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exchange

Tommy Taylor

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INDEPENDENCE

ISSUE 6 2024

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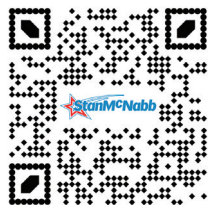
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The colors between the oceans

Healing is building for a more perfect union.

IF YOU took a snapshot of any moment in our country's history, there is a hurt we were trying to heal. The same is true today. It's our independence that lets us correct our wrongs, to heal, and to build our country up for a more perfect union. We can all be made by the same Creator and still land somewhere red, white, or blue. We can be different. That is the beauty of independence. This land is your land; this land is my land.

We can be better because of the people in our communities. Those who allow us to be independent provide an open field. We can run for miles into the unknown, and while it's scary, we know we are capable of whatever waits on the other side. We can run with the wind to our backs, hitting the ground to the beat of drums and trumpets that empower us. The same trumpets that rang as we fought a Civil War to keep a

country together with human rights for those of every skin color. The same drums that banged as we flew to Europe to end the Second World War. The same trumpets that helped us stand tall in September 2001. We're a country with the strength to hold each other up in 2020, even if it was through latex gloves.

While perfection will always be impossible to attain, it's our duty to fight for it every day — to get closer to the threshold of freedom and equality for everyone. Independence is a blessing that paints a beautiful picture of blues and reds that, when you pull away, make a purple you can only find between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

This issue of Good News highlights those in our community who make us better. It's their independence — and the fight to obtain it — that makes us who we are. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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PUBLISHING PARTNER Faith Cashion

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Wesley Bryant

VP OF SALES Ken Holtzinger

REGIONAL PUBLISHER Jack Owens

LEAD LAYOUT ARTIST Brianna Brubaker

SENIOR LAYOUT ARTIST Melissa Davis

LAYOUT ARTIST Ben Adams

LEAD PRINT AD DESIGNER Todd Pitts

JR. PRINT AD DESIGNER Jane Morrell

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER Ashleigh Newnes

PHOTOGRAPHER Brooke Snyder

FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHERS Amanda Guy, Adin Parks,

Sarah Bussard, Chad Barrett, Robin Fast, Gretchen Clark

LEAD WRITER Tina Neeley

STORY WRITER Jeriah Brumfield

FREELANCE WRITERS Amanda West, Sara Hook, Paige Cushman,

Kali Bradford, Gabriel Huff, Dave Lenehan, Richard Klin

FOOD CRITIC Michelle Allison

STORY COORDINATOR Haley Potter

PROOFREADER Michelle Harwell

JR. PROOFREADER Kaitlin Rettig

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Cindy Baldhoff, Amanda Cox,
Tony Glenn, Kevin Hines, Mark Mahagan, Kevin Maples, Janet Mullins,
Gina Rose, Sissy Smith, Sandra Thomas

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VP OF TALENT Chase Perryman

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HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE Tracey Pollock

CUSTOMER SERVICE Shelli Fuller, Barb Hargrove

DIGITAL DESIGN DIRECTOR Clinton George

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HIGHWAY HERO

Braving the storm for seniors in need

By Amanda E. West // Photography by Brooke Snyder



THUNDER RATTLED every window in Kathy's car. Lightning streaked across the blackening clouds above the back roads of Lincoln County. She gripped her steering wheel and leaned closer to the windshield, squinting. The wipers *whacked* back and forth. Where were the lines on the road? It was difficult for her to drive through a storm during the daytime, but the darkness of night was almost unbearable.

A strange sound pierced the silence before another flash of lightning curled in the sky. When the sound rang out again, Kathy's check engine light blinked before every light on her dashboard ignited. She coasted to what she hoped was the side of the road and shifted the car into park. Thick puffs of steam burbled up from the edges of her hood. Tears spilled over Kathy's cheeks. Her husband's night vision was worse than hers, but with no choice, she must call him for help. Right after she pressed the button to end



Sgt. Jonathan Allen



▲ Logan Leverette and Ciera, Pamela, Jonathan, Cody, Kayla, Lane, and Bennett Allen

I am absolutely working in the field that I am strong, passionate, and destined to be a part of. Watching the new recruits grow and thrive really gives me a sense of purpose.

-Sgt. Jonathan Allen

the call, blue lights flashed in Kathy’s rearview mirror, and an officer with the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Department knocked on her window.

It was Sgt. Jonathan Allen. As a child, Allen wanted to be a firefighter, and he even served as a volunteer for a time, but the call to protect and serve echoed the loudest. Allen began his journey into law enforcement as a reserve officer with the city of Fayetteville, and it wasn’t long before he was confident that he’d now dedicate his life to three things: his wife, Pamela; their six children; and every citizen he comes in contact with.

“Within months, the city of Fayetteville offered to send me to the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy,” said Allen. “I then worked with the city for about two years before I was offered a job with the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Department in

November 2018 as a road deputy, where I am currently employed. I recently got promoted to road sergeant in November 2023.”

As a native of Lincoln County, Allen graduated with honors from Lincoln County High School in 2008 and pursued other trades before settling in at Walmart Distribution Center (Walmart D.C.) in Shelbyville for 10 years. While there, his lifelong friend, Justin Gault, kept nudging him toward a career in law enforcement.

“Justin and I went to school together, worked at Walmart D.C. together, then he began his career in law enforcement. As we spoke often, I wanted more and more to get into this profession. I remember as we were in school, we would talk about being officers now and then. Little did I know this would be the career we both love. Justin now serves as an investigator after being a road and K-9 deputy.”



▲ Justin Gault and Jonathan Allen

Allen graduated from SWAT school in 2020 and enjoys mentoring the younger officers. Since November 2018, his duties have also included school resource officer, a deputy at the courthouse, and road deputy before his promotion to sergeant several months ago.

“I am absolutely working in the field that I am strong, passionate, and destined to be a part of. Watching the new recruits grow and thrive really gives me a sense of purpose. I like to know that, as a team, we are learning and working together to offer protection, public order, law enforcement, and preventing crime and civil disorder in our community. Being part of the SWAT team, we hold each other accountable to higher standards, as far as physical fitness and tactics, so that we can execute high-risk search warrants and emergency callouts.”

Lt. Jon MacDonald and Sgt. Tull Malone have mentored Allen from the beginning.

“I knew I wanted to follow their lead as I was learning this new career. They continue to be models for the department as they uphold respect for people and the law, demonstrate adherence to high morals and ethical principles. They also push the department to possess high ethical expectations of self and others.”

The night Kathy’s car broke down on the side of the highway, Allen and other deputies lingered long after her husband arrived. Even though rain drizzled the entire time, Allen held a flashlight and didn’t leave until he knew the pair would make it home safely.

“I want to thank Mrs. Kathy for contacting the Good News Magazine,” said Allen. “It was a pleasure to serve her in a time

of need. Everyone at the sheriff’s office takes part in the overall success and happiness of the community that we serve.” GN





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The annual Lincoln Barbecue has supported the Lincoln Cemetery for generations.

By Sara Hook // Photography by Brooke Snyder and submitted by Randy Delap

JULY FOURTH is a day for community, fireworks, parades, and food from the annual Lincoln Barbecue. Every year, members of the Lincoln community line up for the delicious barbecue and homemade lemonade prepared by the Lincoln Cemetery Committee.

It is a tradition that began before World War II. As a generational cemetery board member, Randy Delap has heard a lot about that history.

“The old-timers have always said that the barbecue was started before World War II, and then during the war, they didn’t have it because most of the men had gone off to fight,” Delap said. “When the war was over, they started back doing the barbecue, and the proceeds from it were used to help maintain the cemetery.”

Randy Delap



Evan Eason, Eli Eason, Randy Delap, Mike Pitts, Justin Crabtree, Joey Wolaver, Fritz Mucke, and Tommy Taylor

The barbecue has been held every year since 1945, even continuing through COVID-19, and it has grown as the cemetery and the community have grown. A decade ago, people would start lining up at midnight on July 3, the line stretching 100 yards long. While that is no longer the tradition, the line of cars can still stretch from the community center to the store on Lincoln Road.

“It’s really funny, in a little community, to see the cars rolling in and backing up to come and pick up their barbecue,” Delap said. “It makes you proud.”

Feeding that many people requires quite a bit of work. In 2022, the volunteers cooked around 4,000 pounds of ham and mixed about 75 gallons of lemonade. That process starts several days before the barbecue, as cemetery committee members, family, and volunteers meet to cut and

squeeze lemons for the wash tub lemonade. Then, on the morning of July 3, they meet again to begin cooking. That task continues throughout the day and night, up to 7 a.m. on July Fourth, when the barbecue pickup begins. Delap said the family and community aspect is a big part of things.

“It’s just a community thing, and we’re just so blessed to have people who are willing to help,” Delap said. “It’s a family thing. We’ve got members now whose fathers, grandfathers, or uncles have served on the committee over the years.”

Delap’s father and grandfather were involved with the cemetery, and two of his nephews also joined the committee this year. Many of the recipes involved are likewise passed down year after year. The dip is a secret recipe that has been used since the 1940s, and the lemonade recipe and wash tub came from a community

member several years ago. That personal history and the excellent barbecue and lemonade are a big part of why the fundraiser has continued for so long.

“The longevity of a fundraiser, I think, most of the time is seven to eight years,” Delap said. “Ours is 79 consecutive years, which is really unbelievable when you think about it; that you can keep people interested in helping [and] people who are still wanting to support a cause.”

The event hasn’t seen many significant changes, either. While the barbecue is mostly pre-sold now and handed out in plastic containers rather than wrapped in butcher paper, things run much the same as they did in the beginning.

“Most of the time, we’re a pretty well-oiled machine,” Delap said.

All proceeds from the barbecue go toward the care and maintenance of



“

It's just a community thing, and we're just so blessed to have people who are willing to help. It's a family thing. We've got members now whose fathers, grandfathers, or uncles have served on the committee over the years.

- Randy Delap

the cemetery, as well as proceeds from other Lincoln Cemetery and Lincoln Community Center fundraisers. All proceeds from the barbecue chicken supper, held the first weekend in June, go toward the upkeep of the community center. While it doesn't have as long a history as the annual Lincoln Barbecue, the chicken supper has been a fundraiser for over 20 years. Such success speaks to the care Fayetteville and Lincoln County have for their cemetery and community center. With such a supportive community, there is no doubt the fundraisers will continue for many years. GN

For more information on the fundraisers, the cemetery, or the community center, contact Randy Delap at (931) 703-9250.





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**A NEW
CITIZEN
IN LINCOLN
COUNTY**

Vocalist crossed 'the pond'
to fulfill lifelong dreams

By Amanda E. West // Photography by Brooke Snyder



Chris Hendrickson

THE STATUE of Liberty has remained a symbol of hope in New York Harbor since France gave it to our country to commemorate our allegiance to one another during the American Revolution. The statue on Liberty Island is just a short ferry ride from the famous immigration center on Ellis Island and reminds each of us what the American Dream is all about.

Although Chris Hendrickson didn't come by way of Ellis Island, like many immigrants did before the 1950s, this symbol of freedom rings as true for her today as the Liberty Bell. When Hendrickson was just a girl of 15, she left her native home of Liverpool, England, and headed for Denmark alone.

"I had left school, and all I had was an unemployment line to look forward to. This was back in 1980. The opportunity to travel to Denmark came up, and I took it. I was to learn a new language, a new culture, and a new way of life. What was supposed to only be three months turned into 30 years. I started an education in the Royal Porcelain Factory as a painter before I was even 16. Later, I got married, bought a house, and had children — who still live in Denmark."

Besides painting porcelain, Hendrickson spent seven years as a mink grader for Saga Furs and also worked at the famous Tivoli Gardens in the heart of Copenhagen. But when a recession rippled through Denmark, her plans changed quickly.

"There was little to no work. It seemed like the perfect time to pack up and follow my dreams. I was married to an American, and he was all about coming back over here. Shortly after we arrived, he left me to my own devices. This turned into an adventure I couldn't possibly have dreamt of. The real man of my dreams came into my life and changed everything for the better. Sherman Hendrickson is not only my best friend but my husband of almost 10 years. He has taught me so much about life, God, and this wonderful country's history. He's brought balance and peace into my life, not to mention real love. And he's pushed me into being the best person I can be."



Sherman
and Chris
Hendrickson



Never one to pass up an adventure, Chris took a situation that most would have found disheartening and turned it into an opportunity to push herself closer to the dream she's held close to her since she was a young girl.

"I started my singing career quite young, as my mum and dad both were musicians and singers," said Chris. "My mum went to school with Paul McCartney. They remained friends until their teenage years when he went off and became a Beatle, and my mum and dad played the music clubs in Liverpool. Music has been huge in my life — especially country music — so Tennessee has always been on my radar."

As a multi-talented artist, her passions also include creating cozy and inviting rooms for her much-loved clients at Norman Furniture. But the notes her heart always hums the loudest are the good old country songs, which she now sings with a band from Hazel Green called Doyle Bradley and the Full Circle Band.

"This was a dream come true for me. I've taken some huge leaps in my life — moving to another country twice, changing jobs, taking chances on people, and being let down and lifted up. I have jumped into almost everything I have ever done with my whole heart and, most of the time, right into the deep end. I've always said, 'What have you got to lose?' Because I can always change my mind and try something else if whatever I was doing didn't work for me."

In February, Chris officially became an American citizen.

"American citizenship is something you work to achieve. The process is long and tedious. We are, after all, dealing with a government that, in any country, takes their time with everything. The process is quite lengthy — almost a year from applying to actually being sworn in. The cost is also quite substantial. Not just in dollars but in time, too. The emotional drain of the wait, not knowing what the outcome will be... What I like best about being an American would take up a lot of space in this article. Mostly, it is being able to follow my dreams, living where it can actually happen — where opportunity is there for whoever wants to work toward what they dream of, no matter who you are." **GN**

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'The best **FAST FOOD** in town'

Ken's Fast Foods voted No. 1
in four categories!

KEN'S FAST Foods is the best place in town to get a slawburger and fries! I have eaten other slawburgers in Fayetteville, but hands down, Ken's is the best. The Elk Valley Times asked readers to vote for the best restaurants in Lincoln County. Locals in the community voted Ken's Fast Foods No. 1 in four categories: Best Slawburger, Best French Fries, Best Hamburger, and Best Fast Food. I concur with the people's choices. The food is always consistent, fresh off the grill, and delicious. It is the best!

Ken Dorning opened Ken's Fast Foods in 1973. Randy Rozar, Dorning's son-in-law, owned the restaurant until his retirement last year. Dan Holt is the new owner, and he hasn't changed a thing, thank goodness. My husband and I moved to Fayetteville six years ago. Soon after, we asked a trusted family member where we should go for a good slawburger. Without hesitation, she suggested Ken's Fast Foods. Now, if I'm close to the restaurant around lunchtime or for an early supper, I will pull into Ken's for some of my favorites.

It is hard to decide what to order when you go to Ken's Fast Foods because everything is so tasty, but one of my favorites is the famous golden crispy french fries. I have never had french fries anywhere to beat Ken's! That said, the menu is not limited to burgers





and fries. They also have juicy chicken tenders, crispy fish sandwiches, hot dogs, onion rings, soft-serve ice cream, and shakes. Ken's is very affordable — a lot cheaper than most fast-food restaurants. For anyone who has never been to Ken's Fast Foods, I can promise you this: Your first trip will NOT be your last. 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 Ken's Fast Foods.

Michelle Allison
Michelleallison615@yahoo.com

KEN'S FAST FOODS

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Facebook: Ken's Fast Foods

A collage of Southern-style barbecue dishes. In the foreground, there are several plates of ribs and brisket. In the background, there is a large bowl of salad with various vegetables and a bowl of corn. The text is overlaid on a dark red background with a white dotted border.

Fireworks, flavor, and
FAMILY

Submit your recipes to be included in Good News Magazine
and the Exchange Cookbook: www.southernaprons.com

Cook up a patriotic feast for summer gatherings.

WHAT BETTER time to indulge in the ultimate celebration of all things American: backyard barbecues, July Fourth festivities, and the comforting flavors of home? Let's salute the classic dishes that evoke the nostalgia of summer gatherings and the joy of savoring delicious comfort food with loved ones.

From perfectly grilled burgers and sizzling hot dogs to mouthwatering potato salad and sweet, tangy barbecue ribs, these recipes capture the essence of summer indulgence. Whether you're hosting a backyard bash or simply craving comfort food, join us as we embrace the essence of outdoor cooking and revel in the flavors of freedom. **GN**



Grilled Chipotle Ribs

Submitted by Essie Mills

2 sm. onions, peeled, divided
1 rack pork spareribs, 4 1/2 lbs.
water, enough to boil ribs
1/2 c. mesquite flavored marinade
1 t. chipotle chili powder
2 T. fresh cilantro, chopped

Quarter 1 onion and chop remaining onion. In a roasting pan over high heat, bring ribs, quartered onion, and enough water to cover ribs to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. In a small mixing bowl, combine chopped onion, marinade, chili powder, and cilantro. Heat grill to medium high. Brush ribs with marinade mixture. Grill for 15 minutes or until thermometer reads 160°, turning once, brushing often.

Broccoli Slaw

Submitted by Brenda Hamilton

1 pkg. broccoli slaw
2 pkgs. Ramen noodles, chicken flavor, broken into pieces
1 bunch green onions, chopped
flavor packet from Ramen noodles
1/2 c. vegetable oil
1/2 c. sugar
1/3 c. white wine vinegar
1 c. slivered almonds, toasted
1 c. sunflower seeds, toasted


Mix broccoli slaw, Ramen noodles, and green onions together in a large bowl. In a sauce pan, mix flavor packets, oil, sugar, and vinegar together; heat slightly to help dissolve sugar. Pour over broccoli slaw mixture; mix well. Refrigerate 24 hours. Before serving, toss with almonds and sunflower seeds

Microwave Coconut Cream Pie

Submitted by Judy Flynt

3/4 c. sugar
5 T. cornstarch
3 c. milk
3 egg yolks, beaten
1 1/2 c. flake coconut
2 T. margarine
1 1/2 t. vanilla
1 deep dish pie shell, baked

In a microwavable bowl, combine sugar and cornstarch. Gradually stir in milk. Cook at full power for 6-8 minutes or until thickened and bubbling. Whisk 2-3 times during cooking. In a small bowl, beat egg yolks. Stir in 3/4 cup of hot mixture into egg yolks, stirring constantly. Return to hot mixture. Cook on full power for 1-2 1/2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from microwave. Add coconut, margarine, and vanilla. Whisk until margarine is melted. Pour into pie shell. Allow to cool for several hours before serving.

A close-up, artistic photograph of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in detail. The flag is draped and folded, creating deep shadows and bright highlights. The word "INDEFEAT" is printed in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image, partially overlapping the stars and stripes.

INDEFEAT

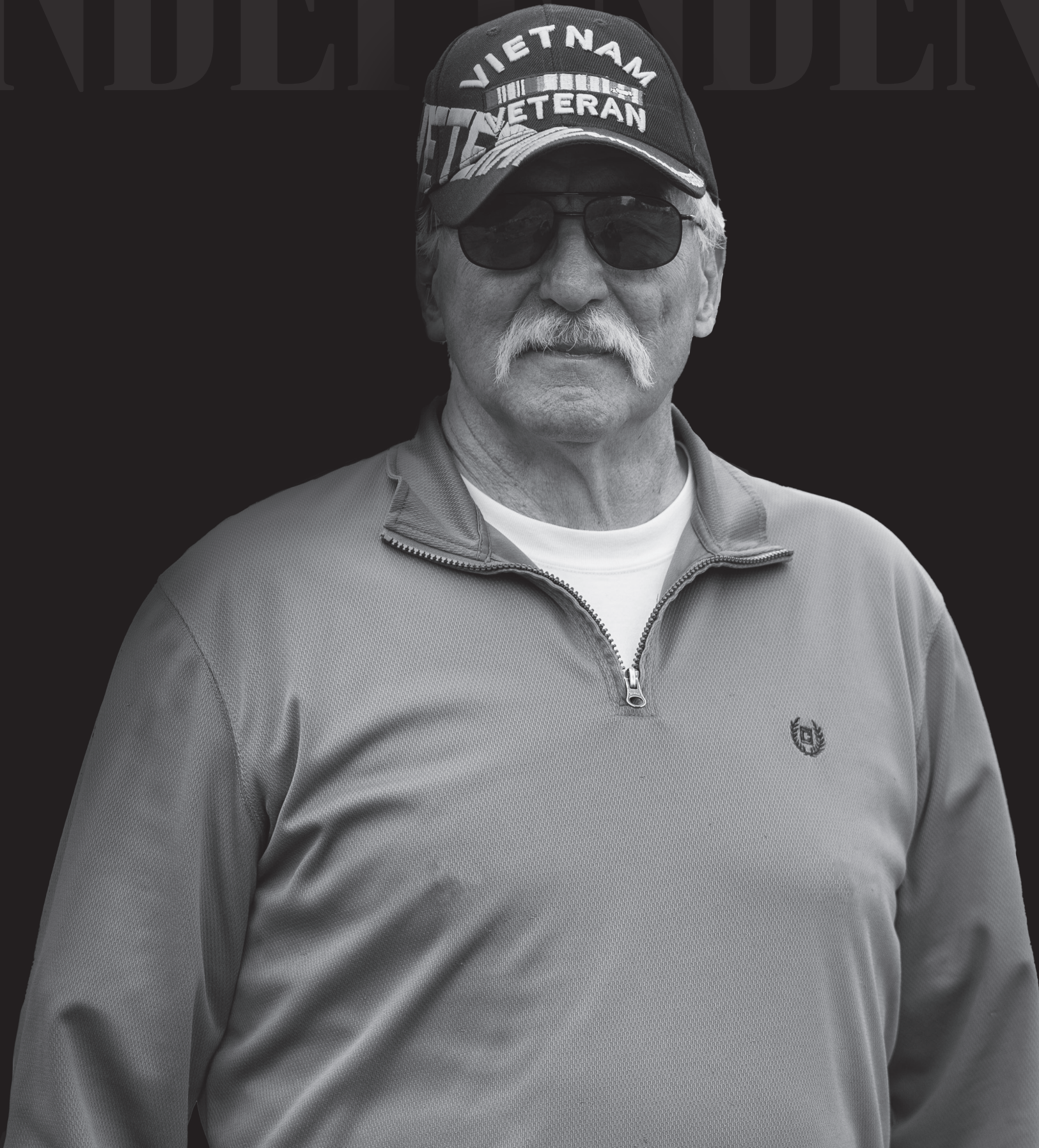


NDENCE

John Winthrop said, “We shall be as a city upon a hill,” during his famous 1630 sermon¹. President Ronald Reagan believed it, too. The promise lifts America from sea to shining sea. We shine bright because of our women and men who pledge allegiance.

¹ *National Endowment for the Humanities (neh.gov)*

INDEPENDENTS



By Tina Neeley
Photography by Brooke Snyder

TOMMY TAYLOR



STARS AND STRIPES FOR SACRIFICE AND SERVICE

Tommy Taylor honors local veterans
and preserves history.

AS MEMORIAL Day begins, the first light of dawn casts a gentle golden glow over Lincoln Cemetery. Rows of headstones stand sentinel beneath the sprawling canopy of ancient trees, the weathered surfaces bearing silent witness to the passage of time. Here and there, fluttering in the gentle morning breeze, are the stars and stripes of the American flag, each one a poignant reminder of sacrifice and service. The air is heavy with a sense of reverence — as if the very earth itself pays homage to those who rest beneath its hallowed ground.

It is a solemn yet stirring scene where the echoes of history mingle with the promise of a new day and where the true meaning of Memorial Day is felt in every fluttering flag.

The flags were placed there days earlier by Tommy Taylor and his wife, Vickie, who order them each year for Prospect, Stewart, Pleasant Hill, and Lincoln cemeteries. They place any remaining flags at Riverview Cemetery in Fayetteville.

Tommy said, “All the Taylor men were in the military. My grandfather was in World War I, my dad and uncles were in World War II, and my uncle, Henry

Taylor, the youngest of the Taylor men, was in Vietnam. My brother, Randy, was in the National Guard, and my stepson, Chase Clevenger, is an Iraqi War vet.”

Tommy is a Vietnam veteran and served in the U.S. Navy.

“I know the hardships the vets went through. I developed a friendship with the people I served with. It’s a brotherhood, and it continues today, and that’s true for all veterans,” stated Tommy.

To honor his father following his death, Tommy proudly displayed the American flag each Memorial Day. One day, a decision to honor as many veterans as possible became a project that most recently placed 400 flags on the graves of those who served our country and were buried in Lincoln County. The number of flags ordered grows each year.

“We put the flags out a couple of days before Memorial Day, and most often, the cemeteries are having Decoration Day at this time of year,” he said. “It’s always a beautiful site with new flowers and flags.”

But it’s much more than decoration.

“It’s to honor our vets who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. They are the true heroes. For me, to present a flag to each gravestone honors the courage and valor they represent. They all deserve our deepest respect,” he said reverently.

Tommy’s commitment to honoring those who defend our country extends beyond the Memorial Day weekend. Inspired by President John F. Kennedy’s appeal in his 1961 inaugural speech, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,” Tommy rises to the challenge as a way of life.

He explained, “We must educate and teach values to our children, for they are our future leaders. Part of their education is world history — Camp Blount, the world wars, and local, country, and worldwide conflicts. We must always honor our veterans and support those still with us.”



He furthers the mission of education in his service with Camp Blount, the Tennessee historic site in Fayetteville. Thousands of Tennessee soldiers commanded by Gen. Andrew Jackson assembled there in 1813, a muster that launched the campaign that ended the Red Stick forces at Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814.

“We can never forget the history of such people like Andrew Jackson and David Crockett walking on this Camp Blount site,” said Tommy. “This year, we’re having our third annual volunteer days Sept. 27-28. Each year, school children from all our county and city schools attend reenactments, demonstrations, lectures, and cannon firing.”

In addition to his work with Camp Blount, Tommy works with the Lincoln Community Center and serves on the Lincoln Cemetery board. He



sees and appreciates the community's involvement and assistance in raising funds to maintain the cemetery and the center. He is proud, too, of the Warrior Exhibit in Fayetteville and the community's support of Linda Williams' work there.

He said, "I enjoy helping others. As I've grown older, I've realized there are organizations out there that are great for Lincoln County. It's an honor to be part of Camp Blount and Lincoln Cemetery boards.

Tommy's dedication waves proudly on the stars and stripes he places at each headstone, honoring our country and those who protect it with their lives. It's saluted as he works to share the history of Camp Blount and quietly goes about making sure our heroes are never forgotten.

We thank you, Tommy, for your service! GN

**"It's to honor our
vets who made the
ultimate sacrifice for
our freedom. They are
the true heroes ... they
all deserve our deepest
respect."**

TOMMY TAYLOR



By Tina Neeley
Photography by Brooke Snyder and
submitted by Tammy McConnell

TAMMY McCONNELL



FROM ARMY STRONG TO VETERANS CHAMPION

Veterans Service Officer
Tammy McConnell is here to help.

TAMMY McCONNELL was never one to sit on the bench. Growing up on a dairy farm in Fayetteville, she learned the value of hard work and hustle. Basketball was her passion, and a full-ride scholarship to the University of Alabama in Huntsville offered a game-winning shot. But Tammy craved a different arena where the stakes felt higher — the purpose more profound. So, in 1989, she traded the hardwood for the rigorous training camp of the U.S. Army. This wasn't a trick play but a full-court press toward a future filled with service and dedication.

McConnell didn't fear challenges. She embraced the grit and discipline of military life, even when it meant swapping airborne dreams for the safer, unexpected role as a telecommunications operator. Stationed in Germany, she found herself on the frontlines of history during Desert Storm. The experience taught her the importance of clear communication, which she finds just as useful today.

Life as a soldier meant constant movement. From Germany to Arizona, Somalia, and Korea, McConnell navigated diverse landscapes and cultures while juggling deployments and motherhood's joys (and

DEPENDENCE



complications). As a single parent in the military, it was challenging at times, but McConnell persevered, inspired by her son, Damion.

“He’s promoted me to every rank I held since being promoted to sergeant,” she said proudly.

In 2007, McConnell deployed to Al Asad Airbase in Iraq.

“During this assignment, I had two roles: first sergeant under the headquarters and headquarters company and the battalion senior resource sergeant. These duties included getting soldiers home for emergencies, reporting any changes in personnel due to casualties or incidents, and handling mortuary affairs by getting the fatalities ready for transport to Balad before they are flown back to the States for preparation for their families. It is the highest honor and respect that you can show to any service member at that given time,” she explained.

She never regretted her decision to enlist following high school graduation.

“The Army gave me a family and a sense of pride. You were able to be a part of something bigger than yourself,” she said. “Overall, it provided a great life and stability. My son, Damion, has always been my true inspiration for everything I’ve done and accomplished in my military career and my life overall.”

After nearly 24 years of service, McConnell, a master sergeant, hung up her uniform in 2013, turning down a sergeant major selection. But retirement wasn’t about slowing down. The desire to serve remained strong, and jobs at Walmart, the post office, and as a corrections officer failed to provide that sense of service. But with one phone call — a nudge from a former teacher — McConnell was back in familiar territory as the Lincoln County Veterans Service Officer.

As the first female veterans service officer in Lincoln County, helping veterans navigate the often-complicated maze of



▲ Veterans Day 2022 submitted by Tammy McConnell

benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) fills her days. Every claim secured and bureaucratic hurdle cleared is a victory. McConnell connected area veterans to their share of \$32,016,000 in the 2022 fiscal year in compensation and pension, not including the medical and educational benefits. There are over 3,000 veterans in Lincoln County, and the office also serves surrounding counties and areas in neighboring Alabama.

“I love my job, and I love my veterans. My job is to let them know they are important. It doesn’t matter how long they served or where they served because, to me, they all are special and deserve everything I can get for them to make their life easier,” she said.

The office assists veterans with filing claims and understanding benefits, which include in-home assistance, taking care of the veteran or their spouse, and transportation to and from medical appointments. Best of all, it’s all free.

McConnell’s passion extends beyond the confines of her office. She’s a proud volunteer with the Lincoln County Warrior Exhibit, a project that honors veterans from all walks of life. Here, too, her desire to connect and give back shines.

“We are all family,” she said. “Whether by kin or brothers and sisters in arms.”





“The Army gave me a family and a sense of pride. You were able to be a part of something bigger than yourself.”

TAMMY McCONNELL

▲ Tammy being accredited by the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services

McConnell’s story is one of dedication and a deep love for her country and the people who served it. She may not be on the frontlines anymore, but her mission remains the same: to serve with honor and to make a difference, one veteran at a time. Helping others is what she does.

“I am here to be helpful; it doesn’t matter who you are. If I can help one person — just one person a day — then I have made a difference in someone’s life,” she said, summing up her calling.

And that, for McConnell, is what it’s all about. **GN**

Contact Lincoln County Veterans Service Officer Tammy McConnell at (931) 625-2102.

INDEPENDENT



JUST CHUCK



ASST DIRECTOR



By Tina Neeley
Photography by Brooke Snyder and
submitted by Debbie Lipsie

CHUCK SPITIERI



ECHOES OF HONOR: A RESOUNDING TRIBUTE

‘It’s not just about decorating
veterans’ graves.’

ON THE second Saturday in December, volunteers with arms ringed with balsam wreaths tied with red velvet bows make their way among the headstones at cemeteries across the country. The sound of muffled voices and crunching footsteps on grass stiffened by frost gradually filled the air. Stopping at a grave, the volunteers of all ages step forward. With reverence and purpose, they approach the marker and gently place the wreath. The volunteer speaks the name of the fallen service member — a simple act ensuring the legacy of duty, service, and sacrifice is never forgotten.

It’s a time of solemn reflection as the volunteers fan out and respectfully deliver a symbol representing the nation’s commitment to “remember, honor, and teach.” And for family members and loved ones gathered around the graves, it’s a tangible connection to the memory of their fallen heroes. It’s part of the national Wreaths Across America program.

In 2023, volunteers and members of American Legion Riders Post 42 (ALRP42) and One Sent Riders conducted ceremonies at Lincoln County Cemetery and Kirkland Cemetery. Several members of ALRP42 assisted with previ-

ous Wreaths Across America ceremonies in Tullahoma. It was an honor they desired for Lincoln County, too. Debbie Lipsie of ALRP42 and Mona Payne of the One Sent Riders of Fayetteville teamed up and obtained approval for their organizations as sponsoring groups.

Lipsie said, "It's not just about decorating veterans' graves. The bigger takeaway here is that by performing these ceremonies and supporting Wreaths Across America, we are able to instill in our younger generations the feeling of community, service, and being able to give back. [It's] to remember that those names we are honoring are not just stones, but folks from our community who fought for our freedoms, as well as to instill a sense of patriotism and desire to serve our great community."

The community's response to last year's ceremonies was encouraging.

"The American Legion Riders Post 42 has received nothing but positive feedback from the community and families whose

resting places were covered last year. Although we don't do it for recognition, it certainly makes us smile when members of the community reach out to us and tell us stories and tales of those we are honoring," commented Lipsie.

There's more to the program than the ceremony. Wreaths Across America requires each cemetery to register under a sponsoring group. Lincoln Cemetery and Kirkland Cemetery board members, alongside The Farmhouse at Two Trees, assisted with the 2023 cemetery registration. The sponsoring groups purchased the wreaths through fundraising efforts. The groups and volunteers later removed the wreaths, and plans for the following year's ceremonies began anew.

"We are fortunate to live in a community where everyone helps out. We approached several other groups to help us with the laying and cleanup of the wreaths. We had the One Sent Riders, Voodoo Custom Cars, and members from several other motorcycle enthusiast clubs help us," Lipsie shared.

The community's support was outstanding.

"We held three fundraisers leading up to the event, and the community really showed up to help us get our goals accomplished for 2023," she said. "Of course, for 2024 and the years following, you'll see us setting up rides and road fundraisers to continue to support our efforts."

According to the American Legion's website, the American Legion Riders are a patriotic veterans organization

chartered by Congress in 1919. Each group consists of the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion members, who are also motorcycle owners or spouses of owners. The Riders' work and community involvement support veterans and their families through charitable and ceremonial activities.

Locally, ALRP42 hosts three annual rides: the spring Blessing of the Bikes, the Fall Run, and the annual American Legion Riders Legacy Run. Donations to these events help fund the group's yearly angel tree for local veterans, a girls softball team sponsorship, funeral home assistance for fallen service members or veterans, financial assistance for local veterans experiencing financial difficulties, and other local nonprofits.

ALRP42 proudly works with the Patriot Guard Riders, standing flag lines at veterans' funerals throughout the area, extending from Nashville to Huntsville.

Lipsie stated, "I am a proud Navy veteran, part of the American Legion Post 42, and an officer in the American Legion Riders Post 42. I am continually surrounded by other veterans who still have the desire to serve and protect, and that camaraderie is irreplaceable. I am proud of our Riders group and what all we have accomplished here in Fayetteville in the past four years that we have been chartered. I feel that the Riders are truly part of my extended family, and we are willing to help our community in any way we can."

It's full-circle support at its finest.

"Many veterans struggle to find their 'in' when they come home. The American Legion and American Legion Riders help recreate that much-missed camaraderie. The Rid-

" [It's] to remember that those names we are honoring are not just stones, but folks from our community who fought for our freedoms."

DEBBIE LIPSIE



▲ Brian Pike "Wrangler"

ers in Fayetteville have all become great friends, and many consider each other family. It's all about being around others who can commiserate and understand what you've been through without having to explain it," she said.

Volunteers honor the legacy of fallen service members with reverence and purpose through the Wreaths Across America program. For Lipsie and the

members of ALRP42, these Lincoln County ceremonies echo the enduring values of service, patriotism, and community. As wreaths are laid and stories shared, we are reminded that in honoring the past, we forge bonds that strengthen our shared future.

From fundraising efforts to flag lines at veterans' funerals, members ensure that no veteran is forgotten and that

every sacrifice is honored, embodying the true spirit of service. **GN**

To volunteer or donate your time to the local Wreaths Across America ceremonies, contact Debbie Lipsie at (412) 953-3030. For up-to-date information, join the public Facebook group, American Legion Riders Post 42.

Tablescapes - May 9



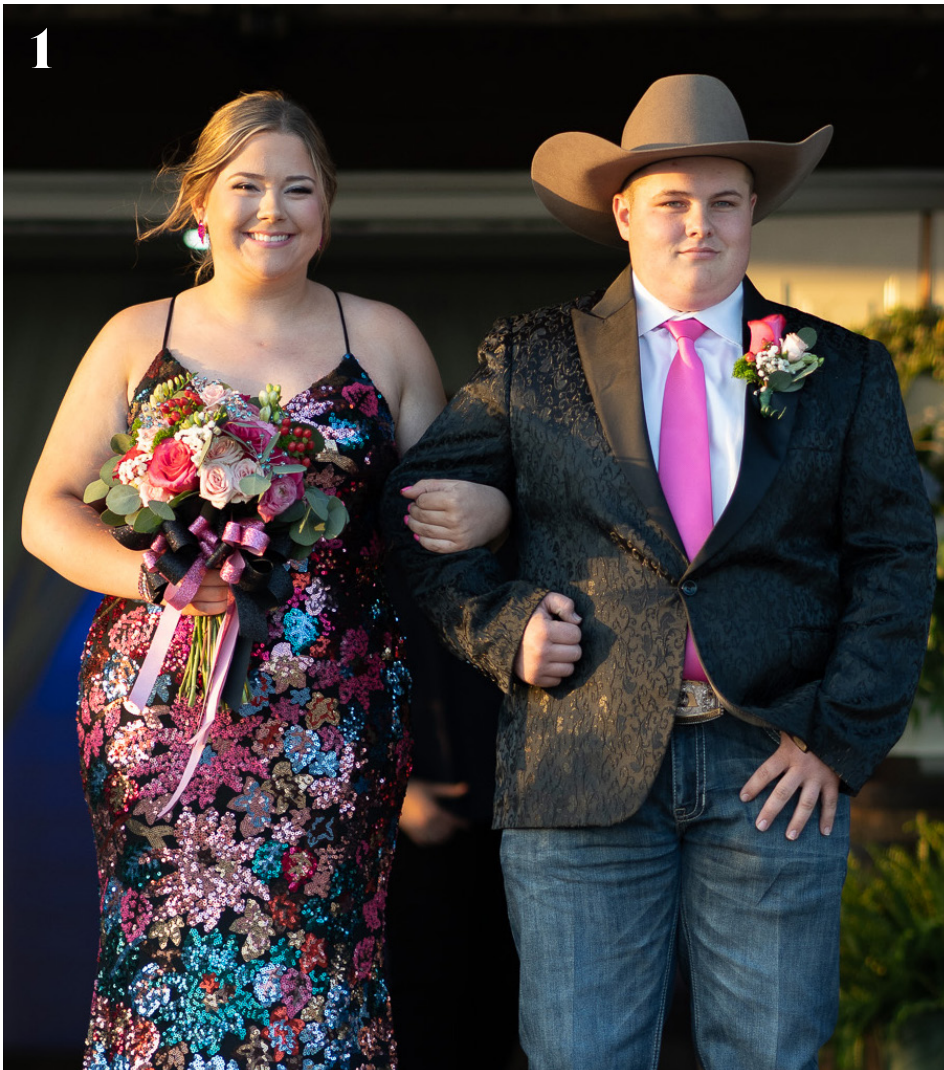
Photography by Brooke Snyder

Fayetteville-Lincoln County Museum's annual Tablescapes fundraiser was held May 9 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tickets were \$10 at the door. Tables went from simple to elaborate. Businesses, individuals, and nonprofits went above and beyond to create beautiful tables.



1. Aimee Byrd, Jason Ivey, and Heather McCormick 2. Shannon Blackwood, Debbie Logan, Cindy Reese, and Crystal Parker
3. Amy, Will, and Luke Anderson 4. Kendra Childress 5. Anastasia Childress 6. Heidi Ables and Suzanne Wagar

Lincoln County High School Prom - April 27



Photography by Brooke Snyder

Students waited all year for this night of a lifetime. Lincoln County Prom was held at the Palace of Riverbend on April 27. Everyone was dressed to impress and spent the evening dancing and laughing.



1. Brynlee Ishmael and Gage Long 2. Hannah Cannon
3. Allie Kalentkowski and Wyatt Terrell 4. Anna Franklin and Cole Carter

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Good News Magazine's mission is to build stronger communities through positive stories. We encourage you to donate and volunteer at local nonprofits to spread more good in your community.

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Motlow College Foundation

Provides scholarships and supports programs at Motlow State Community College.

(931) 393-1543
www.motlow.edu/give/foundation.html

The Fayetteville-Lincoln County Museum and Civic Center

Collects and displays artifacts and information about the history and culture of Fayetteville and Lincoln County, and the event center is available for public rentals.

(931) 297-2450
www.flcmuseum.org

Friends of the Fayetteville-Lincoln County Public Library Association

Supports the library through various avenues as a group of volunteers.

(931) 433-3286
www.flcpl.org/friends-of-the-library

Lincoln County Humane Society

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(931) 433-3726
www.humanesocietylc.com

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(931) 557-5150
www.fayettevillemainstreet.com

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Provides free monthly books for registered children under ages birth to 5 in order to promote childhood literacy.

www.flcpl.org/imagination-library

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(931) 623-3763
www.fayettevillelions.org

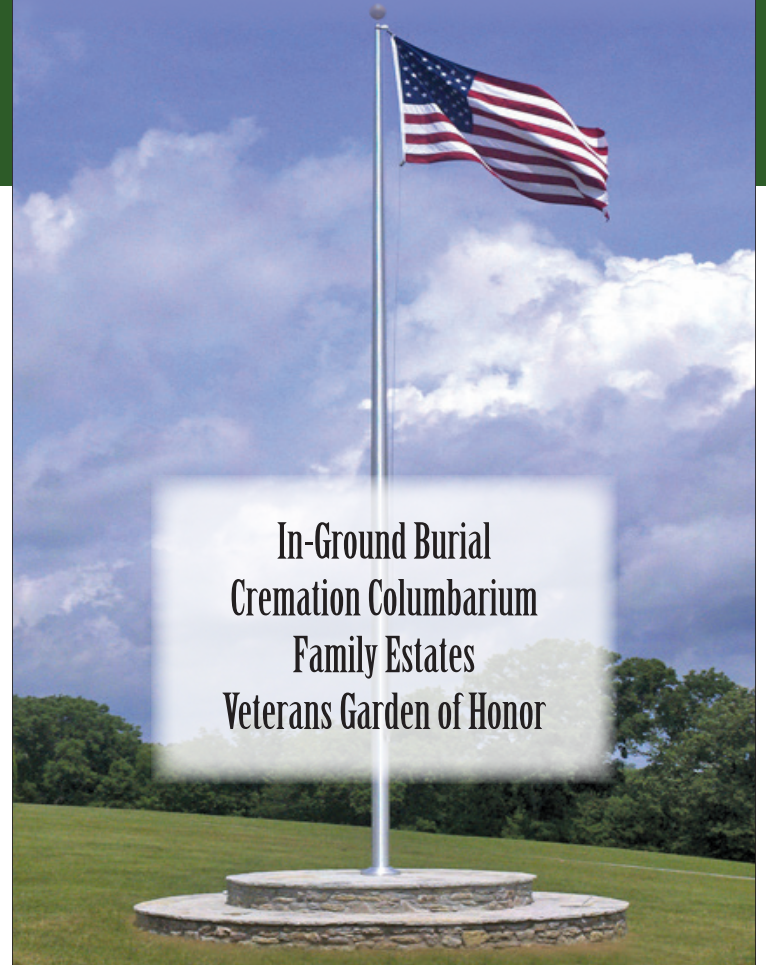
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www.relayforlife.org
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