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## A LIFE WELL-ANCHORED

Through faded tattoos and family tales, the past remains vividly alive.

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LIFE, LOYALTY, AND LEADERSHIP

## LAND OF THE

**ISSUE 7 2025** 

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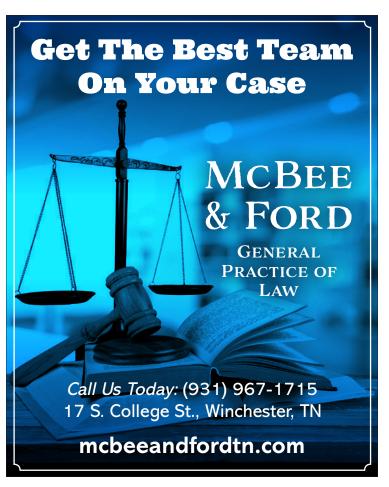


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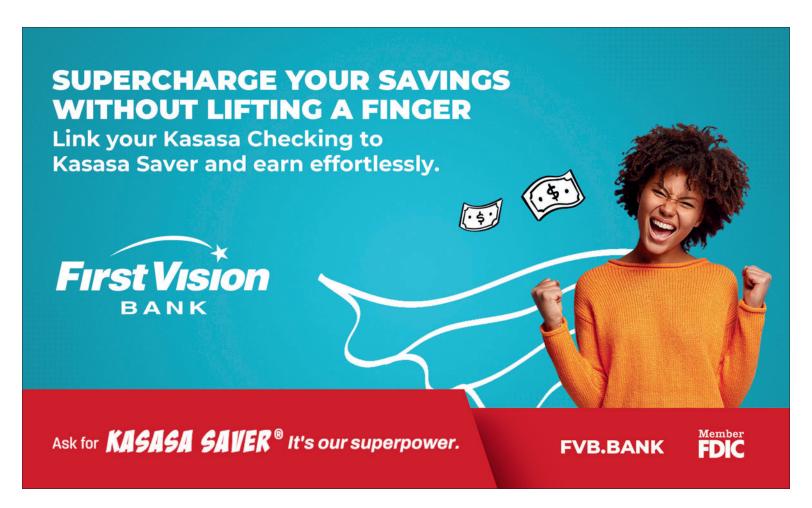
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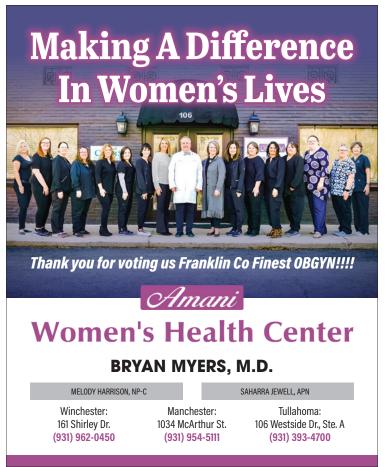


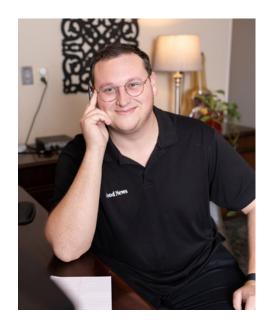












LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Land of the Brave

Celebrating veterans who watch over us from sea to shining sea.

I F YOU'VE ever seen a fighter jet cut across the sky, you know what powerful looks like. You know what freedom sounds like. That roar overhead reminds us that we live in a country where people put their lives on the line so the rest of us can live without fear. They fly above land and sea, from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea, watching over the red, white, and blue.

This issue of Good News is dedicated to the brave — the ones who stepped forward when they didn't have to. Who negotiated peace with strength. Who shook hands with people they never met and still called them "brother." Who boarded boats and planes and tanks and flew into danger because protection is a calling of duty.

We salute our veterans not just for what they did but for what they made possible. Civility. Progress. A world where we can disagree and still shake hands at the end of the day. That handshake is not weakness. It's quite the opposite.

Independence isn't handed out. It's fought for. And the people who have worn the uniform, our veterans, carry that story everywhere they go. They are the reason the Stars and Stripes still wave. They are the reason we can gather around dinner tables, build businesses, fall in love, and sleep through the night without fear of bombs above or boots at the door.

Sometimes, honoring them means telling their stories. Sometimes it means listening. And sometimes it's as simple as standing still, hand on heart, letting the wind catch the flag on a clear day, and knowing you are lucky to live here.

This is the Land of the Brave. GN

In our latest issue, "Our Families," we mistakenly added the word "late" in a photo caption for Margaret Lynch on page 47. She has not passed, and we deeply regret the error and sincerely apologize.

# From our publishing partner



"I am so excited to be the publishing partner for Good News Franklin County. It's an absolute joy to be part of this uplifting publication, inspiring readers and helping local businesses thrive. If you would like to become an advertising partner to spread the Good News, please give me a call."

### **Sandra Thomas**

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HANNAH BRADLEY

# New Dreams and Real Conversations

She built her Christian social media platform on obedience, not numbers.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder and submitted by Taylor McDonald

HE BIBLE felt heavier than it should have as she held it for the first time. Its wide, empty margins waited for her to fill them. Somewhere between the shelves at Barnes & Noble and her mother's comforting smile, Hannah Bradley felt the slightest flicker of hope: maybe this was the beginning. Maybe grace had more to say than grief ever did.

Growing up in Bradley's household, Christian values were the norm. She said she learned about God and could repeat familiar stories, but looking back, she sees a clear difference between knowing about someone and truly walking with them.

"My understanding was more surface-level than relational," she reflected.

For a while, that version of belief seemed enough. But time and pain eventually revealed what was missing.

After high school, Bradley said the facade of busyness she'd used to cope with loss and grief began to crack. With fewer distractions, the emotional weight she had pushed aside surfaced.

"It felt like an anchor crushing my soul," she remembered. Years of internal pain from childhood trauma and personal loss demanded attention she could no longer deny. That's when she began questioning everything, including the faith she once thought she understood.

According to Bradley, those deep, internal questions were the beginning of something deeper. What many saw as an instant transformation was a slow unfolding for Bradley — a hunger for the truth, a desire to know the God she had heard about all her life. She recalled a moment of excitement, running to her mom and asking to buy a journaling Bible. That trip to Barnes & Noble changed her life.

"The crisp, white margins felt like an invitation," she said. And for her, they were.

The smooth white pages became a starting place for healing. Through Scripture, she began to understand what grace really meant as a living reality. Over the next five years, Bradley's love for studying the Bible only grew. Now, she's pursuing her master's degree in Biblical Studies, which she never would have imagined during those years when her faith felt fragile.

In the early days of her newfound faith, Bradley felt compelled to step away from social media entirely. It was a personal decision that she described as a season of "undistracted devotion."

But a few months later, a simple question arose in her heart: What if what I'm learning could help someone else? After a conversation with a friend who saw her Bible and encouraged her to share her notes, she turned this idea into action. She created @passiontoproclaim, an online social media platform where she now shares reflections, Scripture study methods, and honest conversations about faith.





▲ Hannah Bradley's once-empty margins are now filled with knowledge she has learned from studying and being poured into by those who mentor her.







Bradley emphasized that the goal was never about numbers or visibility.

"In today's world, it's easy to chase virality," she said. "It's much harder to walk in quiet, consistent obedience — to crucify the flesh daily, to pursue holiness, and to make space for others at the table, regardless of status. I've come to see more clearly that this platform isn't mine. Any measure of visibility or influence I have is not about me. It's about people who are hungry for God's word. If I've been allowed to encourage others and speak the truth in my small corner of the internet, then I want to be found faithful with that calling."

When ministry gets tough — when there is online backlash or her words are misunderstood — she returns to that foundation.

She also holds tightly to humility. Having attended events with other Christian content creators, she's noticed how easily society measures success in num-

bers. But, as she's learned, follower count can't quantify true impact.

"This platform isn't mine," she said. "Any influence I've been given is about serving those who are hungry for God's word."

Looking ahead, Bradley recently launched a YouTube channel and dreams of one day writing a book. Both are ways she hopes to continue making space for real conversations — about Scripture, suffering, faith, and freedom.

Bradley's message remains consistent through it all: "You don't have to fix yourself before coming to Christ," she said.

According to her, it's not perfection that draws people to Jesus, but brokenness met by grace.

And maybe that's what makes her story resonate most. It isn't about the triumph, but the honesty, slow healing, and strength she embraced by choosing to stay when things got hard. **GN** 







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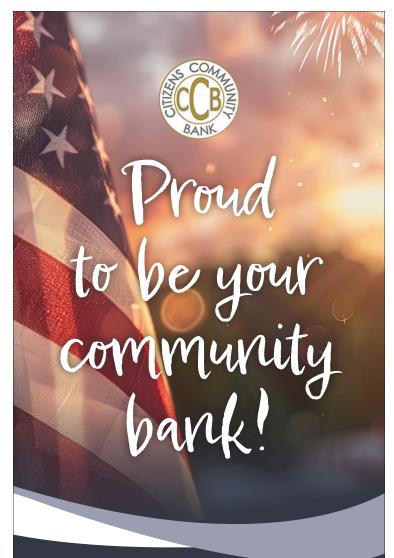
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Memory, love, and legacy meet at Winchester Monument Company.

By Jeriah Brumfield





▲ Scot Bradford is the director of sales and marketing for Winchester Monument Co.

RIEF OFTEN hollows out the world we once knew. When someone we love dies, we're left holding memories that feel too weightless for the weight of our sorrow. Without something lasting to anchor those memories, the ache can feel even deeper, like their life might one day slip from view. In the midst of that pain, many families long for one thing: a tangible way to keep their loved one's legacy alive. That's where Winchester Monument Company steps in.

Winchester Monument Company began in the 1990s with the purpose of serving families during one of life's most tender moments. When Scot Bradford first entered the monument business 10 years ago, he didn't fully grasp the emotional depth behind what a monument truly meant.

"At the time, I thought it was simply about marking a grave — something practical and necessary," Bradford reflected. But as he sat with grieving families and listened to their stories, his understanding deepened.

"I began to see how much healing can come through creating a permanent tribute — where memories live on."

For Bradford, a monument is never just stone.

"It's a vital step in the closure process. It gives families a way to honor their loved one's life, tell their story, and create a space where future generations can come to remember."

He carries this mindset daily as he walks alongside families on their healing journeys.

At Winchester Monument Company, every step of the memorial process centers on listening well and walking gently with families.

Bradford explained, "Everything we do is guided by compassion, respect, and honesty. We understand that every family is different, and every life is unique."

"It's a vital step in the closure process. It gives families a way to honor their loved one's life, tell their story, and create a space where future generations can come to remember."

SCOT BRADFORD



His approach is patient, never rushed, honoring the importance of creating a lasting tribute that feels just right.

The process begins with a conversation in person or over Zoom, where families share stories about their loved ones, their passions, and what made them special.

"We talk through options: size, shape, colors, and design ideas. We show families samples, sketches, and computer designs so they can visualize everything before it's ever carved or etched. We make adjustments together until it feels just right."

Choosing the right material is another deeply thoughtful step. Bradford walks families through options like granite, marble, mountain stone, and bronze and explains the unique qualities of each.

"Granite is our most popular choice because it's incredibly durable and comes in various colors. Marble has a classic, timeless beauty, but it is softer and may weather faster. Mountain stone offers a rustic, natural feel that some families love, especially for country or mountain cemeteries. Bronze adds a modern touch, often combined with granite."

But what truly makes each monument unique is the story it tells.

"We might include a favorite quote, a symbol of their faith, a picture of their farm or fishing spot, or even a laser-etched portrait," Bradford shared.

Whether a cross, a flower, or a pair of boots, the monument becomes a tangible expression of a person's life, passions, and legacy. For families experiencing grief, Winchester Monument offers both craftsmanship and companionship.

"Grief isn't a straight line, and everyone experiences it differently," Bradford said. "Sometimes, just listening is the most important thing we can do. Other times, it's helping them laugh through tears as they share memories."

His team's goal is always to leave families with a sense of peace, feeling heard, cared for, and confident in the tribute they've created.

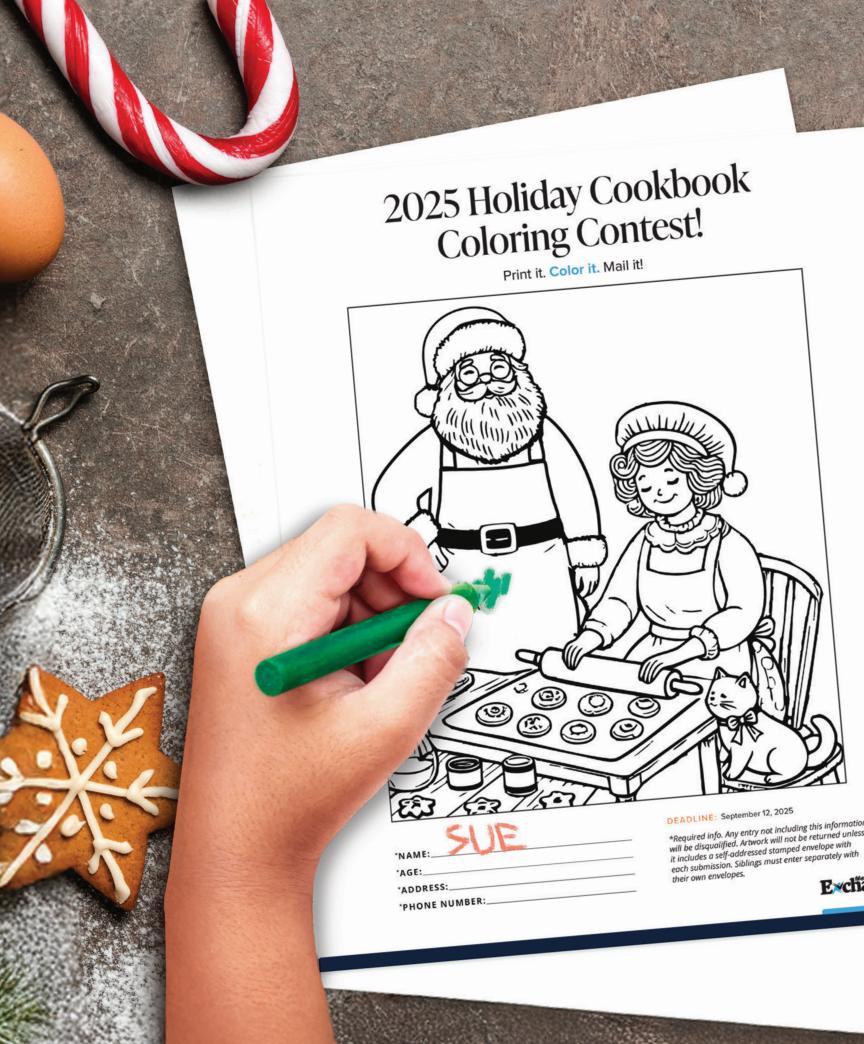
Looking to the future, Bradford sees memorials evolving as people seek more personal and creative ways to remember loved ones. Custom shapes, photo etching, and QR codes linking to tribute videos are on the horizon, blending tradition with modern elements.

Yet the core remains unchanged: a permanent place to remember, reflect, and feel close to those who have died.

At Winchester Monument, every stone tells a story, every detail honors a life, and each memorial offers a beautiful expression of honor and enduring love. **GN** 

Call (931) 581-4234 or visit www. winchestermonument.com for more information. Address: 405 Sharp Springs Rd., Winchester, TN 37398





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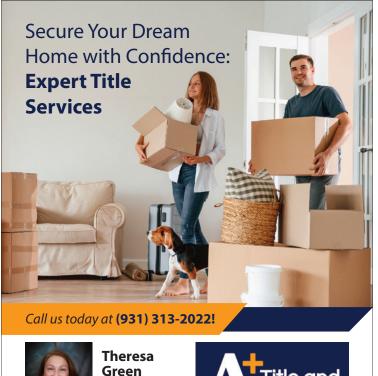












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# DANGERS OF UNDERAGE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Did you know that underage drinking isn't just illegal—it's also extremely harmful to young people's health? Alcohol can seriously disrupt brain development, especially during adolescence when the brain is still growing and changing. Introducing alcohol at this critical stage can lead to long-term consequences, including impaired memory, reduced learning ability, and lasting damage to brain function. Protecting our youth means keeping their minds sharp, healthy, and alcohol-free.

Not only does underage drinking pose serious risks to physical health, but it also significantly increases the likelihood of injuries, physical and sexual assault, and, in severe cases, even death. Not to mention, young people who start drinking at an early age are significantly more likely to develop alcohol dependence later in life. This risk alone is enough to prevent underage drinking. However, did you know that according to the Tn Together survey, 10.4% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Franklin County reported that they drank alcohol in the last 30 days, and that most young people tried alcohol at age 13? So, how can we prevent underage drinking?

The first step is to be the best version of yourself. As a parent or role model, your actions speak louder than words. When you misuse alcohol, it sends a powerful message to young people that such behavior is acceptable. By setting a positive example, you help shape healthier attitudes and choices for the next generation. The next step is to be prepared. As young people grow, their curiosity about alcohol will naturally increase. It's important to be ready to answer their questions honestly and confidently. At the same time, consistently reinforce the message that underage drinking is not only dangerous—it's also illegal for anyone under the age of 21. This brings us to a crucial point and step number three: it is illegal—and incredibly dangerous—to provide alcohol to minors. The setting doesn't matter. Whether you're at home or elsewhere, the law is clear: giving alcohol to anyone under 21 is a crime. Beyond the legal consequences, consider the message it sends. When adults supply alcohol to youth, it not only puts young lives at risk but also undermines efforts to keep our communities safe. Protect your children. Protect yourself. Take a stand and be the example they need. Step four: Be open and honest about the dangers of alcohol. Don't shy away from conversations that could make a difference in your child's future. Creating a safe space for open dialogue allows young people to ask questions, express their thoughts, and feel supported. These conversations—however uncomfortable they may seem—can be the key to preventing dangerous decisions down the road. Let them know they can always come to you without fear or judgment. Step five: Be supportive and encouraging. Young people thrive when they feel believed in. Take the time to listen, celebrate their interests, and fuel their passions. Show genuine excitement when they share what matters to them. Studies show that boredom is a major risk factor for underage drinking—so let's combat that by helping our youth stay engaged, inspired, and connected. Your encouragement could be the very thing that keeps them on a positive, healthy path.

Ultimately, underage drinking is an issue we must all take a stand against. By working together, we're not just protecting individual lives—we're building safer, stronger communities. You have the power to make a difference. How? **Because prevention starts at home.** The values you teach, the conversations you have, and the example you set all play a vital role in keeping our youth safe. **You can help prevent underage drinking—because it begins with you.** 

For more information visit fcpctn.org or call us at 931-800-9112.



# Prevention Roadmap

Prevention starts at home



The first step to prevent underage drinking is that you need to be a positive role model. If youth see you abusing alcohol, then they are more likely too as well.

## Know who shouldn't drink

If anyone under the age of 21 is drinking, it's illegal. It doesn't matter if you're in the safety of your home with your children- it's still illegal.

### Be supportive

As your children grow up, they need more support from you! Encourage their dreams and invest in their passions.

Step 01

Step 02

> Step 03

Step 04

> Step 05

Be prepared

Your children may come to you with questions about alcohol. Be prepared to give them the best advice.

 $\bigcirc$ 

Be open

Be open and ready to talk to your children about drinking. You can use natural settings such as dinner time or during chores to have these conversation.



Department of
Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services

This project is funded under a grant contract with the State of Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.



O YOU ever get the blahs? You know — those days (or weeks) when nothing seems to be going quite right — work feels heavy, your energy's off, and even your daily routine feels like a drag. I had one of those weeks recently, and I could tell my body and mind needed a reset — something refreshing, uplifting, and just plain good for me.

That's when I decided to text a friend and meet up for morning tea. But not the dainty kind with scones and fine china — I'm talking about nutritional tea — the kind that's packed with vitamins, energy-boosting ingredients, and purpose. You may have seen them around — locally owned spots run by people who care about health and wellness — both theirs and yours.

As soon as I walked in, I felt better. The space was welcoming, the vibes were positive, music was playing, and the menu was good. It was full of colorful, flavorful drinks designed to nourish and energize. I ordered a loaded tea called the Strawberry Jolly Rancher, which includes strawberry and pomegranate flavors that boost energy. It has vitamins, no sugar, and lifts my mood — yes, please! One sip in, and I already felt physically and emotionally lighter. I also ordered some chocolate chip protein bites. Made with scrumptious creamy peanut butter, protein powder, and, of course, the chocolate chips. But it wasn't just about the tea or the bites, although those both helped it was the whole experience. Taking time for myself, connecting with a friend, and choosing to put something good into my body and mind made all the difference.

Sometimes it's the small choices that create the biggest shifts. Whether you're having an off day, looking to change up your routine, or just need a feel-good pick-meup, I highly recommend checking out North High Nutrition, located in Winchester, just off the square. You'll leave with a tasty drink, a little more pep in your step, and a reminder that taking care of yourself doesn't have to be complicated.

Trust me — your body (and mood) will thank you. **GN** 

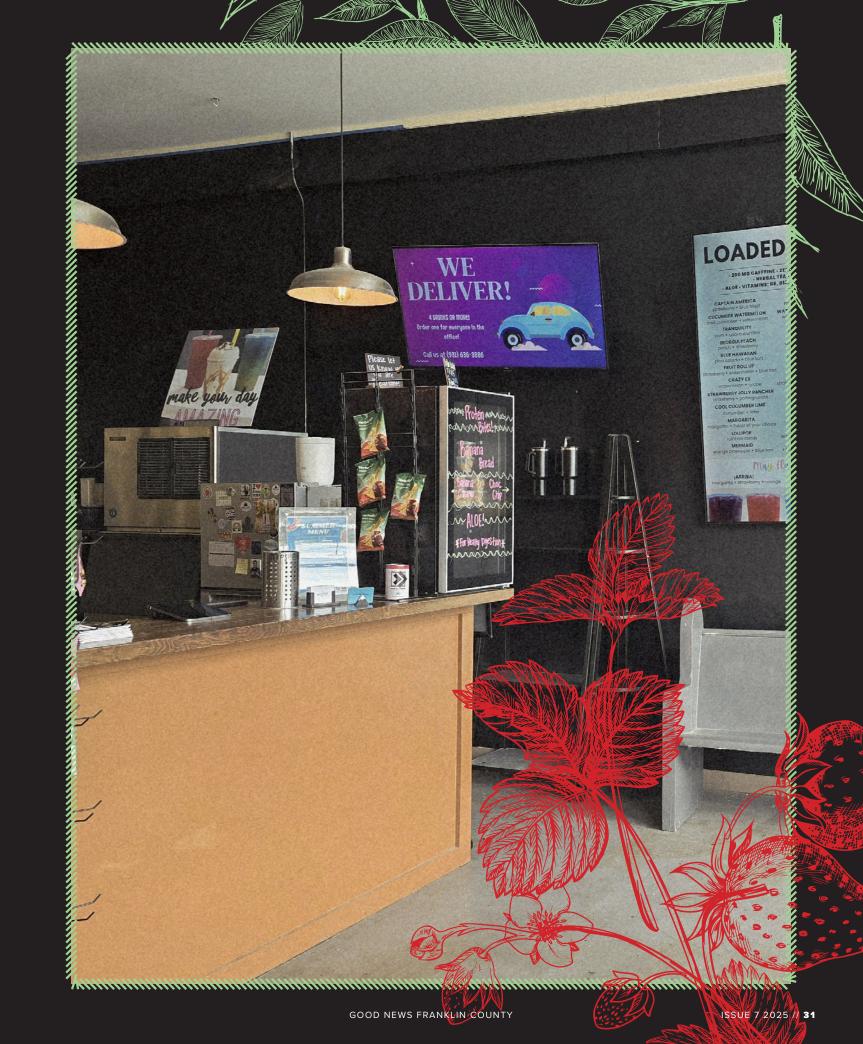
### GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Franklin County. This month Shannon Beebe visited North High Nutrition.

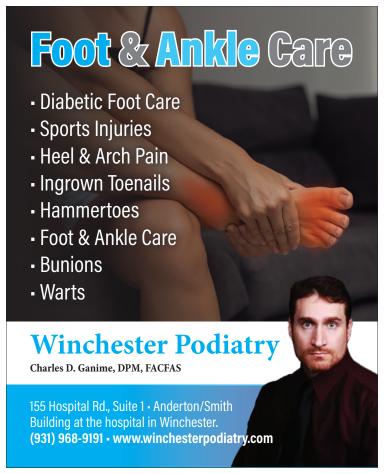
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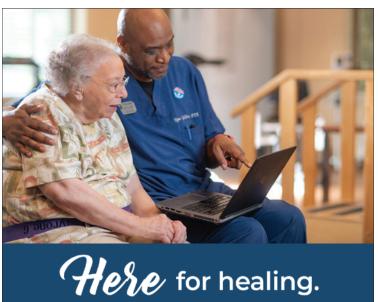
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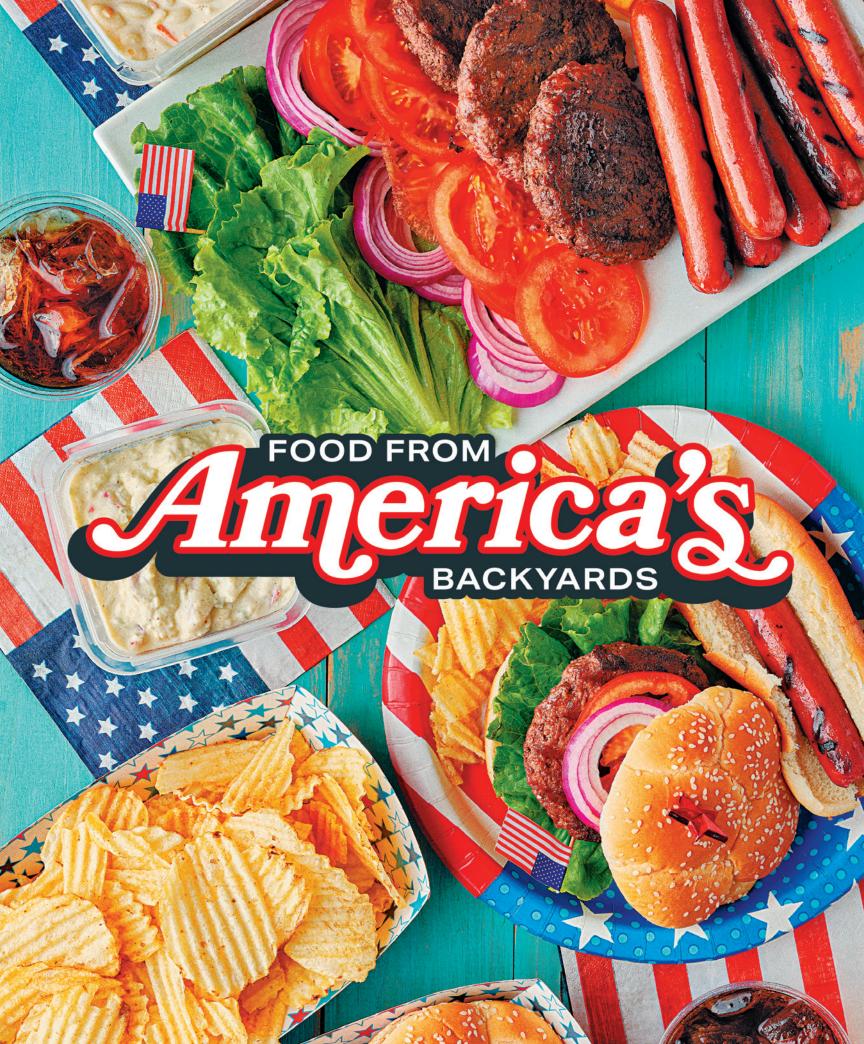
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S SUMMER heats up, so do our grills and smokers, giving our kitchens a well-deserved break. Casual worknight dinners, weekend celebrations, and holiday parties bring together families for good food and, sometimes, fireworks.

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Summer living — and its foods — are easy! GN



8 ears fresh corn in husks 1/3 c. Italian dressing 2 1/2 T. water 1T. chili powder 1/8 t. ground red pepper

Submitted by Betty Pirtle

Carefully peel back husks, exposing corn. Leave husks attached. Remove and discard silks. Combine Italian dressing, water, chili powder, and red pepper in a small mixing bowl. Stir well and brush over corn. Return husk to original position and tie the tips with wire twist-ties. Grill corn over medium hot coals for 30 minutes or until the corn is tender. Turn corn every 5 minutes.

### New York Push Cart Hot Dog Onion Sauce

Submitted by Emma Hardin

2T. vegetable oil 2 md. onions, sliced ¼ inch slices 1/4 c. ketchup pinch of ground cinnamon 1/8 t. chili powder dash of hot pepper sauce dash of salt 1/2 c. water

In a medium skillet, heat vegetable oil over medium heat. Add onion slices and saute for 7 minutes or until golden brown. Add ketchup, cinnamon, chili powder, hot pepper sauce, and salt. Pour in water, stir, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. Serve over hot dogs.

# Tangy Grilled Beef

Submitted by Rosalind Lindsey

1 can tomato soup
1 t. Worcestershire sauce
1 t. garlic powder
1/4 t. dried thyme leaves, crushed
2 t. packed brown sugar
2 t. lemon juice
2 t. vegetable oil
11/2 lbs. boneless beef sirloin steak, cut 3/4" thick

In a large bowl, mix soup, sugar, lemon juice, oil, Worcestershire, garlic and thyme. Brush mixture on both sides of steak. Place steak on hot grill and cook until golden brown and slightly charred. Turn steak over and continue to cook until desired level of doneness. Bring remaining soup mixture to a boil and serve with steak.

Submit your recipes to be included in Good News Magazine and the Exchange Cookbook:

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### DWIGHT SHOLEY JR.

# ALIFE WELL-ANCHORED

Through faded tattoos and family tales, the past remains vividly alive.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder







In the early 1950s, the Pacific Ocean swelled beneath the might of the USS Midway, the largest ship in the world at the time. With over 5,000 crew members on board, the ship felt like a small city. Planes soared overhead, boots clanged on the metal decks, and young sailors were finding their way into adulthood. Somewhere in that great sea of sailors was a young man from Sewanee, Tennessee, named Dwight Edward Sholey Jr., bright-eyed and ready to see the world.

He completed his basic training in Millington, Tennessee, then boarded a train headed west toward San Diego. It was there that his naval journey officially began.

Though he was only 17 when he enlisted — fibbing just a bit about his age — Sholey wasn't running from anything. He was running toward something. Korea was still a headline in the papers, and he wanted to serve, grow, and explore.

His son, William, shared that Dwight left school to join the Navy and didn't earn his GED diploma until he was 73.

"They didn't retire until they were about 75," William reflected. "They just kept going."

Aboard the Midway, Dwight worked as an aviation mechanic, keeping the ship's birds in the air and the mission moving forward. When the ship crossed the equator and docked in the Philippines — as



Dwight raised his children on the mountain of Sewanee. The cross at Sewanee feels like home to him

"THEY DIDN'T RETIRE UNTIL THEY WERE ABOUT 75. THEY JUST KEPT GOING."

WILLIAM SHOLEY





While Dwight hung up his uniform, the Navy never left him. He proudly wears his veteran hat.

an age-old rite of passage for sailors — he commemorated the moment with a tattoo: a shark, a bird, and his Navy number etched into his arm. These tattoos are permanent emblems of identity, belonging, and pride for the sailors.

Though the Korean War ended shortly after he joined, Dwight's tour took him to Japan, the Mediterranean, and South Africa. The Midway was too large for the Panama Canal, so they looped around the Horn of Africa.

"We went all the way around the world," he said proudly.

During those four years, he soaked in every detail. Later, he taught his sons the value of water on a ship — "Boys, get in, soak yourself, turn it off, and get out" — though, as William admitted, they didn't quite master the quick Navy shower.

By 1957, just six months before being released from service in Milton, Florida, Dwight and his wife, Vickie Hawkins Sholey, welcomed their first son, Mark. They had been sweethearts since grade school, wrapped up in a small-town love that never let go.

After his time in uniform, they settled back in Sewanee and built a life centered

around hard work, community, and enduring love. Together, they raised three boys: Mark, William, and Jeffrey.

While Dwight hung up his uniform, the Navy never left him. He proudly wears his veteran hat and lines his room with flags.

"He had a short time there, but he was always proud of it," said William. "He constantly tells people that he's proud to be a veteran."

Back home, Dwight became a mechanic again, this time in civilian coveralls. He worked at the Hat Corporation in Winchester, eventually becoming a union representative. Later, he opened Sewanee Auto Repair, a little garage that became a town staple for 33 years.

After retiring, he handed over the keys, and the new owner still keeps the lights on today, upholding Dwight's legacy and honoring the man who fixed a little more than cars. He fixed what he could in the world around him.

At 89, now in a Winchester nursing facility, Dwight's memory has softened in some places and sharpened in others. The Navy stories come easily, along with the laughter, the salt air, and the noise of jet engines. The tattoos, though faded, still speak for him — signs of a life lived wide and well.

Dwight may have started his journey as a teenage boy looking for more than Sewanee could offer, but he returned with stories, honor, and courage that have rooted his family for generations. His story and his sons' devotion to keeping it alive remind us that the past is never too far away. **GN** 





"HE HAD A SHORT TIME THERE, BUT HE WAS ALWAYS PROUD OF IT. HE CONSTANTLY TELLS PEOPLE THAT HE'S PROUD TO BE A VETERAN."

**WILLIAM SHOLEY** 







# BUILT TO BUILT TO ENDURE

After a life-altering injury ended his military dream, Marine Colton Henley found new strength in unexpected places.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder and submitted by Colton Henley







ARINE CORPS veteran Colton Henley stepped onto the plane to boot camp with nothing but hope, bravery, and the dream of changing the world. Leaving behind the familiarity of Franklin County, he carried with him the courage born long before the Corps, in battles no one saw. He didn't know exactly what the path would hold, but he was certain it would change his life and his family's future.

"What really motivated me to join the Marine Corps," he said, "was wanting to get out of Tennessee for a while and do something that could make a difference in not only my life but other people's lives."

Resilience wasn't something Henley had to learn — it was something he already carried. Hardship walked beside him

for much of his youth, but never once led the way. It did, in fact, help him see clearly: he would one day leave Tennessee, serve his country, and live purposefully. Joining the Marine Corps was something he both wanted and needed to do.

Henley found purpose in the routines, structures, and challenges of Marine life. As an infantry mortarman, he spent much of his time training to operate one of the military's most powerful indirect fire weapons.

Training days felt surreal — like he had walked straight into a film. Explosions shook the ground beneath his boots, fired with a force that left his bones buzzing. It was loud, gritty, chaotic, and electrifying. Mortars roared from their tubes with a chest-thumping boom, their trail



One of the first rounds Calton dropped while active in the fleet and out of infantry training school

"SHOOTING
ROCKET
LAUNCHERS,
MORTARS,
EXPLOSIONS
— IT WAS LIKE
THE STUFF
YOU SEE IN THE
MOVIES, AND
YOU'RE SITTING
THERE DOING IT
IN REAL LIFE."

**COLTON HENLEY** 

slicing through the sky before vanishing into the horizon.

For Henley, this was a dream come true. A childhood filled with struggle and survival had morphed into a reality that, at times, felt almost cinematic.

"We were always going to the range," he remembered vividly. "Shooting rocket launchers, mortars, explosions — it was like the stuff you see in the movies, and you're sitting there doing it in real life."

But dreams, even the most deliberate ones, can take unexpected turns.

While stationed in Hawaii, a training accident flipped his Humvee, leaving Henley with a traumatic brain injury. The injury meant he could no longer pursue advanced training. The career path he'd envisioned within the Marines suddenly vanished.

"After I got that brain damage while in the military, it ruined my chances," he said. Despite the setback, he pressed forward. The Marines transferred him to Quantico, Virginia, where he began training as a combat instructor.

"I was in a weapons company, but medically they wouldn't allow me to do what I originally thought I was going to be doing."

In February 2024, Henley left the Marine Corps — his uniform neatly folded, his mind heavy as he grappled with complex decisions. Depressed and uncertain, he stared down a new battle-field — civilian life.

But Henley didn't stay down for long.

While in Virginia, he started pressure washing in his spare time, gradually building a foundation for what would become Semper Softwash, his own power-washing company now servicing all of Middle Tennessee. By February 2025, he was a full-time business owner, once again find-

ing discipline, purpose, and momentum through hard work.

Though his days in uniform are behind him, the core values remain: loyalty, determination, and service. The comradeship of his Marine brothers and sisters still grounds him today.

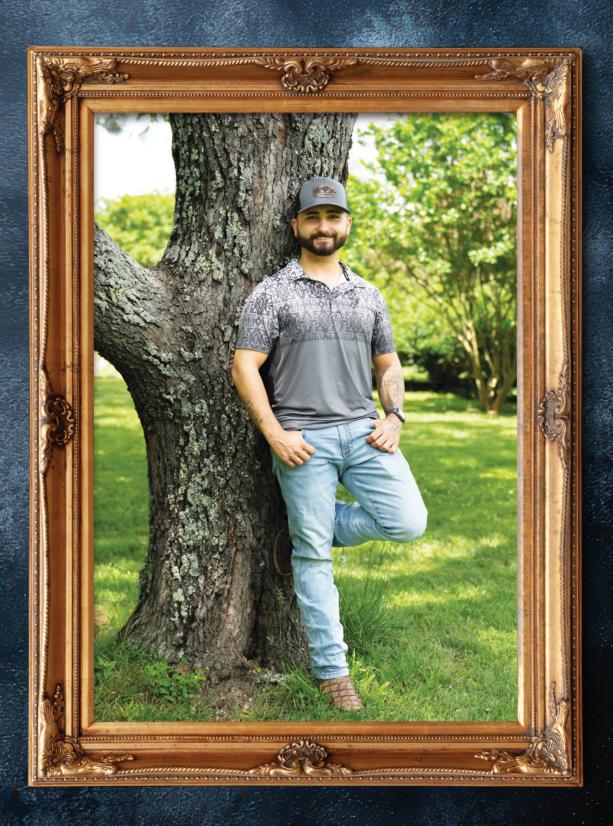
Henley plans to continue building his business while encouraging other young people who feel like they're facing the impossible.

His advice for future service members is, "Find a job in the military that can translate to civilian life. That way, when you get out, you already have the training and certifications you need — and no student debt."

Henley may no longer wear the uniform, but he continues to serve in his own way — leading by example, turning pain into purpose, and proving that a new mission can be just as meaningful as the first. **GN** 



▲ Colton was a combat instructor for new officers in Quantico, Virginia.







# LIFE, LOYALTY, AND LEADERSHIP

A devoted veteran learned early that life is short and service is sacred — and he's still honoring both today.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photos submitted by Steve Kirby



HEN STEVE Kirby joined the Navy in 1975, he never imagined how many miles — and milestones — it would carry him through. Over the course of 17 years in uniform, he served across the country, from Florida to Mississippi to California, eventually earning the distinguished title of Sailor of the Year aboard the USS Prairie, a destroyer tender stationed in San Diego.

But what followed was just as dynamic. Kirby has had a successful run in the car business, deep ties to the music industry, and now, at age 72, a leadership role in nonprofit work — one he stepped into with grace, humor, and conviction.

That recognition gave Kirby a rare opportunity to choose his next post anywhere in the country. He decided to be close to his home state of St. Louis, Missouri, and accepted a position at the Navy's recruiting logistics headquarters in Nashville. That decision would open the door to the next chapter of his life, full of music, motors, and meaningful relationships.

There's more to Kirby's journey than a record of service.

One of the most challenging moments of his life came in 1987 when Kirby's father died suddenly at the age of 54.

"It was shocking," Kirby said.

At the time, he was caught up in the fast-paced rhythm of his Navy life in Nashville. Christmas gifts for his dad were waiting at his house — gifts he never got the chance to deliver.

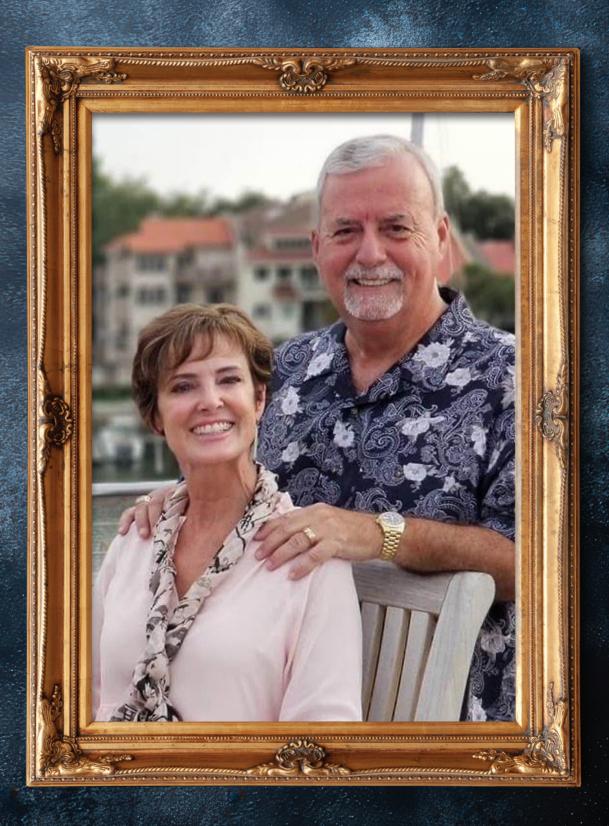


▲ Kirby's promotion to chief petty officer with daughters Julie and Amanda

"ITRY TO LIVE EVERY DAY LIKE IT COULD BE MY LAST. AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS LEARN FROM THE MISTAKES YOU MAKE."

STEVE KIRBY







Kirby is honored with one of his nearly 40 commendations, a testament to his long-standing service and commitment.

"I didn't know it would be the last time I'd see him," he reflected.

This moment still lingers in his mind, reminding him of how quickly life can change and how important it is to hold your loved ones close.

From his time in the Navy, Kirby carries forward lessons that have anchored him ever since.

"The Navy has made me an extremely organized person," he said. "You learn things like being on time. I always tell my grand-children that the most important thing you can do when you wake up is to make your bed. It begins a day of organization."

That same structure, self-discipline, and purpose carried him smoothly into civilian life, though not without a few bumps along the way.

Leaving the military wasn't easy.

"It's hard to go from that steady, disciplined environment to regular life," Kirby admitted.

But he knew it was a stepping stone to something else — and for a natural people person like him, the car business was a perfect fit.

In Nashville, Kirby quickly became the director of sales at a major dealership. There, he connected with big names in the music industry, selling vehicles to Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson, and Michael McDonald.

"Michael called and said he was going on tour with Cher in Europe. He asked if I'd pick out a Tahoe and deliver it to his wife, Amy. I said, 'sure,' and I did," Kirby recalled. "I knew what my customers wanted. I knew how to take care of them. That's what made me successful."

Though the connections were exciting, Kirby longed for a slower, more grounded pace.

"I was ready to get into a rural community like where I grew up in Missouri," he said.

He called his General Motors representative, and the response was immediate — Walker & Garner Chevrolet in Winchester needed a general manager. Kirby accepted the position and relocated in 2008.

Three years later, he met Colleen, a registered nurse of nearly five decades at the local hospital. They immediately fell in love and married the same year. The two traveled the country together — South Dakota, Naples, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, Maine,

England, and Italy — making memories and soaking up life's beauty.

Kirby managed what is now Russell Barnett Chevrolet until 2021 and briefly stayed on as an adviser in 2022. Then, in April 2024, he stepped into a new role: executive director of United Way of Franklin County.

"We've got 26 agencies we provide funding for," he said. "Everything we collect, we try to pour right back into the community."

His days are full but never too busy for what matters most — his family. Kirby is a proud grandfather who attends his grandchildren's extracurricular events as often as possible. He's also an active member of Winchester First Baptist Church.

Even with physical challenges from his athletic past — including torn tendons, multiple surgeries, and a knee replacement — Kirby keeps going. He once played various sports, even competing in softball tournaments nationwide with the armed forces. While tennis and pickleball are no longer options, the memories were well worth it.

"It was worth every minute. I wouldn't trade any of it," he said. "Those were great times."

Today, Kirby focuses on giving back, staying grounded, and cherishing the present.

"Try to enjoy life," he said. "I try to live every day like it could be my last. And all you can do is learn from the mistakes you make."

Kirby's story started on a Navy ship and led him through years of service, leadership, and change. No matter where he's been, whether in the military, the car business, or nonprofit work, he's kept one thing steady — he shows up for people. Now, at 72, he's still giving back, learning, and leading with heart. **GN** 











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