

2020 State Press Contests Awards

Special Section

November 2020



2020 TPA State Press Contests awards winners revealed during virtual ceremony

STAFF REPORTS September 25, 2020

Newspaper publishers, editors, writers, and designers won top awards in September in the Tennessee Press Association's 2020 newspaper contest cosponsored by UT which has been a part of the annual event since 1940.

The Chattanooga Times Free

Press, the Johnson City Press, the Leaf-Chronicle (Clarksville), the Knoxville Ledger, and the Hamilton County Herald (Chattanooga) won the top general excellence awards in their respective divisions at the association's ceremony, held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Points were awarded for each entry, and general excellence honors were based on the newspaper's total

points in their division.

The Chattanooga Times Free Press and the Bristol Herald Courier each won 10 first-place awards. The Tennessean (Nashville) received eight first-place awards and the Knoxville Ledger received seven first-place awards.

Among the many stories from 2019 cited for excellent work, contest judges highlighted several papers for

their coverage of the Sumner County slayings in April 2019, which left seven people dead and one injured.

As part of the annual contest, newspapers winning first-place awards in the categories of editorials, best single editorial, and public service received \$250 prizes from UT's Edward J. Meeman Foundation. The Tennessean won three awards this year, one for each

category. The Meeman Foundation was established in 1968 at UT to fund the contest, provide professional critiques of journalists' work, and support journalism students and educators.

Reciprocal judging was done this year with the Georgia Press Association, which judged 1,341 entries from 72 of the TPA's 129 member newspapers.

Index to First-Place Entries

General Excellence

Group I. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga

Group II. Knoxville Ledger

Group III. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Group IV. Johnson City Press

Group V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Pages 16-17

Make-Up & Appearance

I. The Camden Chronicle

II. The Wilson Post, Lebanon

III. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

IV. Bristol Herald-Courier

V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Pages 19-20

Best Single Editorial

I. Grainger Today, Bean Station

"When words aren't enough"

Tracey Wolfe

Page 12

II. Murfreesboro Post

"Residents ignored during electric department sale"

Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin, Dave Gould

Page 13

III. The Greeneville Sun

"Keep hands on the wheel, focus on the road"

Scott Jenkins

Page 14

IV. Bristol Herald Courier

"We're at critical mass. Where do we go now with jail overcrowding?"

Cliff Cumber

Page 15

V. The Tennessean, Nashville

"Fix this mess"

Michael Anastasi

Page 18

Best Personal Humor Column

I. The Leader, Covington

"Pimento cheese and family ties"

Sarah Brown

Page 23

II. The Tullahoma News

"I'm Duane Sherrill . . . and I'm a man now"

Duane Sherrill

Page 24

III. Cleveland Daily Banner

"Tales of terror from 'The Night of the Slug'"

Rick Norton

Page 25

IV. Johnson City Press

"Dealing with the shame of locking your keys into your car three times"

David Floyd

Page 26

V. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

"5 things I learned about Hallmark's Memphis"

John Beifuss

Page 27

Best News Photograph

I. The Herald Chronicle, Winchester

"CSX train derails in North FC"

Scott Smith

Page 9

II. The Tullahoma News

"Lady Wildcats triumph"

Zach Birdsong

Page 10

III. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

"Faces of labor"

Henry Taylor

Page 11

IV. Bristol Herald Courier

"Tragic day"

Andre Teague

Page 12

V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

"End of watch"

Erin Smith

Page 13

Best Feature Photograph

I. New Tri-State Defender, Memphis

Karanja Ajanaku

Page 21

II. Farragutpress, Farragut

"Brave Beatrice"

Tammy Cheek

Page 22

III. The Paris Post-Intelligencer

"Having a really good day"

Leslie Sensing

Page 22

IV. Johnson City Press

"The fur flies"

Nathan Baker

Page 23

V. The Tennessean, Nashville

"A new life"

Courtney Pedroza

Page 24

Best Sports Photograph

I. The Milan Mirror-Exchange

"Hornets swat competition in Classic"

Logan Watson

Page 25

II. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

"C-N women get back-to-back wins over King"

Melanie Fritz

Page 25

III. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville

"WCHS wins first round"

Ben Craven

Page 25

IV. Citizen Tribune, Morristown

"Soaring into the postseason"

Adam Greene

Page 26

V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

"Ringgold takes 2 for region title"

Robin Rudd

Page 27

Best Personal Column

I. New Tri-State Defender, Memphis

"Why are people still talking about Eddie Lee Smith, Jr.?"

Lee Eric Smith

Page 28

II. Crossville Chronicle

"Local Government 101"

Heather Mullinix

Page 28

III. The Greeneville Sun

"Roadside marker links doctor and deputy"

Cameron Judd

Page 29

IV. Bristol Herald Courier

"Goodbye, you lovable fuzzi-ball"

Joe Tennis

Page 29

V. The Tennessean, Nashville

"How reading with a kindergartner has transformed me"

David Plazas

Page 30

Headline Writing

Page 30

I. Robertson County Times

Nicole Young, Chris Smith

II. The Knoxville Ledger

Lyle Graves

III. The Nashville Ledger

Lyle Graves

IV. Citizen Tribune, Morristown

John Gullion, Cliff Hightower, Jean Henderson, Robert Moore

V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Staff

Complete list of 2020 contest winners

General Excellence

Group I. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga

Group II. The Knoxville Ledger

Group III. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Group IV. Johnson City Press

Group V. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Make-Up and Appearance

Group I

1. The Camden Chronicle

Christy Slaman, Jennifer Fox, Pamela Mirabella, Angela Jones

Judge's Comments: Great use of photos on page 1.

2. Cheatham County Exchange, Pleasant View

Carrie Tomlin, Mary Anne Ferrell, Mark Rodgers, Pam Wingett, Ivan Aronin

Judge's Comments: Nice-looking pages.

3. Macon County Times, Lafayette

Craig Harris

4. Grainger Today, Bean Station

Robert Turner

Judge's Comments: I really like the use of photos throughout the paper, people like to see themselves and friends in the paper.

5. Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon

Daniel Richardson, Jennifer Fox, Christy Slaman, Shirley Nanney, Ron Park

Judge's Comments: Nice-looking paper.

Group II

1. The Wilson Post, Lebanon

Carrie Tomlin, Mary Anne Ferrell, Ivan Aronin, Tommy Bryan

Judge's Comments: Nice layout.

2. farragutpress, Farragut

farragutpress Editorial, farragutpress Production

Judge's Comments: Nice layout.

3. The Knoxville Ledger

Leigh Singleton, Mike Hopey

Judge's Comments: Great-looking paper.

4. Murfreesboro Post

Carrie Tomlin, Mark Rodgers, Ivan Aronin, Mary Anne Ferrell, Jason Reynolds, Monte Hale

Judge's Comments: Great-looking paper.

5. Hendersonville Standard

Pam Wingett, Sherry Mitchell, Zach Womble, Tena Lee

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Staff

Judge's Comments: Photo illustration on page 1 looks good. A like the big pictures, and bold and big headlines.

2. The Nashville Ledger

Leigh Singleton, Mike Hopey

Judge's Comments: Nice page-1 layout.

3. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville

Don Foy, Kate Cook, Lindsay McReynolds, Scott Wilson, Ben Craven, Ben Wheeler

Judge's Comments: Great-looking paper.

4. Southern Standard, McMinnville

Seth Wright

Judge's Comments: Great-looking paper.

5. The Daily Herald, Columbia

James Bennett, Aaron Walther

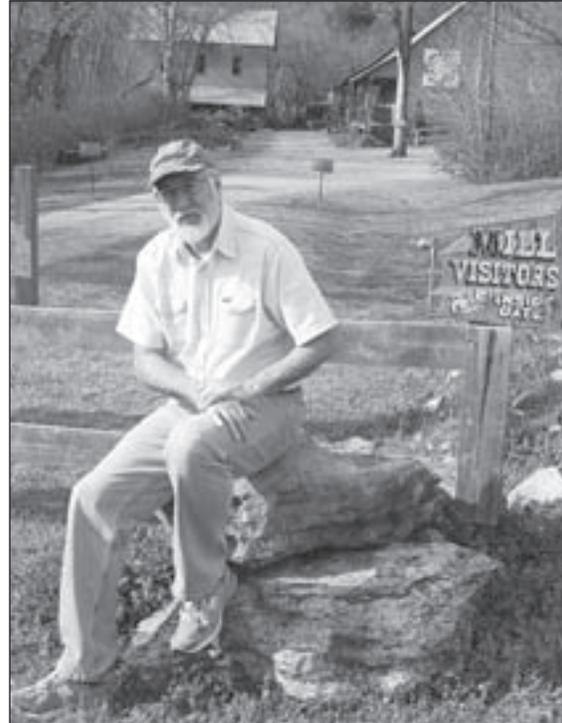
Judge's Comments: Great-looking paper.

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier

Staff

Judge's Comments: Very clean, concise and easy-to-follow page. Also, I like that you tease the on-line elements on the page.



Submitted photos

Top left: Ken Beck, The Wilson Post, Lebanon, first place, Group II, Best Single Feature, and Carthage Courier, first place, Group I, Community Lifestyles. Top right: John Beifuss, The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, first place, Group V, Best Personal Humor Column.

Bottom left: Zach Womble, Hendersonville Standard, first place, Group I, Best Special Issue or Section, and The Gallatin News, first place, Group I, Best Sports Writing. Bottom right; Heather Mullinix, Crossville Chronicle, first place, Group II, Best Personal Column, gets ready to hit the road with perhaps her biggest fan.

2. The Daily Times, Maryville

Design Staff

Judge's Comments: Eye-catching and great teasers around the masthead.

3. Johnson City Press

Brian Reese, Robert Pierce, John Stout, Jason Bullard, Mike Murphy

Judge's Comments: I like the cut-

outs around the masthead.

Group V

1. Chattanooga Times Free

See **WINNERS**, Page 4

WINNERS, from Page 3

Press
Matt McLane

Judge's Comments: A very good-looking front page and inside pages. I think the fonts are eye-catching, and the concept is excellent. Great illustration on page 1.

2. News Sentinel, Knoxville Staff

Judge's Comments: Nice and simple layout.

Local Features

Group I

1. Grainger Today, Bean Station
Tracey Wolfe, Barbara Womack

Judge's Comments: Excellent entry all the way around!

2. Carthage Courier
Ken Beck

Judge's Comments: Well done and creative!

3. Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough
Marina Waters, John Kiener, Lisa Whaley

Judge's Comments: Great work from this group of writers!

4. Brownsville Press
Brooke McCain

Judge's Comments: Entry shows nice range of content in a well-designed package!

5. Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon
Shirley Nanney

Group II

1. Murfreesboro Post
Jason Reynolds, Cat Murphy, Frank Caperton, Ivan Aronin

2. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
Steve Marion, Mark Brown, Kimary Clelland, Eric Cain

3. The Knoxville Ledger
Sheila Burke, Nancy Henderson, Hollie Deese

4. Shelbyville Times-Gazette
Dawn Hankins, John Carney

5. The Wilson Post, Lebanon
Dawn Hankins, John Carney

Group III

1. The Paris Post-Intelligencer
Shelby Frye, Ken Walker

2. The Daily Herald, Columbia
James Clark, Margaret Hobbs, Lisa Hobbs

3. The Nashville Ledger
Kathy Carlson, Tim Ghianni, Tom Wood

4. Southern Standard, McMinnville
Atlanta Northcutt, Jeffery Simmons

5. Cleveland Daily Banner
Kaitlin Gebby, Christy Armstrong, Tim Siniard, Rick Norton

Group IV

1. Johnson City Press
Brandon Paykamian, John Thompson, Jonathan Roberts, Sue Guinn Legg, Joe Avento, Robert Houk

2. The Daily Times, Maryville
Melanie Tucker

Group V

1. News Sentinel
Staff

2. Chattanooga Times Free Press
Mark Kennedy, Doug Strickland, Ben Benton

Best Single Feature

Group I

1. Hamilton County Herald
David Laprad

Judge's comments: Very interesting subject matter, great way of presenting it, interesting for readers.

See **WINNERS**, Page 6

The Tennessee Press Association thanks the following:

The University of Tennessee Office of Communications and Marketing and UT System

We are grateful for the excellent relationship that has existed for 80 years. Since 1940, UT has participated in the implementation of the UT-TPA State Press Contests and has provided plaques and certificates and assisted in various other facets of the awards event.

We especially thank Charles Primm, UT Office of Communications and Marketing, for his work that brings you the awards presentation, plaques and certificates each year.

We also thank Alison Gerber, Contests Committee chairman and members of the 2019-2020 TPA Contests Committee for their contributions, guidance and support.

And we thank each member who judged part of the Georgia Press Association's contest this year!

View all of this year's winning entries at www.tnstatepresswinners.com.

Past General Excellence Winners

From TPA Archives

A points-based Sweepstakes Award was established in 1999. In 2006 the category of General Excellence became a points-based award and replaced the Sweepstakes Award. The newspaper in each of the five contests divisions (Groups I, II, III, IV and V) with the highest total points in its group receives the General Excellence Award.

2011 General Excellence

- I – The Erwin Record
- II – The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
- III – Southern Standard, McMinnville
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – The Tennessean, Nashville

2012 General Excellence

- I – Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough
- II – (a tie) Gallatin News Examiner and Grainger Today, Bean Station
- III – Southern Standard, McMinnville
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – The Tennessean, Nashville

2013 General Excellence

- I – Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough
- II – (a tie) The Standard Banner, Jefferson City, and Manchester Times
- III – Elizabethton Star
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – The Tennessean, Nashville

2014 General Excellence

- I – The Erwin Record
- II – The LaFollette Press
- III – Elizabethton Star
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – Chattanooga Times Free Press

2015 General Excellence

- I – (a tie) Independent Herald, Oneida and The Portland Leader
- II – The Wilson Post, Lebanon
- III – Southern Standard, McMinnville
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – Chattanooga Times Free Press

2016 General Excellence

- I – The Portland Leader
- II – The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

- III – The Lebanon Democrat
- IV – The Jackson Sun
- V – Chattanooga Times Free Press

2017 General Excellence

- I – The Gallatin News
- II – The Wilson Post, Lebanon
- III – (Tie) The Daily Herald, Columbia, and The Lebanon Democrat
- IV – Johnson City Press
- V – The Tennessean, Nashville

2018 General Excellence

- I – Independent Herald, Oneida
- II – The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
- III – The Nashville Ledger
- IV – Bristol Herald Courier
- V – The Tennessean, Nashville

2019 General Excellence

- I – The Gallatin News
- II – Hendersonville Standard
- III – The Nashville Ledger
- IV – Johnson City Press
- V – Chattanooga Times Free Press



Above left to right: Monte Hale Jr., Murfreesboro Post, first place, Group II, Best Sports Coverage; Tracey Wolfe, Grainger Today, Bean Station, first place, Group I, Best Single Editorial and Local Features; Robert Houk, Johnson City Press, Group IV, Local Features; and Jonathan Roberts, Johnson City Press, first place, Group IV, Local Features.



Above left to right: Sue Guinn Legg, Johnson City Press, with granddaughter Caroline and daughter Stephanie, first place, Group IV, Local Features; Amy Beth Miller, The Daily Times, Maryville, first place, Group IV, Best Education Reporting; Andrew Jones, The Daily Times, Maryville, first place, Group IV, Best Business Coverage; Taylor Vortherms, The Daily Times, Maryville, first place, Group IV, Best Special Issue or Section, Best Sports Writing.



Above left to right: Melanie Tucker, The Daily Times, Maryville, first place, Group IV, Community Lifestyles; Troy Provost-Heron, The Daily Times, Maryville, first place, Group IV, Best Special Issue or Section, Best Sports Writing; Leslie Sensing (with a member of her renowned Nubian milk goat herd), The Paris Post-Intelligencer, first place, Group III, Best Feature Photograph; David Plazas (with good pal Bandit), The Tennessean, Nashville, first place, Group V, Best News Reporting, Best Personal Column, Editorials, Public Service.



Submitted photos

Above left: Erin McCullough and Kyle Murphy, The Tullahoma News, won first place in Group II for Best Website. Right photo: Brandon Paykamian (right), Johnson City Press, interviews William Graham, grandson of evangelist Billy Graham. Paykamian was part of the team that won first place for Group IV in Local Features.



Submitted photo

Corey Roepken (right), The Daily Times, Maryville, is seen here interviewing former baseball star Jose Canseco during Canseco's appearance in the ISSA Great Smoky Mountain Senior Class. Roepken was part of The Daily Times team that won top honors for Group IV in Best Sports Writing and Best Special Issue or Section.



Submitted photos

Above left: Nathan Baker, Johnson City Press, and his wife, Meaghan Stark, during a visit to the Superstition Mountains near Phoenix. Baker won top prize for Group IV in Best Feature Photo. Right photo: Ken Walker, The Paris Post-Intelligencer, shows off the PI's first-place plaque for Group III Local Features in front of the 60-foot replica of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Tenn.

WINNERS, from Page 4

2. Hamilton County Herald
David Laprad

Judge's Comments: Incredibly thorough, well-written piece. I could tell the writer took a lot of time researching this and was passionate about this story.

3. The Leader, Covington
Jeff Ireland

Judge's Comments: Interesting story, great way to approach it. Grabbed my attention.

4. The Ashland City Times
Kelly Fisher

5. Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon
Shirley Nanney

Group II

1. The Wilson Post, Lebanon
Ken Beck, Ivan Aronin

2. farragutpress, Farragut
Michelle Hollenhead

3. The Elk Valley Times, Fayetteville
Lucy Williams

4. Hendersonville Standard
Tena Lee, Sherry Mitchell

5. Shelbyville Times-Gazette
Dawn Hankins

Group III

1. The Nashville Ledger
Tom Wood

Judge's comments: Excellent writing and story telling. Fantastic lead. I enjoyed how the author

wove in backstory details.

2. Cleveland Daily Banner
Autumn Hughes

Judge's Comments: Very well done. Great flow, great information, great story. And tears, lots of tears.

3. The Mountain Press, Sevierville
Jason Davis

Judge's Comments: Fun, sweet story! Well-developed subject that was informative and sentimental.

4. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville
Jim Herrin

5. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro
Nancy DeGennaro

Group IV

1. The Daily Times, Maryville
Melanie Tucker

Judge's Comments: Excellent story about human beings working together to help an innocent creature. It not only tugged at the heartstrings, but laid out the plan to help the bear return to the wild. A winner all the way around.

2. Kingsport Times-News
Matthew Lane

Judge's Comments: Excellent lead in with the personal story and transition to where one family personal tragedy led to helping others. Very well done!

3. Kingsport Times-News
Matthew Lane

Judge's Comments: Well-written story about how a young man turned his life around by helping abandoned dogs. You can't go wrong with a feel-good story about the human/dog bond.

4. Bristol Herald Courier
Joe Tennis

5. Citizen Tribune, Morristown
John Gullion

Group V

1. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Rosana Hughes

2. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis
Sarah Macaraeg

3. The Tennessean, Nashville
Jessica Bliss

Community Lifestyles Group I

1. Carthage Courier
Ken Beck

2. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga
David Laprad

3. Pulaski Citizen
Cary Jane Malone, Margaret Campbell, Dan Watson, Johnny Phelps

4. Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough
Lisa Whaley, Marina Waters, Lorelei Goff, Marcella Peek, John Kiener

5. The Gallatin News
Josh Cross, Tena Lee, Sherry Mitchell, Carrie Tomlin

Group II

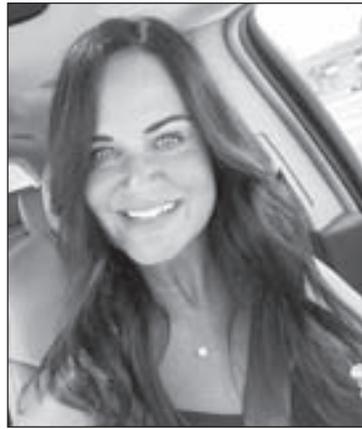
1. The Knoxville Ledger
Nancy Henderson, Jim Meyers, Tom Wood



All photos submitted
Elena Cawley, The Tullahoma News, first place, Group II, Public Service.



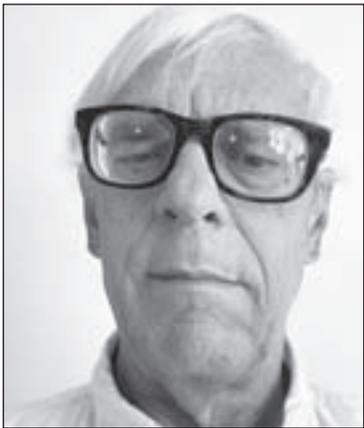
Zach Birdsong, The Tullahoma News, took first place in the Group II category of Best News Photo.



Melanie Fritz, The Standard Banner, Jefferson City, took top honors in Group II for Best Sports Photograph.



Submitted photo
Duane Sherrill (above), The Tullahoma News, won first prize in Group II for Best Personal Humor Column for his piece about a major error on his birth certificate that had gone unnoticed for years.



Submitted photos
Above left: John Thompson, Elizabethton bureau chief for the Johnson City Press, was part of the team that took first place for Local Features in Group IV. Above: Joe Avento, Johnson City Press, shared in that same award for Local Features in Group IV, and here he feels the love from his beloved bloodhound Daisy Duke. Left photo: Jason Reynolds, Murfreesboro Post, who won top honors for Best Single Editorial in Group II, has pen and pad ready for his next interview.



WINNERS, from Page 6

2. The Wilson Post, Lebanon
Ivan Aronin, Carrie Tomlin, Ken Beck, Mary Anne Ferrell

3. Crossville Chronicle
Missy Wattenbarger, Cheryl Duncan, Caroline Selby, Heather Mullinix, Gary Nelson, Rebekah K. Bohannon Beeler, Michael Moser

4. farragutpress, Farragut
farragutpress Editorial, farragutpress Production

5. Hendersonville Standard
Sherry Mitchell, Tena Lee, Josh Cross, Kristina Shaw, Rick Murray, Pam Wingett

Group III

1. The Daily Herald, Columbia
Jay Powell, Mike Christen, Aaron Walther

Judge's comments: DAR photo

out of focus. Remove exclamations from copy. Like the wedding section. Like the Life header. Work on getting the hed decks even (see David Phelps hed). Clean layout. Good original writing.

2. Southern Standard, McMinnville
Margaret Hobbs

Judge's Comments: Don't sensationalize in copy or headlines (see amazing queens story). If source used the word in reference to the girls, use single quotes in head and double quotes in lede. If



Submitted photo
Victor Parkins (left), Milan Mirror-Exchange, is joined, left to right, by Scarlet Elliot, Logan Watson, and Melissa West in front of the newspaper's awards wall. The Mirror-Exchange won top prize for 2020 in the category of Best Special Issue or Section. Watson also won first place for Best Sports Photograph in Group I.

source didn't use the word, don't use it all in copy or hed. Design for 4-H results would've been better with a sidebar box. Like the best wishes section to engage community readers. "Ready to Learn" needs a subhed. "Hair-raising fun" main art is great. Attracts reader and reflects subject matter. Instead of using "filled with electrici-

ty" in hed. Think something along the lines of "Event electrifies" Is more active and reads better than the former. Try to be a little more diverse in content. Copy mostly covered children's events. Try to write longer stories and use less photos for one story. One article

WINNERS, from Page 7

anchored by photos is fine, but not every story needs a ton of photos printed with it. If that's the case, it should be a photo essay instead.

3. The Nashville Ledger

Tom Wood, Tim Ghianni, Chip Cirillo

Judge's Comments: Layout is inviting. Needs more original photos. Needs more diverse content. Can't read copy because it's too small and surrounding art is too distracting. These are more specialized sections than Lifestyles section. The last submission offers more variety, however. Life sections should be a comprehensive look at various features, not solely focusing on one main feature. It is OK to feature one topic on the section front but inside material should be diverse in nature to be more inclusive. While inviting, layout should not distract from writing.

4. Cleveland Daily Banner

Gwen Swiger, Christy Armstrong, Autumn Hughes, Larry Bowers

5. Union City Daily Messenger

Donna Ryder

Group IV

1. The Daily Times, Maryville

Melanie Tucker

Judge's comments: Well-written story about a newspaperman and the community he covered.

2. Bristol Herald Courier

Sandy Ross

Judge's Comments: Loved the illustrations - very eye catching.

3. Johnson City Press

Hannah Swayze, Kenneth Medley, Brandon Paykamian, Becky Campbell, Mike Murphy

Judge's Comments: Fun event important to the community. Very cute pic.

Group V

1. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

Staff

2. The Tennessean, Nashville

Staff

3. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Lisa Denton, Barry Courter, Susan Pierce, Cindy Deifenderfer

Best Sports Writing

Group I

1. The Gallatin News

Zach Womble

Judge's Comments: A major accomplishment for one writer to beat out entries with multiple writers.

2. Macon County Times, Lafayette

Craig Harris

Judge's Comments: A close second. Winner was just too good to beat.

3. Carroll County News-Leader, Huntingdon

Ron Park, Russell Bush, Jim Steele

Judge's Comments: Best example in this category of team writing.

4. The Herald Chronicle, Winchester

Sam Cowan

5. The LaFollette Press

Robbie O'Daniel

Group II

1. The Knoxville Ledger

Rhiannon Potkey, Tom Wood

2. The Wilson Post, Lebanon

Tommy Bryan, John Sloan, Jason Goolesby, Larry Taft, Xavier Smith, Ivan Aronin

3. The Oak Ridger

Darrell Richardson, Angela Richardson

4. Crossville Chronicle

Michael Lindsay

5. The Connection, Springfield

Russell Vannozzi

Group III

1. Cleveland Daily Banner

Joe Cannon, Richard Roberts,

Kaitlin Gebby, Noah Taylor

Judge's Comments: It's easy to focus on the high scores and last-second points, but the CBD staff keeps a focus on the human stories behind the games. Sports coverage is ultimately about people doing something they love, just like Fred Brown.

2. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro

Cecil Joyce, Joe Spears

Judge's Comments: Oakland twins get beyond athletes and numbers. Wonderful deep-dive features, joined with athlete profiles and larger sports issues, i.e., Guarding their hearts. The Venezuelan athletes story stands out even in this crowded submission full of talent.

3. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

George Robinson

Judge's Comments: This is really solid journalism, each story only topped by the next one. It's the human component of sports that makes for the best stories, and Robinson has that in abundance.

4. The Greeneville Sun

Sam Bundy

Judge's Comments: There's no denying Bundy's ability to write, from personal columns to games and profiles. Solid journalism.

5. Southern Standard, McMinnville

Jeffery Simmons

Judge's Comments: A solid example of sports journalism, diving into a number of sports, games, and personal stories.

Group IV

1. The Daily Times, Maryville

Corey Roepken, Troy Provost-Heron, Taylor Vortherms

2. Bristol Herald Courier

Allen Gregory

3. Johnson City Press

Joe Avento, Jeff Birchfield, Tanner Cook, Douglas Fritz

Group V

1. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Stephen Hargis, Mark Wiedmer, Mark Pace

Judge's Comments: Total package, from features, to enterprise to opinion - all of it top notch. Loved that the coverage included marathons, basketball, baseball, golf and prep and college football. Mark Wiedmer's columns and Stephen Hargis' enterprise stories on TSSAA made this entry the clear winner.

2. The Tennessean, Nashville

Paul Skrbina

Judge's Comments: I cringed as I read "Smile if you love playing for the Preds." Great story idea that was perfectly executed with quotes from the team dentists and many of the players. The feature on Craig Baugh tugged at my heartstrings. Baugh's life story and his popularity among NHL players was captured beautifully with anecdotes and quotes. These stories will stick with me for a long time. This was sports feature writing at its best.

3. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

Mark Giannotto

Judge's Comments: Nice mix of columns. The Gasol column was a great idea that was executed to perfection - my favorite of the bunch.

Best Sports Coverage

Group I

1. The Leader, Covington

Jeff Ireland

2. The Courier, Savannah

David Shirley, Jeremy Smith, Shelia Bomar

3. Macon County Times, Lafayette

Craig Harris

4. Carthage Courier

Shea Haile, Terry Collins, Eddie West, Mary Baker

5. Cheatham County Exchange, Pleasant View

Casey Patrick, Russell Vannozzi, Bill Clark, Howard

Abell, Marty Allison

Group II

1. Murfreesboro Post

Monte Hale, Ethan Scott, Jim Davis, Jake Bolden, Matthew Sawyer

Judge's Comments: Tight first-place contest, but variety and depth of coverage wins by a nose.

2. The Connection, Springfield

Russell Vannozzi, Phil Stauder, Ken Herndon, Tyler Graves, Dave Gould

Judge's Comments: Second by a very narrow margin. Best individual writer.

3. Independent Appeal, Selmer

Steve Beavers, Joel Counce, Jeff York

Judge's Comments: third, fourth and fifth are extremely close.

4. Hendersonville Standard

Zach Womble, Andy Telli, Phil Stauder, Don McPeak, Rick Murray, Matt Murray, John Decker

5. Crossville Chronicle

Michael Lindsay

Group III

1. The Greeneville Sun

Sam Bundy, Tate Russell, Wayne Phillips

2. Southern Standard, McMinnville

Jeffery Simmons

3. The Nashville Ledger

Mike Hopey, Chip Cirillo, Tom Wood, Terry McCormick

4. The Daily New Journal, Murfreesboro

Cecil Joyce, Joe Spears, Luis Torres

5. The Mountain Press, Sevierville

Wes Mayberry

Group IV

1. Citizen Tribune, Morristown

Matt Daniels, Derwin Helton,

See **WINNERS**, Page 9

View all of the winning entries at www.tnstatepresswinners.com



First place award

Best News Photograph Group I

Scott Smith –
The Herald Chronicle, Winchester



Judge's comments: Absolutely fantastic work with the variety of content. Each graphic made me curious, and I ended up learning something.

- 2. **Grainger Today, Bean Station**
Robert Turner

Judge's Comments: The artwork is great. I love the old-vintage style of drawing. Absolutely astonishing.

- 3. **Southern Standard, McMinnville**
Seth Wright

Judge's Comments: Loved the variety, also loved how the graphics were able to fit with the articles.

- 4. **The Standard Banner, Jefferson City**

Judge's Comments: Loved the variety; also loved how the graphics were able to fit with the articles.

Kim Cook, Dale Gentry

- 5. **Hendersonville Standard**
Paul Alberstadt

Groups IV & V

- 1. **Bristol Herald Courier**

Chelsea Gillenwater, Sandy Ross, David Thometz, Leif Greiss

- 2. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Matt McClane, Clay Bennett, Mark Wiedmer, Dylan Chesser, Cindy Deifenderfer

- 3. **The Daily Times, Maryville**
Mike Sisco, Marcus Fitzsimmons

Editorials

Group I

- 1. **The Gallatin News**
Josh Cross, Tena Lee, Sherry Mitchell, Dave Gould

- 2. **Grainger Today, Bean Station**
Tracey Wolfe, Barbara Womack, Laura Lakins

- 3. **Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga**
Joe Rogers

- 4. **Hickman County Times, Centerville**
Bradley Martin

- 5. **Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough**
Lisa Whaley, Lorelei Goff,

Marina Waters, John Kiener

Group II

- 1. **The Newport Plain Talk**
Seth Butler

Judge's comments: Editorials are topical, well written and support involvement in the community. The layout is clean and inviting.

- 2. **Hendersonville Standard**
Tena Lee, Josh Cross, Sherry Mitchell, Dave Gould

- 3. **Shelbyville Times-Gazette**
David Melson, Dawn Hankins, John I. Carney

- 4. **The Knoxville Ledger**
Joe Morris

- 5. **Crossville Chronicle**
Cheryl Duncan, Michael Moser, Heather Mullinix

Group III

- 1. **Cleveland Daily Banner**
Rick Norton

- 2. **The Nashville Ledger**
Joe Rogers

- 3. **Herald-Citizen, Cookeville**
Kate Cook, Lindsay McReynolds, Don Foy

- 4. **The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville**
Chris Smith

- 5. **The Jackson Sun**
Brandon Shields

Group IV

- 1. **Johnson City Press**
Sam Watson

Judge's Comments: This says it all: "What the people don't know will hurt them." Timely topics and a strong stance on issues relevant to readers.

- 2. **The Daily Times, Maryville**
J. Todd Foster, Robert Norris

Group V

- 1. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
Staff

Judge's Comments: Insights section is a real marketplace of ideas. Editorials are strong, bold and straightforward.

- 2. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Pam Sohn, Clint Cooper

Judge's Comments: This newspaper shows a willingness to take on important - and controversial - topics and take a decisive stand. Editorials can be a bit wordy at times but are still persuasive.

Best Single Editorial

Group I

- 1. **Grainger Today, Bean Station**
Tracey Wolfe

Judge's Comments: This is everything an editorial should be - calling out elected officials who need to be serious when it comes to serving citizens and being a steward of taxpayer dollars.

- 2. **Manchester Times**

Elena Cawley

Judge's Comments: We all need to remind our readers why they are important and why communities can't do without weekly newspapers. Strong, effective communities, at least.

- 3. **The Humboldt Chronicle**
Danny Wade

Judge's Comments: Working with other media to ensure meetings are available online is a great way to serve the public. Calling out bad behavior in the newspaper is even better.

- 4. **Chester County Independent, Henderson**
Steve Oden

- 5. **Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga**
Joe Rogers

Group II

- 1. **Murfreesboro Post**
Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin, Dave Gould

Judge's comments: This editorial jumps straight to the heart of the matter and is unrelenting in making the point to readers. The solid structure presented reinforced the importance of this topic.

- 2. **Shelbyville Times-Gazette**
David Melson

Judge's Comments: This editorial isn't just about tooting the horn of news media, but highlighting

WINNERS, from Page 8

JD Vaughn

Judge's comments: Great use of bold type on the front page to draw attention to the championship. The section cover and writing are topnotch!

- 2. **Bristol Herald Courier**
Tim Hayes

- 3. **Johnson City Press**
Joe Avento, Douglas Fritz, Jeff Birchfield, Tanner Cook, Kevin Mays, Jonathan Roberts

Group V

- 1. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Stephen Hargis

Judge's comments: Powerful sports

coverage. Felt like I was in Chattanooga at all of the games.

- 2. **News Sentinel, Knoxville**
Staff

Judge's Comments: Great coverage.

- 3. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
Paul Skrbina, Adam Sparks, Erik Bacharach, Gentry Estes, Tommy Deas, Jessica Bliss

Judge's Comments: Strong coverage.

Best Graphics and/or Illustrations

Groups I, II & III

- 1. **The Knoxville Ledger**
Mike Hopey

WINNERS, from Page 9

efforts by those who seek to strip power from the public through misinformation. It gives a healthy dose of contrast of truth and fiction in a time when many want to further blur the line.

- 3. **The Knoxville Ledger**
Joe Rogers

Judge's Comments: This piece cuts through tropes repeated ad nauseam. The writer's focus drives home his point.

- 4. **The Newport Plain Talk**
Seth Butler

- 5. **The Knoxville Ledger**
Joe Rogers

Group III

- 1. **The Greeneville Sun**
Scott Jenkins

- 2. **Cleveland Daily Banner**
Rick Norton

- 3. **The Daily Herald, Columbia**
James Bennett

- 4. **The Greeneville Sun**
Scott Jenkins

- 5. **The Jackson Sun**
Brandon Shields

Group IV

- 1. **Bristol Herald Courier**
Cliff Cumber

- 2. **The Daily Times, Maryville**
J. Todd Foster

- 3. **Bristol Herald Courier**
Paul Rice

- 4. **Johnson City Press**
Sam Watson

- 5. **Johnson City Press**
Scott Watson

Group V

- 1. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
Michael Anastasi

Judge's Comments: Perhaps the strongest of all press contest entries.

- 2. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
David Plazas

Judge's Comments: You have some credit for the subsequent political fortunes of Mr. Casada.

- 3. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Pam Sohn

Judge's Comments: You articulate the problem, describe its impact on the reader and suggest a solution.

Best Personal Column Group I

- 1. **New Tri-State Defender, Memphis**
Lee Eric Smith

- 2. **Chester County Independent, Henderson**
Steve Oden

- 3. **Manchester Times**
John Coffelt

- 4. **Hickman County Times, Centerville**
Bradley Martin

- 5. **The Leader, Covington**
Echo Day

Group II

- 1. **Crossville Chronicle**
Healthier Mullinix

Judge's Comments: One of the most important jobs we have as journalists is to inform our readers about local governments and how they spend taxpayer money. This column struck a nerve with me. The local government does something, people don't fully understand why, and then take to social media to complain. The columnist does a great job taking a complex issue - the school system's budget - and explaining it to her readers in a way that was easy to comprehend and very persuasive. Great job!

- 2. **The Knoxville Ledger**
Joe Rogers

Judge's Comments: This was a great column that hooked me early and had a nice payoff at the end. The columnist is a pro at good storytelling -- keeping the flow going while providing details to keep the reader interested. Among my favorite parts was this from early in the column: "His plan had been to use a police officer's

badge to rob people he said were drug dealers. His reasoning, he said, was simple: "Hey, these people are illegal themselves. How will they call police and say I robbed them?" "But you know something? They did - and here I am."

- 3. **The Wilson Post, Lebanon**
Carrie Tomlin, Ivan Aronin

Judge's Comments: This was a sweet column about having a baby later in life. I appreciated how candid the writer was. Her writing style was very conversational which made it an easy and fun read.

- 4. **Weakley County Press, Martin**
Sabrina Bates

Judge's Comments: This was a great explainer piece for readers on the pros and cons of actual journalists posting news to Facebook. The writer nailed it at the end: Facebook is "no place that can be a true medium for journalistic integrity."

- 5. **The Standard Banner, Jefferson City**
William Blevins

Group III

- 1. **The Greeneville Sun**
Cameron Judd

Judge's Comments: Really strong example of what community columns should be. The reporter takes an example of two of the area's leaders, tells their stories and shows how they're still remembered today.

- 2. **The Nashville Ledger**
Tim Ghianni

Judge's Comments: A very touching tribute to the writer's father. The guy lived more than most of us will ever have the opportunity to.

- 3. **Cleveland Daily Banner**
Rick Norton

Judge's Comments: Author goes back to his childhood, during days of desegregation and introduced his first experiences in school with it.

- 4. **The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville**
Chris Smith

- 5. **Southern Standard, McMinnville**



First place award

Best News Photograph Group II

Zach Birdsong –
The Tullahoma News

THE NEWS
TULLAHOMA, TENNESSEE
www.tullahomanews.com

Lady Wildcats triumph
Allen claims state title
6 other wrestlers place

County delays attorney hiring decision

Staff Photo by Zach Birdsong

Jane Allen hugs head coach Anna Morris after earning a seat into the finals at the TSSAA State Individual Wrestling Championships by beating Shelby Zacharias in overtime. Allen went on to win a state title in the 170-pound weight class on Saturday.

SPORTS EDITOR Zach Birdsong

over Debra Billo-Perez, capturing the state title.

That championship had been in the making all offseason for Allen. During the summer months, the TSSAA event traveled to several different venues in several different states, all with one goal in mind.

"I wanted to win state. That's all I ever wanted to do," Allen said.

Ryan Foster

"It's amazing. I worked so hard for this," Allen said. "I worked all summer. I went to Indiana, North Dakota, Georgia and everywhere. This is what I wanted. It's really good to have that dream realized."

Her head coach, Anna Morris, was all smiles after Saturday's final match. In a celebratory mood, Al-

Legislative committee

However, a few months later, at the Aug. 18 legislative committee meeting, before any discussion

Atlanta Northcutt

Group IV

- 1. **Bristol Herald Courier**
Joe Tennis

Judge's Comments: Well-told story with a haunting yet beautiful ending.

- 2. **Johnson City Press**
Brandon Paykamian

- 3. **The Daily Times, Maryville**
J. Todd Foster

- 4. **The Daily Times, Maryville**
Steve Wildmith

- 5. **Kingsport Times-News**
Jeff Bobo

Group V

- 1. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
David Plazas

- 2. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Mark Kennedy

- 3. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
Alex Hubbard

Best Personal Humor Column

Group I

When words aren't enough

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. If so, perhaps the accompanying photo will shorten the length of this piece.

The antics of some county commissioners are discouraging. Particularly those whose behavior is deserving of their being put in time out. The fact that there are people serving in elected office whose behavior is on the same level as those for whom time out is age appropriate is appalling.

The photo accompanying this piece depicts Grainger County Commissioners Justin Epperson and Rodney Overbay, laughing and talking, while Grainger County Mayor Mike Byrd informs the commission about what would



First place award

Best Single Editorial Group I

Tracey Wolfe – Grainger Today, Bean Station

Meeman Award Winner

been involved in the process to bring clean water to Thorn Hill residents from the get-go, he was the least likely of the three to need to hear Byrd's explanations. Self-control often separates the men from the boys.

Commissioners like Dalton



be needed for Thorn Hill residents to have the opportunity to receive treated water from Sneedville Utility District. The two laughingly conversed for two minutes and 44 seconds, as other commissioners, and members of the audience, strained to hear Byrd speak.

In contrast, Commissioner Gary Wayne Dalton can be seen focusing solely on what Byrd had to say. Considering Dalton has

suffer due to the lack of decorum often displayed by a few others. It is unfair to those commissioners who are actually trying to do their job as representatives of the citizens of Grainger County when meetings are disrupted by immature behavior.

Byrd was explaining the history and status of the water line so that commissioners could make an informed decision whether

to approve almost \$60,000 in matching funds for a grant to pay for the construction of the water line. It could be argued the commissioners ignoring Byrd and behaving badly were talking about an important and serious issue, but judging from all the laughter and the expressions on their faces, it's doubtful. If they were discussing any matter of county business between them, they were in violation of the state's Sunshine Law.

Commission Chairman Johnny Baker shouldn't have to act like a parent in charge of unruly children during meetings, but it's apparent he needs to. Perhaps a class explaining Roberts Rules of Order for all commissioners would be a place to start.

Unfortunately, the behavior depicted in the photo wasn't the only instance of poor behavior during Monday's meeting. Interrupting, talking over top of other commissioners and even using excessively loud voices were also exhibited by some of those representing us, the citizens.

Grainger County citizens are not getting what they pay for. Even after receiving an enormous raise, some commissioners still can't bring themselves to act in a professional manner. I guess they're laughing all the way to the bank.



First place award

Best News Photograph Group IV

Andre Teague – Bristol Herald Courier



with the news coverage. The tale of this modern-day Bonnie and Clyde is told from the viewpoint of both investigators and the victims. When does the Netflix documentary?

den, Mealand Ragland-Hudgins
Judge's Comments: Three stories were needed to delve into this complex web of deceit. Good reporting and clear writing. The DNJ told a difficult story in a manner that readers could easily grasp.

WINNERS, from Page 11

Josh Cross, Sherry Mitchell

Judge's Comments: Solid use of public records to inform the community about the behavior of their elected officials.

3. Carthage Courier

Eddie West

Judge's Comments: Great splash headline and nifty organization for the story. Perhaps some more details of what happened during the robbery could go higher up

on A1.

4. Brownsville Press

Brooke McCain

5. Carroll County News-Leader, Huntingdon

Shirley Nanney

Group II

1. The Standard Banner Jefferson City

Steve Marion, Mark Brown

2. The Wilson Post, Lebanon

Angie Mayes, Ivan Aronin

3. Murfreesboro Post

Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin

4. Hendersonville Standard

Tena Lee, Sherry Mitchell

5. Roane County News, Kingston

Damon Lawrence

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Alexis Clark, Chris Smith

Judge's Comments: Compelling stuff. Good story-telling mixed in

2. Southern Standard, McMinnville

James Clark

Judge's Comments: This report should be used as a model for descriptive reporting. It's phrases such as "The scenic beauty was replaced by moments of terror ..." that tell the story of displaced residents. Great writing. Good description. Interesting details.

3. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro

Brinley Hineman, Scott Bro-

4. Cleveland Daily Banner

Tim Siniard, Rick Norton

5. Southern Standard, McMinnville

James Clark

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier

Robert Sorrell, Leif Greiss, Lurah Spell



First place award

**Best News
Photograph
Group V**

*Erin Smith –
Chattanooga Times Free Press*



Residents ignored during electric department sale

Once the City of Murfreesboro sells its electric department, that asset will be gone forever.

City Manager Craig Tindall claims the power to make that decision rests solely with the seven members of the Murfreesboro City Council.

Here are some of our concerns:

- There is no indication the council plans to allow citizens to vote on the sale in a referendum.

- Only one buyer is being considered.

- It's difficult to determine the utility's value.

Tennessee Code Annotated 7-52-132 "Disposition of plant Election resolution Notice Ballot Election" lays out requirements for selling a municipal utility, including a citizen referendum. Tindall, who is the former city attorney, says he interprets state law to say the code does not apply to MED because the city a couple of years ago changed its charter to bring the utility more directly under the city's control.

The Murfreesboro Post contacted the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's Office.

Comptroller Director of Communications John Dunn said, "We're not currently aware of any requirements that would require Murfreesboro to receive bids prior to selling its electric department. Bids are more commonly used when a government entity is

First place award

**Best Single
Editorial
Group II**

*Jason Reynolds, Ivan
Aronin, Dave Gould
- Murfreesboro Post*

Meeman Award Winner

purchasing something. It would appear, however, that the City of Murfreesboro would be subject to TCA 7-52-132 if it chooses to proceed with selling its electric department. This law requires that not only the council approve the sale, but that it also be subject to a public referendum. See below (referring to the code's wording). Please note, this is just our opinion. Legal advice should be provided by the City Attorney or other hired counsel."

While the office does not oversee utilities, it does provide some oversight of state and local government bodies in the form of financial audits, among other functions.

Another concern is MED's value.

When the council tried to sell the utility in 2015, the city's consultant

set the value at \$422.9 million, far above MTEMC's offer of \$150 million. Both sides now are working toward a price of \$202 million plus other assets that Tindall says puts it closer to \$300 million.

Tindall said the city used cash flow to set its value.

MTEMC's valuation considered three approaches to set a value: cost approach, income approach and market approach. Each uses different factors and creates different valuations.

At one point during this negotiation the city's valuation was over \$267 million, while MTEMC's fair market value estimate was \$202 million.

These wildly varying numbers beg the question of how much is MED worth?

MED's ratepayers since its founding in 1939 have paid for its assets and operations. Not all city residents are MED customers – some are MTEMC customers. Both groups will be affected by a sale. While MED customers have local utility oversight now in the form of MED's board of directors and the city council, their representation will be diluted when they are part of the nation's third-largest electric co-op. If their voice is never heard now, it likely never will be.

The residents of Murfreesboro deserve to have the final word.

2. The Tennessean, Nashville
Yihyun Jeong, Adam Tamburin, Mariah Timms

3. Chattanooga Times Free Press
Sarah Grace Taylor

**Best News
Reporting
Group I**

1. The Gallatin News
Josh Cross, Sherry Mitchell
Judge's Comments: Mr. Cross provided very clear writing and detailed reporting in a series of breaking stories on the death and investigations of eight Sumner County residents in April. He and fellow reporter Sherry Mitchell made a complex story clear for their readers to follow the largest mass homicide in Tennessee in 20 years. Six members of the

suspect's extended family were found in one location and a seventh - a robbery victim - was found elsewhere. The 25-year-old parolee was charged later with the death of a man killed days earlier but not found much later. The News published family photos of the victims that larger, non-local publications probably would not have gotten.

2. Robertson County Times, Springfield
Nicole Young, Mariah Timms, Elaina Sauber, Mike Clark

Judge's Comments: In any other year, the reporting and writing by Nichole Young, Mariah Timms, Elaina Sauber and Mike Clark would have taken First Place. They exercised a lot of initiative, including involving some of the town's 2,000 residents impacted, to cover the intrigue, including surreptitious meetings, allegations of traffic

ticket quotas, political retaliation and multiple lawsuits involving an 84-year-old, 1-stoplight town.

3. Hickman County Times, Centerville
Bradley Martin

Judge's Comments: Mr. Martin chronicled in clear but pain-staking detail how a group of Hickman County residents were left holding the bag for maintenance of a roadway promised to their development for more than a decade. After a court held the county immune from liability under sovereign immunity for letting developers off the hook. Following Mr. Martin's coverage, the county agreed to share the project cost.

4. Brownsville Press
Carlton Veirs, Brooke McCain

WINNERS, from Page 12

Judge's Comments: This standout entry reported the facts, but went further in getting fan reaction. Loved the sidebars. Well-written and concise. Solid journalism on a story that certainly held high-reader interest.

2. Johnson City Press
John Thompson, Jeff Birchfield

Judge's Comments: What stood out in this entry was the effort made to give solid background information on the Earnhardt family. Good reporting. straightforward writing.

3. Kingsport Times-News
Matthew Lane, Rain Smith

Judge's Comments: Loved the sidebar as much as the main bar. Good reporting on a story that certainly created utmost concern with readers.

4. Johnson City Press
Kenneth Medley, John Thompson, Sam Watson

5. Bristol Herald Courier
Robert Sorrell, Lurah Spell

Group V

1. News Sentinel, Knoxville
Staff

WINNERS, from Page 13

Judge's Comments: Brownsville Press for well-written running coverage by Carlton Veirs and Brook McCain of the fight between city mayor and Chamber of Commerce director's failure to reimburse the city for payroll expenses.

5. Grainger Today, Bean Station
Tracey Wolfe, Barbara Womack

Group II

1. The Knoxville Ledger
Sheila Burke, Kathy Carlson

Judge's Comments: Great writing throughout on a diverse range of politicians and government leaders. Strong art presentation.

2. The Knoxville Ledger
Joe Morris, Hollie Deese, Kylie Hubbard, Tom Wood

Judge's Comments: Comprehensive look at a diverse range of contributors to the local economy. Strong art presentation.

3. Murfreesboro Post
Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin

Judge's Comments: Very timely series in two ways: dealing with the opioid crisis and the interest state lawmakers around the country are showing in hemp and CBD.

4. The Newport Plain Talk
Alison Brooks

5. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
Steve Marion, Mark Brown

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville
Jennifer Babich

Judge's Comments: Powerful writing style. Well done coverage of a difficult topic. Excellent photography and layout design. Strong follow-up pieces.

2. The Daily Herald, Columbia
James Bennett, Mike Christen

Judge's Comments: Important subject covered well showing issues from a local scale to an international one. Writing style is hard-hitting. Graphics, pho-

tography and layout is excellent throughout the series of stories.

3. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville
Stephanie Ingersoll

Judge's Comments: Powerful writing style with strong investigative qualities. Photo illustration and layout is excellent. Follow up coverage is hard hitting and relevant.

4. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville
Ben Wheeler

5. Cleveland Daily Banner
Tim Siniard

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier
David McGee, Robert Sorrell, Tim Dodson, Joe Tennis, Leif Greiss, Lurah Spell

2. The Daily Times, Maryville
J. Todd Foster

3. Kingsport Times-News
Jeff Bobo, Rain Smith, J. H. Osborne, Hank Hayes

4. Johnson City Press
Nathan Baker, Robert Houk, Zach Vance, David Floyd, Jonathan Roberts

5. Bristol Herald Courier
David McGee

Group V

1. The Tennessean, Nashville
Jessica Bliss, Jason Gonzales, Adam Tamburin, Mike Reicher, Anita Wadhvani, Duane Gang, David Plazas

Judge's comments: Like that the Tennessean saw a story concept lying within the education system and expanded upon it. Education is always going to be a relevant topic. Report clearly took time to construct. Like the call for action. Good supporting data. Lots of original reporting. Reporting could've been a little more balanced by getting "the other side" of the story. Needs more opposition to be fair.

2. Chattanooga Times Free Press
Rosana Hughes

Judge's Comments: Compelling photography to complement compelling story. Thorough reporting. Balanced coverage. Good

Keep hands on the wheel, focus on the road

Carrie Underwood scored a hit on the country charts in 2005 with the song, "Jesus Take the Wheel," but we can't count on the Almighty jumping into the driver's seat if we're not doing our part to stay safe on the roadways.

That's why it's encouraging that, as Ken Little reported in Monday's paper, local law enforcement agencies are working to ensure drivers know about the Hands Free Law that went into effect July 1. Most have no doubt heard of the new statute's requirements by now, but they bear repeating:

The law makes it illegal for a driver to:

- hold a cellphone or mobile device with any part of the body;
- write, send or read any text-based communication;
- reach for a cellphone or mobile device that requires the driver to no longer be in a seated driving position or properly restrained by a seat belt;
- watch a video or movie on a cellphone or mobile device; and
- record or broadcast video on a cellphone or mobile device.

Those seem like common-sense measures. When controlling a machine that weighs thousands of pounds on roadways filled with other machines weighing thousands of pounds – as well as some

job not convicting suspect and instead allowed the police to do it. Reporter went above and beyond by attending funeral. Hope she was sensitive to the situation's emotional state by allowing sources to grieve and not press them too hard. The officer's willingness to speak demonstrates the relationship between the publication and the department, which is essential for any newspaper. Layout added to attracting readers to the piece. Overall, amazing job! Good investigative series. Kudos!

3. News Sentinel, Knoxville
Jamie Satterfield

Judge's Comments: Subject matter relevant and timely. The first initial story uses language that accuses Purdue rather than letting the sources do that. It is not the job of the journalist to accuse or convict, only report the facts. Detailed writing.

Investigative Reporting



Meeman Award Winner

First place award

Best Single Editorial Group III

Scott Jenkins - The Greeneville Sun

weighing much less and completely unprotected pedestrians – safe operation should be the top priority. In a world where we're always connected to our devices and every bit of incoming information seems vitally important, however, priorities can be misplaced faster than we can slam on the brakes.

And that can be a deadly mistake. According to a report commissioned by personal finance website ValuePenguin, investigators blamed distracted driving due to cellphone use for more than 1,400 fatalities nationwide from 2015 to 2017. Of all states, the report says, Tennessee had the highest rate of such accidents during that time with 7.2 distracted driving deaths per 10 billion miles traveled – nearly five times the national average.

That is not a list you want to top, and we appear to be moving in the right direction. Statistics provided Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security show the number of distracted driver-related wrecks declining statewide and in Greene County from 2017 to 2018. Still, Sheriff Wesley Holt told Little if authorities routinely examined cellphone records after crashes, "we would find a lot more wrecks caused by distracted driving."

That's why the Hands Free Law and the Hands Free Tennessee information campaign are so important. Up to now, authorities have been handing out warnings and fliers explaining the law. Soon, they'll start issuing citations that carry a \$50 fine for a first offense and increase from there – and rightly so.

No one likes being told what to do, especially by the government. But when you drive while distracted by a cell phone or anything else, you're not just putting yourself in danger. You're putting the safety of everyone in and around your vehicle at risk, too.

No call or text or social media update is worth that. Let's keep our priorities in order, Greene County, and keep our hands on the wheel.

Group I

1. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga
Tom Wood

2. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga
David Laprad

3. The Camden Chronicle
Pamela Mirabella

4. Portland Sun
Staff

5. Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough
Marina Waters

Group II

1. The Newport Plain Talk
Alison Brooks

2. Crossville Chronicle
Michael R. Moser

3. Murfreesboro Post

Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin

4. The Wilson Post, Lebanon
Angie Mayes, Ivan Aronin

5. Murfreesboro Post
Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville
Jennifer Babich

2. Cleveland Daily Banner
Christy Armstrong

3. Cleveland Daily Banner
Tim Siniard

4. The Jackson Sun
Cassandra Stephenson, Brett Kelman

5. The Greeneville Sun
Ken Little

Where do we go now with jail overcrowding?

The stories you have read over the past seven days and today—published by The Bristol Herald Courier following a comprehensive eight-month investigation into overcrowding at the Sullivan County Detention Center and Bristol Virginia Jail—sum up a catastrophe unfolding in slow motion.

Here we are, at a tipping point Sullivan County Criminal Court Judge James Goodwin in 2017 termed “critical mass.”

Inmates sleep on the floor. Guards, the few that there are, and inmates are at constant risk of violence. Conditions in the Sullivan County jail are so treacherous that inmates nicknamed it the “Thunderdome.”

A wave of addicts—from opiates and, more recently, methamphetamines—are being funneled by mandatory sentencing into these already overburdened facilities, but there are too few rehabilitation programs to effectively help break the offend-release-reoffend cycle.

Yet, the region’s elected officials have for years ignored the warning claxons, pushing scarce resources to more politically palatable areas—ones that sound snappier on campaign advertising—or simply deferring the problem.

As this project shows, we’re out of time. Deferral is no longer possible as a strategy. We could even be past the point of no return. We must start here and now to solve the increasingly urgent, systemic deficiencies that have led us into this criminal-justice morass.

The Bristol Herald Courier is stepping up to lead this discussion. As a starting point, in addition to our investigative journalism on “Critical Mass,” the newspaper hosted a town hall Wednesday



Meeman Award Winner
Cliff Cumber

First place award

Best Single Editorial Group IV

Cliff Cumber - Bristol Herald Courier

night at the old Sullivan County Courthouse in Blountville. If you couldn’t be there, you can see the archived livestream on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/heraldcourierdotcom). We invite you to join the discussion.

Jail overcrowding is a complex, interconnected issue, and so are the solutions. We may have to resign ourselves that even the simplest resolutions could take years. The structural origins of the issue—the ones beyond simple bricks and mortar and manpower, which lie in the realm of criminal-justice philosophy and the national economy—may be entirely outside local control.

According to The Sentencing Project, the U.S. leads the world in incarceration, with 2.2 million people in U.S. corrections facilities in 2017. Prison populations have grown by 500% over the past four decades.

But that doesn’t mean our communities are helpless or solutions beyond reach.

If one thing is clear, though, building larger facilities to house more offenders is an unrealistic long-term option, especially given the influx of drug-related convictions—a painful hangover from war-on-drugs sentencing policies

of the ’80s.

We can’t jail our way out of the problem. But we can reduce the influx.

In the short term, the Tennessee state legislature must revisit drug-sentencing laws that require mandatory jail time. As we were told by Julie Canter, a defense attorney in Sullivan County and a former assistant district attorney in the locality, a simple possession misdemeanor meth charge carries a mandatory 30 days in jail. That can be enough to begin a lifetime in and out of detention.

The state must commit funding to comprehensive and truly rehabilitative recovery programs that allow the scores of incarcerated addicts a shot at escaping the sinkhole of addiction.

Longer term, we must bring together law enforcement, prosecutors, the judiciary, incarceration experts and elected officials to answer tough questions about the root causes that lead to overcrowding.

Copious resources exist for us to draw on, and we must use them.

In the longest term, we have to work toward a robust regional economy based on a comprehensive educational system that is committed to excellence, and the growth of industry and businesses that provide varying levels of employment with livable salaries and rounded health care.

Right now, it’s a mess—an inhumane, dangerous, immoral mess that only feeds on itself; nothing more than human warehouses—a production line that battery farms criminality out into our communities in a never-ending cycle.

We could return to the status quo. We can continue to ignore it. We would do so at our peril.

Judge’s Comments: I-81. Solid coverage of an important event, going beyond the surface, providing the reader with real context.

4. Johnson City Press

Nathan Baker, Brandon Paykamian, Robert Houk, Jonathan Roberts

Judge’s Comments: Interesting reporting on a complicated and perhaps overlooked issue in the media.

5. The Daily Times, Maryville

Waylon Cunningham

Judge’s Comments: Solid reporting, just not as in-depth as some other entries in this category.

Group V

1. News Sentinel, Knoxville

Staff

2. The Tennessean, Nashville

Anita Wadhvani, Mike Reicher

3. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Mark Pace

Best Business Coverage

Group I

1. Roberston County Times, Springfield

Nicole Young, Elaina Sauber, Desiree Stennett, Alexis Clark, Chris Smith, Ken Atkinson, Melissa Corbin

Judge’s Comments: Thorough pollution, Electrolux and economic development stories. Good analysis on airport impact and fiber optic impact. Solid business coverage.

2. Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga

David Laprad, Jim Myers, Hollie Deese, Joe Morris, Sheila Burke

Judge’s Comments: Very thorough stories and good range of topics, from resale of older home items, feature on Lodge and changes in real estate business.

3. The Courier, Savannah

R. Kelly Jordan, Linda Jo Edwards-White, June Iljana, Staff

Judge’s Comments: Good hospital analysis story and business features and news like dialysis story. Solid local business coverage.

4. The Gallatin News

Josh Cross, Sherry Mitchell

Judge’s Comments: Design good on popcorn and snowball stories. Solid business coverage. Would like to see some in-depth analysis, too.

5. The Dickson Post, Gallatin

Elliott Wenzler, Sean Barry, Randy Moomaw, Sabrina Garrett, Ivan Aronin

Judge’s Comments: Attrac-

tive photos and solid business coverage. Would like to see some in-depth analysis, too.

Group II

1. The Knoxville Ledger

Joe Morris, Hollie Deese, Nancy Henderson, Jim Myers, Kylie Hubbard

2. The Tullahoma News

Duane Sherrill, Katelyn Lawson, Kyle Murphy, Erin McCullough

3. The Elk Valley Times, Fayetteville

Lucy Williams, Sandy Williams, Laurie Caruso, Paul Henry

4. The Newport Plain Talk

Matthew Winter, Seth Butler, Duay O’Neil, Gem Lieser

5. farragutpress, Farragut

farragutpress Editorial, farragutpress Production

Group III

1. The Nashville Ledger

Hollie Deese, Tom Wood, Richard Courtney, Joe Morris, Jim Meyers

Judge’s Comments: By far the strongest entry.

2. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Jimmy Settle, Jennifer Babich

Judge’s Comments: Great photos and diversity of subject matter.

3. The Jackson Sun

Adam Friedman, Cassandra Stephenson

Judge’s Comments: Excellent photos and layout.

4. The Paris Post-Intelligencer

Jason Reynolds, John Carney, Ashley Coker, Terence Corrigan, Dawn Hankins

Judge’s Comments: Strong art carried this story.

5. The Mountain Press, Sevierville

Jeff Farrell

Judge’s Comments: Strong writing and photos.

Group IV

See **WINNERS**, Page 17

WINNERS, from Page 14

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier

Leif Greiss, Nick Shepherd

Judge’s Comments: Putting a real face on homelessness, making the story compelling and accessible, working in a team approach to provide strong infographics and art to complement a researched, well-written, and important piece. Good job.

2. Johnson City Press

Brandon Paykamian, David Floyd, Sue Guinn Legg, Robert Houk, Nathan Baker, Becky Campbell, Jonathan Roberts

Judge’s Comments: This series was a massive undertaking. The newspaper put a lot of resources into the project. Stories were well-researched and the writing crisp.

3. Bristol Herald Courier

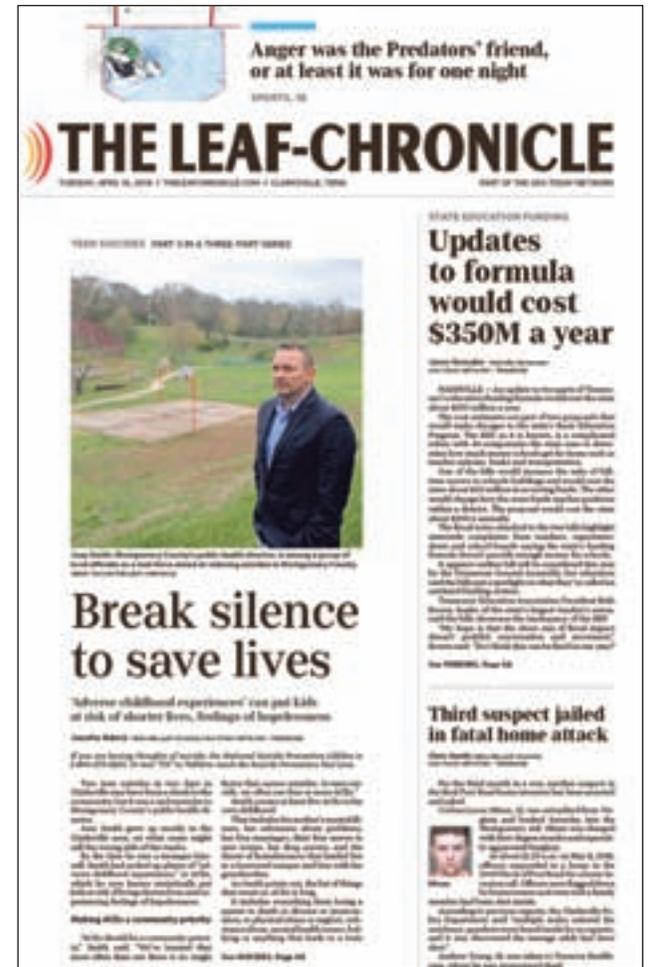
Robert Sorrell

2020 General Excellence Winners

Circulation Group I: Combined weekly circulation of 5,000 or less
Hamilton County Herald, Chattanooga

Circulation Group II: Combined weekly circulation of 5,001-15,000
The Knoxville Ledger

Circulation Group III: Combined weekly circulation of 15,001-50,000
The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville



Submitted photo

David Floyd, who won top prize for Best Personal Humor Column in Group IV, joined the Johnson City Press as an intern after his freshman year of college, worked at the Press part-time through college and later returned as a full-time staff writer.



Submitted photo

Sam Watson, Johnson City Press, who won first place in Group IV for Editorials, is seen with granddaughter Carah Taylor at a recent daddy-daughter dance in Johnson City.



Submitted photo

Top photo: Tammy Cheek, farragutpress photographer, took top honors in Group II for Best Feature Photograph.

2020 General Excellence Winners

Circulation Group IV: Combined weekly circulation of 15,001-50,000
Johnson City Press

Circulation Group V: Combined weekly circulation of 50,001-200,000
Chattanooga Times Free Press



Submitted photos

Top: Chattanooga Times Free Press page designer John Battle, showing his Big Ten team loyalties for "Sparty," was part of the TFP team that won top prize for Makeup & Appearance in Group V. Bottom: Jamie Poole, also a TFP designer, was part of the newspaper's winning team in Group V sports coverage.



WINNERS, from Page 15

- 1. **The Daily Times, Maryville.**
Andrew Jones, Waylon Cunningham, Melanie Tucker, Robert Norris, J. Todd Foster
- 2. **Johnson City Press**
Zach Vance, Robert Houk, Jonathan Roberts, David Floyd, Sue Guinn Legg, Nathan Baker

- 3. **City Tribune, Morristown**
Glenna Howington
- Group V**
- 1. **The Tennessean, Nashville**
Brett Kelman

Judge's Comments: Great investigative work, compelling writing, creative display.

- 2. **The Commercial Appeal,**

- Memphis**
Ted Evanoff, Max Garland, Desiree Stennett
- Judge's Comments: Good variety of topics with strong photos and display.*
- 3. **Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Dave Flessner, Mike Pare, Allison Collins, Mary Fortune

Judge's Comments: Good choice

of subjects, well written and displayed.

Best Education Reporting

Group I

- 1. **Hamilton County Record, Chattanooga**
David Laprad, Kathy Carlson

Judge's Comments: Very thor-

ough, timely stories with analysis and explanation. Good graphics and design.

- 2. **Brownsville Press**
Brooke McCain, Carlton Veirs

Judge's Comments: Good reporting and helpful graphics to visualize the gains in scores, etc. Good variety of coverage, from

WINNERS, from Page 17

general reporting to in-depth explanations of what scores/rankings mean.

- 3. Carthage Courier**
Eddie West

Judge's Comments: Good mix of reporting and explanation. Graphics might be helpful in some stories like changes in enrollment.

- 4. The Ashland City Times**
Jessica Bliss, Kelly Fisher, Nicole Young

- 5. The LaFollette Press**
Deidre Wilson

Group II

- 1. The Knoxville Ledger**
Joe Morris, Hollie Deese, Nancy Henderson, Sheila Burke

Judge's Comments: The Ledger's coverage on a wide range of school matters is thorough, informative, and superior. The storytelling chops for profile pieces are there, and the needed scrutiny is brought to subjects like voucher programs that any community's members must understand.

- 2. Independent Appeal, Selmer**
Steve Beavers

Judge's Comments: Not your typical dog day community paper. The headlines and style are stellar. The local schools coverage is comprehensive, but could benefit from more reporting on school board and leadership actions.

- 3. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City**
Dale Gentry, Mark Brown, Steve Marion

Judge's Comments: The Standard Banner's education coverage provides an excellent mix of fun student happenings, school board actions, and topical items like active shooter training. A well-rounded periodical.

- 4. The Wilson Post, Lebanon**
Xavier Smith, Angie Mayes, Laurie Everett, Jason Goolesby, Ivan Aronin

- 5. Murfreesboro Post**
Jason Reynolds, Ivan Aronin

Group III

- 1. Southern Standard, McMinnville**
Lisa Hobbs, Atlanta Northcutt, James Clark

- 2. The Daily Herald, Columbia**
Mike Christen, James Bennett

- 3. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville**
Jennifer Babich, Jimmy Settle, Chris Smith

- 4. The Nashville Ledger**
Kathy Carlson, Sheila Burke, Hollie Deese, Joe Rogers

- 5. The Paris Post-Intelligencer**
Shelby Frye, Cassie Walsh, Michael Williams

Group IV

- 1. The Daily Times, Maryville**
Amy Beth Miller,

- 2. Johnson City Press**
Brandon Paykamian, Jonathan Roberts

Group V

- 1. Chattanooga Times Free Press**
Meghan Mangrum

- 2. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis**
Laura Testino, Jennifer Pignolet, Sarah Macaraeg

- 3. The Tennessean, Nashville**
Jessica Bliss, Jason Gonzales, Adam Tamburin, Mike Reicher, Anita Wadhvani, Duane Gang

Headline Writing

Group I

- 1. Robertson County News, Springfield**
Nicole Young, Chris Smith

- 2. The Camden Chronicle**
Pamela Mirabella

- 3. The Courier News, Clinton**
Kenneth Leinart

- 4. Pulaski Citizen**
Cary Jane Malone, Nathan Gomillion

- 5. Grainger Today, Bean Station**
Tracey Wolfe

Group II

- 1. The Knoxville Ledger**
Lyle Graves

Please fix this mess

Welcome to Tennessee, Mr. Lyash. No doubt you had a busy first week as the new CEO of the Tennessee Valley Authority. And what a responsibility! You lead the nation's first and largest regional planning and economic development agency owned and operated by the federal government.

You provide power for some 10 million people, and you employ thousands in our state. You've taken over an organization whose history and legacy are revolutionary and inspiring. Few organizations have transformed the lives of so many people, across so many generations. And we know you believe deeply in this mission, a mission derived from decades of service to improving the lives of the people of the Tennessee Valley. This is what has brought you to Knoxville. Which is why today we challenge you to be the leader your predecessor was not.

We challenge you to launch a fully independent and transparent investigation of safety and workplace practices that occurred in the aftermath of the massive Kingston coal ash spill and cleanup — not just the TVA's own practices, but those of every one of the contractors and subcontractors it employs. We've reported extensively about the workers who have died, and the hundreds



Meeman Award Winner

First place award

Best Single Editorial Group V

Michael Anastasi - The Tennessean, Nashville

of others who are sick, after their exposure to the toxic ash. Learn from the mistakes of the past and demand accountability.

We challenge you to commit to a top-to-bottom review and overhaul of workplace safety at every power plant you operate. Last week we reported about workers at two Tennessee plants who are exposed to fly ash dust and flue gas without masks or respirators.

We challenge you to review your relationship with Jacobs Engineering. Although the case goes on, a federal jury already found Jacobs breached its contract with the TVA and its duty to ensure the health of cleanup workers. Yet you're still doing hundreds of millions of dollars of business with the company.

We challenge you to hire an

independent consultant to radically remake your internal reporting and whistle-blowing procedures and make sure they are accessible to your contractors as well. Your people are adamant no one should fear workplace retaliation, yet your workers are coming to us because they don't trust TVA.

We challenge you to rid the agency of doublespeak and misdirection — where it's culturally acceptable to mislead the public, as Bill Johnson did when he said that the EPA, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and OSHA were on site daily during the Kingston cleanup. Today at the TVA it's acceptable for your official spokesman to recraft this as mere hyperbole.

Finally, we challenge you to visit your employees in the field. Talk to them. Not with an entourage, not with a phalanx of handlers who will hand-select the ones who'll say the "right" things to you. You need to hear the truth. You need to visit sick men in hospitals and listen to their stories. You need to sit down in the lunchroom with truck drivers who are around fly ash all day. You need to walk through the plant, see things yourself. And then you need to do the right thing.

Judge's Comments: Tremendously enticing!

- 2. Murfreesboro Post**
Ivan Aronin, Jason Reynolds

- 3. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City**
Steve Marion, Dale Gentry, Mark Brown

- 4. Roane County News, Kingston**
Jason Perry

- 5. The Wilson Post, Lebanon**
Ken Beck, Ivan Aronin, Carrie Tomlin

Group III

- 1. The Nashville Ledger**
Lyle Graves

Judge's Comments: Clever and intriguing!

- 2. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville**
Staff

Judge's Comments: Very powerful!

- 3. The Greeneville Sun**
Staff

Judge's Comments: Spilled Beans!

- 4. Southern Standard, McMinnville**
Seth Wright, Jeffery Simmons

Judge's Comments: Great pun!

- 5. Cleveland Daily Banner**
Rick Norton, Autumn Hughes

Judge's Comments: Well done!

Group IV

- 1. Citizen Tribune, Morristown**
John Gullion, Cliff Hightower, Jean Henderson, Robert Moore

- 2. Johnson City Press**
Brian Reese, Robert Pierce

- 3. The Daily Times, Maryville**
Mike Sisco, Abigail Potter, Marcus Fitzsimmons

- 4. Kingsport Times-News**
Frank Cannon

- 5. Bristol Herald Courier**
Sandy Ross, David Thometz, Robert Allen

Group V

- 1. Chattanooga Times Free Press**

2020 Make-up & Appearance Winners

Circulation Group I:
The Camden Chronicle

Circulation Group II:
The Wilson Post, Lebanon

Circulation Group III:
The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville



WINNERS, from Page 18

- Staff
Judge's Comments: Clever play on words, literary awareness and a little humor along the way, while reflecting the essence of the story.
- 2. The Tennessean, Nashville
Karen Grigsby
Judge's Comments: Well-written headlines, just not as strong as

- other entries in this category.*
- 3. News Sentinel, Knoxville
Sarah Strong
Judge's Comments: Headlines are clear and accurate.
- Public Service Group I**
- 1. The Courier, Savannah
R. Kelly Jordan, Linda Jo Edwards-White, Ron Schaming, Staff

Judge's Comments: Every newspaper has had the experience of reporting on a fatal, tragic wreck, the kind that really hits the community. The Courier staff take the initiative to help head off those accident stories before they happen with a series taking readers through safety, statistics, and stories from the people with first hand experience. A community recovering from a devastating natural disaster can be aided greatly by its newspaper. That's what the Courier does

here, taking readers through the aftermath of the flood all the way through lessons for prevention.

- 2. The Gallatin News
Sherry Mitchell, Dave Gould, Josh Cross, Tena Lee, Kristina Shaw, Carrie Tomlin, Pam Wingett
Judge's Comments: Change is always upsetting to some people, and the Gallatin News team takes its readers in depth through two big changes: the growth of their community and the twice-a-de-

cade property reappraisal. Both could be confusing, but with solid reporting, readers (even out of state readers judging a journalism competition) get a solid handle on it.

- 3. Manchester Times
Elena Cawley, John Coffelt
Judge's Comments: Very impressed by the MT staff tackling a difficult subject. Most newspaper shy away from suicide as a

WINNERS, from Page 19

subject. Understandable, but the first step to changing something is talking about it, or as a newspaper, writing about it.

4. Grainger Today, Bean Station
Tracey Wolfe, Laura Lakins, Barbara Womack

5. The Courier News, Clinton
Crystal Huskey

Group II

1. The Tullahoma News
Elena Cawley

Judge's Comments: This newspaper did a good job mixing facts and first-hand stories from multiple people, while providing opportunities for action. It informed and empowered those in the community.

2. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
Mark Brown, Steve Marion, Kimary Clelland

Judge's Comments: In moments where much of the community likely had many questions about what to do, these reports carried readers through these situations.

3. Hendersonville Standard
Tena Lee, Sherry Mitchell, Dave Gould

Judge's Comments: This entry presents persistent coverage of how local government operates and therefore affects residents. (This entry would have been further bolstered by editorials written by newspaper staff.)

4. Weakley County Press, Martin
Karen Campbell

5. The Newport Plain Talk
Matthew Winter, Gem Lieser

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville
Chris Smith, Jennifer Babich, Jimmy Settle, Henry Taylor

Judge's Comments: Hands down the strongest entry. True public service reporting. The writing and reporting are heartbreaking and insightful; the photos and page design are powerful. Everyone involved in this project deserves an ovation.

See **WINNERS**, Page 21

2020 Make-up & Appearance Winners

Circulation Group IV:
Bristol Herald Courier

Circulation Group V:
Chattanooga Times Free Press

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER
Sullivan County Commission
Official: Jail heavily understaffed
Administrator makes request for 32 new employee positions

Strong storms kill at least 8

BEEN THERE, RUN THAT
Roberta Thaxton has run 54 full marathons and 73 half marathons

AGRICULTURE
Relatives of egg producer Duff & Wagner's general manager heading to D.C. for the annual Easter Egg Roll

INDEX
CLASSIFIED: \$6.00
COLUMNS: \$1.00
SEVEN: \$1.00
OPENING: \$1.00
22-23/2020: \$1.00

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SPRING SPECIAL 2019

Chattanooga Times Free Press
Celebrating 150 years

End of watch
Chattanooga police officer Nicholas Gallinger laid to rest

Test Drive: Nissan Maxima's new, aggressive look

Vols get another shot at Kentucky

St. George Hotel at center of Southside dispute

How the weather gets weaponized with climate change messaging

After an unpredictable meeting, Kim returns to script in Vietnam

AGRICULTURE
Relatives of egg producer Duff & Wagner's general manager heading to D.C. for the annual Easter Egg Roll

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SPRING SPECIAL 2019

First place award

Best Feature Photograph Group I

*Karanja Ajanaku—
New Tri-State Defender, Memphis*



WINNERS, from Page 20

2. Cleveland Daily Banner

Tim Siniard, Daniel Guy, Christy Armstrong, Rick Norton, Larry Bowers, Kaitlin Gebby

Judge's Comments: This paper is committed to public service projects. Numerous series with multiple stories on several topics. A newsroom committed to making a difference in the community. Only demerit: a heavy use of clip art in the homeless series.

3. The Jackson Sun

Adam Friedman, Cassandra Stephenson, Brett Kelman

Judge's Comments: Good reporting, good work, good commitment to do the community-changing service that only a newspaper can provide.

4. The Daily Herald, Columbia

James Bennett

5. The Nashville Ledger

Hollie Deese, Kathy Carlson, Tom Wood, Joe Morris

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier

News staff

Judge's Comments: A huge amount of work to pull all of this together. Thoroughly reported

with strong use of graphics

2. The Daily Times, Maryville

Todd Foster, Mike Sisco, Marcus Fitzsimmons, Amy Beth Miller

Judge's Comments: Comprehensive treatment of the topic from a wide array of angles.

3. Johnson City Press

Nathan Baker, Jonathan Roberts, Sue Guinn Legg, Brandon Paykamian, Becky Campbell, David Floyd, Robert Houk

Judge's Comments: The series on faith was strongest in terms of a comprehensive overview of the topic, photos and layout.

Group V

1. The Tennessean, Nashville

Emily West, Michael Anastasi, Maria De Varenne, David Plazas

2. News Sentinel, Knoxville

Staff

3. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Allison Shirk Collins, Elizabeth Fite

Best News Photograph Group I

1. The Herald Chronicle,

Winchester

Scott Smith

Judge's Comments: This is the perfect shot.

2. Pulaski Citizen

Ron Mayes

Judge's Comments: There were a number of fire entries for best news photograph and this was by far one of the better ones.

3. The Courier News, Clinton

Crystal Huskey

Judge's Comments: Strong picture to help illustrate the article. Good job.

4. Grainger Today, Bean Station

Tracey Wolfe

5. Carroll County News, Huntingdon

Shirley Nanney

Group II

1. The Tullahoma News

Zach Birdsong

2. Roane County News, Kingston

David W. Doonan

3. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

Steve Marion

4. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

Steven Lloyd

5. Independent Appeal, Selmer

Steve Beavers

Group III

1. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Henry Taylor

Judge's comments: These photos wonderfully capture the different faces of our country's labor force. Well done!

2. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro

Helen Comer

3. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Henry Taylor

4. The Jackson Sun

Kenneth Cummings

5. Cleveland Daily Banner

Staff

Group IV

1. Bristol Herald Courier

Andre Teague

Judge's comments: Wonderful coverage of a tragic story. The photos take readers through the main story as well as all the side stories that accompany stories like this.

2. Johnson City Press

Jonathan Roberts

Judge's Comments: Nighttime candlelight vigil photos are always a challenge, but these are perfect.

3. Kingsport Times-News

Rain Smith

Judge's Comments: This photo both highlights the human side of a blaze, as firefighters slug it out with the fire, and the destruction that comes with a fire.

4. The Daily Times, Maryville

Tom Sherlin

Judge's Comments: This photo demonstrates the sheer verticality of a blaze, from the firefighters on the ground to the smoke stretching high above.

5. Johnson City Press

Jonathan Roberts

Judge's Comments: A photo that demonstrates the sheer physicality of art exhibits and installation. Art is often thought of as the work of one person, but this shows that each installation represents the efforts of many.

Group V

1. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Erin Smith

2. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

Max Gersh

3. The Tennessean, Nashville

Larry McCormack

Best Feature Photograph Group I

1. New Tri-State Defender, Memphis

Karanja Ajanaku

Judge's Comments: By far the best feature photo in the contest. Shows lots of emotions and just tells the story. Great job!

2. Grainger Today, Bean Station

Tracey Wolfe

Judge's Comments: Very nice sunrise photo. Just a great photo and presented well.

3. Carroll County News-Leader, Huntingdon

Shirley Nanney

Judge's Comments: Who doesn't like a good pie in the face photo? Very good job!

4. The Courier, Savannah

Linda Jo Edwards-White

Judge's Comments: Nice photo to illustrate summer. Good job.

5. Cheatham County Exchange, Pleasant View

Randy Moomaw

Judge's Comments: Another solid feature photo. Very good work!

Group II

1. farragutpress, Farragut

Tammy Cheek

Judge's comments: The photographer captures a great reaction that tells a story in a single frame.

2. farragutpress, Farragut

Alan Sloan

Judge's Comments: This eye-catching scene definitely puts a smile on your face.

3. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

Kimary Clelland

Judge's Comments: The composition of this photograph makes it stand out with the light-hearted moment.

4. Murfreesboro Post

Jim Davis

5. Crossville Chronicle

Rebekah K. Bohannon Beeler

Group III

1. The Paris Post-Intelligencer

Leslie Sensing

WINNERS, from Page 21

Judge's comments: Great capture of expression. Good job getting all important details in one shot. Great job getting an "in your face" photo; adds to impact and limits surrounding distractions. Provides a sense of happiness and joy to the audience.



First place award

Best Feature Photograph Group II

Tammy Cheek – farragutpress, Farragut

2. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Henry Taylor

Judge's Comments: Good capture of emotion on the girl's face; tightening the photo could've added to the impact more to better zoom in on her face. Cutline needs work.



3. The Nashville Ledger

Michelle Morrow

Judge's Comments: Nice photo variety. Great layout. Great detail.

4. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Henry Taylor

5. Cleveland Daily Banner

Daniel Guy



Brave Beatrice

A mother's love is not limited to the good times, but feeling the pain of their child in bad times. Rebekah Page is one such mother, who grimaces while daughter, Beatrice, receives her shot from Dr. Tadig Hart during Free Flu Shot Saturday, sponsored by The Rotary Club of Farragut. Taking place Saturday morning, Sept. 28, at Farragut High School, the event brought out not only Farragut residents, but also residents from all over Knox County.

Memphis

Ariel Cobbert

Judge's Comments: A beautiful combination of color and emotion.

Best Sports Photograph Group I

1. The Milan Mirror-Exchange
Logan Watson

Judge's comments: Hands down the best sports photo entry in the competition. Great job and great layout!

2. Portland Sun

Randy Dixon

Judge's Comments: A very strong football picture. Nice job!

3. The Erwin Record
Keeli Parkey

Judge's Comments: When looking for the perfect football touch-down picture. Nice job.

4. The Dickson Post
Marty Allison

Judge's Comments: Great sports photos covers all ages.

5. Smithville Review

Group V

1. The Tennessean, Nashville
Courtney Pedroza

Judge's comments: Photos really tell the story here. That's what made this entry stand out the most.

2. The Tennessean, Nashville
Andrew Nelles

Judge's Comments: The photo was so good that it overcame its small placement on the page. Deserved to be much more prominently displayed than it was.

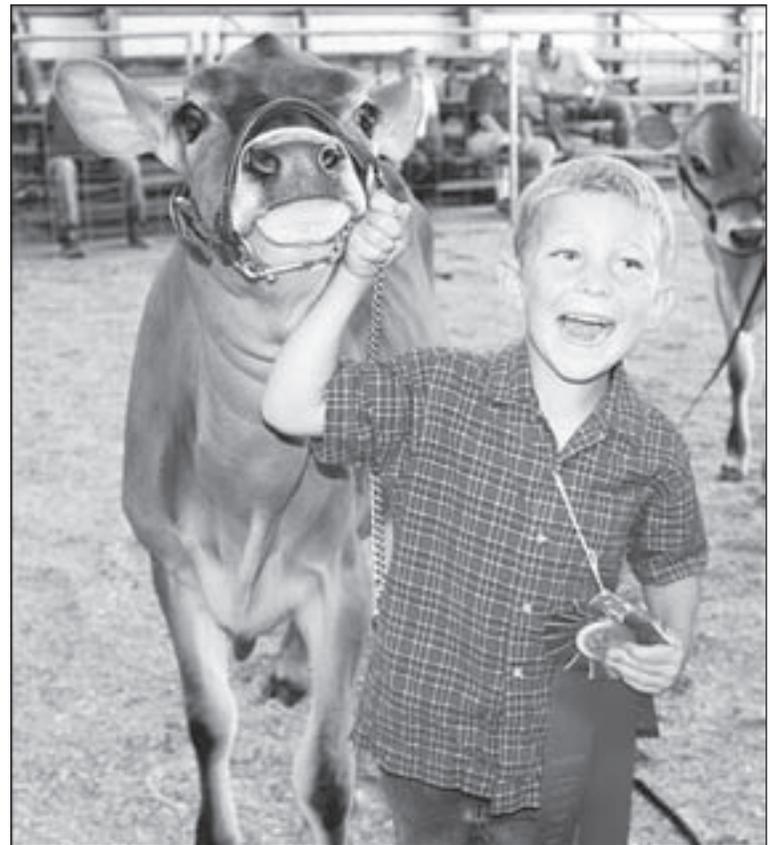
3. The Commercial Appeal,



First place award

Best Feature Photograph Group III

Leslie Sensing– The Paris Post-Intelligencer



Duane Sherrill

first win.

Group II

1. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
Melanie Fritz

Judge's comments: The action, the expression, the angle, the reactions. Just a splendid photograph.

2. The Wilson Post, Lebanon
Steve Wampler

Judge's Comments: The expression, the catch, the move. You will believe a man can fly!

3. The Newport Plain Talk
Seth Butler

Judge's Comments: Captures a great moment for a new coach's

4. The Tullahoma News
Zach Birdsong

5. Crossville Chronicle
Michael Lindsay

Group III

1. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville
Ben Craven

Judge's Comments: Now this is a good action shot with even better expression that works well together to tell a story in a single moment.

2. Cleveland Daily Banner
Joe Cannon

Pimento cheese and family ties

The day my Memaw told me my pimento cheese tasted like her mama's, I swear the heavens opened up and Granny smiled down on me from glory.

Pimento cheese is a staple in Southern homes, church potlucks and long days on the water. It originated in the Yankee mecca of New York City, according to a Southern Living Magazine. The piece stated Spain began sending tins of pimiento peppers. Northern cheesemakers began combing a semi-soft cheese with the tinned peppers. The concoction migrated South where we, the chosen people, perfected it.

I remember watching my Memaw take a fork and mash the whole pimentos in these specific Homer Laughlin bowls (two of which, one for each of my children, now reside in my china cabinet). The pimentos would become a juicy pulp in the bottom of the bowl. Next, she would use a thin wire cheese cutter to peel cheesecloth and wax from a wedge of hoop cheese, then grate some fresh for the mixture before adding a healthy dollop of mayonnaise, pepper and a dash of salt and sugar. I can still hear the scraping of the bowl as the items became that delicious spread.

As a teenager I realized my mother couldn't make pimento cheese worth a darn; she'd tried and failed for almost 20 years. Hers was too runny, too sweet, too awful to really be called pimento cheese. When I was about 14 I decided I needed to learn how to make it so the spread could continue the family tradition.

My parents always let us kids get in the kitchen and experiment; there were three kids and one less food item to fix was quite fine by them. I don't think my first batch was all that bad. My daddy – who was a good, eat-anything-Ma-



First place award

Best Personal Humor Column Group I

*Sarah Brown –
The Leader, Covington*

rine – tried it and proclaimed my mom need not attempt and flop anymore. My mom is a great cook – she had to be with all of us kids and a tight budget – but pimento cheese just isn't her thing. In fact, until I started making it, she wasn't really a big fan of it.

In my early twenties I was a working single mother. I worked with a working single mother. We had kids the exact same age, but she was 16 years my senior. The first time I brought a batch to the office, she was skeptical. She was in her late thirties then and still hadn't learned to cook much. When I asked her what she took to the family holidays her reply was simple, "Paper plates!" That's code in the South for, "Bless it, she can't cook."

She eyed me, all of 22 years old, and the bowl with the orange shreds and red specks. That bowl of my pimento cheese was the most naughty fun she'd had in a long time. From then on out, I kept struggling single moms from Mississippi well-fed on tight budgets. She never questioned me again. I may have been raised on Justin Wilson, but I was continuing my education through the Food Network and various websites.

My method is simple, it's like Memaw's: Hand grate sharp cheddar (I prefer Best Choice New York-style sharp cheddar). Open a jar of pimento and dump it all in. I add a healthy dollop of Duke's mayonnaise, some pepper, dash of

some other proprietary secrets and stir. (come on now, if I told you all that was in it, you'd be replicating it and making the millions I currently don't). You stir until it's the right consistency, just how you get it that way is up to you (you may need more cheese, mayo or whatever else). Then you leave it on the counter to marry unto its decadence. This is a key step most forget in this age of modern refrigeration. Just let it set about 20 minutes, covered with the board you grated your cheese on. I promise in the more than 20 years I've made it, nobody got sick. One also didn't get sick after eating some I'd had in the fridge a month, but that's neither here nor, well, here.

A word of advice: God love Miss Paula Deen, don't ever put cream cheese into pimento cheese. It's an abomination! It's almost as bad as white shoes after Labor Day or hot pink bridesmaids dresses in January. Just don't do it. I'm of the old school, as in Granny Holden school: JoAnn never put cream cheese in her pimento cheese and you won't ever catch me doing it either. My Granny was a spitfire, a pint-sized hurricane. She'd come down from glory and give me a verbal thrashing. I can't have all that. Neither can you, trust me.

After I make my pimento cheese in a glass bowl, I store it in a plastic one in the fridge. Even your beat up Cool Whip bowl will suffice. I just hope you enjoy it.



First place award

Best Feature Photograph Group IV

*Nathan Baker –
Johnson City Press*



The fur flies

More than a dozen dogs show Friday at Never a Dull Moment Dog Days in Sulphur Springs during a qualifying event for the North American Living Dogs National Championships to be held in Orlando, Florida in December. The winners leap into the 70-foot long event jumping to more than 100 feet high. Photo/Text by Nathan Baker



WINNERS, from Page 22

Judge's Comments: This was a great job captured the joyous chaos of the moment. The photography draws your eye to the players while accenting the frame nicely with the celebrating crowd in the background.

3. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro
Helen Comer

Judge's Comments: This action in this photo is rather eye-catching and is enhanced by the player's agonizing expression.

4. The Greeneville Sun
Tate Russell

Judge's Comments: In this sequence, the photographer captures pure emotion in victory and the bond between teammates and coaches.

5. Southern Standard, McMinnville
Jeffery Simmons

Group IV

1. Citizen Tribune, Morristown
Adam Greene

Judge's Comments: Stunning image.

2. Citizen Tribune, Morristown

Staff

3. Johnson City Press
Tanner Cook

4. The Daily Times, Maryville
Scott Keller

5. The Daily Times, Maryville
Tom Sherlin

Group V

1. Chattanooga Times Free Press
Robin Rudd

Judge's comments: Photo captures action with balance temperature, color, movement and sharpness.

2. The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

I'm Duane Sherrill . . . and I'm a man now

My name is Duane Sherrill. I'm your new editor and I'm a man. Well, I am now anyway. Up until a few years ago I was a woman.

Perhaps I should explain. As most gender issues go, my problem began as I was getting ready to go on a cruise a few years ago. Since it was my first trip overseas, well to the Bahamas anyway, I had to get a passport. For most people that wouldn't be a problem. All you have to do is have a driver license and a birth certificate.

So, I take my identification to the clerk's office and plop it on the counter. "I need a passport," I tell them. "I'm going on a cruise."

The lady behind the counter looks at my birth certificate and gives me a wry smile. "What you trying to pull, Roger," she says, handing back my birth certificate.

"Actually I go by Duane," I respond as Roger is my first name. "What's the problem? Isn't my paperwork in order?"

She openly chuckled. "Oh, you're paperwork is in order, alright," she quips. "I don't know about the rest of you."

She then points to the "gender" listing of my birth certificate. "It's going to be hard to give a passport to Mr. Sherrill when your birth certificate says you are Mrs. Sherrill."

My eyes got as big as saucers. Right there, on the same birth certificate I've had since my mom birthed me at Warren County General it says "FEMALE" as big as life.

"What the ..." I mumble.

"It says you're a woman ... Duane," the clerk grins. "You might want to get that fixed."

I shake my head. How did no one notice that in all these years after all the little league and



First place award

Best Personal Humor Column Group II

Duane Sherrill – The Tullahoma News

school registrations?

So, here I go trying to get it corrected. I didn't want to get stuck in another country during my cruise due to a question of gender. However, as you would guess, any government-issued thing comes with a lot of red-tape so I ended up having to drive to Nashville.

"Hi, I'd like to get this fixed," I say as I slip my birth certificate through the front window of the state office.

"What seems to be the problem, sir?" she asks.

"Well, first off, if you look at that certificate closely, I'm not a sir, I'm a ma'am," I replied.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," she comes back. "I didn't mean to . . ."

"No. You don't understand," I explain. "I am a sir but my certificate says I'm a ma'am. I want it changed to sir."

She takes a long look at the document and then looks me up and down. "You do appear to be a male," she say.

"Yes. Very much a male," I puff out my chest.

"If you say so," she rolls her eyes. "I'll have to have you speak to an inspector."

"An inspector!" I exclaim.

"What are they going to inspect?"

My question went on deaf ears as the clerk walked to the back and returned with another woman.

"This way, Mr. Sherrill," she

directed me to a side room.

My mind was spinning. Was I going to have to prove I was a man? I mean, I knew I was and I wasn't scared to, well, you know.

"There are some formalities we have to go through, Mr. Sherrill," she announced as she shut the door behind us.

I took a deep breath. "Shouldn't there be like a witness or something?" I wondered out loud, my ignorant statement getting a deep sigh from the agent. "I mean I don't have a problem providing whatever proof that you ..."

"Just sign the affidavit attesting that you're a male," she slapped the paper on the table, shaking her head. "We will take your word for it."

So, I signed the document and gave them \$30 and one week later my certificate came in the mail. It was at that point I figured out what the government gives you for \$30. It was my old birth certificate. They had drawn a line through FEMALE and typed MALE above it. That means every time I show someone my birth certificate, it is now glaring that I was once a female.

Don't believe me? Come to The News office this Thursday between 4 and 6 p.m. for my reception as your new editor and I'll show you the certificate. Heck, come anyway and we will give you finger foods and something to drink.



First place award

Best Feature Photograph Group V

Courtney Pedroza – The Tennessean, Nashville

8000 S. SUNSHINE, DECEMBER 4, 2019 • USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MY HOMETOWN | LEBANON

A NEW LIFE

MIDWIFE HELPS FAMILY GIVE BIRTH AT HOME TO SIXTH CHILD

Before Henry Hudson Whitson told his parents, "You just got me," he was laughing at the medical staff with his hand over his face.

Meanwhile, the other Whitson-at-his-side simply on the other side of the house woman they were about to have a new baby.

After a consultation from certified professional midwife Cynthia McInnis and a parent from Lebanon, Henry Whitson began to cry in mother Beth's arms shortly after midnight in August.

"It's not just a baby being born, it's a lot of love if a mother being born to that motherhood, whether she's done three times or six," McInnis said. "Every single time is new to that relationship. It's always exciting to me to wonder what experience is about to be shared."

For Beth and Eric Whitson, their large family brings them joy and fulfillment. They prefer home births because that is where they feel the most comfortable, they said.

"It's such a beautiful process," Beth Whitson said. "I remember calling my baby when I was having contractions in the very beginning and just being excited to meet this little person."

Whitson's parents told Whitson he was choosing home births for many reasons, including personalized care, lower cesarean delivery rates and no longer being stuck in a hospital. At home, if natural thoughts come about in Tennessee since 2016, according to Tennessee investigation, midwives handle low-risk pregnancies and monitor the pregnancy closely by governing the complications. They are trained as CPR, oxygen administration, emergency and control the process (including in addition to other complications).

After a moment hospital built the their first child, Beth Whitson is motherhood children. She later became a nurse and taught her husband, who delivered babies as an Army medic.

Five of the six Whitson children have been born at home. They live in an unincorporated area just outside the Lebanon city limits.

The Whitson's children are home schooled by their mother every weekday. While they sit at the kitchen table going through lessons, Henry Whitson sits in his mother's arms and is breastfed.

"There's always a reason to be a mom. That's all I want! I want to be a mom and a nurse and a wife. I can't even describe how much I love them."

WHERE IS LEBANON?
(2 miles west of Nashville in Warren County)

THE FAMILY
1. Baby Henry Hudson Whitson's dad is first off his mother Cynthia McInnis (center) after birth. 2. From left: Beth, 1. Susan, 2. mother Beth, Henry Whitson, 3. Beth, and father Eric Whitson all sit on the sofa together at their home. 4. Beth Whitson's husband has seen for the first time after going birth at home Aug. 24. She was still in pain while trying to deliver the grandson. 5. Beth Whitson's baby Henry Hudson white baby, 1, sitting on her Tennessee and baby's baby doll at their home.

WINNERS, from Page 23

Joe Rondone

Judge's Comments: The symmetry and timing shown sets this action shot apart from the others. Balance of colors also is visually appealing.

3. The Tennessean
Andrew Nelles

Judge's Comments: Very well-timed action shot captured sharply in a key moment. Tight crop-

ping on the phone helps with the problem of crowding and keeps attention on airborne player.

Best Special Issue or Section Group I

1. The Milan Mirror-Exchange
Logan Watson, Victor Parkins, Scarlet Elliott, Melissa West

2. The Gallatin News
Sherry Mitchell, Carrie Tomlin, Mary Anne Ferrell, Josh Cross,

Tena Lee, Randy Moore, Ginger McClendon

3. Pulaski Citizen
Cary Jane Malone, Scott Stewart, Judy Sisk, Kelley Garrett, Mark Mize, Dan Watson, Rebecca Brooks

4. The LaFollette Press
Robby O'Daniel, Dwane Wilder, Deidre Wilson, Megan Muse

See **WINNERS**, Page 26



First place award

Best Sports Photograph Group I

Logan Watson – The Milan Mirror-Exchange



First place award

Best Sports Photograph Group II

Melanie Fritz – The Standard Banner, Jefferson City



First place award

Best Sports Photograph Group III

Ben Craven – Herald-Citizen, Cookeville



Tales of terror from 'The Night of the Slug'

"It seems to me the worst of all the plagues is the slug, the snail without a shell. He is beyond description repulsive, a mass of sooty, shapeless slime, and he devours everything." — Celia Thaxter, American poet and author (1835-94)



First place award

Best Personal Humor Column Group III

Rick Norton – Cleveland Daily Banner

Left to the creepy imagination of Hollywood film directors like M. Night Shyamalan or the late George Romero, a recent happening in our home might have been titled "The Night of the Slug."

In past editions, this column has documented my wife's disgust with lizards. In her mind, they're bad enough in the yard. When they become so bold as to squirm through the crease of an exterior door left ajar, the result is nothing shy of reptilian Armageddon.

In our house over a 27-year span, it has happened ... maybe three times. With each occurrence comes the same sequence: Long-

tailed lizard invades. Woman sees lizard. Lizard sees woman. Woman shrieks. Lizard stares. Man is summoned. Lizard exits house, voluntarily or otherwise.

Wildlife's latest intrusion came a couple of weeks ago. It wasn't pretty, neither the incident nor the intruder.

It wasn't a lizard. Worse ... far worse.

It was a slug. Yes, a slug.

To quote Wikipedia, the encyclopedia of cyberspace, "... [Their] bodies are made up mostly

of water and, without a full-sized shell, their soft tissues are prone to desiccation."

Obviously, it is why nobody likes slugs. They desiccate ... probably quite often.

Then, of course, there's the slime. No one likes that, either. The translucent trail left in the wake of a slug's crawl is pretty disgusting, too.

Can you imagine stepping on a slug, in bare feet? Yours, not the slug's.

My wife can. She did it.

Here's her story.

While relaxing in a glider-rocker the other night in our living room, I became absorbed in a TV show. Love Muffin sat on the other side of a lamp table in her own chair. In our household we have an unwritten rule: My chair is my chair ... unless she wants it first. On this evening, she didn't.

During a commercial break, she stepped into the dark kitchen, lit only by the subdued shine of the appliance bulb in the oven's exhaust hood. Most of the laminate flooring lay unseen in the soft shadows of a table and chairs, a refrigerator and cabinets.

Hearing the soft footfalls of her uncovered feet, I could tell she was headed for the laundry room, likely to move clothes from washer to dryer. But she stopped, perhaps halfway across the floor. Hearing her pull the dangling chain of the ceiling fan light, the kitchen grew

bright. I could hear her back-pedal ... twice, maybe three times. "Oooooooh!" she screamed.

Such "Ooooooohs!" are never good, not in our home. In years past, this level of "Oooooooh!" has signaled the encroachment of a spider, an uninvited bug ... or, well, lizards. Yet, this "Oooooooh!" seemed different ... it was worse, a new range of hysteria. "...

[Slugs] must generate protective mucus to survive. Many species are most active just after rain because of the moist ground."

In lightning response that defied my years, I jerked to my feet and stormed the kitchen. There, I found her. Cupped hands held tightly to her chest, she was bent over at the waist peering unbelievably at the floor.

"Oooooooh!" she repeated. A second "Oooooooh!" — this one the voice of terror. Whether the

See **NORTON**, Page 26

Dealing with the shame of locking your keys into your car three times

It was raining when I pulled my Camry into the driveway of a stately house in Johnson City.

I was getting ready to interview a couple for a story I was putting together for the paper and was running a couple minutes late. I parked my car, gathered up the various items that I needed for the interview — a notepad, pen and recorder — and slammed the car door behind me, jogging over to the awning that hung over their back door to get out of the rain.

On instinct, I slapped my pockets a couple times to make sure I had my phone, wallet and chapstick and instantly realized that I was missing something: I didn't feel the misshapen, metallic lump that usually indicated that I had my keys in my pocket.

I returned to the car and tried the door. Locked. I peered through the window. My car keys were still sitting in the cup holder between the driver and passenger's seat.

"Darn," I said aloud.

I heard the door of the house open behind me and turned to see one of my interview subjects standing on the stoop.

"Hey, you're in the right place," she said, presumably thinking that I was returning to my car to drive



First place award

Best Personal Humor Column Group IV

David Floyd – Johnson City Press

away.

"Hey," I said.

There was a tiny pause during which I mentally calculated how easy it would be to pretend nothing was wrong, covertly call AAA and tell them that I needed a mechanic to drive to this couple's house and discretely unlock my car while I conducted an interview.

"I actually locked my keys in my car."

I'm not the most attentive person in the world, which is probably why during the two years I spent in Asheville I locked my keys in my car twice. The second occurred in the parking lot after work, and the first occurred in the gravel driveway beside a downtown homeless shelter I was visiting for a story. About 20 people were milling outside the home and had an unimpeded view of my shame.

In every instance, people have been exceedingly nice about it. They usually laugh and ask if I need any help. I laugh, tell them that I'm good and then lean against my car for 20 minutes while I wait for assistance.

It's easy to feel like a dumb-dumb in instances like this, but, in a simple, blunt way, it does help remind me that it's easier to handle situations like this if you have a good sense of humor about it.

When I told the couple in Johnson City about my predicament, they were very understanding. "I bet it's easier to do when it's raining outside," the husband said sagely.

I believe that's true, but I do think that I'll need to rethink my life if I end up locking my keys in my car for a fourth time. That might just involve updating my AAA membership.

the bottom of the storm door. "...

The slippery mucus they produce makes slugs more difficult for predators to grasp."

Armed with the folded paper towel — whose power of absorption would be tested — I scooped up the beast, careful to avoid skin-to-slug contact, and deposited the visitor into the trash can. I wished him well in his retreat.

Still jittery from the chance encounter, my wife asked the obvious, "How'd it get in here?" Her words held as much demand as inquiry. Choosing between honesty or male preservation, I foolishly chose the former.

"Actually, I've found three others in recent days," I stammered. "I've been keeping an eye out."

Yes, I freely admitted I had been on slug watch without her knowledge. "But—?"

"The back door," I offered with pointed finger. "These past few weeks have been so wet. They're

coming out of the ground, crawling onto the deck and squeezing beneath the bottom of the door, or along the side ... I think."

"And exactly when were you going to tell me?"

Bowing my head in shame, this knight had been busted.

"So how do we keep them out?" she pleaded.

"... A spray of cold coffee can control small slugs, but it must completely drench them to be effective."

Refusing to waste good coffee on a slug — besides, it didn't say regular or decaf — we chose another defense, one also ripped from the pages of cyberspace: Salt.

In the dark of night, standing on the deck in her slippers, nightgown and bathrobe, my security-minded bride layered the back threshold with enough Morton's to salinize a freshwater pond.

Actually, it was more of a wall. We haven't seen a slug since.

NORTON, from Page 25

rafters shook I cannot say. But a third clamor surely would send the neighbors running. "...

When attacked, slugs can contract their body, making themselves harder and more compact and more still and round. By doing this, they become firmly attached to the substrate."

To her credit, my beloved had already torn a paper towel from its holder. Folding it to assure a proper barrier against fingers touching slug, or slug touching fingers, she looked up at my approach.

"You do it!" she bugled, thrusting the sheet of Bounty into my torso. Accepting the weapon like a knight ready for battle, I stooped to gauge her nemesis. Fully intact, its antennae slowly scoping this strange surround — one that had now grown crowded — the raider probably wished he, or she, had not shapeshifted its way beneath



First place award

Best Sports Photograph Group IV

Adam Greene – Citizen Tribune, Morristown



Carson-Newman running back Ty Denny (27) dives through Tusculum blockers to put the ball into the end zone from 23 yards out Saturday at Barker-Tarr Stadium in Jefferson City. The Eagles won 49-13 to secure a spot in the NCAA Division II playoffs.

Soaring Into The Postseason

Eagles secure playoff spot with dominating 49-13 win over rival Tusculum

WINNERS, from Page 24

5. Herald & Tribune, Jonesborough

Lisa Whaley, Marina Waters, John Kiener, Marcella Peek, Suzanne Huron

Group II

1. Hendersonville Standard

Zach Womble, Randy Moore, Ginger McClendon, Russell Vannozzi, Mary Anne Ferrell, Phil Stauder, Don McPeak

2. The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

Dale Gentry, Steve Marion, Kimary Clelland, Kim Cook, Shane Cook, Gayle Page, Jesse Woody

3. The Wilson Post, Lebanon

Carrie Tomlin, Debby Mabry, Mary Anne Ferrell, Jason Goolesby, Laurie Everett, Xavier Smith, Dallus Whitfield

4. Roane County News, Kingston

Jason Perry

5. Weakley County Press, Martin

Beth Cravens, Sabrina Bates, Lynette Wagster, Kelcee McMillin

Group III

1. Union City Daily Messenger

Kevin Weaks

2. The Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro

Mealand Ragland-Hudgins, Nancy DeGennaro, Helen Comer, Scott Broden, Mariah Timms, Holly Meyer

3. The Daily Herald, Columbia

James Bennett, Mike Christen, Jay Powell, Aaron Walther, Justin Glover

4. The Nashville Ledger

Staff

5. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Staff

Group IV

1. The Daily Times, Maryville

Taylor Vortherms, Troy Provoost-Heron, Corey Roepken,

5 things I learned about Hallmark's Memphis

We know that Hallmark Channel movies are modern fairy tales, in a way: wish-fulfillment romances aimed at audiences whose happily ever after fantasies require the intervention or at least the addition of a Prince Charming.

But are they also science fiction?

Doubling down on a trend that has been building through its predecessors, "Christmas at Graceland" and "Wedding at Graceland," the third Elvis-themed Hallmark Channel movie — titled "Christmas at Graceland: Home for the Holidays" — presents a Spock-with-a-beard version of Memphis that in some ways is recognizable but in other ways is as alien as the alternate universe visited by the crew of the Enterprise in that famous "Star Trek" episode "Mirror, Mirror."

Filmed in Memphis this past summer, the movie — known as "Christmas at Graceland 2" during production — debuted Saturday night on the Hallmark Channel, two days after its public "world premiere" screening at the Graceland Soundstage. If the storyline audiences experienced was formulaic, the setting was unique: I've lived in this city since 1966, and even I frequently was surprised by the Memphis presented in the film.

So, in the Christmas spirit of giving, allow me to share five things I learned about Memphis — or at least Hallmark Memphis — from watching "Christmas at Graceland: Home for the Holidays."

Snow? What snow?

"Home for the Holidays" is stuffed like a Christmas stocking with aerial shots of Memphis neighborhoods blanketed in computer-generated special effects snow and sprinkled with digital falling snowflakes. For closer shots, Graceland, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and other locations are dressed with white tarps and spray-on snowfall to create the illusion of a proverbial winter wonderland. Although the film was shot in in the 90-plus-degree heat of July, every window looks frosty, every car looks icy; the piles of plowed snow along the streets appear to be waist-high.

And yet, no Memphian ever comments on the weather, except in a positive way (as when the kids



First place award

Best Personal Humor Column Group V

John Beifuss —
The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

sled down the soft slopes of Beale Street Landing). Schools remain in session. Nobody curses or says, "You must be crazy if you think I'm driving to Graceland in this." Heroine Harper Ellis (Kaitlin Doubleday) does not make a panicked run to Kroger for bread; instead, she gathers the kids to bake a Yule log cake. The likeliest explanation may be that some apocalyptic climate calamity settled over Hallmark Memphis some years in the past, and now the residents accept living in a deep freeze as the new normal.

Blowin' in the wind

To enhance the winter effect, the shrill whistle of an arctic wind is heard on the soundtrack in every night exterior scene, even when the actors' hair remains unruffled. Again, nobody seems to mind; but judging from this bone-chilling noise, Hallmark Memphis at night is about as inviting as the Antarctic base camp in John Carpenter's "The Thing."

International art

Presented as an absolutely flawless being (except for the crucial fact that she needs a man), heroine Harper is described as a "tour guide, nanny, philosopher, artist" — but that description only scratches the surface of her blond perfection. At the drop of a Santa's cap, Harper can organize a corporate fundraiser, design a Graceland exhibit, expertly play the piano, substitute as onstage vocalist for tardy country star Chase Bryant, and lead her nieces and the children of wealthy young widower Owen Read (Adrian Grenier) in montages of such fun-filled activities as the baking of Christmas sponge cakes, the singing of Christmas carols, and the crafting of homemade Christmas tree ornaments.

We also learn that this Memphis dynamo has visited 17 countries

and held jobs in nine of them. (Later, we learn that she's only been away three years, which might cause one to question the quality of her job performance in those nine countries.)

Anyway, the reason Harper has returned to her hometown is that she has gathered up her college degree in art history and is applying for a job at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. And what is that job? As Harper explains: "I would be their international curator, so I would be based in Europe."

So yes, in Hallmark Memphis, the Brooks staff includes an "international curator" who is based in London (London, England, not London, Arkansas, or London, Kentucky). At one point in the movie, the Brooks director describes that person's job duties as "curating our exhibits in Europe"; does this mean the Brooks has franchise museums in, say, France and Germany?

An interesting aside is that the Brooks and Elvis Presley's Memphis — Graceland's relatively new exhibit/entertainment space, which is heavily showcased in the new movie — are presented as peer institutions. Referencing the "Elvis at Christmas" exhibit that Harper is organizing, the Brooks director comments: "There seems to be a lot of good buzz surrounding the Graceland exhibit." Harper implies she probably won't be hired by the Brooks unless the museum director is impressed with her Graceland exhibit.

Priscilla in the house

In Hallmark Memphis, Priscilla Presley — who married Elvis in 1967 and divorced him in 1973, four years before his death — apparently lives at or at least hangs out at Graceland. She welcomes visitors at the door as if they were neighbors seeking a cup of sugar, and her happy domestic duties include decorating the Christmas tree in the front room of the man-



First place award

Best Sports Photograph Group V

Robin Rudd —
Chattanooga Times Free Press



sion. In the movie, Harper joins her at tree time, bringing along Owen and the kids — the more the merrier is Priscilla's evident credo. And how does Priscilla know Harper in the first place? In high school, Harper was a tour guide at Graceland, so naturally the two women are close friends.

Elvis is King

I love Elvis, but one of the more amusing aspects of the Graceland/Hallmark movie series is that everybody in Memphis loves Elvis with the fervor and fidelity Americans associate with the North Korean veneration of Kim Jong Il.

"The top of my to-do list is see-

ing Christmas lights at Graceland," announces Harper, before she's barely off the plane at Memphis International Airport. Later, she asks, "What makes Graceland so amazing?," and immediately supplies her own answer: "Well, everything."

Putting her art degree to use with a theory that might have been her Hallmark Memphis University senior thesis, Harper muses: "Like art, every time you come to Graceland at Christmas, you see something new — something magical." Displaying a picture of the Great Leader's, er, Elvis' childhood Tupelo home, Harper reassures on-

Why are people still talking about Eddie Lee Smith Jr.?

Thirty years ago this year, in 1989, my father, Eddie Lee Smith Jr., made history as the first African American elected mayor of my hometown of Holly Springs, Mississippi.

It was a pretty big deal at the time, though when you think about it, it shouldn't have been. I think most people intrinsically know the color of your skin has nothing to do with your qualifications for the job. It certainly doesn't measure the impact you leave behind.

My dad died on Jan. 25, 2001, while serving the final months of his final term. That same year, a health fair was named in his honor. A few years later, a street would bear his name. For many years, there was an annual program commemorating the day he was born.

And I still get chills when I walk inside the Eddie L. Smith Multipurpose Building on North Memphis Street. As one of his final projects, he envisioned it as a common ground for the whole town. How often do you literally get to walk around inside your father's vision?

It says something about how he lived, that people still want to actively celebrate his life. Last Friday, on the 18th anniversary of his death, my hometown paused for a candlelight vigil, a chance to reflect on the impact he left. As I listened to the stories people told, I realized: Whenever I'm in Holly Springs, I'm always walking around in his vision.

He had a vision that Holly Springs needed a good doctor, preferably African American – not just for health reasons, but so that young people of color could SEE what a career in medicine looks like in the flesh. That's the pitch he used on Dr. Kenneth Williams, who opened Williams' Medical Clinic there in the 1990s.

My dad would call on Williams again, this time to prevent the local hospital from closing in the late 1990s. He convinced Williams to purchase the facility, which is now Alliance Healthcare System. No coincidence, Alliance now hosts the Eddie L. Smith Health



First place award
Best Personal Column
Group I

*Lee Eric Smith –
New Tri-State Defender, Memphis*

Fair each May – at the Eddie L. Smith Multipurpose Building.

He also had a vision that Holly Springs should recognize its most famous daughter, Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Though she made her name in Memphis and Chicago, she was born in Holly Springs, where she attended Rust College. When my dad identified the “home house” where she was born, he got the city to acquire the property, then leased it for \$1 to what is now the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Museum.

As mayor, he quickly corrected those who called him a politician. He preferred “elected official” or “statesman;” both of those terms carry a greater sense of service and integrity than “politician.” He remained his own man, turning down political donations if they came with even a hint of strings attached. And his character won him respect from the town's black and white citizens – even his political adversaries.

“I'm not the black mayor or the white mayor,” he would say. “I'm the Mayor of Holly Springs.”

There are literally too many stories to put here. He was a school principal, a 27-year college administrator, and a Boy Scout leader. He ran for multiple offices in the post-Jim Crow days, as a way to spur African Americans to register and vote. Many credit his work in bringing the Pre-K education program ICS Headstart to Holly Springs. He served on multiple committees in the local and state United Methodist Church.

Like I said: Too many stories. It's only a mild exaggeration to say that almost everyone in Holly Springs has an Eddie Lee Smith story. Most of them involve him helping them in some way – helping to launch a business (Annie's Restaurant, for one); being Scoutmaster to Holly Springs' first

black Eagle Scout (Donald Street). There's the one where he settled down a raucous crowd during a Board of Aldermen meeting by reciting Psalm 23.

For me, of course, he was Dad. It was him playing “old man” basketball against me and my 10-year-old friends – backing us down before unleashing that unstoppable hook shot. We had no chance, even two on one. It was he and I remodeling bathrooms and kitchens or taking road trips to some meeting he had.

But one of my favorite Eddie Lee Smith stories happened about five years ago. I was in line at Subway when Reggie Burke walked in, still wearing his Holly Springs Parks & Recreation uniform. He's always friendly with me whenever I see him. On this day, I learned why.

“Lee Eric,” he said as we waited in line, “When I finished high school, I didn't know what I was going to do next. Your daddy said he could get me on at Parks and Rec, at least until I decided what I wanted to do next. That was in 1990. And I'm still here.”

“He saw something in me,” Burke said. “I don't know if I saw it in myself yet. And I've been with the city now for more than 20 years. A whole career . . . because of him.”

That's when he nodded to the employee making my sandwich. “Put his order on mine,” Burke said.

It was a simple gesture with profound implications. After all, who among us wouldn't want to live the kind of life where people want to repay your kindness by buying your CHILDREN dinner – YEARS after your death? I hope that someday, someone I've helped does the same for Victoria and E.J.

See **SMITH**, Page 30

Local Government 101



First place award
Best Personal Column
Group II

*Heather Mullinix –
Crossville Chronicle*

When the school system announced it would be discontinuing the text message alerts for snow delays and closings, the reaction from the community was swift.

“What will we do now?”

“What are they spending their money on that they can't afford this?”

“Maybe they shouldn't have spent all that money on a splash pad.”

So let's take each of these questions one at a time.

“What will we do now?”

There was a time when we didn't have text alerts to tell us about school closings.

I'm old enough to remember getting up at 5 a.m. on snowy mornings to watch the Knoxville TV stations or listen to WDEB-FM and hope for those wonderful words — “No school today.”

Then I'd go back to sleep.

The school system will continue to use its student information system to alert parents and send notifications or messages from the school. It just isn't offering the community-wide text service. They will also post those announcements to their social media and website.

Notifications will also go to local and regional media. Closings will be announced on the Chronicle's social media page as soon as we receive word of a closing or delay.

Other local media outlets also post these announcements to their social media accounts. The radio stations announce these on the air. A couple of stations even offer their own text alert systems.

Don't worry — if we managed to figure it out back in the dark ages of the 1980s, we can manage it now.

“What are they spending their money on?”

The service the school system had used to send out these alerts had been free in the past. They

learned the service would start charging for groups of more than 150 people. The cost for the “snowbird” alert was going to be about \$22,000 to serve the 7,500 students.

This was not an expense the school system had anticipated when developing the 2019-'20 budget, so no funding was included to pay that bill.

The school system must submit a budget to the state each year that details how much they will spend and what that money is for. The budget includes the various departments, like regular education, maintenance and transportation. Within each of those departmental budgets, funds are allocated to pay the costs associated with that department, like salaries and benefits, any contracted services, supplies, software and other equipment.

Funding comes from state appropriations and county taxes, primarily a portion of property taxes and the county's share of sales taxes. The state sets the minimum funding the county must provide, \$18.636 million this year. If that's not met, the county can lose its state school funding, \$36.4 million this year.

The school's \$59.2 million budget includes many things — like a 2.5% salary and wage increase for all employees, the third year of a one-to-one technology initiative that puts a computer in the hands of every fifth- and ninth-grade student and a renovation project at Martin Elementary.

The budget had been approved by the Cumberland County Board of Education and the Cumberland County Commission, which provides the local funding for the school system. Changes require budget amendments approved by the school board and county.

Could the board find \$22,000 to keep this service? Probably. The budget includes approximately

See **MULLINIX**, Page 31

Roadside marker links doctor and deputy

After my growing family and I moved to Greene County in the fall of 1982, Bob Hurley, Greene Countian to the core, told me I'd need to hang around at least 30 years before I could consider myself local.

Well, the 30-year mark passed years back and I'm now edging toward the 40-year mark. Maybe even Bob would consider me a local now. I certainly think of Greene County as home.

There's a particular local spot that always sparks memories of my early experiences in this community and people I came to know at that time. That spot is a corner near the John Deere plant where Rick Coyle Boulevard joins Hal Henard Drive (or Hal Henard Road, as I usually hear it called. The road sign calls it "Drive," though, so I'll stick with that for consistency.)

Rick Coyle Boulevard is the small avenue leading off of Hal Henard Drive and into the recently completed Rick Coyle Firing Range.

Whenever I see that road marker with the Henard and Coyle names on it, I'm reminded that I was lucky enough to arrive in Greene County while it was still possible to meet both of those men. They were very different men, pursuing different professions and coming from different generations, but they had something in common: Both were citizens any community would be proud to claim.

Because many people living here now arrived too late to meet this pair, I want to tell a little about them here.

Hal Henard first.

Thanks largely to the Greeneville school named after him, almost everybody has at least heard the name of Hal Henard.

He was born in 1908 and died in 1984. By profession he was a physician; in community life he was a deeply involved citizen and leader. The man had class and dignity.

When I first met him, he was part of the Greeneville City Board of Education, as was one of my then-bosses at The Greeneville Sun, Ken Hood Jr., a good friend of Dr. Henard.

Dr. Henard's craggy face could look rather somber if he was listening closely to something, or deep in thought, but when I mentally picture him, I see him as smiling. That's because of the welcoming, open manner he had in dealing with others (even newspaper re-



First place award

Best Personal Column Group III

*Cameron Judd –
The Greeneville Sun*

porters, who can sometimes be annoying). He was never my personal physician, but it was easy for me to see why his patients loved him.

Dr. Henard was smart, too. As our local boards of education face new challenges in our own era, it would be fascinating if we could



know Dr. Henard's take on those matters. That, sadly, is not an available option now.

That was Dr. Henard. But who was Rick Coyle?

Rick was dispatcher for the Greene County Sheriff's Department when I knew him. As with Hal Henard, I met Rick through my newspaper job. He was young, friendly and always seemed glad to help out anyone who called or came by the GCSD, at that time headquartered in the lower level of the Greene County Courthouse.

Rick also was funny. He laughed a lot and had the ability to make those around him laugh, too.

I didn't see him all that often, mostly on the occasions I needed to stop by and see the sheriff about something going on in the news. Every time I saw Rick, he gave me a grin and a welcome, and had some funny comment or light-hearted anecdote to share. He was ideally suited to be a con-

necting point between the public and the GCSD, because his default setting with visitors was positive.

Though Rick Coyle seemed perpetually cheerful to me, others who knew him better say he had his various moods, as we all do. That's just part of being human.

Lori Rader, longtime employee of the GCSD, said this week that one thing Rick consistently did, no matter what his mood, was end his shifts by telling his coworkers to have a good day or good evening, and that he'd see them next time.

Eventually Rick left the relative safety of the dispatcher desk job to go on the road as a working deputy. That change in function is what led to the day when Rick's typical "see you next time" pledge could never again be fulfilled.

Sept. 25, 1995. It was a Monday, and Sgt. Rick Coyle was on a call, investigating a hit-and-run incident out in the county. Lori, still working the front desk at the Sheriff's Department, told me this week that she was the one who received that call, and had nearly sent a newer officer to deal with it. But the door had opened and Rick Coyle walked in. He volunteered to be the responder.

He headed back out, got in his cruiser and left.

No one anticipated the situation would be anything but routine, but sometime later, Rick's strained voice came over the radio, asking for an ambulance. He'd been shot.

Lori reacted fast and called an off-duty officer who lived not far from the area Rick was, and he readily headed out to find Rick.

Someone else got there first: A man in a nearby barn had heard the sound of gunshots and went to check it out. Rick's physical position revealed he'd been trying to pull himself into his cruiser but had made it only far enough to reach the radio and call for help. The man from the barn got on the radio himself and began frantically

See **JUDD**, Page 30

Goodbye, you lovable fuzzleball



First place award

Best Personal Column Group IV

*Joe Tennis –
Bristol Herald Courier*

I could never keep enough water in the bowl.

Somewhere around the first of the year, we began noticing that Heidi was lapping up lots of liquid from her big, green water bowl almost every hour.

She had been slightly overweight for years.

Heidi ate her regular food. And she might've had an extra Saltine here and there. She also liked a chunk of chicken.

Still, her main staple was regular, dry dog food.

What's more, she was our baby. We spoiled her.

For our family, Heidi filled in where we had lost Wendy, our black-and-white dog who had lived with us for over 16 years.

Perhaps it's not fair to make a comparison. But let's not get too serious with this: Heidi was a dog, after all.

So when we looked at her black fur with white markings, it was, oh, so natural to begin thinking of her as "Little Wendy."

That's kind of what we called her, sometimes. Or at least I did.

For my wife, Heidi actually took her name from another "Heidi"—a dog that had belonged to her late mother—when she came to us as a puppy in the fall of 2010.

She grew into a rather wiry rascal.

We adopted her nearly a year before Wendy died on Aug. 9, 2011.

Yet when Wendy passed on to that great doghouse in the sky, well, that was when Heidi truly began to assert her personality.

She growled if you got near her food.

Comically, she would sometimes guard that food and not eat it. Yet she would still growl.

Some might call that "food aggression."

We just called that "Heidi."

It was also kind of normal how she rudely ignored any other dog in the house.

Other than Wendy, she never

took time to make any other canine friends.

She just loved her human family.

Heidi wanted to be held, and she was not about to give up her turn in somebody's arms.

Sadly, she began losing her luster for life around the start of this year.

She drank so much water that, sometimes, she had a hard time waiting to go back outside.

Her shape shifted.

What was once a plump Chihuahua-dachshund became almost bony.

Our veterinarian called her problem "complicated diabetes."

Another doctor revealed she had problems with her liver and probably more things that I don't understand.

Suffice it to say that she was just not herself.

And then she died

Saying goodbye made me cry.

I do know crying is a healthy human emotion, especially when you're dealing with death. And saying goodbye to your lovable fuzzleball, who slept almost every night at the foot of the bed, must be one of the hardest losses to endure.

What made me cry the most was seeing her little body in a bag, lying beneath a blanket, waiting to be buried.

I had put off the burial all day. Then I found both the shovel and the right spot—next to Wendy, perhaps the only dog that Heidi truly loved.

Returning inside the house on Tuesday afternoon, after a few more tears, I caught a glimpse of Heidi's water bowl.

My daughter said she thought she had again seen Heidi, still at that bowl—perhaps as a ghost.

I had no answer for that one.

I only stood there and wished I could have filled that water bowl one more time for my dearly-departed dog.

How reading with a kindergartner has transformed me

The first time I looked into the boy's eyes, I wondered which one of us was more nervous.

I asked myself: "Will I be able to fulfill this weekly commitment of spending time reading with him?"

As someone without kids who spends most of his time with adults, I thought the height difference was jarring. He looked so tiny. I had to remind myself, "He's just 5. He'll grow."

Two months since I began my journey as a reader at Buena Vista Elementary in North Nashville through PENCIL, a foundation that links volunteers to classrooms, I can report that I have not missed a day.

So, this past Wednesday was bittersweet: It was my last time reading at the school until 2020 because of the holidays.

The memories make it worth coming to read with this child

I consider it a Christmas gift to receive the opportunity to spend time with this child, to read books together, including "Squid and Octopus: Friends for Always," and



First place award Best Personal Column Group V

David Plazas –
The Tennessean, Nashville

to draw together.

A favorite memory was when he recently noticed my winter beard. "How did you grow that mustache?" he asked. I gave my best shot at giving a biology lesson to a 5-year-old: "When you're a grown-up, hair grows on your face and it continues to grow unless you cut it off." Thankfully, he seemed to accept my answer.

I so look forward to reading together again soon.

News about efforts to support public schools has been plentiful recently.

On Monday, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce released its annual Education Report Card call for a "whole city" approach to create greater equity among, investment in and support for Metro

Nashville Public Schools.

A new coalition called Nashville NOW has been formed to create greater dialogue about supporting our public schools.

These efforts have not come without controversy, as they have stirred up painful conversations about pro- versus anti-charter school debates, neighborhood schools and what adequate funding for schools really means.

Next summer's election for five of nine Nashville school board seats has the potential to be divisive, if recent history is any indication.

That is why when we talk about supporting, investing in and creating greater equity throughout MNPS, our city as a whole needs to keep focused on those children, like

the kindergartner at Buena Vista.

I hope volunteering makes difference

Buena Vista Elementary is an outlier in that it has an incredibly high rate of students — 73% — who change schools before the school year ends because of socio-economic hardships, homelessness or other challenges. Contrast that to the mobility rate MNPS-wide, which has varied between 31% and 33% over the last five years.

At the same time, the school is in an area where pricey new developments are overtaking old housing near the Cheatham Place public housing complex. The students are seeing a new, out-of-reach, affluent Nashville grow around them even as their circumstances continue to be difficult.

On Dec. 14, I joined a group of fellow neighbors from the Salem-town neighborhood, less than a mile east of the school, to volunteer at the annual holiday and toy breakfast.

We sat for holiday song and

dance performances.

We also helped the incredibly dedicated educators serve families who came to pick up groceries, coats, school supplies and toys and make appointments for dental cleanings.

These are things many of us take for granted.

My involvement in Buena Vista began because of The Tennessean's "Dismissed" series, which examines inequities among public schools and has promoted avenues for people to get involved, from volunteering as a reader to investing in the Adopt-a-Teacher program, which runs through Dec. 31. Learn more at dismissed.tennessean.com.

As a volunteer, I worry if reading to my kindergartner will make a difference years down the line, when he will be at risk of joining the two-thirds of third grade children who cannot read at grade level.

My hope is that it will make a difference, and that at least, for now, he knows there is an adult he can trust who cares about his future and genuinely enjoys the time they spend together.

BEIFUSS, from Page 27

lookers that the place was "modest, but it really was full of love."

Five Elvis recordings are heard on the soundtrack (notably absent is "White Christmas," which is a little too on the nose as a de-

scription of Hallmark Memphis' demographics). Even so, the script de-emphasizes Presley's music in favor of his generosity. "Elvis was an incredibly charitable guy, right?" somebody says, and it's an affirmation, not a question. That assumption helps motivate a plot

twist that finds Graceland hosting a fundraiser for the cutting edge medical technology that Owen's company has developed and plans to give away for free, "in honor of Elvis' legacy of giving."

In another scene, Owen, Harper and the kids are leaving Elvis

Presley's Memphis when the script gives a shoutout to Gladys' Diner, the entertainment complex's destination point for what the Graceland website calls "classic American cuisine" (the menu includes peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches). Expressing a senti-

ment I've never heard uttered in Memphis, Owen says: "Whaddaya say we grab a bite at Gladys' to celebrate?" The pleasure in his voice suggests there's no more agreeable or obvious place to celebrate when you're a citizen of Hallmark Memphis.

SMITH, from Page 28

As I look at my own life, I can see he set me on the right trajectory. He was a scout leader; I earned Eagle Scout just shy of

my 18th birthday. A year after his election, I made history as the first African American editor of The Daily Mississippian, the student newspaper at Ole Miss. As a child, I watched he and my

mom care for both of their parents; years later, I was full-time caregiver for my mom.

It reminds me of a poem I wrote a few years after his death — about the weight of filling the shoes of

a man who meant so much to so many people. I wrote about that time after he died, when I literally slipped on an old pair off his shoes, only to find out they were uncomfortable and worn out. The

closing lines:

"As I slipped off his shoes, I cried, as I looked down and realized: I do not have to fill my father's shoes. For I have inherited his feet."

JUDD, from Page 29

calling for help to come fast, saying an officer was down.

At the Sheriff's Department, everyone was feeling frantic themselves as they heard all this, and sick with shock at the unexpected, grim direction a seemingly routine hit-and-run had taken.

Rick had been shot three times. His protective vest had stopped one bullet, but the other two had struck him in unprotected areas and did

significant internal damage. The man who had shot him (a fugitive from Alabama, wanted on felony charges) was yards away, dead, at least five bullets in him. He and Rick apparently had exchanged shots from a distance of only a few feet. Those must have been some horrible moments.

Rick was taken to a hospital, but despite best efforts, his wounds proved unsurvivable.

When they laid Ricky to rest, officers and police and other first

responders from all over came to salute their fallen peer, as did everyday people from across the county.

Rick Coyle's too-short life was that of a man seemingly hard-wired to serve others. Even before devoting 16 years to the Greene County Sheriff's Department, he'd worked a year with the Northern Illinois University Police. Before that, he'd been in the United States Air Force. So a big part of his life of 41 years had been spent supporting and protecting other people.

The GCSD still remembers and honors Rick Coyle. A picture of him is displayed in the outer area of the main office. Rick, in that small photograph, looks exactly like I remember him, with a big and bright smile.

There are many younger GCSD deputies now who had no chance to meet Rick Coyle, and that is too bad. They'd have liked him. I know I did. Just as I had liked Dr. Henard.

That the names of these two men, Henard and Coyle, are linked for-

ever on that road marker is fitting, as I see it. A doctor and a deputy, each serving his community in a different way ... and each doing it well. These men gave it all they had.

Next time I drive out near John Deere, I'm going to let that road marker serve to remind me that we of Greeneville and Greene County were blessed to have had the likes of Hal Henard and Rick Coyle among us. The community that is our home today is more hallowed because they lived.

MULLINIX, from Page 28

\$335,000 over its required 3% reserves.

However, the budget already calls for spending \$3.7 million of fund balance reserves. The fund balance is money not spent in one year that rolls over to the next. It can only be used for one-time projects — like a new school roof or renovation — or capital purchases like technology or buses. They can't use that money for salary increases because that's an ongoing expense. The text

alerts would also be an ongoing expense.

The school system's budget is available online at the school system website, and we'll post a link with this article online. You can review it and see the money they're getting and where it's going.

"Maybe they shouldn't have spent all that money on a splash pad."

Several people seemed to think the school system or county was involved in the recent renovation of Garrison Park on Fourth St.

To clear this up — the Garrison Park renovation is a project of the city of Crossville, which owns the park. It is not a county project. It did not use county funds. It did not use school funds.

In fact, the city was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the state that covered almost half of the project. The rest came from the city's own fund reserves.

Based on my observation of its use over the past couple of weekends, it appears to be a popular addition to our community.

The only funding obligation

the city has to the school system is to make sure the schools get their share of local mixed drink tax revenue, about \$46,000 last year.

I often see comments on social media or overhear things about our local government that are simply just wrong. I understand why some folks have these incorrect notions. Some things may have changed since they last studied the subject. They may not have a clear understanding who is responsible for what — like calling the city street department for a

road out in the county.

Local government can be challenging to make sense of sometimes — in more ways than one. The Chronicle staff includes reporters with decades worth of local government knowledge. We need to do a better job of sharing that with you.

If you have questions or things you've wondered about, email me. We'll try to get you an answer.

And hopefully we can bring a better understanding to our community so, at the very least, you'll know who you should be mad at.

WINNERS, from Page 26

Tom Sherlin, Scott Keller, Marcus Fitzsimmons, Margaret Chwat

Judge's Comments: Special sections sometimes means covering a lot of ground, and that can lead to a sort of boring repetitiveness. The creativity involved in this edition, though, and the quality of the content elevated it to the best in this category.

2. Bristol Herald-Courier

Tim Hayes, Allen Gregory, George Stone, Brian Woodson, Missy Hale

Judge's Comments: Putting in work to preview more than two dozen high school football teams is simply impressive, as is the effort that clearly went into selling advertisements for the publication.

3. Johnson City Press

Staff

Judge's Comments: The best part of the edition were the archival photographs, along with the images of historic editions and editorial cartoons. Their quality showed a generational commitment to preserving the area's history.

Group V**1. The Tennessean, Nashville**

Ben Goad, Cindy Watts, Dave Paulson, Matt Leimkuehler, Marcia Prouse, Karen Grigsby

Judge's Comments: There's really not much to say, other than it's fantastic and hard to top.

2. Chattanooga Times Free Press

Stephen Hargis, Matt McLane

Judge's Comments: A brilliant

effort, start to finish.

3. News Sentinel, Knoxville

Staff

Judge's Comments: It's expertly designed and well-written. There's some natural limitations to the photographs, considering the subjects, but this section gets the job done.

Best Website**Group I****1. The Leader, Covington**

Echo Day, Jeff Ireland, Alan Ervin, Daniel Richardson

Judge's Comments: A good example of a community new site.

2. Smithville Review

Angie Meadows

Judge's Comments: Very interesting. Many interesting examples of involvement.

3. The Herald Chronicle, Winchester

Brian Justice, Sam Cowan, Linda Stacy

Judge's Comments: Very Good content.

4. The Gallatin News

Sherry Mitchell, Zach Womble, Josh Cross, Nick Gould, Sam Gould, Jennie Slowey

5. Portland Sun

Sherry Mitchell, Nick Gould, Sam Gould, Jennie Slowey

Group II**1. The Tullahoma News**

Erin McCullough, Katelyn Lawson, Duane Sherrill, Rayana Lemons, Kyle Murphy, Zach Birdsong

2. The Newport Plain Talk

Matthew Winter, Seth Butler, Duay O'Neil, Alison Brooks, Dennis Barker, Gem Lieser

3. Crossville Chronicle

Heather Mullinix, Caroline Selby, Rebekah K. Bohannon Beeler, Michael Lindsay, Cheryl Duncan, Missy Wattenbarger

4. The Elk Valley Times, Fayetteville

Sandy Williams, Lucy Williams

5. The Connection, Springfield

Russell Vannozzi, Cheri Reeves, Sherry Mitchell, Jennie Slowey, Nick Gould, Sam Gould

Group III**1. Herald-Citizen, Cookeville**

Don Foy, Kate Cook, Lindsay McReynolds, Scott Wilson, Ben Craven

Judge's Comments: Easily the best website of the competition.

2. The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville

Staff

Judge's Comments: Special features and the navigation of the site were strong.

3. Southern Standard, McMinnville

Nikki Childers

Judge's Comments: The clean feel of the website and the amount of information warranted the Southern Standard the third-place finish.

4. Cleveland Daily Banner

Patty Hawkins, Trena Bailey, Carrie Pettit, Gwen Swiger, Autumn Hughes

5. The Greeneville Sun

Brian Cutshall, Scott Jenkins, Kelly Pickering

Group IV**1. Bristol Herald Courier**

Dalena Adams

Judge's Comments: The Bristol Herald Courier has a smooth, easy-to-navigate website with the day's most pressing news at your fingertips. I especially appreciated the automatic prompt to sign up for a daily coronavirus newsletter. Nice touch and helpful.

2. The Daily Times, Maryville

Staff

Judge's Comments: The Daily Times website is fairly easy to navigate, but the first few feature photos on the home page are too big. Beyond that, the stories were well organized.

3. Johnson City Press

Sam Watson, Nathan Baker, Joe Avento

Judge's Comments: The Johnson City Press website is packed with local reporting, but I found navigating it difficult with a large number of sections and similarity between links and ads. I also did not like the video pop-up at the bottom which dominated much of the viewing screen and could not be closed.

Group V**1. Chattanooga Times Free Press**

Allison Collins

2. The Tennessean, Nashville

Staff

Judge's Comments: I loved the

clickable subheads halfway down the mainpage: Elections, Special Reports, Inside Nashville.

3. News Sentinel, Knoxville

Staff

Judge's Comments: I loved the clickable subheads halfway down the main page.

Sunday Editions**1. Chattanooga Times Free Press**

Staff

Judge's Comments: Great local content in every section gave them a slight edge in a very competitive field.

2. News Sentinel, Knoxville

Staff

Judge's Comments: Great all-around papers packed with information.

3. Bristol Herald Courier

Staff

Judge's Comments: My favorite from a design standpoint. Clean and precise with great attention to detail.

4. The Daily New Journal, Murfreesboro

Staff

Judge's Comments: Solid papers with good local content. Has the potential to be better with a few tweaks, mainly on the editorial page.

5. The Daily Times, Maryville

Design Staff

Judge's Comments: Solid paper with excellent local content. Special sections were lacking and wasn't enamored with the design, but there was a lot to like elsewhere.

2020 Headline Writing Winners

Circulation Group I: **Robertson County Times, Springfield**

ROBERTSON COUNTY TIMES

Springfield sees chicken-wrangling cops, birds on the loose despite laws

Judge seals case on coach who secretly recorded girls in locker room

Ghostly voices, poison and POWs

Chris Smith

ADAMS, Tenn. - The race is supposed to be easy, but voters have grunts, crows and laughter. All over the town, voters report neither noise of war.

There those are the marks. If you take one, you could end up with lead back, hanging from out invisible to instantly death. Voters refuse to let of these marks work beauty, just to end what they like can mean.

It's the legend of the Bell Witch, continued near the town of

Circulation Group III: **The Nashville Ledger**

Ledger

Next 440 makeover will kick asphalt

Getting late early for Preds
NHL history unkind to teams that misfire in 1st quarter of season

More bang for your puck: Preds tickets worth scoring

Circ. Group II: **The Knoxville Ledger**

Ledger

Artistry in a Snapchat world

No way award-winning photographer is phoning it in

Interview with *Lobby McInerney*

How the WEST is ONE

Principal Ashley Jessie has diverse high school working as a team

Story by *Nancy Henderson* begins on page 2

Red planet, green light

UT students repeat as finalists in NASA's Mars water-mining competition

Circulation Group IV: **Citizen Tribune, Morristown**

LUCK OF THE IRIS

The Purple Iris re-opening in new location

GUITAR HIRO

Classical guitarist to play Rose Center

Something subtle, beautiful, and elegant is coming to Rose Center's Prater Hall this April, and you won't want to miss it.

The musical stylings of Hiroya Tsukamoto are delicate, precise, and offer the audience a rare glimpse of the intersection between discipline, mastery, and natural talent. A classical guitarist, Tsukamoto's music is both lovely and accessible to a wide audience.

An accomplished composer, guitarist and singer-songwriter.

PORTRAIT OF AN Artist

Circulation Group V: **Chattanooga Times Free Press**

Keeping up with the Boneses

PARADISE LOST

TVA directors vote to close two coal plants

Under p-r-e-s-s-u-r-e

Among the winners of Saturday's 2019 Regional Spelling Bee at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's University Center were McClellan School student Carver Parks, first place; Heritage Middle School student John Courtney, second place; and Chattanooga School for the Arts & Sciences Annabelle Hartha, third place. As champion, Parks will now go to represent the Chattanooga area at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. **Above:** Chattanooga's Carver Parks from Wallace A. Smith Elementary School puts on a face of supreme concentration as he spells a word during Saturday's spelling bee. **Right:** Carver Parks of Latta Middle School keeps the gears turning in her head as she spells "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."