

State Finds “Insufficient Evidence” in Weakley County IEP Complaint; Parent Plans Federal Filing

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Tennessee Department of Education has concluded its investigation into a complaint against Weakley County Schools, finding insufficient evidence of a violation of special education law. The decision, dated October 8, states that while schools must follow Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), they are not required to “perfectly implement” every provision to satisfy federal requirements.

The parent who filed the complaint, Alicia Green of Martin, said she plans to submit a formal filing with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, alleging denial of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and failure by the district to comply with federal law.

Green’s filing follows a months-long state investigation into whether Weakley County Schools properly implemented her child’s IEP during the 2024–25 school year. The complaint named staff members Eva Esary, Jeff Cupples, Stacey Rubenacker, and Patresa Rogers, alleging that the district failed to consistently apply a key classroom accommodation requiring assignments to have answer choices eliminated—a modification designed to reduce confusion and help the student demonstrate knowledge.

The Tennessee Department of Education’s decision reads, in part, “The Department finds insufficient evidence of a violation of special education law.” It continues, “LEAs must ensure that special education and related services are implemented in accordance with the student’s IEP, but LEAs are not required to perfectly implement a student’s IEP to provide the student with FAPE. When there is only a minor discrepancy between the services required under the student’s IEP and the services provided to the student in the classroom, an LEA will not be deemed to have deprived the student of FAPE.”

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public schools must implement all provisions of an IEP. The law defines a FAPE as instruction and services provided in conformity with that plan. Failure to carry out an IEP can constitute a violation if it results in the loss of educational benefit or restricts a student’s access to appropriate instruction.

Federal courts, however, have held that not every technical lapse automatically denies FAPE. In *Van Duyn v. Baker School District* 5J (2007) and *I.Z.M. v. Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools* (2017), courts ruled that while schools must substantially implement

IEPs, minor or one-time discrepancies that do not affect progress may not amount to a legal violation.

Even so, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has clarified that a district must carry out a student’s IEP in all “material” respects. Repeated or systemic failures—even if small individually—can still violate IDEA.

In Tennessee, the Department of Education oversees complaints about IEP implementation. If a violation is found, the state can order corrective action, such as revising the IEP, providing compensatory services, or mandating staff training.

Green’s original complaint, filed September 19, alleged that her child’s teacher did not follow the accommodation requiring elimination of answer choices on assignments. Email records included in the filing show Green telling district administrators, “It doesn’t matter if she did some, she is supposed to do all.” District officials acknowledged that the IEP included the accommodation but said it did not specify how many answer choices should be removed, suggesting a meeting to clarify wording.

The Department’s finding suggests that the difference in interpretation did not rise to the level of a legal violation. Green disagrees, arguing that the failure was consistent and materially affected her child’s academic progress. She said she intends to argue in her federal complaint that the state applied the wrong legal standard by accepting “non-perfect” implementation rather than requiring full compliance.

The Weakley County Examiner reached out to Director of Schools Jeff Cupples previously for comment numerous times but the district has refused to respond.

The outcome raises broader questions for parents across Tennessee about how IEP compliance is enforced. While state investigators often defer to school discretion in cases involving minor lapses, advocates say that the law requires full implementation in all meaningful areas of instruction.

If the Office for Civil Rights accepts Green’s filing, the case will test whether Tennessee’s interpretation of “substantial compliance” meets the federal standard for ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education under IDEA.

The Weakley County Examiner will continue to follow this case as it develops.

If you have information or documents related to a similar case, contact shannon@theweakley-countyexaminer.com.



WORDS ON WHEELS — United Way’s “Words on Wheels” bus drew crowds with its mobile library stocked with donated books from 15 West Tennessee counties. Family Champion Sabrina Bates said the program’s goal is to get books into children’s hands and inspire a love of reading early.

Bump 2 Baby Family Expo Brings Fun and Resources to Martin Families

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Families from across Weakley County gathered at the Martin Public Library on Saturday, October 4, for the annual Bump 2 Baby Family Expo, a community event designed to connect parents, caregivers, and children with local resources, health information, and family fun.

Hosted by the Weakley County Health Department in partnership with the United Way of West Tennessee and the Martin Public Library, the expo featured a wide variety of activities both indoors and outside the library. Children enjoyed bounce houses, face painting, a child’s obstacle course, and even a Teddy Bear Clinic, while parents explored booths offering educational materials, safety information,

and family support resources.

Visitors could also take part in cooking demonstrations, car seat safety checks, and meet with vendors sharing products and services geared toward new and expecting parents. The event included firetruck and police car displays, food trucks, and several prize giveaways, creating a festive and welcoming atmosphere for families throughout the day.

One of the most popular attractions was United Way’s “Words on Wheels” bus—a mobile literacy project stocked with donated books collected from 15 counties across West Tennessee. The bus, part of United Way’s Read Team initiative, invites children to climb aboard and select free books to take home and keep.

“This is donated by the

communities we serve,” explained Sabrina Bates, Family Champion for the United Way of West Tennessee. “We take the bus to different events so kids can walk through and pick out what they want. It’s called Words on Wheels. It’s all about getting books into children’s hands and encouraging a love of reading early.”

Bates described her role as a “Family Champion,” which she says is essentially a case manager helping families access needed support and resources. She said the Bump 2 Baby event is one of her favorites because it provides both education and fun in a family-friendly environment.

“Oh, goodness, there’s so much going on here,” Bates said with a smile. “We’ve got inflatables outside, people inside

with resources and swag, lots of giveaways, and so much information—especially for expecting parents and parents of young ones. We even have certified staff doing car seat checks to make sure everything is installed safely.”

The expo ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., drawing steady crowds throughout the day. Organizers said events like this are important not only for sharing information but also for building community connections and making parents aware of the many services available to them.

With bright decorations, community partners, and plenty of excitement for children, the Bump 2 Baby Family Expo once again proved to be a day filled with learning, laughter, and local support.



Greenfield’s Front Street Festival Returns with Full Week of Family Fun

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Greenfield’s annual Front Street Festival is back this October with a full week of community events, family activities, and hometown traditions that capture the spirit of small-town Tennessee. From live music and local food to a parade, fireworks, and even a 5K Glow Run, this year’s schedule offers something for everyone.

Kicking Off the Celebration

The festival begins with the Citywide Yard Sale on Saturday, October 18, giving residents and visitors a chance to explore Greenfield’s neighborhoods for bargains and hidden treasures. Those wishing to participate can register through City Hall by emailing frontstreetfestival@greenfieldtn.org or calling 731-235-2330.

On Monday, October 20, families can enjoy the magic of Fairytale Night from 6 to 8 p.m. at Veterans’ Park Pavilion.

Children can meet their favorite princesses, have their nails painted, enjoy face painting, and take photos. Tickets are \$10 per child and include a goodie bag.

Opening Night Festivities

The official Opening Night Ceremony takes place Tuesday, October 21, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Veterans’ Park Pavilion, featuring live music by The Doublestops, a Jackson-based family bluegrass band, with a special performance by Lisa

Hilliard’s Voice Students during intermission.

Throughout the evening, guests can visit local food trucks, including Miso Hongry, Coffee 731, and Sweet Liv’s Pies. The Greenfield Senior Center will sell tickets for their Grand Prize Giveaway, which includes a Blackstone Grill with accessories and gift cards to Tate’s (\$50), Walmart (\$250), and Amazon (\$250). Tickets are \$3 each or two for \$5. See FRONT, Page 2

LOCAL NEWS



MARTIN ROTARY CLUB- Weakley County Court Clerk Courtney McMinn spoke to the Martin Rotary Club about the duties and services provided by her office. Members described the presentation as informative and appreciated her insight into local government operations. The club also shared continued prayers for member Roger Donaldson.



MARTIN ROTARY CLUB-April Wright Jones, Weakley County Register of Deeds, spoke to members of the Martin Rotary Club about the work of her office and its staff. In her honor, the club donated a book to the Martin Public Library.



NWTN EAGLES RIDER FUN RUN-Members of the North West Tennessee Eagle Riders hit the road last Saturday for a Fun Run to Tater's in Paris, enjoying good weather, great company, and a scenic ride through West Tennessee.

FRONT

From 1

\$5, with the drawing at 5:45 p.m. Participants must be present to win.

Earlier that day, the Senior Center will host a Steak Sandwich Sale from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., offering freshly made sandwiches for \$12. Proceeds help support Senior Center programs.

Animal lovers can take part in the Dog Show at 5:30 p.m. at Veterans' Park. Entry is \$5 or a donation of dog food, with proceeds benefiting the Greenfield Pound. Awards will be given for Best Dressed, Best Tricks, Most Handsome, and Prettiest.

Immediately following, the Power Wheels Race begins at 6 p.m., featuring three age divisions (0-3, 4-5, and 6-7 years). Prizes will be awarded for each category, along with one for Best Decorated Overall.

Midweek Events and Local Flavors

On Wednesday, Oc-

tober 22, the Greenfield High School Senior Class will host the Front Street Festival Breakfast from 6 to 9 a.m. at Wimpy's Corner. The menu includes country ham, biscuits and gravy, eggs, juice, and coffee. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased in advance from any senior or by contacting Katie Cooper at 731-621-0398.

Later that day, the Food Truck Night returns from 4 to 8 p.m. on the north block of Front Street. Featured vendors include Yummy Sourdough Pizza, Tacolima, Wally's Taters & More, and Tiffany's Sweet Treats.

Thursday Highlights

Thursday, October 23, brings the Greenfield Fire Department Spaghetti Supper at the Greenfield School Cafeteria from 5 to 7 p.m.. Plates are \$10, and tickets can be purchased from any firefighter.

At 7 p.m., the community is invited to First Baptist Church for an evening of Gospel Singing featuring the acclaimed group Under Grace. Admission is free.

Saturday's Big Events

Saturday, October 25, is the busiest day of the festival, packed with family activities across downtown Greenfield.

The day begins with the Dr. Nathan Porter Library Book Sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 228 N. Front Street. Shoppers can find hardbacks for \$1, paperbacks for \$0.50, DVDs for \$1, audio books for \$2, or fill a bag for \$5. The sale is cash only.

The Front Street Festival Parade steps off at 11 a.m., with lineup beginning at 10 a.m. in the Southern Source parking lot on GPC Road. Floats, bands, vehicles, churches, businesses, and elected officials are encouraged to join. Three-

wheelers and four-wheelers are allowed for drivers 18 and older.

Following the parade, the Cade Doyle Band will perform on the main stage at 11:45 a.m., followed by another performance by Lisa Hilliard's Voice Students at 1:45 p.m.

From 12 to 3 p.m., visitors can explore the Hooker Farms Petting Zoo and State Park Animal Display on the north block of Front Street, featuring exhibits from Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park and Big Cypress Tree State Park.

The Front Street Festival Jeep Show will also run from 12 to 3 p.m. in front of Greenfield Banking. Entry is \$20 per Jeep, with prizes for fall and Halloween decorations. All Jeep participants are invited to join the parade. For details, contact Ashley Brooks at 731-377-1623.

Evening Finale

As the sun sets, Greenfield lights up with evening events. Fireworks begin at 7 p.m. near the water tower on North Front Street, followed by the 5K Glow Run and 1-Mile Fun Walk starting at 8 p.m. at Veterans' Park Pavilion. Registration for the race begins at 7:30 p.m. Proceeds benefit the Greenfield High School Junior Class for prom expenses.

Honoring Community Leaders

Each year, the Front Street Festival honors outstanding citizens for their community service and leadership. This year's Front Street Festival Star Jacket recipient is Emma Kail, a fifth grader at Greenfield Elementary and founder of Sassy E's Lemonade and Sweet Treats. Since age five, Emma has donated over \$3,000 to Greenfield Elementary teachers through her small business, earning

her recognition for her generosity and entrepreneurial spirit.

The Front Street Festival Star Citizen award goes to Randy Huffstetler for his dedication and longtime service to the Greenfield community. His work exemplifies the hometown pride and commitment that define the festival's spirit.

A Tradition of Togetherness

From the first morning breakfast to the final burst of fireworks, the Front Street Festival continues to unite the Greenfield community through shared memories, local talent, and neighborly pride. For event details or registration information, contact Greenfield City Hall at 731-235-2330 or email frontstreetfestival@greenfieldtn.org

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CEO/PUBLISHER:
SHANNON TAYLOR

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OPINION



HILTON-This week's cartoon courtesy of Cartoonist Morgan Hilton

The Mo You Know: My First War Was Inside the Walls, My Second Is for the Public

MORGAN HILTON
Staff Reporter

What is it like to be an #investigativejournalist or a PI? People picture high-stakes drama; they rarely see the grind, the risk, and the personal toll it takes.

This job is brutally tough. It means diving deep into systemic failures, exposing corruption, and holding powerful people accountable. The danger isn't theoretical—it's very real. The work is risky with our lives, prompting constant vigilance.

My dedication to these stories started before I joined the #WCE. I was doing this work for free then, and I'm still doing it now, operating without a paid position and from my heart. I juggle multiple, complex cases, all demanding intense focus, documentation, and the kind of meticulous cross-referencing that would make most people quit.

My professional journey has been anything but smooth. I was previously let go from a paper where I was only submitting comics, a move that received major local, public backlash. #NotSurprised

Now, I'm finding a home writing critical articles for an independent paper. But the pushback is escalating. I've had to contend with alleged public officials spreading rumors about my personal life. This is a classic tactic: if they can't discredit the evidence, they try to destroy the messenger.



Morgan Hilton

The constant threat, the sleepless nights, the need to verify every detail while fighting against attacks—it all takes a profound toll on my mental health. It's exhausting, isolating, and often frightening. This was my life BEFORE this job and I decided to take a dive even deeper into exposing very dangerous subjects. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

But here is the core of it: I don't do this for fame or status. The motive is simple: the truth. It's about giving a voice to the unheard, pursuing justice for the victims, and upholding the integrity of the public trust.

My time between 2019 and 2024 wasn't spent at a journalist's desk—it was spent on the inside. I was a Correctional Officer at Fulton County Detention Center, who was trying to stand up for what's right within the system. But when I realized the corruption was deep-rooted and systemic, my commitment to expose it became a years-long internal struggle. The relentless, five-year effort to expose jail corruption resulted in more than just a story; it was

a near-fatal event. The life I almost didn't walk away with is the sacrifice people so often forget.

I first walked into the Fulton County Detention Center with the badge and eventually a dream of being an official investigator for the jail, only to find the rot went all the way to the foundation. For nearly five harrowing years, I was forced into the opposite role: an internal operative, working under the constant fear of exposure as I filed reports that were ignored.

That internal betrayal and near-fatal fight wasn't the end; it was the training. I'm no longer trapped; I'm armed with the evidence of a survivor. Now, I leverage the skills I learned on the inside—the meticulous documentation and source development—to lead real, independent investigations. Working alongside private operatives, my focus has shifted from silently suffering under broken systems to actively dismantling them. The difference is that now, I don't just report—I expose wrongdoers and bust corrupters left and right without having to ask permission from the very people I'm bringing down.

If you believe in the necessity of deep, uncomfortable journalism, please support independent outlets. The Weakley County Examiner

#InvestigativeJournalism #IndependentMedia #WatchdogJournalism #PressFreedom #Accountability

Straight Talk with Shannon: Silence Won't Stop the Truth

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

When I launched The Weakley County Examiner, I knew the backlash would come. It always does when the powerful lose control of the narrative. The difference this time is simple: there is no one for them to complain to. No publisher to pressure, no editor to silence me behind closed doors. The meetings they used to hold about me can't happen anymore because I now sit at the top of the masthead.

That said, it appears some of those meetings might still be happening, just not with me in the room. Recently, a staff reporter of mine received emails claiming that certain officials were holding discussions about both of us and our reporting. Those messages have since been forwarded to the appropriate officials, but so far nothing has been done to confirm or disprove them. There is no clear evidence that such meetings are actually taking place, but the situation itself raises serious concerns. It feels off, a red flag if you will. Because while no one can go above me anymore to alter what I write, the idea that officials may be gathering privately to discuss members of the press should trouble anyone who values transparency.

Still, the same old tactics remain. The Weakley County School System refuses to answer phone calls or respond to emails when asked for comment. That lack of communication is not only unprofessional, it is a direct blow to transparency and public trust. When public institutions refuse to engage with the press, they are telling the people who fund them that their voices do not matter.

I have been told more times than I can count that my reporting is "too aggressive." That label gets tossed at women who ask direct questions, but not at men who do the same. The word "aggressive" is a tool, a way to dismiss confidence, minimize credibility, and intimidate women out of hard reporting.

Research supports this double standard. International media freedom monitors have documented that women journalists face far more verbal attacks and character smears than their male counterparts. In 2024, Media Freedom Rapid Response reported that nearly 43 percent of harassment cases targeting female reporters involved verbal abuse, compared to 31 percent for men. A Guardian analysis that same year found that three out of four female journalists had faced threats to their safety or reputation while doing their jobs. In short, women in journalism are often policed not for their accuracy but for their tone. What some call "aggressive," others call persistence.

Some officials in this county are not used to real journalism. They prefer friendly coverage



Shannon Taylor

that flatters rather than challenges, and they have grown comfortable with it. But healthy communities require more than cheerleading. They require scrutiny. Freedom of the press was never designed for comfort; it exists to make sure the truth gets told whether people like it or not.

When I worked for another media outlet, I saw how deep the resistance to accountability runs. Years ago, I filed a public records request for data related to sexual assault complaints within the Weakley County School System. Instead of transparency, I got retaliation. A meeting was called without me between school officials including then Director of Schools Randy Frazier, the sheriff, Terry McDade, the district attorney, Colin Johnson and my publisher. Their goal was to shut me down, and it worked. I was pulled aside and told to "leave the school alone."

That was not the only time the system tried to silence me. During a custody case I covered, I was nearly forced to testify about a confidential source. Judge Michael Maloan claimed he did not know of any law preventing him from ordering it. I had to educate him in open court on Tennessee's Reporter's Shield Law, which clearly protects journalists from being compelled to reveal sources. Even then, he threatened to hold a hearing about my refusal, but none was ever scheduled. I was later told not to report on the incident at all.

It became a pattern. Every time a story made someone uncomfortable, phone calls went up the chain. When a former Greenfield police chief chased an unarmed man out of a courtroom and fired shots, I asked questions, too many questions apparently. When I investigated the Weakley County Long-Term Recovery Group and exposed questionable practices, that too brought complaints. My coverage earned a Tennessee Press Association award, but I was told to "back off."

Eventually, I left that job and took another, but the playbook did not change. Once I became editor, the school system blacklisted me, refusing to send me press releases or answer inquiries. They sent everything to my publisher instead, who had to forward it to me like a middleman. They even withheld public press releases that were shared on their own Facebook page.

That silence says everything. They believe ignoring legitimate questions will make the press go away. But what they are really doing is exposing their own lack of professionalism and transparency.

When officials hide from scrutiny, they are not hurting me; they are hurting the people they serve. Parents deserve to know what is happening in their schools. Taxpayers deserve honesty about how their money is used. Silence does not protect anyone; it only deepens mistrust.

This county does not need "friendly" news. It needs fair, factual, and fearless reporting. That means covering the good, the bad, and everything in between. I enjoy writing about the positive stories, the achievements, the businesses, the community events, but the job does not end there. True journalism also means asking uncomfortable questions and following the facts wherever they lead.

Blacklisting reporters, dodging inquiries, and playing games with public information is not leadership. It is cowardice. It is also unconstitutional. And the more officials try to control the narrative, the more determined I am to shine light on what they want hidden.

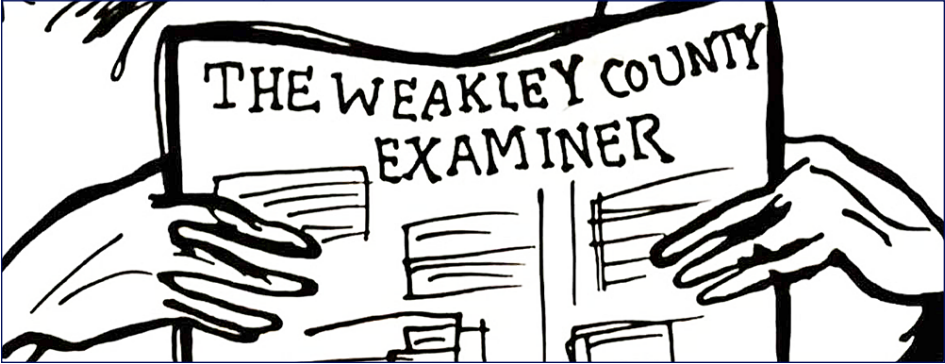
Across the country, there are growing examples of small-town officials abusing power to punish reporters for doing their jobs. In Marion, Kansas, police raided the Marion County Record newsroom in 2023 and seized equipment without cause, a case that later led to criminal charges against the police chief for interfering with the judicial process. In New York, city leaders in Delhi used funding pressure to try to silence a local paper. In Oklahoma, a sheriff was caught on tape talking about "getting rid of" a journalist. And in 2024, two female reporters from the Marion County Record filed federal lawsuits after the raid, alleging constitutional violations and retaliation. Their case now stands as a warning of how fragile local press freedom can become when power is unchecked.

Weakley County is not there, but that is the road this kind of behavior leads to. Transparency is the antidote. Accountability is the cure. And when journalists start receiving messages suggesting officials may be privately meeting to discuss their reporting, it should raise a red flag for everyone who values an open government.

For too long, people in power here have mistaken compliance for respect. That era is over. The Weakley County Examiner is here to stay, and we will continue reporting without fear or favor.

Truth does not belong to the comfortable; it belongs to the public.

We are watchdogs, not lapdogs. And we are not going quiet.



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RECORDS

JAIL REPORT

Weakley Jail Report: Oct. 6–12

Twenty-seven individuals were booked into the Weakley County Detention Center between October 6 and October 12. Charges ranged from DUI and drug possession to burglary, assault, and failure to appear. The full list of arrests follows: Hailey Nicole Bradley, Martin, arrested October 8 for domestic assault and false imprisonment; Terry Lynn Burkett IV, Ridgley, arrested October 12 for failure to appear; Michael Eric Cantrell, McEwen, arrested October 10 for fabricating/tampering with evidence, failure to appear, and possession of drug paraphernalia (meth related); Shakia Marie Curry, Martin, arrested October 12 for aggravated assault against a first responder, disorderly conduct, and resisting arrest; Heather Elyse Davis, Dyer, arrested October 7 for contempt of court; Eric David Dunham, Martin, arrested October 10 for violation of probation; Granville Markus Elam, Sharon, arrested October 9 for three counts of burglary; Ryan Scott Fisher, Martin, arrested October 12 for two counts of shoplifting and two counts of probation violation.

Thomas Kelly Hardy, Sharon, arrested October 8 for violation of a protection/no contact restraining order; Kristin Maria Holder, Glen Ellyn, IL, arrested October 11 for DUI, resisting arrest, and violation of implied consent law; Judy Patrice Jones, Union City, arrested October 7 for failure to appear; Milton Monroe Jones, Sharon, arrested October 12 for driving on a revoked/suspended license (2nd offense), DUI, failure to provide proof of insurance, and registration violation; Paul Edward Jones IV, Clinton, KY, arrested October 10 for DUI; Nicole Paige Keane, Fulton, KY, arrested October 12 for DUI; Cheyanne Nicole Klatt, Jackson, arrested October 6 for probation violation; Patrick Ryan Kohagen, Rives, arrested October 9 for failure to appear; Narkel Kyon Leflore, Springfield, IL, arrested October 9 for DUI, failure to appear, simple possession, and two counts of probation violation; William Earl McLaughlin, Martin, arrested October 10 for failure to appear and probation violation; Ryan Christopher Murphy, Greenfield, arrested



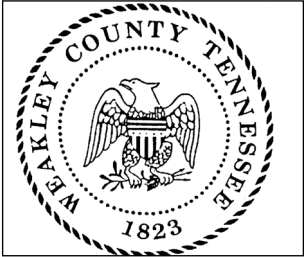
October 9 for hold for another agency; George Everett Seaton, Dyersburg, arrested October 11 for violation of probation (circuit); Neil Evan Sellers, Greenfield, arrested October 6 for child abuse and neglect; Franklin Eldridge Simmons, Martin, arrested October 10 for violation of a protection/no contact restraining order; Felicia Ann Stewart, Greenfield, arrested October 7 for driving on a revoked/suspended license; Sierra Montana Terry, Murfreesboro, arrested October 8 for driving on a revoked/suspended license, failure to provide proof of insurance, and speeding; Timmy Dean Totty, Greenfield, arrested October 9 for motor vehicle theft; Lamont Deshon Treadway, Bruceton, arrested October 6 for failure to appear; Nathaniel Brooks Via, Bells, arrested October 10 for criminal impersonation, possession of an alcoholic beverage, and possession of a weapon under the influence.

PROPERTY TRANSFERS

Weakley County Property Transfers: October 6–10, 2025

A total of 25 property transfers were recorded by the Weakley County Register of Deeds between October 6 and October 10, 2025. The transactions reflect real estate activity across Martin, Greenfield, Dukedom, and surrounding areas of Weakley County. GA Land LLC to Ladd Jeffrey and Balmhor Douglas, District 1, 7.394 acres, Map 11, Parcel 3.06. Woodruff Investment Properties LLC, Woodruff Terry L Trustee, and Woodruff Laura A Trustee to Woodruff Wendell K and Woodruff Darlene A, District 24, 8.39 acres, Map 103, Parcel 28.05, Evergreen Street, Greenfield. Dunn Christina McAlister and Dunn Raye Bishop to Mann Mechelle, District 2, 0.556 acres, Map 78G, Parcel 13.00. Martin Gaylon and Martin Martha to Kirby Marty, District 13, Tract 4, 15 acres. Sullenger Claudia Lee to Gardner William Daniel III and Gardner Valerie, District 13, 0.754

acres, Map 17, Parcel 17.00, State Line Road, Dukedom. Lemaster Donald M to Mast Alvin S and Mast Laura J, District 25, Tract 62, 19.01 acres. Woodruff Kevin and Woodruff Darlene Trustee to Mattison Melvin N Trustee and Mattison Melvin N Revocable Trust AG, District 24, 2.018 acres, Map 102, Parcel 41.00. Collins Darwin W Trustee and Collins Family Living Trust to Doster Derek, District 9, Lot 156A, Map A, 28 acres. Raleigh Charles Lee and Raleigh Jamie Joy to Jones Anthony and Jones Megan, District 24, Tracts 83, 52 acres. Reeves James Robert Heirs, Reeves James Hurly Heirs, Reeves Patrick Nolen Heirs, Reeves Jeremy Wayne Heirs, Reeves Doyle Wayne Heirs, and Hubble Kevin to McCollum Matthew, District 16, 18 acres, Map 178, Parcel 19.01. Reeves Doyle Wayne Heirs to McCollum Matthew, District 18, 79 acres, Map 79, Parcel 78.00. Vowell Ventures Partnership to Cooper Brandon Lee and Cooper Regan Hope, District 18,



Map 79, Parcel 78.00. Ray David to Freeman Samuel and Freeman John Robert, District 2, Lot 73E, Map A, Parcel 24.00, Church Street, Martin. Welliver Polly Wilma Laura Brinker Trustee, Welliver Robert Trustee, and Brinker Family Living Trust to Freeman Samuel, District 3, 0.166 acres, Map 56N, Parcel 1.00, Jowers Road, Martin. Ellis Dwayne Jr. and Ellis Amanda L to Duncan Paige N, District 7, 1.14 acres, Map 109, Parcel 35.00. Duncan Paige Nicole Adams, Adams Patrick Richard, and Adams Paige Nicole to Rock Royal and Rock Julia, District 7, 8.216 acres, Map 89, Parcel 10.00. Daily Samantha, Elliott Samantha, and Elliott Brandon to Linam Michelle R, Linam Jonathan M, Jordan Kane, and Wilson Kennedy, District 14, Lots 781B, 4 acres.

CIRCUIT DISPOSITIONS

Weakley Circuit Court Dispositions Oct. 10

Two individuals appeared in Weakley County Circuit Court on October 10.

Dispositions included a probation violation and a sexual offender registration form violation. Xavier Dwayne Williams pleaded guilty to a proba-

tion violation. Gregory Lee Pergantis pleaded guilty to a sexual offender registration form violation.

Weakley General Sessions Dispositions Oct. 6–10

Weakley County General Sessions Court closed 64 cases between October 6 and October 10. Dispositions included guilty pleas, judicial diversions, dismissals, and probation violations. Below is a list of individuals and the charges resolved during that period. Floyd E. Riley – failure to appear, dismissed; Brandon Lance Neville – failure to appear and probation violation, both dismissed; Landon Chase Vise – open container, guilty; Luis Fernando – reckless driving and driving without a license, guilty; Kaitlynn Autumn Webb – driving while license revoked, dismissed with costs; Katlyn Jo Pollock – public intoxication, guilty; Lexi Marie Felty – public intoxication, judicial diversion; Dimitri Markel Nance – probation violation, dismissed; Shawn Eugene McClanahan – registration expired, guilty; Hunter Isaac Birdwell – seat belt violation, guilty; Cassidy Dawn Mayo – seat belt violation, guilty; Raymond Lee Robertson – failure to appear, dismissed; Charlotte Lindsay Canaday – speeding, guilty; Adam Wayne Crocker – DUI second offense reduced to first offense, guilty plea to lesser charge; lane violation and failure to appear, dismissed; Charles Richard Warren – failure to appear and resisting arrest, guilty; probation violation, guilty.



Rusty Westerman – theft (under \$1,000), judicial diversion; Courtney Marie Clark – domestic assault, dismissed with costs; Logan Eugene Pollard – theft and credit card fraud (under \$1,000), guilty; failure to appear and probation violation, guilty; theft and vandalism (under \$1,000), dismissed; Caden Bruce Holley – reckless driving, other disposition; Damien Rey Ibarra – duty upon striking unattended vehicle, guilty; possession of alcohol underage, dismissed; Tammie Leann Braddy – two counts assault on first responder and resisting arrest, guilty; Gaylon Daniel Harris – theft of services (under \$1,000), one charge judicial diversion, one dismissed; Rusty Dale Ricketts – simple possession, guilty; Obrian Lamar Sowell – drug manufacturing/distribution reduced to simple possession, guilty plea to lesser charge; probation violation, guilty; Joshua Alan Lawrence – domestic assault, dismissed with costs; Rodney Eugene Wright Jr – indecent exposure (two counts), guilty; Alexander Logan Hickey – domestic assault and probation violation, dismissed; Taylor Alexander Spain – failure to appear and probation violation, guilty; James Howard Sheridon

– failure to yield and due care, guilty; Matthew Cecil Eldon Partin Smith – due care, guilty; Ashley Michelle Edmonton – domestic assault, dismissed; Justin Lee Cochran – multiple traffic charges with mixed outcomes: some dismissed, some guilty, including guilty plea to driving without a license; Austin Cole Payne – multiple driving violations including speeding, license suspension, and failure to appear, various outcomes including guilty and dismissed; Katelyn Coette Isbell – multiple violations including seat belt, driving while license suspended, and failure to appear, various outcomes; Seth Andrew Cannon – multiple charges including driving while license revoked, financial responsibility violations, and improper registration, various outcomes; Tonya Lynn Mcree – speeding and registration expired, dismissed with costs; driving while license suspended (second offense), guilty; Jose Alejandro Cuevas – driving while license revoked, guilty; light law and failure to appear, dismissed; Perry Lynn Dillahunt – expired registration and cellphone use while driving, guilty; Kody Owen Hatchel – due care, guilty; financial responsibility law, dismissed with costs; Tyler Shane Wilson – speeding, guilty; David Wayne Sayles – registration expired, guilty; license suspended and financial responsibility violations, dismissed with costs.

S.M.A.R.T.

PARENTING TIPS FOR ONLINE SAFETY

Set-up: Devices/Accounts/Passwords

Monitor: Online Use/Connections

Approve: Apps/Games

Restrict: Content/Permissions

Talk: #StartTheConversation/Teach

exploitation

scam

risky behavior

sexting

grooming

financial sextortion

generative ai

privacy

To access more Internet safety resources, please scan the QR code here:



OBITUARIES



Edward Gene Gibbons
1961 — 2025

Mr. Edward Gibbons, age 64, passed away on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at his residence in Martin, TN.

Edward was born on July 30, 1961, to late Pete and Delores Gibbons in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

He was a retired Truck Driver at Mitchell Trucking Company in Latham, TN.

He is survived by his two daughters: Tasha

Gibbons of Columbus, Ga, and Christine Mobley of Columbus, Ga, four grandchildren, Elise McCart, Jackson McCart, Kayla Loyd, and Michael Mobley III, one great-grandchild, Justin Pino Jr., two siblings, Ermaleen Arnold and Roseatta Wilson both of Martin, TN.

In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by one sister, Macsana Bailey and one brother, Terry Gibbons.

There will be no services held at this time.



Sherry Ann Thomason
1948 — 2025

Sherry Ann Thomason, formerly known as Sherry Barnett, was born on February 29, 1948, in Union City, Tennessee. She departed from this life peacefully on October 9, 2025, at her home, surrounded by her loving family. Sherry was a devoted member of Tumbling Creek Baptist Church, where her faith was an integral part of her life.

Sherry was a loving mother to her son, David (Courtney) Thomason, and her daughter, Cathy (Paul) Brown. Her legacy continues through her grandchildren, Natalie Thomason, Paul Thomason, and Brenden Thomason, as well as her great-grandchildren, Ivan Thomason and Eryx Thomason. Sherry is also survived by her brothers, Matthew and Glenn Goetz, who shared many cherished memories with her.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Eugene Thomason, as well as her parents, William Harrell Barnett and Virginia Lucille Bradberry. Sherry has now gone home to meet her Lord and Savior and her husband, embracing the peace that comes from a life well-lived.

The visitation for Sherry will be held on October 12, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at Bowlin Funeral Home, located at 279 W Main St, Dresden, TN 38225. This will be followed by a graveside service at 3:30 PM in Lebanon Church Cemetery at 185 Lebanon Church Road, Dresden, TN 38225. Bro. Gene Price will officiate the service, honoring her memory and the impact she had on those around her.

Sherry was a passionate dog lover, reflecting her kind heart and nurturing spirit. Her love and dedication to her family and her faith have left a profound legacy, and she will be deeply missed by all who knew her.



Jerry Wayne Crittendon
1938 — 2025

Jerry Wayne Crittendon, of Palmersville, TN, was born on September 15, 1938, in Martin, TN. He departed this life peacefully on October 11, 2025, at the Weakley County Nursing Home, surrounded by his loved ones.

A proud veteran, Jerry served in the National Guard, exemplifying his dedication to his country and community. He was known for his warmth, kindness, and ability to make those around him feel cherished. His family remembers him not only as a devoted husband and father but also as a loving grandfather and great-grandfather, leaving behind a legacy of love and cherished memories.

Jerry is survived by his son, Jeff (Mandy) Crittendon, of Knoxville, TN; stepson Daryl (Andi) Poiner of Martin, TN; daughter Teresa (Kerry) Boane of Gleason, TN; stepdaughter Carol Oliver of Dresden, TN; and stepdaughter Ann Boswell of Dresden, TN. His

family continues to celebrate the joy he brought into their lives with the presence of eight grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Doris Crittendon, and his parents, Toy F. Crittendon and Gertie Lee Prince. Additionally, he mourned the loss of his daughters, Pam Crittendon and Amy Horice, who remain forever in the hearts of those who loved him.

A graveside service to honor Jerry's life will be held on October 14, 2025, at Macks Grove Cemetery in Palmersville, TN. The service will commence at 2:00 PM, officiated by Bro. Terry Griffin. The family welcomes all to celebrate Jerry's life and legacy; however, they would like to note that there will be no visitation at the funeral home.

Jerry Wayne Crittendon will be dearly missed, yet his spirit will continue to shine through the countless lives he impacted throughout his journey on this earth.

THE WEAKLEY COUNTY EXAMINER

Stages of Grief

acceptance

depression

bargaining

anger

denial

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When your loved one becomes a
Memory,
Every memory becomes a
Treasure.

GRIEF SHARE®

Grief Support Group

Mondays 5:30-7:30 pm

February 19th - May 13th

Central Baptist Church

JOIN US FOR A

BICENTENNIAL

Celebration

Downtown Dresden

History - Music - Food Trucks - Vendors

Bounce Houses - Fireworks

OCTOBER

SATURDAY 25 STARTS 2PM

2025

LET'S CELEBRATE TOGETHER!

There are times when explanations, no matter how reasonable, just don't seem to help.

--Fred Rogers

"A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again."

— Maya Angelou

"Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touches some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you're there."

— Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

EDITORIAL

The Mo You Know: The CO Who Knew Too Much

MORGAN HILTON
Staff Reporter

My career as a correctional officer was supposed to be about upholding the law. Instead, my nearly five years on the job became a grueling fight against a rampant, suffocating atmosphere of corruption in corrections. From the start, I felt a chilling premonition: if I didn't meticulously document everything I saw, I wouldn't just be silenced, I could be set up. My journey to expose the jail began the moment I realized the institution was turning against me.

My primary weapon against the rising tide of misconduct wasn't my badge or my training; it was the digital logging system mandated by the facility, Jail Tracker. I was determined to create an undeniable record of the systemic failures.

The incidents I documented went far beyond simple rule infractions. I witnessed extreme negligence, including roaches in inmate lunch trays, a shocking detail that exemplified the disregard for basic human dignity. I also focused on disrupting the flow of illicit items. When I seized contraband such as smoking products, I didn't just toss it aside; I officially turned it in through the evidence flap, meticulously following protocol.

By using the official, sanctioned system, I was creating an undeniable digital paper trail, a record proving that I did my job and attempted to correct the issues through appropriate channels. The evidence was visible to supervisors and command staff. Yet, the systemic response to my reports was a wall of silence.

The system felt designed to shield those at the top, including Jailer Steven Williams. As a CO, I was bound by the strict chain of command, meaning any issue had to be addressed sequentially. If my Sergeant failed to act, I would go to Lieutenant Ronnie Fair, and so on, up the line until reaching the Jailer.



We were told we simply couldn't go directly to the Jailer. This rigid structure ensured the truth was easily contained.

The leadership's ignorance was a deliberate strategy. A Captain once admitted the unthinkable: Jailer Steven Williams didn't even know his own cameras were useless. I knew because I had worked the control room, and the reality was a nightmare. Every single camera was so blurry it was useless for identification. Worse, safety was completely abandoned. On the Female Hall and 100 Block, officers had no video feeds to their desks at all. Unlike other areas, we were forced to fly blind. These weren't mere blind spots; they were unmonitored death traps where an inmate could harm themselves or die unseen.

The failure of supervision under Jailer Williams had tragic consequences. An inmate died because of contraband that had been intentionally allowed into the facility. This wasn't incompetence; it was a deliberate failure of supervision that compromised everyone's safety.

My reports were serious, detailing violations that risked the safety of both staff and inmates. Lieutenant Fair's reaction confirmed my deepest fears. There was no professional concern, no promise of investigation, only dismissiveness and annoyance. The official channels, both digital and personal, weren't paths to justice; they were dead ends sanctioned by command. At that moment, I understood the corruption wasn't just tolerated, it was protected.

I attempted to call 911 and report corrup-

tion within the jail facility, all while being overwhelmed by the fear that I was trapped in a calculated setup. Realizing the internal chain of command was hopelessly corrupt, and feeling my personal and professional safety collapsing, I saw only one way out, forcing an external record. I never abandoned my post. I used my last free moments to call 911 and report the corruption inside the jail.

My call for help was answered not by investigators but by retaliatory handcuffs. My dark premonition had come true in the most brutal way imaginable. The officer who knew too much had been neutralized, or so they thought.

My experience is real. It is proof of a structural failure. When an officer follows the rules, uses the official reporting system, and faces arrest for calling 911 in fear of being set up, the system doesn't just feel dysfunctional, it feels designed to silence the truth.

Corruption in corrections isn't a victimless crime. It bleeds taxpayer money, compromises justice, and creates a lethal environment. I kept documentation because I knew this day would come. I felt it grow closer with every passing shift.

I did what most officers, paralyzed by fear or complicity, wouldn't do. I have the digital evidence. I followed the failed chain of command. I have the 911 calls and the date of my arrest as undeniable proof of the retaliation I faced. I have the right to demand accountability.

The ultimate injustice is that officers who expose corruption are often treated as criminals. My arrest proves the system's goal is not to fix the problem but to crush the messenger. Until we pass whistleblower protection laws that safeguard the careers, financial security, and freedom of those who report corruption, the silence will remain louder than the truth. I have the right to be heard.



SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

We welcome Letters to the Editor from our readers. Whether it's a response to a published article, a community concern, or an issue you believe deserves attention, we want to hear from you.

Submission Guidelines:

- No word limit. Say what you need to say.
- Include your full name and city of residence for verification and publication.

Letters must be original and unpublished elsewhere.

We do not accept anonymous letters or those under a pseudonym.

We reserve the right to edit for clarity, grammar, and legal considerations, but we do not alter viewpoints.

We do not publish personal attacks, libel, or hate speech.

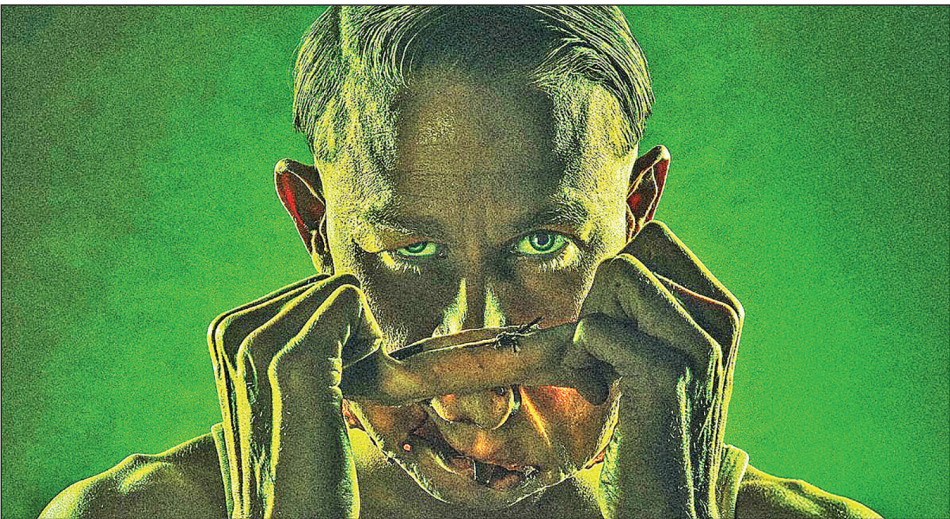
There is no limit on how often readers may submit letters. All voices are welcome.

Disclaimer: The views

expressed in Letters to the Editor may not necessarily reflect those of the publisher or staff of The Weakley County Examiner. This space is for the community, and we aim to reflect a wide range of perspectives.

How to Submit:
Email: shannon@the-weakleycountyexaminer.com

Mail: Letters to the Editor
The Weakley County Examiner
428 Pikeview Street
Dresden, TN 38225



Monsters Are Made: What Netflix's Monster: The Ed Gein Story Teaches About Mental Illness

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Ed Gein uttered one word and the mood in the room changed. From that moment, I knew Monster: The Ed Gein Story was not an ordinary crime series. It is now streaming on Netflix, and while most people see it as another gruesome true-crime story, I found something deeper beneath the horror.

This series is not about forgiveness. It does not ask viewers to excuse what Ed Gein did. Nothing could justify the pain he caused. Instead, it challenges us to understand how trauma, isolation, and untreated mental illness can distort a person's reality until they become something beyond recognition.

The real horror is not just in his crimes, but in how easily his decline was overlooked. It is a reminder that mental illness left untreated can destroy both the sufferer and everyone around them. The story of Ed Gein is one of neglect, repression, and silence. It raises the question of how different things might have been if he had access to real mental health care instead of a home built on fear and religious extremism.

This show is disturbing, graphic, and not suitable for children. It is one of the hardest things I have ever watched. I paused more than once just to collect myself. It forces you to sit in the discomfort of human

cruelty and mental collapse. It is relentless, unsettling, and emotionally draining.

Historically, Ed Gein was diagnosed with schizophrenia and ruled not guilty by reason of insanity. The series captures that mental unraveling with painful precision. It suggests that Gein was also neurodivergent, struggling with emotional detachment and rigid behaviors that today might be recognized as traits of autism. Whether that is accurate or not, the portrayal succeeds in showing how untreated psychological conditions can deepen isolation and create dangerous distortions of reality.

Charlie Hunnam gives one of the most haunting performances of his career. He transforms Gein into a frail, trembling figure whose guilt and confusion feel painfully real. Every flicker of his eyes, every pause in his speech, seems to carry both shame and fear. Laurie Metcalf, playing Augusta Gein, captures the terrifying side of religious zeal. She turns maternal devotion into emotional imprisonment, showing how faith without empathy can suffocate the soul.

One scene near the end broke me completely. Gein, crying and broken, asks his doctor if schizophrenia is the reason he did what he did. It is a rare moment of awareness, a glimpse of the man buried beneath years of madness. That

question cuts deeper than any of the violence shown on screen. It captures the tragedy of a man who might have been helped long before he became what history remembers him as.

I want to be clear. This review does not defend or excuse Ed Gein. What he did was horrifying. But it also shows the cost of a system that ignores mental illness until it turns deadly. We need more access to care, more understanding, and more willingness to see suffering before it becomes a headline.

Monster: The Ed Gein Story is not easy to watch. It is dark, brutal, and emotionally exhausting. But within that darkness is a warning that still matters today. Monsters are not born. They are made, piece by piece, in homes filled with silence and fear. Understanding that truth is not forgiveness. It is recognition. And recognition is the first step toward preventing the next tragedy.

Editor's Note: Monster: The Ed Gein Story contains graphic violence, disturbing imagery, and scenes depicting severe mental illness and abuse. Viewer discretion is strongly advised. This series is intended for mature audiences only and is not suitable for children or sensitive viewers. While this editorial explores its psychological and social themes, nothing written here should be interpreted as condoning or minimizing the crimes committed.

DISCLAIMER: THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN OUR "LETTER TO THE EDITOR" SECTION ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OR POSITIONS OF THE WEAKLEY COUNTY EXAMINER, ITS STAFF, OR ITS AFFILIATES.

No byline?
Be skeptical.

When you read a news story with no byline, stop and think. A byline tells you who stands behind the reporting. Without one, there's no accountability, no transparency, and no way to judge credibility.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month October

CRIME FEATURE

What Should Have Been a Mother’s Love, Turned into a Newborn’s Tragedy: Family Demands Justice for Aquazia Kennedy

MORGAN HILTON
Staff Reporter

On January 6, 2024, the life of 19-year-old Aquazia Kennedy was tragically and abruptly ended in a callous highway crash on I-30 in Dallas.

Aquazia, who was 33 weeks pregnant, was a passenger in a stalled vehicle when it was struck by a Jeep Wrangler driven by an off-duty Dallas Police Officer, Alban Karanfili, who had just left his second 12-hour shift at Bottled Blonde, a bar well known for serving alcohol.

Aquazia passed away at the hospital after an emergency C-section, but her daughter, Sky’lynn, was born a fighter. She survived the impact because of her mother’s final, heroic act. Aquazia reportedly shielded her baby with her own body. A life was lost, and another life began with immense struggle.

Sky’lynn has been left with severe complications that require round-the-clock nursing care.

As the Kennedy family grieves, they have also been forced into a painful fight against what they describe as a lack of accountability and systemic obstruction. To date, the family has received no apology from the officer, the police department, or anyone else involved in the investigation.

The Roadblocks to Justice

The investigation into the crash has been handled by the Dallas County Sheriff’s Office. Despite the severity of the incident and the involvement of an officer identified as Alban Karanfili, Aquazia’s family, led by her father Quincy Kennedy, has struggled to receive basic information or even a meeting with investigators.

This silence has raised serious concerns about a potential conflict of interest and an attempt to shield the officer involved.

The officer was never given a sobriety test at the scene, and no bloodwork was taken at the hospital. Allegedly, NICU nurses later told the family that the officer was in the emergency room screaming “I’m sorry” and appeared intoxicated. Witnesses also said there was a strong smell of alcohol. The officer’s union representative arrived shortly after and reportedly stopped him from saying anything that could incriminate himself. Bloodwork was refused, and there was no arrest.

Under Texas law, any officer involved in a crash resulting in death must take an automatic sobriety test. If the officer refuses, the law states that an automatic arrest should follow.

Instead, the officer was removed from the hospital. Nurses allegedly informed the family that he was taken to a private hospital that was not part of the official investigation. The Kennedy family believes this was done to flush his system.

After the officer was stabilized, bodycam footage shows him being questioned and told not to sign his statement. Authorities quickly announced that no charges would be filed. The family says communication with both survivors and family members has been almost nonexistent.

On January 6, 2024, at Baylor Scott & White Hospital (BSWH), Quincy

Kennedy was refused the opportunity to ID his daughter’s body. He informed the Chaplain and the Medical Examiner of the serious nature of the case and the involvement of law enforcement, requesting permission to take evidence pictures of her before the autopsy. This request was completely denied, with authorities allegedly telling him that under Texas Law, he had no rights to do so.

He was finally able to see his daughter for the first time on January 8, 2024. Mr. Kennedy describes losing control upon seeing her, stating, “I started punching the walls and I was punching hard objects and I was screaming why is she dead.” Two of his sons, Demetrius and Kashmin, had to hold him down on the floor until he regained his composure.

The Fight for Justice: Family Files Multiple Lawsuits

The Kennedy family is fighting back against the system by filing several lawsuits.

Lawsuit	Defendant(s)	Value Demanded	Description
Civil Suit	Alban Karanfili	No lower than \$1 Million	Civil lawsuit against the officer involved in the crash.
Insurance Suit	Kennedy vs. Bluefire Insurance	\$60 Million	Against the son’s wife’s insurance company for allegedly omitting Aquazia’s name from the insurance claim.
Municipal Suit	Quincy Kennedy vs. City of Dallas	\$60 Million	Lawsuit filed against the City of Dallas.
Malpractice Suit	Quincy Kennedy vs. Baylor Scott & White Hospital	\$600 Million	Suit for all alleged malpractice surrounding the case and care.
Product Liability Suit	Quincy Kennedy vs. General Motors	\$200 Million	Filed due to the faulty electrical gas pedal sensor in the 2016 Chevy Malibu (the stalled vehicle). The sensor failed to send power to the gas pedal. This sensor is what sends a misrepresentation of an overheating code, causing drivers to think their car is overheating when it is really a bad sensor, which is part of the 106 lawsuit against GM.

The family is fighting to uncover what happened that night.

The Three Demands for Truth

To uncover what happened that night, Quincy Kennedy has listed three key pieces of evidence he believes will bring justice. The family insists that the official story cannot be accepted until these are addressed.

Highway Traffic Camera Footage: The family was first told that traffic cameras captured the crash. They were later informed by a judge that an excuse might be made that the cameras were not working at the time. The Kennedys continue to demand proof that the cameras were either working or truly out of service.

Officer Bodycam Footage: The family is asking for all body camera footage from the officer involved, including from his on-duty and off-duty hours leading up to and after the crash. They believe this footage could reveal his condition and actions that night.

Extraction of the Of-



Aquazia Kennedy & Imani David, Davida's daughter, Aquazia's cousin.

ficer’s Phone Data: The family also wants data extracted from the officer’s personal cell phone to determine if he was distracted or impaired. All iPhones from model 14 and up include collision detection that automatically takes snapshots when a crash occurs. The Kennedys say this data could show what the officer was doing in the seconds before impact. They have also asked for footage from the city’s highway drones, which constantly record Dallas traffic, and the black box from the officer’s 2015 Jeep Wrangler. The black box records collision data, direction, and short clips up to 20 seconds long showing what the driver was doing during the crash.

This battle for Aquazia is a stand for broader systemic change. The family demands immediate police reform and transparency, viewing this case as a stark example of a system designed to shield officers rather than pursue truth. Achieving true justice, they assert, requires holding institutions accountable and ensuring no other family is denied the right to an honest and open investigation.

Aquazia Kennedy’s story must be heard. Accountability and justice must prevail.

Aquazia’s Legacy and Family Impact:

Words from Davida Kennedy (Aquazia’s aunt) about Aquazia:

Aquazia came to Texas for a better life for her and her baby. The week she arrived, she applied for nursing jobs, looked for apartments and was about to make an appointment for her Texas drivers license. Qua was nesting and very happy about her future.

When her phone was returned by the Dallas Sheriff’s Department three months after the incident, messages showed she was approved for her apartment at 10:00 AM on January 6, 2024, hours after she was fatally injured at 2:30 AM and deceased by 4:18 AM. This detail underscores the tragic loss of the future she was building.

Words from Quincy Kennedy about his mom (Aquazia’s grandmother):

“She told my sister that Qua was in a bad wreck around 1:30 am the same morning of 1/6/24. Our mom went from barely moving around to getting up and getting dressed. My sister asked her where was she going. Our mom said to be with Qua in Texas. Then by 3:30 am, my sister received the call from the Shanice who was with the Baylor social worker about the crash. I took her to the room. She kept saying that she was going to be with Qua. Mom died February 15, 2024.

The baby original due date was February 24, 2024. Mom was buried on 2/24/24.”

Aquazia’s boundless love and fierce loyalty illuminated the lives of her many siblings, who hold her memory close as they navigate life without her. She is eternally cherished by her brothers and sisters: Quavonta Kennedy, Demetrius K. Cosby, Kealan Carrol, Kashmin Kennedy, Jleena Kennedy, Anazaria Thomas, and Abreona Thomas.

Though tragically separated, the bond Aquazia shared with her family remains an unbreakable source of strength and guidance. The family notes that Aquazia’s enduring wish for her siblings, a testament to her hopeful spirit, is this:

“Aquazia wants them to win and never give up on wanting the best, live safe and live smart.”

Q&A with Quincy Kennedy

How has this tragedy impacted your family, and how is Sky’lynn doing today?

The impact has left a permanent debt of pain that cannot be matched by price. I know that suing the police department won’t bring my daughter back, however, not suing them won’t bring her back either. My pain of emotion has no limits.

You and your legal team have been very vocal about the investigation. What is your main concern?

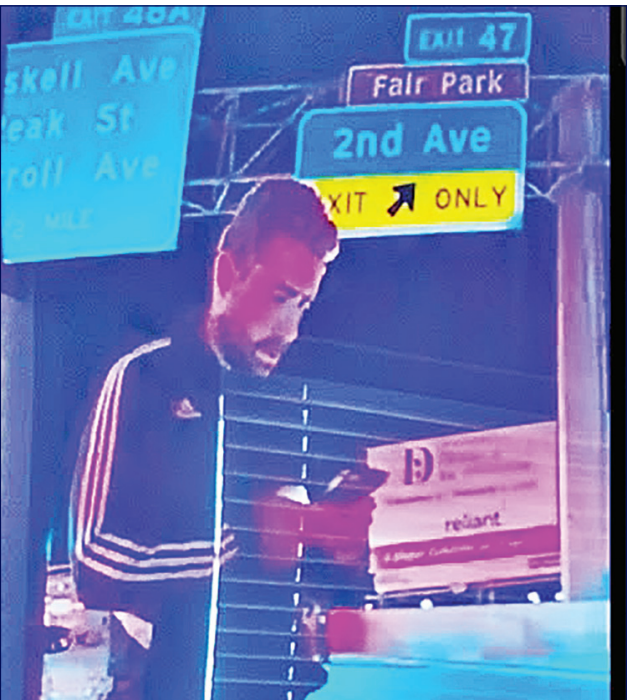
To remove the false low enhancement charge and gain the right to a real due process for the correct and true charges. To remove the case from the defendants being in charge of their own investigation against themselves, and for the case to become a federal investigation by the FBI.

You spoke of three specific demands for the authorities regarding evidence. Can you explain those?

It’s simple: for the authorities to release the correct bodycams and not the ones from officers who blocked their view by covering the lens. To prove, with paperwork, why the officer was not given a sobriety test. To explain why there were Dallas highway recordings for January 5 and January 7, but not one for January 6, the day of the crash.

What message do you have for the Dallas County Sheriff’s Office and the District Attorney’s Office, who you feel have failed to communicate with your family?

To Dallas law enforcement: The silent transparency is a dead giveaway that supports the sabotage of case evidence. To the DA: by now I have shown enough evidence that when he finally chooses to recognize the truth, I ask that



Alban Karanfili

he not be afraid to do his job and pursue criminal charges.

Aquazia was described as the “life of the day.” What is one memory you have of your daughter that you want the world to remember?

How she pulled people together for love.

What do you want the public to take away from Aquazia’s story?

That under the U.S. Constitution and the law, every life matters. No one should have to be rich or famous to be treated equally in the court of law. Whether on duty or off duty, all police officers are government officials sworn to protect life first. They are not supposed to kill us and go unpunished unless their actions truly prove to be an accident.

In a conversation with Jennifer Thomas, Aquazia’s mother, the profound impact of this loss was clear. Ms. Thomas expressed her grief simply, saying, “I miss Aquazia so much,” and shared her wish to honor her daughter’s memory.

Jane, the family’s youngest sister, offered the following reflection:

“Hi, Jane here, baby sister. I don’t really speak much about this because my big brother and big sister live it daily. I don’t even know if it’s the right time to add this, but Qua was incredibly family oriented and loved children. She was not with strangers late at night; she was with her brothers. She leaves behind her younger brother and two younger sisters. My little boy just turned nine, and he talks about her all time. The void is just so massive.”

In this time of profound difficulty, the most powerful thing we can offer is our love and support. The family is deeply grateful for your incredible generosity. If you wish to ease the immediate financial burden they are facing, a donation to Sky’lynn’s Cash App will directly assist with essential needs and expenses. You can send your heartfelt contribution using the tag [\$123Skylynn].

Every single donation is a beacon of hope and comfort, providing not just financial relief, but a reminder that they are not alone. Thank you for opening your hearts.

The Kennedy family’s pursuit of justice highlights something larger than one case. It underscores the urgent need for justice for police reform and accountability. Holding officers and agencies responsible for their actions is essential not only to ensure fairness, but also to maintain the public’s trust.

To honor Aquazia’s memory, this fight for police reform is paramount. True accountability builds trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. For families searching for answers and healing, it is not a political goal; it is the foundation of justice itself.

Aquazia’s life was defined by courage, perseverance, and love. Though her time was cut short, her purpose continues through her daughter Sky’lynn.

We leave this story with the words she lived by and the truth she wanted her daughter and the world to know:

Davida Kennedy, Aquazia’s aunt shares with us a Bible verse “You’re more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto you. Length of days is in your right hand; and in your left hand riches and honour. Your ways are ways of pleasantness, and all your paths are peace. You’re a tree of life to them that lay hold upon you: and happy is every one that retaineth you.

Proverbs 3:15

This scripture is the unbreakable promise Aquazia made. It is the legacy she left behind, ensuring that Sky’lynn will always know the love and worth her mother saw in her. The fight for Aquazia’s justice continues, and her light, captured in these words, will never fade.

CRIME

21-Year-Old Found Guilty of Rape, Stabbing, and Burglary in Humboldt Home Attack

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

After a three-day jury trial in Humboldt Law Court, 21-year-old Tobias Hodge was convicted of a series of violent crimes, including aggravated rape, attempted rape, aggravated assault, especially aggravated burglary, two counts of theft of property, false imprisonment, and interference with emergency communications. He faces a maximum sentence of up to 64 years in the Tennessee Department of Correction.

The conviction stems from a brutal home invasion that occurred in the early morning hours of March 1, 2024. Investigators said Hodge, then 20, left his residence on McDearmon Avenue in Humboldt armed with a serrated kitchen knife. He broke into a home on North Street where two women lived, entering through a kitchen window. Once inside, he stabbed a 25-year-old woman multiple times before turning on a 19-year-old woman who confronted him. He forced her into her bedroom, raped her, and attempted to rape the older victim. Hodge then coerced the 19-year-old into driving him back to his residence, where he remained until police arrested him later that day.

Both victims survived the attack but sustained serious physical and emotional trauma. The 25-year-old victim required emergency treatment for multiple stab wounds, and both testified during the trial. The prosecution presented forensic evidence ana-



TOBIAS HODGE

lyzed by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, including DNA samples and the recovered weapon, which tied Hodge directly to the crime.

District Attorney General Frederick H. Agee and Assistant District Attorney Nina Seiler prosecuted the case for the 28th Judicial District. Agee praised the jury's work and the victims' strength in coming forward, noting the case's successful resolution within 19 months of the attack.

"This was a violent case where the victims were attacked in their own home," Agee said. "We hope the victims and their families have some sense of justice. Their young lives are forever changed, and we pray they can heal physically, mentally, and emotionally. As long as I have the honor of serving as District Attorney, we will continue to focus on removing people like this defendant from our communities."

Hodge, who had no prior felony record in Gibson County, was known to the victims. Investigators described the interagency effort as textbook cooperation,

crediting the Humboldt Police Department, TBI, and local emergency personnel for the swift arrest and prosecution.

The case involved contributions from DA Investigator Jimmy Wilson, Victim-Witness Coordinator Carol Oliver, Humboldt Police Chief Kenny Rich, Officers Jonnie Yarbrough and Zachary Smith, Investigators Jonathan Wilson and Tony Williams, Registered Nurse Catherine Woodard, TBI Special Agents Elizabeth Reid and Militza Kennedy, and Jerry Privitt of the Humboldt Area Rescue Squad.

Judge Clayburn Peoples is scheduled to sentence Hodge on Monday, November 24, 2025, in Humboldt Law Court. Prosecutors said Hodge faces up to 64 years in prison depending on whether his sentences are ordered to run consecutively or concurrently. Victim impact statements and pre-sentence reports will be presented at that hearing.

District Attorney Agee said his office remains committed to supporting the victims as the case moves toward its final stage.



LUIGI MANGIONE

Attorneys Move to Dismiss Federal Charges in UnitedHealthcare CEO Assassination Case

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Attorneys for Luigi Mangione have asked a New York federal judge to dismiss several criminal charges, including the only count that could result in the death penalty, from a federal indictment connected to the December killing of UnitedHealthcare Chief Executive Officer Brian Thompson.

In court papers filed early Saturday, October 11, in Manhattan federal court, Mangione's lawyers argued that prosecutors failed to identify the required "crime of violence" necessary to pursue a death-eligible charge under the federal statute covering murders committed with a firearm. They said the alleged underlying offense, stalking, does not meet that legal definition.

According to court filings reviewed by the Associated Press and Business Insider, the defense also asked the court to suppress Mangione's statements to law enforcement officers and evidence obtained from his backpack, where investigators found a gun

and ammunition. The attorneys claimed that officers did not read Mangione his rights before questioning him and searched the bag without first obtaining a warrant. Mangione, 27, has pleaded not guilty to both federal and state charges in the December 4, 2024, shooting outside a Midtown Manhattan hotel where Thompson had arrived for UnitedHealthcare's annual investor conference. Prosecutors say the killing was deliberate and premeditated.

The shooting led to a multi-state manhunt after the suspect fled on a bicycle to Central Park and then took a taxi to a bus depot. Authorities later arrested Mangione five days later in Altoona, Pennsylvania, after receiving a tip from a McDonald's employee.

In April, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi directed federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty, calling the attack "a premeditated, cold-blooded assassination that shocked America." Defense attorneys argued that Bondi's comments were politically charged and risked prejudicing the proceed-

ings, asking the court to remove the death penalty from consideration.

Murder cases are typically tried in state court, but federal prosecutors charged Mangione under a statute allowing capital punishment for murders committed with firearms during other violent crimes. It is the only count in the federal indictment that could result in the death penalty, which New York State itself does not impose.

Investigators have said that ammunition found at the scene was marked with the words "delay," "deny," and "depose," a phrase used by critics of the insurance industry. The case has drawn national attention, sparking anger toward health insurers and prompting security concerns among corporate executives.

Mangione remains in custody without bail. His next hearing in federal court is scheduled for December 5, 2025, when Judge Margaret Garnett is expected to address the defense motions and set a potential trial date. He is also due in New York State court on December 1, 2025, for related charges.

Halls Couple Indicted on Charges of Stealing More Than \$250,000

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

A grand jury in Lauderdale County has returned indictments against a couple accused of embezzling more than a quarter-million dollars from a Halls business. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) says the theft allegedly occurred over nearly six years.

The investigation began in April at the request of 25th Judicial District Attorney General Mark Davidson. Agents were asked to examine suspicions of employee theft at Southern Lease Management Group, located in Halls. During their inquiry, investigators say they uncovered evidence that Maggie Cherry Tate, a former employee, used her authorized access to business accounts to make fraudulent payments to herself and to her husband, Justin Alexander Tate.

The alleged improper conduct spanned from April 2019 through January 2025.

This week, a Lauderdale County Grand Jury

indicted both Maggie Tate and Justin Tate on charges of "Theft over \$250,000." Each surrendered to authorities, was booked into the Lauderdale County Jail, and later released on a \$25,000 bond.

The TBI has stressed that the charges are allegations only. Both defendants remain presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Legal Stakes and Potential Penalties

Under Tennessee law, theft of property or services totaling \$250,000 or more is classified as a Class A felony. Sentencing for a Class A felony depends on the offender's criminal history and classification under the state's sentencing guidelines.

Possible sentences include:

- Range I: 15 to 25 years in prison
- Range II: 25 to 40 years
- Range III: 40 to 60 years

In addition to confinement, the court may impose a fine up to \$50,000, unless another statute prescribes

a different maximum. The precise sentence, if the couple is convicted, will depend on multiple factors, including prior record, mitigating or aggravating circumstances, and decisions made under Tennessee's sentencing framework.

Following the indictments, the case will move through the court system. The prosecution must present evidence that convinces a judge or jury beyond a reasonable doubt. The defense may challenge the sufficiency of the evidence, the legality of investigative procedures, or the credibility of witnesses.

Pretrial motions, exchange of discovery, possible plea negotiations, and ultimately—if no plea is reached—a trial are all likely phases in this case.

I will continue to monitor developments and report on court proceedings, hearings, or changes in charges or bond conditions. Let me know if you want ongoing updates or deeper coverage of related court documents.

Mooresburg Man Arrested in 2023 Arson and Insurance Fraud Case

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

A Mooresburg man has been indicted following a Tennessee Bureau of Investigation probe into a 2023 vehicle fire that authorities say was intentionally set.

At the request of 3rd Judicial District Attorney General Dan Armstrong, TBI special agent fire investigators opened the case in October 2023 after a vehicle fire occurred in the 700 block of Big Hill Road in Mooresburg. During the investigation, agents determined that 69-year-old Daniel Dewayne Manning deliberately set

the blaze.

A Hawkins County Grand Jury has indicted Manning on five charges, including arson, reckless endangerment, vandalism, insurance fraud, and false reports. He was arrested with the assistance of the Hawkins County Sheriff's Office and booked into the Hawkins County Jail on a \$30,000 bond.

Under Tennessee law, arson is typically classified as a Class C felony, carrying a sentence of three to fifteen years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000. If prosecutors pursue additional charges such as insurance fraud or reckless

endangerment, those could bring additional penalties if Manning is convicted on multiple counts.

No details have been released about the motive behind the fire, whether anyone was injured, or if there was significant property damage. The TBI has not shared whether surveillance footage or witness statements played a role in identifying Manning as a suspect.

Court records do not yet show a plea or hearing date. Manning remains presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.



1st Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

We establish no religion in this country.

We command no worship.

We mandate no belief, nor will we ever.

Church and state are and must remain separate.

Ronald Reagan

UTM NEWS

Pusser Files to be Made Public Through UT Martin

DAVID SNOW
University Relations

The case file in the investigation into the death of Pauline Mullins Pusser – the wife of the late sheriff Buford Pusser of McNairy County – were made public Friday, Oct. 10, through the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Pauline Pusser died Aug. 12, 1967, while riding with her husband. According to officials, Buford Pusser told investigators that his wife wanted to go with him on a domestic dispute call and his car was ambushed by men who shot into the car, killing his wife and injuring him.

That account was the basis of a number of “Walking Tall” movies.

District Attorney General Mark Davidson of Tennessee’s 25th Judicial District held a news conference Aug. 29 with members of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) at the UT Martin Somerville Regional Center to an-

nounce court filings that would make the Pauline Pusser case file public.

Officials added that due to new evidence, forensic testing and expert analysis, were Buford Pusser alive today, an indictment would have been presented to the McNairy County grand jury for its consideration against Buford Pusser for the murder of his wife.

Some of the new evidence came from an autopsy performed in February 2024. An autopsy was not performed immediately following Pauline Pusser’s death.

UTM Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. spoke at the media conference.

“We are honored to assume the stewardship of the historical case files regarding Pauline Mullins Pusser, a process we approach with care to ensure with transparency for the public and the perseverance of these important records for generations to come,” he said.

“At UTM, we see this

as more than a transfer of documents. It is a powerful teaching and research opportunity. ... These files provide our students with an invaluable real-case study.”

The file is currently in process as part of the UT Martin digital archive initiative. This ensures the public will ultimately have high-quality, searchable online access to the records. Because this is a careful and ongoing process, online availability will take time to develop.

Those wanting to gain access to the case file should visit www.utm.edu/selmer to schedule an appointment to view the printed case file at the UTM McNairy County Center/Selmer at 1269 Tennessee Ave. in Selmer and to request a printed reproduction copy.

Through its six regional centers – including the UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer – the University of Tennessee at Martin offers a Bachelor of Science de-



PUSSEY FILES – UT Martin Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. speaks at a joint media conference Aug. 29 with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the 25th Judicial District of Tennessee regarding the investigation case file in the death of Pauline Pusser. Shown in the background of the media conference are (l-r) TBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Mike Parson, TBI Assistant Director Josh Melton, Special Counsel Amy Weirich, District Attorney General Mark Davidson of the 25th Judicial District of Tennessee and TBI Director David Rausch.

gree in criminal justice and an online Master of Science degree in criminal justice.

The newly-acquired case file will enrich learning opportunities for students and foster interdisciplinary re-

search across fields such as communication, history, political science, sociology, and more.

For more information about degree programs, internships or outreach opportunities, email outreach@utm.edu or visit www.utm.edu/distance.

For more information about the University of Tennessee at Martin, visit www.utm.edu or call 1-800-829-UTM1 (-8861).

UT Martin Nursing Professor to Deliver Phi Kappa Phi Fall Faculty Lecture

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Dr. Kellie Ashburn, assistant professor in the University of Tennessee at Martin’s Department of Nursing, will deliver the Fall Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Lecture at 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 16, in the Lew and Mary Jo Daugherty Tennessee Room of the McCombs Center. The lecture will also be available to watch online.

Her presentation, titled “Learning by Doing: The Impact of Experiential Approaches in Higher Education,” will explore findings from her doctoral research grounded in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory. Ashburn will discuss how hands-on and practical learning methods prepare students for professional settings, particularly in health science disciplines.

“Nursing continues to grow more complex

as treatment options expand, technologies evolve, and new medical information emerges,” Ashburn said. “Classroom learning lays the groundwork, but it’s through clinical experience that students strengthen their judgment, skill, and confidence.”

The lecture will spotlight UT Martin’s nursing program and its partnerships with health-care organizations across West Tennessee that give students real-world training opportunities. Ashburn teaches in both classroom and clinical environments, advises nursing students, and contributes to curriculum design and educational research. Her work centers on developing clinical judgment in undergraduate students and improving success rates on nursing licensure exams.

She has presented at numerous regional and



Dr. Kellie Ashburn

national conferences and has received several honors for her contributions to nursing education, including the National League for Nursing

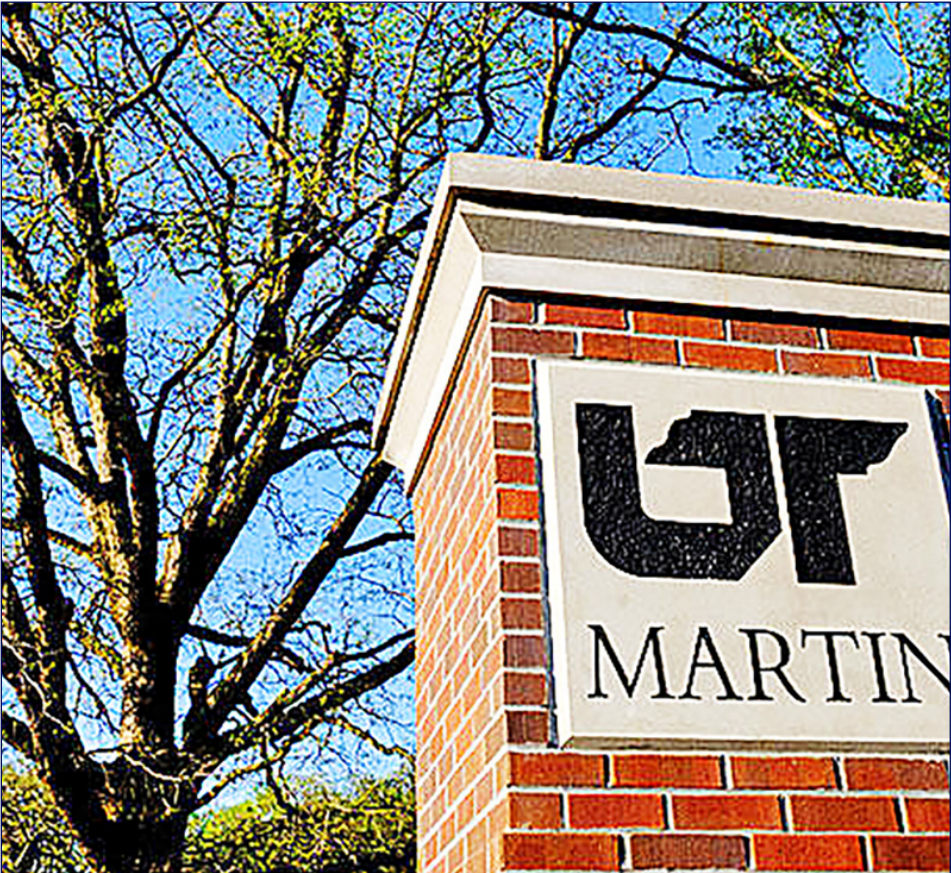
Education Scholarship Award and the Rising Star Nurse Leader Award from the Tennessee Action Coalition. In addition to her academic role, she continues to work as a registered nurse at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Union City to ensure that her teaching remains grounded in current clinical practice.

Founded in 1971, UT Martin’s Chapter 127 of Phi Kappa Phi recognizes outstanding scholarship among students, faculty, and staff. The organization now includes more than 325 chapters worldwide.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Those unable to attend in person can access the livestream through the Phi Kappa Phi Runway event page. For more information, contact Dr. Erik Nordberg, Phi Kappa Phi program chair, at 731-881-7070.



ALDEN-Dr. Kelle Alden, associate professor of English and director of the Hortense Parrish Writing Center at UT Martin, has been named the university’s first Faculty Fellow through the Center for Teaching and Learning. Her fellowship will run through the spring and fall 2026 semesters, during which she will lead faculty workshops and research innovative approaches to teaching and learning.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
MARTIN

UTM NEWS



UT Martin Celebrates 125th Anniversary with Opening Ceremony

BUD GRIMES
University Relations

The University of Tennessee at Martin will begin its 125th anniversary celebration with an opening event at 10 a.m., Friday, Oct. 10, in the Phillip W. Watkins Auditorium, located in the Ed and Carolyn Boling University Center.

The public is invited to attend and help to begin the year-long celebration of the university's founding as Hall-Moody Institute in 1900. The opening ceremony will be archived on the university's YouTube account for later viewing.

The program's opening speakers include UT System President Randy Boyd and UT Martin Chancellor Yancy Freeman. Other speakers will highlight different periods of university history and include:

- The Past: Bob Carroll, UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame football coach and a 1954 UTM graduate, and Dr. Chandra Alston, the University of Tennessee, and a 1993 UTM graduate;
 - The Present: Ashlee Mallon, a junior finance major from Dresden and student trustee to the UT Board of Trustees, and Dr. Sandy Mehlhorn, professor of agricultural engineering and UT Martin Faculty Senate president;
 - The Future: Art Sparks, chair, UT Martin Advisory Board, and a 1976 UTM graduate.
- A public reception will immediately follow the program on the Boling University Center North Patio outside Watkins Auditorium. Copies of the new 125th anniversary photo books will be on sale and available for pre-sale pickup. The pur-

chase link for the book is <http://alumni.utm.edu/125book/>.

On Oct. 2, 1900, the cornerstone was laid for the administration building, the institution's first building, and on Sept. 2, 1901, the first Hall-Moody Institute classes were held.

The institute would become the Hall-Moody Normal School in 1917 and Hall-Moody Junior College in 1922. In 1927, the state assumed ownership of the campus and the name was changed to UT Junior College before becoming the University of Tennessee Martin Branch in 1951 and, finally, the University of Tennessee at Martin in 1967.

Learn more about the 125th celebration at <http://alumni.utm.edu/celebration>.

2025 UT Martin Alumni Award Winners Announced

DAVID SNOW
University Relations

Four University of Tennessee at Martin alumni are being honored with awards during this week's 2025 Homecoming celebration at the university.

The awards will be presented at the Chancellor's Homecoming Brunch and Alumni Awards Program at 9:15 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 11, in the Paul Meek Library.

the Young Alumni Council and on the Memphis Chapter Alumni Board. He and his wife, Sara, have two daughters, Hazel and Eloise.

Bill and Amy Rhodes • University Service Award

Bill and Amy Rhodes of Memphis will receive the University Service Award.

Bill graduated from UT Martin in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting, while Amy graduated in 1991

Board, and several civic boards.

Tymikia Glenn • Outstanding Alumni Award

Tymikia Glenn of Olive Branch, Mississippi, will receive the Outstanding Alumni Award. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in health and physical education in 2001.

Glenn was inducted into the UTM Athletics Hall of Fame in 2019 for her success in track and field. She held seven



ALUMNI AWARDS – Receiving Alumni Awards at the 2025 Homecoming celebration are (l-r) Jacob Ross, Outstanding Young Alumni Award; Bill and Amy Rhodes, University Service Award; and Tymikia Glenn, Outstanding Alumni Award.

The brunch and program are by invitation only.

Jacob Ross • Outstanding Young Alumni Award

Jacob Ross of Germantown will receive the Outstanding Young Alumni Award.

Ross graduated from UT Martin with a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing in 2011 and a Master of Business Administration degree in 2013. As a student, he served as president of Pi Sigma Epsilon marketing and sales fraternity and was a four-time Faculty Scholar. He was a member of the Dean's Advisory Board and a Who's Who in Marketing honoree.

with a Bachelor of Science degree in communication.

Bill is the executive chairman of AutoZone, having joined the retailer in 1994. He held several positions before being selected as its chief executive office in 2005 at age 39, the youngest Fortune 500 CEO at the time.

During his 18-year tenure as CEO, Bill led AutoZone through significant growth and transformation, elevating it into the largest retailer of its kind in the Americas.

school records when she was inducted into the Hall of Fame, and her marks in the 400-meter hurdles and the triple jump still stand.

Glenn is the past-president of the UT Martin Alumni Council, which engages all UT Martin alumni to stay connected with the university. She is also the center director of the Georgette and Cato Johnson YMCA in the Memphis and Mid-South region.

Glenn was a national committee member of the Women's Leadership Resource Network, where she championed initiatives to elevate women leaders across the nonprofit sector. She also served on the YMCA of the USA's Association Assemblies Board and is a council member of the North American YMCA Development Organization (NAYDO) and an active NAYDO conference committee member. As a YMCA Leadership Academy mentor, she continues to guide and develop the next generation of nonprofit leaders.

Glenn is married to UTM alumnus Nicholas Glenn, and they have three sons, Terrick, Nathanael and Jonathan, who is attending UT Martin.

Professionally, Ross has built a career in logistics technology, marketing and product leadership, currently serving as a product manager at IMC Logistics focusing on building digital tools that improve the supply chain experience for drivers and operators across the country.

He has previously worked at FedEx and The AroundCampus Group.

Ross serves as the West Tennessee Metro Administrator for Team Rubicon, a veteran-led humanitarian organization that supports communities before, during and after disasters. In this role, he coordinates disaster response efforts across 21 counties, working alongside emergency managers and regional voluntary organizations active in disaster partners.

Thus far this year, his team has responded locally to tornadoes, floods and severe weather events throughout Tennessee, Kentucky and Arkansas.

An active UT Martin alumnus, Ross has served as a president of

Amy was appointed to the Tennessee Arts Commission in 2018 and has been a community volunteer and board member in Memphis since 2002.

She serves on the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy board and the University of Tennessee Alliance of Women Philanthropists board. Before that, she served on the board of the Memphis Oral School for the Deaf, Christ Methodist Day School, St. Mary's Episcopal School, the University of Memphis Advisory Board and the LeBonheur Children's Hospital Advisory Board.

Amy previously served as a speech-language pathologist from 1993 to 2001, and was past president of Subsidium Inc., the fundraising arm of the Memphis Oral School for the Deaf.

Bill was inducted into the UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame in 1993 and was selected as UT Martin's Outstanding Young Alumnus in 2007. He serves as the Finance and Administration chair of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees and is a member of the Regions Financial Corporation Board of Directors, the PGA Policy



CSBS WINNING PRESENTATION-UT Martin College of Business and Global Affairs students Aaron Bartholomew, Anna Batte, Makenzi Bouras, Blair James, and Hayden Weber earned first place in a national case study competition, presenting their winning analysis to members of the Federal Reserve, top bankers, and university representatives. Their faculty advisors were Mr. John Clark, Dr. Brittany Cole, and Dr. Nell Gullett, with Carroll Bank and Trust of Huntingdon serving as their partner institution.



UTM SPORTS



Caldwell Paces Bubba Barnett Intercollegiate Field Through 36 Holes

RYNE RICKMAN
UTM Sports Director

Senior Luke Caldwell ranks atop the 72-man leaderboard at the Bubba Barnett Intercollegiate through two rounds as the University of Tennessee at Martin golf team is off to another blazing start.

Caldwell shot a 137 (-7) today to lead Arkansas State's Thomas Schmidt by one stroke. The Cookeville, Tenn. native produced rounds of 68 this morning and 69 this afternoon, leading the tournament in par-5 scoring (4.38, -5). He also ranks fourth in the field in birdies (10), fourth in fewest bogeys (three) and seventh in par-4 scoring (3.95, -1) while accounting for a team-best 23 pars.

In the team standings, the Skyhawks are one of only two squads in the 12-team field to shoot under par through 36 holes. UT Martin's 276 (-12) in Round 1 topped the field before a 292 (+4) in Round 2 resulted in an aggregate score of 568 (-8). That score is 16 strokes clear of third-place East Texas A&M

(+8) and nine strokes behind tournament host Arkansas State (559, -17) heading into tomorrow's final round. As a team, the Skyhawks lead the event in par-3 scoring (2.98, -1), second in birdies (37), second in par-4 scoring (4.13, +13), second in fewest bogeys (28) and third in par-5 scoring (4.95, -2).

Three more UT Martin representatives join Caldwell in the top-25 of the player standings. Drew Williams (147, +3) checks in at 21st while John-Gregory Wilson and Grant Phillips carded matching 148's (+4) today to rank 24th overall.

Luke Beadles ranked second in the field through Round 1 as the sophomore posted a team-best 67 with six birdies. Caldwell's 68 included five birdies while Wilson (five birdies) and Williams (three birdies) posted countable scores of 70 and 71, respectively. As a group, the four countable Skyhawk scores delivered 16 of their 19 birdies on the front-nine.

In Round 2, Caldwell (five birdies) shared the

team lead with Phillips, who shaved 10 strokes off his first-round tally for a 69 that included three birdies and UT Martin's lone eagle on the day. Williams (76, three birdies) and Wilson (78, two birdies) each made it 2-for-2 in countable rounds on the day.

Beadles leads the entire tournament in par-3 scoring (2.63, -3) and is shooting a 150 (+6) with eight birdies through two rounds. His overall score is tied with Skyhawk sophomore Lucas Herring, who managed scores of 76-74 with three birdies in each round as an individual. UT Martin freshman Bryce Harmon (158, +14) is also competing as an individual, jotting down two birdies on his scorecard in both rounds on the way to a 77 in Round 1 and 81 in Round 2.

The Skyhawk scoring lineup will tee off Holes No. 1-4 at 8:30 a.m. tomorrow, playing alongside Arkansas State and East Texas A&M. Herring and Harmon will each start their Round 3 journey on Hole No. 17 of the RidgePointe Country Club.



Skyhawk Cowboys Earn Season-High Point Tally At Southern Arkansas

RYNE RICKMAN
UTM Sports Information Director

The University of Tennessee at Martin men's rodeo team posted its best performance of the young 2025-26 season over the weekend, dialing up 330 points on the way to a fourth-place finish while the Skyhawk women's squad placed sixth with 70 points at Southern Arkansas.

The 330 points for the UT Martin cowboys were 190 points more than its previous-high this season. Missouri Valley College (670 points) won on the men's side while West Alabama (265 points) finished atop the women's standings.

Clint Southworth had

a great weekend in calf roping as the graduate from Bagdad, Ky. won in average (22.4) after placing second in both the opening round (11.3) and the short go (11.1). Owen Larrick also managed points in all three phases of that event with times of 11.6 in the second round (third), 24.0 in average (fourth) and 12.4 in the first go (sixth).

In steer wrestling, Bentley Anthony's opening-round time of 6.0 seconds flat was good enough for a third-place finish as well as a fifth-place effort in average.

Cooper Stone competed alongside East Mississippi's Ryder Griffith in team roping as that duo placed fourth in the opening round with a

time of 7.6 seconds.

A trio of Skyhawk cowgirls secured points in barrel racing, paced by Savannah Moran. The senior out of Ripley, Ohio finished third in the short go (16.05) and fourth in average (32.43). Ryanne Frecker's performance of 15.99 seconds in the opening round was the second-best time in the field while Gracie Restuccio placed fifth in both the short go (16.2) and in average (32.5).

UT Martin heads back to the Natural State next week as both the men's and women's squads will compete in the rodeo hosted by Arkansas-Monticello on Thursday, Oct. 16 through Saturday, Oct. 18.

Skyhawks Edged By Little Rock Thursday

PARKER GRIFFITH
UTM Associate Sports Information Director

The University of Tennessee at Martin soccer team fell to Little Rock, 1-0, Thursday night at the Skyhawk Soccer

center of the goal, for what would go on to be the game-winning goal. The Skyhawks played most of the game with an 11-10 advantage after Jetney Cook was ejected for denying a goal-scoring chance. However,

20-11 and placed more shots on target at 10-4. Ava Huntrods, Unni Wolf and Peyton Cook led UT Martin in shots Thursday with four each, while Wolf, Cook and Parker Gelinias each had a team-high two shots on



Field in Martin.

Little Rock scored the lone goal of the game in the 20th minute when Maggie Turner slipped a shot through the bottom

despite the advantage, the Skyhawks could not capitalize on it and fell 1-0.

The Skyhawks outshot the Trojans in the match,

goal.

The Skyhawks return to action Sunday when they travel to Cookeville to take on Tennessee Tech at 1 p.m.



Fourth Quarter Heroics Lead Skyhawk Football To 32-31 Homecoming Victory Over Western Illinois

RYNE RICKMAN
UTM Sports Information Director

Clutch plays down the stretch lifted the University of Tennessee at Martin football squad as the Skyhawks outscored Western Illinois by a 12-0 margin in the fourth quarter on the way to a 32-31 triumph on Homecoming weekend.

Both teams held double-digit leads today as UT Martin went ahead 17-7 midway through the second quarter but it was the Leathernecks who held a 31-20 advantage through 45 minutes of play.

Jase Bauer scored a pair of rushing touchdowns in the fourth quarter – the last of which came with 1:57 remaining for the Skyhawks' go-ahead score. Western Illinois was able to move the ball downfield for a potential game-winning field goal attempt with 44 seconds left. However, Lebron Edmond rose above the line to block the Leathernecks' 48-yard kick and seal the win, improving UT Martin to 2-1 in OVC-Big South play.

The Skyhawk offense rolled to 445 yards (245 passing, 200 rushing) and won the time of possession battle by a 36:33 to 23:37 margin. Bauer briefly left the game with an injury in the fourth quarter but returned to ignite UT Martin, fin-

ishing with 235 passing yards on a 19-of-28 completion rate and three total touchdowns. On the Skyhawks' final scoring drive, he hit Hyatt Timosciek (34 yards) and Phaizon Wilson (29 yards) for big gains before finishing off the drive with his fifth rushing touchdown in the last three weeks.

John Gentry doubled his previous season-high rushing tally with 104 yards on 15 carries while Tommy Ansley (rushing) and Bryce Bailey (receiving) additionally found the endzone today. Timosciek and Wilson each finished with team-highs of four receptions apiece for UT Martin (2-5).

The Skyhawk defense held Western Illinois to 20 rushing yards in the second half and only 59 total yards in the fourth quarter. Zamarion Farmer-McCray accounted for a game-high 10 tackles (eight solo), including 1.5 tackles for loss and a sack. Keyshawn Johnson also had a sack while the trio of Jabaree Dawkins, Toby Camp and Josh Hastings were each in on tackles for loss.

Cade Hechter split the uprights on field goal attempts from 28 and 41 yards out today while Jaren Van Winkle averaged 42.8 yards over four punts with a long of 55. Dazalin Worsham registered 81 yards on three kickoff returns to

cap off a successful afternoon for the UT Martin special teams unit.

The Leathernecks (1-6, 0-3 OVC-Big South) were led by reining OVC-Big South Freshman of the Week Cason Carswell, who completed 21 of his 30 pass attempts for 327 yards and two touchdowns. Demari Davis (four catches, 109 yards) and Alex Williams were on the receiving end of Carswell's touchdowns while Markell Holman scored twice on the ground. Christian Pierce and Justin Richardson each had nine tackles to guide the Western Illinois defense.

"Conference wins are hard to come by and Homecoming wins are to be valued," Skyhawk head coach Jason Simpson said. "The Homecoming crowd brought good energy and vibes all day and it was good to see a lot of our former players back on campus. I give Western Illinois credit – they played their tails off. I appreciate our kids for sticking together and finding a way – there's something to be said about knowing how to win and having that confidence."

UT Martin heads to Gardner-Webb in Week 8, traveling to Boiling Springs, NC for a conference showdown on Saturday, Oct. 18 at 12:30 p.m. CT.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
MARTIN

UTM SPORTS



UT Martin's Luke Caldwell Earns Ohio Valley Conference Golfer Of The Week Award

RYNE RICKMAN
UTM Sports Director

Two days after tying the best tournament finish of his University of Tennessee at Martin career, Luke Caldwell has been named the Ohio Valley Conference Golfer of the Week.

Competing at the Bubba Barnett Intercollegiate in Jonesboro, Ark., Caldwell picked up his second top-10 and third top-15 finish in as many tournaments to start his senior season. He placed fourth out of 72 competitors with an overall score of 208

(-8), accounting for red scores in all three rounds (68 in Round 1, 69 in Round 2, 71 in Round 3). The fourth-place performance equaled his previous best collegiate finish as he also came in fourth at the TSU Big Blue Intercollegiate on April 7-8, 2025.

Caldwell ranked third in the field in birdies (15), third in par-3 scoring (2.83, -2), fourth in par-4 scoring (3.97, -1) and sixth in par-5 scoring (4.58, -5). His efforts helped the Skyhawks to their third consecutive top-four team finish (second runner-up per-

formance) to begin the season.

A southpaw out of Cookeville, Tenn., Caldwell becomes the 21st player in program history to win the OVC weekly honor. He currently leads the league with a 69.2 stroke average, posting under-par scores in eight of his nine rounds so far during the 2025-26 campaign.

UT Martin continues its fall slate next week when it travels to The Scrappy at Cobblestone, hosted by Kennesaw State on Oct. 13-14 in Acworth, Ga.

Late Tennessee Tech Goal Forces Draw With Skyhawks

PARKER GRIFFITH
Associate Sports Director

The University of Tennessee at Martin soccer battled Tennessee Tech to a 1-1 draw Saturday afternoon at Tech Soccer Field in Cookeville.

Shayla Addington put the Skyhawks on the

ball into the upper right corner of the goal for the 1-0 lead.

Just when it looked like the Skyhawks were about to escape with the win and three points, Katie Toney scored for the Golden Eagles in the 89th minute to save the tie for Tennessee Tech.

Despite being outshot

their 18 shots on goal.

Alexandra Weihs led UT Martin in shots in the game with three total and three on frame. Despite allowing the goal, Mac Titus spent all 90 minutes between the posts and racked up seven saves on the day.

The Skyhawks return to action Thursday when



board in the 50th minute when she took a feed from Ayja McCleary from the top left corner of the 18-yard box and buried the

by the Golden Eagles, 18-8, the Skyhawks placed all of their eight shots on frame, while Tennessee Tech placed just eight of

they travel to Morehead State to take on the Eagles at 12 p.m. CT.



UT Martin Volleyball Outlasts Western Illinois For First OVC Triumph

RYNE RICKMAN
UTM Sports Director

A riveting fifth set provided a fitting end to the University of Tennessee at Martin's volleyball match today as the Skyhawks defeated Western Illinois for their first Ohio Valley Conference victory of the season (22-25, 25-23, 25-19, 18-25, 15-13).

UT Martin trailed by a 12-8 margin in the deciding fifth stanza but rallied to score seven of the final eight points. Five different Skyhawks scored the final five UT Martin points as Kristin Phillips (kill), Ava Peters (kill), Dylan Sulcer (service ace), Kylie Surratt (kill) and Kayla Bryant (kill) helped the Skyhawks complete the impressive comeback.

Bryant stayed hot with her third consecutive double-double, amassing season-highs of 17 kills and 21 digs to go along with three service aces. Ava Peters handed out 41 assists while setting career-highs in both digs (17) and blocks (five) while Kristin Phillips tallied 10 kills, a career-best three service aces and a season-high four blocks.

The UT Martin trio of Abby Freund (match-best 27 digs), Dylan Sulcer (career-high 18 digs) and Carly Mueller (team-best five blocks) helped tame the Leatherneck offense.

The first set alone featured 13 tie scores and

five lead changes. Neither side took more than a one-point lead until the Skyhawks claimed a 9-7 advantage. The scoring margin remained razor-thin before Western Illinois scored three straight points to go on top by an 18-15 margin. A Makaelah Paulino service ace pulled UT Martin back within one point late but the Leathernecks were able to take the early 1-0 lead in the match. Bryant had four kills and a service ace to top the Skyhawks in the opening set.

Phillips started the second stanza with back-to-back kills to get UT Martin back on track. After a Phillips service ace, Western Illinois scored four consecutive points and eventually took a 16-12 lead. The Skyhawks found themselves trailing by a 22-19 margin but scrapped back for six of the last seven points of the set, capped off with a Bryant service ace that knotted the match at 1-1. Freund managed a whopping 10 digs in the second set alone as UT Martin held the Leathernecks to an .035 hitting percentage.

The Skyhawks held a block party midway through the third stanza, at one point rejecting three blocks in the span of four points during a 6-0 surge. Mueller had a hand in all three blocks with two assisted swats and one solo block. Three Sienna Wnetrzak

kills in the span of six points helped UT Martin extend its advantage out to nine points (21-12) as the Skyhawks advanced one step closer to victory. Bryant (team-highs of four kills, five digs) and Peters (eight assists, three blocks) led the way for UT Martin in the middle set.

Western Illinois began the fourth set on a 7-2 run and eventually led by a 14-8 margin before the Skyhawks mounted a comeback. UT Martin used a 7-3 surge to get back within striking distance as two straight Bryant kills made the score 18-16. However, the Leathernecks were responsible for seven of the next nine points to force a winner-take-all fifth set. Freund nabbed eight digs for the Skyhawks in the fourth stanza.

In the fifth set, UT Martin was incredibly composed in a pressure-packed environment – committing just one attack error in the entire stanza (.233 hitting percentage). Sulcer's service ace gave the Skyhawks their first lead in the set at 13-12 as she also scooped up a team-best five digs in the shortened stanza.

UT Martin resumes its homestand next week when it hosts OVC rival SIUE on Friday, Oct. 17 (5 p.m.) and Saturday, Oct. 18 (11 a.m.).



Bauer and Hechter Garner OVC-Big South Player of the Week Honors

ALEX BOGGIS
UTM Associate Sports Director

Following the team's comeback victory over Western Illinois last week, the University of Tennessee at Martin tandem of quarterback Jase Bauer (Offensive) and place kicker Cade Hechter (Special Teams) garnered OVC-Big South Football Association Player of the Week honors.

For the second time in three weeks, Bauer earned OVC-Big South Offensive Player of the Week honors after a standout performance against Western Illinois. The Ankeny, Iowa native

racked up 259 yards of total offense while finding the endzone three times – including a pair in the fourth quarter. The senior completed 19-of-28 passes for 235 yards and a touchdown and rushed for 24 yards and two additional scores. He connected on a 10-yard passing touchdown in the second quarter before tallying a pair of two-yard rushing scores in the fourth, as UTM overcame an 11-point deficit. On the final drive Bauer completed a 34-yard pass and followed that with a 29-yard strike to set up his team on the two-yard line. He currently ranks sixth nationally in completion

percentage (70.1%).

Hechter made a pair of field goals and a pair of extra points as UT Martin topped Western Illinois 32-31 on Homecoming. The Sydney, Australia native connected from 28-yards out with 7:43 to play in the first half and added a season-long 41-yarder just before the break to pull the Skyhawks within one point at halftime. Hechter ranks ninth nationally in field goal percentage (87.5%).

The Skyhawks return to action this weekend with a road trip to Gardner-Webb on Saturday, Oct. 18.



NATIONAL NEWS

Trump Leaves Open Possibility of Pardoning Ghislaine Maxwell, Raising Questions About Justice and Power

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

On October 6, 2025, in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s refusal to hear her appeal, former President Donald Trump was asked whether he would pardon Ghislaine Maxwell. He declined to make a definitive commitment but said he would “take a look” and consult with the Department of Justice. That response has renewed scrutiny over Epstein’s network, prosecutorial discretion, and the power of the pardon in cases involving sexual abuse and trafficking.

Maxwell is serving a 20-year federal sentence for her role in facilitating the abuse of underage girls by Jeffrey Epstein. Her conviction was upheld by the appeals court, and the Supreme Court’s recent decision leaves clemency as one of her few remaining legal avenues.

Ghislaine Maxwell, born December 25, 1961, is a British socialite who later became a U.S. citizen. She was closely associated with Jeffrey Epstein, reputed to have been his confidante, recruiter, and intimate associate. Epstein, a financier with vast global connections, was arrested in 2019 on sex trafficking charges and died by suicide in a Manhattan jail cell later that year.

In July 2020, Maxwell was indicted for charges including sex trafficking



of a minor, transporting minors with intent to engage in illicit sexual activity, conspiracy, and perjury. The indictment alleged that between 1994 and 1997 she participated in Epstein’s abuse network, grooming underage girls and guiding them into sexual encounters. She was arrested in New Hampshire and denied bail.

In December 2021, a federal jury convicted her on five counts. In June 2022, she was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Prosecutors stressed that while Epstein was the central figure, Maxwell earned conviction for her direct participation in the criminal scheme.

Maxwell’s appeals have argued that a 2007 non-prosecution agreement made with Epstein should shield her

from charges. However, courts have rejected these arguments. In 2024, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld her conviction, rejecting, among other claims, her challenges to jury procedures, statute of limitations arguments, and whether the Epstein agreement applied to her. Most recently, the Supreme Court declined to hear a petition by Maxwell’s legal team to revisit the case.

Trump’s remarks make clear that he is not ruling out a pardon, though he emphasizes that he has not yet fully considered the matter. He told reporters that many people ask for pardons and noted that rapper Sean “Diddy” Combs had made a request. He also said the name Maxwell had not come to his mind in a long time and that he

would have to review the case more closely.

His response opened political backlash. Virginia Giuffre, one of Epstein’s most prominent accusers, and her family strongly condemned the notion of a pardon, calling it a betrayal of survivors. Critics from both parties warned that pardoning someone convicted of aiding in child sex trafficking would undermine trust in the justice system. Some of Trump’s own supporters also expressed discomfort with the idea.

Far-right influencer Laura Loomer admonished Trump publicly via social platforms, admonishing him not to issue a pardon, saying the decision would have lasting consequences.

The fact that Maxwell was transferred to a less restrictive prison facility

and interviewed over two days by Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche in July has added pressure. Reports indicate Maxwell answered extensive questions about influential individuals connected to Epstein, possibly covering as many as 100 persons. Her attorneys said she cooperated fully. While no explicit promises of clemency were made in those interviews, the very fact she was interviewed by high-level DOJ figures has fueled speculation that her case remains under special review.

A presidential pardon is a constitutional power. But pardoning Maxwell would carry enormous moral and legal weight. It would raise questions about accountability, possibly undermine the convictions of victims who testified, and risk

appearing as favoritism toward a person implicated in one of the highest-profile sex trafficking cases in recent memory.

Maxwell’s conviction and sentence were grounded in extensive testimony from survivors, documentation of grooming and travel of minors, and corroborating evidence from Epstein’s own records. A pardon would not erase those facts—but it would rewrite the legal consequences.

If Trump were to grant clemency, it would not require congressional approval, but it would be irreversible. Critics say that it would send a chilling message about equality before the law, especially in a case so fraught with abuse, power, and silence.

Maxwell’s legal team may explore additional motions, but with the Supreme Court’s denial, a successful legal reversal seems unlikely. Her remaining path rests on clemency.

Trump’s next move may hinge on political calculations, the reactions of survivors, and the pressure from both allies and critics. If he does choose to act, the decision will be historic—and deeply controversial.

As the public watches, one question looms: should mercy, politics, or justice decide the fate of someone convicted in one of the most disturbing criminal enterprises of our time?

Federal Power, Clashes, and the Fragile Line Between Order and Control

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

We are living through a remarkable moment. The National Guard is active in Memphis, soldiers are stationed in Chicago, a judge’s home has been burned in South Carolina, and arguments over presidential power are pushing the boundaries of democracy. These are not isolated events. Together, they reveal a nation reckoning with the reach of government force and the strength of its constitutional checks.

In Memphis, National Guard troops are already on the ground. Officials describe the mission as support for law enforcement in “high-risk” areas. Governor Bill Lee authorized the deployment after reviewing new legal advice from the attorney general’s office. Residents say military vehicles are visible downtown and near key intersections, a sight that has left many uneasy.

In Chicago, about 500 Guard troops, 200 from Texas and 300 from Illinois, remain near federal buildings, including the Broadview ICE facility. Protests there have become increasingly tense. Videos show ICE agents using tear gas and pepper balls, some of which hit Chicago police standing nearby. The violence prompted outrage, and President Trump’s threat to jail Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson for criticizing the mission drew bipar-



CHICAGO PROTESTS — About 500 National Guard troops remain near federal buildings as tensions rise outside the Broadview ICE facility, where ICE agents reportedly used tear gas and pepper balls that struck nearby Chicago police. The clashes and President Trump’s threat to jail Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker and Mayor Brandon Johnson have sparked bipartisan outrage.

tisan condemnation.

Portland has seen similar unrest. A federal judge blocked a proposed Guard deployment after ruling that the administration’s legal justification was insufficient under constitutional standards. The White House appealed but has not yet prevailed. California faced a related conflict when Governor Gavin Newsom protested federalized troops being sent into Los Angeles for immigration enforcement. A federal court later ruled that the President had overstepped his authority and violated the Posse Comitatus Act, which limits military involvement in civilian policing.

Behind all of this stands a legal idea that most Americans had never heard of until now: plenary power. The term

resurfaced after senior adviser Stephen Miller used it during an interview defending the President’s actions. In plain terms, plenary power means full and absolute authority in a given area. Traditionally, it applies to foreign policy or immigration, not domestic law enforcement. Legal scholars warn that applying it to internal military action could effectively remove checks on executive power.

Constitutional law professor Michael Gerhardt of the University of North Carolina notes that plenary power is never limitless. The Constitution’s separation of powers was designed to make sure no one branch can operate without accountability. Former U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin added that using it to justify military

force inside the United States would be a distortion of its purpose and a direct threat to civil government.

The use of troops on American soil is not new, but it is always controversial. In 1957, President Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce desegregation after the governor refused to comply with federal law. In 1970, National Guardsmen opened fire on student protesters at Kent State University, killing four. In 2020, under President Trump, federal agents in military gear clashed with demonstrators in Portland during protests against police violence. Each of those moments tested the balance between order and freedom and left scars on the nation.

That same balance

is being tested again. The military’s oath is to the Constitution, not to any one person. Service members pledge to defend the nation from enemies foreign and domestic, but that duty includes protecting citizens’ rights, not suppressing them. When soldiers are used to silence dissent, the line between democracy and authoritarianism begins to fade.

In South Carolina, that line blurred further. Judge Diane Goodstein’s home was set ablaze shortly after she ruled against the federal government in a voting data case. Her family escaped with injuries, and investigators are still determining whether the fire was politically motivated. She had received weeks of threats leading up to the attack. The incident

has drawn condemnation from across the judiciary and sparked new discussions about how to protect judges from political violence.

Recent updates show that courts are beginning to push back against federal deployments. Judges in Oregon and Illinois have scheduled new hearings to determine whether the current use of the Guard violates constitutional boundaries. In Memphis, civil rights groups are calling for transparency over the scope and duration of the mission, and legal experts say future rulings could redefine how much power a president can claim during domestic unrest.

The United States has faced moments like this before, but the convergence of military presence, judicial threats, and open defiance of legal norms feels uniquely dangerous. What happens next will depend on whether courts hold the line. If judges continue to assert their authority, the system may hold. If they falter, the boundaries between civilian life and military rule could erode completely.

We are not yet living under martial law. But the safeguards that prevent it, an independent judiciary, a restrained executive branch, and a military loyal to the Constitution, are being tested every day. Whether those safeguards survive may determine what kind of country we become.

NATIONAL NEWS

Texas Deputies Used Nationwide Surveillance to Track Woman Who Legally Got an Abortion in Illinois

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

A Texas woman left an abusive relationship, drove across state lines, and obtained abortion care in Illinois, where the procedure is legal. She committed no crime. Yet she became the target of a multi-state police search launched at the request of her ex-boyfriend, whom she had accused of domestic violence. Texas law enforcement officers used a nationwide license-plate tracking network to locate her after she received medical care, a pursuit that has sparked outrage among privacy advocates and state officials.

In May 2025, deputies from Johnson County, Texas, used Flock Safety’s national automated license-plate reader system to search for the woman’s vehicle. The search covered more than 83,000 cameras across the United States. Flock’s technology automatically logs license plates, timestamps, and GPS coordinates, creating a digital trail of nearly every vehicle that passes one of its cameras. The woman had committed no offense, yet the deputies treated her movements as a matter for investigation.

Illinois officials discovered that local police departments had shared data from this system with the Texas agency. The Illinois Secretary of State, Alexi Giannoulias, opened an investigation in June after confirming that the Mount Prospect Police Department near Chicago had coop-

erated with the Texas request. Under Illinois law, it is illegal for law enforcement to share or use license-plate reader data to pursue abortion or immigration cases. Giannoulias ordered a statewide audit and later revealed that Mount Prospect had also shared hundreds of records for unrelated immigration inquiries.

The Illinois probe has already led to sweeping reforms. All police agencies in the state must now certify in writing that their license-plate data will not be used for abortion or immigration investigations. The state also cut off Customs and Border Protection’s access to its database. Flock Safety, facing national scrutiny, suspended multiple law enforcement users, restricted federal access, and announced that it had added filters to prevent abortion and immigration-related searches. Critics argue that those protections rely too heavily on self-reporting and voluntary compliance.

Documents published by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and 404 Media reveal that Johnson County deputies described their search as a welfare check while internally calling it an abortion investigation. The operation originated when the woman’s ex-boyfriend contacted the sheriff’s office claiming concern for her safety. According to investigators, the relationship had been violent, and the woman had fled the state to escape further abuse. Privacy experts say the

case illustrates how police technology can be used to continue coercion after a victim leaves an abusive partner.

Illinois lawmakers moved quickly to strengthen protections. In August 2025, Governor JB Pritzker signed new legislation expanding the state’s reproductive privacy laws. The update introduced stronger penalties for agencies that share restricted data and new audits of any system connected to the Flock network. “This woman broke no law,” Giannoulias said in a public statement. “She exercised her right to travel for legal medical care, and no out-of-state authority can criminalize that.”

The controversy reaches far beyond Illinois. Since returning to office, President Trump’s administration has reshaped federal policy on reproductive rights and privacy. The Justice Department deprioritized enforcement of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, which once served as a safeguard for clinics and patients. Trump pardoned several people convicted of obstructing abortion facilities and praised activists who opposed the law. His allies have also pushed to revive the Comstock Act of 1873, a statute that bans mailing materials deemed “obscene,” including abortion medication. Anti-abortion groups now argue that the Justice Department could use Comstock to halt distribution of abortion pills nationwide, even in states where abortion is

legal.

The administration has also weakened federal privacy protections for medical information. After the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022, the Department of Health and Human Services created a new rule under HIPAA to block law enforcement from accessing reproductive health records for abortion investigations. The rule required anyone requesting medical information to provide a signed statement confirming that the request was unrelated to abortion enforcement. It also prohibited releasing records connected to care that was lawful where it occurred. In June 2025, a federal judge in Texas struck down most of the rule, calling it unlawful. The ruling erased the government’s main attempt to rebuild privacy protections after Roe and left patients vulnerable to subpoenas and data demands from states that criminalize abortion.

To understand why this matters, it helps to look at how Roe and HIPAA intersect. Roe v. Wade recognized a constitutional right to privacy in personal medical decisions. HIPAA governs how medical data is stored and shared. When Roe was overturned by the Dobbs decision, the constitutional protection vanished. HIPAA became the last major federal safeguard for patient privacy, but it was never designed to handle politically driven investigations into medical care. The 2024 rule was meant to close that gap.

Its repeal has left state-level shield laws as the only remaining barrier.

The Illinois case shows what happens in the absence of those protections. With modern surveillance systems, police can track people across the country in seconds. A single query through a database like Flock’s can reconstruct a person’s route, identify where they stayed, and estimate how long they were gone. For survivors of domestic violence or those seeking medical care in another state, that capability can be life-threatening.

Advocates for abuse survivors describe the Texas woman’s case as a clear example of “policing by proxy,” a term used when abusers enlist law enforcement or court systems to continue control after a breakup. The sheriff’s office may have treated the case as a missing-person call, but its actions gave an abusive ex-partner a powerful new way to monitor and intimidate his victim under color of law.

This is not the only case of personal relationships colliding with abortion enforcement. In 2023, a Texas man sued his ex-wife’s friends for allegedly helping her obtain abortion pills after reading their text messages. The lawsuit, based entirely on private conversations, was dropped in October 2024. It highlighted how personal data, messages, and location records can be turned into evidence in abortion-related legal disputes.

The combination of Roe’s reversal, the weakening of HIPAA, and the

growth of surveillance technology has created a new frontier in reproductive control. Without federal privacy rules, patient data, travel records, and even phone location histories can be used to identify or pursue people who seek abortion care. More than twenty states, including Illinois, have passed “shield laws” to block cooperation with out-of-state abortion investigations. Texas has moved in the opposite direction, experimenting with local “travel ban” ordinances designed to punish anyone who helps residents leave the state for abortion care. Several counties have rejected those ordinances, but others have adopted them, creating a patchwork of laws that often conflict with one another.

The woman at the center of this story did nothing wrong. She sought medical care in a state where her choice was legal. Yet she became the subject of a national surveillance effort triggered by an abusive partner and enabled by the technology of modern policing. Illinois continues to investigate how that happened, and civil rights groups are calling for nationwide limits on law enforcement data sharing. As the legal battles over HIPAA, Comstock, and state shield laws continue, the question now extends far beyond abortion itself. It is whether women can ever again make private medical decisions without being watched, tracked, or punished.

María Corina Machado Wins Nobel Peace Prize, Amid White House Rebuke

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

In a landmark decision, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2025 has been awarded to Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado. The Norwegian Nobel Committee praised her “tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy.”

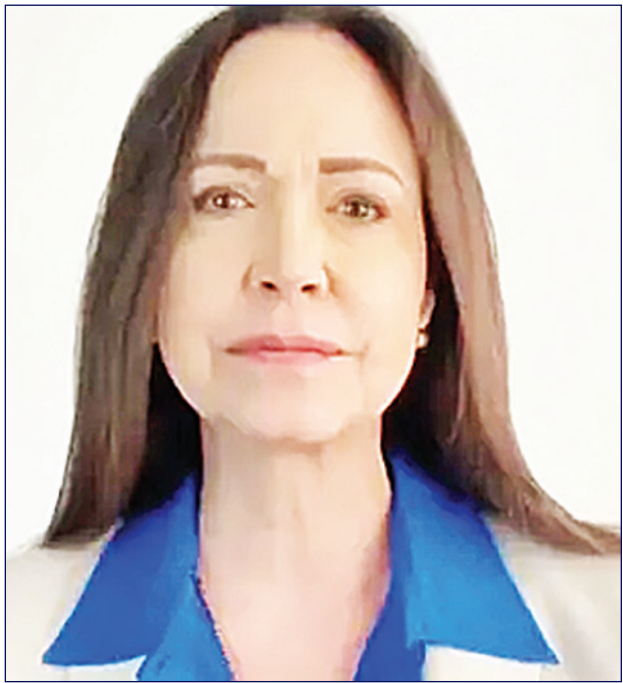
Machado is widely recognized as Venezuela’s most prominent democratic dissident. She was barred from running in the 2024 presidential election and has remained in hiding as the Maduro regime intensifies pressure on opposition figures. Despite ongoing threats, she has mobilized grassroots networks, exposed human rights abuses, and rallied support for free elections. The Nobel Committee described

her as a symbol of civic courage in the face of authoritarian rule.

Reaction in Venezuela and Beyond

In Caracas and other opposition strongholds, supporters greeted the news with celebration and relief. Many called the award international validation of Venezuela’s democratic struggle and a morale boost to those risking their safety for political reform. Machado expressed surprise and gratitude, saying she was “in shock.” She later stated that the award belongs to all Venezuelans and dedicated her Nobel to the citizens suffering under repression.

International observers say the decision underscores the global relevance of Venezuela’s ongoing crisis. Some analysts believe the recognition will increase diplomatic pressure on President Nicolás Maduro, while others caution it could harden his stance and lead to new



María Corina Machado

crackdowns on dissent.

White House Response
The White House sharply criticized the Nobel Committee’s decision, claiming the panel favored politics over peace. In an official statement, Communications Director Steven Cheung said, “The Nobel

Committee proved they place politics over peace. President Trump will continue making peace deals, ending wars, and saving lives. He has the heart of a humanitarian, and there will never be anyone like him who can move mountains with the sheer force of

his will.” Read the full White House statement here: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2025/10/10/statement-on-the-nobel-peace-prize-2025/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The administration had reportedly hoped former President Donald Trump would receive the prize for his diplomatic initiatives, including efforts toward a Gaza ceasefire. The statement’s tone suggested disappointment and frustration after a weeks-long campaign by allies promoting Trump’s nomination. Critics described the reaction as an attempt to reframe the loss and reinforce the administration’s foreign-policy image.

Why This Prize Matters

This year’s Nobel Peace Prize expands the definition of peacebuilding. By honoring Machado, the Nobel Committee high-

lighted the importance of protecting democratic institutions and human rights as part of global peace efforts. The award signals that nonviolent resistance against domestic oppression can be as vital as traditional diplomacy in advancing peace.

For Venezuela, the impact could be significant. The honor boosts Machado’s international profile, increases visibility for pro-democracy movements, and may strengthen calls for transparent elections. However, it also risks triggering new retaliation by Maduro’s government, which has repeatedly portrayed such recognition as foreign interference.

The 2025 Nobel Peace Prize marks a defining moment in Venezuela’s modern history—a message that democracy and courage, even under siege, remain powerful instruments of peace.



We establish no religion in this country.
We command no worship.
We mandate no belief, nor will we ever.
Church and state are and must remain separate.
Ronald Reagan





Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.
-Thomas Jefferson



WEAKLEY SCHOOL NEWS

26TH ANNUAL FARM DAY CONNECTS WEAKLEY COUNTY STUDENTS TO AGRICULTURE

WEAKLEY COUNTY SCHOOLS

For generations of Weakley County students, Farm Day has been more than just a field trip. It's a chance to trade their desks for hay bales and connect with the land, animals, and farmers who feed and sustain our communities. Now in its 26th year, the event continues to bring the county's agricultural roots to life for over 300 Weakley County students through a day full of hands-on educational experiences.

Throughout the day, students rotated through a wide variety of stations, guided by local farmers, agricultural experts, and FFA students. Each stop offered a glimpse into a different part of farm life — from caring for animals and tending crops, to seeing how the work done on a farm connects to the things they use every day. By experiencing these lessons firsthand, they gained a better understanding of the hard work, dedication, and care that goes into farming, and how it touches almost every part of their lives, often in ways they hadn't thought about before.

Hosted annually on the farm of Jack and Cathy Ogg, a Century Farm family whose generosity has helped the event thrive, Farm Day brings agriculture to life in the most authentic way possible: on a real, working family farm.

"There's just something special about students getting to walk across a true farm and see firsthand what agriculture looks like day to day," shared Jesi Vallee, who coordinates the annual event through the Weakley County Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R). "I love that they can look around and realize this is what farming actually is, not just what they see in books or on screens."

Vallee notes that while the event doesn't look the same as it did when it first began in the year 2000, the goal remains the same: educating students about agriculture.

"For some of these students, this is their first real introduction to agriculture," Vallee explained. "We want them to understand where their food, clothing, and even things like soap and lotion come from — and to see the people behind those products."



26th Annual Farm Day

Pulling off a full-day, hands-on event for hundreds of children is no small task. Each year, Farm Day relies on the generosity and teamwork of more than 50 volunteers and sponsors throughout the state donating time, money, and

resources to accomplish the goal of connecting students to the people, land, and hard work behind the food they eat and the products they use.

"It takes so many people to make this day happen, and every year

I'm blown away by how much our community shows up for our students," Vallee said. "We could not do this without them."

Betsi Foster, Assistant Director of Schools, noted how events like Farm Day let students

experience education in a new and exciting way, making for unforgettable experiences.

"In public education, not every lesson happens behind a desk," shared Foster. "Farm Day gives students the chance to experience what they're learning — to see, touch, and ask questions in a way that brings it all to life. We're proud to provide hands-on learning that connects what they see in the classroom to the world around them."

While agriculture continues to be the backbone of the Weakley County economy, the connection between children and the farm has changed dramatically over the years.

"Most Americans today are two to four generations removed from the farm," Vallee noted. "Less than 2% of our population are farmers or ranchers. Events like Farm Day help close that gap."

By the end of the day, as buses rolled past the same fields that inspired the lessons, students carried with them more than just facts: they carried a deeper understanding of the people, passion, and purpose behind every acre that makes Weakley County home.

Gleason Students Step into Leadership Through 4-H Program

SHANNON TAYLOR CEO/Publisher

Gleason School's fourth and fifth graders are diving into the world of 4-H with enthusiasm this fall, thanks to a partnership coordinated by Elementary Guidance Counselor and Work-Based Learning Director, Mrs. Alivia McDowell. The collaboration with local 4-H leaders gives students the opportunity to develop leadership and life skills through hands-on learning experiences.

The 4-H organization, which stands for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health, focuses on empowering young people to grow into responsible,

capable leaders. Through a variety of programs offered in every county, students explore subjects including agriculture, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and healthy living.

In Mrs. Jess's class, newly elected 4-H officers include President Grady Pinkston, Vice President Ashton Ross, Secretary Jermaine Betts, and Photographers Rhett Lemonds and Blakelee Dinning. Poster competition winners were Pinkston in first place and Shep Hopper and Lemonds tying for second.

In Mrs. Brittany's class, students elected Colin Baumgartel as President, Killian Stam-



POSTER WINNERS

borski as Vice President, and Kylie Weber as Sec-

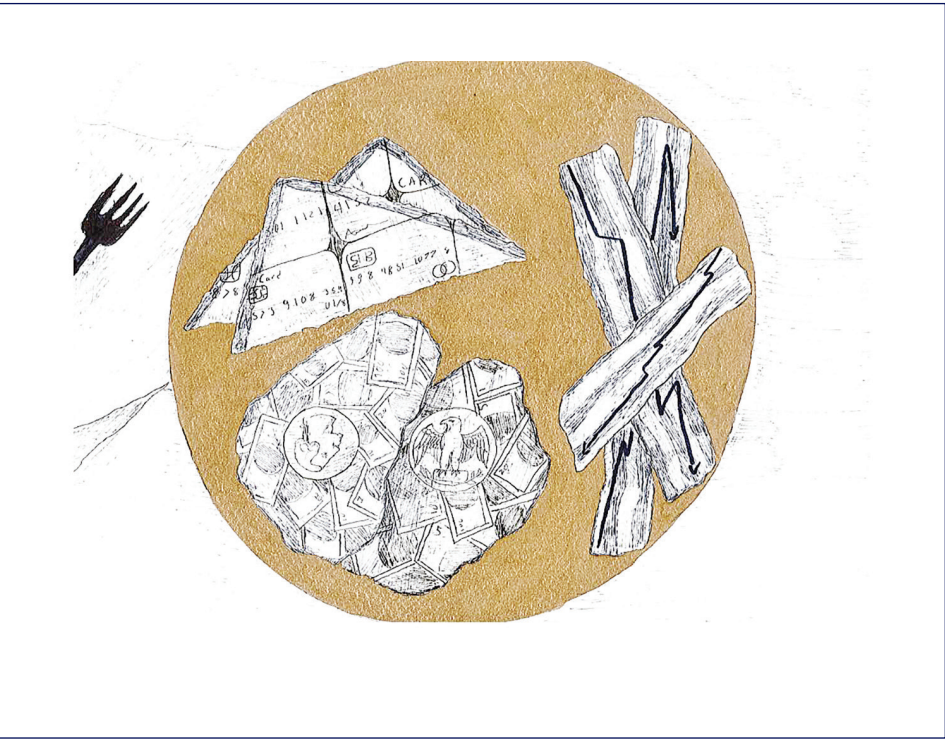
retary, with Luke Lane and Declan Ellis serving

as Photographers. Poster winners were Baumgar-

tel in first place, followed by Ellis, Weber, and Maxwell Mitchell in second.

Teachers and leaders praised the students for their initiative, teamwork, and creativity. The school's motto—"A.C.E. the Day with Accountability, Community, and Excellence"—was on full display as students celebrated their achievements and prepared for a year of new projects and learning opportunities through 4-H.

Gleason School expressed appreciation to Mrs. McDowell and local 4-H representatives for helping foster leadership and community engagement among young students.



CREATE CONNECT CARE AWARD—Westview High School senior Alexis Waldon was recognized with a 2025 #CreateConnectCare Award from Creative Visions, a global program celebrating youth creativity as a tool for promoting mental health awareness and community connection. Waldon's entry stood out among thousands of submissions from across the United States and abroad for its originality, emotional depth, and impact in encouraging others to speak up about mental health. The awards were announced in observance of World Mental Health Day on October 10, underscoring the importance of giving young people creative outlets to express themselves and support one another.



YANCY SPEAKS TO GLEASON STUDENTS—University of Tennessee at Martin Chancellor Dr. Yancy Freeman Sr. met with Gleason High School seniors during a campus visit to share information about academic programs, scholarships, and student life. He was welcomed by Principal Lee Lawrence, Guidance Counselor Kerri Maddox, Senior Class President Drake Lehmkuhl, and Senior Beta Club President Luke Lawrence. Representatives Kristy Norton and Sydney Roney also spoke with students about admission opportunities and the Skyhawk Aviator scholarship application.



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H A L L O W E E N



WEAKLEY SCHOOL NEWS

Weakley County School Board Advances Five-Year Plan and Policy Updates

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Weakley County School Board met on Thursday, October 2, 2025, at Gleason School, where members approved the district’s five-year plan and discussed a series of policy updates, community programs, and academic progress reports.

The district’s new plan focuses on four key priorities: student achievement and growth, staff development, postsecondary partnerships, and targeted intervention strategies. Director of Schools Jeff Cupples said the plan will remain

a “living document” that can adapt to changes in state accountability standards and instructional needs.

Gleason School hosted the meeting, where administrators highlighted student accomplishments and ongoing facility improvements. Among them was senior Weiland, who completed Army National Guard basic training over the summer and plans to pursue a career in military law enforcement. The school also announced its annual Fall Festival, set for Saturday, October 25, from 4 to 8 p.m., featuring games, live entertainment, and

community booths.

Principal Lee Lawrence outlined recent upgrades, including a \$260,000 science lab renovation creating two STEM-ready classrooms and the addition of a new STEM special for elementary students. Gleason also expanded its career and technical education offerings, introducing business marketing and planning a social media and analytics course for next year. The school continues to build postsecondary pathways through dual enrollment with UT Martin and Bethel University and is in talks with Dyersburg State for a new phlebotomy course expected to launch in January.

Lawrence also shared data showing improved student performance and attendance. The school’s safe-testing incentive program grew from 140 qualifying students last year to 180 this year, reflecting stronger academic outcomes. Attendance challenges, “Dog Call” rewards for positive behavior, and semester recognition ceremonies continue to reinforce engagement.

Facility improvements included a new press box and sound system for the football field, a \$10,000 donation from the Gleason Alumni As-

sociation for an auxiliary gym sound system, and security enhancements with updated key systems and staff badge access. The after-school program now averages 25 to 35 students daily and recently added staff to meet demand.

Board members reviewed and approved first readings of several policy revisions. Most were language alignments to meet current state laws and district codes, including updates to policies on board member legal status, tobacco-free campuses, internet use, media access to students, credit recovery grading thresholds,

and alternative school programs.

The consent agenda approved multiple student field trips, including cross-country competitions, Beta Club conventions, the high school baseball tournament in Chattanooga, drama competitions, FCCLA leadership events, and participation in the Dresden First Baptist Church Backpack Program.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 5 p.m. at Westview High School.



Dresden Middle School Honors Student on World Cerebral Palsy Day

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Dresden Middle School students and staff came together Monday to celebrate one of their own, eighth-grader John Ganczak, in recognition of World Cerebral Palsy Day. The day was filled with unity, encouragement, and plenty of green—the color symbolizing cerebral palsy awareness.

John, known for his kindness, determination, and bright spirit, has inspired classmates and teachers alike by never letting his condition limit him. In honor of his last year in middle school, students and staff wore green shirts designed especially for the

occasion, each including a donation to the Cerebral Palsy Foundation made in John’s name.

Throughout the day, students reflected on John’s example of perseverance and positivity. Teachers shared stories about his encouragement of others, his leadership in the classroom, and the impact he’s made on the Dresden Middle community.

The event was part of a larger effort across Weakley County Schools to promote understanding and inclusion. Donations collected from the shirt sales will help fund programs supporting those living with cerebral palsy worldwide.

“John reminds us every day that kindness,

friendship, and determination can make a difference,” one teacher said. “He’s an example of what it means to live with courage and compassion.”

The celebration served not only as a tribute to John but also as a reminder of the power of empathy and community support. As one student shared, “We all wore green for John, but he’s the one who shows us what strength really looks like.”

World Cerebral Palsy Day is observed each year to raise awareness and celebrate the achievements of the more than 17 million people globally living with cerebral palsy.



Dresden Middle Students Explore Local Government, Higher Education, and Aviation in Hands-On Field Trip

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Dresden Middle School students recently experienced a full day of hands-on learning through visits to several key institutions across West Tennessee, gaining a deeper understanding of local government, higher education, and aviation.

The day began with a tour of the newly constructed Dresden City Hall, where students were greeted by Dresden City Mayor Mark Maddox. Mayor Maddox guided the group through each department, explaining how city operations function and how various offices work together to serve the community. Students asked questions about city services, leadership roles, and the decision-making process behind projects that impact Dresden residents.

Weakley County Mayor Dale Hutcherson also joined the visit, offer-

ing perspective on how county government differs from and cooperates with city government. He discussed his responsibilities as county mayor, the importance of intergovernmental collaboration, and the value of civic engagement. Both mayors emphasized the role young citizens play in shaping their community’s future.

Following their government tour, the students traveled to the University of Tennessee at Martin, where they explored the campus and learned about college life. They toured several academic buildings, visited the recreation center, and engaged with university staff to learn more about the wide range of academic and extracurricular opportunities available. The visit gave students an early look at life on a four-year university campus and encouraged them to think about future educational goals.

The day concluded

with a trip to Everett-Stewart Regional Airport in Union City. Airport Manager Don Coady provided an overview of the airport’s history and operations, explaining the types of aircraft that fly in and out of the facility. Students learned about different categories of pilot licenses, the purpose of various types of planes, and the maintenance work performed in the airport’s hangars.

Through these visits, Dresden Middle School students were able to see how local leadership, education, and transportation connect to everyday life and future career possibilities. Teachers and administrators expressed appreciation to Mayor Maddox, Mayor Hutcherson, UT Martin staff, and the Everett-Stewart Regional Airport team for providing an engaging and educational experience outside the classroom.

Photos courtesy of Dresden Middle School’s Facebook page.



REGIONAL

Deadly Blast Levels Hickman County Explosives Facility, Leaves Dozens Searching for Answers

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

A massive explosion tore through the Accurate Energetic Systems (AES) plant on Friday, October 10, 2025, destroying a production building and shaking nearby communities. Authorities confirmed multiple fatalities and said at least 18 people remain unaccounted for. Search and investigation efforts are ongoing.

The blast struck around 7:45 a.m. in what officials have referred to as Building 6 of the AES site near the Hickman–Humphreys county line. Witnesses described a shockwave that shattered windows and rattled homes across a wide area. Secondary blasts initially prevented emergency crews from entering the scene safely.

Local, state, and federal agencies are coordinating the investigation. The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) activated its State Emergency Operations Center in Nashville at a Level 4 “Elevated” status to support local emergency requests. Agents with the FBI, ATF, and Tennessee Bureau of Investigation remain on site alongside local responders.

Sheriff Jason Craft posted on the Hickman County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page: “We endured a tragic incident today that has profoundly impacted our community, Humphreys County, and surrounding communities. I extend my most profound condolences to the victims and their families during this difficult time.



As we collaborate with various agencies to unravel the circumstances of this event, it is imperative that we maintain our focus on the victims and their families. The investigation is currently in its active phase, and the scene remains highly dynamic.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the first responders from multiple surrounding agencies for their prompt and dedicated response. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge the unwavering support provided by multiple agencies across the state, including manpower and resources. Their contributions have been invaluable, and I am deeply appreciative of their assistance.

Once again, please extend your prayers to the families and to all first

responders who have assisted with this tragic event.

Sincerely, Sheriff Jason Craft.”

Governor Bill Lee issued a brief statement asking Tennesseans to pray for those affected.

“We are monitoring the ongoing situation in Hickman County and state agencies are responding in partnership with local and federal agencies. We ask Tennesseans to join us in prayer for the families impacted by this tragic incident.”

According to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency’s Flash Report #1, released at 3:32 p.m. Friday, the explosion occurred at the privately owned AES facility in the Bucksport area. The report confirmed that the plant processes, but does not

manufacture, ammunition and explosives. TEMA deployed district coordinators to assist local officials and stated there is no known continuing threat to public health or safety.

The State Emergency Operations Center was activated to coordinate assistance from multiple agencies, including the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Department of Environment and Conservation, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Officials urged the public to avoid the area and minimize non-emergency calls to allow responders to work safely.

AES has established a Family Assistance Center for those affected, providing information, resources, and emotional

support. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation also activated a hotline at 1-800-TBI-FIND for missing-persons reports.

Accurate Energetic Systems operates on about 1,300 wooded acres near the Bucksport exit off Interstate 40. The company develops, manufactures, stores, and tests high explosives for military, aerospace, and commercial clients. The state’s description of the facility as one that processes ammunition and explosives differs from the company’s own materials, a distinction investigators are expected to review.

Authorities confirmed multiple deaths and said several people were transported for treatment, though conditions have not been released. The explosion obliterated Building 6 and

scattered debris across a half-mile radius. Residents in both Hickman and Humphreys counties said the shockwave shook their homes and set off car alarms. Doorbell and security cameras captured the sound of the blast.

AES has faced prior Occupational Safety and Health Administration citations since 2019 for issues related to hazard communication and chemical handling. Most were resolved through settlements. In 2014, an explosion at a related ammunition operation on or near the same property killed one worker and injured three others.

As of Friday evening, the Tennessee Department of Health had not confirmed any official fatality count. The Tennessee Highway Patrol continues to assist with road closures, and motorists are advised to check TDOT’s SmartWay website for updated information.

Officials have not released the names of the deceased or missing. Federal investigators from the ATF and FBI remain on site collecting debris and residue samples to determine the cause of the blast. Environmental testing and cleanup assessments are expected to follow once the area is stabilized.

TEMA plans to issue its next update as additional verified details become available. For now, officials continue to urge patience, compassion, and prayer for the families affected by one of the deadliest industrial explosions in Tennessee’s recent history.

Weapons Industry Relocates from Pennsylvania to Tennessee, Raising Questions About the State’s Expanding Firearms Economy

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

A weapons manufacturer formerly based in Pennsylvania is moving its operations to Tennessee, citing the state’s more favorable business environment and fewer restrictions on the firearms industry. IWI US, Inc., a subsidiary of Israeli Weapons Industries, will relocate its headquarters and production facility from Middletown, Pennsylvania, to Andersonville, Tennessee, where it plans to invest more than \$15 million and create approximately 70 new jobs.

The relocation reflects a larger national shift as firearm companies move from states with tighter regulations to those offering fewer legal barriers and stronger protections for the industry. For Tennessee, this transition adds to its growing

reputation as a leading hub for firearms and defense manufacturing.

Company officials cited Tennessee’s legal stability, tax incentives, and consistent regulatory framework as major factors in the decision. The state recently expanded its legal protections for gun manufacturers through new legislation that limits civil liability in certain cases and shields Tennessee-based companies from out-of-state judgments related to firearm misuse. Supporters say these laws reduce legal risk and make the state more attractive to arms producers.

Tennessee also maintains strict state preemption laws that prevent cities or counties from passing their own firearm regulations. That creates uniformity for manufacturers, distributors, and retailers operating statewide. While Pennsylvania also pre-

empts most local firearms ordinances, enforcement and political pressure at the local level have led to uncertainty for companies there.

Economic incentives also play a major role. Tennessee offers one of the most favorable tax environments in the nation for manufacturing. Industrial machinery, repair parts, and raw materials are exempt from sales tax, and energy costs for manufacturers are often reduced through special rates. State and local governments frequently offer infrastructure support and job development grants to attract manufacturers. In Pennsylvania, similar incentives are available but are often subject to greater public scrutiny and community review, which can delay or discourage expansion in politically divided regions.

IWI US will estab-

lish its operations in the David Jones Industrial Park in Anderson County. Local leaders say the project will bring skilled jobs and technical training opportunities while reinforcing the county’s growing role in advanced manufacturing. State officials praised the decision as another success story for Tennessee’s economic development efforts.

The move follows a pattern set by other major firearms companies. In 2023, Smith & Wesson completed its relocation from Massachusetts to Maryville, building a \$125 million facility that employs roughly 750 people. Barrett Firearms, headquartered in Christiana, was acquired by Australian defense contractor NIOA, which has announced plans to construct a \$120 million weapons testing and development site in Murfreesboro. Together,

these companies have made Tennessee a centerpiece of the nation’s private firearms industry.

State officials estimate that Tennessee’s firearms and defense sectors now employ more than 8,000 workers and generate hundreds of millions of dollars each year for the state economy. Supporters of the industry point to its ability to create stable employment in smaller communities, attract investment, and build local technical training programs.

Critics argue that the state’s embrace of the weapons industry raises broader questions about oversight, ethics, and safety. Some advocacy groups have voiced concern that Tennessee’s expanding legal protections for manufacturers could make it harder to hold companies accountable in cases of

negligence or defective products. Others question whether the state’s reliance on defense and firearms manufacturing could pose risks to long-term economic diversity.

For now, IWI’s relocation represents another step in Tennessee’s emergence as a national leader in firearms production. The company is expected to begin operations in 2026, joining a growing number of manufacturers who view Tennessee as a state that welcomes their business.

Whether this growth strengthens Tennessee’s economy or deepens its dependence on a politically sensitive industry remains to be seen. What is clear is that the state’s mix of low taxes, legal protections, and permissive regulations continues to make it one of the most attractive destinations for the nation’s weapons industry.

Tipton County Officer-Involved Shooting Under Investigation

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

An investigation is underway after a Tipton County deputy shot and critically injured a man during a call Monday afternoon in Drummonds.

According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the 25th Judicial District Attorney General Mark Davidson re-

quested that TBI agents investigate the shooting. The incident occurred shortly after 4 p.m. in the 7600 block of Richardson Landing Road. Deputies with the Tipton County Sheriff’s Office had responded to a report of a fight between two brothers.

When officers arrived, one of the men ran from the scene, leading to a

short foot chase that ended at a mobile home on the property. For reasons still under investigation, the situation escalated, and a deputy fired at the man, hitting him. The man was taken to the hospital and remains in critical condition. No law enforcement officers were injured.

The TBI says the investigation remains active

and ongoing. Agents are working to determine the exact series of events that led to the shooting. They are collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses, and will present their findings to District Attorney General Davidson for review once the investigation is complete.

The bureau emphasized that its role is to act

as an independent factfinder. It does not decide whether an officer’s actions were justified. That decision will be made by the district attorney overseeing the case.

The Tipton County Sheriff’s Office has not released the names of the deputies involved or confirmed whether the man was armed at the time. The sheriff’s office

will determine if the officers’ names or any additional information will be made public.

The TBI says updates on the case will be posted online at TBInewsroom.com as more information becomes available.

COMMUNITY NEWS



PIONEERS OF THE COLLIER HOMESTEAD—Front (L-R): Doctor Benjamin Franklin, Adaline Hampton, Thomas Jefferson, Doctor Edward Millard. Back (L-R): Mary Alice, Mattie Hampton, Sarah Bell, Henry Green.

DBF Collier Family Graveyard Added to Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Tennessee Historical Commission has officially recognized the DBF Collier Family Graveyard in Martin by adding it to the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register. The designation marks an important milestone in Weakley County’s preservation of local heritage, honoring one of the area’s earliest families and their enduring legacy.

Nestled along Cane Creek just off VanCleave Road, the Collier Family Graveyard traces its roots to Doctor Benjamin Franklin “Dock” Collier and his wife, Adaline Hampton Collier. Dock moved to the area as a child and went on to become a respected farmer, community leader, and postmaster of the Collier Post Office, once located on the family farm. Together, Dock and Adaline raised six children—Mollie, Thomas Jefferson “Jepp,” Doctor Edward Millard,

Mattie Hampton, Sarah Bell, and Henry Green—whose lives intertwined with the development of early Martin and surrounding communities.

The Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register serves as the state’s official record of significant burial sites. Each cemetery listed represents an effort to preserve Tennessee’s historical and cultural landscape. According to the Tennessee Historical Commission, properties added to the register are carefully documented and maintained as part of the state’s permanent archive of historic sites.

The certification, dated September 12, 2023, was signed by Executive Director E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr. of the Tennessee Historical Commission. The inclusion recognizes not only the Collier family’s contribution to the region but also the dedication of Dock and Adaline’s third great-granddaughter, who led the effort to research, document, and

protect the cemetery for future generations.

Members of the Weakley County Historical and Genealogical Society celebrated the announcement, noting the importance of preserving family burial grounds as part of the broader story of local settlement and community life. “Every name and every headstone tells a story,” the society shared in a public statement. “By protecting sites like the Collier cemetery, we honor the people who shaped our towns, farms, and families.”

With its quiet setting shaded by trees and bordered by Cane Creek, the DBF Collier Family Graveyard stands as both a memorial and a link to the past. Through its recognition on the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register, the site will continue to serve as a testament to the lives and legacy of one of Weakley County’s founding families.

Greenfield Banking Company CEO Named Front Street Festival Star Citizen

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The City of Greenfield honored longtime resident and community leader Randy Huffstetler as this year’s Front Street Festival Star Citizen, recognizing his decades of service, leadership, and dedication to the people of Greenfield and Weakley County.

A lifelong native of Greenfield, Huffstetler grew up on his family’s farm and graduated from Greenfield High School in 1990. He went on to attend the University of Tennessee at Martin, where he played football for four years as a UTM Pacer and was an active member of the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. He earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural business before beginning his professional career.

After college, Huffstetler worked for Terra International as a seed and chemical sales representative for four years before beginning his career in banking. In 1999, he joined Greenfield Banking Company as a loan officer. His dedication and leadership led him to the position of CEO in 2012. Under his guidance, the bank has seen substantial growth, expanding from \$45 million in assets to \$137 million.

In addition to his career achievements, Huffstetler has been deeply involved in civic and community leadership across Greenfield, Weakley County, and the state of Tennessee. He is a member of the Tennessee Bankers Association, where he served on the board for three years, and is a graduate of the



RANDY HUFFSTETLER

Southeastern School of Banking. He also completed the 2002 Weakley County Leadership Class and is a lifetime member of the University of Tennessee at Martin’s WestStar Leadership Program.

Huffstetler’s commitment to education, athletics, and local growth is evident through his service on several boards, including the UTM Football Alumni Foundation, the Horace and Sarah Dunagan Banking Advisory Board, the Weakley County Economic Development Board, and the Weakley County Board of Equalization. He is also a member of the Dresden Elks Lodge and has served on the Weakley County Sports Hall of Fame Board.

In Greenfield, Huffstetler’s influence extends across many local organizations. He has served as president of the Greenfield Booster Club, Greenfield Alumni Association, and Greenfield Rotary Club. He has also volunteered his time on the Greenfield Parks and

Recreation Board and the Highland Cemetery Association Board. For a decade, he taught Hunter’s Education classes in Greenfield and Gleason, helping train and mentor young hunters in the community.

A man of faith, Huffstetler is an active member and elder of First Presbyterian Church in Greenfield. He and his wife, Sherri Arnold Huffstetler, have two children, Abby (Tanner) Smithson and Grant (Taylor) Huffstetler, and one grandchild, Ellery Huff Smithson.

Reflecting on the honor, Huffstetler shared, “Greenfield and Weakley County is my home, and I am proud to serve the members of our community.”

The Front Street Festival committee praised Huffstetler’s long record of service, describing him as a leader who “embodies the spirit of Greenfield through his commitment to local growth, family, and community values.”



New Hope Methodist Church Cemetery in Ruthville Added to Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Tennessee Historical Commission has officially added the New Hope Methodist Church Cemetery in Ruthville to the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register, marking it as one of Weakley County’s most historically significant burial grounds. The certification, dated September 16, 2025, makes New Hope the fourth cemetery in the county to receive this distinction.

The honor recognizes nearly two centuries of faith, community, and continuity. According to church historical records compiled by Miss Dorothy Jeans, the New Hope United Methodist Church was founded in

northern Weakley County on November 12, 1881, when Walter H. Jones sold land to William Spence, James S. Woods, James T. McFall, Jeptha Ballard, John Davis, and William H. Jones for the establishment of the church and cemetery. Abe Sawyers later donated one acre of land for the burial grounds in 1891, ensuring a lasting resting place for generations of local families.

The church’s original structure, built from logs, stood near what was known as the New Hope Meeting House. Early members worshipped there before rebuilding larger frame churches as the congregation grew. By 1915, a new frame building with high ceilings and grooved pine

walls was constructed—features still admired today. Much of the church’s early history was preserved in anniversary booklets, documenting the names of ministers, Sunday school teachers, and local families who shaped its enduring legacy.

Cemetery records show burials dating back to the early 1800s, including veterans, farmers, and founding settlers of Ruthville and the surrounding communities. The site stands as a reflection of the area’s Methodist roots and rural life in nineteenth-century Tennessee.

The Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register, maintained by the Tennessee Historical Commission, documents and

THE TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

This is to certify that

New Hope Methodist Church Cemetery

has been entered on

THE TENNESSEE HISTORIC CEMETERY REGISTER

by the

TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register is the official list to documenting the state's cemeteries. Properties listed have been recorded and are included in the database.


E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
Executive Director



September 16, 2025
Date

preserves burial grounds across the state that hold cultural, architectural, or historical importance. Cemeteries listed on the register are permanently recorded and included in Tennessee’s historic preservation database.

E. Patrick McIntyre Jr., executive director of the commission, signed the official certificate, noting that properties added to the register are recognized for their role

in telling the broader story of Tennessee’s past.

The Weakley County Historical and Genealogical Society praised the designation, noting that New Hope’s inclusion highlights the community’s dedication to preserving its heritage. “Old New Hope stands as one of the oldest churches and cemeteries in Weakley County,” a spokesperson said. “This recognition ensures that its

history—and the stories of those buried there—will be protected for future generations.”

For those interested in learning more about the New Hope Methodist Church and cemetery’s history, historical records and anniversary documents are available through the Weakley County Historical and Genealogical Society.

1st Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

LOCAL NEWS



SEARCH AND RESCUE TRAINING — Sharon Junior Firefighters practiced search and rescue techniques during a recent training session, demonstrating skill, teamwork, and dedication. Instructors praised the group for their focus and professionalism as they continue preparing for future roles in emergency response.



Greenfield Fifth Grader Honored as Front Street Festival Star Jacket Recipient

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The City of Greenfield has named 10-year-old Emma Kail as the 2025 Front Street Festival Star Jacket recipient, recognizing her outstanding community spirit, leadership, and generosity. A fifth grader at Greenfield Elementary School, Emma is the founder of “Sassy E’s Lemonade and Sweet Treats,” a small business she created during the COVID-19 pandemic that has since grown into a local symbol of kindness and giving.

Emma is the daughter of Adam and Katie Kail and has two siblings, Noah and Anna, as well as a golden retriever named Henry. She attends Greenfield Church of Christ and is active in

both academics and extracurriculars, playing basketball and softball for Greenfield Junior High and studying dance at Spotlight Dance Academy, where she regularly performs in recitals.

Her entrepreneurial journey began in 2020 when, at just five years old, she told her parents she wanted to open a lemonade stand for the summer. Her father built her a small purple stand, and Emma began mixing lemonade and baking chocolate chip cookie sandwiches to sell outside her home. What started as a way to stay busy during uncertain times quickly became a mission to give back.

Instead of keeping the profits, Emma chose to donate all her earnings to teachers at Greenfield Elementary. Over

the past five years, she has raised more than \$3,000, benefiting 13 educators through her business. Her parents describe her as having one of the most caring hearts in the community—along with a touch of sass that inspired the name “Sassy E’s.”

Emma’s work reflects her belief in the importance of kindness, generosity, and faith. Her favorite Bible verse, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), continues to guide her as she balances school, sports, dance, and community service.

Through her giving spirit and determination, Emma Kail has become an example of how even the youngest members of the community can make a lasting difference.

Dresden Aldermen Advance City Projects, Budget Amendments, and Chamber Expansion

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Dresden Board of Mayor and Aldermen met on October 6, 2025, to review ongoing city projects, address community concerns, and approve several financial measures during its regular session at the Dresden Municipal Complex. Mayor Mark Maddox presided, joined by all six board members, city staff, and City Attorney Lowe Finney.

The meeting began with a small correction to last month’s minutes. The record will now reflect that the board approved the appointment of City Attorney Lowe Finney, rather than appointing him directly.

Mayor Maddox announced that contractor Bert Dyer will begin installing new hardware and software for the boardroom’s camera and microphone system this week. Once complete, the setup will make meetings more accessible to the public through improved audio and video recording.

Board members discussed several local projects and concerns. Park Director Joey Winstead said the new pickleball courts have been delayed because of asphalt issues but assured the board that plans are being revised to ensure the courts meet community standards.

Alderman Jennifer Schlicht asked about replacing light bulbs along Highway 22, and Mayor Maddox said he would follow up with a volunteer assisting the project to help reduce costs.

Alderman Gwin Anderson requested an update on the Wilson Street sidewalk work, which the mayor also

agreed to check on.

Noise complaints were another topic of discussion. After receiving multiple reports about vehicles with loud exhausts, the board asked the police department to monitor the problem more closely.

Alderman Kenneth Moore followed up on a citizen concern brought to the board last month. Mayor Maddox said he had received a legal opinion from Attorney Finney regarding the issue and would share it with members once he had reviewed it.

The board also discussed progress on the city’s transition to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). The original plan documents were lost during the 2021 tornado, and an attorney is now recreating them. Once complete, the board will need to adopt the plan again before the city can officially move forward with TCRS participation.

Moore also noted that several lights around the court square need replacing. Finance Director Carla Edwards said Public Works has gathered pricing for a new pole to replace one damaged by a postal worker on the northwest corner. Moore asked to be notified whether the city or the postal service would be responsible for the replacement cost.

The South Parkway storm drain project drew one of the longest discussions of the evening. Mayor Maddox said no easements have been signed, and resident Lianne Moore requested a meeting with the project engineer, which will take place next week.

Alderman Anderson, who vis-

ited the property, voiced concerns about large trees that might be lost under the current design. He made a motion to reject the existing plan and have engineers with A2H redesign the project so the drain runs north of the property instead of south. The motion, seconded by Alderman Moore, passed unanimously.

The board approved Budget Amendment Resolution 2026-06 with a 4–2 vote and unanimously passed Donation Acceptance Resolution 2026-07, which allows the city to accept a monetary donation for improvements to the Civic Center.

Winstead also requested authorization to trade in two aging mowers to help purchase new ones. The board approved the request 5–1, with the condition that bids for the new equipment be presented before purchase.

Mayor Maddox announced that the Dresden Chamber of Commerce plans to renovate and expand its building to include a handicap-accessible entrance. Because the new ramp will extend slightly into an adjoining alley, the mayor suggested donating that portion of the alley to the Chamber. The board agreed to have Attorney Finney draft a deed for review at the next meeting.

The meeting concluded with an update on Dresden’s upcoming Bicentennial Celebration, scheduled for Saturday, October 25. The event will include unearthing a time capsule, burying a new one, and showcasing historical artifacts from the city’s 200-year history.



Woodfire Pizza Kitchen Wins First Place at Annual Chili Cook-Off

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Woodfire Pizza Kitchen took home first place honors at the Second Annual St. John’s Community Services Chili Cook-Off, held Thursday, October 9, inside the Martin Public Library’s Events Center.

Hosted by St. John’s Community Services (SJCS) in partnership with the University of Tennessee at Martin Alumni Association, the event brought together local restaurants and community members for a night of food, music, and friendly competition. Guests sampled a wide variety of chili recipes, voted for their favorites, and enjoyed family-friendly entertainment that included balloon art, face painting, and

live blues music by local legend Lew Jetton, with Trial and Error opening the evening.

Woodfire Pizza Kitchen’s manager and chef, Joseph Adcock, prepared the winning chili that secured the restaurant’s top spot. “We couldn’t be more proud to bring home first place,” the restaurant shared in a statement. “Huge thanks to our incredible manager and chef, Joseph Adcock, for cooking up the winning chili. We’re lucky to have him on our team.”

Adding to the night’s energy, a “Hot Ones”-style interview with SJCS State Director Dwayne Webb kept the crowd laughing while shining a light on the purpose behind the event: supporting St. John’s food assistance efforts.

“Events like the Chili Cook-Off bring our community together in such a meaningful way,” said Mandy Hinson of St. John’s Community Services. “Not only is it a fun night of food, music, and fellowship, but every ticket sold helps us stock the shelves of the St. John’s Food Pantry for families in need.”

Tickets for the cook-off were \$10 and included samples from all competing restaurants. Proceeds will directly benefit the St. John’s Food Pantry, which serves local families across West Tennessee.

The event also served as an unofficial kickoff to UT Martin’s Homecoming weekend, giving alumni and residents a chance to celebrate community spirit while contributing to a good cause.

ADOPTION EVENT!

WHEN: OCTOBER 18TH
WHERE: RURAL KING, 850 UNIVERSITY ST, MARTIN
WHAT TIME: 10AM-1PM

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FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT AUSTIE PACEWELL AT (731) 849-9302

WHERE ANIMALS WILL BE THERE THE DAY OF

COUNTY NEWS



Rep. Tandy Darby Secures \$91,000 in State Grants for Weakley County Senior Centers

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Senior centers across Weakley County are receiving new support through state grants secured by State Representative Tandy Darby of Greenfield. The funding, totaling \$91,000 across Carroll, Weakley, and Henry counties, will help improve facilities, expand programming, and strengthen wellness and social activities for older adults.

The grants are administered by the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging as part of a \$5 million statewide initiative to assist 125 senior centers. In Weakley County, the Martin Gateway Center will receive \$10,000, while the Dresden Senior Citizens Center and Sharon Senior Center will also receive \$10,000 each. Additional allocations include \$50,000 for the Paris Henry County Senior Citizens Center Association and \$11,000 for the Carroll County Office on Aging.

“These senior centers make a real difference in the lives of older adults,” Darby said. “I’m proud to support this investment that will help them improve facilities, expand programming, and continue serving as a resource for our communi-

ties.”

The \$91,000 distributed locally comes from a \$42.5 million allocation approved by the Tennessee General Assembly in the 2025–26 state budget to strengthen emergency and community services. Each senior center received between \$10,000 and \$50,000 through the competitive program. Funds can be used for building repairs, new equipment, marketing, or program expansion, but not for staff salaries.

For Weakley County, the investment provides an opportunity for senior centers to upgrade services for local residents. The Martin Gateway Center could use the grant for improvements such as fitness and activity equipment, new programming, or outreach initiatives aimed at increasing community participation. Directors at the Dresden and Sharon centers are also expected to evaluate how best to use the funds for facility needs and senior engagement.

While the grant funding is a boost, some center administrators across the state have noted that staffing and long-term operations remain ongoing challenges, as the program limits funding to physical improvements and program

costs. Sustaining new activities may require continued fundraising or local support.

Darby has consistently emphasized programs that serve rural communities. Earlier this year, he announced more than \$33,000 in Tennessee Arts Commission grants for Weakley and Henry counties and over \$1 million in infrastructure and safety funding for municipalities across his district.

The Department of Disability and Aging’s senior center grants are part of a broader effort to help communities invest in aging services. Officials say the goal is to ensure that senior centers remain safe, accessible, and vibrant spaces that encourage wellness and social connection.

For local residents, the funding represents a step forward in maintaining those vital community spaces that provide more than just recreation. Senior centers in Weakley County have long served as places of friendship, outreach, and daily support for the county’s older citizens.

As projects move forward, community members are encouraged to contact their local senior centers for updates on how the new funds will be used.



Greenfield Fire Department Celebrates 38 Years of Fire Prevention Education

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Greenfield Fire Department marked another successful Fire Prevention Week, continuing a 38-year tradition of visiting local schools to teach children about fire safety and prevention. Firefighters spent the week engaging with students, presenting educational demonstrations, and rewarding participants in the department’s annual poster contest.

This year’s events included the popular fire truck rides for kindergarten classes. Students enjoyed a trip from their school to the station, where they received a tour and learned about firefighting equipment before riding back to class. Fire Chief Bob T. Dudley expressed his gratitude to the schools for their ongoing partnership in promoting

safety awareness among young students.

“This is something we’ve done for nearly four decades,” Dudley said. “It’s always rewarding to see how much the children enjoy learning about fire safety and to recognize their creativity through our poster contest.”

The department also recognized several poster contest winners. Freshman Brianna Miller earned first place in her class and was congratulated by Lieutenant Gavin Elam. Fifth-grade student Keaton Pitt took home first place in his division, pictured with Lieutenants Jay Yeargin and Elam. Second-grade winner Lydia Harris and first-grade winner Gracie McKee were also honored for their creative entries.

The week featured special appearances by beloved mascots Smokey the Bear, Sparky, and

Flame, the department’s remote-control fire engine, which delighted the children during demonstrations.

Dudley extended appreciation to The Greenfield Banking Company for providing plastic fire helmets for the students each year, a tradition that has become a highlight for many participants. “When we brought the helmets back to the school, little Randy looked so proud in his,” Dudley said jokingly. “We might have to recruit him someday.”

The Greenfield Fire Department’s long-standing commitment to fire safety education continues to foster awareness and enthusiasm among students, ensuring that each new generation learns the importance of fire prevention and emergency preparedness.

‘The Harvest’ Screening to Explore Mississippi School Integration History

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

The Weakley County Reconciliation Project is inviting residents across West Tennessee to attend the premiere screening of “The Harvest: Integrating Mississippi’s Schools,” a PBS American Experience documentary directed by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Douglas A. Blackmon. The event will take place Saturday, November 1, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The Ned, 314 East Main Street in Jackson. Admission is free, with registration requested. A light breakfast and boxed lunch will be provided.

The documentary chronicles the desegregation of schools in Leland, Mississippi, following a 1969 federal court order requiring full integration. Blackmon and his classmates became part of the first generation of Black and white children to complete all twelve grades together. The film follows their journey through graduation in 1982 and examines how integration

shaped their lives and the community. It also confronts what remains unfinished in America’s effort to achieve true equality.

After the screening, a panel of residents and community leaders will share personal reflections on local school integration in West Tennessee. The discussion will connect the film’s themes with modern issues of equity and reconciliation in education.

The event is supported by Georgia Humanities with funding from the Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation, in partnership with Humanities Tennessee, the Weakley County Reconciliation Project, the Jackson Equity Project, and the Lynching Sites Project of Memphis. The United Way of West Tennessee is serving as fiscal agent.

Douglas A. Blackmon is best known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning book “Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II.” The book revealed how

systems of forced labor persisted into the twentieth century. Blackmon also co-produced the documentary adaptation of his book, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and aired nationwide on PBS.

Event Details
Date: Saturday, November 1, 2025
Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Location: The Ned, 314 East Main Street, Jackson, TN 38301
Cost: Free and open to the public
Registration: Eventbrite Registration
Contact: weakleyreconciliation@gmail.com

To learn more about the Weakley County Reconciliation Project, contact Chairperson Joyce Washington, P.O. Box 263, Martin, Tennessee 38237. The film trailer is available on PBS’s official YouTube channel here.

This event highlights ongoing efforts by local and regional organizations to confront the history of segregation and promote honest dialogue about equity and unity across West Tennessee.

GEORGIA HUMANITIES & HUMANITIES TENNESSEE
PRESENT

Planting seeds one classroom at a time.

The Harvest
Integrating Mississippi’s Schools

Nov. 1, 2025 | 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
The Ned
314 East Main Street
Jackson, TN 38301

A riveting portrait of how children’s lives in Leland, MS were transformed by integration, and how the town — and America — were changed.

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FREE ENTRY

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Weakley County Reconciliation Project

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FEATURE

Examiner Insider Exclusive: Tonya Mitchell Returns With “Nobody Loves Me Like You”

The Weakley County Examiner brings readers the first look at the official lyrics to Mitchell’s powerful new single addressing domestic violence, marking her return to music after two decades.

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

Y2K-era vocalist Tonya Mitchell, known for her 2001 single “Broken Promises,” is stepping back into the spotlight with “Nobody Loves Me Like You,” a raw, deeply personal ballad about domestic violence and survival. The single is set for release in December, with a first-ever official music video and a broader advocacy effort tied to Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Mitchell rose to fame in the early 2000s under Motown Universal and opened for *NSYNC’s Pop Odyssey tour before stepping away from the industry following her father’s passing. Now, more than twenty years later, she’s returning on her own terms—with her own words.

Q & A with Tonya Mitchell

Q: What inspired you to return to music after so many years away from the spotlight?

A: I’ve always wanted to. When my father passed away—it was very traumatic—I put everything on hold. I started a family and lived that life for a while. I worked on a few projects over the years, and the music was great, but it just wasn’t God’s timing. Now it finally feels right. Getting back on stage for the first time in 24 years at the Downtown Tavern in Jackson lit that spark again.

Q: Why was now the right time to release “Nobody Loves Me Like You”?

A: October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and I wrote this song years ago for my sister, who was going through that situation. I hadn’t experienced it myself then, but I saw her pain. Since then, I’ve been through it personally a few times. It’s time to speak up and say something.

Q: How did your personal experiences shape this song and album?

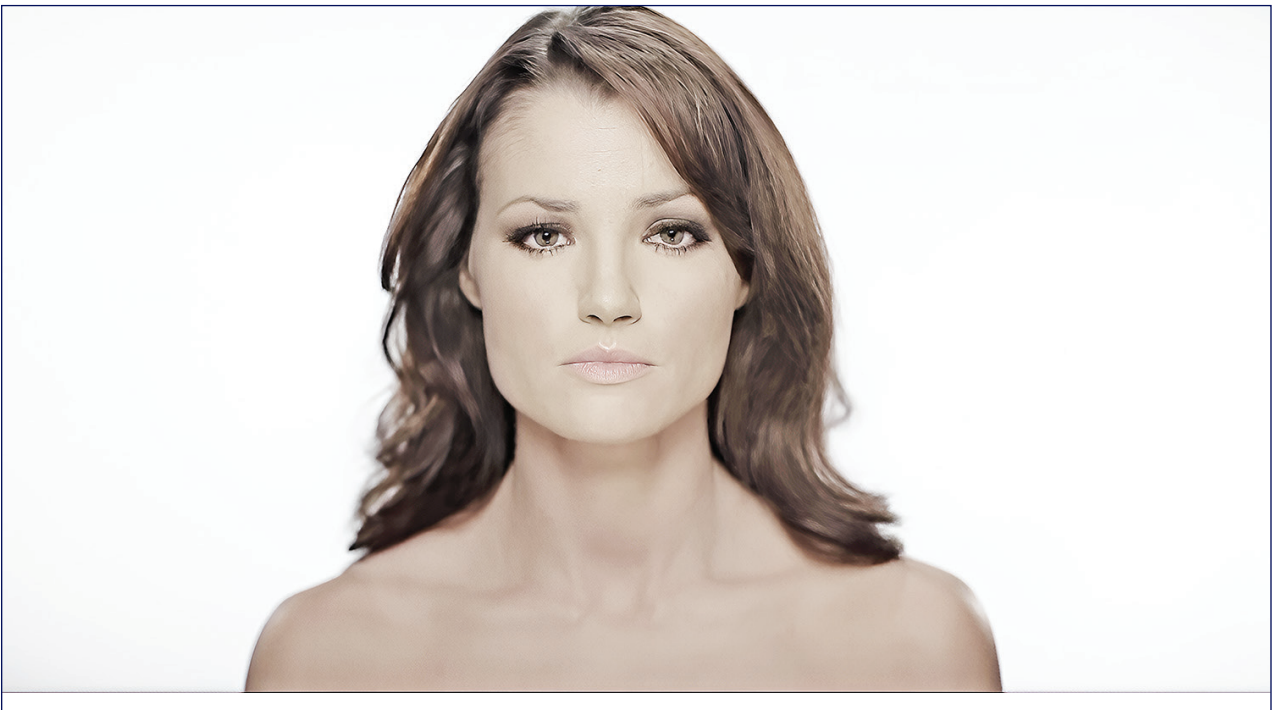
A: When I first recorded it, I hadn’t lived it yet, so the emotions came from empathy. Now it’s personal. People often ask, “Why didn’t you leave?” But it’s not that simple. There’s financial abuse, manipulation, gaslighting—and if kids are involved, it’s even harder. I stayed because of my children, but eventually realized they deserved peace. It took me far more than seven tries to leave.

Q: When you began writing again, did it feel like picking up where you left off or starting over?

A: Completely new, because this is the only song I’ve ever written. It’s my baby.

Q: How did it feel to write your first song?

A: It was amazing. The idea came from Ruben, my longtime collabora-



tor, and I started by writing it like a poem. He and others helped shape the music and chorus. He was in New Jersey and I was in Tennessee, so we worked remotely—sending ideas back and forth.

Q: This song directly addresses domestic violence and emotional manipulation. How did you approach writing something so personal and vulnerable?

A: It was hard, even when I wrote it for my sister. Now, when I hear it, it hits so much deeper. Sometimes I cry when I’m alone and it comes on.

Q: The title sounds like a love song, yet the lyrics expose an unhealthy dynamic. What message do you want listeners to take away from that contrast?

A: That’s exactly the point. When you’re in that situation, it really does feel like nobody loves you like that person. But there’s hope and there are resources. Friends may not even know someone is being abused because it’s often hidden. I want people to know there’s a way out.

Q: You mentioned you were off social media for years. How does that tie into the message?

A: For almost 15 years I wasn’t allowed to have it. Control can take many forms. Now, being able to release this song on different platforms feels like freedom.

Q: You’ve said sometimes the worst prison is within your own home. Can you expand on that?

A: When I was in that situation, it was like walking on eggshells. You’re scared to make a sound, to say something wrong. You never know what will set them off. The song reflects that. It’s not just emotional—it’s physical, spiritual, and even biological. Prolonged fear damages your health.

Q: How did it feel to turn such painful experiences into art? Was it healing, challenging, or both?

A: Both. I’m still healing, and maybe always will be. It’s like grief—you never fully get over it. But creating something from it helps.

Q: What do you hope survivors of domestic violence feel when they hear this song?

A: Empowerment. Not everyone makes it out, but I hope someone listening finds strength in it. I want it to mean as much to them as it does to me.

Q: How did your collaboration with Ruben and Vasco come about?

A: I’ve known Ruben since around 1999. He worked on five songs on my debut album. We’ve stayed in touch for over 25 years. When I went to New Jersey to record this song and video, that’s where I met Sebastian, the videographer.

Q: What was the production process like for this track compared to your earlier work?

A: Back then, demos came in the mail and I followed strict directions from the label. I didn’t have much creative freedom. This song had no demo—it’s all me. It’s very different and much more personal.

Q: How do you balance vulnerability and strength when writing about trauma?

A: The healing process makes that possible. I can write something sad, but being public and vulnerable about it takes courage. Healing gave me that.

Q: You became known during the Y2K pop era with “Broken Promises.” How has your voice and artistic perspective evolved?

A: Completely. I didn’t write on my first album and was only sixteen or seventeen. Back then, “heartbreak” meant a teenage crush. Now it’s about real life—loss, motherhood, and survival. It’s maturity and truth.

Q: Many artists from that era return to nostalgic sounds. Yours feels deeply personal instead. Was that intentional?

A: Yes. I want people to see me as an artist, not a product. I’ll still do some fun Y2K-style songs, but this is different. My oldest daughter loves that 2000s sound, so it’s fun seeing it come full circle.

Q: How has the industry changed since your debut, and how are you

navigating it now as an independent artist?

A: It’s completely different. Back then, we mailed VHS tapes and promo kits. Now, with streaming and social media, it’s instant. There are no CDs in stores anymore. I’m learning every day, but vinyl coming back is exciting.

Q: Do you see yourself using your platform to advocate for domestic violence awareness and survivor empowerment?

A: Absolutely, especially locally. I recently connected with organizers in Lexington who host a domestic violence awareness walk. I hope to perform there next year and help grow the event.

Q: Is “Nobody Loves Me Like You” part of a larger project?

A: It is. We’re planning interviews, TV appearances, and more new music. This is just the beginning.

Q: Will you be performing live again soon?

A: Yes. We have shows and appearances in the works. This will also be my first official music video, which I’m thrilled about. “Broken Promises” hit the charts without one, so this is a big moment for me.

Q: What do you hope this new chapter communicates about who you are today?

A: Powerful. Resilient. Perseverance. Resurgence. That’s what this is about.

Q: If your younger self from the “Broken Promises” era could hear this song, what would she say?

A: She’d be proud. You lose your spark when you go through things, but getting back on stage reignited it.

Q: What has been the most rewarding part of creating this song?

A: The chance to reach people who need it. It’s a simple but powerful message, and it’s deeply personal.

Q: What do you want your legacy to represent—not just as a musician, but as a woman who has endured and rebuilt?

A: I want people to know it can be done. You don’t have to come from

money or fame to succeed. I grew up poor. I just got a lucky break, and I want others to believe they can too.

Q: How do you know Von Howard?

A: Through mutual friends like Larry B. Green. We connected around New Year’s and later collaborated on my July show in Jackson. He’s one of my closest friends now, and we’re planning for him to join me on tour. He’s an incredible DJ, and we share the same faith and drive.

Q: We love Von here—he performed at the Soybean Festival recently. Will you be joining us for next year’s event?

A: I was supposed to this year, but it didn’t work out. I’ll absolutely be there next year. I can’t wait to perform for everyone.

Stay Connected with Tonya Mitchell

Fans can follow Tonya Mitchell for updates, release announcements, and performance dates on her official platforms:

Facebook: facebook.com/tonyamitchellmusic

Instagram: @tonyamitchellmusic

TikTok: @tonyamitchellofficial

Official Website: www.tonyamitchellmusic.com

Mitchell actively shares behind-the-scenes footage, recording updates, and advocacy work across her pages. Fans can expect performance dates, exclusive giveaways, and previews from her upcoming projects.

Exclusive: Official Lyrics — “Nobody Loves Me Like You”

(Provided exclusively to The Weakley County Examiner by Tonya Mitchell)

I look at you, still trying to see the man you used to be.

How did these arms that used to hold me tight

Start to suffocate me?

I know you say you’re

sorry,

I know you think you

care,

But with you I’m lost in

this silent prayer.

Nobody loves me like

you,

Nobody loves me like

you.

My heart races when-

ever you’re around,

So I don’t make a

sound.

You’ve controlled my

heart like you’ve con-

trolled my mind,

You made me believe

that you’re the best I

could find.

I know you say you’re

sorry,

I know you think you

care,

But with you I’m lost in

this silent prayer.

Nobody loves me like

you,

Nobody loves me like

you.

And this is what you

put me through.

When you wake up at

the light of dawn,

You’ll realize too late—

I’ll already be gone.

Nobody loves me like

you,

Nobody loves me like

you.

And this is what you

put me through...

Domestic Violence Re-

sources in West Tennes-

see

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

• National Domestic Violence Hotline — 24/7 confidential help at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or text START to 88788.

Website: www.thehotline.org | TTY: 1-800-787-3224

• WRAP — Wo/ Men’s Resource and Rape Assistance Program (serving Weakley, Madison, Gibson, and surrounding counties)

Hotline (24/7): 1-800-273-8712 | Office: 731-668-0411

Email: info@wraptn.org | Website: www.wraptn.org

• Tennessee State-wide Domestic Violence Helpline — Operated by the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence

24-Hour Hotline: 1-800-356-6767 | Website: www.tncoalition.org

• YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee — Weaver Domestic Violence Center

Crisis Hotline (24/7): 1-800-334-4628 | Text Line: 615-983-5170

Email: jenna.moulder@ywcannashville.com | Website: www.ywca-nashville.com

• Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence

Phone: 615-386-9406 | Alternate: 1-800-289-9018

Address: P.O. Box 292245, 525 Royal Parkway, Nashville, TN 37229

Website: www.tncoalition.org

• Family Safety Center of Memphis and Shelby County

Phone: 901-222-4400 | Website: www.family-safetycenter.org

• West Tennessee Legal Services

Phone: 731-423-0616 | Email: wtls@wtls.org | Website: www.wtls.org

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SPORTS



DRESDEN DEFEATS GREENFIELD 42-14-Dresden defeated Greenfield's Yellowjackets 42-14 in a hard-fought matchup Friday night. The UTM marching band joined the Dresden High School band to entertain fans throughout the game. Photos by Jeff Washburn

DRESDEN DEFEATS GREENFIELD 42-14

JEFF WASHBURN-
Special to the Examiner

The Dresden Lions claimed their sixth win of the 2025 football season Friday night with a 42-14 victory over the visiting Greenfield Yellowjacket.

The Lions received the opening kick-off and marched down field to score on a three-yard run by runningback Luke Di Pietro with 7:13 remain in the first quarter. The extra point kick by Valdemar Pedersen to jump to an early 7-0

lead.

Neither team found the end zone for the remainder of the first quarter and it was the Yellowjacket who scored next with 8:00 remaining in the second quarter on a six yard run by QB Easton Sullivan. An incomplete pass on the points-after-attempt left Dresden with a 7-6 edge over Greenfield.

Following the Yellowjacket kick-off Luke Di Pietro ran 64 yards to score with 7:44 remaining in the first half. Pedersen's kick on the PAT

was good to give Dresden a 14-6 lead.

The Lions scored again with 1:04 remaining in the first half on a 29 yard pass from QB Bruce Willis to Aiden Carrington. Pedersen once again split the uprights to give Dresden a 21-6 edge going in the half-time break.

Greenfield received the second half kick-off and the Lions intercepted a Yellowjacket pass to take over with a first and ten at the Greenfield 35. Di Pietro then ran 20 yards to move the line of

scrimmage to the 15 yard line. On a second and three play, Di Pietro ran for three yards and a TD to give the Lions a 28-6 lead after Pedersen's PAT kick.

The Lions added another TD on a pass from Willis to junior receive Ayden Flora with :43 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter. The TD pass was good for 70 yards. Pedersen's PAT kick was good to improve Dresden's lead to 35-6.

In the fourth quarter of play, Carrington once again got his number

called to run 11 yards for a TD. Pedersen's kick was good to stretch the Lions lead to 42-6 with 7:56 remaining.

Greenfield scored the final TD of the game on a 16 yard run by senior quarterback Easton Sullivan. Jerrick McMullin carried on the Yellowjacket PAT for two points to make the final score 42-14.

The win moved the Lions into first place in Region 7-1A with a record of 4-0 in region play and 6-2 overall. Dresden has two region games left to

finish up the regular season. The Lions will have an open date next Friday night and will play South Fulton on October 24 at home and then face off to finish the regular season on Thursday, October 30 against Lake County.

South Fulton is currently in second place in Region 7-1A play with a Region record of 3-1 and 6-1 overall. Lake County is in third place in Region play with a record of 2-1 in Region play and 5-2 overall.



DRESDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL XC HEADED TO STATE AGAIN — Dresden Middle School's girls cross country team claimed first place, with Benjamin Pettitt finishing second among middle school boys. The team earned multiple medals and personal records at Shelby Farms, securing another trip to the state championships.



DRESDEN ELEMENTARY XC CLAIMS REGIONAL TITLE — Dresden Elementary School's cross country team captured the 2025 regional championship in Memphis, earning a spot at the state meet. The team celebrated the win with pride as they prepare to represent DES at the next level.

Fall Fun and Halloween Events Planned Across Weakley County

SHANNON TAYLOR
CEO/Publisher

As autumn settles over Weakley County, churches, schools, and community groups are preparing a full lineup of fall festivals, trunk-or-treats, and Halloween celebrations. Residents of all ages will have several chances to enjoy family-friendly activities, good food, and local fellowship throughout October.

The season begins on Saturday, October 25, when Public Well Baptist Church, 790 Public Wells Road in Martin, hosts its annual Fall Festival at 4 p.m. The event will include a bonfire, hayrides, food, games, and more. For details, call 731-819-7684.

Also on October 25,

Weakley County Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, 700 W.C. Nursing Home Road in Dresden, will hold a Trunk or Treat from 1 to 3 p.m. The afternoon will include games, a costume contest at 2 p.m., and free hot dogs while supplies last.

That same evening, Child Evangelism Fellowship of Northwest Tennessee will participate in the region-wide Spooktacular at Eiffel Tower Park in Paris from 1 to 4 p.m., offering activities for children and families as part of its fall outreach series.

On Sunday, October 26, Liberty Baptist Church, 2912 Liberty Church Road in Dresden, will celebrate Harvest Day beginning at 11 a.m. A meal will follow

the morning service, and The Owen Family will perform gospel music afterward.

Later that day, Dresden First Baptist Church, 490 Morrow Street, will host its Fall Festival beginning with a puppet show at 4 p.m., followed by games, inflatables, food, and activities from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. The event is open to the community.

Throughout October, Discovery Park of America in Union City will continue its popular Pumpkin Village, transforming the park's 1800s Settlement into a family-friendly fall destination filled with pumpkins, corn pits, and photo displays. The attraction is included with park admission and will run through the end of the

month.

Looking ahead to Halloween week, the Ned R. McWherter Weakley County Library in Dresden will hand out treats on Thursday, October 30, until 6:30 p.m. Families are invited to stop by for a safe, early start to the Halloween festivities.

On Friday, October 31, celebrations will be in full swing across the county. Hillview Community Living Center will host Halloween on the Hill from 4 to 6 p.m., offering hot dogs, chips, and cookies while guests visit residents and enjoy a lighthearted evening together.

That same night, families can head to Downtown Dresden for the city's annual Trunk or Treat on Court Square,

beginning at 5:30 p.m. Local businesses will join in the fun by handing out candy and prizes to children.

In nearby Greenfield, Front Street will come alive from 5:30 to 7 p.m. during Trunk or Treat on Front Street, where businesses and volunteers will offer candy, games, and family activities in a festive Halloween setting.

Adults can keep the celebration going into the weekend. On Friday, October 31, and Saturday, November 1, Sadler's Classic Bar & Grill in Union City will host Halloween Week-end at Sadler's, featuring live music, karaoke, drink specials, and a costume contest.

The season wraps up on Saturday, November

1, when the Dresden Elks Lodge #2373, 449 South Poplar Street, hosts its Halloween Party. The evening will include cocktails, a potluck dinner, a costume contest, and prizes. Attendance is limited to members and their guests.

From church gatherings and family festivals to adult costume contests, this year's fall calendar offers something for everyone. Residents are encouraged to support local organizations, enjoy the changing season, and celebrate safely throughout October.

If you have an event you'd like to see listed, please contact us at shannon@theweakley-countyexaminer.com



Weakley County Schools Sports



