



Jake Nichols

## Reports of mail theft rise in Farragut

**Tammy Cheek**

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Anyone planning to mail a check to pay a bill is advised to take the check inside the post office to mail. “I will never mail another check,” said one Farragut resident, who asked to remain anonymous and was a victim of mail fraud. She reported the theft of her check on Jan. 13. “I mailed a check at the drive-up mailbox at the Farragut Post Office,” she said. “About a week later, the person to whom I had writ-

ten the check asked me if I mailed it. I said yes. “After checking, I noticed the check was cashed within a day but not to the person I was sending it to,” the resident said. “I looked at the bank account online and saw someone had taken the name off and put a different name on it. Everything else on the check was the same. “This had never happened to me before,” she said. “I thought, ‘Oh, no, I’m out that money.’ I called the bank. There’s a whole protocol you have to go through. After mul-

tle calls, this is what I found out: “First, I had to file a police report,” the resident said. “Then I had to get a copy of that report in person and take it to the bank and fill out an affidavit.” Once the affidavit was filled out, she had to close the account on which the check was written, then open a new account. “It took a week or so to get all the auto pays and other transactions moved to the new account,” the resident said. “But I did it, and

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## Board debates law enforcement needs amid growth

**Tammy Cheek**

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As Farragut continues to grow, questions are being raised about whether the town has enough law enforcement coverage to meet increasing demands. During a workshop retreat of the Farragut Board of Mayor and Aldermen held Friday, Jan. 23, at Turkey Creek Medical Center, Town Administrator David Smoak proposed paying for two Knox County Sheriff’s Office deputies to provide additional service to the town. With Farragut’s growth, Smoak said the Town is experiencing increased traffic and speeding. He also cited recent

incident reports showing a rise in mail thefts that have led to check fraud. A while back, “the mayor and I met with Bernie Lyon, trying to get additional services for the town,” Smoak said, referring to the former Knox County Sheriff’s Office chief deputy who has since died. The discussions focused on adding patrol officers within Farragut, he said. Smoak also noted concerns about the loss of the sheriff’s office precinct location on Parkside Drive, which was moved to Cedar Bluff. “At the same time, we’ve had a captain in place in the Farragut precinct for 20 years,”

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## New class enters hall

**Jake Nichols**

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On Feb. 7, Farragut High School will host the 14th annual Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Dinner in the FHS Commons with festivities beginning at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$40 each (also available at the door) or \$300 for a table of eight. For further information, contact David.

Moore@knoxschools.org or visit the FHS website to book a table. This year’s athlete inductees are Katie Green Pinkston (soccer, track), Anna Miller (swimming), Sara Yeager Stokes (track, cross country), Bailey Williams (softball), Drew Burnette (football, soccer, baseball), Harri-

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Photo submitted by Alyssa Jordan

Madison Jordan caught snowflakes in Lovell Hills.

For the second weekend in a row, winter provided the backdrop for the community to experience what is usually reserved for those who live in other parts of the nation. Even the bitterly cold temperatures did not stop kids, families and pets from having some fun. Thank you to all who shared photos on our facebook page. *Check out that page and look for more pictures in the farragutpress Feb. 11 issue.*

## Growth, traffic top 2026 Farragut aldermen concerns

**Tammy Cheek**

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As the Farragut Board of Mayor and Aldermen moves into 2026, members say they face a range of challenges as they work toward individual and shared goals. During a workshop retreat Friday, Jan. 23, at Turkey Creek Medical Center, board

members outlined the issues the town expects to confront in the coming year. For Mayor Ron Williams, a key challenge is balancing progress with the founders’ original vision for Farragut. He cited the development of the Town Center as an example. “A lot of times when you look at what is relevant at that

moment, things change slightly, and it most certainly did with the Town Center,” Williams said. He said the original vision called for vertical development, with businesses on the ground floor and residences above. However, he said that approach did not work at the time for a suburban setting. “Instead, we got a good de-

veloper who went horizontal,” Williams said. “So I think our vision, going forward, with (state) elected officials is going to be really important.” Williams also pointed to staff training as a challenge, noting that many department heads and employees are new to the town. “It’s great — we’ve got people from all over the country,”

he said, adding that cross-training staff will be important as the town plans for future needs. Traffic continues to be a major concern, particularly as Farragut and West Knox County continue to grow, Alderman Drew Burnette said. He emphasized the need to

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# Letter to the editor

Editor:

The principle of Equal Protection has been steadily eroded by the current Town administration.

In years past, the regulation of private property was governed by clearly defined ordinances based on land use—agricultural, residential, or commercial—so that all owners understood both their rights and the extent of the Town’s authority.

Today, that framework has been replaced by a practice of selectively targeting individual properties. Instead of applying rules uniformly by zoning district, the Town now creates “special projects” tailored to a small number of

parcels when existing ordinances do not support a desired outcome. These projects are designed to undermine or sidestep current law.

An example is the Town’s ongoing effort to construct a greenway along Evans Road. Although Evans Road has functioned safely for decades and improvements were not included in the original effort to build a greenway back in 2022, it was suddenly labeled “substandard” so that the project could be redefined as multi-modal. The Planning Commission then approved an ordinance that effectively applies only to the six properties from which it seeks to acquire land— properties located in two separate zoning districts but unified solely

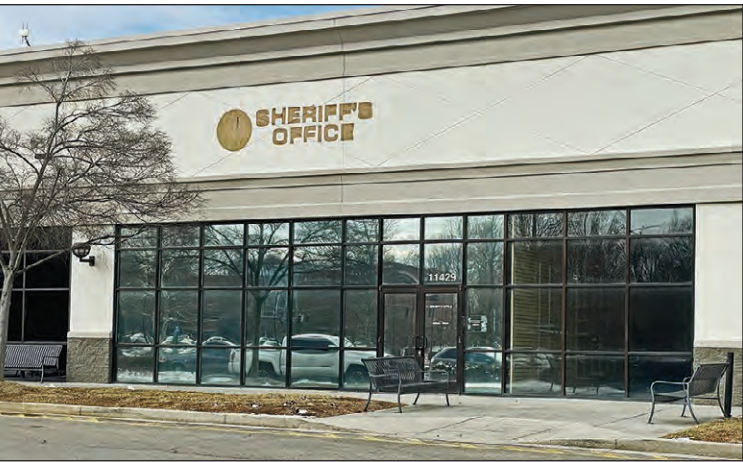
by the Town’s objective.

The inequity deepens with the Town’s redefinition of greenway requirements. Nearby roads improved by the Town feature grass strips ranging from zero to three feet, and the improved east end of Evans Road already meets that standard. Yet the Town now seeks to take up to 25 feet of people’s property to create grass strips as wide as 20 feet, justified only by a staff preference for “the maximum grass strip.” In contrast, the town recently approved a different greenway extension along Everett Road that only includes a sidewalk and 2-1/2’ of curb and gutter with no mention of taking a large portion of land for a grass strip.

Equal Protection has also been undermined by the Town’s proposed Home Occupation Ordinance, which the Town Attorney ruled illegal because it improperly classified citizens into unequal groups, and the approach the Town took to approve the Mixed Use Town Center Ordinance that enabled the Biddle Farm apartments despite widespread public opposition. Finally, the Town recently approved allowing neighborhood voting on installing “traffic calming measures” (speed bumps) but will not allow residents to vote on anything else.

If none of this sounds fair, join the club.

~ Greg Wiberley



Tony Cox

The Knox County Sheriff’s Office closed its West Precinct in Turkey Creek in October 2025.

Law  
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he said. “There have been different captains during that time. Now, that captain [position] has been taken out, and there’s no real liaison for Farragut.

“So we have no direct contact with the Knox County Sheriff’s Office going forward,” Smoak said. He added that upcoming elections for sheriff could be important for determining future cooperation.

In the meantime, Smoak said the board could review town revenues to determine whether it could help fund additional services and continue discussions with the sheriff’s office.

“It won’t be this sheriff; it may have to be the next one,” Mayor Ron Williams said.

The board also discussed the town’s red-light camera, or automated traffic enforcement, program.

“This is a program we’ve had in place probably since 2008,” Smoak said, noting it was adopted after a fatal crash at the intersection of Kingston Pike and Concord Road. He said the system has been effective in slowing traffic and increasing driver awareness.

However, Smoak said the program has faced challenges in recent years. In 2024, the town lost a significant amount of money operating the sys-

tem, and it again operated at a loss in 2025.

Part of the loss stemmed from staffing added in 2022 due to a high number of violations, he said. The Town had a part-time officer then added another but the second one had left about a year ago.

“We haven’t had as many violations,” Smoak said. He attributed part of the decline to vendor issues, saying potential nonviolations are no longer being filtered out before being sent to town staff for review. He also noted that fewer people are paying citations, with the payment rate now below 50 percent.

The town currently has a month-to-month contract with its vendor, leaving the board to decide whether to discontinue the program or seek proposals from a new provider.

“This is a major safety program,” Smoak said.

“I like the program; I don’t like the loss,” Vice Mayor Scott Meyer said. “We don’t have a police department; we don’t have anybody to enforce speeding [laws]. It’s a good program. I don’t think it needs to be replaced. I think we need to do something.”

Board members generally agreed on the value of the program, particularly in addressing speeding by young drivers, and supported exploring a new vendor.

## presstalk

865-671-TALK (8255) or [editor@farragutpress.com](mailto:editor@farragutpress.com)

I was reading the farragutpress, the Pugh & Company audit of the Town of Farragut financial situation. They say that Farragut has \$64.6 million of unrestricted net money with \$34.5 million available at their discretion, for spending, and no debt. My big question is, why does Farragut not contribute more to the schools in Farragut? The primary, the elementary, the middle school, and the high school, Farragut contributes very, very little to the schools. All the pressure is on Knox County. Farragut has all the extra money, no debt. They need to contribute to the schools. That's the most important thing in our community is the young children, rather than buying land and building parks and building monuments for people, we need to support the schools more. We do not. Farragut does

not contribute, but very, very little money to the school system. I know that through the Farragut Education Foundation, they contribute very, very little. Farragut needs to contribute more to schools. That's the most important asset we have is our young people, not building monuments to ourselves and parks and naming things after people and spending a lot of money. We need to support the schools more. That's an obvious point. I'm sure this will come up big time in the mayor's race coming up. We need to contribute more to schools. We have been negligent.

The financial situation with the Town of Farragut, another point that we need to make is the Farragut officials bought land at the end of McFee Road and paid over \$5 million for land that they probably didn't

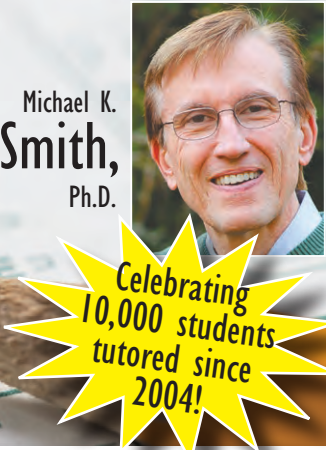
need. And the renovation of the Campbell Station House, which is a good thing, but I believe the Town of Farragut spent over \$5 million on that renovation total. Again, the mistake we're making in Farragut is we're not putting enough money in the education of our children. We give very, very, very little to the school system. Knox County has to support our schools. We need to put more money in the schools, not building monuments for ourselves and naming parks and building parks. That's all well and good, but what about the children? What are we doing for the children of Farragut and supporting them with money into the schools, the primary, the elementary, the middle, and the high school? What are we doing? Our priorities are wrong.

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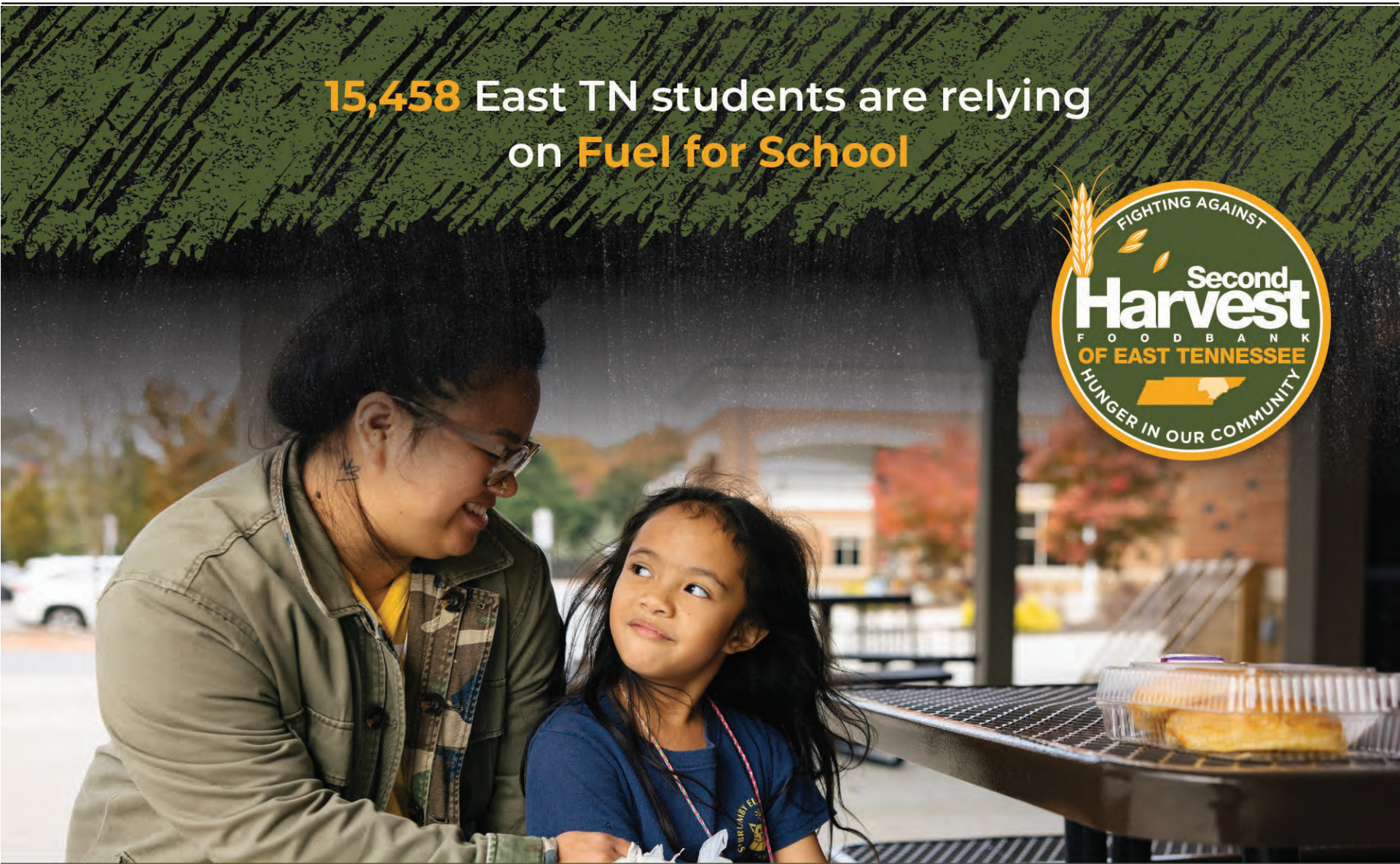


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Mail  
From page 1A

the bank refunded the money. I was surprised.

“The police detective said it was a fraud ring,” she said. “Someone is at the post office and steals the checks.”

Then the thief either sends the check to someone else or sends it to an out-of-state account. Once the money is in that account, the person takes the money and closes the account, making it difficult to catch the suspects.

“The bank can’t release personal information, even to police,” the resident said.

“Needless to say, I will never mail another check,” she added, noting she plans to send money online, by Venmo or another electronic transfer.

“I’m glad that the bank refunded my money, but I had to go through hoops for them to do it,” the resident said. “I didn’t know mail fraud was a thing. I wish I had known. I’m happy to tell my story to avoid someone else the hassle.”

To others, she advised: “Don’t mail a check, period, because it can get forged. Someone is looking for checks.

“Do electronic funds or go in person and pay a bill,” the resident said. “It’s a risk, like Russian roulette.”

On her report, dated Jan. 13, it stated the complainant “called the Knox County Sheriff’s Office North Precinct to file a report on theft, fraud and forgery that occurred at the Farragut Post Office, located at 11409 Municipal Center Drive.

“Complainant stated she placed a check ... for \$1,250 in the Farragut Post Office box,” the report stated. “She was then notified that check was mobile-deposited into a Chase Bank account made out to the listed suspect, Jeremy Roberts. Complainant stated only the payee was changed on the check.”

There have been several reports to the Knox County Sheriff’s Office and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service of mail being stolen from the outside mailbox at the Farragut Post Office.

Another report detailed a similar crime of theft, forgery and fraud in which a complainant mailed a check to Lenoir City Utilities Board for \$7,010.06 at the Farragut Post Office.

“She said she dropped the envelope containing the check

into the drive-up drop box in front of the Farragut Post Office,” the offense report stated. “According to the victim, on Dec. 2, she received a call from Lenoir City Utilities stating her payment was past due. She said she told them she had mailed it, and they said they would give it a few more days.

“The victim stated she checked her account and saw where a check cleared for the exact amount she had written to the utility company,” the report stated. “She advised she received another call yesterday saying they still hadn’t received it.

“According to the victim, she checked with her bank and got a copy of the check,” it added. “The victim advised the check didn’t look like her original check and had a different check number of 5320. She said this check had a different date; the payable to was changed to a Michael (last name was illegible); the number amount and written amount of the check were not her handwriting. The victim advised the signature looked like hers. She stated the suspect had written ‘final payment’ on the memo line.”

“Both the United States Postal Inspection Service

and Postal Office of Inspector General are aware of the recent reports, and there is an ongoing investigation,” said Rob Firkin, a postal inspector assigned to the Knoxville domicile and public information officer for Knoxville and Chattanooga.

“As with most, if not all, mail theft, the driving factor for the suspects is to obtain checks or other negotiable instruments and convert them to their use (whether through washing the check, creating fraudulent checks using the bank and routing numbers, etc.),” Firkin said. “With regards to the prior case, the investigation remains active; however, one individual has been charged and is set to be sentenced in February in the Eastern District of Tennessee.”

A post office staff member at the Farragut Post Office said he recalled there was a rash of similar mail thefts last summer, which occurred across Knox County, but someone was apprehended and arrested in that case.

To better protect themselves from mail theft, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service recommends the following:

- Do not deposit any mail in a USPS collection box after the last collection time;
- Keep track of checks written and monitor your account for any changes in amount;
- Do not send cash through the mail;
- Be cautious in responding to unsolicited or generic work-from-home offers;
- Never share financial or personally identifying information with those you do not know or trust;
- Notify USPIS of any mail theft through uspis.gov/report or by calling 877-876-2455.

Likewise, post office staff recommends bringing mail inside the post office rather than using the outside mailbox, as suspects don’t want to be seen but can be observed in the building.

“As the case progresses, I may be able to speak more specifically on it,” Firkin said. “Much is being done that we do not disclose for the security of the investigation.”

Growth  
From page 1A

address intersections near schools.

Alderman Alex Cain and Vice Mayor Scott Meyer echoed those concerns, particularly on the west side of town and with the opening of a new school.

“Obviously, we have to be prepared for people moving into Farragut and the problems it can cause,” Burnette said. “We’ve also got to be ready for a development plan that will be developed in the next 12 to 48 months.”

“I think we’re going to continue to see growth, and that’s going to affect our traffic,” Alderman Joe LaCroix said.

To address traffic issues, Williams said the town plans to expand its Advanced Traffic Management System.

Cain said another challenge is maintaining Farragut’s rep-

utation as one of the top communities in East Tennessee.

“We have to continue to be excellent stewards of the wants and needs of our residents,” he said.

Economic uncertainty and inflation also remain concerns, LaCroix said.

“We’ll be struggling to harvest new revenue, and we’re continuing to experience higher costs,” he said.

Meyer addressed rising costs relative to town services and assets, while Williams said Farragut must maximize its local sales tax revenue.

“There are alternative revenue stream sources out there,” LaCroix said, noting that leasing capacity from the town’s expanded fiber network could be one option.

LaCroix also said aging infrastructure, particularly stormwater systems and roadways, presents an ongoing challenge for the town.

Class  
From page 1A

son Eldridge (baseball), Cole Strange (football) and James Thomas (football).

Former Farragut coach Eddie Courtney will be the coach

inductee, and Michelle Brossett and Richard Huff will receive the Service Awards.

The Hall of Fame Class of 2026 will be honored on Feb. 6 with a reception in the Farragut library from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Later, the group will be

introduced at halftime of the boys basketball game against Bearden before being inducted the following night.

The emcee will once again be the Voice of FHS football and basketball, WFIV-FM 105.3’s Erik Gerhardt.



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## Johnson City Kubota group adds Knox County location

**Staff Reports**  
editor@farragutpress.com

A family-owned East Tennessee Kubota dealership is expanding into Knox County with the launch of Turkey Creek Kubota, a new full-service dealership scheduled to open in March

2026 on the former Buddy Gregg RV & Motor Homes site.

Turkey Creek Kubota will be the Johnson City based company's fourth dealership. According to a press release, "The new location is designed to better serve customers across Knox County and surrounding communities,

including many who already travel to the group's existing stores for sales, parts, and service."

"As an award-winning Kubota dealership for years, we are East Tennesseans working to provide strong service and quality products for our community," said Matt Jones, managing partner and

a University of Tennessee alumnus. "We love working with everyone from commercial landscaping and construction to residential mower customers and hobby farmers.

"We're focused on building long-term

See KUBOTA on Page 6A



Photo submitted  
Marshanda Pinchok Interiors has created a home for her business.

## Pinchok plants roots in Farragut

**Tammy Cheek**  
tcheek@farragutpress.com

Marshanda Pinchok Interiors has created a home for her business at 102 Chaho Road in Farragut.

Pinchok moved her business to that location, sharing space with Bryan Insurance Group on Jan. 1, 2024.

Prior to that, "we worked out of a collaborative space in Turkey Creek," she said. "We felt like we needed our own space."

So when Pinchok worked with Matthew Bryan, owner of Bryan Insurance Group at the Chaho Road building, to renovate his offices, she had the opportunity for a new location.

"Shortly after moving in here in 2025, we were voted City View's Best of the Best, and we're truly honored by our clients' and friends' votes to make that happen," she recalled.

In Pinchok's move to the space, "we added paint; we updated the lobby and break room wallpaper," she said. "We changed the carpet and outfitted the lobby and our offices with new furniture, new lighting and tore down wallpaper."

"By our own hands, we came in here and started removing the wallpaper," Pinchok said. "We were lucky enough that

it came down with wonderful ease."

MPI designs residential and commercial spaces for her clients, from kitchen and bath remodels to designing the interior of a new home.

"Good design creates a sense of ease," Pinchok said. "That's what we strive to give our clients every day. When the room is laid out well and if the clients feel comfortable in their space, we know we have done a wonderful job."

"It's not about perfection but creating rooms that help sup-

“ Good design  
creates a  
sense of ease.”

~ Marshanda Pinchok

port how we live," she said. "We love collaborating with one of our favorite architects, Falconnier Design Company."

Reflecting on today's trends, Pinchok said, "Wallpaper is so popular right now. It's made a huge comeback, and we get a request in every other job for wallpaper."

"We also provide window treatments, and we handle the installation of those win-

See PINCHOK on Page 6A

## Health Expo, Chili Cook-Off rescheduled

**Jake Nichols**  
jnichols@farragutpress.com

Due to the snowfall this past weekend, Shop Farragut has moved its sixth annual Health and Wellness Expo to Sunday, March 1, 2026. Shop Farragut Executive Director Vic Scott informed the farragutpress of the move Saturday morning. She also noted that the organization's annual chili cook-off has been moved from March 1 to March 29 to finish off the month.

## businessbriefs

• Covenant Health recently earned Accreditation with Distinction from the American Nurses Credentialing Center for its Nurse Residency Program, recognizing evidence-based standards that strengthen nurse readiness, retention and patient care across the health system.

This designation, the highest recognition offered by ANCC's Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP), according to Covenant Health, affirms Covenant Health's commitment to supporting new nurses through

See BRIEFS on Page 6A

# THIS IS YOUR INVITATION!

# FARRAGUTBIZ MIXER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH FROM 4 TO 6PM | REEF COFFEE @ 138 WEST END AVE

Join Farragut Business Owners, Managers and their employees in an exciting and informative networking opportunity on **Tuesday, February 17th**, between 4 and 6pm  
at **Reef Coffee located at 138 West End Ave.**

We will have drip coffee available from Reef Coffee and wine available from Water into Wine. Reef Coffee will also be open for orders from the coffee shop and we will have food available as well. Reef Coffee will be doing a Grand Reopening with us at the mixer after completing a transformative renovation to their space. We will also be discussing the grand opening of the Visit Knoxville Campbell Station Inn Visitors Center, the upcoming Chili Cookoff and future events for 2026.

Please RSVP - hello@shopfarragut.com with the number in your party. We would like to have an accurate count for food and beverage. Questions call 865-274-6431.



Shop Farragut



**Pinchok**  
From page 5A

dow treatments,” she said. “We handle custom draperies, blinds, shutters and shades. We love working with local businesses and local artisans to bring our clients a truly unique experience and product.”

Throughout her career, “my husband, Jeff, has been a tremendous support during the years of building the business and raising our family,” Pinchok said. “We have two wonderful children, Ella and Brady, who are also very creative.”

To help the public, she is planning to start a design series night at the office. It will include wine and light bites.

“Each series will offer insight into design knowhow and trends,” Pinchok said. “Our first one is set for Thursday, Feb. 26. It has limited seats. The first of the series, we’ll talk about how to lay out your

room and understand the traffic flow and how to scale your furniture.

“Each participant will be given a digital layout of their room as part of the price for the evening,” she said, adding the cost of the event is \$250 per seat.

“They will be given a coupon toward ordering furniture,” Pinchok added. “This is an excellent opportunity for people to have an introduction to working with designers and understanding a little more of the process before they commit [to hiring a designer]. To attend the event, call to reserve a seat.

For more information or to make an appointment, call 865-363-5504 or 865-675-2208 or email to mp@marshanda.design or visit www.marshanda.design

People can also find Pinchok’s business on Instagram at Marshanda Pinchok Interiors.

**Briefs**  
From page 5A

a structured, year-long transition-to-practice pathway. The program equips nurses with clinical decision-making skills, confidence and leadership development, ensuring safer care and stronger teams across 10 Covenant Health sites.

- Chris Hall recently has stepped into the role of chief executive officer for Remote Area Medical.

The transition comes as part of a long-planned succession

process designed to ensure continuity, stability and momentum for RAM. As part of the process, RAM extended its thanks to Jeff Eastman for his years of dedicated leadership.

Hall’s connection to RAM runs deep. He first began volunteering at clinics when he was 12 years old. He became RAM’s chief operations officer in 2013.

- Weichert, Realtors - Advantage Plus has announced Andrew Sullivan has joined its Knoxville office at 10160 Parkside Drive Suite 100.

*Paleteria Azteca Ice Cream Shop*



Tammy Cheek

Paleteria Azteca Ice Cream Shop owners Marisol (sixth from left) and Carlos Cobian (behind her and to her right) and their daughter Fatima (with scissors) joined family, Farragut West Knox Chamber of Commerce members and Town officials, Town administrator David Smoak, Farragut Municipal Planning Commissioner Louise Povlin and Mayor Ron Williams in a FWKCC-sponsored ribbon cutting at the ice cream shop 11615 Parkside Drive, Farragut, Wednesday, Jan. 7.

**Kubota**  
From page 5A

relationships and delivering high-quality service behind a high-quality brand,” Jones continued. “We’ll be bringing our focus and award-winning service to this location, with local people operating the business and hiring local people who understand the community and its needs.”

“We will have a well-trained team in place to meet customers’ needs quickly.”

The new dealership will carry the full lineup of Kubota equipment and attachments, including tractors, mowers,

skid steers, excavators, hay equipment, and implements, as well as products from Land Pride, Echo, and Blue Diamond.

In addition, the dealership will feature full parts and service support, rentals, and a large selection of used equipment. The store will offer trade-in and trade-up options across all brands, as well as equipment hauling and pickup by appointment.

The dealership will be located at 11730 Snyder Road, Knoxville, just off I-40 at the Campbell Station Road exit (Exit 373).

“The site was selected for

convenience and access, making it easier to serve customers across the Knoxville region,” the press release noted.

“We’re bringing 20 years of award-winning expertise to Knox County,” Jones said. “This investment reflects our commitment to being nearby when customers need equipment, parts, service, and support, and to being a local dealership run by people who not only sell the equipment, but use it ourselves.”

Additional details about the opening, including grand opening plans, will be announced closer to launch.

See more business stories at [farragutpress.com](http://farragutpress.com)

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Ken Lay  
Correspondent

**KNOXVILLE** — Farragut Middle School's boys basketball team had to work a little overtime Thursday night. The extra labor netted the Admirals a Knox County Middle School Class AAA Tournament Championship.

Farragut had to come from behind to notch a 42-39 overtime victory over

Halls before a spirited crowd at South-Doyle Middle School.

"There were a couple of times tonight that I thought we were done," Admirals' coach Shane Wells said. "But our kids came back and that shows a lot about their character."

"We've been in a lot of close games and we've won almost every one of them. We were extremely fortunate to win tonight and we've been extremely

fortunate all season."

The Red Devils, thanks to a shot from Cruze Yaniello as time expired in the third frame, held a slim 31-29 advantage heading into the final six minutes of regulation. Halls also had a lead in the waning seconds of the fourth quarter until Farragut's Henry Crecy buried a 3-pointer as time expired in the fourth quarter, knotting the contest, 36-36, and sending the game into overtime

The Admirals, who had seemingly been embroiled in an uphill battle all night, wasted little time seizing control of things in the extra three-minute frame.

Farragut scored first in overtime as Crecy grabbed an offensive rebound and scored, making it 38-36. The Ads were dominant on the offensive glass

See ADMIRALS on Page 3B



**Jake Nichols**  
Bearden guard Justin Nordin (10) goes in for a layup against Lenoir City

# Dawgs devour Panthers

Jake Nichols  
jnichols@farragutpress.com

**LENOIR CITY** — With more winter weather rolling in last weekend, the start times for Bearden's matchups at Lenoir City were pushed up an hour.

Neither the start time nor the snow hampered the Bulldogs, however, as both BHS programs came out red-hot to remain undefeated in District 4-4A.

The Lady Bulldogs won 78-44, while the Bulldogs won 80-27.

In the girls matchup, Natalya Hodge led the way with 33 points — a remarkable effort any night, but especially when she had just been

named a 2026 McDonald's All-American nominee.

She paced BHS with 22 of those points at halftime — a stark contrast to Lenoir City's 20 as a team — while Emma Rainey totaled 16 for Bearden.

They started the game with back-to-back 3-pointers to open the scoring.

"Not playing in a week, you have an idea of what you hope you look like versus the reality. I was pleased," Lady Bulldogs coach Justin Underwood said. "We hit those two 3s right out of the gate to set the tone."

After the game, all

See DAWGS on Page 3B

# Airborne Admiral



**Jake Nichols**  
Farragut senior Olivia Kohl positions herself in a pike during a dive at UT's Allan Jones Aquatic Center on Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026. Kohl's second-place finish helped the Admirals as they claimed their fourth consecutive Division I KISL championship, first under first-year head coach Marlee Sanders.

## Farragut wins fourth straight KISL title

**Jake Nichols**  
jnichols@farragutpress.com

**KNOXVILLE** — Farragut senior Olivia Kohl leaped into the air last Wednesday night, arms locked at 90 degrees and legs outstretched as she plummeted toward the water at Tennessee's Allan Jones Aquatic Center.

Her pike set up one of multiple successful dives, as Kohl helped the Aqua Ads reach a first-place finish to win their fourth consecutive Division I KISL City Meet championship.

FHS totaled 499 points to claim its fifth KISL title in program history, first under first-year coach Marlee Sanders.

"I've been with this team for six years in some capacity, but this is my first year as head coach, so I went into this season not knowing exactly what to expect," Sanders said. "We lost a lot of talent last year when our seniors graduated, so this season felt like starting over in a way. But these kids blew me away with the talent that they honed every single day."

Following FHS, Maryville came in second at 478 points with Hardin Valley Academy in

See AIRBORNE on Page 3B



**Photo submitted**  
The Farragut and Tennessee dance teams took a photo together during halftime of the FHS-West basketball game on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026. UT's team performed that night in preparation for its national competition, while Farragut is preparing for its own trip to nationals in Orlando within the next week.

## Farragut dance team benefiting from UT inspiration

**Jake Nichols**  
jnichols@farragutpress.com

On Jan. 8, 2026, high-pitched screams pierced the air inside the Farragut High School gymnasium.

But these were not screams of triumph or defeat. Rather, they were screams of pure joy and admiration, as the University of Tennessee dance team went through its routine with Farragut's own teenage dancers watching and cheering.

UT's presence was part of its annual performance at a local high school, where the Vols' dancers — including two local products in Bearden alumnus Jordan James and Webb graduate Island Shuler — perfect their steps before the Universal Dance Association's national collegiate competition in mid-January.

"It's really important for us to have opportunities to replicate that pressure, and you can't do that in a studio," said Tennessee dance coach Kelley Tafazzoli. "You have to have an audience and an authentic environment. So going to local schools gives us a chance to practice and showcases the talent we have here in Knoxville too. Having their support really means a lot."

It was also effective, as UT took fifth in Division 1A Pom and sixth in Division 1A Jazz during a competition that went from Jan. 16-18 at Walt Disney

See DANCE on Page 3B

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# Athletes making noise in 2026

**Jake Nichols**  
*jnichols@farragutpress.com*

Across the Farragut area, plenty of individuals made noise throughout the course of 2025.

With 2026 sports already unfolding, here are several athletes to keep an eye on in the New Year.

On the hardwood, Justin Nordin and Parker Lane are just a couple guys to watch for Bearden and Farragut, respectively.

Nordin was named All-State in the 2024-25 season, while Lane recently set a new Far-

ragut record for 3-pointers in a single game (10). He also poured in 84 points in three games during the Loudon Christmas Tournament.

Missouri signee and 2025 Miss Basketball finalist Natalya Hodge is once again one of the area's top players after averaging 22.7 points per game as a junior, while Grand Canyon signee KJ McNealy has led Farragut as a senior after reaching the 1,000-point mark at the end of last season.

Clemson signee and reigning Miss Basketball winner Meeyah Green has continued to produce for Webb, and

on the soccer pitch, the Lady Spartans will once again look to utilize the skills of 2025 All-State selections Mary Mac Emery and Lauren Newell.

Together, those two helped lead the Lady Spartans to a second straight runner-up finish in the Division II-AA state tournament, while Green paced Webb to a Division II-AA state title in hoops.

On the diamond, Farragut will be led by Jake Harris, Aidan Flagg, Travis Brummitt Jr. and Will Dickens in the senior class.

All four recently signed to continue their careers at the

next level. This spring, they will look to once again mesh with standout underclassmen such as Braxton Tye — who knocked a grand slam in the season finale last year — as the Admirals pursue a fifth straight state championship.

Farragut football standout Anderson Glover also lands on this list, having earned Underclassman of the Year in Region 2-6A. He caught 22 passes for 238 yards and two scores — both against Bearden in a crucial region rivalry. Defensively, he accumulated 15 tackles on the season and was named All-Region at wide re-

ceiver and defensive back as a sophomore.

Farragut's Nathan Jacobs also earned All-Region honors as a freshman. He averaged 4.5 yards per carry last season and returned two kickoffs for a total of 42 yards.

2027 punter Logan Holbrook will be another gridiron standout to watch in 2026, as he paced the Hardin Valley special teams unit with 18 touchbacks and a punt average of 43.8 yards last season. He also went 100% on PATs and nailed four field goals on five attempts through nine

See 2026 on Page 3B

## Two wins, no doubt

**Ken Lay**  
*Correspondent*

The Farragut High School boys basketball team held on to second place in the District 4-4A basketball standings with a pair of league victories last week.

The Admirals improved to 18-7 overall and 8-2 in district play with lopsided victories over Lenoir City and Rhea County.

Farragut opened the week with a 76-49 victory over the Panthers on Thursday night in the friendly confines of the Lynn E. Sexton Gymnasium.

The contest was originally scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 27, but had to be postponed and subsequently rescheduled due to winter weather that forced the closing of Knox County Schools.

The Ads were also unable to practice on when classes were canceled early last week and they got off to a slow start against Lenoir City.

"You can't afford to get off to a slow start against a team like Lenoir City or anybody else in

our district," FHS coach J.P. Burris said. "Lenoir City is a good team."

The Panthers feature one of the area's top post players in Ben Barr. Barr can be a dominant inside force, but he can also handle the basketball and bury clutch 3-point shots when called upon. His 6-foot-7 frame causes match-up problems for opponents.

He had a quiet night. He did score 13 points but found himself in foul trouble, and picked up his fifth foul and was disqualified early in the fourth quarter.

"Barr is a great player and for the most part, we did a good job against him," Burris said. "Reid (Vining) did a good job against him, but we fell asleep a few times and he hit a couple of threes."

Despite the slow start, the Admirals held a slim 13-12 lead. From there, Farragut kept building its advantage, opening a 35-25 lead by half-time and extending its advantage to 58-38 heading into the final frame.



Jake Nichols

The Farragut wrestling team poses with its Region 2-AA semifinal runner-up trophy on Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026, at Hardin Valley Academy. This marked the Admirals' first region appearance in more than 25 years, as second-year coach Charlie Rohn noted a remarkable improvement in the program.

## New coach, new life for Farragut wrestling

**Jake Nichols**  
*jnichols@farragutpress.com*

**HARDIN VALLEY** — When Charlie Rohn moved to Farragut, he did not plan on becoming the Admirals' newest wrestling coach.

But with a son who loved the sport and a program that needed a coach, Rohn stepped in to help 40 years after his own wrestling career concluded.

One year later, the Admirals reached the region semifinals for the first time in more than 25 years, as they fell to Halls 66-6 on Jan. 21 to end the team's 2025-26 campaign inside the Hardin Valley gymnasium.

The result was one of multiple in the Region 2-AA duals, as HVA defeated West 43-36 in the same gym to clinch its second consecutive sectional berth under head coach Matt Bates.

For Farragut, the team season concluded in a 23-4 record in dual matches. Moreover, FHS expounded on a 2024-25 campaign in which it beat Bearden, Maryville and William Blount in the same night to mark their first wins over those programs in more than two decades.

"They've done great," said Rohn, who credited assistant coach Dalton Pearl with plenty of help and instruction in the process. "Almost all of our kids are first- or second-year wrestlers, and they saw the passion Dalton and I have for the sport."

"Basically we started new last year with four kids at the end of the season before that. Even to get here is huge, so they will improve."

One of the biggest wins this season did not come on the mat, but in multiple kids dropping notable amounts of weight and becoming healthier in the process. Izaac Koga was just one example, and he finished with one of Farragut's two wins on the night against Halls' Liam DeSauters with a 6-2 decision in the 190-pound slot. Fellow Admiral Luca Hofer won by 9-7 decision over Halls' Jake Glenn in the 285-pound bracket.

Meanwhile, Hardin Valley went back and forth with West in its region semifinal. But a pin by Rosalio Arce over West's Michael Robinson in the 126-pound bracket cemented a 43-35 win for Hardin Valley, sending the Hawks onto the sectional round.

They did wind up losing to Halls 69-12 in the region championship, but the more important part was locking up the program's second ever sectional berth.

And much like Farragut, Hardin Valley staged an improbable yet remarkable run to this point.

"We lost 14 seniors off last year's team, so nobody gave us a chance yet here we are," said Bates. "I'm just proud of the way they work and grind, and they really care for each other and it shows."

## Defense delivers for Lady Admirals

**Ken Lay**  
*Correspondent*

Some inclement winter weather played havoc with the Farragut High School girls basketball team last week.

But the Lady Admirals would persevere and survive a couple of District 4-4A scares last week.

The week started on a cold note as Knox County Schools were closed due to inclement weather on Jan. 26-27, forcing a league contest between Lenoir City and Farragut had to be rescheduled for Thursday.

Further complicating things for the Lady Admirals was that they weren't able to practice when classes were canceled.

Farragut, however, used its defense to pull out a 35-31 victory over the Lady Panthers Thursday night at the Lynn E. Sexton Gymnasium, but the game was full of tense moments for the Lady Admirals,

who had trouble scoring all night.

The contest's outcome wasn't decided until center Trinity Curry converted a pair of free throws to make the score 35-30 with 7.6 seconds remaining.

"This is what happens when you don't get to practice," Farragut coach Jason Mayfield said. "We were rusty, but we were able to play good enough defense to win the game."

"It was a struggle but we were able to gut one out."

Curry was Farragut's top scorer as she finished the game with 12 points. She also pulled down some clutch rebounds down the stretch to help propel her team into the win column.

"Trinity did a great job for us," Mayfield said.

KJ McNealy chipped in with eight points for the Lady Panthers, who led, 9-6, at the end of the opening quarter and held a slim 15-14 advantage at halftime.



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2026  
From page 2B

games, becoming a first-team PrepXtra selection.

At Catholic, sophomore receiver Xavier Bowman should shine again this fall. The 3-star 2028 wideout has offers from Tennessee, East Tennessee State, Arkansas, Georgia Tech, Florida State and Indiana, among several others.

Baxter Johnson, a Webb lacrosse standout, will a senior to watch in 2026 before he heads to West Point to help continue his family’s legacy with the program. He led the Spartans to the Division II-AA state championship game this past season and was named the PrepXtra Boys Lacrosse Player of the Year for the 2025 campaign.

Dawgs  
From page 1B

four programs came together to honor survivors of breast cancer awareness.

“Coach (Shelley) Collier had mentioned doing a thing for that,” Underwood said of the Lenoir City girls coach. “The girls want to wear the pink shoes, and we talk about doing it for something more than a fashion statement.

“Unfortunately, just about everyone has been impacted

Airborne  
From page 1B

third at 396.5. Webb, Bearden and Concord Christian placed fourth, fifth and seventh, respectively.

In Kohl’s dives, she totaled 297.55 points — good for a second-place finish behind Bearden’s Sarah Griffith (446.10 points) in the middle and high school diving session on Jan. 28. Bearden’s Garrett Bailey won the high school boys diving event with 483.90 points, and seventh-graders Cate Bridges (CAK) and Will Petrone (Webb) placed first in their respective events as well.

While the diving portion of the meet was pushed back due to weather, the swimming events took place on Jan. 23.

Farragut finished in the top 10 in 19 of those events, claiming 39 points altogether with 19 points for the women and 18 for the men.

“Everyone on the team has their own individual talents that they bring to the table, especially the ones who challenge themselves outside of their favorite strokes or events for the success of our team,” Sanders said.

FHS senior Daniel Lanning, a Tusculum signee, will look to pace the Admirals in a similar output after helping the team reach an 11-2 mark last season. He has scored 43 goals in 33 outings through his career so far, totaling a .338 shot percentage.

Catholic volleyball standout Mia Kinney will be another one to watch this year before she goes west to Vanderbilt as a Libero or defensive specialist. She was named the 5 Star Preps Player of the Year, racking up 274 kills with a 40.7 kill percentage this past season. She also tallied 65 assists through her junior year with 206 digs, 76 aces and top-notch passing to pace the Lady Irish in a Division II-AA Final Four run.

Hardin Valley’s Hayden Hall

by cancer; my mom is a breast cancer survivor. So while this is a great game, there is life outside of it. It was fun to compete and then come together and realize we all go through ups and downs too.”

In the boys game, the Bulldogs shot out to an early lead and never looked back.

By halftime, that philosophy put Bearden — ranked No. 2 in Tennessee Class 4A in the latest TSWA polls — at a commanding 51-11 lead.

Four area teams finished in the top four of the men’s 400-yard freestyle relay, as Webb took first with HVA in second, Bearden in third and Farragut in fourth.

Hardin Valley finished first in the women’s 200-yard medley relay at 1:50.61, leaving Farragut (fourth place) as the record holder in time from last year’s 1:47.42 result.

Bearden won the men’s version at 1:39.94. Concord Christian took second place there with FHS in third.

Farragut’s Sam Duby led the team in the women’s 200-yard freestyle, placing fourth at 2:02.00, and finished second in the women’s 500-yard freestyle at 5:22.45.

Hardin Valley’s Hayden Hall won the men’s 200-yard freestyle at 1:37.92, and Webb’s Sam Kowalski took third with Farragut’s Garrett Roberts in fourth.

HVA’s Katie Dutrow won the women’s 200-yard individual medley at 2:07.69, and Concord’s Landon Hall placed first in the men’s edition at 1:48.31. FHS freshmen Liam Finley and Petr levlev saw third and fourth, respectively.

is coming off a state championship in the 200-yard freestyle, while Bearden’s Sarah Griffith will try and clinch a third straight state title in the 1-meter dive competition.

At 6-foot-6, Catholic sharpshooter Malachi Brown will be one to watch before he writes his next chapter at Michigan. So will his teammate, Cade Murphy, an Eastern Kentucky commitment.

Christian Academy of Knoxville sophomore Tate Campbell is poised for another big spring on the tennis court. As a freshman, he went 12-2 while advancing to the Division II-A state quarterfinals where he fell to eventual state champion Jack Veazy. Campbell took home the District 1 title and finished runner-up in

Admirals  
From page 1B

early in overtime as Benji Evans scored another putback a short time later, giving his team a four-point lead.

Harrison Holmes added a pair of foul shots down the stretch for FMS.

The Red Devils scored their only points of overtime when Yaniello buried a long-range jumper with 15.4 seconds to play, making the score 41-39.

Dance  
From page 1B

World. Meanwhile, UT’s cheer squad took home a national title in the Division IA Co-ed Gameday category.

FHS will look for similar success from Feb. 6-8, competing in the preliminary round of the Division I competition on

the region, while in team play he helped lead CAK to a state-runner up finish.

Hardin Valley’s Madison Huffman will look to finish her senior year in style, as she finished as the Class AA state runner-up last season.

She remained unbeaten until the championship match and will look for a similar result in the New Year.

Bearden keeper Sophie Keener will be another top name to watch, as will Hardin Valley midfielder Dane Hammer, Farragut defender Lincoln Unger, Hardin Valley senior Anna Ogle and Webb junior Lauren Newell.

Keener contributed to 17 shutouts last season, allowing nine goals overall while not giving up a single one in

Bearden’s final seven games. Hammer racked up 14 goals and 18 assists for HVA, while Unger earned District 4-AAA Defensive Player of the Year honors for FHS. Ogle played a big role in 11 shutouts and posted two goals and two assists, helping the Lady Hawks advance to the District 4-AAA semifinals. And Newell allowed just 14 goals on the season to help Webb reach the title match.

Catholic sophomore Drew Gerken placed eighth in the Division II-AA girls state cross country meet, so she should be in for another big year as a junior.

Aside from high school athletes, the Farragut area will also see several notable products who are looking to start off strong at the college level.

Knoxville.

Since the school opened in 1999, West Valley has been a middle school power in Knoxville.

Three coaches, including Tim Goddard, Alex Comer and current head coach Josh Ballard (formerly at Cedar Bluff Middle) have guided the Lady Wolves to Knox County Tournament Titles.

“West Valley is a well-established program. It was a good program before I got here,” Ballard said.

nessee at one point, while Taffazzoli and her choreographer both worked for FHS in previous stints.

Also, Tennessee had a Farragut graduate on its team as recently as last year in former UT and FHS dancer Bridget Gibson.

“It’s been a long legacy of Farragut being inspired by Tennessee,” Brink added. “So there’s a big correlation.”



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- One photograph may accompany the profile.
- While the newspaper will not alter the substance or message of submitted profiles, it reserves the right to make spelling and grammar corrections as needed / AP style.
- All submissions will be reviewed by the Publisher prior to print deadlines to ensure they meet established standards.
- Candidates need to provide contact information with their submission in case clarification or follow-up is necessary.

Candidates may email their political profiles to [editor@farragutpress.com](mailto:editor@farragutpress.com)

Deadline for profiles is Friday by 12 p.m. prior to the following week's publication.



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# Seniors Hobby Fair highlights passions, stories, talent

**Staff Reports**  
[editor@farragutpress.com](mailto:editor@farragutpress.com)

KNOXVILLE — A Hobby Fair Friday, Jan. 23, at Morning Pointe of Knoxville celebrated creativity and connection as residents, associates, families and community partners shared the hobbies that shape them.

“Our Hobby Fair was such a meaningful reminder of how much life experience, creativity and passion our residents carry with them,” life enrichment director Kari Christopher said. “Seeing them share their hobbies and the stories behind them with family and community members was in-

credibly uplifting.”

The event showcased interests, such as model trains, antiques, fine art, textiles, wood-working and baked goods. Each table highlighted a personal story.

Among the standout displays was Elizabeth Morris’ antique postcard collection, with pieces dating back to the 1920s.

Also, Christopher said Bill Lee shared his extensive collection of model trains and buildings, all crafted by hand. He reflected on how his basement at home once housed a fully operational train layout with tracks weaving through detailed structures.

Art was a central highlight

throughout the room. Guests admired Marie Meredith’s watercolor and oil paintings, noting the remarkable detail in each piece. Another memorable moment came when Betty Brannum shared her love of clogging, giving attendees a joyful glimpse into a hobby rooted in rhythm and tradition.

“There was something really special about watching residents light up as they explained their hobbies,” Christopher added. “It wasn’t just about what they made; it was about sharing a piece of who they are.”



Photo submitted  
Morning Pointe of Knoxville resident Marie Meredith shared her artistic accomplishments during the Hobby Fair.

See HOBBY FAIR on Page 5B

# Special act of kindness

## FHS basketball players show up to support coach’s daughter

**Jake Nichols**  
[jnichols@farragutpress.com](mailto:jnichols@farragutpress.com)

It was a simple act of kindness — one that would have never been seen if not for one social media post. Thanks to J.P. Burris, though, his Farragut basketball players’ caring moment went public. And the ripple effect extends far beyond the court inside the Admirals’ home gym.

“Basketball is going to end one day, and those guys will go on to be unbelievable husbands, fathers and members in this community,” Burris said. “That is a testament to them. It is not anything I’ve done.”

For Burris and his guys, the moment in question began well before Saturday, Jan. 10. In fact, one could even trace it back to his start at Farragut High School in 2022.

Upon his arrival from Hardin Valley, Burris — then less than a decade removed from his own playing career at Maryville College — connected with his new players.

“He came in our freshman year, so we’ve been with him all four years,” said senior center Reid Vining. “This is probably the best team we’ve had in terms of everyone being together.”

“We break it down on family,



Jake Nichols

On Saturday, Jan. 10, several Farragut basketball players surprised Briar Burris, the daughter of Admiral head coach J.P. Burris, by attending her game in Alcoa. Pictured, from left, are Reid Vining, Britton Lewis, Briar Burris, Parker Lane (holding Judah Burris), Matthew Dickens, Dan Lanning and Aiden Foshie.

and he wouldn’t even let some other teams do that because he didn’t think they meant it.

We’ve all been playing together since eighth grade, so it really is a family.”

With that in mind, it’s easy

See KINDNESS on Page 7B



## WFIV’s Bryan shares stories of changing radio landscape

**Tammy Cheek**  
[tcheek@farragutpress.com](mailto:tcheek@farragutpress.com)

Darrell Bryan has seen decades of change in the radio business — from spinning vinyl records to the rise of FM radio and digital automation.

Bryan, director of sales and programming for WFIV-FM (West 105), which serves Farragut, West Knox County and Loudon County, shared stories from his long broadcasting career during a Rotary Club of Farragut meeting Wednesday, Jan. 21, at Fox Den Country Club.

“In the mornings, I’m in a little room — about 6 by 8 — and I’m the only person there, so I like to see a lot of people,” he told club members. “I’m going to tell you about the radio business and how it’s changed

See BRYAN on Page 5B



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**Bryan**  
From page 4B

over the years.”

Bryan began his radio career in the early 1970s at WEZK-FM (97.5) in Knoxville, located on Sharp’s Ridge.

“My first job was loading tapes,” he said. “A keypunch operator would give me cards to put in trays, and that’s all I did.”

He also recorded weather forecasts for a Sears weather line that listeners could call for up-to-date conditions.

“There were no cell phones in the ’70s,” Bryan said. “People really depended on the radio. That was how they got their news.”

One memorable morning, he had to report for a New Year’s Day shift during icy conditions.

“At Sharp’s Ridge, it was about an 85- to 90-degree hill going up to the station,” he recalled. “They had a Jeep, but it was broken down. I had to walk up that hill around 5:30 a.m., and I basically fell up it — it was that slick and that steep.”

He also brought along vintage vinyl records for the club to see, including 45s, 33 1/3s and even some rare 10-inch records.

“My real start in radio was in 1973, when I moved to Greenville,” Bryan said. “I got married one week, moved the next,

and took a new job shortly after. But it worked out well.”

In Greeneville, he wore many hats: hosting a six-hour radio show, selling advertising and doing remote sports play-by-play.

While some see sports broadcasting as glamorous, Bryan recalled a less-than-glitzy start.

“The very first game I broadcast was at a new school. I was on the back of a half-ton truck, parked in one end zone,” he said. “At another school, I was on the back of a pickup on a hill. At a third, I was under a funeral tent.”

Bryan noted FM radio didn’t become mainstream until around 1980.

“One of my earlier jobs was at an FM station, but back then there were no FM radios in cars,” he said. “Your biggest listening audience is in cars. One station in Knoxville gave away FM converters to help grow the audience — and it started a new wave.”

In 1981, Bryan purchased WSMG-AM in Greeneville and later became owner and managing partner of WBEJ-AM in Elizabethton. He also served as a broadcast and media consultant and operated a performing arts center.

He is currently doing the morning show on WFIV-FM 105.3.

**press planner**

• The Farragut Museum has partnered with WordPlayers, a Knoxville nonprofit theatre organization, for a production of *The Ends We Seek*, by Ethan Norman, on Sunday, Feb. 8, at 1:30 at the Farragut Community Center, 239 Jamestowne Blvd.

• Knoxville Bar Association and Legal Aid of East Tennessee are offering the next Veterans Legal Advice Clinic. The event will be held in person at the Knox County Public Defender’s Office on February 11. Any veteran seeking legal help

is encouraged to attend 12 to 2 p.m.

• The Farragut Museum has opened a new temporary exhibit on Farragut artists titled “Farragut Focus: A Creative Com-

**See PLANNER on Page 7B**

**Hobby Fair**  
From page 4B

She said family members were equally moved by the experience. Visiting family member Dottie Penney shared how meaningful it was to hear residents talk openly about hobbies about which they are

deeply passionate.

“It’s not something you get to hear very often, and it was so uplifting,” Penney said.

For participants, the opportunity to share was just as rewarding. Lee talked about how much he enjoyed talking about his train collection and said he was grateful for the chance to

showcase something so meaningful to him.

“The Hobby Fair served as a reminder that hobbies are more than pastimes,” Christopher said. “They are expressions of identity, creativity and connection that bring people together through shared curiosity and appreciation.”

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# FIS Spelling Bee champ



Photo submitted

Farragut Intermediate School principal Suzanne Parham announced the school’s spelling bee champion, fourth-grader Ayesha Dutta, who won the event, held at the school Friday, Jan. 16, with the word, “synopsis.” Ayesha was among 49 students who participated in the spelling bee. The runner-up was Barrett Anderson, also a fourth-grader.

# Valentine’s Gift Ideas



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## Kindness

From page 4B

to see why Burris' daughter, Briar, would be at practice. She drops by to spend time with her dad and his players when she has a break from her own youth basketball practices. Recently, that latter part sparked a question from the 7-year-old.

As the team circled up to begin a workout, Briar Burris asked her father if she could tell the team about her own career in the Alcoa Co-ed youth league.

When he said yes, she squeezed into the group, looked around and offered three statements.

"We won our first game."  
"I scored 16 points."

Oh, and one more thing, as she nervously crammed 12 words into a quick burst of speech, "I've got a game on Saturday if you guys want to come."

Each sentence from Briar

Burris brought a cheer from her dad's players. But that final part inspired some thought.

"She told us that at practice," Vining said. "And we were just like, 'When and where?'"

A couple days later, after Farragut's win over West on Jan. 8, fellow senior Britton Lewis sent a text informing his head coach that a group would be coming. And when the day arrived, six Admirals — Vining, Lewis, Parker Lane, Matthew Dickens, Dan Lanning and Aiden Foshie — strolled into a Blount County gym to watch their coach's daughter play basketball.

Upon their arrival, J.P. Burris broke into an ear-splitting grin. His daughter did too — but with a bit more reservation.

"All six of them walked in the gym together, and she was super excited but so nervous too and got all red," Burris said with a laugh.

Once the game started, Briar Burris went to shoot and drew

a foul. When she sank the free-throw, one might have thought she had just hit a buzzer-beater.

"People don't usually go nuts for that," Burris said. "But the guys kind of lost their minds, at least in relation to what you can do at a 7-year-old co-ed basketball game."

"She had a big smile on her face," added Vining. "We chirped the whole game too."

Ultimately, Briar Burris' team wound up losing the game. But the day as a whole counted as a win for the Burris family and the Farragut program as a whole.

"The relationship I have with those guys has allowed them to get to know my family, so it's bigger than basketball," Burris said. "It is not often you'll get a group like that — where, on a Saturday that they don't have practice, they drive 30 minutes to watch my daughter and support her. That's something I don't deserve, and it means a lot."

## Planner

From page 5B

munity." The exhibit features local artists including visual, performing, musical, etc., and will be open through April. The Farragut Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.,

and admission is free.

• The public is invited to the Town of Farragut Quilt Show, which will take place at the Farragut Community Center Saturday, Feb. 21 through Sunday, Feb. 22. This free event is open to the public from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 1-4 p.m. Sunday.

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2ND ANNUAL FARRAGUT HIGH SCHOOL  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION GALA

Chair-Ish  
the Moment

About 150 attended the 2nd Annual Farragut High School Education Foundation gala, Chair-Ish the Moment, in Fox Den Country Club Saturday, Jan. 10, to help raise money to support FHS Education Foundation. “Usually every year, we kind of set out with some very specific goals in addition to some of the general projects and student initiatives we try to fund,” foundation president Toni Scott said. “This year’s project is called Chair-ish the Moment because we are trying to bolster our fund and be able to replace [the chairs] and renovate the auditorium.”



Farragut High School Jazz Choir members, from left, Ruth Shved, Gracie Hamlett (back), Lynlee Byars, Catherine Langlais, Scarlett Studebaker and Rafika Amlani, perform at the 2nd Annual Farragut High School Education Foundation gala, Chair-Ish the Moment, in Fox Den Country Club Saturday, Jan. 10.



From left, Josh and Melanie Hall and Lindsay and Alan Willis



From left, Stanton and Kara Smith joined Joseph and Kimberly Hicks



Cristina and John Tiernan



Mike and Claudia Stallings



Eric and Amy Coulter



Wendy and Jason Sfles



Jay and Louise Povlin



Allison and Todd Prosnan



Meredith and Wes Whitehead



Todd Mason, left, and Michael Crawford



Meredith Crawford, left, and Sarah Mason