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Today's forecast is for cloudy skies. Perfect weather for exploring the Mill at Lebanon.

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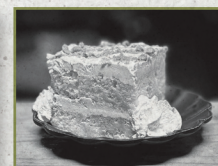
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Running toward danger

Celebrating our local heroes

**S**HE FLASHES her lights and pushes the gas pedal a little harder. The walkie-talkie is too quiet, so she spins the dial and makes her bulletproof vest a little more comfortable. She worked hard to wear that badge. She joined the force to give people comfort and safety — a luxury her mother didn't have. A few people may think she joined law enforcement for pride, power, or influence, but the truth is that she just wants to help people.

He puts on a yellow helmet — the real one — not the play one he wore when he was younger. Decades ago, he watched his dad go to work every morning to go save the day. Sure, some of the days were not as exhilarating, like climbing a tree to get a cat home. But other days were scary. He

thought of his dad every time he ran into a burning house.

And she shops at Bath & Body Works for the new deals they're offering. Her favorite lotion scent is "Into The Night." She is sometimes self-conscious about her cracked, itching hands. When she worked long 16-hour days during the COVID-19 pandemic, she had to wash her hands triple what she used to... because she had to save triple the lives she used to. Only a hero like her could help give a family several more years with their loved ones.

Our first responders are heroes. And this issue of Good News shines a light on the life, happiness, and joy they help us keep. When we scream for help, they run toward danger. We thank you, now and forever. **GN**

**Wesley Bryant,**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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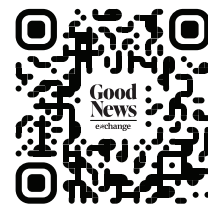
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# A Safe Haven

The Child  
Advocacy Center  
provides a place  
to rest for heroes  
of all ages.



By Sara Hook  
Photography by  
Larry McCormack

Heather Wamble and  
Cece Ralston help  
children at Lebanon's  
Child Advocacy Center  
on Wednesday, Aug. 28,  
2024, in Lebanon

**H**EROES COME in many shapes and sizes, but at the end of the day, each has the same important quality: they are willing to do difficult things to help people in need. A hero might rescue someone from a fire, perform emergency CPR to save someone's life, or join the Army to protect their country — but the heroes at Lebanon's 15th Judicial District Child Advocacy Center (CAC) know that sometimes, that difficult thing is a simple conversation.

A child advocacy center exists to support children who have been victims of abuse. Many people work with the CAC, all of them heroes — law enforcement, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), the district attorney's office, and medical and mental health professionals — among many other groups dedicated to protecting children. For Executive Director Heather Wamble, however, those groups aren't the biggest heroes who enter the center.

"We get to serve all of those heroes," Wamble said. "To me, though, the kids are the real heroes in this story because they were brave enough to tell someone. They're their own heroes, and that's just pretty remarkable."

The center offers several services to the Lebanon community. It regularly offers training on recognizing and responding to abuse and has a family advocate ready to support families in such a situation. But most importantly, the CAC is the place for



**“To me, though, the kids are the real heroes in this story because they were brave enough to tell someone. They’re their own heroes, and that’s just pretty remarkable.”**

– Heather Wamble

children to tell their stories. Often, those stories are told to forensic interviewer Cece Ralston. The stories aren't easy to tell.

"It's a very hard thing to do because [most] often they're afraid — they don't know what's going to happen if they tell, they don't know if they're going to be believed or even maybe be blamed for what happened," Ralston said. "There's a lot of fear that they have to overcome and so it is a real act of bravery to speak up."

It may not be easy, but the CAC does its best to make it as peaceful as possible. The center is in a beautiful craftsman-style home with a homey, child-friendly atmo-

sphere. It's a safe, neutral place for a child, Ralston said, and much better than the alternatives: a police station, a classroom, or maybe even the home in which the abuse took place.

Before child advocacy centers became common, children would often have to speak to multiple people about what they went through — a conversation that is hard enough to have just once. Now, forensic interviews at an advocacy center are admissible in court as evidence and testimony. It's an important and impactful job.

"As an interviewer, when you can give the child that safe opportunity to talk about what has happened, and you see them visibly relax ... often children will say to me afterward, 'I feel so much better now that I've been able to talk about this,' and it's a relief. It is a relief to that child," Ralston said. "[It] lets the healing process begin for the child, and it's very gratifying as an interviewer to be able to help children so directly like that."

The CAC also helps others heal. It's a place where caseworkers, caregivers, and other partners can rest after a long day or a difficult case. The center is truly a hub for people dedicated to helping children.

"We're at least just a little bit of a safe haven for not only the children we serve but for our law enforcement, our DCS partners, our district attorneys," Wamble said. "We serve more than just kids here."

Since the center first opened its doors in 2008, with a director, a contracted interviewer, and a rented space, it has served thousands of children in Lebanon and its surrounding counties. Ralston herself has interviewed over 2,000 children, and the cases worked have begun the healing process for many. For Deputy District Attorney Tom Swink, their role in protecting Lebanon's children does not stop there.

"In my nearly 20-year career as a criminal prosecutor in Tennessee's 15th Judicial District, the Child Advocacy Center has played and continues to play a crucial role in the prosecution of child physical abuse and sexual abuse cases," Swink said. "The three-pronged mission of our center — community outreach and education, victim and family advocacy, and the forensic interviewing of children — has helped protect the youth of our five-county district. In addition, the work of the Child Advocacy Center helps ensure that the perpetrators who harm our children are held accountable."

Lebanon's Child Advocacy Center is full of heroes, from those on the front-lines protecting children to the children themselves, who bravely speak up and change their lives for the better. What kind of hero will you be? **GN**



▲ Cece Ralston restocks a bookshelf full of toys that the interviewers use to reward their young interviewees at Lebanon's Child Advocacy Center



▲ Heather Wamble, Kolleen Mangram, Becca Belemjian, and Cece Ralston pose for a team photo at Lebanon's Child Advocacy Center

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# A HERO IN BLUE:

## Officer Abigail Jones saves infant's life

By Haley Potter // Photos submitted by Lorah McCarter  
and the Lebanon Police Department

**T**HE NIGHT began like any other for Lorah McCarter and her husband as they fed their precious baby girl, Rhylee — one of their newborn twins. Having just returned from the NICU days earlier, life was finally starting to feel a little more normal. But in the blink of an eye, everything changed.

Rhylee, born prematurely at 29 weeks, had been through so much already, and just when things seemed to be settling down, her parents faced every parent's worst nightmare.

"Her dad had seen that she was unresponsive. He brought her to me, and he said, 'I can't get her to respond,'" Lorah recalled with a tremble in her voice, showing the emotions that had to

have been running through her. "We gave her some pats on the back, and she started to cough. But then she started to shake and go unresponsive again."

Panic set in, and Lorah's heart raced as she dialed 911.

"We didn't know what was happening," she said. "We just needed help — anybody who could come quickly."

And that help came in the form of Patrol Officer Abigail Jones. Within minutes, Jones arrived.

"She was here so fast — maybe two or three minutes," Lorah said. "Before she even stopped her car, she was running straight for us."

Jones didn't hesitate for a second. "She grabbed Rhylee, turned her over, and gave her a few

pats on the back," Lorah said as she remembered one of the scariest nights of her life. "Then she turned her upright, saw that she still wasn't breathing, and quickly turned her back over again."

And then it happened — Rhylee cried. The relief was indescribable. In a matter of moments, a terrifying situation turned into one filled with hope, all thanks to the fast and decisive actions of Jones.

"Without her, we wouldn't have our baby girl. She was Godsent in that moment," Lorah said, her voice filled with emotion. "That is the only way to describe it."

The story doesn't end there. Lorah and her family recently



*Officer Abigail Jones presented with the Life Saving Award from Chief Mike Justice for her quick response and immediate action in saving baby Rhylee's life.*

had the chance to meet Jones again, this time under far less dire circumstances.

“We met up with her a few days ago to grab a couple of photos. She was so kind and so humble — just an amazing person,” Lorah shared. “Our family will forever be thankful for her quick actions. Without her, we’d be missing a huge piece of our hearts.”

In September, Jones was presented with the Lebanon Police Department’s Life Saving Award for her quick response and immediate action, saving Rhylee’s life.

It’s easy to understand why Jones is being recognized as a hero in her community. Her quick response and dedication saved Rhylee’s life and brought comfort to a family who will never forget her actions.

“She was exactly where she needed to be at exactly the right time. God worked through her that night,” Lorah said, reflecting on how the stars aligned that fateful evening to save her baby girl.

Today, Rhylee is a thriving 4 1/2-month-old baby, hitting all her milestones.

“She’s learned to roll over, she’s starting to coo, and she’s doing so well,” Lorah proudly shared.

That life-changing moment felt like the slowest and fastest few minutes for Lorah and her husband, and they will never forget Jones.

“She truly is our hero,” Lorah said with a smile on her face and tears filling her eyes.

The family even captured a sweet photo of Rhylee smiling up at her hero, Officer Jones — proof that sometimes, real-life heroes wear a badge. **GN**

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pepper jelly, pepperoni, cheddar cheese, jalapeno cream cheese on ciabatta bread (includes a side)

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turkey, bacon, avocado spread, tomato, cheddar cheese, pesto aioli on ciabatta bread (includes a side)

### PLAIN JANE - \$12

ham, white cheddar cheese, ooey gooey butter spread on ciabatta bread (includes a side)

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chicken, bacon, tomato, cheddar cheese, chipotle sauce on ciabatta bread (includes a side)

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# 'Pick Up Your Cross'



Pastor David Ashley

# A pastor's mission to fight domestic violence

By Haley Potter // Photos submitted by Holly Ashley

**W**ITH EVERY heavy step down the road, Pastor David Ashley's rugged hands grip the weight of a wooden cross — a symbol of strength and sacrifice — carried not for himself but for the countless victims of domestic violence across Tennessee whose suffering he refuses to ignore.

At first glance, Ashley's life seems like a blend of two worlds: physical strength and spiritual guidance. A former personal trainer turned pastor, he now works as a strength and conditioning coach at Mt. Juliet Christian Academy. But there's a deeper mission that drives him — one that goes beyond the weight room and into the lives of those across Tennessee who have been affected by domestic violence.

For the past five years, Ashley has organized the Cross Strength Ministries' annual Cross Walk, an event designed to honor and remember those who have been affected by domestic violence. But for him, this is more than just an event to raise awareness — it's a personal calling.

"My wife was a past victim of domestic violence, of a lot of horrible acts — childhood molestation, rape — but I never really had to go through that," Ashley said, his voice heavy with emotion. "She had the background and the knowledge from her experiences, and I wanted to say, 'Lord, what can I do? How can I help?'"

Ashley's answer came in the form of a cross. Inspired by his love for strength and

power, he created an event where he would physically bear the weight of a cross, symbolizing the burdens of those who have suffered from domestic violence.

"God created me to lift heavy things," he said. "So why don't you bear some burdens of those people who are in pain, the people who are in guilt and shame from the evil of domestic violence?"

As he carries the large cross down North Mount Juliet Road each year, it's not just physical labor. Each cross is adorned with ribbons — purple for females affected by domestic violence, blue for males affected, and black for those lost to domestic homicides.

"Those ribbons, they represent real people. There's a name attached to each one of those ribbons, and knowing that as I carry the cross ... it tears at my soul," Ashley said softly. "It just breaks my heart that God would even allow me to pick up this cross and bear these burdens."

*"God created me to lift heavy things, so why don't you bear some burdens of those people who are in pain..."*

- Pastor David Ashley



For Ashley, the act of carrying the cross is not only about honoring those who have suffered but also about giving them a voice.

“I’m speaking for those who can’t speak for themselves. Usually, when women stand up, the violence becomes greater. But I’m here to say ‘no more.’ We need men with backbones to stand up against this evil.”

His message is clear: the fight against domestic violence is one that demands courage, particularly from men.

“Women have been leading the charge for way too long,” Ashley declared. “Men were created to protect and defend women and children, and we’re not doing our job. We need to be stronger — to man up and stand up against this evil.”

For Ashley, the cross isn’t just a burden — it’s a call to action.

“We’ve torn down the natural role of men. We were created with aggression, power, and strength — not for our own benefit but to protect others. And now I’m challenging men to pick up their cross, to take a stand, and say ‘no more.’”

His powerful words are backed by equally powerful actions. In the first year of the Cross Walk, Ashley walked 50 miles from Mt. Juliet to Lebanon and back, carrying the cross every step of the way. Five years later, despite a need for a total knee replacement, he continues the tradition, walking as far as he physically can, reminding others that the fight against domestic violence must go on.

This year, the Cross Walk will conclude at Charlie Daniels Park, where survivors, supporters, and families of victims will gather for a time of reflection.

“We’ll have speakers; some of the victims may want to share their stories,” Ashley explained. “But I understand if they don’t. It’s hard to speak about the horror of it all. And that’s why we need to step up and be their voice.”

For many, the Cross Walk offers a sense of healing.

*“We must do better.  
We must stop this  
evil. It’s time for men  
to stand up.”*

- Pastor David Ashley



“Last year, I had ladies come up to me, just wanting to give me a hug, thanking me for bearing their burdens,” Ashley recalled. “I tell them, ‘The only hope comes from the cross. That’s where all the guilt, shame, and pain can be left behind.’ That’s why the cross is so powerful.”

As Ashley reflects on his journey, it’s clear that his mission goes beyond one event.

“This evil — it’s in our communities, it’s in our churches. And too often, we’re passive. We look the other way,” he said, his voice firm. “Edmund Burke said, ‘The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is

for good men to do nothing.’ Right now, too many of us are doing nothing, and that has to change.”

Through his words and actions, Ashley is challenging men and the broader community to rise up against domestic violence. “I don’t want people to think, ‘Oh, what a good guy he is.’ No,” he insisted. “I have a good God. Without Him, I’m nothing. But with Him, I can pick up that cross, and together we can fight this evil.”

As he prepares for this year’s walk, Ashley’s message to the world is simple yet profound: “We must do better. We must stop this evil. It’s time for men to stand up.” GN





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# Lucy Nelson

## FIGHTING FIRES AND OPENING DOORS

**F**EW PEOPLE have the chance to become pioneers in their field, and even fewer take that risk and blaze new paths. Lucy Nelson — wife, mother, and lieutenant at the Lebanon Fire Department — is one of those people. As the first female firefighter in Lebanon, Nelson had to break through many barriers to succeed. But she did succeed, and in over 15 years of service, she has done a lot of good in Lebanon.

Her success took many years of hard work, and it did not come without rejections as well. Nelson first applied to be a firefighter at 19 years old. She had been in the National Guard, and felt like the fire service was a good fit as well.

“I love taking care of people, and I also love to prove [to] people that I can do things that they think I can’t do, so when I was 19, it just seemed like the next step for me,” Nelson said.

She wasn’t hired. Nelson moved on with her life, thinking that it was just a dream that had passed her by. She got married, had a daughter, got divorced, and then one day as she was working in dispatch, Nelson’s mother gave her a call.

“She had heard the chief at the time speaking on the radio, and he was talking about how they real-



ly wanted to hire a female,” Nelson said. “She had known that was a dream of mine for years.”

Firefighters work 24-hour shifts, so Nelson’s mother volunteered to watch her 4-year-old daughter during those 24 hours. Nelson was finally able to achieve her dream.

▲ *Lucy Nelson, lieutenant at the Lebanon Fire Department, stands proud as the first female firefighter in Lebanon.*



*Caption:  
Abhorvita nis  
Porio esti d aluntur  
molorumet  
quia pori offici  
omnihil liquodi  
genduntem. Et pe  
in re*

LUCY  
NELSON

She was a little older and had different reasons for joining, but the fire to succeed was still there.

“I thought it would be cool to be the first female, but I also, with a young daughter, wanted to show her that we could do whatever we wanted to do,

*“I thought it would be cool to be the first female, but I also, with a young daughter, wanted to show her that we could do whatever we wanted to do.”*

- Lucy Nelson



▲ Lucy Nelson prepares equipment on one of the engines at the Lebanon Fire Department.



▲ Lucy Nelson gears up

and I was going to prove it to her,” Nelson said. “But my main motivation for keeping going and being a firefighter is helping people.”

The challenges didn’t end once she was hired. Now, Nelson had to pass fire school, as well as many other grueling challenges. She had to get the other firefighters to trust her as well, Nelson said. In the life or death situations firefighters find themselves in, trust is incredibly important.

“I was pretty much breaking the boys club,” Nelson said. “There had never been a girl, and they didn’t know if I was coming in to actually do a job — like, seriously take on this job — or just to take up a spot.”

Fortunately, many of her co-workers stood behind her and encouraged her to keep going. She persevered through the many physical challenges, and she and her superiors adapted many techniques — not so they would be easier, Nelson said, but so they worked better for her.

“As a female, what’s harder for us — it’s always going to be [us] not having as much upper body strength as a man does, and that’s just always going to be the thing, but what you have to do is figure out how you can do it,” Nelson said. “It was my business to work out every single day so I could get through fire school and I could’ve never done it without the people that were at my



“I’m home for two days, so I spend more time at home with my kids than I do at work,” Nelson said. “I’ve been there to pick them up; I’ve been able to do so much stuff for them because of my work schedule.”

Nelson’s goal is to continue breaking barriers, promoting as high as she can before retirement so the next woman who follows her knows that they can do it.

“I think that females do a great job,” Nelson said. “I would really love all women to — especially women that are athletic and have the heart and want to really help the community that they live in — to consider this for a career.”

With someone like Lucy Nelson as an example, there is no reason to think such a thing is impossible. GN

*“I would really love all women to — especially women that are athletic and have the heart and want to really help the community that they live in — to consider this for a career.”*

- Lucy Nelson

station at the time that truly believed in what I was going to do.”

One of those physical challenges included running a mile in full gear — gear that can weigh between 45 to 75 pounds. Nelson proved that it’s the determination that really matters, not size or gender.

“Anything is possible; I don’t care how small you are or how big you are,” Nelson said.

While there have been other female firefighters since Nelson first began her career, Nelson is the only one still serving at the station. There aren’t many women who see it as a career option, Nelson said, and even fewer who think they can succeed. But mothers like her can do well.





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MATT  
McPEAK

## Guardian on Campus

CPL. MATTHEW MCPEAK, SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER, IS SHAPING A SAFER FUTURE FOR STUDENTS.

**Y**OU'LL SEE him roaming the halls during class time. You can find him in the cafeteria at lunch, sitting with a group of students, getting the news of the day. He lends a hand whenever an instructor or faculty member needs one. He is also often one of the first on campus and among the last to leave long after the 3 o'clock bell has rung.

For Cpl. Matthew McPeak, school resource officer (SRO), days can be long. However, the rewards of his profession make every day a good one at Lebanon High School, his alma mater. McPeak said that serving the community at his favorite high school has been a longtime dream of his.

"I graduated from Lebanon High School. I still remember my SRO from when I was a student, and I still have a relationship with him today. So, it was a dream of mine to also be an SRO here," McPeak said.

With a 20-year career as a police officer, McPeak stepped into the role of SRO in 2012. Working in numerous areas of law enforcement, McPeak said working as an SRO was a longtime career goal of his.

"It was something I had an interest in," he explained. "I knew some guys

that had gotten into that division, and they really liked and enjoyed it. At the time, I was working patrol, which I liked, but I didn't feel like I was making a difference there."

Since stepping into his role as SRO in 2012, McPeak has kept busy in making a difference for area youth. He has been involved with and served on the board of DrugFree WilCo (DFW), a coalition dedicated to combating the effects of the opioid crisis on Wilson County.

"My oldest son was in high school at the time, and I was his SRO," McPeak explained. "I was looking for something he and I could participate in together, and we got involved with the Youth Prevention Coalition. The Youth Prevention Coalition is the juvenile arm of DFW, and they work to educate on any substance abuse that affects juveniles. I believe there were just six students representing all of the county's high schools at the time. We worked and grew the program and continued to move forward with it. Now, we currently have a Youth Prevention Coalition in every high school in the county."

He has served as the chapter president of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association Andrew Jackson Chapter. In 2023, McPeak was nominated as the 2023 adult nominee for volunteer service for the Governor's Volunteer Stars Awards.

McPeak added that he feels helping this coalition to grow is among his most beneficial accomplishments to date as an SRO.

"Just the things we've been able to do for the students has been rewarding. With the programs we've held and the information we've been able to get out, I feel like it's had a huge impact," he said.

Another impactful event with the coalition that McPeak is most proud of is his work with a mock DUI crash that would take place around the end

of the school year. The event even gained recognition and was recognized in 2023 by the Tennessee Highway Safety Office for the school's work with the mock DUI crash and the impact it had on young drivers with the Silver Safety Award through the Reduce TN Crashes Traffic Safety Award Program.

"I would call in just every community partner I could think of," he explained. "A local towing company would donate a wrecked car. Fire, police, and the Tennessee Highway Patrol would contribute manpower, and there were even students who participated in school's theater program who wanted to play the victims of the crash. Teachers



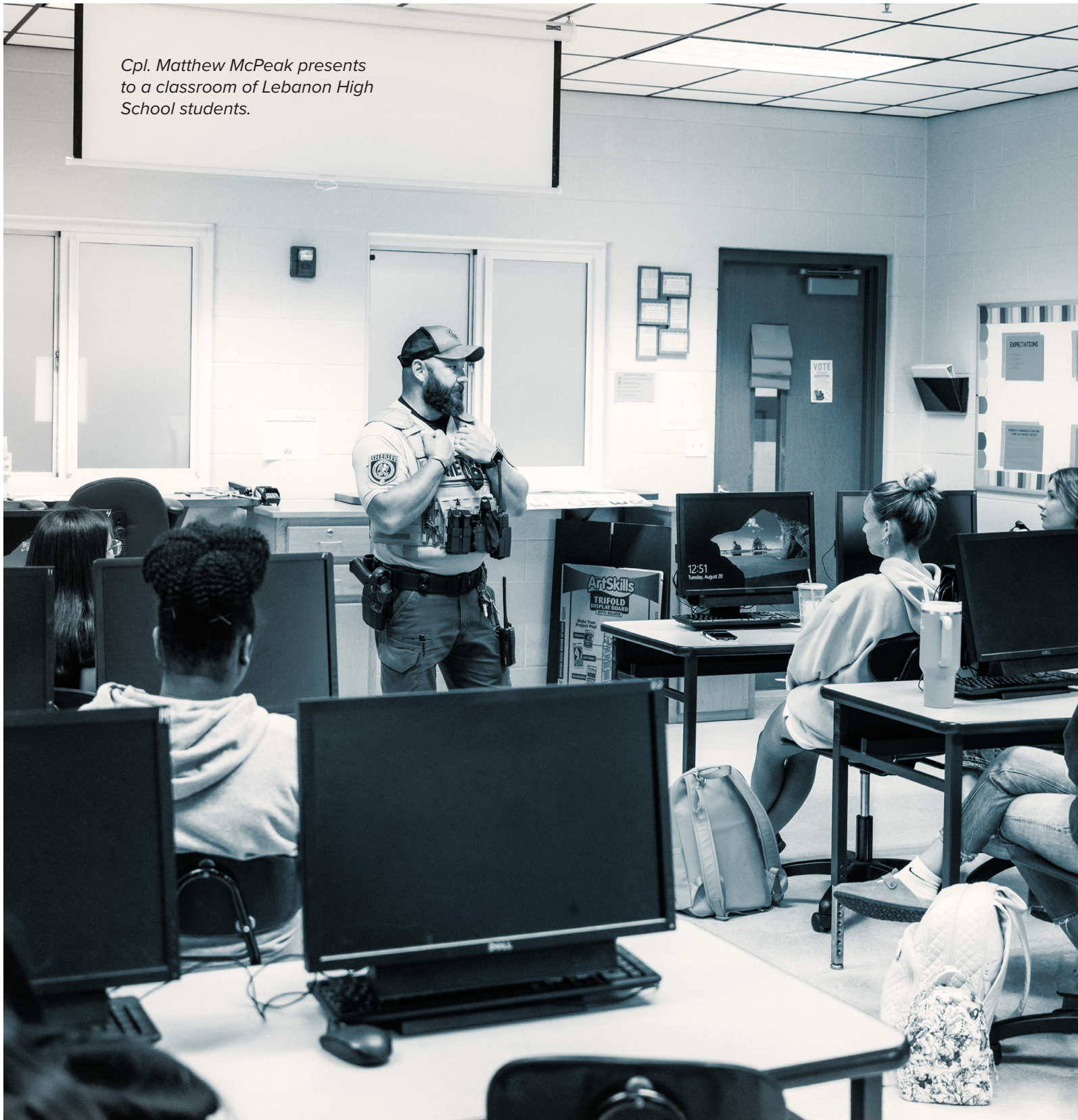
▲ CPL. Mathew McPeak talks to students at Lebanon High School about the importance of safety and having an SRO.

*"Just the things we've been able to do for the students has been rewarding. With the programs we've held and the information we've been able to get out, I feel like it's had a huge impact."*

- Mathew McPeak

OUR HEROES

*Cpl. Matthew McPeak presents to a classroom of Lebanon High School students.*



OUR HEROES



would bring their junior and senior students out and they were able to get the whole experience of an actual crash. I received a lot of positive feedback from students and parents. Currently, we hold the mock crash every other year and it is still having a lifesaving influence on the students. It's something I'm very proud of."

Now over a decade into the position, McPeak understands just how important his and his fellow SROs' roles are inside the school system.

"It's incredibly important," he explained. "Most people look at that position, and the first thing that comes to their minds is safety, and that is the primary function of us. But we also are heavily involved in community outreach. When I first started, I was in the elementary schools, and there were children that [were] somewhat scared of policemen because they didn't know us. By being there each day and get-

ting to spend time with them, I was able to make them feel more comfortable and see us in a positive light. That positive relationship with me enables them to have an overall positive relationship with law enforcement as they grow into adults."

McPeak added that it's important to remember just how significant our youth are and how important a positive influence is for their and the community's success.

"It might sound cliché, but the youth are our future," he said. "We are going to get old, and we're going to not be in charge anymore. We're going to retire, and these students are going to be taking care of us. They are literally our future. So, the more that you can pour into them now, the greater return we're going to have and the greater return to society we'll have. I don't think there's anything more important than teaching, molding, and influencing young people." GN





# ‘The Most Honorable Thing in the World’

LEBANON NURSE STRIVES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE BORN OR WHERE THEY DIE.

**J**OE'S (REAL name withheld for privacy) brain did not work. The man was unconscious. He had been that way for a while now in the trauma unit at Vanderbilt University Medical Center after suffering a serious injury, but this made no difference to Jan Parker. She read his favorite sports page to him. She sang to him, danced for him, and even told him corny jokes. The man did not laugh or sing back. He never responded to any-

thing, but Parker believed he could hear her deep inside his spirit. Even the other nurses saw their bond and tweaked their schedules so she could attend to Joe. Their sessions continued this way for a while until doctors one day took him to another floor, and those meetings ceased.

Anyone who has stepped foot in a hospital will say nurses play a vital role in every medical center. Unfortunately, projections show the United States will

experience a shortage of registered nurses, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). The aging of baby boomers and the growing need for health care both intensify the situation. Nursing schools across the country strain to increase capacity to meet rising care demands, AACN reported. Those demands call for large hearts, and people like Parker are running to meet them.

Parker works as a registered nurse at the Lebanon Endoscopy Center, a place offering procedures to examine the inner body. She sets up examinations for patients and assists with their recovery, ensuring they are taking appropriate steps to return to normalcy. However, these tasks do not even begin to utter how this Tennessean pours her soul into the intricate parts of life through her profession.

“I’m supposed to go to places into people’s lives that is usually very painful or very uncomfortable and very awkward, and I get to be the catalyst from point A to point B,” Parker said.

For Parker, nursing is diverse and a fulfilling passion. Throughout her career, she has fielded level 1 trauma cases to provide comprehensive care for some of the worst injuries, handled case management, and served as a clinical coordinator. She has worked in wound care clinics, cardiac clinics, and hospice. She’s done it all.

No matter the task, whether it was assisting with a baby’s birth or filling out patient charts, Parker worked the task with passion, because she was practically born to be a nurse.

“I always thought I was a nurse,” Parker said. “... Even when I was just a kid, I took that role.”



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JAN PARKER

She obtained her Bachelor of Science in nursing at Middle Tennessee State University in 1992. With the degree, she accepted some of the hardest tasks anyone could imagine. Those came especially in the beginning years of her career. Parker particularly remembered in the early 1990s when one woman came to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville pregnant with twins. She had been in a car accident where she was T-boned.

The trauma team placed her on two ventilators, one for each lung, and attempted to save the twins. Parker's team did everything right and tried their hardest. However, it wasn't enough in the end, as the blossoming family died.

Those are the type of days no nurse wants to face. Such stressful moments can often lead to fatigue, burnout, and then early departure for another profession.

But even the most difficult parts of being a nurse did not break Parker, because her mother ingrained the passion into her. A woman who attended nursing school at the cusp of World War II, Mama Mac — as she was known to most — showed Parker how to live, instilling tremendous love for God, family, and honor. She had the greatest impact on Parker's life. They were the best of friends until her mother's passing. Thanks to her mother, Parker saw the true meaning of being present at someone's birth and death.

"It's very similar," Parker said. "It's the most honorable thing in the world. You know you are in a place somewhere that is bigger than humans."

People remember the courage and heart it takes for nurses to step into that place. One man in particular recalled Parker very well. Months after he was removed from the trauma unit in the early 1990s where Parker worked, the man showed up at the medical center and requested to see her.

"Can I help you, sir?" Parker asked.

"Are you Jan?"

"Sir, how do you know me?"

"You tell the worst jokes," said Joe, the man who Parker had faithfully entertained despite no one knowing whether he had awareness.

But he heard Parker, a woman who gave him a light of hope amidst seemingly eternal darkness. This is the kind of power nurses like Parker hold and why they are called heroes.

"I think nursing is absolutely the best, most basic fundamental human [form of] giving possible. I think it's that intimate." GN

*"I think nursing is absolutely the best, most basic fundamental human [form of] giving possible. I think it's that intimate."*

- Jan Parker



OUR HEROES



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# Expungement Clinic - Sept. 24



1. Thomas Maynard 2. Tonya Lynn Goodall, Jonathan Wardle, and Tomi Robb 3. Defendant, Judge Brody Kane, and Thomas Maynard 4. Alyvia Bush 5. Jason Lawson 6. The Tennessee Justice Bus



Photos by Nancy Marquez

The third annual Expungement Clinic was held on Tuesday, Sept. 24, with partners American Job Center/Tennessee, Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services, the Legal Aid Society, and others. In total, over 540 records were signed for expungements for at least 130 people in prior clinics held in 2022 and 2023.



7. Savannah Quintero, Meron Kassa, and Jordan Stringer 8. Jermy Tudor with Wilson Works 9. Jonathan Wardle and Makayla Mitchell  
10. Judge Brody Kane, Tonya Lynn Goodall, and Jonathan Wardle

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