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A LEGACY OF
QUIET LIGHT

THE HOME TEAM

ISSUE 8 2025

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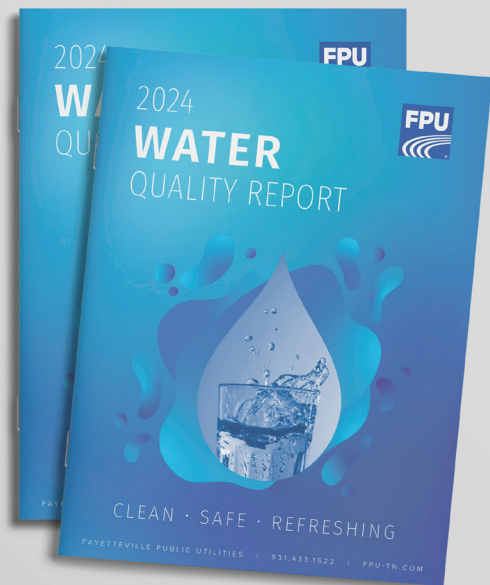
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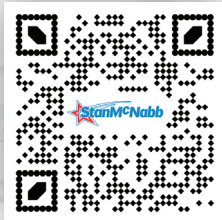
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never forgotten



"GOOD NEWS MAGAZINE" is published monthly by Exchange Media Group Inc., 404 Main Avenue S, Fayetteville, Tennessee 37334. Periodicals postage pending Fayetteville, TN Post Office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Exchange Media Group, P.O. Box 490, Fayetteville, TN 37334



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Home Team

A community is built under Friday night lights.

THE SCENT of warm butter-covered popcorn and the huge roar of the crowd... does anything bring you back faster than a Friday night under the stadium lights? For me, it's a flood of memories: the nervous jitters before kickoff, the eruption of cheers after a touchdown, even bumping into old friends and teachers in the concession line. These moments aren't just for students anymore; they whisk us right back to our own school days. We remember walking the school halls, practically buzzing for the game later that night. Those feelings? They stick with us for decades.

No matter how the game went, whether it was a nail-biting win or a tough loss, we played hard, cheered loudly, and probably got a little too carried away. It was something bigger, something you could truly feel in the air. We were together, not just in matching colors and jerseys, but in spirit, drive, and care.

Think about it: whether it's the powerful sounds of the band, the gravity-defying stunts of the cheerleaders, or the grit of the players on the field, every person involved

learns lessons that stick with them long after that final whistle. They learn about teamwork, about picking themselves up after a fall, and about the quiet power of sportsmanship. These are the qualities that make our community special, building character and shaping the next wave of leaders right here in our own backyard.

As life speeds up, it's easy to lose sight of these simple, Friday-night experiences. But there's a hidden treasure in our local fields and courts, a comfort and strength that we shouldn't take for granted. It's the feeling of knowing that our team, our community, always has our backs. That game that's not just a game? It ties us together under those Friday night lights. We build our lives together, often finding ourselves meeting up in those very same stands year after year.

Our home teams have always been a reflection of who we are as a community, inspiring us and cheering us on, both on and off the field. This issue of Good News, "The Home Team," is a celebration. GN

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Linda Pettie:
Still growing at 77

Her lifelong love of gardening now colors the lives of friends, neighbors, and 21 great-grandchildren.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

WHEN LINDA Pettie retired in 2014 and moved to Lincoln County, her property held the seeds of a lifelong dream. The vision had been with her since childhood, fertilized by a mother's green thumb and a love for nature's colors. With one acre set aside as her canvas, Pettie began painting with plants.

"It has become not only a passion, but some say an obsession. If I see a plant I don't have, it will usually end up in my garden," she shared.

Pettie's job gives her an abundance of blooms — not just for her garden, but for others' gardens, too. If you're strolling the aisles of the garden center at our local





▲ Linda started this “no dig” garden a few years ago. Since then, the beautiful flowers have grown bigger and bigger.

Marvin’s Supply and hear the “beep beep beep” of a forklift, there’s a good chance you’ll find Pettie behind the wheel. It’s her second gardening plot, a place where she shares her passion for all growing things with the community.

“Shopping at Marvin’s was the beginning of my own gardens and led to part-time work in 2017,” she said. “Having the opportunity to care for, learn about, and assist customers gives me joy and a sense of being a part of my community while seeing others get involved with and excited about improving their own properties.”



Many of the flowers planted by Linda benefit the bees in the area.



*Beautiful coreopsis
Linda has in her
flower garden*



Fittingly, her work at Marvin's, where she's now full time, led to a third way for Pettie to share her ever-growing horticultural savvy.

"One of those customers, Vickie Small, told me about the Stone Bridge Garden Club," Pettie recalled. "Once I attended that first meeting in 2018, I felt I could become an even greater part of service to a community I now called home."

As the landscape committee chairman for the past four seasons, Pettie oversees the club's efforts to maintain plots at the Fayetteville-Lincoln County Museum, the public library, and Stone Bridge Park's welcome center. She shared the committee's goals of providing color and beauty while working to minimize watering and maintenance, making them all more environmentally friendly.

"Pollinators, native plants, and perennials are important in reaching our goal. Each of the past seasons, the club has focused on one of the plots. The 2021 focus was on the welcome center," Pettie explained, noting that the beds in front

of the park's log house were reworked to add new soil, edging, and replanting. The library was 2022's project, and in 2023, the group took on the museum's courtyard.

She added, "The feedback from the community has been very positive."

Feedback affirms the harvest of Pettie's hard work.

"The customers at Marvin's give me such joy and pleasure as they shop for their own gardens and landscapes. To hear a customer tell me, 'My friend or a family member told me to come see you,' tells me I'm doing something right."

Today, at 77, Pettie's still cultivating tomorrow's gardens.

"My days are driven by staying busy and what I can accomplish. As for my energy, I'm staying healthy at 77 to be around as long as I can to enjoy my 21 great-grandchildren," she reflected.

All those great-grandchildren are even more blooms in the gardens of Pettie's beautiful life. **GN**



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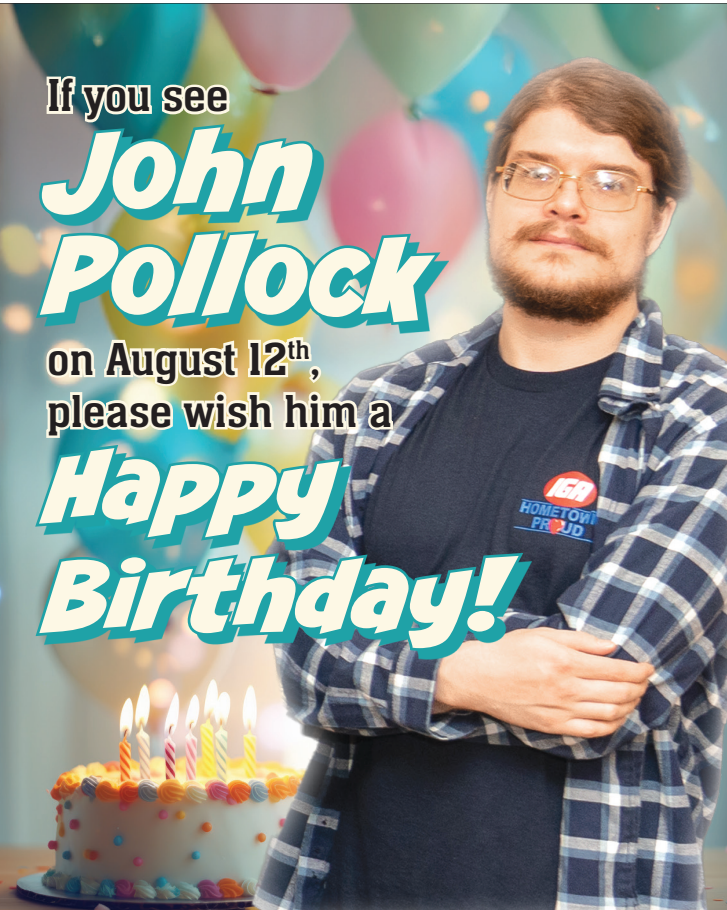
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The blue vest that Don puts on tells that a medical call has been received by the fire department. Don has been a first responder in the community for 27 years.

Don Counts:

ONE MAN, MANY MEMORIES

Through video and volunteer work, he ensures local history and heroism are never forgotten.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder
and submitted by Don Counts

LIFE TODAY is often captured with a cellphone — snapped, posted, and stored in the Cloud. We scroll through headlines, hobbies, and celebrity news, intending to pass a few minutes. Instead, we often fall into what some call “doomscrolling,” wasting precious time.

Don Counts devotes much of his time to preserving pieces of local life that we might otherwise forget. As he carefully adjusts the lighting and camera angle, he understands the value of what’s unfolding.

“I just enjoy hitting the red record button and capturing life as it happens,” said Counts.

Life in our community fills his YouTube channel. It’s packed with stories and images of our days, which might feel mundane in the moment. But when you take a step back, you find things you’d forgotten — events that no longer occur, faces of those who’ve passed, and memories that connect us.

“There’s so much meaning in every video or photo. Every one has a story behind it,” he stated. “A lot of what I record





Don has served Lincoln County Fair for many years. He was happy to help at the LC Fair in 2019 and every year following.

might not seem important today, but I hope it will be meaningful to someone in the future.”

An early radio career naturally transitioned into his current role as communication supervisor at Fayetteville Public Utilities (FPU), where he continues to record, edit, and preserve community life through FPU’s Channel 6 programming and personal projects that document local history.

Recordings of veterans sharing stories of service, strength, and sacrifice sit alongside gospel singings, championship games, and snapshots of small-town life. The Lincoln County Warrior Exhibit initiated the series, but Linda Williams, president of the exhibit’s board of directors, had questions and knew just who to call.

“She asked what kind of video camera she should get to record veteran stories. I told her it takes more than a camera — you need someone who knows what to do with the video once it’s recorded. I offered to help, and it’s been very fulfilling to hear the veterans’ stories. It really makes you appreciate their service,” Counts said.

He’s noticed a commitment to service, something reflected in his life’s work, too.

He shared, “It’s made me proud to live in a country where so many step up to serve. One thing that stands out is how many veterans feel their role was small. But in reality, every job, no matter how big or small, plays a vital role in the bigger picture of our military.”

Counts, too, is a man of service. When the tones drop, indicating a call to Flintville’s

volunteer fire department, he suits up and answers along with other members. Even here, capturing training sessions for the department sparked a desire to play a larger role.

“Knowing I can help people in moments when they really need it keeps me going,” he said.

Helping people is at the heart of everything Counts does. His life is a snapshot of quiet service.

“I’ve always believed that one person can make a difference,” he said with conviction. “Even when I’ve questioned it myself, the truth is — it always starts with one. As long as I’m able, I’ll keep showing up.” **GN**

Check @DonCounts on YouTube regularly for new content.



Don Counts, who has been with the Flintville Fire Department for almost three decades, suits up and is one of the first on many calls in the Flintville community.

Tell us
something
good 



education that comes
celebrating. Dairy
a father Steve, his
and his wife Kara
family started dairy
been in Tennessee
nth is a way to ob-
behind the scenes,
agriculture.
ght on many people
energies, high-pro-
farmers do a lot of
in terms of raising
care of cattle, being
robust, and wear-
rk goes into dairy
The Nash family
of 2020. "We'd al-

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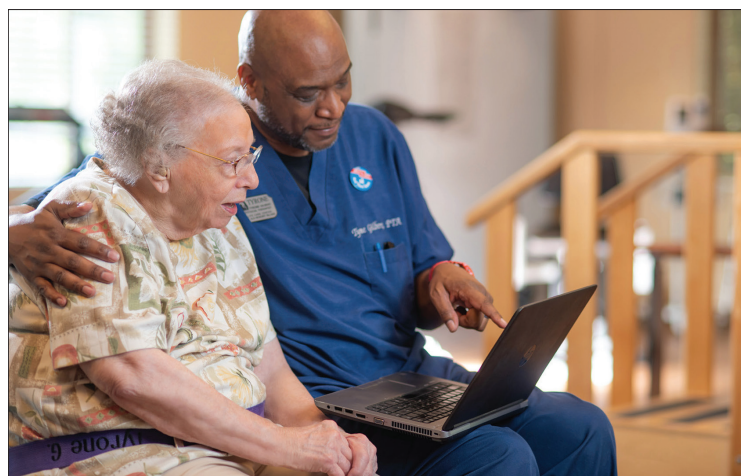
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2025 Holiday Cookbook Coloring Contest!

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*AGE: _____
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*PHONE NUMBER: _____

DEADLINE: September 12, 2025

*Required Info. Any entry not including this information will be disqualified. Artwork will not be returned unless it includes a self-addressed stamped envelope with each submission. Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes.

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Don't miss this chance for your child's art to be part of our holiday tradition!



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Good News
e×change

FAYETTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

2025 Football Schedule

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Friday	Aug. 22, 2025	AWAY @ Columbia Academy	7 p.m.
Friday	Aug. 29, 2025	Friendship Christian School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 5, 2025	Gordonsville High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 12, 2025	AWAY @ Cornersville High School	TBA
Friday	Sept. 19, 2025	Forrest High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 3, 2025	AWAY @ Huntland High School	TBA
Friday	Oct. 17, 2025	AWAY @ Moore County High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 24, 2025	Richland High School	TBA
Friday	Oct. 31, 2025	Eagleville High School	TBA

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2025 Football Schedule

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Friday	Aug. 15, 2025	Tabernacle Christian School	7 p.m.
Friday	Aug. 22, 2025	Lighthouse	7 p.m.
Friday	Aug. 29, 2025	AWAY @ South Haven	TBA
Friday	Sept. 12, 2025	AWAY @ Tennessee Tigers	TBA
Friday	Sept. 19, 2025	Trinity	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 26, 2025	AWAY @ Lancaster Christian	TBA
Friday	Oct. 3, 2025	AWAY @ CHATT	TBA
Friday	Oct. 17, 2025	Freedom Cowboys	7 p.m.

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GOOD NEWS FAYETTEVILLE

ISSUE 8 2025 // 27

LINCOLN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

2025 Football Schedule

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Friday	Aug. 22, 2025	Marshall Co. High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Aug. 29, 2025	AWAY @ Independence High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 5, 2025	Battle Creek High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 12, 2025	Columbia Academy	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 19, 2025	AWAY @ Summit High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 26, 2025	AWAY @ Giles County High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 3, 2025	Tulahoma High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 17, 2025	AWAY @ Columbia Central High School	TBA
Friday	Oct. 24, 2025	AWAY @ Lawrence County High School	TBA
Friday	Oct. 31, 2025	Franklin Co. High School	TBA

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2025 Football Schedule

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Friday	Aug. 22, 2025	Tanner High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Aug. 29, 2025	Clements High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 5, 2025	Priceville High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 19, 2025	Russellville High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Sept. 26, 2025	AWAY @ Madison County High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 10, 2025	AWAY @ Lawrence County High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 17, 2025	East Limestone High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 24, 2025	AWAY @ West Point High School	7 p.m.
Friday	Oct. 31, 2025	AWAY @ Elkmont High School	7 p.m.



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STEPHEN BRYAN

UNITY WINS WITH HEART

The Unity boys basketball team claimed a championship built on grit, growth, and unshakable belief.

THE HOME TEAM



▲ Coach Stephen Bryan, Lawrence Guthrie, Graham Ashby, Samuel Bryan, Hezzie Phelps, Colt Bryan, Colby Groce, Beau Watt, Will Byrd, Lawson Honey, Brody Wilson, Maddox Groce, and Jayce Jean

BY TINA NEELEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER

AND SUBMITTED BY VELVA WALKER

THEY STEPPED onto the court believing, not in an easy win or in being the favored team; they believed in each other, in what they'd built, and in what they'd become.

When the Unity boys basketball team clinched the TMSAA Class A-Section 3 Tournament title, the roar wasn't just for a win but for a story years in the making. For coach Stephen Bryan, who guided them there, the journey was as meaningful as the moment.

"I told them before the game, 'Why not us? We're here.' I think they knew if they just believed in what we'd done all season, that we would be successful."

It was his third year as head coach, though he'd been the assistant coach, coached youth and AAU

teams for years, especially when his children took to the court. A former standout player at Lincoln County High School, Bryan's love for the game runs deep, but his deeper calling is teaching life through basketball.

"You owe them something more than just teaching them how to play basketball," he said, adding that he really wants to see them handling adversity the right way, being great young men on and off the court.

That shaping began long before their championship run. The team had grown together through disappointment, coming up short in prior years. "I told them last year, when we lost, that next season started that night," he said. "They remembered."

“I’m glad I got to coach them. They deserve all the credit because they knew how to do it the right way. They’re the ones setting the example.”

STEPHEN BRYAN

What followed was a season of growth, skill, and maturity. The team took early losses hard, but learned from them. “After that,” Bryan said, “they didn’t take anything for granted.”

Unity may be a rural school, but its spirit and ambition rival any powerhouse. Many of the boys had been teammates since elementary school, playing baseball and basketball side by side. Their chemistry showed in their play and in how they supported one another.

“Down the stretch, it was almost like you would have different kids stand out... one might not be having a good game, somebody else would step up, and then somebody else,” Bryan recalled.

The championship game drew a crowd that surprised even Bryan. “People saw Unity playing one of the biggest schools in the division for the championship like David vs. Goliath. It felt like a win for not only Unity, but for Lincoln County.”

When the final buzzer sounded, he was at center court, celebrating in awe. “I was out there acting crazy,” he laughed. “And I go back and watch that video sometimes just to remember — yeah, we did that.”

His pride isn’t just in the win; it’s in the young men his players are becoming. They’re FCA leaders, Beta Club members, and peer mentors. “I’m glad I got to coach them. They deserve all the credit because they knew how to do it the right way. They’re the ones setting the example.”

This fall, with the help of his wife, Brooke, Stephen will coach both boys and girls, balancing the demands of farming, parenting, and coaching. His daughter will play for Union University on a basketball scholarship, his sons will suit up for high school, and his youngest daughter will play for Unity.

He doesn’t know how long he’ll keep coaching. But for now, he’s leading a team that’s not just leaving it all on the floor; they’re carrying what they’ve learned far beyond it. **GN**





Lawrence Guthrie,
Colt Bryan,
Graham Ashby,
and Samuel Bryan

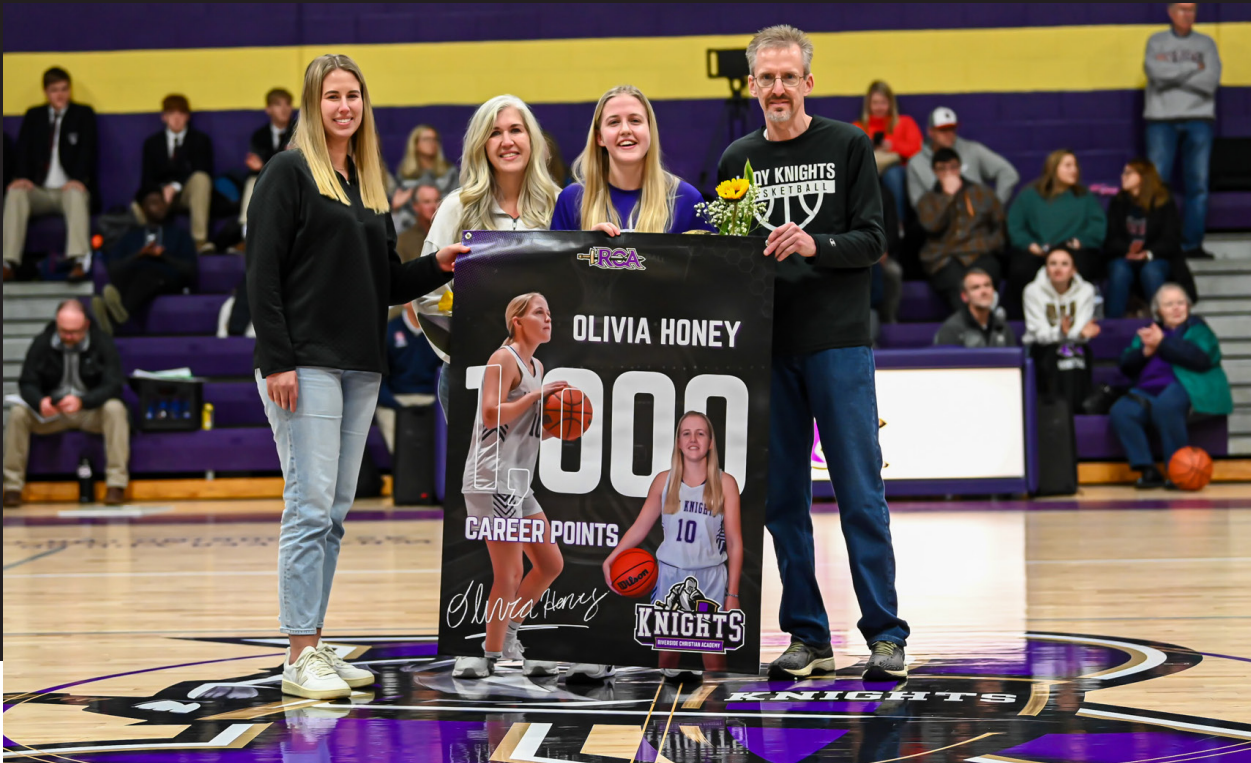
A portrait of a young woman with long blonde hair, smiling, wearing a white basketball jersey with "KNIGHT" and the number "10" in purple. She is standing against a dark, textured background. The text "OLIVIA HONEY" is in a black box on the left. The title "A LEGACY OF QUIET LIGHT" is in large yellow letters with a black brushstroke underline. A quote is at the bottom left.

OLIVIA HONEY

A LEGACY OF QUIET LIGHT

She inspired not through flash,
but through faith, friendship,
and unwavering resolve.

THE HOME TEAM



▲ Olivia Honey was celebrated at Riverside for shooting 1,000 career points. Kennedy Honey, Jessica Gafford, Olivia Honey, and Shawn Honey

BY TINA NEELEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER

AND SUBMITTED BY VELVA WALKER

THE GYM fell quiet for a split second — just long enough for Olivia Honey’s three-point shot to arc toward the basket. It was the kind of moment you dream about but also carry on your shoulders. When the ball dropped through the net, the crowd erupted. Honey had scored her 1,000th career point.

“I could’ve sworn it was an airball,” she admitted, laughing. “I was just relieved. For so long, I had people telling me that my name was going to be the next one on the 1,000 point banner in the gym... I did feel a little bit of pressure.” It wasn’t just about the points. That shot marked years of discipline, resilience, and the steady resolve Honey became known for.

This year, her senior season at Riverside Christian Academy (RCA), Honey’s hard work was recognized in a whirlwind of honors: Miss Basketball, valedictorian, and that milestone moment on the court. “I’d never heard of Miss Basketball before,” she said. “I was honored — and a little confused.” The valedictorian news surprised her, too. “I knew I ranked high in my class, but not at the top.”

Though not one to seek the spotlight, Honey has led by example, both on the court and off. She’s a quiet mentor to younger players — someone who shows up, pushes through, and encourages others to do the same.

“I just hope to have been a leader that others were proud to be led by,” she said.

“Through Riverside, I formed relationships I hope to carry forever and discovered strengths I did not know I had.”

OLIVIA HONEY

“RCA has helped shape me into the person I am today,” Honey said. “It has been my source of growth emotionally, socially, and spiritually.” She added, “Through Riverside, I formed relationships I hope to carry forever and discovered strengths I did not know I had.” Her faith has guided her throughout. “My faith shapes how I approach school, sports, and leadership by reminding me that everything I do is for God, and those things should glorify Him.”

Looking ahead, she plans to attend Middle Tennessee State University and pursue a degree in physical therapy, a field that ties her love for movement to her heart for service. “I’ve always been fascinated by the human body, especially in sports,” Honey said. “This curiosity has made me want to further understand how the body moves and how to keep the body strong.”

But more than titles or stats, Honey hopes she’ll be remembered for something simpler. “I want to be remembered as someone who was genuine and stayed true to themselves,” Honey said. “To my classmates, someone who had others’ backs, someone they could come to for advice or just a good laugh; to my teammates, as someone who gave their all on the court...



▲ Olivia shooting hoops in her home gym, Riverside Christian Academy

never giving up and always pushing others to be their best.”

At RCA, Honey gave everything she had. And in doing so, she became the kind of leader others could count on, just as others had once believed in her. **GN**





ZA'LEA HAMPTON AND AKEELAH PULLEN:

BONDS BUILT ON TRUST AND TEAMWORK

The cheer duo from Fayetteville High School is heading to college with scholarships and a friendship stronger than ever.

THE HOME TEAM



▲ Akeelah Pullen and Za'Lea Hampton signed scholarships to continue their careers as student athletes cheering for the University of Tennessee Southern Firehawks.

BY TINA NEELEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER

FAYETTEVILLE HIGH School's Class of 2025 turned their tassels this spring, but for Za'Lea Hampton and Akeelah Pullen, the milestone marked a new beginning, not an end. They graduated with cheer scholarships in hand. According to their coach, Rose Murray, they were among some of the first in school history to continue cheering at the collegiate level.

They're doing it together.

"We met our freshman year," Pullen said. "But it felt like I knew her longer. She was the only person I trusted to put me up in a stunt."

That trust stuck. The pair's bond grew through long practices, high-pressure competitions, and everyday ups and downs in high school life. "I felt

relieved that I would have someone I already knew and was close to on the team, and so happy for both of us," Hampton shared.

Their journey began in their sophomore year, a little later than most. But both quickly found their footing, and with it, a love for the sport, the friendships it built, and the coaches who believed in them.

"Cheer is an emotional and mental sport," Pullen said. "You constantly think everything you do is wrong or not good enough, so hearing that I had received a scholarship made me very excited."

They'll cheer this fall at the University of Tennessee Southern, bringing a deep gratitude for the team and town that raised them. One memory they both trea-



“Always keep your head held high. Remain positive and make sure God is a constant in your life.”

ZA’LEA HAMPTON

sure: a cheer competition trip to Virginia Beach, where their team placed first. “It meant a lot to us because we all worked hard to accomplish that,” Hampton said.

Coach Murray remembers their early days. “They were quiet and reserved. Throughout their time with me, I have watched them become outgoing and role models. They are both quiet leaders, leading their team by example.”

She hopes their story is just the beginning. “I pray they’re not the last,” Murray said. “Their achievements show younger cheerleaders at FHS that hard work, dedication, and teamwork pay off.”

That message is already on Hampton’s heart. “I feel honored. I want to set an example,” she said. “I would tell younger cheerleaders to always chase their dreams no matter what. Don’t base what you do on what other people are doing. Be yourself, and work hard to get what you want.”

Pullen’s advice: “Make the most of every moment. Show up, even when you don’t want to.”

Hampton plans to major in nursing with a minor in coaching. Pullen looks forward to stunting more and seeing where cheer takes her next. What they both carry forward is a sense of belonging to their team, to their families, and to each other.

“Always keep your head held high,” Hampton said. “Remain positive and make sure God is a constant in your life.”

The same hands that steadied each other in their first stunts will now lift them into a new chapter. The bond they built in Fayetteville isn’t staying behind — it’s going with them.

Two graduates. One legacy. Still side by side. **GN**



▲ Akeelah Pullen

*Akeelah and
Za'Lea spent their
four years of high
school cheering
on the Fayetteville
City Tigers. Their
hard work has
paid off and the
two will continue
their cheering
careers at college.*





Junior's Walk:

HOPE MARCHES through Lincoln County

Hundreds of people showed up to walk in support of children who have experienced abuse.

Photos submitted by Velva Walker

ON MAY 7, the community gathered at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds for the 21st Annual Blue Ribbon Walk. This powerful tradition raises awareness for child abuse prevention and provides critical support for Junior's House Inc. This year's turnout proved once again that when a community stands together, real change is possible.

Junior's House is the only Child Advocacy Center in the 17th Judicial District that also serves as a Court Appointed Special Advocate program. Each year, the nonprofit sees more than 500 children and provides prevention education to more than 1,000 students. No family is ever charged for services, and community events like the Blue Ribbon Walk make that possible.

Despite the rainy weather, walkers of all ages showed up with energy and pride. Local schools, businesses, and churches joined forces to support the mission. Two churches even packed and provided lunches for student walkers. Sponsors, volunteers, and friends of Junior's House walked together to show their commitment to protecting children and preventing abuse.

The Blue Ribbon Walk is a public show of unity for children who have experienced trauma. Every step taken at this event helps fund therapy, forensic interviews, advocacy, and education. That support ensures that no child is ever turned away due to cost or capacity.

This year's walk also recognized a local hero. Ricky Pierce received the 2025 Humanitarian Award for his selfless service to Junior's House. His dedication and kindness represent the heart of the organization and the spirit of the community it serves.

One in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Over 700,000 children are physically abused each year in America. Events like the Blue Ribbon Walk remind us that awareness saves lives and community action creates safe spaces for healing.

When people show up, children are seen, believed, and supported. That is the true power of the Blue Ribbon Walk. **GN**





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