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Cain: maybe a mistake, but no Sunshine admission

ALAN SLOAN

editor@farragutpress.com



Cain

While admitting to “maybe a mistake” in a private “15-second” correspondence with fellow Town of Farragut Alderman David White, Alderman Alex Cain said he never “admitted” to any Open Meetings Act (Sunshine Law) violation as reported in the July 30 issue of farragutpress (starting on page 1A).

Denying they broke the law concerning the Sunshine Law, Cain did admit that it “may have been” bad judgement in his private discussion with White, the published report of which has set off a series of attacks on the North Ward (Ward 1) alderman on Social Media believing he did, in fact,

violate the Open Meetings Act.

“Since I sent the e-mail (open letter published in the July 23 issue of farragutpress), the social media has been abuzz about it,” Cain said.

Writing what became an open letter, which he refers to as “the e-mail” he wanted read during the Thursday, July 17, Farragut Municipal Planning Commission meeting, “there were some things on the agenda I had some concerns with and wanted to get a comment on, obviously, at the meeting,” Cain said, adding the e-mailed letter “voiced my concerns.” It was never read during that FMPC meeting.

“Before I even put the e-mail together, I happened to run into David White and I asked David if he saw the items that were on the Planning Commission agenda, especially the one in regard to Road Cross Sections, I believe is how it was titled,” Cain recalled.

“He said, ‘Yeah, and I don’t like it.’ I said, ‘Neither

do I,’” he added. “Then we went on our way. That was the total extent of that whole conversation.

“When I put the e-mail together at the end of (the correspondence in question), it may have been a poor choice of words. ...”

Though he spoke with Town attorney Tom Hale on Wednesday, July 23, and Thursday, July 24, concerning the Open Meetings Act, Cain said Hale did not take a position on whether or not the North Ward alderman did, indeed, violate the law.

Cain, who is not an attorney, said he did not form his opinion of not violating the Act based on meetings with any attorney.



Instead, “After I got elected, I had meetings with a lot of people at the Town, (such as) Town staff, department heads, people in the administrator’s office,”

See CAIN CLARIFIES on Page 3A

Dog Daze IX almost upon us

TAMMY CHEEK

tcheek@farragutpress.com



This month is going to the dogs — Dog Daze IX @ Village Green Presented by TDS Telecome, that is.

Shop Farragut/Farragut Business Alliance volunteers will help facilitate this event from 4 to 7 p.m., Friday, Aug. 15; from 10 a.m. (registration and practice at 9 a.m.) to about 6 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 16; and from 11 a.m. (with practice at 10 a.m.), to the end of the Big Air Finals, which starts 3 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 17, in Village Green shopping center parking lot, 11435-11543 Kingston Pike in Farragut in front of Planet Fitness.

For more information on competition schedules, visit shopfarragut.com and go to Programs and Events.

“The schedule is based on the competitions for the dogs,” Shop Farragut/FBA executive director Stephen Krempasky said.

“There will be over 400 jumps with 150 competitors — and new this year will be ‘Dueling Dogs,’” which replaces the former “Pooch Plunge” with “Canine Water Racing” Aug. 15, stated a press release from Shop Farragut/FBA, also working in cooperation with Smoky Mountain Dock Dogs and Ricki’s Pet Depot.

This year, Krempasky anticipates, “if the weather’s nice,” at least 6,000 attendees and more than 65 vendors.

“It just keeps growing,” he added. “There seems to be a lot of excitement out there this year ... because it’s been there long enough now that you don’t have to remind people what it is. They just know.

“We had a lot of fun in the (Farragut Independence Day) Parade,” Krempasky added. “We actually had somebody, local Dock Dogs people, marching with us, pulling a banner for Dog Daze.”

Dog Daze is a three-day festival featuring dogs from around the nation competing for prizes plus vendors, food and shopping. Along with many sponsors, Shop Farragut also gets a grant from the Town to support the event.

While Dog Daze is free to attend as a spectator, Krempasky said there are registration fees for dogs to compete. He explained the registration costs depend on the competition event in which they are registering and the number of dogs being registered.

Shop Farragut, with the support of Town of Farragut and other sponsors, has teamed up with Smoky Mountain Dock Dogs and Rikki’s Pet Depot to bring the nationally sanctioned regional canine aquatics competition by Dock Dogs International to Farragut, according to Krempasky.

“We look forward to this event all year long and to showcase the talent of our canine athletes and all of the hard work we put in with them to get them to this level and to share our love for the sport with the community,” said Jennifer Belle, president of Smoky Mountain Dock Dogs. “We love seeing the joy and smiles of the spectators, whether it’s the biggest jumping dog or the smallest.”

See DOG DAZE IX on Page 3A

(Above, left) A pair of competing dogs display their skills during Dog Daze VIII @ Village Green in the Village Green shopping center parking lot, 11435-11543 Kingston Pike in Farragut, during last year’s competition in mid-August. Shop Farragut/Farragut Business Alliance again sponsors this event — Presented by TDS — in the same location from 4 to 7 p.m., Friday, Aug. 15; from 10 a.m. (registration and practice at 9 a.m.) to about 6 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 16; and from 11 a.m. (with practice at 10 a.m.), to the end of the Big Air Finals, which starts at 3 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 17. Along with scores of the nation’s — and the world’s — most talented jumping dogs, at least 6,000 attendees and more than 65 vendors are expected during the three days, said Stephen Krempasky, executive director of Shop Farragut/FBA.

Photos courtesy of James Enos/James Enos Photography

Pair of Traffic Calming Public Meetings with Town Engineering

- **Two Town of Farragut Public Meetings involving traffic calming**, hosted by the Town’s Engineering Department, will be held in the Board Room in Farragut Town Hall, 11408 Municipal Center Drive this week: from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 6, concerning Union

Road traffic calming; and again from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 7, also in Town Hall Board Room concerning Midhurst Drive traffic calming.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Eric Schindler, assistant Town Engineer, at eschindler@townoffarragut.org.

Boyd Station Road section closure; detours

- **“Boyd Station Road will be closed to through traffic for approximately two months, (which began) Monday, July 28, from McFee Road to Willow Cove Way,”** according to a Town of Farragut press release from Wendy Smith, Communications manager, concerning road construction.

“Through traffic will be detoured via Evans Road and McFee Road.

“This road closure is for construction of roadway improvements as part of the development of The Grove at Boyd Station subdivision,” Smith added.



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In ‘Liu’ of youth talent, turn to Albert, FMPC student rep from FHS

TAMMY CHEEK
tcheek@farragutpress.com

Farragut Municipal Planning Commission has a new young face on hand when it meets every third Thursday.

Farragut High School rising senior Albert Liu has been chosen as its 2025-26 youth representative.

“I’ve always wanted to have a larger role in helping my community and looking out for the issues I believe in and the people who are around me,” he said.

So, when he saw there was an opportunity to be a student representative in Town, “I thought this was a way I could help others,” said Liu, son of Xiaobing Liu and Dongyi Xiao.

Why FMPC?
“I think I chose the Planning Commission specifically because I think they have a lot of impact in what goes on around Farragut,” the youth said. “Just like, from the few meetings that I’ve been to, it’s already clear how much they do.

“Almost everything I’ve grown up around, like all the construction projects, all the roads and everything, it’s really cool to see how all that’s impacted at a city level and what all goes into that work,” Liu said.

As a high school student, he acknowledges “there is a ceiling to what I can do” — not being a voting member — yet what he sees his role to be is “to bring more attention to the stuff that’s going on here.”

Liu also wants to try to show as many of his peers “the work that goes on at a city level and how much it affects them and all the cool things that are going on at Town Hall.”

Along with that, he wants to bring a voice of the youth to Town meetings.

Present for a Thursday, July 17, FMPC meeting, he observed, “A lot of people who showed up, they’re not in our generation, and being able to maybe share some of the things that happened in those



Albert Liu

meetings with my peers or even get some of my peers to speak up and voice their views is really my goal and what I can do as far as being a student rep.”

Letter of Recommendation
In a letter of recommendation, STEM and Design Academy counselor Katie King wrote of Liu that, as a junior he was in the top 5 percent of “his very competitive class.

“He has a long-standing commitment to civic engagement that has led him to meaningful involvement in a variety of activities centered around politics and public service,” she stated. “Albert is a skilled organizer and fundraiser who holds local, regional and national office positions in organizations like Youth Government and Civic Leaders of America. All told, he has raised over \$20,200 for these and other groups, organized multi-conferences, group travel and more.

“I’ve always been impressed with Albert’s maturity,” King added. “He is thoughtful, measured and at times even wise. “His interest in all levels of governing drives his genuine interest in the Planning Commission.”

Liu said he has aspirations of attending a law school and focusing on economics and public policy.

KCSOreports

• At 8:30 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 2, Knox County Sheriff’s Office units responded to a Conductor Way address “in reference to what appeared to be gun shots in the area,” the report stated. Officers made contact with (eventual arrestee/suspect), who said “he had smoked weed and had been drinking. Officers could tell (he) was highly intoxicated and could hardly walk or stand.

“Officers also made contact with (witness), who said he was at (eventual arrestee’s) residence and (said) they were drinking together,” the report further stated. Witness said “they were checking out (eventual arrestee’s) firearm when suddenly (he) started shooting the gun (six or seven times) at the street light across the street that was in the direction of the entrance to the neighborhood.”

Another witness said she was “walking her dog right near the entrance of the neighborhood when she heard several loud pops that sounded like a gun shots,” the report stated. Suspect was taken into custody and transported to Roger D Wilson Detention facility.

• At 5:45 p.m., Aug. 2, a complainant called KCSO Teleserve Unit to report a burglary inside a vehicle at an Axton Drive residence. “Complainant advised he had been over at a business partner’s house. ... After he left he realized items (with a value listed at \$2,400) with-

in the vehicle were missing,” the report stated. “Complainant (said) the doors to the vehicle had been locked and noticed there were scuffs on the vehicle, but no damage was done to gain entry to the vehicle.” “Complainant advised the listed items were taken from inside the vehicle.”

• At 3:03 p.m., Thursday, July 31, a complainant called Knox County Sheriff’s Office North Precinct to report a theft that occurred at Farragut Post Office, 11409 Municipal Center Drive.

Complainant said she dropped the check in the Post Office box at the listed location on June 20. “She made the check out to (a man) for \$1,200.00. The payee contacted her and advised he never received the check,” the report stated.

“Complainant then went to her banking institution, ORNL Federal Credit Union, and they advised the check was deposited on June 26 to a Bank of America account and the payee was changed to the listed suspect,” the report further stated.

• At 2:06 p.m., Tuesday, July 29, officers responded to a Parkside Drive address in reference to a disturbance. Upon arrival, officers made contact with complainant/victim, who “advised that he needed to discuss two incidents regarding a former friend, (suspect),” the

See KCSO REPORTS on Page 3A

Towncalendar

• Farragut and other area residents can help honor veterans in Pleasant Forest Cemetery starting at 9 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 9 (in the cemetery along Concord Road) by helping clean veterans’ monuments.

Pleasant Forest Cemetery board of directors and Veterans Heritage Site Foundation have teamed up on the cleanup project, in which

VHSF provides the supplies and a skilled person to train volunteers and Pleasant Forest officials furnish volunteers.

“We can definitely use more volunteers,” said David Stinton, cemetery board director.

For more information, or to volunteer, e-mail Stinton at stintondp@gmail.com or call 865-250-0056.



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lettertotheeditor

Reader defends Cain, sharply critical of Povlin couple acts

In the last Farragut (Municipal) Planning Commission meeting on July 17, chairman Ron Pinchok could not attend, so the vice chair Louise Povlin (former Farragut Vice Mayor) chaired the meeting.

Povlin did not read the e-mail from Aldermen Alex Cain and David White to the Planning Commission as requested. Louise Povlin has resorted to a false cover story through her husband’s words that it was a Sunshine Law violation as the reason she did not comply with the instructions of two elected Aldermen.

I thank the farragutpress for making this e-mail public. Ironically, many more people are aware of this serious issue than if the e-mail had been read into the record on the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission is an un-elected advisory board that is subordinate to the elected Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Povlin refusing to read the e-mail into the record was an act of insubordination.

Louise Povlin is neither a chancellor nor a judge. She had no authority or standing to disobey the elected Aldermen. As the former Vice Mayor of Farragut, she knows this better than anyone.

Povlin simply did not want the public to know the contents of the e-mail because it reflected very badly on her conduct and the conduct of others on the Planning Commission.

This cover-up is ridiculous because the Sunshine Law distinguishes the difference between a discussion, which is allowed and happens all the time, and a deliberation on an agenda item, which is not allowed by state law.

The subject of the e-mail Povlin refused to read into the record was about “the 2024 re-branding of the Turkey Creek Greenway Project” to the “Turkey Creek Multi-Modal Road Improvement Project” in an effort to circumvent state law on using eminent domain to seize land for greenways.

Aldermen Cain and White both had enough of the word games and sent essentially a cease and desist warning to the Planning Commission. A warning that was rejected and rebuked.

This 2024 rebranding to evade state law has not been, and is not scheduled to be on any Planning Commission or Board of Mayor and Aldermen agenda, so a Sunshine Law violation is impossible.

Another way to think of this is to ask how a Sunshine Law violation is cured. It is cured by a re-vote of the agenda item of the violation. There was no agenda item in either body, meaning there was no violation.

The Letter to the Editor last week from Jay Povlin, the husband of Louise Povlin, is bereft of fact and meaning. It has no foundation in law.

Jay Povlin falsely claims “Alex Cain and David White violated the Tennessee Open Meetings Act (Sunshine Law) by privately discussing and agreeing on a vote outside of public view.”

There was no vote because there was no agenda item, so there can be no violation. Jay Povlin’s letter and claims are false and contrived. They are malicious libel and slander. Jay Povlin demands, “FOIA requests for all communications between the Aldermen and a potential civil complaint in Knox County Chancery Court.” There is no legal basis for this bogus threat. It is only misdirection from the serious conduct of Louise Povlin defying the instruction of two elected aldermen.

Louise Povlin should be removed from the Planning Commission for insubordination and conduct unbecoming a Planning Commission member.

Mike Mitchell, Farragut

KCSO Reports

From page 2A

report stated. “Victim advised that (suspect) had recently signed divorce papers and was lashing out.”

Victim advised officers that on Monday, July 27, suspect “had stolen his iPhone SE and had gotten it unlocked and was now sending his personal information to multiple people.”

Victim also advised that around 9:45 to 10 p.m., Monday,

July 28, “he was driving west-bound on Kingston Pike when he saw a car turn around, travel at a high rate of speed and begin to follow him closely,” the report stated.

Victim advised he “realized it was (the suspect) and attempted to speed up to get away from him,” the report further stated. Victim advised the suspect “sped around him and cut in front of him, causing him to go off the road about 4 feet.”

Dog Daze IX

From page 1A

“Shop Farragut has been an amazing advocate for us,” she added. “We are thrilled to come back every year and we are ecstatic to be a part of Dog Daze,” she added.

So far, “it’s going great,” Krempasky said about organizing the event. “The number of vendors is a little bit better than last year. People are really excited about it.

“I’ve gotten more dog people involved this year than ever

Cain clarifies

From page 1A

Cain recalled. “... We even talked about the Sunshine Law and how if I was going to go meet with a group of residents in a neighborhood, I can’t have another alderman there unless we put a notice in the paper that Alderman Cain and Alderman whomever are going to meet. ... That’s how it was explained it to me.

“An item that is on the agenda you’re going vote on, you cannot deliberate it beforehand with another elected official,” Cain added, stressing this was not the case with himself and White.

Moreover, “I don’t see that as a violation of this law because it’s not on the BOMA agenda,” Cain said. “It hasn’t been on the BOMA agenda, and as of today, it’s not going to be on the BOMA agenda. ...

“My comment in my e-mail

before,” he added. “It takes a few years for everyone to know what’s going on.”

About “Dueling Dogs” Aug. 15, “That’s actually another category of Dock Dogs (competitions) that has become very popular in the last few years,” Krempasky said. “This year, we decided to add (Dueling Dogs). It’s more of a dog-against-dog competition, so it’s like Olympic swimmers.

“They split the pool in half and have the dogs — two at a time — race on up to the end of the pool, and it’s all based on

speed,” he added. “Word on the street is that people actually start betting for their favorites on side hustles. It gets that exciting. They get so involved with the dogs.”

Krempasky assured, however, “there is no public wagering on (the competition).”

To register for Dueling Dogs, visit <http://duelingdogs.net>

Krempasky replaced the Pooch Plunge because of the cost and “it’s hard to get sponsors” for that portion of the event, he said.

about David White and I noticing an agenda item that we didn’t like; technically, that agenda item doesn’t exist now,” he added.

“If it doesn’t come to fruition, then there’s no violation whatsoever. I don’t believe there was a violation even up until then.”

Hale addressed the Sunshine Law at the Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting Thursday, July 30. “He said, ‘Sometimes it’s very difficult to decide what is or what is not a violation,’” Cain recalled. “I think that’s where we stand on this because that (letter-referenced) item was pulled as an agenda item, so now it doesn’t exist. It’s not on any agenda. I made a comment in an e-mail about an item that got pulled.”

However, that issue in question “can come back” for deliberation before any Town board, commission or committee — all subject to the Sun-


shine Law — according to both Hale and Cain.

About the 15 seconds in question privately with White — for those thinking it might have been a Sunshine Law violation — Cain said Hale told him, “‘If you talk about (the same information as discussed in the private conversation) in a public meeting before you may have to vote on the item in question, then you cure it.’ ... Basically, that nullifies any violation because you disclosed it ahead of time.”

When Cain said he asked Hale, ‘How do I violate something if the agenda item doesn’t exist?’ Cain recalled Hale saying, “‘That’s where the gray area comes from.’”

Cain recalled Hale saying to him, “‘If you truly believed you violated the law, I don’t think you would have asked the newspaper to print your e-mail where you stated that you and David (White) talked.’”


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Dryvebox brings game to players

TAMMY CHEEK
tcheek@farragutpress.com

Ending his eligibility as a special teams starter for University of Tennessee Football last season, his one and only on Rocky Top after standout performances at Farragut High and Wofford College, Eli Purcell realized he needed to re-invent himself.

So when he discovered the Dryvebox franchise, he launched his own business, Dryvebox Knoxville, Saturday, July 26.

Dryvebox, a new franchise based out of California, is a mobile golf simulator transported in a trailer.

“I got the trailer made and delivered about two weeks ago,” Purcell said. “I had my first showing last Saturday, July 26.

“It’s something very new,” he added. “There’s nothing else like it. You can bring games — like closest to the pin, long drive, capture the flag — to any event, whether that’s a birthday party, a corporate event or even a festival.

“There’s many kids’ games as well. (Dryvebox has) ways to tailor it to many different groups.”

For instance, “if you have 150 people at some festival, we can play close to the pin and create a leaderboard of all 150 people as they roll through,” Purcell said. “Or, if you’re having a birthday party with eight or 10 people, they can all play multiple games together in a competition style, so there are many ways to tailor to whatever your event needs are.”

A native of Farragut, Purcell’s search for a business began as his football career with UT ended.

“Last year, when I was playing football at Tennessee, I was looking into some things that I thought were cool,” he recalled. “I was like, ‘Man, I would love to have a golf simulator.’ I started Googling it and I came across Dryvebox.

“I did some research and ultimately I followed a link that said ‘become a franchise’ and I didn’t really think too much of it (at the time),” Purcell added. “I thought it was interesting.”

However, multiple conversations later, a trip to California — meeting the team — “it just felt like the right thing God had basically placed in my lap,” the former football standout said.

“I felt like it was the right move, so I pursued it,” Purcell added. “Now, I’m in this business.”

About Dryvebox, “I think it’s fun,” he said. “I think with how life is these days for a lot of people, they’re looking for something to be happy and joyful and excited about, and when you bring Dryvebox anywhere, smiles just light up on everybody’s faces because when you hit a golf ball the right way, it’s just a great feeling.

“And, you can bring that to anyone,” Purcell added. “What’s great about Dryvebox is it doesn’t matter if it’s your first swing or you’re a pro, you’ll find it enjoyable because we can make just about anybody successful and enjoy the experience.”

To get Dryvebox at an event, Purcell said it can be booked by visiting his website, Dryvebox.com, his social media at Dryvebox Knoxville or by e-mail at events@dryvebox.com



Tammy Cheek

Eli Purcell, former University of Tennessee football player who was a star player at Farragut High and Wofford College, is bringing a different kind of game to the public with Dryvebox Knoxville, a mobile golf simulator that travels to any kind of event.



Tammy Cheek

Dullahan’s Irish Pub owners Will Camp, fourth from left, and Ben Harmon, second from right, had an opportunity to give their input on operating their business to Small Business Administration representatives, such as regional administrator Tyler Teresa, far left; regional advocate Michael Vallante, second from left; SBA director Greg Bostick, third from left; and David Glasgow, district director, during a meeting at Dullahan’s Tuesday, July 29.

SBA reaches out at Dullahan’s Irish Pub

TAMMY CHEEK
tcheek@farragutpress.com

Small Business Administration representatives reached out to East Tennessee businesses Tuesday, July 29, to learn how they can help those businesses.

One such business was Dullahan’s Irish Pub at 12744 Kingston Pike in Renaissance | Farragut.

“What brought us here today, basically, is we want to hear today from a bunch of small businesses of what federal regulations are hurting them and making it harder for them to do business — and seeing if there is a way we can help,” SBA regional administrator Tyler Teresa said.

“I think at the office of advocacy at SBA, our job is to talk to people that run small businesses and find out, A, where their regulations, rules or just processes cause them to have to use time or resources that take away from their ability to get their business up and running or successful,” said Michael Vallante, regional advocate for SBA’s Region 4. “It’s important because sometimes people in Washington, D.C. will make decisions about some things, not really understanding how it impacts Main Street U.S.A.

“I think President (Donald) Trump and the (U.S. SBA) administrator Kelly Loeffler are very, very cognizant of that, and that’s why they have people like Tyler and myself out in the field to talk to businesses and find out what really is impacting their bottom line,” he added.

Before arriving at Dullahan’s, the group attended a Roundtable meeting, during which they could engage with local businesses and

federal agencies to discuss regulatory issues, at Apex Bank, 9721 Sherrill Blvd. in Knoxville.

“Our Round Table ran a little long, which was good because it meant that we had a great assortment of different kinds of businesses here, everything from manufacturing to hospitality, wine making, robotics,” Vallante said. “It was good to listen because they all have different and unique challenges that they face.

“And, getting their information of the things they have to face, in terms of the federal government, is something we can bring back to Washington and see how we can help make those things a little smoother for them,” he added.

“We had over 35 businesses, resource partners, members of organizations, from Senators’ offices, the congressman’s office — all in the (Round Table) meeting today — just to hear directly from them what’s happening here in East Tennessee and how we can help with SBA to make small businesses thrive,” Teresa said.

Vallante said the beauty of small business in Knoxville is they are so varied.

For example, “You know, we’ve got people in the robotics industry,” he said. “They are trying to develop and get a robotics industry going and more efficient. We’ve got a woman who opened her hospitality business, Ancient Lore, in 2021 in the middle of COVID, and they’ve been able to survive. But they’ve been able to identify for us a couple of things that we can take back and get fixed.

“What we find is a fine line between success and failure for small businesses is very thin, and anything we can do to help get government out of their way and help them will help make that line a little thicker,” he added.



NHC Farragut Celebrates Hawaiian Week with Residents & Staff

Residents and staff at NHC Farragut Assisted Living recently enjoyed a vibrant week of festivities inspired by the Hawaiian Islands. Each day featured themed activities, including tropical crafts, lively entertainment such as traditional hula dancing, and delicious island-inspired cuisine.

“Our Hawaiian Week celebration offered residents a vibrant cultural experience—from traditional hula dancing by the Halls Senior Center to live Hawaiian music by the Ohana Ukuleleans,” said Jennifer Morello, Life Enrichment Director. “It was a wonderful opportunity for residents to engage with the rich history and traditions of Hawaii.”

This celebration is just a glimpse of the meaningful and engaging lifestyle offered at NHC Farragut. Come take a tour and see what awaits you!

Contact Harriet Amonette at harriet.amonette@nhccare.com for more information.

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PARTY IN THE PARK

The summer heat did not stop families from having fun at McFee Park for Town of Farragut’s Party in the Park Friday, July 25.

“We estimated around 200 participants,” Town Recreation and Event manager Rachel Malone said. “We had crafts, food trucks, water activities and the splash pad.”

Malone said the event has been happening for several years, but “this year was the first time we held the event at McFee Park, and we felt like it was a great fit with the splash pad and playground.”

“Everyone seemed like they had a lot of fun, despite the heat,” she added.



Photos by
Tammy Cheek

1. Ben Schultze gives daughter Olivia, 1, a lift.
2. Willa Knipp, 3
3. Arya Kuman
4. Sophia Ebright, 3, and brother, Harrison Ebright, 1
5. Brantley Knipp, 4
6. Town staff and volunteers with Rachel Malone, Town Recreation and Event manager, in front, left
7. Mom, Jennifer Gendreau, with Charlotte, 8, and Adalynn, 5, and dad, Taylor Gendreau, with Theodore, 1
8. Volunteer Debbie Pinchok assists, from left, Natalee Huckleberry, 12, her sister, Paige, 8, and brother, Zack, 6.
9. Layla Moser, left, makes a craft with help from Town staff member Peyton Pettyjohn



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Photo access courtesy of Joe Carson

Concord plus Carolina equals National Senior Olympic Games gold

Carson a 70+ champ in 3-on-3 hoops

(Left) Joe Carson of Concord, third from right, was a member of a 70-plus 3-on-3 Senior Olympic basketball team, based out of North Carolina, that won gold at the recent National Senior Games in Des Moines, Iowa. “There were 18 teams in our age bracket (Senior Olympics starts at age 50 and uses 5-year age brackets to divide age levels),” Carson said. Team members, from left, are Chuck Friend, Kevin Kelly, Wallace Lewis, Lamar Marshall, Carson, Kevin Reily and Ed Davis. In addition to Carson’s success with Tar Heel State teammates, a 65-plus team “with mostly players from the Knoxville area” according to Carson, Tillman Construction, earned a National Senior Games bronze medal. “Additionally, a number of Knoxville-area teams medaled in the recent Tennessee State Senior Olympics at the end of June.”

Girls soccer previews: Lady SoccerDawgs, FHS girls

Fourth BHS state title in 5 years?

KEN LAY
Correspondent

KNOXVILLE — Bearden High School’s girls soccer team played in the Class AAA state championship match and had its eyes on an unprecedented fourth consecutive state title.

But the Lady Bulldogs lost a penalty kicks shootout to Germantown Houston and had to settle for a runner-up finish.

As the 2025 campaign looms, Bearden is looking to erase the memories of last year’s final match. And one of its stars is back, senior midfielder Taylor Roth, after missing her entire junior season due to a knee injury.

“I’m excited to have Taylor back,” longtime Lady SoccerDawg head coach Ryan Radcliffe said.

Roth returns just in time to help Bearden in 2025 when District 4-AAA, long considered the toughest league in the Volunteer State, is as strong as it has ever been.

“Anything less than getting to the state tournament is a disappointment for us,” said Radcliffe, who begins his 12th season as Bearden’s head coach. “Our first goal is always to finish at the top of our district, and that’s going to be extremely hard this season.”

The district underwent a facelift thanks to TSSAA realignment and re-classification for the 2025 school year.

The Lady Bulldogs, who have won multiple consecutive district regular-season and tournament championships, went 20-1-2 last season and, again, won the district regular-season title and tournament championship, as well as the Region 2-AAA Tournament crown.

Top returners for the Lady Bulldogs include: Roth (who recently committed to Western Kentucky), Jayla Blue (a senior forward and University of Tennessee commitment who was the District 4-AAA Offensive Player of the Year in 2024); Emma Rainey (senior, defender); Kennedy Lucas (junior, midfielder); Cadence Nesbitt (sophomore, defender); Brooklyn Major (junior, forward); Cali Motley (junior, midfielder); Madi Bowlin (junior, forward); Ella Eakins (senior, goalkeeper) and Taylor Cope (sophomore, defender).



Radcliffe

Radcliffe said incoming freshman midfielder Hannah Nye will a player “to keep an eye on over the next few years.”

Expectations are high for Bearden and that’s nothing new, but some players will be asked to fill different roles in 2025.

“We’ll have some new faces and we’ll have new faces in new places,” Radcliffe said. “The biggest question for us is going to be whether or not we can find another scorer to go with Jayla.

“People are going to be game planning to stop Jayla and we know that.”

Bearden will open the 2025 campaign when it hosts Knoxville Catholic on Wednesday, Aug. 20, at Turner-Allender Field. Kickoff is slated for 7 p.m.

‘District of Death’

Radcliffe knows his squad will enter the campaign with a target on its back. The District 4-AAA has long been labeled “the District of Death,” as it features the likes of Farragut, Hardin Valley Academy, Maryville and Knoxville West. Things also got a little tougher, as Heritage was re-classified to Class AA and was replaced by Lenoir City, a program considered stronger that once fielded competitive teams in the district. The Lady Mountaineers almost always finished at the bottom of the standings.

The Lady Hawks will have 10 returning seniors. West always is a tough opponent and has a mix of young and experienced talent. The Lady Admirals should be improved and Maryville is hoping to bounce back after undergoing a massive rebuild in 2024.

“The district has always been the ‘District of Death,’ and now it’s probably as good as it’s ever been,” Radcliffe said. “Hardin Valley, Farragut and West are all going to be good — and Maryville will be back.

“Lenoir City has always been pretty good and William Blount has been getting better,” he added. “... I think our district is going to be really strong this year.”

Young Lady Admirals look to make big strides under Burkhart in her 3rd season

KEN LAY
Correspondent

As Jessica Stephens Burkhart prepares for her third season as Farragut High School girls soccer head coach, she’ll have a young team.

But that doesn’t mean the one-time Lady Admirals star forward (Class of 2006) doesn’t have high expectations.

“We have a very young team,” Burkhart said. “We do have seven seniors, and one of our strengths is going to be that those seniors are going to provide us with strong upper-class leadership, whether it’s on the field or off the field.

“Two or three of them will play a lot, but the rest of them really work hard and they’re great kids,” she added.

Expectations are lofty for the Lady Admirals, who went 7-5-2 overall and reached the District 4-AAA Tournament semifinals before losing to Kingston Pike rival and eventual state runner-up Bearden after finishing fourth in the league’s regular-season standings.

In addition to its returning upperclassmen, Farragut has a talented group of freshmen.

“This team has really gelled and they’ve really connected and they’ve hit the ground running,” Burkhart said. “We have a big freshmen class and these returners have been a really enjoyable group to coach.

“One of our strengths is our work rate, and these girls are really holding each other accountable,” she added. “I’m proud of the culture that we’ve built and established.”

Burkhart has lauded her team’s effort during the preseason.

“Farragut has a reputation for being a white-collar town,” she said. “But this team is really more of a blue-collar team, and we know that we’re going to need to give 110 percent effort every night if we’re going to be successful.”

Top returners for the Lady Admirals include: Rowan Unger (a senior who can play forward, midfielder and defender. She has been an All-Sistrict 4-AAA honoree and an All-Region 2-AAA performer over the last two seasons and was an All-State standout as a sophomore); Kennedy Wade (senior, defender); Ada Becker (junior, defender); Ava Barczak (senior, forward); Leana Maier (sophomore, midfielder) and Ava Upshaw (sophomore forward).

Top newcomers looking to make an early impact are freshmen Meghan Shimeall (midfielder) and Emery Wylie (goalkeeper).

The Lady Admirals will open their 2025 campaign in Maryville against Heritage Tuesday, Aug. 19. Kickoff is slated for 6 p.m.

Tough district slate



Burkhart

Lofty goals, however, are nothing new for the Lady Admirals, and Burkhart is hoping her side has the right ingredients to go a bit further in the postseason. But she also knows her team will face a tough district slate of matches against the likes of Bearden, Maryville, Hardin Valley Academy, Knoxville West, William Blount and Lenoir City, which returns after a stint in Class AA. The Lady Panthers will replace Heritage, which was moved down due to TSSAA re-alignment and re-classification.

The rest of the league will be looking to dethrone Bearden, which has won multiple consecutive regular-season district and tourney championships in addition to four straight Class AAA state title match appearances (three crowns).

“Until somebody knocks (Bearden and head coach) Ryan (Radcliffe) off, they’re the team to beat,” Burkhart said. “Our district has always been ‘the District of Death,’ but it just got tougher with Lenoir City coming back in.

“Hardin Valley is supposed to be really good because they have a lot of seniors coming back,” the coach added. “West will be good again. Maryville will also be tough because (coach) Steve (Feather) always gets the most out of his teams and William Blount has gotten better.”

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(Above left) Christina Nguyen, owner of Angel Nails in Farragut, after being crowned Mrs. Petite Tennessee earlier this year. (Above right) In her Mrs. Petite USA state-themed attire in Chicago, Nguyen with her husband, Hien Pham, and their daughter, Sophia, 6.

Mrs. Petite’s ‘19 years’

State winner, USA ‘People Choice’ honoree, opens up about pageants, life in, near Town post-Vietnam

ALAN SLOAN
editor@farragutpress.com

Christina Nguyen’s interesting journey from her native Vietnam to East Tennessee — a businesswoman in Farragut with a family living in Concord — had another chapter added beginning in January.

Earning the title of Mrs. Petite Tennessee last winter after a “virtual” pageant, Nguyen went on to the Mrs. Petite USA competition in Chicago last month.

“I made it to Top 11 and I won the ‘People’s

Choice Award,” said the owner of Angel Nails, 11110 Kingston Pike Suite 155, about the national pageant.

Her pageant experience “was amazing because, really, it’s just for small people like me, 5(-foot-)4 and under,” she added.

While in Chicago, “I met so many incredible sister queens from all over the nation and I learned so many great things about them,” Nguyen said.

“It’s not just a beauty pageant, but it’s

See MRS. PETITE TN on Page 5B

‘Hawk’ish on Sinatra ‘News’ hit: ‘25 show

of HVA Spirit of the Valley Marching Band

TAMMY CHEEK
tcheek@farragutpress.com

HARDIN VALLEY — Hardin Valley’s Spirit of the Valley Marching Band has been learning to get in step with its 2025-26 show, “Start Spreading the News” — a famous Frank Sinatra hit song — during its band camp, taking place at the school Monday through Friday July 14 through July 18, as well as July 21 through July 25 and Monday through Wednesday, July 28 through July 30.

The camp culminated with a free community performance starting at 7 p.m., Tuesday,

July 29, in the HVA stadium.

The inspiration for the show came from program coordinator Ben Lee, according to Chuck Brock, assistant band director, who serves with head band director Alex Rector.

“Lee wanted to keep this character-type show,” Brock said. “We were Dust Bunnies last year. He wanted a similar character, but a more real character, so he chose the early 1900s’ paperboys’ look.

Besides show choice, Lee writes the wind (instrument) music and coordinates the rest.

See SPIRIT SHOW ’25 on Page 5B

FHS majorette wins 2 National Titles in S.C.

STAFF REPORTS
editor@farragutpress.com

Macy Morgan, a rising sophomore at Farragut High School and the majorette for FHS Marching Admirals band, competed Saturday through Tuesday, July 12-15, at Drum Majorettes of America Nationals in Aiken, South Carolina,

She won the National Novice Princess Title (15-to-23-year-olds) and the Beginner 2-Baton Title (15-to-23-year-olds). This is her second season with the FHS band according to a press release.

Morgan is the daughter of Jarrett and Janet Morgan. Her coach is Mindy Thomas, former University of Tennessee majorette

See NATIONAL TITLES on Page 5B



Photo submitted

Macy Morgan, a Farragut High School rising sophomore and majorette for Farragut High School Marching Admirals, recently won two titles at the Drum Majorettes of America Nationals in Aiken, South Carolina.

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Qualifying Duel # 1 4:30 pm
Qualifying Duel # 2 5:00 pm
Qualifying Duel # 3 5:30 pm
Dueling Dogs Finals 7:00 pm

Sat Aug 16, 2025
Onsite Registration/Practice 9:00 am
Big Air WAVE # 1 10:00 am
Big Air WAVE # 2 12:00 pm
Big Air WAVE # 3 2:00 pm
Speed Retrieve Competition 4:00 pm

Sun Aug 17, 2025
Onsite Registration/Practice 10:00 am
Extreme Vertical Competition 11:00 am
Big Air WAVE # 4 1:00 pm
Big Air Finals start at 3:00 pm
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• **Farragut Band Boosters will hold its 2nd Annual Yard Sale** from 8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Aug. 9, at Farragut High School (indoors), 11237 Kingston Pike. “Our community and families have shown up big with donations, which we are still accepting: indoor and outdoor furniture, sports and outdoor equipment, kitchen and household items, clothes/shoes of all sizes, seasonal/holiday, novelty/luxury, toys and kid stuff, books, accessories and so much more,” stated Kara Doyle, FHS secretary/administrative assistant.

“This will be a massive yard sale, and all proceeds benefit the FHS band program and its students. There will also be a car wash on the FHS grounds,” she added.

• **Knoxville Bar Association and Legal Aid of East Tennessee are offering an In-Person Free Legal Advice Clinic** from noon to 2 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 13, at Knox County Public Defender’s Community Law Office. Any veteran seeking legal help is encouraged to attend.

Veterans who are not able to attend the clinic in person are encouraged to continue to use the telephone clinic option. Pre-registration is required for telephone clinic and veterans are asked to call Legal Aid of East Tennessee at 865-637-0484 to pre-register.

This is a general advice clinic with a wide variety of legal issues, including family law, landlord/tenant, bankruptcy, criminal defense, consumer protection, contract disputes, child support and personal injury, among other issues.

This is an advice-only clinic. Clients can expect legal advice, but no wills will be drafted nor legal work performed.

In 2025, the clinics are held every other month, with the next ones Oct. 8, and Dec. 10.

• **Concord United Methodist Church invites the entire community to its Annual Rock the Block celebration** from 5:45 to 8 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 13.

“This free family-friendly event kicks off the new school year and the upcoming fall season at the church,” a CUMC press release stated.

Held on the front lawn of CUMC, 11020 Roane Drive in Farragut, Rock the Block “features something for everyone, including: free hot dogs and burgers, exciting inflatables and bounce houses, delicious sno-cones and fun activities

for all ages and stages,” the release further stated.

For more information, contact the church office at 865-966-6728 or e-mail Concord@ConcordUnited.org.

• **Knoxville Children’s Theatre, in partnership with Clayton Foundation, will present a live production of “The Hobbit.”** The play runs from Friday, Aug. 8, through Sunday, Aug. 24, with showtimes starting at 7 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays, at 1 and 5 p.m., Saturdays, and at 3 p.m., Sundays.

The production will take place in Knoxville Children’s Theatre’s new location, 747 World’s Fair Park.

Tickets, which run from \$13 to \$16, are available at the KTC website: <https://knoxvillechildrenstheatre.com/tc-events/the-hobbit-3/>. Free onsite parking is provided.

About “The Hobbit,” “Like most respectable Hobbits, Bilbo Baggins leads a quiet, decidedly unadventurous, life filled with comfort and good food,” a KCT press release stated.

“But when Gandalf the Grey brings a host of dwarves to his door, Bilbo finds himself lured out of his Hobbit Hole without a handkerchief and onto a road that will include gold, goblins and a fire breathing dragon,” the release further stated. “It’s an adventure that will change him and the world of Middle Earth forever.”

Moreover, “The production features 23 young actors, ages 8 to 16,” the release also stated. KCT veteran Shepherd Shafer will be playing Bilbo Baggins and will be joined by Quniton Stiffler as Gandalf.

Additional KCT veterans in this production include Tessa Arwe as Bomber, Addison Stanley as Smaug, Grace Templeton as Elven Queen, Taylor Tucker as Gollum, Isabella Summers as Balin, Barnes Shafer as Bofur, and Rosalie Linnabary as Thorin.

Playing Dori, Kili, Fili and Ori are KCT actors Adlee Moye, Dakota Paxton, Wyatt Stanley, and Emily Rowe. Laila Brown and Mason Cox are playing trolls Essie and Bert. Joining them are Charlie Fritts as Goblin, Chloe Harrison as great Goblin, and Clara Stanley as Dwalin.

Making their KCT debuts are Savannah Landfather, Luke Lowery, Makenna Reilly, Eli Roach and Samuel Wilson.

The play is directed by KCT directing intern Delaney Rickman. The scenic design is led

by Patrick Harrison and assisted by Eliza Huang, Kea Mitchell and Tabi Mannuam.

Persie Cunningham is costume designer, assisted by Quinn Johnson, Waverly Ostermayr and Scarlett Cooper.

Props are designed by Gabriel Herrera, who is assisted by James Carpenter, Abigail Schwinn and Grayson Wright. Anthony Canales serves as the lighting designer.

The play is stage managed by Eiley Rickman and Natalie Graves.

• **12th Knox Asian Festival – Let’s Celebrate Life Together! returns to World’s Fair Park** from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 24, with a special VIP “Sushi + Sumo” event the evening before at the Amphitheater Saturday, Aug. 23.

Tickets may be pre-purchased through Eventbrite for \$3 for visitors 12 years and older. Tickets can be purchased at the gate on the day of the festival for \$5 (cash and card accepted), so the community is encouraged to pre-register to take advantage of discounted admission. Visitors under age 12 will enjoy free admission.



Tammy Cheek

Rotary Club of Farragut member Bill Nichols, left, who heads RCF’s Rotary International Youth Exchange program, introduced Darius “DJ” Palmer, who recently returned from Colombia as an exchange student, during the club’s meeting in Fox Den Country Club Wednesday, July 9.

Palmer reports to RCF on Columbia

TAMMY CHEEK

tcheek@farragutpress.com

Darius “DJ” Palmer, 18, recently returned from the trip of a lifetime and thanked Rotary Club of Farragut for that opportunity during its meeting in Fox Den Country Club Wednesday, July 9.

RCF was one of five Rotary Clubs that sponsored Palmer, who graduated in 2024 from Knoxville Central High School, to take a

See PALMER’S EXCHANGE on Page 6B

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Rotary Club Farragut’s Changing of Guard ’25-26



In addition to inducting Rotary Club of Farragut’s president for 2025-26, Candace Viox (not pictured), assistant District Gov. Bill MacGrath (seventh from left), inducted other new officers and chairpersons. Inducted, from left, included Josh Hornberger, John Hoffman, Stephanie Markowitz, Tom Woodbery, Steve Krempasky, Brian Walker, John Rock, Greg Tilley, Walter Pattison, Craig Donnachie and Alex Barnwell at the club’s meeting in Fox Den Country Club Wednesday, July 2.

Tammy Cheek



Bead gifts of friendship for Red Cross from Concord Place grateful residents

Photos submitted



Some Farragut, Knoxville and Knox County seniors are trying to make a difference bead by bead. In response to the devastating floods in Texas, residents from Concord Place, an Anthem Memory Care community at 901 Concord Road in Farragut, teamed up with homeschool students to make friendship bracelets for the American Red Cross Disaster Relief in Victoria, Texas. The group created bracelets at the community. Anthem Memory Care’s 20 communities took part in this project to thank the compassionate American Red Cross volunteers for their courage and kindness. They will send the bracelets, along with photos of the residents making them, handwritten notes of appreciation and a card explaining their purpose. **(Top)** Resident Carole Mitchell, left, and volunteers Becky Shreve and Peter Shelton bonded over making friendship bracelets. **(Above)** Resident Pat Wilson, left, and Teresa Kohn, resident assistant, were grateful to give back to those helping the recent flood victims.

Grads, Chancellor’s, Faculty honors: locals

The University of Arkansas has recognized Sarah Carter of Farragut for making Spring 2025 Chancellor’s List, joining a prestigious group who have attained a 4.0 grade-point average for the semester while having at least 12 credit hours of coursework.

• Georgia Tech presented Spring Semester degrees to 6,660 undergraduate and graduate students following Spring 2025 semester. Three Farragut residents were among the 6,600: Blake Cragen, Susannah Gordon and Ion Li.

• Anusha Anil and Susannah Gordon of Farragut earned the distinction of Faculty Honors for Spring 2025 at Georgia Tech (to undergraduate students who have earned a 4.0 academic average for the semester).

• Anna Cales of Farragut was among nearly 4,800 students from Miami University (Ohio) who received degrees during Spring Commencement. Cales graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in journalism and women, gender & sexuality studies.



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National titles

From page 2B

and former FHS majorette. “She has been twirling competitively for the past five years,” her mother said. “Macy spent all summer training and preparing for nationals. She went to multiple camps this summer to prepare for nationals and the upcoming FHS marching band season, including UT Twirl Camp. “It was exciting to see that all the time and dedication ... pushed her to be her best at Nationals and win two titles,” Janet Morgan added.

“It was exciting to see that all the time and dedication ... pushed her to be her best at Nationals ...,”

- Janet Morgan
Macy Morgan’s mother

FHS Dance Camp participants



Photo submitted courtesy of Lisa Zellin-Derr

Farragut High School dance team members taught scores of children from kindergarten through fifth grade the moves during FHS Dance Camp in the school’s Lynn E. Sexton Gymnasium last week. The Admiral Farragut mascot oversees this group photo.

Lorren Gray-beal, Hardin Valley Academy rising freshman, practices on the vibraphone during HVA’s band camp Thursday morning, July 24, in the school’s band room.



Tammy Cheek

Spirit Show ’25

From page 2B

“He speaks with the percussion writer; he speaks with the drill designer; he speaks with the other visual designers to coordinate (the show),” the assistant director said. This year’s show will feature a jazz sound — “a few jazz standards and a few more modern jazz pieces,” Brock said. With images of a typewriter, Brock said the visuals are all related to the early 1900s New York jazz and paperboy scene. Headed by drum majors, seniors Douglas King and J.C. Thomas and juniors Kaylen Talbot and Carter Case, there will be 140 band members, compared to 110 last year. “It’s really a change from last year,” said the assistant director, who attributed the growth to the “overall focus on recruitment, obviously trying to grow. “And, the middle school directors did a great job of promoting and helping us get more students into the pro-

gram,” Brock added. These students will be vying for wins at two local shows: a Clinton High School contest and another to be determined later; two Bands of America contests, one at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City and another outside of Atlanta; and Contest of Champions at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. “I feel really good (about the band),” Brock said. “The kids have a great attitude, working really hard, not seeming to be bogged down by the heat or the exhaustion. “I’m really excited about their work ethic and just the overall vibe of the ensemble,” he added. About what he hopes the band will achieve, Brock said, “More than anything, I think it is building a community that the students want to be a part of ... sharing the joy and love that music gives me and all of our staff, and seeing the younger generation also get bit by that bug and enjoy it.”

Mrs. Petite TN

From page 2B

about the sisterhood,” she added. “It’s about encouragement and support.” A foster mother before adopting her daughter, Sophia, 6, “So my (pageant) platform (reflected being) a foster mom,” Nguyen said. “I saw so many children out of the system with no support. My plat-

form was all about child advocacy.” Winning Mrs. Petite Tennessee “just made me really proud to be a Tennessean and represent Tennessee in the national pageant,” Nguyen said. Vietnam to Farragut “I was born and raised in Vietnam, but then I got a great opportunity,” she said. Living along Northshore Drive in Concord with her

husband, Hien Pham, and Sophia, the Vietnam native said she’s been in the Knoxville area “about 19 years,” having had her business, where Pham works, in Town almost as long. “I met my husband online,” she said. “He moved here when he was little with his parents.” About the Farragut area, “It’s a great community,” Nguyen said. “Everybody is so supportive, so nice, friendly.”

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Palmer’s exchange
From page 3B

trip to Boyacá, Colombia, this past school year.

“Our District 6780 provides a grant to inner-city youth here in Knox County,” explained Rotarian Bill Nichols, who has been overseeing Rotary Youth Exchange Program for years. “Five Rotary Clubs in Knox County — our club, Bearden, the Breakfast Club, the Volunteer Club and the Downtown Club — all contribute to raise funds that match the district grant.

“We select one student from Central, Fulton, Austin-East (high schools) or South-Doyle (High School),” he added. “Last year, we chose a young man named DJ Palmer, who was a student in Central High School.

“I want to thank you all (Rotarians) for continuing the support of inner-city kids who would never have an opportunity to be an exchange student (otherwise),” Nichols said.

“I grew up, just me and my mom and my little sister, for as long as I remember,” Palmer said. “I just want to say ‘thank you’ because ... to be a part of such a program, to even have the idea to even give a student some money to be able to go for free and experience other people for free is really, truly a blessing for me.

“It’s done so much for me,” he added. “The program itself is a world peace program, but the exchange program, let alone, is culture and language.

“I did both of those outstandingly, and there’s nothing that I would redo if I had the chance. I also went for my personal goals to learn myself — who I am; what does that look like? What type of mindset do I want?

As a result, “I tell you that I came back with everything that I wanted to come back with — mentally, emotionally, you name it,” Palmer said. “That is because of you all for giving me this opportunity to be in this program.”

Taking his experience with him, Palmer is preparing to enroll at Alabama State University, where he will major in

psychology. His career goal is to be a psychology therapist.

“It was amazing, from family, from food, friends,” Palmer said about the experience before the meeting. “Everyone (in Colombia) was welcoming. Everybody was heartfelt and warming.”

What impressed him most was the people, adding Boyacá is “more of the countryside of Colombia.”

He also was impressed with their culture of dancing and being sociable.

Yet, “I would say their biggest thing in Colombia is family,” Palmer said. “Here, we’re a little bit more individualistic, so seeing, like, a whole bunch of the families together all the time, eating all the time, it was really nice to be there.”

He also recalled the kindness displayed.

“When I didn’t know how to speak (their language), they would help me,” he said. “Even people on the street, sometimes when I just needed a little extra help, they would always be heartwarming and helpful.”

Palmer’s favorite Colombian food was papa criollas, a potato dish.

“It was amazing,” he added. “I ate them all the time, to the point I couldn’t eat them anymore.”

Looking back on his trip, Palmer said the most important thing he learned was the language.

“That’s the only way I could talk to them,” he said. “That’s the only way I could share moments with them.

“When I first got there, I knew nothing of Spanish,” Palmer said. “Now, I’m almost fluent. I have a couple of

grammar things I need to work on, but now we have conversation ... I have many friends.”

Farragut Rotary and the other area Rotary Clubs combining to give him that opportunity “was amazing,” he said. “They paid everything for me to be able to see the world, and that, alone, is the biggest thing for me because I am a person of God, as well, so I see that as nothing but a blessing,” Palmer said. “For Rotary to even al-

low me to do that is amazing. The thought of it, itself, is just amazing.”

Regarding his family in Knoxville, “my mom didn’t know what to think (about his taking the trip),” he recalled. “I remember I called her — it was a random Thursday — and I was like, ‘Mom, I just talked to this guy named Bill (Nichols), and I think I want to go be an exchange student,’ and she said, ‘What?’

“Then she said, ‘We’ll talk about it when you get home,’” he added

He met Nichols at Central, where Nichols sets up booths in the school cafeteria.

“I’ve always wanted to travel,” Palmer said.

“The difference from me and the other students who went up there (to talk to Nichols) was I was serious about it,” he added. “I really wanted to do it.”

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