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ISSUE 6 2024

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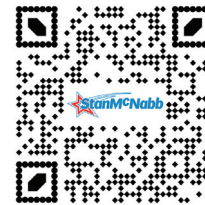
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# The colors between the oceans

Healing is building for a more perfect union.

**I**F 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



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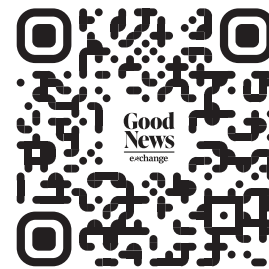
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**RECYCLING GETS**

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**THE COUNTY WINS**

**Carol Fulmer's journey  
to a greener Franklin County**

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder

CAROL  
FULMER



**I** MAGINE A world overflowing with trash overshadowed by plastic mountains. This unsettling vision could have been a reality for Franklin County until Carol Fulmer, our "Recycling Queen," and her enthusiasm stepped in. Her story is one of passion, perseverance, and a community transformed — all thanks to the power of recycling. Fulmer's journey began with her backpack full of books and a yearning for knowledge. After graduating from Franklin County High School and spending time in banking, she embraced a second chance at education with the support of her husband, Tim Fulmer, and her daughter, Lindsey Fulmer (Ladd). A classmate's enthusiasm for a blooming Nashville recycling program ignited an environmental spark.

"I started at Motlow and transferred to Middle Tennessee State University, graduating with a major in mathematics and a minor in computer science and education. I became interested in recycling due to the excitement and encouragement of a classmate who himself became energized when Nashville started a recycling program," she explained.

The early '90s in Franklin County, however, offered no outlet for her ever-growing eco-consciousness. Witnessing the overflowing green boxes burning on the side of the road, often mistaken for bonfires by passersby, left her frustrated but undeterred. The lack of an outlet only strengthened her resolve

to find a solution. Fulmer diligently stockpiled her recyclables, eventually finding a home for them across county lines into Nashville. The 1991 Solid Waste Act inspired the county to apply for grants to bring in clean, well-maintained convenience centers to replace green boxes.

Fulmer eventually stumbled upon a job advertisement that seemed tailor-made for her. The Interlocal Solid Waste Authority (ISWA), a collaborative effort between counties striving for cost-effective waste management, was seeking a recycling coordinator. It was a perfect match. Fulmer's dedication and expertise blossomed within the ISWA, but Fulmer knew there was more work to do.

She and the solid waste director spearheaded the "blue bag concept." This concept allows residents to conveniently recycle different materials at all centers, making it more cost-effective. Through tireless presentations to city councils, curbside recycling became a reality for the entire county, mirroring the ease of trash disposal.

Convenience centers transformed, boasting designated bins for each recyclable commodity — metal, aluminum, paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, and jugs. Businesses, too, benefitted from Fulmer's collaborative efforts with community leaders. A cardboard collection program tackled waste disposal challenges, saving them money while contributing to the county's 25%



Paul Armstrong, Blake Stephens, Amanda Hendon, and Carol Fulmer



waste reduction goal — a collective triumph. Community members can now easily recycle, as all cities offer curbside recycling alongside trash pickup.

The success story wasn't confined to infrastructure. Fulmer's passion burned brightest when educating others. Her interactive programs were anything but dull. She held a "recycling relay race" where teams raced to sort items, learning valuable facts and the environmental benefits of recycling along the way. The thrill of competition is intertwined with environmental education, making it a win-win for all.

Her STEM-related activities, toss games, and "Where Does This Go?" challenges captivated younger audiences. The message resonated deeply, turning children into recycling ambassadors and coaching adults who strayed from the green path.

The impact of Fulmer's work transcended environmental benefits. Increased recycling participation means a lighter burden on taxpayers' wallets and a more significant economic benefit for the community.

Franklin County relies on property taxes to fund garbage disposal. Every recycled item means less waste to manage, translating to cost savings for the county and revenue from the sale of recyclables — a double win.

"When a resident puts an item into their garbage, it costs the county money. However, when the community recycles, the county does not pay, and the county receives revenue from the sale of the recyclables," Fulmer said.

But perhaps the most heartwarming aspect of Fulmer's success comes from a fellow teacher, Vickie Acklen. After attending one of Fulmer's school programs, Acklen's daughter became a recycling fanatic, even holding her family accountable for their sorting habits.

She added, "My stunned reply was simply, 'Good for her.' If only we had one in every household."

It takes everyone working together to make recycling a success. The changes made over the years are the result of collaborative efforts from many individuals committed to safeguarding the community's future.

Fulmer finds immense satisfaction today as younger generations embrace the mantle of environmental responsibility. Witnessing the seeds she sowed blossom into a community actively reducing waste and embracing a sustainable future fills her with pride. Fulmer's story is an inspiring example and reminder that we can tackle even the most daunting environmental challenges — one recycled bottle, one informed child, and one passionate advocate at a time. **GN**



Sue Fulmer, Nancy Hibler, Carol Fulmer, and E.J. Langford



Carol Fulmer and Lindsey Fulmer Ladd

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# DESERT SANDS

## meet Main Street



**Beri Fraley's story of generational service and sacrifice.**

By Jeriah Brumfield  
Photography by Brooke Snyder and submitted by Kelly Fraley



• **BERI FRALEY** •



**WENTY YEARS** ago, Beri Fraley's calloused hands gripped a rifle in the unforgiving deserts of Iraq. Back then, Fraley wasn't yet a seasoned businessman but a National Guard captain leading a patrol under a sky painted crimson. He was a leader — not by title but by the responsibility thrust upon him. This is the story of a man forever shaped by duty, from the sands of war to the streets of his hometown.

His journey began abruptly. A knock on the door, a single weekend to say goodbye, and Fraley, along with his ever-present rucksack filled with essentials for a soldier or a natural disaster, was on his way. The gravity of the situation settled in during a pre-deployment prayer session.

"When I was home for a day after my unit was called up for deployment, some members of my church came to see me and had a prayer service."

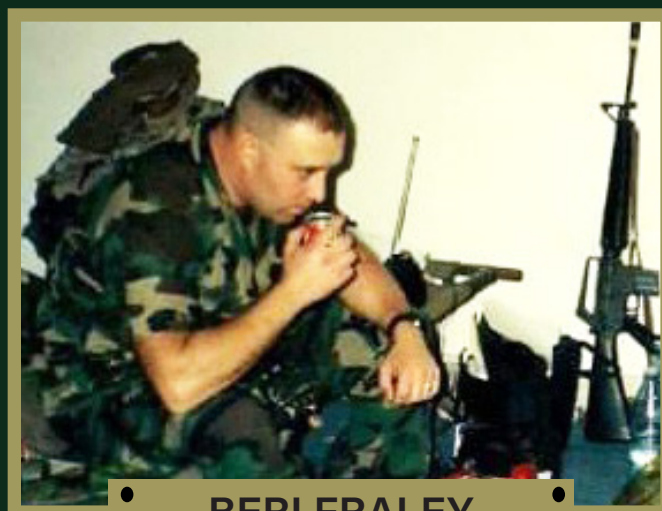
Two Vietnam veterans, their eyes etched with the ghosts of battles past, offered a simple yet profound piece of advice: "Do your job. Don't volunteer for anything."

Heeding their words might have shielded him from the leadership thrust upon him in the heat of Desert Storm. Selected by seasoned non-commissioned officers for a reconnaissance mission, a knot of fear tightened in Fraley's gut. He was a junior officer, yet he was entrusted with the lives of these veterans. In that moment, the weight of responsibility transformed him. "Playing Army" was over. He was a leader — a steward entrusted with the nation's most valuable resource: its people in uniform.

The seeds of leadership were planted much earlier. Fraley thought back to his childhood. His father, George Fraley, a man of strong convictions, served as a state representative. Witnessing his father's dedication to the community and his tireless work ethic in advocating for those he served left a lasting impression on him.

His mother exemplified strength and steadfast support. Together, they were a solid and resilient team. Their influence became the foundation upon which Fraley built his leadership style, developing one that valued decisive action and compassionate empathy.

"My dad was a great representative, but my mom was the one who got him elected."



**BERI FRALEY**

Another one of his inspirations was his wife, Kelly. "She is an extremely strong person, and she owns a successful business as a woman in a business that exists in a man's world. Our partnership is incredible, but I have to give some credit to my parents," Fraley said. "Most importantly, my parents had me in church two or three times a week. My wife and I still attend church with my mom unless we are traveling."

Back home, the newness of civilian life felt deafening. The camaraderie, the mutual purpose — all gone. Yet, the experience left a lasting mark on him. "Freedom", a word often taken for granted, became a cherished ideal after he returned home. He witnessed firsthand the cost of liberty and the sacrifices combat soldiers made, some of whom couldn't return. Their memory instilled a sense of determination to build a better future worthy of their sacrifice.

Transitioning wasn't easy. Military service, even as a reservist, is a lifestyle. But Fraley's leadership skills honed in the desert proved valuable in the corporate world. He rose through the ranks of a defense contractor. His decisive nature and experience with briefings translated well to the boardroom. However, the corporate red tape felt stifling. The itch for autonomy and a direct impact grew stronger. After spending almost 30 years in the Army and National Guard, he retired as a lieutenant colonel.

One day, opportunity knocked. It was a chance to lead a welding business from the ground up. Leaving the security of a large corporation was a gamble, but Fraley wasn't afraid of calculated risks. He brought the "Warrior Ethos" — the core values of the Army — to his new venture. His company now thrives not just on his expertise but on treating his employees with the same respect he demanded from his soldiers.

"I always try to treat people with respect. If you take care of others, they will take care of you."

Through his business, he offers scholarships to aspiring welders and utilizes local resources whenever possible. Fraley is fully committed to leaving his community better than he found it.

Today, he navigates the world of veteran support groups, helping others navigate the Veteran Affairs' ebbs and flows and offering a listening ear to those who share their experiences. His journey from the desert sands to the familiar backroads of his hometown continues to shape him as a leader.

Looking back, Fraley reflects on the lessons learned. His father's humility, the unwavering support from his church community, and the camaraderie forged during his service all shaped who he is today. He doesn't consider himself a hero but a man who answered the call and continues to serve his community in his own unique way.

Perhaps that's the essence of Fraley's story — the story of countless veterans who carry the weight of their service with such dignity, their dedication to a better future a constant undercurrent in their everyday lives. This Independence Day, as we celebrate our freedoms, let us remember the sacrifices made to secure them and honor the service of those who continue to build a better future — one act of kindness, one life touched at a time.

"At some point in your life, you need to think about your legacy — what you will be remembered for." GN



KELLY AND BERI FRALEY



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# A hub of *Hope*



The Community Development Center's programs turn challenges into possibilities.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes and submitted by Anita Teague

**W**E OFTEN overlook the significance of basic abilities such as independence, clear sight, good hearing, problem-solving skills, and easy access to essential resources. Navigating the challenges associated with what society labels as disabilities, disorders, limitations, and conditions requires more than personal determination; it takes a supportive community dedicated to helping individuals achieve their utmost potential.

Finding assistance for those grappling with such obstacles can be daunting. However, the Community Development Center (CDC) is a central hub assisting all ages. Each program is a spoke in the center's wheel of resources.

The CDC's purposeful rotation connects lives and propels them forward. The CDC acts as a driving force, steering individuals toward a brighter and more empowered future within this dynamic wheel of change.

Originating as the Child Development Center over 50 years ago, the CDC initially focused on early intervention. This program delivers therapy to children with developmental delays and disabilities, offering support and continuing eligibility until kindergarten.

The CDC supports 11 counties in South Central Middle Tennessee and ensures that children receive personalized assistance within the familiar environment of their homes. Staff work closely with parents and caregivers to comprehend developmental milestones and implement strategies for day-to-day challenges.



The Child Development Center transitioned to the Community Development Center in the mid-'90s to support all age groups. The Family Support program, initiated during this expansion, covers six counties and provides essential funding to families caring for a member with developmental or intellectual disabilities. Operating statewide under the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, this program addresses daily life skill challenges, offering financial assistance to alleviate costs.

Anita Teague, executive director of the CDC, said, "We serve our entire community of those with special needs and of all abilities. We help them work, achieve their personal goals, strive for independence, and connect them with resources."

Resources like the Children's Center for Autism, launched in 2016, address the growing need for autism services in rural communities. There are locations in Lewisburg and Shelbyville, with a Fayetteville location coming in 2024. This program serves children aged 18 months to 12 years who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Children's Center for Autism is staffed by licensed board-certified behavior analysts and certified registered behavior technicians. It provides applied behavior analysis therapy, parent training, and community outreach.

The CDC's Employment Services cover a wide range of support, including assisting individuals with job readiness, placement, and pre-employment transition services to students. They also help those in TennCare's Employment and Community First CHOICES program, offering support for independence skills and community navigation. A recent addition, MAPS, focuses on skills like independence and employment. This program operates across 10 counties in the center's service area.

Teague and her team understand the frustration of being tossed around from resource to resource without guidance.

"Family members get so stressed and tired because they're having to manage their household and [deal with] medical issues, therapy sessions, insurance, and all these things for their family member with a disability," said Teague.

But a call to their office is different. Staff will check to see if you fall within the guidelines of any of their programs, and if not, they will recommend other resources that might meet your needs.

The Independent Support Coordination program, established in the mid-1990s, offers case management for individuals with significant intellectual disabilities. This program operates across 17 counties. It ensures that individual desires and needs get prioritized. Additionally, assistance with disability case management services is available under the Tennessee Strong Families program.

The CDC's commitment extends to seniors through the Senior Equipment Loan program, initiated in 2017. Providing durable medical equipment across South Central Middle Tennessee regardless of income, this program operates through a collaborative effort among CDC staff.

The CDC's leadership team is composed of Teague and program managers. To ensure the seamless operation of these vital programs, leaders meet monthly and annually to review and improve them.

She said, "We work with many partner agencies, including other nonprofits in our communities, focusing on other aspects, not just disabilities. We are



▲ Henry, Aiden, Rachel Rudolf, and Kelli Lafont

“ We serve our entire community of those with special needs and of all abilities. We help them work, achieve their personal goals, strive for independence, and connect them with resources.

—Anita Teague

all involved in our local communities, and many of us serve on the Community Health Councils and Community Advisory Boards, which gives us avenues to learn what the needs are in our communities. The CDC’s main focus is on those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Still, by being involved, supporting other nonprofit’s missions, and expanding our services to those of all abilities, we are more inclusive and meet a larger community of need.”

The CDC is the wheel that turns toward hope and carves out paths to independence and empowerment. As the center’s wheel of change continues to turn, it leaves an indelible mark on those navigating challenges, fostering a brighter and more inclusive future.

*For more information, visit [cdctn.org](http://cdctn.org) or follow the center on Facebook. The office is at 111 Eaglette Way, Shelbyville, or you can reach them by calling (931) 684-8681.*

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**

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and the Exchange Cookbook: [www.southernaprons.com](http://www.southernaprons.com)

## Cook up a patriotic feast for summer gatherings.

**W**HAT 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.

# Piezan Pizzeria Italiano

Where every bite tells a story of Italian tradition

**F**OR MOTHER'S Day this year, I went to dinner with my youngest daughter at Piezan Pizzeria Italiano, located on the square in downtown Winchester. I wasn't going for pizza, though. I wanted to be different and try something I wouldn't think to order any other day. I'm the person who can find one dish and stick with it for a long time, so this was going to be an adventure! We walked in and loved the new seating arrangements. The aroma of freshly baked pizza ebbed and flowed throughout. Several dishes on the menu sounded delicious, but two caught my eye, and I couldn't decide. I opted to get both the Mussels Pomodoro and the Neapolitan Eggplant. We ordered the antipasto salad for an appetizer and caught up with life while we waited for our entrees.

When they brought out the antipasto salad, it was beautifully arranged with different cuts of salami, prosciutto, mozzarella, tomatoes, fresh basil, sliced olives, banana peppers, balsamic vinegar, and I'm sure I forgot something. It was so light and fresh. It made me think of what it would be like if I were ever to visit Italy one day.

Next came the actual entrees. The Mussels Pomodoro was huge! I thought it would have a few mussels. Boy, was I wrong. The entire plate was decorated with them. There was easily enough for three people. I took my first bite and was instantly transported to







Italy, sitting on the patio overlooking the gondola's passing in the Grand Canal. The mussels were sautéed in garlic and fresh basil. The al dente spaghetti had just enough sauce.

My next bite was from the Neapolitan Eggplant. This was an entirely different experience. The crispy eggplant was layered with ricotta cheese on a bed of spinach. The heartiness of the eggplant when you bite down, along with the flavor of the breading, paired with the ricotta and spinach, gives your tastebuds a trip to the Rome Colosseum. Classic, hearty, robust.

I may just have to keep ordering different. **GN**

### **GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!**

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Franklin County. This month Shannon Beebe visited Piezan Pizzeria Italiano.

Shannon Beebe  
franklincountyfoodcritic@gmail.com

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A close-up, artistic photograph of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in a draped, wavy pattern. The colors are vibrant, with deep reds, bright whites, and a dark blue field with white stars. The lighting creates soft shadows and highlights the texture of the fabric.

**INDEEPE**



# NDENCE

John Winthrop said, “We shall be as a city upon a hill,” during his famous 1630 sermon<sup>1</sup>. 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.

<sup>1</sup> *National Endowment for the Humanities (neh.gov)*

# INDEPENDENTS



By Jeriah Brumfield  
Photography by Brooke Snyder and  
submitted by Harold Jones

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## HAROLD JONES



# A LIFE WELL BUILT

A local Vietnam veteran builds  
a thriving hardware store in town.

---

**A**T JONES Hardware, the scent of fresh-cut lumber pairs with the excitement of shopping for hardware supplies, making it the perfect destination for first-time movers, demolition projects, or do-it-yourself home improvements. Shelves overflow with nuts, bolts, and every gadget imaginable to fix a leaky faucet or a broken tractor. Harold Jones smiles and greets a young couple browsing paintbrushes. This seemingly ordinary exchange holds an extraordinary story, representing the strength and inspiration our veterans bring to our nation, even after their service.

Jones was born and raised in Franklin County, where he developed a deep under-

standing of the area's fertile soil and rich agriculture scene. He comes from a family of hard workers who taught him the value of strong work ethics early on.

"My daddy was a farmer, my mother worked in a factory, and I worked on the farm," he explained.

After finishing his education at Huntland Schools, he realized that he didn't want to spend the rest of his life farming. He started working at a hat factory in Winchester and continued there until he was drafted into the military in October 1966.

Jones' professional career began in the fields of Vietnam. He was drafted at the age of 25, a far cry from the life he envisioned on his family's farm. The military

sent him to Fort Campbell in Kentucky for basic training, Fort Dix in New Jersey for his Advanced Individual Training, and Fort Hood in Texas for his assignment.

After three months, he received orders to go to Vietnam. Upon arrival, he was stationed with the United States Army, Vietnam Special Troops at Long Binh as a military driver's license issuer for his tour.

His new job across the country was a world away from the small-town lifestyle he knew. Day in and day out, Jones ensured soldiers navigating the treacherous landscape of Vietnam had the permits needed to operate the fleet of vehicles keeping the war effort moving — jeeps, tanks, and massive eighteen-wheelers.

The experience was a rude awakening. Witnessing the struggles of people in a war-scarred country instilled in Jones a profound appreciation for the life he had back home.

“If we could all see what people have going on in other countries, how they live, and what they suffer from, we wouldn't do some of the things we do here in the USA.”

He saw firsthand the value of a nation where safety, security, and opportunity weren't privileges but a birthright. This newfound appreciation, coupled with the natural skills in mechanics he learned on the farm, ignited a fire within him.

After returning home, Jones secured a job at Knies Hardware in Winchester, where he worked for over six years. At Knies, he was responsible for ordering pipe fittings, bolts, nuts, electrical supplies, and other hardware items. Jones had a great time working for Mr. Alf and Cottam Knies, who were wonderful people. While working, he also attended Motlow College, where he majored in business and attended classes twice a week. The entrepreneurial spirit that had simmered within him during his service time finally bubbled over. In 1969, with grit, determination, and passion, Jones took a chance. He bought his first hardware store.

He successfully operated the hardware store from the same location for four fruitful



years. However, he realized that it had outgrown its original location, and he made the bold decision to purchase what was formerly known as Oran Walker Hardware in Huntland in April 1976. The business has stood the test of time for 48 years and counting, making it the oldest hardware store in the county. With optimism and gratitude, he hopes to continue serving the community for another 50 years with the Lord's blessings.

Jones and his wife, Tina, have a daughter named Joy, who graduated from Middle Tennessee State University. Joy works at the store full time and continues to expand her hardware knowledge and skill set.

Harold's success wasn't built overnight. He spent long days and nights reviewing inventory, restocking items, and overcoming the constant challenge of staying



ahead of big box stores. But he persevered, treating every customer with the respect he believes everyone deserves.

Understanding the importance of community, he sponsors local baseball teams, donates tools to the high school shop class, and never hesitates to lend a helping hand to a neighbor in need.

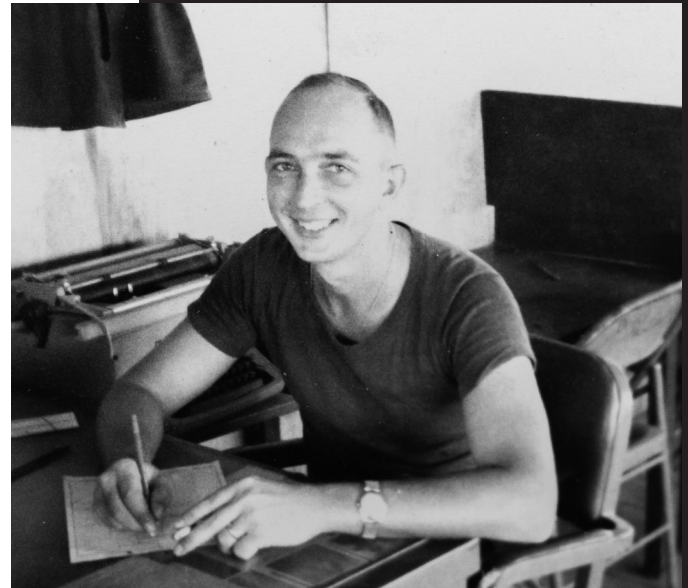
Jones Hardware has helped customers all over the county by providing the right tools to complete their projects, fixing leaky pipes, and bringing their dreams to life with a hammer, a box of nails, and a wealth of knowledge from a lifetime of experiences.

Upon meeting Harold Jones, you can sense his pride in having served his country while building a fulfilling life and continuing to make a positive difference, one interaction at a time. **GN**

*Call (931) 469-7774 for more information.  
Stop in and visit Jones Hardware:  
103 Alabama St., Huntland*

**“If we could all see what people have going on in other countries ... We wouldn’t do some of the things we do here in the USA.”**

**HAROLD JONES**



By Jeriah Brumfield  
Photography by Brooke Snyder

---

RAY COBB



# A LENS OF COURAGE

A local veteran's persistent fight  
for veterans and community.

---

**A** YOUNG RAY Cobb, barely out of his teens, crouches behind a sandbag in a mock Vietnamese village. Sweat beads are on his forehead, and condensation gathers on his vintage camera lens. The distant boom of artillery rumbles in the background, but Cobb is calm, focused on the fleeting moment — a look of determination on his face. Black and white photographs, some grainy with age, now flash across the screen — a triumphant athlete on the podium, a flamethrower's fiery rage against a Vietnamese village. These are Cobb's captured moments, symbolizing

the essence of humanity in both triumph and tragedy. These images graced the pages of renowned publications like *Desert Voice* (Third Army), *Stars and Stripes*, and *U.S. Army Magazine*. In 1973, he earned the prestigious *Headliners Award* for capturing a powerful photo of a demonstrator bravely standing up for their beliefs despite the looming threat of police violence.

It was draft day, and when President Johnson learned of Cobb's situation, he arranged a personal farewell for him.

"The day I was supposed to leave," he explained, "I told one of his aides I wouldn't see him for a couple of years."





# DEPENDENCE



The aide informed the president, “Ray is leaving us.”

Soon after his military training, Cobb and his first wife spent 14 months in Germany and even witnessed the birth of their first child. Upon returning, he covered President Johnson and attended his private graveside service, a touching tribute to a compassionate president during a difficult time.

It’s 1996. Cobb, slightly older and a seasoned photographer with a press pass dangling from his neck, maneuvers through the crowds of cheering fans. His camera snaps to capture the peak of a high jump, the graceful arc of a gymnast in mid-air. The vibrant energy of the games stands in stark contrast to the war-torn scenes he documented earlier.

This artistic side reflects a multifaceted personality — a man who finds solace in both the precision of military service and the artistic flow of capturing a fleeting moment. Back home, life seemed normal until the insidious effects of Agent Orange, a chemical used in Vietnam and Fort McClellan, Alabama, began to manifest in his body quietly.

Cobb’s condition inspired him to embark on a relentless pursuit of disability benefits, facing rejection after agonizing rejection. But Cobb wasn’t alone in this struggle. Through thick and thin, Pam, his wife and anchor, became his cheerleader and confidante. Together, they navigated the maze of paperwork and appeals, strengthening their determination with each obstacle.

In 2011, after years of relentless pursuit, Cobb’s case cracked open the system. Not



only did he secure his rightful benefits, but his case set a precedent for countless other veterans exposed to Agent Orange at Fort McClellan, Alabama. This victory, however, wasn’t an ending but a turning point. The fire within Cobb now burned for more than just himself. He yearned to light the path for others.

A few years later, in 2016, Cobb joined the American Legion in Winchester, an organization facing a slow decline. His leadership, inspired by his own personal experiences, sparked a revival.

“We started by having the first veterans parade since World War II,” he explained. “We saw a lot of turnout from the community, which I can imagine boosted morale. Then we started looking for different fundraisers.”

The Crosses and Flags Memorial still leaves Cobb beaming with pride today. Congressman Scott DesJarlais and other state, county, and city dignitaries stood shoulder-to-shoulder with veterans and families, a powerful symbol of the widespread recognition Cobb’s initiative had garnered. It was about a community coming together to honor its heroes, living and departed.

The fight for veteran benefits is ongoing, and Cobb’s message to other veterans is a stark reminder: “Never give



**“Never give up on your claim. Keep fighting. Keep trying to make yourself better. Things will happen.”**

**RAY COBB**

up on your claim. Keep fighting. Keep trying to make yourself better. Things will happen.”

Cobb’s voice now resounds through local and national radio shows, offering veterans crucial guidance and support in navigating the complexities of Department of Veterans Affairs claims. His dedication led over 500 veterans to receive the benefits they rightfully deserved.

Cobb’s story is a reminder that heroes aren’t just found on battlefields but also in the everyday struggles for justice, recognition, and honoring the sacrifices of those who have served. Cobb’s success wasn’t solely his own. It was fueled by his wife’s support, the dedication of fellow Legionnaires, and the persistent respect of the beloved Winchester community. **GN**

# INDEPENDENTEN



By Jeriah Brumfield  
Photography by Brooke Snyder  
and submitted by Syrenna Patrick

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SYRENNA PATRICK



# A VETERAN'S VOICE

Syrenna Patrick finds her inner leader through military service and veteran advocacy.

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**I**N THE pitch-black darkness of an Iraqi night, with the desert sand swirling around her, Syrenna Patrick found herself in a surreal moment of clarity. Bullets zipped through the air, mirroring the disarray of war. Even through the chaos, she felt a surge of determination unlike any she had known before. This wasn't just about survival. It was about honor, duty, and a promise she made to herself long ago.

As she returned to her tent, her mind flashed back to the humble beginnings that shaped her into the empowered woman she had become. Memories of ... her mother, Elizabeth "Ms. Ritty" Hol-

man, and her... and her relentless love and the struggles of raising 12 children flooded her thoughts, grounding her in purpose. Patrick's determination grew stronger with each burst of gunfire. She was fighting for her country and to honor the sacrifices of those who came before her. At that moment, she knew she had found her calling.

"It wasn't a very lavish upbringing. We struggled," Patrick began. "Of course, with 12 children, you're going to struggle as a single mom."

Patrick's childhood wasn't always easy, but she knew she could always depend on the warmth of her family and her mother's guidance.

As she grew older, she realized that one day, she would need to support her mother and give back the love and support her mother selflessly gave her children.

Patrick watched four of her older brothers proudly answer the call to serve and weighed her own options and decisions about joining the military. She felt hopeful and thoughtful about the opportunities that lay ahead.

“Watching my mom struggling just to make ends meet, I started wondering, ‘Okay, so what can I do to make my life better?’”

As she contemplated the idea of joining the military, a strong sense of purpose took hold of her. At 18, she walked confidently into a recruiting office with a hopeful heart and determined spirit.

Patrick thrived during her basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Her intelligence and natural leadership qualities shone through, and she excelled in her new life.

“It was one of the best times of my life,” she said. “I would not take this

part of my military journey back for anything in the world. I met some wonderful people and made some great friends. I learned a trade, and it was just a great experience for me.”

Even after she embarked on this newfound journey, she held on tight to the promise she made to herself before she left home. With each crisp paycheck clutched in her hand, she’d peel off a portion as a meaningful tribute for her mother’s countless sacrifices. It fulfilled a dream she’d carried close to her heart since her teenage years.

After marrying her former husband, they moved to California, but their relationship ended shortly after their move. Determined to prioritize raising her two sons, she returned to Tennessee. She faced a brief period of uncertainty until 2001 when she made another courageous decision to join the Tennessee National Guard.

This was one of the most impactful and challenging experiences of her life.

“In 2003, our unit was deployed to Iraq.”

Despite her fear and uncertainty during her deployment, the peace she found in the presence of her brother, who was deployed alongside her, provided a sense of comfort and familiarity that she longed for.

Patrick’s leadership skills flourished during that time, and she credits her time in the military for developing them. For her, leadership means leading by example. She made split-second decisions under pressure,

and her naturally calm demeanor and courage were a source of strength for her and her team.

“You have to be able to pull people behind you up the same ladder you’re climbing,” she explained. “I’ve had to walk with people and teach them how to be leaders, not only in the military sector but also in my civilian job as a supervisor.”

Just three days into her deployment, she received the shocking news of her mother’s passing. The pain of losing her while being thousands of miles away weighed heavily on her heart. Yet, even amid her grief, she had to press on and fulfill her duties. Upon returning home from deployment, Patrick resumed her civilian job and retired in January 2024.

Last year, Patrick spoke at a veterans program in Winchester. There, she shared her military experience with many young members of the community.

Today, Patrick strives to ensure that veterans, especially African American veterans who face unique challenges upon returning home, have the support they deserve. She listens to their anxieties, shares her own experiences, and is always willing to guide them toward the resources they need to thrive. She also offers a hand-up, a connection to a community that understands their unseen burdens.

Patrick’s journey is far from over, and she is committed to making an even greater impact on the lives of veterans all over the community by advocating for them.

“I would love to see more awareness and more communication between veterans. Now that I’m retired, I have more time to get involved in the veteran community.” GN

**“It was one of the best times of my life. I would not take this part of my military journey back for anything in the world.”**

**SYRENNNA PATRICK**





**Sandra Thomas**

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# High on the Hog Festival - May 15-19



Photography by Brooke Snyder

The Kiwanis Club of Franklin County presented the annual High on the Hog Festival from May 15-19. Carnival rides, games, and food were a few attractions that were available to the public.



1. Kaiden and Easton Satterfield 2. Kailee Elliot, Lilian Campbell, and Michelle McLaughlin 3. Charlie and Claudia Cunningham 4. Mary Beth, Tanner, and Mack Hill 5. Rylie Howard 6. Chasity Patton, Ma'Khi Patton, Zealand Robertson, Tealand Robertson, and Samia Miller

# Senior Center Art Class - May 22



Photography by Brooke Snyder

Twenty-two local ladies gathered together at the Franklin County Senior Center to create more than art. Laughter filled the room as they enjoyed each other's company. This paint class took place on May 22 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.



1. Tammy Smith 2. Shelley Kosiorek  
3. Debbie Bradford 4. Sandra Johnson

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# Finding hope in the battle with addiction

## What is it?

As the first phase in the recovery process, the StepOne Service<sup>SM</sup> is a hospital-based, three-to-five day acute withdrawal management service. Provided at Southern Tennessee Regional Health System, it is for adults who are in the impending or early stage of withdrawal from alcohol and/or opioids.

## The service:

- Requires voluntary admission to the hospital.
- Provides round-the-clock medical care by the hospitalist team and nurses at Southern Tennessee Regional Health System.
- Uses protocol-specific medications to reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms and keep you as comfortable as possible.
- Is provided in partnership with Evergreen Healthcare Partners, LLC.

## The commitment

Individuals seeking treatment through the StepOne Service<sup>SM</sup> must be committed to staying in the hospital until they are medically stable. Once discharged from the hospital, they must be motivated to continue addiction treatment by transitioning to a service based in the community.

An individual entering the StepOne Service<sup>SM</sup> will undergo:

- Telephone pre-screening
- In-person assessment
- Admission to the medical unit at Southern Tennessee Regional Health System
- Acute withdrawal management
- Individualized discharge planning
- Post-discharge follow-up

## Admission

For information on how to be admitted, call the StepOne Service<sup>SM</sup> coordinator at 931.201.9868.

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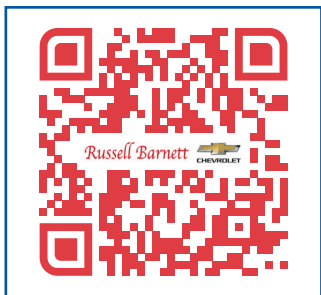


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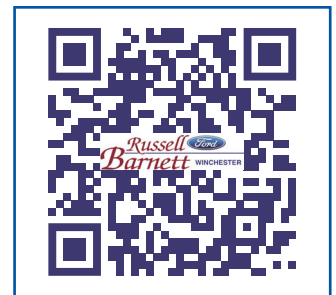
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