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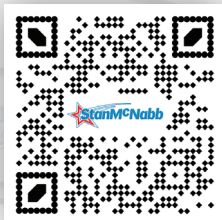
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Shop Local

Every receipt is a vote for dreams to stay open.

WHEN YOU choose a locally owned business over a national chain, you're not just spending your money, you're planting it. And the roots of that investment reach deep. Every dollar counts, and it lifts our neighbors.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, 68 cents of every dollar spent at a local business stays in your community, compared to just 32 cents at a chain. When the community gets to keep the cash flow internal, it doesn't lose revenue to corporations and competitors.

Imagine a little shop tucked between a bakery and a barber. The owner opens the doors each morning with her hands wrapped around a warm mug of coffee. She sweeps the sidewalk and turns on the glowing "open" sign. Years ago, she dreamed of creating a shop that felt like home, where people could find handmade goods, gifts that mean something, and real connection. That dream became her reality not because a corporation backed her, but because her neighbors did.

Because people like you stopped by.

Every time someone chose her store, she was able to hire a part-time worker, fix a leaky roof, or sponsor a Little League team. When large companies laid off workers, her steady foot traffic kept her doors open and jobs in place. Because the people in our community are not just people looking for a profit. They're friends. Neighbors.

When our community is full of local businesses, it brings our home to life. It makes the gloomy gray sky look like a bright sunrise after a stormy night. It adds beauty, like a local flower shop with blooming colors. Without each other, those flowers wilt. Without our financial support, our shops close their doors. When the glowing neon sign turns off for good, the storm rolls back in.

Sure, shopping local can sometimes mean paying a couple of extra bucks. But our community and the people in it are worth it. This issue of Good News is about shopping local, and it celebrates the people who keep our community alive. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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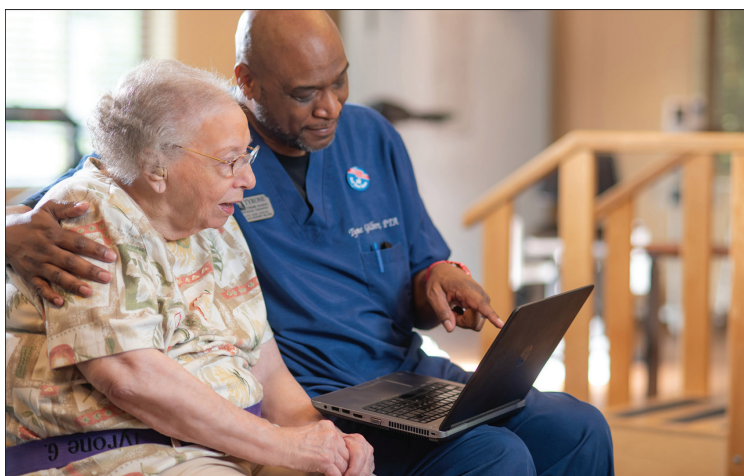
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BLAKE SKEETS AND TYLER RENS

Brewing a Dream into Reality

The longtime friends and Franklin County natives are working to launch the county's first brewery, Back Bone BrewWorks.

By Rachael Smith // Photography by Brooke Snyder

AS THE founders of Back Bone BrewWorks, Blake Skeets and Tyler Rens are working toward opening Franklin County's first brewery, a dream that has been years in the making.

"We live in Winchester, and so far, [the brewery] is basically housed at my house," Skeets said. "We don't have a brick and mortar yet, but we want to be Franklin County's first brewery."

Skeets and Rens, both Franklin County High School graduates, have been brewing together for years, traveling across Tennessee to participate in beer festivals and competitions. They've built a following through their homebrew, and with a win at Common John Brewing Company's "Family Reunion" last fall, they're ready to push forward.

"We took home [the] Best in Show [award], which just cemented for us that people like what we do," Skeets said. "The cool thing about coming back each year is seeing familiar faces who remember us and our beers. The fan base keeps growing, and that just validates everything for us."

The name Back Bone BrewWorks is a tribute to the hard-working people in their community.

"A lot of people ask us if we're chiropractors or something," Skeets said. "But really, the name comes from wanting to repre-

sent the backbone of our community — the hardworking folks who keep things going. The veterans, teachers, health care workers — people like that."

Both Skeets and Rens have backgrounds in public service. Skeets works as a nurse, having spent time in emergency rooms and intensive care units across Tennessee, while Rens, a retired Navy Corpsman, now is a terminal manager of one of the long-haul logistics companies in Winchester.

Like many craft brewers, Skeets started small.

"I started out with just a pot in the kitchen and a homebrew kit," he said. "Now, it's turned into something much bigger."

Their beer lineup features a variety of styles, but one of their most popular creations is "Stoutkast," a peanut butter coffee stout that was a crowd favorite at their recent competition win.

"It's like Outkast, the band," Skeets said. "But stout."

Currently, Skeets is working as a travel nurse to save money for a future brewery space.

"My soon-to-be wife and I are both travel nurses, so we're 2,000 miles from home right now, just saving up," he said. "We've come close a few times, but it never quite felt right. We're waiting for the right opportunity."



^ Skeets and Rens toast to the future of Back Bone BrewWorks.

Despite the distance, Skeets remains dedicated to his craft.

"I'm constantly coming up with new recipes," he said. "I even challenge myself to find ingredients at the grocery store and see what I can brew."

Skeets' stepdaughter, Lalei, has designed all of their logos, a tradition he hopes to continue.

"Any label we make, I want it to be created by someone in the community or someone we love," he said.

Working in an emergency room is challenging, and brewing beer has become an outlet for Skeets.

"It's something that I can pour a different type of energy into and see how other people like it," he said. "I've kind of got a sciency brain anyway, so it kind of fuels that. I really love the work I have to put into it. It's just a stress relief for them from the emergency job, but it also lends to the awesome community that I've absorbed myself into." **GN**



Tyler Rens

Blake Skeets



A LOT OF PEOPLE ASK US IF WE'RE CHIROPRACTORS OR SOMETHING. BUT REALLY, THE NAME COMES FROM WANTING TO REPRESENT THE BACKBONE OF OUR COMMUNITY – THE HARDWORKING FOLKS WHO KEEP THINGS GOING. THE VETERANS, TEACHERS, HEALTH CARE WORKERS – PEOPLE LIKE THAT."

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ERPUD: A smarter, warmer future

Why more families are making the switch
to natural gas with ERPUD

By Haley Potter // Photography by James Jordan

AS ENERGY costs rise and outages become more common during Tennessee's colder months, many homeowners are looking for smarter, more reliable options. That's where Elk River Public Utility District (ERPUD) comes in — offering a one-stop shop for all things natural gas, including appliances, expert guidance, and cost-saving incentives. With offices across the region and a dedicated general manager like Matt Hulvey, ERPUD is helping families make the switch to natural gas easier than ever.



“Natural gas is reliable, efficient, and affordable,” said Hulvey. “We want people to know that this is a long-term investment in comfort and peace of mind.”

Unlike electric heating systems, natural gas doesn’t rely on overhead power lines that can fail during storms or freezing temperatures. ERPUD’s natural gas pipelines are located underground, which helps prevent service interruptions, even during severe weather events.

“We don’t have to turn off our service when the temperatures drop,” Hulvey explained. “With natural gas, our customers stay warm — even when the power goes out around them.”

That kind of consistency matters to families trying to stay safe and cozy through the winter. With natural gas, homeowners can rest easy knowing they’ll still have hot water, heating, and cooking capabilities no matter what the weather brings.

One of ERPUD’s most popular offerings is the tankless water heater, which provides an endless supply of hot water without taking up bulky space in your home. These sleek units mount directly to the wall and are both space-saving and energy-efficient.

“They don’t rust out like traditional water heaters, and you’re not paying to keep a tank full of water hot all the time,” Hulvey noted. “It’s hot water on-demand, and it lasts longer.”

Natural gas also brings energy savings to other household appliances. Gas dryers, for instance, not only dry clothes faster than their electric counterparts, but also do so at a lower cost. And when it comes to cooking, many home chefs prefer the precision of gas cooktops, which offer quick heat-up times and better temperature control.

Switching to natural gas isn’t just a smart move for efficiency — it’s also easier on the wallet, according to Hulvey, thanks to ERPUD’s competitive pricing structures and rebate programs.



▲ Stefani Edinger, Kimberly Hart, Tristin Sain, Torrie Jernigan, Caitlin Simmons, Destiny Angus, and Melonie Howell

“Customers who use gas year-round — for heating, water heating, cooking, or drying — benefit from a lower monthly rate,” he said.

Even homes that use gas primarily for heating are eligible for affordable rate options. On top of that, ERPUD offers generous rebates for both new appliance installations and replacements.

“If your old appliance has gone bad and you’re installing a new one, you can still qualify for a rebate,” Hulvey said. “We’re here to make the transition as affordable as possible.”

Hulvey said ERPUD goes beyond just delivering gas.

“We do install most any gas appliance, but mainly sell just logs, tank water heaters, and some space heaters,” he said.

ERPUD even offers free natural gas safety inspections, ensuring every home and family is protected and informed.

“We try to take care of it all, whether you’re just starting out with natural gas or upgrading your current setup,” said Hulvey. “Our goal is to make this as seamless and beneficial as possible.”

Franchised in Franklin and Coffee Counties, ERPUD is a local utility with a strong commitment to the communities it serves. Its budget billing options help customers plan their monthly costs without surprises, and ERPUD’s experienced staff is always ready to answer questions or help homeowners explore what gas options are right for them.

“We really care about helping our customers find the best fit for their lifestyle,” Hulvey emphasized. “Whether you’re building a new home, remodeling, or just looking to save money, natural gas could be the solution you didn’t know you needed.”

As more families choose to make the switch, ERPUD stands ready to guide them every step of the way, with reliable service, high-efficiency products, and real savings that make a difference all year long. **GN**

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A new way to walk without pain

Dr. Basaraba has a new treatment for knee pain.

By Haley Potter // Photography by Brooke Snyder

FOR OVER two decades, Shaun Clark lived with constant knee pain. A farming accident left him in daily discomfort, trying everything from steroid injections to a surgical scope. “I regretted that scope ever since,” Clark said.

But hope showed up in an unexpected way. His wife came home one day and told him about a doctor at Southern Tennessee Cardiology and Vein Center who was offering something new. “She kept talking about it



for months,” Clark recalled. Eventually, he made the appointment. The result changed everything.

Dr. Mircea Basaraba has been following the development of a minimally invasive procedure to relieve knee pain for over 10 years. Once the treatment finally gained insurance approval, he began offering it locally, and the results have been remarkable.

“This is for people who are told their only option is a knee replacement,” Basaraba said. “But knee replacement is a major surgery. Recovery takes months, and even then, about 30% of people still have pain afterward. This gives them another choice.”

Instead of surgery, this new technique addresses inflammation, the root cause of most knee pain, not necessarily “bone-on-bone” friction, as many believe.

“The inflammation causes increased circulation, which causes more inflammation. It’s a cycle,” Basaraba explained. “The nerves get irritated, and that’s what causes the pain.”

So, how does it work?

The procedure uses a tiny catheter inserted through an artery in the foot to reach the knee. Using specialized imaging, Basaraba pinpoints which blood vessels are contributing to the inflammation. He then administers microspheres — tiny beads that temporarily block those vessels and reduce blood flow to the inflamed area.

“It’s done right here in the office,” he said. “The patient is sedated just enough to stay calm and still, and the whole thing takes about 40 minutes. Most people only need one treatment.”

Basaraba trained with a physician in North Carolina who has performed the procedure thousands of times. Though it’s relatively new in Tennessee, the approach — called embolization — is already used in other parts of medicine,



including treatments for liver cancer, brain bleeds, prostate issues, and pelvic congestion syndrome.

Clark was one of the first patients in the area to receive the treatment. “I was number two,” he said with a smile. “Now he’s done over 50.”

Clark said the change was immediate and life-changing for someone who had tried nearly everything.

“I stepped off the table, and there was no pain. None,” he said. “I just looked at my wife and said, ‘I think it’s gone.’”

The relief typically lasts up to five years, though some patients may go longer. “We don’t know the full long-term yet,” Basaraba said, “but so far the results have been amazing.”

Now, with demand growing, he’s building a new facility next door. “This is catching on,” he said. “Because it works.”

For Clark, the journey from 22 years of pain to finally finding relief is more than medical — it’s personal.

“You don’t realize how much it changes your life when you’re not in pain every single day,” he said. “I’m grateful for this doctor, and I’m grateful for second chances.” **GN**





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THE ROW

Food trucks, family fun, and games
— everything you need for a perfect
summer evening!



LIVING IN a small town can limit family-friendly activities, but Franklin County is lucky to have The Row in Decherd. This lively spot hosts multiple food trucks, a public restroom, an indoor party room, and weekend family movie nights. With games like Connect 4, cornhole, and Jenga, plus a pet-friendly atmosphere, it's a great place to unplug and make memories in the summer.

Although it was a gloomy day outside, I went and ordered something from several different food trucks that were set up. A birthday party was going on, with lots of laughter coming from inside the party room, and the parking lot was full.

First, I went to Stoltzfus Pretzels, where the warm, soft garlic-parmesan pretzel was perfectly balanced and delicious with chive cream cheese.

Next, at Pivot Coffee Co., I ordered an espresso made with locally brewed beans from Loco LLC in Winchester, along with a refresher. I love unique details that make a business stand out, and Pivot

Coffee delivers with its latest gimmick — clear 'cans' sealed right before serving. It was so much fun watching it spin while sealing the top.

At GoGo Hoagies, I ordered the Olive Deluxe with fries. It's a smashburger with green olives in the mayo and lettuce mixture. The fries were seasoned and crispy, soft inside, and perfectly cooked.

Lastly, dessert at Frostbites, where you can get a variety of homemade soft serve ice cream, Dole Whips, sundaes, and more. I ordered their newest item, the Reese's Overload Crazy Shake. It features their signature vanilla soft serve blended with Reese's peanut butter cups, topped with Reese's bits, peanut butter drizzle, a giant Reese's cup, and whipped cream. It was pure indulgence!

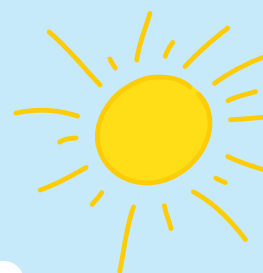
Whether you're craving great food or a fun evening out, The Row is the perfect place to enjoy small-town charm with big flavors. Different trucks are on display on different days, making each visit an experience. **GN**

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 The Row.

The Row

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Young has a wide variety of sweets on her menu. The menu changes every week. M&M chocolate chip cookies were one of the big hits of the week.



Malia Young

M. SWEETS TAKES THE CAKE

A recently opened bakery in downtown Decherd delivers real, local delicacies.

By Becca Roberts // Photography by Brooke Snyder

WHEN CUSTOMERS bite into one of Malia Young's thumbprint cookies at M. Sweets bakery, their eyes often widen in recognition as they exclaim that the cookies are "just like the thumbprints I used to get when I was little!" Young smiles and nods, sharing in the nostalgia. She is passionate about delighting her customers with fresh-baked, homemade breads and desserts that use only the best, tastiest ingredients.

M. Sweets opened in November 2024, fulfilling Young's dream of owning her own bakery — a dream that started in her very own family kitchen.

"I have baked for as long as I can remember. It's just been like a hobby," Young said.

Her years of experience naturally led to her decision to start selling her baked goods from home and at local farmers markets.

"I always knew that if I was going to do something for work, I wanted to bake," Young said.

Baking from home was ideal for her as a stay-at-home mom, but it definitely posed some challenges. "I could never have sugar cookies resting or trying to dry or anything because my 4-year-old would go and take them," said Young, laughing at the memory.



▲ A friendly face and welcoming attitude are just some of the sweet parts of a visit to M. Sweets.

Young has three children: Logan, Silas, and Ruth. Her husband, Blake, and their children have supported her as she turned her baking business into a storefront bakery. Young found a location to rent with a fully furnished kitchen, making it the perfect spot for M. Sweets. In addition to what they sell, Young also offers cookie decorating classes and hosts afternoon teas, as well as other fun events. Young's sister, Abby Nelson, works alongside her at the bakery, making these events happen. Young's family is fundamental to her success.

"My step-dad is always going to talk about it to anyone who will listen," she said. "If he's in the store, he's always telling customers, 'If you haven't had the chocolate chip sourdough cookies, you are missing out!'" said Young, shaking her head and smiling.

Young said using sourdough starter in your cookies makes them cake-like and adds a savory aspect, which cuts down the sweetness. They also sell the sweeter "O.G." chocolate chip cookies, which have two bags of chocolate chips in the recipe. Either choice is a winner. Young makes everything

from scratch with real butter and ingredients, even homemade fillings and icing.

M. Sweets also sells other foods and beverages, like their breakfast yogurt bowl made with homemade yogurt, homemade granola, and locally sourced honey. When they need ingredients, Young seeks out local vendors to support.

"I'm excited for farmers market season because we're going to start offering salads. The people that sat next to me at the farmers market — they do hydroponic lettuces, so I'm excited to use that for our summer salads," Young said.



"I always knew that if I was going to do something for work, I wanted to bake."

MALIA YOUNG

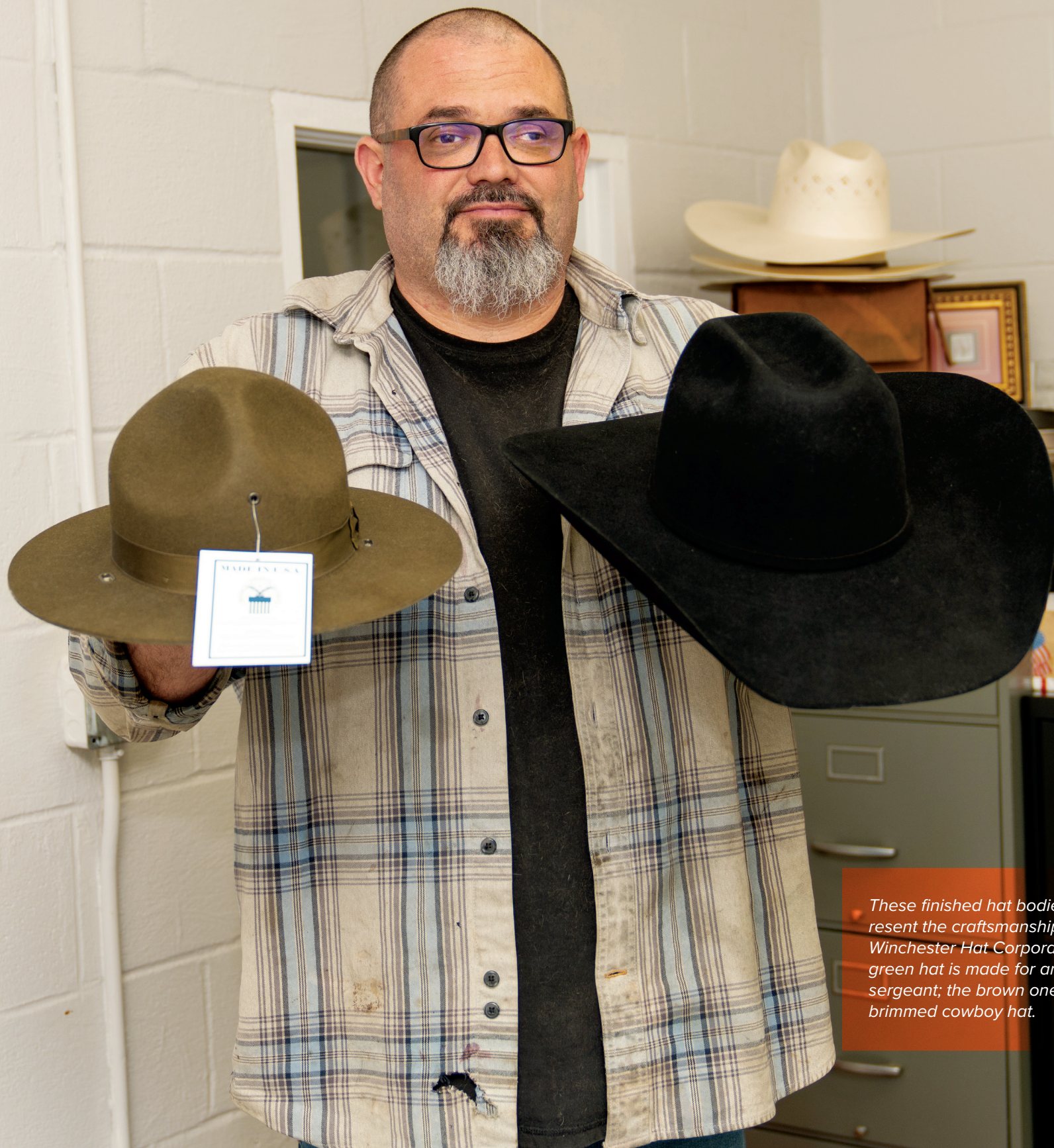


▲ Young prepares homemade brownies for the shop. This recipe calls for real butter and lots of chocolate chips.



▲ Young's family has always been incredibly supportive of her and her business. Her sister, Abigail, often lends a hand in the bakery — whether she's working up front or helping out in the kitchen.

A fun novelty at M. Sweets is its selection of specialty soda drinks. Young said they offer regular coffee, but she's not a fan — she's a soda girl. So, Young created unique, soda-based specialty drinks for her customers, such as the "Pink Swifty" or the "Blue Lagoon." These drinks, the weekly rotating cupcake flavors, sourdough breads, cookies, and special events make M. Sweets a must-visit bakery in Decherd. **GN**



These finished hat bodies represent the craftsmanship in Winchester Hat Corporation. The green hat is made for an Army sergeant; the brown one is a brimmed cowboy hat.



Jeff Teters

BENEATH THE BRIM

A local historic hat company provides steady jobs and quality hats.

By Becca Roberts // Photography by Brooke Snyder

JEFF TETERS, general manager of the Winchester Hat Corporation for 25 years, said the city of Winchester has always been well known for making hats. Although this hat company was established by the Stratton family out of Illinois in 1971, there has been a hat manufacturer in Winchester since at least the mid-1950s. Teters said it is a trusted company in hat body manufacturing. The company uses fur to craft quality hat bodies that are sold to hat makers for the finished designs.

The cowboy hat, a Southern staple, is one of their best sellers. It has been especially popular with the recent interest in all things country. Song artists in other genres are now creating country music,

and clothing brands are currently incorporating a southwestern flair.

Teters said, “This stuff is trending right now. Some times are slower than others, but the last five or six years have been steady. Everybody wants to be western right now.”

Another hat produced by the Winchester Hat Corporation is the iconic shape used for Army drill sergeant hats. Teters said the Stratton family’s hat company in Illinois takes the hat bodies made in Winchester and finishes them to sell to the Army. They have even done work for Homeland Security.

The company is proud to be family-owned and American-made. It is one of only two companies in the United



▲ This multi-roller machine only requires two workers as opposed to four workers for some of the others. Milken Yanes sorts and stacks hats ready to go to the next process.

States that make these hat bodies. Teters has no trouble finding clientele.

In fact, Teters said, “They find us!” The company is so well established that they don’t need to advertise. “We have a waitlist of about 50 to 100 deep right now of companies that want to buy from us.”

These customers come from all over the globe. “We have several hundred custom hatters throughout the country and some around the world — Canada, Germany, Japan, Australia — that buy from us,” Teters said.

Teters has been at the company since he graduated high school, working his way up from the bottom to become the general manager. Having worked most of the positions at the company over the years gives him an expert knowledge of the craft he now manages. Teters believes in the company and its exceptional products but said the customers and employees are the heart of his motivation. He values the loyalty of his customers because he knows they can buy their hats elsewhere, sometimes cheaper if imported. Supporting this local business has a ripple effect that also supports other employees.

“You know, there are 40-plus employees here, but on the backside, our job here probably represents another 2,000 to 3,000 people,” Teters said. “If you go to Texas or Wyoming and walk into a store that makes hats, there is a really good chance they are getting them here. If they have salespeople, people finishing hats, and all the other employees — they have those jobs because we supply the bodies. It’s not just about us.” It is a community that Teters has built through trust, dedication, and a well-made, fur-lined hat. **GN**



▲ Teters holds the hat that just came off the brimmer.



"If you go to Texas or Wyoming and walk into a store that makes hats, there is a really good chance they are getting them here."

JEFF TETERS



*Jeremy, Bayla, and April
Acklen stand in the
showroom of Reliable Rental.*



Reliable Rental

BIG-CITY OPPORTUNITIES, SMALL-TOWN FEEL

Persistence gets the job done.

By Sara Hook // Photography by Brooke Snyder

JOYFUL, CLASSY events and sweaty outdoor work may not seem to have much in common, but in Franklin County, they have found a common denominator in Reliable Rental. Since 2020, the business has been owned by April and Jeremy Acklen, and their leadership has grown the company into something that can keep up with big city rental stores.

“We have everything that the big cities have — you don’t have to go out of town to get something,” April said. “We may be a small town, but we [can] put on a big event.”

Taking over a business is never easy, and the Acklens faced challenges from the

beginning. April and Jeremy bought Reliable Rental right before the pandemic, and the lack of events made keeping it open difficult. Still, they persisted, using their own money when they had to.

“We don’t give up,” April said.

That attitude is present everywhere at Reliable Rental. Events and equipment needs rarely take a holiday, and that carries over into the Acklens’ work. Often, they arrive at an event location before the sun comes up, and they don’t leave until it is over.

Those same events offer some of the best moments on the job as brides and event planners get to see their vision come



▲ Akeem Hill, JB Berridge, Tina Cosme, Brandon Speck, Debbie Holliday, Michael Holliday, Bayla Acklen, April Acklen, Jeremy Acklen, Shannon Nee, Corey Daniels, Cory Garner, Damon Walker, and Kevin McCarver



"It's just fun to help people get married and make their day beautiful and have a wonderful event. We just like helping everybody as best we can."

APRIL ACKLEN

together. April said her favorite part is the happiness it brings.

"It's just fun to help people get married and make their day beautiful and have a wonderful event," April said. "We just like helping everybody as best we can."

Reliable Rental has rented equipment and decorations for many large events in Franklin County and the surrounding area, especially weddings — one of their brides has even been featured in Vogue magazine. Each event

brings something to the county, and April said their goal is to keep expanding their inventory and providing up-to-date decor. They have it all — from 40-by-120-foot tents to delicate champagne flutes.

"We just want to keep growing," April said. "Anything we can find, we want it to be the best we can make it."

Reliable Rental isn't just for events, however. Husbands with honey-do lists and contractors with construction proj-

ects depend on the business to get the job done, renting everything from carpet cleaners to compressors and trenchers. Reliable Rental is a resource for everyone, offering big-city rental opportunities while keeping the local, small-town courtesy everyone knows and loves. What else could a community ask for? **GN**

Find Reliable Rental online at eliablerentalfc.com or call (931) 962-0406 to plan your event or equipment rental.

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Finding hope in the battle with addiction

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- Is provided in partnership with Evergreen Healthcare Partners, LLC.

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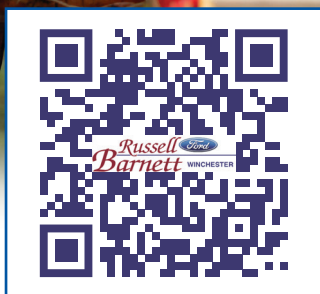
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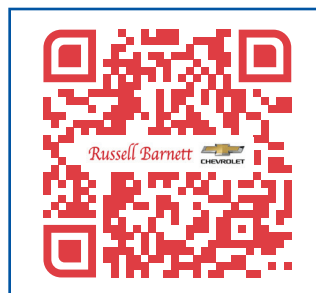


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