educators in our schools. Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Martin are two of those exceptional educators, and we are proud that Yale University recognized their commitment to making a difference in the lives of so many young people. Their work ethic and dedication to student success is unmatched.”

Their care for students and their futures drive Martin and Harrison.

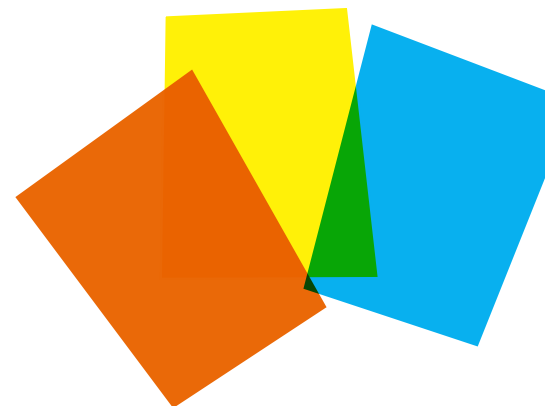
Harrison said, “Inspiring and supporting students is achieved just by being kind and actually caring about your students. You accomplish this by having a big heart for the job. I love seeing all students have success — big or small. Fortunately, the career path I’ve taken has landed me in a position to be a helper to students and their families. The impact of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school employees is seen every year at graduation.”

Students empowered by their former educators fill Yale’s lecture halls and labs. Lincoln County has a seat at the table, and Martin and Harrison have the engraved desk sets and congratulatory letters to prove it. **GN**



*Inspiring and supporting students is achieved just by being kind and actually caring about your students. You accomplish this by having a big heart for the job. I love seeing all students have success — big or small.*

*-Lainie Harrison*



# FPU'S STUDENT UTILITY BOARD CREATES TOMORROW'S LEADERS

*Fayetteville Public Utilities (FPU) seeks ways to give back to the local community, and youth programs offer many opportunities to make positive changes that have a lasting impact. For this reason, FPU CEO/General Manager Britt Dye launched the Student Utility Board (SUB) in 2010.*

Since then, fourteen groups of high school seniors have served on the student board, meeting once a month throughout the school year to gain valuable knowledge about FPU's electric, water, wastewater, natural gas and telecom services. The seven-member board consists of three students from Fayetteville High School, three from Lincoln County High School and one from Riverside Christian Academy.

Through their SUB experiences, students not only gain valuable utility knowledge and career skills, but they also serve alongside FPU employees as they participate in numerous service projects, such as the Harvest of Hope Food Drive and Day of Service benefitting Hands of Mercy Outreach Center. These projects provide students with opportunities to connect with their community and make a positive difference in the lives of their neighbors.

*Top:* Assistant Electric Operations Superintendent Mike Buntley takes Student Utility Board member Hayden Swinford for a ride in a bucket truck.  
*Bottom:* Telecommunications Supervisor/Substation Technician Eric Reeves helps Avery Raby, student board member, prepare fiber to be spliced.



**“FPU not only provides their customers with outstanding utilities, but they also make a difference through acts of kindness and service throughout the community.”**

**– Avery Raby**

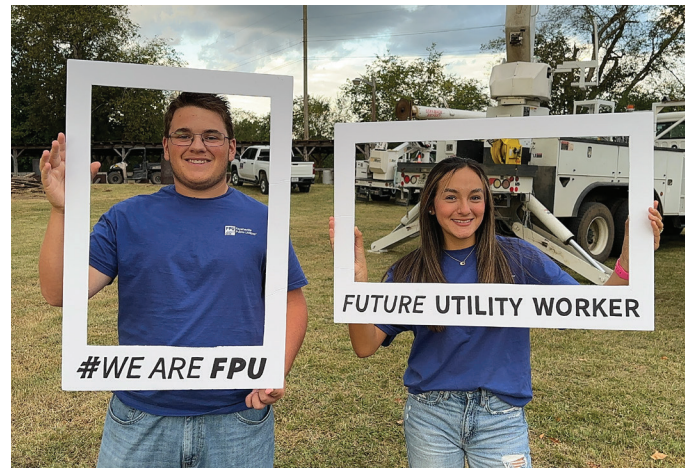




According to Dye, “When I think back on all the students who have served on FPU’s Student Utility Board, I am encouraged as I watch them grow into leaders and volunteers in our community. Student board members become adults who understand the tremendous hard work and dedication FPU employees contribute to Fayetteville and Lincoln County through the services we provide. In fact, several members of the student board have returned to FPU as interns and employees. That speaks volumes about FPU’s outstanding merit and the value of our student board.”

The Student Utility Board’s term follows the school year and runs from August to May. Throughout the term, SUB members earn points by participating in monthly meetings and community events. Each May, FPU awards a student a \$1,000 scholarship based on the points earned and the written responses given on the scholarship application.

“By sponsoring the Student Utility Board, providing scholarships and offering internships, FPU is investing in our community’s future,” added Dye. “We care about the education of our local students, and we want to help them achieve their career goals. Through our involvement with youth programs, our hope is to inspire and equip the next generation of creators, innovators and leaders.”



Top: The 2023-2024 Student Utility Board (back row, from left) FPU CEO/ General Manager Britt Dye, Hayden Swinford, Eli Layne, Javon Fox and Case Creson (front row) India Bryson, Saira Martinez and Avery Raby. Bottom: Eli Layne (left) and Saira Martinez (right) lend a helping hand in capturing photos of participants interacting with FPU employees and equipment during FPU’s Customer Appreciation Day.

Scan to view students as they speak about their experiences as members of FPU’s 2023-2024 Student Utility Board.



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# “ I’M STILL COACH MEDLEY.

A Unity School coach sees the blessings of cancer and community.

By Tina Neeley // Photos submitted by Jennifer Medley

**T**HE LITTLE girl who always loved school would never have imagined how deep her love for school would grow. She couldn’t know how her participation in athletics was weaving a tapestry of love and support for her future self. Life led the girl who grew up immersed in school and athletics, Jennifer Medley, to Unity School, but cancer joined the hearts of everyone at Unity to her.

Even before the roar of the stands became the hushed tones of the treatment clinic, Medley felt the tug of coaching. From middle and high school basketball and softball

to volleyball and college softball, the pull of teamwork grew stronger with each step. Her cancer battle, however, deepened her understanding of community and unwavering support.

“So many people influenced me growing up. To this day, my parents have not missed anything I’ve done. And there are other role models, like teachers and coaches,” said Medley. “I’ve had two of my middle school coaches still come and watch my teams playing now. So, it has been full circle. I didn’t know it would be that way back then, but I always thought I’d love to be this kind of role model for others.

You use athletics to get through a lot of life lessons.”

In August 2022, when the results of a routine annual physical exam revealed a mass measuring 10.4 centimeters on her ovaries, athletics offered more than a life lesson. It created a network and support system that teamed with Medley’s family, doctors, and friends to see her through an ovarian cancer diagnosis and treatment. It was high-grade serous carcinoma, stage 2, a fast-spreading cancer that is usually hard to detect early.

Medley relied on God’s grace, running head-on into what she couldn’t control.



JENNIFER  
MEDLEY



“

I fought for them, and I could feel their fight for me coming through on the court. I connect with all my players over the years, but I will share a special bond with this group of girls that I will cherish forever.

- JENNIFER MEDLEY

“You have to let things go, and I’m not a let-goer; I’m a doer. But you have to let it go. You can only take on what you can do each day and put your faith in God above and [the medical team] taking care of you,” said Medley.

Also taking care of and encouraging her were her parents, John and Cathy Gooch; her brother and his wife, John and Selina Gooch; their daughters, Emma and Ella; and Medley’s boyfriend, Todd Nunn.

Following two surgeries, Medley underwent chemotherapy from December 2022 to March 2023. Countless friends and family members offered to go with her to her treatments.

“I almost had to draw names for people to go with me. Everybody wanted to go,” she said. And in many ways, they all did — especially for her last treatment.

Completing your last chemotherapy treatment is a big deal — a bell-ringing big deal. Medley knew about the bell, but she didn’t know about the bells in the hands of all of the staff and students in the gym at Unity waiting for the FaceTime call from Nunn at the end of her treatment. They all simultaneously rang bells to signify the end of Medley’s chemotherapy.

She said, “I didn’t know it, but Todd had worked it out with Principal Emily Pierce and Assistant Principal Andrea Brewer, and they arranged for every single student in Unity School, every teacher, every janitor, every lunchroom lady — everybody in this building was in the gym. And when I finished treatment, Todd FaceTimed my principal, and they all rang the bell at the same time that I was ringing it.”

Her treatment season ended on a high note, and she welcomed the next volleyball season with a new perspective. She said during her treatments that she just wanted things back to normal. But people gently reminded her it was unlikely.

“They said, ‘Jen, I don’t know that you’ll ever be who you were before.’ And they were right. I’m still Coach Medley, but you have a different outlook every morning when you wake up. You’re just grateful for every little thing.”



▲ John A. Gooch, Todd Nunn, John M. Gooch, Ella Gooch, Selina Gooch, Jennifer Medley, Cathy Gooch, and Emma Gooch

The following volleyball season, Medley and her team built upon the strength training her cancer battle brought to them and began with a preseason tournament victory that set the tone for every game to come.

“It was so emotional because, at one point, I didn’t even know if I would be able to coach, and there I was with a group of girls winning the tournament! Little did I know it was just the beginning,” said Medley.

The team won their Lincoln County tournament and ended their season fifth in the middle school state championship games.

“The drive and leadership these young ladies had was amazing to watch. They were by my side through some of my

toughest battles. I fought for them, and I could feel their fight for me coming through on the court. I connect with all my players over the years, but I will share a special bond with this group of girls that I will cherish forever.”

Medley’s influence is evident and spread wider following her cancer journey.

Unity’s principal, Emily Pierce, said, “Jennifer makes a mark on the hearts of everyone she meets. Her students return time and time again to visit her and simply be near her. She has a competitor’s heart and fought her battle with a level of grace and gratitude that I truly admire. I am so grateful and honored to call her my friend.”

And her former student and player, Bethany Lamon, attests to the connections she makes. “Coach Medley played a huge role in molding the woman I am today. She showed me that my potential was determined by my mindset in basketball and life. Her passion and love for coaching inspire me, and her strength to never quit can be a lesson to us all.”

Cancer couldn’t defeat Medley’s spirit, influence, and love for the Unity community and Lincoln County. A good life became an extraordinary life filled with gratitude and appreciation for the place and people who put their arms around her and loved her through the most challenging game of her life. **GN**

# Empowering future health care leaders: The HH Lincoln Health Student Advisory Board

By Haley Potter // Photography by Brooke Snyder

AT THE forefront of shaping tomorrow's health care leaders, the HH Lincoln Health Student Advisory Board is turning aspirations into action for local high school juniors and seniors, one student at a time.

The Student Advisory Board, now in its second year, has become a positive and prestigious opportunity for high school juniors and seniors aspiring to carve out careers in the health care industry. Spearheaded by dedicated professionals like Emily Schultz, the staff development coordinator, and Mary Beth Seals, the president of HH Lincoln Health, this initiative is more than just an extracurricular activity — it's a launchpad for the next generation of health care heroes.

With a tone of pride and optimism, Schultz shared, "This is our second year having a Student Advisory Board here. It is composed of juniors and seniors from the three high schools in the county: Fayetteville High School, Lincoln County, and RCA."



▲ Luke Atchley, Alex Richardson, Ailah Collins-Gentry, Ila Hose, Jessica Black, Lexi McClure, Alex Armas, Sierra Moon, Greta Davis, Reagan Conn, Carly Lowrance, Maddie Seals, Grace Uriostegui, and Ella Murdock. Not present in photo: Sam Ogle, Emily Moore, MaRaya Fulton, Lilly Murray, and Braila Hockett

Right now, there are 19 students on the board. The board not only offers these students a glimpse into the health care world but also immerses them in it.

“The purpose of the board is to expose students to different aspects of health care,” Schultz said. “We want them to see different jobs within the health care system, both clinical and non-clinical.”

Through visits to various departments, and interactions with department leaders, staff members, and even physicians, the board facilitates an in-depth understanding of the health care sector.

Schultz excitedly added, “We’ve had physicians and department directors make presentations to the students and have roundtable discussions for the students. This allows [them] to see how we all have different backgrounds but share a passion for helping patients. They have also visited some of our other facilities, such as EMS and the Patrick.”

One of the board’s significant achievements, as highlighted by Schultz, is its success stories, like that of a young lady who, after participating in the program, won a scholarship to attend a radiology tech program and was immediately employed at the facility post-high school.

“It’s an amazing experience, even though it’s just been two years, to watch them grow up,” Schultz said, emphasizing the program’s impact on students’ lives and career paths.

Mary Beth Seals underscored the collective effort and the community spirit that powers the Student Advisory Board.

“I want to say about this program that it was very important to me that we get involved with students again across our community,” Seals said, ensuring that the credit is shared with the staff who have poured their hearts into the program. She further commented on the students’ enthusiasm and the broad exposure they receive, which is integral to the initiative’s goal: fostering a long-term relationship between the students and the local health care community.

“The staff here try to make them a part of something different each time, so that whether they want to pursue something clinically, or whether they’re going to get into the business side of health care, they maybe have seen it all by the time they’re ready to finish their junior year or graduate, and I’m really loving that for them,” Seals said.

She said their health care system also benefits in the long run by exposing students to health care.

“After the program, hopefully, these students stay in the community and come back [to be] part of our health care team here in the long run,” Seals noted. “That’s what we hope to show them. And even if not, we hope they’ve had a good exposure and a good experience, and we’ve started their journey in a very positive light.”

Both leaders emphasized the importance of community engagement and the program’s role in revitalizing health care interest post-COVID.

“We’re exposing them to health care. We’re very involved with CNAs again — students who are getting that certification. It’s been really great to see people involved in health care again in our community,” Seals reflected on the significance of such initiatives.

The HH Lincoln Health Student Advisory Board stands as a reflection of the power of mentorship, education, and com-

munity engagement in shaping the futures of young individuals. Through hands-on experiences, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities, the program prepares students for careers in health care and instills in them a sense of belonging and purpose within their community.

As these students embark on their journeys, they carry with them the knowledge, experiences, and connections made through the Student Advisory Board, ready to contribute to the health care industry and, by extension, to the well-being of their community. GN



# THE 411 ON 431 BBQ



**W**HEN I hear the word barbecue mentioned, I immediately think of my late father, Benny. He loved a good “barbecue joint” as he called such restaurants most of the time. If someone recommended a new place 100 away with awesome barbecue, we would soon be taking a daytrip to try it when I was a kid. Those are some fond memories for me. It’s because of my father that I love the hickory smoked meats so much too, and I feel confident in being a judge of what is an excellent-tasting barbecue.

431 BBQ is Fayetteville’s newest barbecue restaurant. It’s currently the best in town, in my opinion. Along with his wife, Kim, and other members of his family, owner Joey Street works hard to prepare excellent pork, chicken, ribs, and brisket. The food is mouthwatering. When you drive by, roll down your window to get a whiff of the smoked meat cooking. It automatically makes me want to pull in and get

a meal to take home. 431 BBQ has excellent sides that are made from scratch, such as potato salad, baked beans, cole slaw, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, and loaded baked potatoes. There’s something for kids, too, if barbecue is not their thing. Kids meals include chicken tenders, hamburgers, and cheeseburgers. The restaurant also has tasty desserts such as bread pudding and banana pudding.

I have eaten 431 BBQ several times and have never been disappointed. The restaurant works hard each day to be sure its customers are satisfied, and you can certainly tell in every bite you take. I have recommended it to all of my friends and family in Fayetteville, and to some folks in other areas who might not mind taking a little drive, like my father, to get some great barbecue. If you haven’t been yet, put it on your list. 431 BBQ currently does not have on-site seating. It is to-go orders only, for now. **GN**

## GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic’s thoughts as they dine in Fayetteville. This month Michelle Allison visited 431 BBQ.

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# Good Stories

## CHAPTER 2 OF 3

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

- 38 There's no substitute
- 42 Celebrating a legacy of leadership
- 46 From shadows to sunshine: Home visits light the way

Our stories are based on submissions from local people.

Submit yours here:



[goodnewsmags.com](https://goodnewsmags.com)

Photography by Brooke Snyder

◀ Karen Bobbitt, E'Sheia Hicks, Claudia Styles, and Lori Frame

# THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE.

## JUDY MOORE FILLS IN FOR 24 YEARS AND COUNTING.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**F**ORGET TESTS and workbooks; Judy Moore's lesson plan is a smile seasoned with 24 years of wisdom and a hug. While most of us battle against the tyranny of alarm clocks, Moore's eyes light up at the sound of the school bell. Her journey? It's not your typical starry-eyed teacher's tale. House cleaning, flexibility, and a daughter's need were the unlikely ingredients that led her to the vibrant chaos of substitute teaching. What started as a practical solution became a passion that ignited her spirit.

"I enjoy every minute that I'm here – you get to meet a lot of great kids. Some of them are [now] grown with kids of their own, and I've subbed their kids, and it's been great," said Moore.

Highland Rim kept her busy for the first 18 years. Moore's idea of slowing down was to switch to the city schools. She subs regularly now for Ralph Askins, Fayetteville Middle School, Fayetteville High School, and, occasionally, Lincoln County High School.

Calls requesting Moore to fill in for a teacher ensure she'll see her favorite people again and again. Late-night calls that usually irritate us are music to her ears.

She said, "People ask me which is my favorite grade, but I can't pick because I love them all. And I've worked with great people. You can't beat the teachers or principals I've worked with; they've been really good to me."

So good to her that when she took a tumble in the parking lot following a fire drill, she wanted to return to school the next day.



Judy Moore

“It happened so fast. The teachers stayed with me, kept talking to me, and called the ambulance. The vice principal called me at the hospital to see how I was doing. They told me to take the day off, and I’m glad they did. When I came back to school, my eyes were black, and the kids were worried and asked, ‘Are you doing better?’ It makes you feel good,” said Moore.

Another often-asked question that makes her feel good is, “When are you subbing for us again, Ms. Judy?”

Whether walking through the halls or running errands, her face is as familiar as the teachers on staff.

“I meet a lot of different kids, and they’ll introduce me to their parents, and I enjoy

**66**  
**Some ask me why I didn’t get my teaching degree, but I didn’t want to because I like to meet every class, the teachers, and the principals.**

– Judy Moore

that. They make me feel special,” said Moore. “At school, they just make my day when they come up and hug me and tell me they love me or miss me.”

At a time when more than half our nation’s teachers and other school staff are indicating they’re leaving education careers earlier than planned, and the shortage of substitute teachers is greater than ever before, Moore’s commitment is a genuine reflection of the joy she finds in the classroom. And while someone else who enjoys it so much might pursue a teaching degree, she’s happy filling in.

“They have kept me busy for the 24 years I’ve been subbing, and I wouldn’t change it for anything,” Moore said. “Some ask me why I didn’t get my teaching degree, but I didn’t want to because I like to meet every class, the teachers, and the principals. I don’t want to be in one classroom.”

As challenging as the classroom can be, she watches for opportunities to help a student. Moore knows that even things as small as handing out papers or delivering something to or from the office can encourage students.

She said, “I can go in and spot a kid that’s struggling and try to work with them. I try to find the ones that need help and call them up to my desk or work with them at their desk. You see the need and help them as much as you can, sometimes just giving a hug. Others are independent and can do it, so I try to find the ones who need the help. And I love to help teach them to read.”

From her seat in so many classrooms over the years, she has the benefit of watching them grow.

“You’re amazed how much they grow from the beginning when school starts to the end of the year. That’s the reward right there,” said Moore.

And it’s not just the students who’ve grown. With each passing year and through the various classes she subs, Moore learns and grows alongside them.

She may not have her own classroom, but Moore’s name echoes through the hallways. As she stops for hugs and hellos, making her way back to her room for the day, her heart is full. She found her life’s purpose not in a title but in the infinite possibilities that blossom within the walls of Fayetteville and Lincoln County classrooms. **GN**



▲ Brittany Baker, Judy Moore, and Heather Bradley



▲ Paulina Miranda, Weston Metcalf, Adalynn Williams, Brody Meggison, Delilah Foxx, and Judy Moore





Judy Moore

# CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

## LINCOLN COUNTY FFA ALUMNI INVEST IN TOMORROW'S AGRICULTURE LEADERS AND CELEBRATE TODAY'S.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**I**NSTEAD OF the usual clinking trays and not-so-muffled chatter, Lincoln County High School's (LCHS) cafeteria vibrates with the boisterous hum of a community gathered. Seated around linen-covered banquet tables are faces etched with the lines of sun and soil. They're swapping stories, discussing planting forecasts and livestock prices. For many present, their iconic blue and gold jackets, traded for rugged Carhartt, now hang proudly in their closets. The mouthwatering aroma of steak fills the air, tinged with the sweet smell of vanilla and almond, and anticipation builds as the time for the awards presentation draws closer.

This isn't high school lunchtime — it's the annual Agricultural's Finest banquet, where Lincoln County's former FFA organization honors the success others harvest from a commitment to farming, agribusiness, technology, and other agricultural careers.

According to [ffa.org](https://ffa.org), the National FFA Organization has 850,823 student members in grades 5-12 who belong to one of 8,995 local chapters across the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. It continues to provide agricultural education, leadership development, and career opportunities for all students. One of those chapters is the Lincoln County FFA, and, with agriculture being the county's largest industry, it shapes tomorrow's leaders and serves us all.

In an interview with another Good News writer in 2022, LCHS FFA Teacher and Advisor Julie Burnum said, "I was an FFA member, and I know full well what this program can do for kids. People like to think of it as Future Farmers of America. In 1988, that name changed, and it's just the letters now. While we continue to recognize our history with FFA, the number one thing our students are doing by being involved in FFA is building leadership skills."



**Neilla Susan Thompson, Melanie Kelso, and Allison Heffington**

They're not necessarily going into farming. Agriculture is a hugely diverse industry. So, the biggest thing we can offer our community is the development of leadership skills that these students can build and use in their careers, families, businesses, and our community. We want students to walk away with an appreciation of where their food, clothing, and housing come from and how all those necessities funnel back to the agricultural industry in some form or fashion."

Students' connection to FFA doesn't end with high school graduation; it opens the door to the alumni association, where former members and other agriculture supporters invest in student members and their programs.

Melanie Kelso, vice president of the Lincoln County FFA Alumni, said, "LCHS has had an active FFA alumni for at least 30 years. Most of us are former FFA or 4-H alumni, and we understand the benefits of these programs. We are there to support the ag teachers and students in any way we can."

FFA members are an active group, continuously learning, growing, and utilizing the skills they acquire through the program.

Burnum said, "We travel at least once a month to a conference, camp, convention, or contest. Our alumni are always open to helping in any way they can. They've hosted meals for our district chapter contests and helped serve at our banquets. And, of course, they are integral in their support of our annual Tractor Day."

Alumni are actively involved in the students' FFA work, assisting with events at the school and attending state competitions, FFA summer camp, and national events when needed. They stay connected through monthly meetings with the agriculture teachers and current student officers.

"Alumni officers are elected every three years. The current officers are President Neilla-Susan Thompson, Vice President Melanie Kelso, Secretary Allison Heffington, and Treasurer Will Scott," said Kelso. "We all come from agriculture backgrounds, but that is not a requirement to be an officer. The alumni have about 50 active members who help with fundraising activities and anything else asked of them throughout the year. Our main focus and goal is to support the FFA members any way we can."

The alumni's largest fundraiser is its annual Agriculture's Finest banquet. Nominations open in December for awards for local farms and businesses in five categories: Farmer You Need to Know, Friend of Agriculture, Best Century Farm, Alumni Choice, and Young Farmer. When nominations close in January, the public votes on the top three nominees in each category. Winners are announced at the banquet held the Saturday following FFA Week in February, receiving an Allie Isbell one-of-a-kind painting explicitly designed for their award.



"The proceeds from this night are used throughout the year for hotel stays, meals, and other things for our students. We also sponsor scholarships to some of our seniors for college. Other funds are set aside for larger projects like future improvements for our classrooms or transportation needs," said Kelso.

The alumni's most popular event is Tractor Day, held each year the day before the Agriculture's Finest banquet. Agriculture students may drive their tractors to school and participate in a tractor parade — a day-long event now in its 44th year. In 2023, the parade included alumni for the first time. What a great way to celebrate the tradition as a community!



▲ Jason Sisk, Kate Henry, Libby Logan, Caroline Garrell, KayLee Sells, Emma-Claire Wright, Knox Rogers, and Jay Patterson

The alumni welcome your involvement if you're passionate about agriculture and Lincoln County's rich history.

Kelso said, "We would love for everyone to help us support the future generations of students who want to come back here and keep the farms and businesses in the agriculture field thriving."

As the evening draws to a close at Agriculture's Finest, award recipients pose proudly with their prized paintings surrounded by family and the FFA's student president. It's a picture of a community connected by agriculture, committed to supporting tomorrow's farmers, agribusiness owners, and leaders in the diverse industry rooted in FFA. It's a picture of hope. GN



# FROM SHADOWS TO SUNSHINE: HOME VISITS LIGHT THE WAY

DR. CLAUDIA STYLES AND HER TEAM ARE A BEACON OF HOPE TO STRUGGLING STUDENTS.

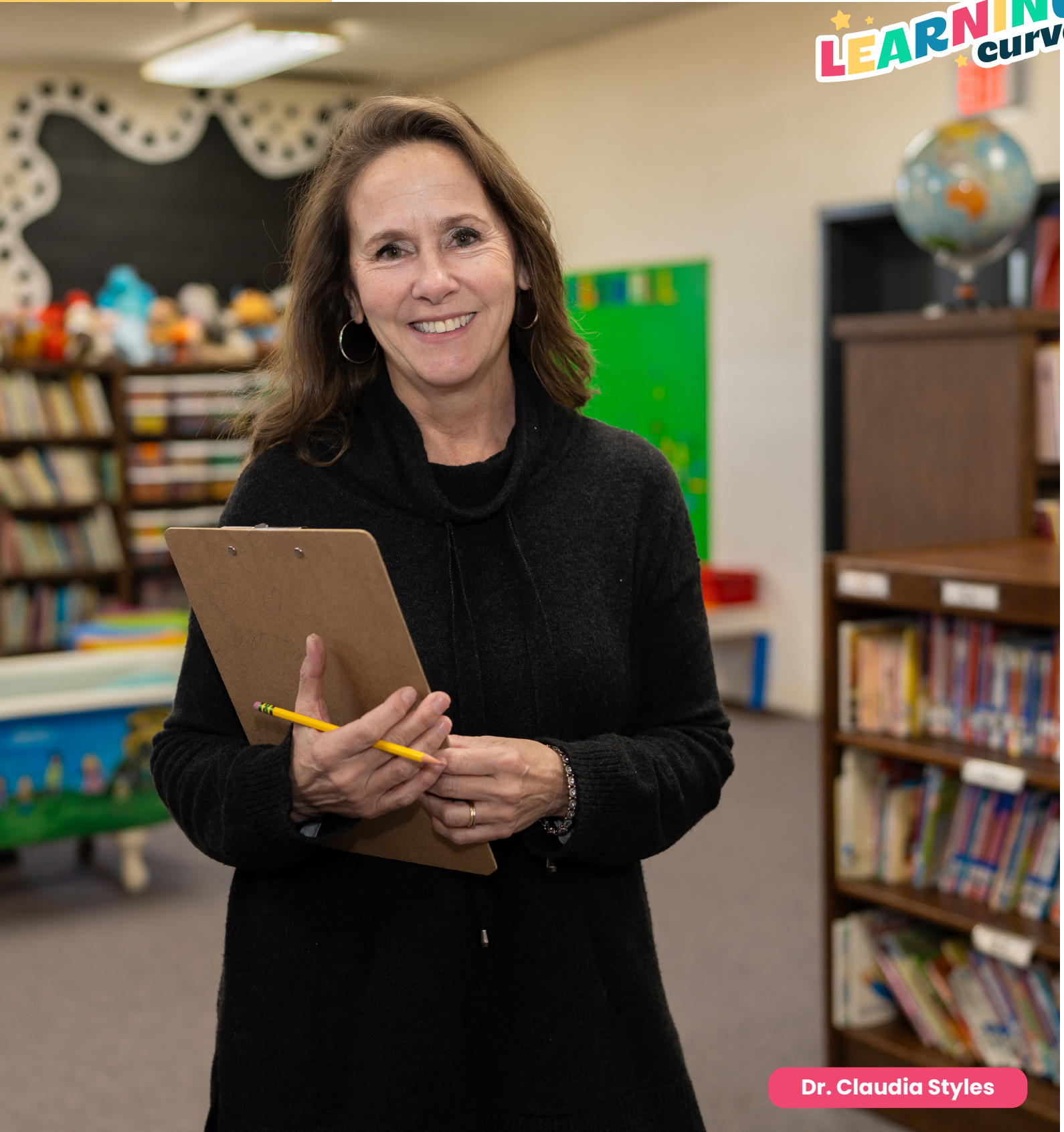
By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**T**HE SCENT of freshly brewed coffee mingles with the rustle of papers as the Home Visit Team convenes. Outside, the sun casts long shadows, reflecting the shades of hardship they are about to address. But within this room, a different light shines — the unwavering determination to bridge the gaps, one family, one need at a time.

They are the cracks created by life's hardships, which deepen with time if not repaired. Financial difficulties, loss of work, homelessness, and food insecurity threaten to deepen the cracks, impacting students' ability to focus and thrive at school. They are our most basic needs for shelter, clothing, food, and safe sleep. Beyond these lies our longing for social connections and belonging, including love, friendship, and acceptance.

Some struggles follow children like silent shadows whispering insecurities. "You're different," they hiss. In Fayetteville City Schools (FCS), however, Dr. Claudia Styles and her team fight back against these echoes of exclusion.





Dr. Claudia Styles

They rewrite the narrative with open arms and a determined spirit, replacing whispers with choruses of support and belonging.

Styles said, “At some point in our lives, we have all experienced hard times; however, some need a little assistance to get them back on their feet. These situations can greatly affect our students and their ability to learn.”

FCS focuses on the whispers, the quiet struggles unseen by others. Their motto, “Big enough to make a difference, small enough to care,” isn’t just a phrase; it’s a promise to listen, support, and nurture every child’s potential, one story at a time.

It’s a caring that goes deeper than meeting the most basic needs of students and their families, and Styles meets those needs with Home Visit Teams in each Fayetteville City School. Teachers and support staff make up the teams from each school who meet regularly to address the needs of their students.

“This team communicates with our students and their families to discuss specific concerns and needs. The team makes special visits to the families to periodically check on them and provide the necessary items to make the child successful in school. These include the essential items that provide basic needs according to Maslow’s hierarchy to include shelter, shoes, clothing, and other things,” said Styles.

But they don’t stop there. They strive to meet the deepest needs of students and their families.

“The Home Visit Team is unique in that it also touches additional needs according to Maslow’s hierarchy,” said Styles. “The face-to-face element not only serves as a type of wellness check but also gives us a chance to interact with the family more intimately.”

School isn’t just bricks and desks for many kids caught in the storm of homelessness. It’s a life raft amidst the chaos, a steady hand in the churning waves. Beyond equations and essays, it offers something priceless: a semblance of normal. A regular rhythm of chimes and classes, a predictable map guiding their days. Here, familiar faces greet them not with pitying looks but with a genuine, “Hey, how are you doing today?” These walls hold echoes of laughter, the clatter of lunch trays, the hum of focused learning — a symphony of everyday sounds that drowns out the silent screams of uncertainty bubbling outside these walls.

Helping others isn’t just about them; it’s about all of us. When we invest time and resources in

66

**You know you’ve done something right when you later see the family you have worked with and know they have a secure income and a home for the child to lay their head down at night.**

– Dr. Claudia Styles

someone struggling, we’re not just giving them a boost but investing in a stronger community. Their improved self-worth and sense of belonging ripples outward, creating positive change that lifts everyone higher. Together, we can build a future where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential, and that’s something worth investing in.

“I take this job very seriously to ensure that we are being good stewards of our federal dollars as we support our families experiencing homelessness or financial burdens that may leave them without a permanent place to lay their head at night,” said Styles.

The team’s attention to the students’ needs pays off.

Styles said, “You know you’ve done something right when you later see the family you have worked with and know they have a secure income and a home for the child to lay their head down at night.”

The students’ futures are brighter, and their hearts are lighter. Their heads are held higher as they walk the halls and, later, the graduation lines. What once seemed impossible becomes more than possible; it becomes an investment that they will one day pass onto another, followed by the whispers of “different.” GN





**Brittany Barnett, Tiffany McKee, and Claudia Styles**

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# GoodTimes

## CHAPTER 3 OF 3

This section of the magazine covers local things to do.

**54** Community Events

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Photo submitted by Jean Gully Reed

◀ Michael and Shannon Doherty

# FLCAC Good Will Ball - Feb. 17



Photos submitted by Jean Gully Reed

Guests danced the night away in their Goodwill best at the annual FLCAC Good Will Ball. Sabghi's Jewelers sponsored a table and donated raffle items. Dominos and Rick's BBQ provided food, and The Locals Company sponsored the spirits, with other local businesses adding to the fun.



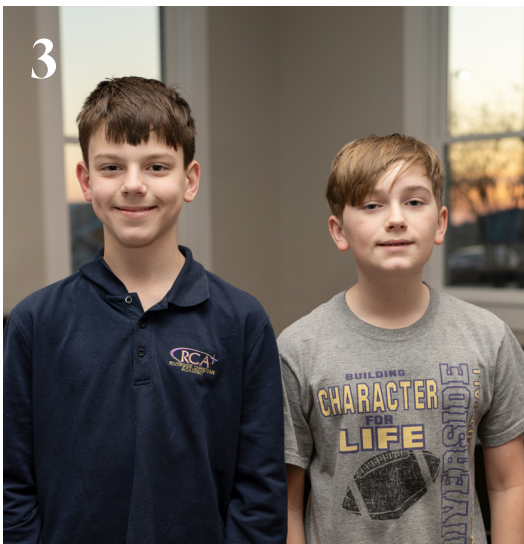
1. Dale and Jen Pierce 2. Lindsey Lipham, Jessica Ables, Kelsey Blaisdell, and Tiffany Hastings 3. Heidi Ables  
4. Jean Gully, Rosalee Witkowski, Sarah Bradford, Jen Pierce, and Camille Hester 5. Jennifer Roland and Corey Wiser

# M.O.V.E. - Feb. 20



Photography by Brooke Snyder

Young men from the Lincoln County area met up at the Hospitality House on Feb. 20, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Ley Jean from Bank of Lincoln County led with wise advice on how to manage money. M.O.V.E meets every third Tuesday of the month.



1. Ley Jean 2. Nathan Browning  
3. Chesley Brown and Maverick Birdsong 4. Trent Harrell and Jaxon Richardson

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## **Lincoln County Anti-Drug Coalition**

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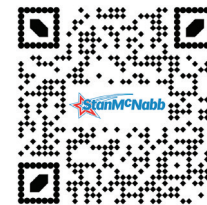
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