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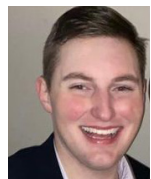
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# STATE OF THE CITY

## LOWERY TALKS INFRASTRUCTURE, RECREATION

**BY JERRY LOWERY**  
mayor of Sparta

It is with great honor that I begin this year with my first State of the City as mayor of this great place we call home. Let me first reflect upon the past, and then focus on the present, and then look forward to our future.

Looking back over the past six years, as an alderman, we made strides to allow the city's infrastructure to be in a good place. We have put in place a plan to pave all the roads within the city limits in an eight-year cycle. We were pushed back a bit with the delay of not paving last year, however, we will continue that progress of paving each road in the city. We have a map located at city hall that has each road that will be paved, according to the plans we have set.

We have been proactive in doing underground repair work on the city's sewer and water lines before each road went for paving. This creates a better underground infrastructure that will allow better service to our residents and will allow us to then pave over the repairs so we will not have to dig up fresh pavement to do the repairs. We have a great bunch of employees that continue to amaze me at all the skills our team has as they serve our citizens and the city.

We also have been proactive in our tree cutting in the city to help cut down the possibility of electrical outages due to limbs falling during bad weather times. The city department heads are doing a great job of making sure we



Sparta Mayor Jerry Lowery

have the equipment and the supplies on hand to keep the city utilities going.

Presently, we are dealing with an ongoing sewer issue that placed us in a sewer moratorium right as I was taking office as the mayor (in August 2022). Through negotiations and working with the Tennessee Department of Environmental Conservation, we have been able to get some relief that gives us now the ability to keep the building within the city moving forward. We are spending at least \$2 million to help the area of the solid waste system, in Sparta. The current aldermen have worked hand in hand with city staff in aiding in the solutions to a major problem.

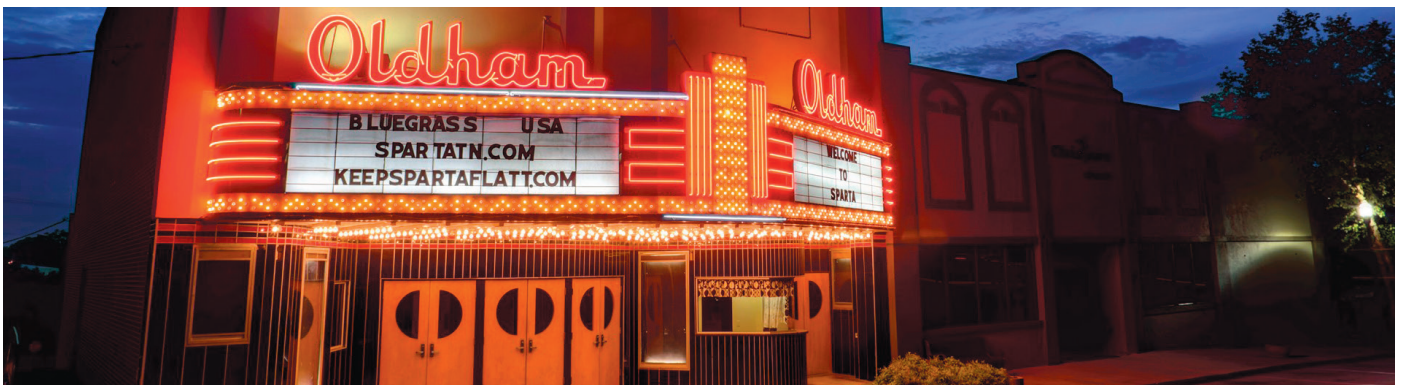
The future looks very bright for the city. As mayor of this great town, we

are moving forward with a new vision that includes some new ventures for the city. We are looking at expanding our recreational opportunities for the residents of White County and Sparta. We have activated our parks and recreation board that has been basically inactive for many years in the past. A vision for these opportunities and projects will be released in the very near future. It is time we build some areas that not only our youth of the community can be proud of but also make Sparta a destination site for visitors to come to our town to take part in recreational activities.

We are also looking into the expansion and completion of a marked walking trail system that will benefit those who wish to do some walking, jogging, and biking in the community. The board of aldermen and city staff are working behind the scenes to provide this progress to our city.

The city has seen some changes in leadership, and I believe that we have one of the best teams in place to help lead our wonderful town and community. Since taking office, we have appointed the first female judge, Macey Dawson Gurley, and the first female city administrator, Tonya Tindle.

We will, as well, continue to entertain and welcome new businesses and new residents to our town. As mayor, I am excited to be a part of what the City of Sparta is doing, and we will continue to strive to make Sparta the place to live, work, and play. I am honored to be your mayor. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time with your concerns.



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# STATE OF THE COUNTY

## ROBINSON ADDRESSES SOLID WASTE CONCERNS

**BY DENNY WAYNE ROBINSON**  
county executive

As we begin 2023, I am pleased to report that White County is continuing to grow and prosper. Even though there have been reports of a recession in other parts of the country, our economy has continued a steady increase. Our unemployment remains low, and there are still many opportunities for those wanting a new career. Our diverse economic environment and low tax structure ensure a great atmosphere for businesses to succeed and employ our citizens. Even with conservative economic strategies in place, we have not been immune from the effects of inflation that have swept across our country. We all have made sacrifices, but we have survived. Fortunately, it appears that inflation is leveling off and will soon slow to a reasonable rate.

This new year began with several new commissioners leading the way for White County. As with any change, we can expect some time for them to get acquainted with their new responsibilities and learn the business of running a county; but, I am excited for the fresh new ideas, new perspectives, and new solutions to improve the standard of living for the citizens of White County. There are many challenges ahead, and I have full confidence in their ability to overcome and make the right decisions.

Our county's water system is old and antiquated. Over the past year, I met with all of our water districts to see what their needs were and where upgrades were needed the most. We now have plans and engineering in place to spend over \$5 millions in upgrades and repairs to our water supply system to



County Executive Denny Wayne Robinson

ensure the continued availability and sustainability of reliable water service to our county. Even better news is that I secured a grant to cover this expense, and upgrades will be at no cost to the local taxpayer.

With the devastating and deadly weather that hit our area a couple of years ago, I made it a priority that we had a plan for White County. I appointed a new emergency management director and charged him with making sure we were as prepared as can be. The Office of Emergency Management has and continues to work with all emergency services to make sure we have the necessary equipment, plans and contacts ready in the event it is needed.

White County had many accomplishments last year, including upgrades to our justice center (which included a new body scanner, which I received through a grant, to prevent contraband from entering our jail), pay raises for employees, and several others throughout the county.

I do want to address our solid waste department in this message. Part of being a leader is to be pro-

active. I talk to others across the state and nation. Trash is going to become a crisis in the near future not only for our state but for the nation and world. I want a long-term sustainable solution for White County, not a temporary plan that kicks the can down the road. There are many rumors and accusations going around about White County's Solid Waste Department. I assure you, we have not been shut down by the state nor closed for violations of rules. We are going in ourselves and re-evaluating the future of trash disposal before it becomes a crisis. We know we cannot continue to operate and dispose of trash in the same manner we have done so in the past. Experts are predicting a substantial increase in the cost of handling solid waste in the future due to the changes and limited space.

The commission and I are exploring every available option to minimize and possibly eliminate these increases from being passed on to the citizens. As our county has grown over the past few years so has the amount of solid waste. That is one of the consequences of being a growing community. Unfortunately, there will be a few inconveniences as we work through this process, and for that I apologize. Hopefully these inconveniences will not affect the majority and should only be for a short time as we plan for the future.

I will continue to work hard for White County, and I anticipate another great year. Fiscally and economically, White County is still at the top of its game, and 2023 looks even brighter. It is my honor and privilege to serve the citizens of White County. There is no place better to be than White County, Tennessee. May God continue to bless your family, White County, Tennessee, and our country.



# WHITE COUNTY OFFICIALS



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# STATE OF WHITE COUNTY SCHOOLS

## DISTRICT RECOGNIZED FOR ACADEMIC GROWTH

**BY KURT DRONEBARGER**  
director of schools

White County schools have continued to move forward over the past year. As we have distanced ourselves from the pandemic, we have not merely returned to normal but have actually excelled. White County school system has been recognized as a Level 5 (highest) district for academic growth by the Tennessee Department of Education two years in a row. This year, we also had two schools (Cassville and White County High School) honored as Reward Schools, which means their students' growth scores were in the top 5 percent of the entire state. Our district's composite ACT score rose again this year, and we continue to see improvements in other key academic areas.

Grant funds have provided several new programs and opportunities for our students. Summer school programming has allowed for



Director of White County Schools Kurt Dronebarger

remediation and acceleration during the month of June, and we look forward to this program continuing. Other grant funding allows for TN All Corps, which provides high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring for students during the school day. We have used grant funds to make improvements to some

of our career and technical programs at the high school level, with more changes to come. Currently, we are applying for grant funding that will provide up to \$1.5 million dollars to enhance the CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs at White County High School and White County Middle School.

During a time of national shortages, our district has remained fully staffed with teachers, support staff, and bus drivers. As Tennessee schools move into a new funding formula (TISA-Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement) next year, one main goal will be to increase the compensation for all employees. White County has a proud tradition of employee support and looks forward to keeping our district as one of the best places to work in the Upper Cumberland region. TISA funds will also allow us to expand our programming, add key positions, expedite improvements to our facilities, and strengthen our reserves.



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# OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## DIRECTOR DISCUSSES SERVICES AND GOALS

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

White County Office of Emergency Management took on a new direction as the county made the decision to create a paid, part-time position for the department's director with the goal of developing a clear focus for the department and how it can best serve the county's citizens.

"While we work closely with county services, our office focuses on the broader picture of county emergency services as a whole," director Matt McBride said, adding that OEM, or EMA (Emergency Management Agency) as it is often called, differs from county to county and state to state. "Here in White County, OEM focuses on mitigating hazards caused by incidents, prepares to implement measures that will reduce damage and minimize damage to property, responds to the needs of the citizens and other agencies during emergencies, provides a strategic plan of recovery after emergencies to assist with returning our communities to normal status, and pretty well whatever else that our emergency services need from us."

White County OEM works closely with many different stakeholders throughout the county such as emergency services, emergency



communications E-911, local churches, schools, state parks, local amateur radio groups, and local county government. The entities work together to provide services to the residents and visitors of White County by helping ensure that measures are in place to prevent and mitigate major disasters, normal everyday emergencies, and non-emergency incidents.

"OEM is here to assist in a number of emergencies," McBride said. "We strive to be as cross trained as much as our budget and time allows us."

In addition to McBride, the department includes one volunteer

deputy director and eight volunteer operational/support members.

"OEM is available to assist any emergency department in a multitude of needs from operations, logistics, and command communications," McBride said.

McBride said OEM preparedness comes from multiple tabletop and scenario-based exercises. They follow the NIMS (National Incident Management System) as well as following the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) command training program.

"OEM pre-plans emergencies as much as possible with certain procedures in place that fit many different incidents, with mutual aid agreements and disaster drill sheets already in place for certain emergencies, along with the staging of basic hazmat supplies stored at different locations across the county," McBride said. "We have a multitude of agreements and understandings with other counties and cities within the Upper Cumberland for mitigation of emergencies."

McBride took the position of director of the county's OEM a little over a year ago when the county decided to start the program over from scratch, but that hasn't stopped him from setting goals and making plans.

"For the near future, I think one of

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the department's goals is to continue to build relationships with county departments and other neighboring counties as well," he explained. "We try weekly to continue to improve our hazard mitigation, while working with TEMA (Tennessee Emergency Management Agency) to improve our total response within our region and statewide.

"A long-term department goal is to establish a countywide training program for the fire/rescue services," McBride said.

This type of training program would allow members of the county's volunteer fire and rescue departments to take advantage of training money and reimbursements to members for their dedication to training that is available through state funding.

In addition to being the county's director of the Office of Emergency Management, McBride serves as both the county fire coordinator and the flood manager.

"Those two just kind of fall under my jurisdiction appointed by the county,"



White County Office of Emergency Management works closely with many different stakeholders throughout the county such as emergency services, emergency communications E-911, local churches, schools, state parks, local amateur radio groups, and local county government.

he said.

McBride said he hopes to start a Volunteer State Education Incentive Program for each county fire department next year, saying that members have shown an interest in the program, and he thinks it will help with the retention of volunteers throughout the county.

"The Flood Manager/Program is required by law for grants, also to be eligible for certain programs for federal and state funding," he said about the third hat he wears for White County.

"At this time, our program is very basic, although the county executive's office has shown interest in growing this area due to certain areas being very prone to flooding and to be better prepared for flooding emergencies within the county."

While the Office of Emergency Management has been re-organized, re-vamped, and re-envisioned, the county is as prepared as ever to step up, step in and provide services for the residents during the times when they are most needed.



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The Rylander Cascades Trail, in Lost Creek, was extended to add another waterfall to the growing Virgin Falls Trail system.

# Tourism expanding in White County

## More scenic hiking trails open to explore

**BY RACHEL AUBERGER**

It's no secret that White County offers an abundance of activities for tourists and residents alike. From waterfalls to rivers, from caves to coves, from mountains to lakes, the county is filled with opportunity for both adventure seekers and those who are looking to kick back and relax. Hiking, kayaking, fishing, hunting, boating, camping, lake days and lazy days are all available across the 379 square miles that make up White County. This past year, there were more opportunities added to the list of things to do on a Saturday afternoon – or any day of the week, for that matter.

One of the newest trails in the area is the 2.5-mile Pamela Hardie Trail. With the trailhead at the intersection of Old Bon Air Road and Gladstone Acres Road, in White County, the trail meanders through level woodlands for approximately

one mile before dropping below sandstone bluffs. Hikers who follow the trail below the bluffs will find themselves faced with a small waterfall fed by Little Lost Creek. The moderate hike, which has appeal for both novice and seasoned hikers alike, offers several overhangs from the bluffs that could provide shelter if the weather were to change while on the trail or if a hiker wanted to just sit and enjoy the peace for a while.

"The land was in the Hardie family for over 100 years. Pamela Hardie wanted to see the family land preserved, and patiently worked with the state until the land transferred, in 2021," Marvin Bullock, Sparta-White County Chamber of Commerce president, said. "We hope in the near future to create a trail connecting Pamela Hardie Trail to Dog Cove."

More recently, The Rylander Cascades Trail, in Lost Creek, was extended to add another waterfall to the growing Virgin Falls Trail system. The one-mile extension continues along

Dry Creek with a variety of flora from moss and wildflowers to native hardwoods. With the new addition, a seasoned hiker can enjoy six separate waterfalls if they were to complete the entire Virgin Falls Trail.

“A word of caution, though,” Bullock said. “While Dry Creek Falls is a moderate hike, the Virgin Falls Trail, however, is quite rigorous and should only be attempted by seasoned hikers.”

Regardless of whether you live in White County or are just stopping by for a visit, whether you are looking for an adventure or a peaceful afternoon, whether you are here in the summer or the winter or any time in between, the abundance of trails and waterfalls is sure to give you something to do and talk about.



Views from Pamela Hardie trail.



The Rylander Cascades Trail



# Sparta Metal Processing

## Plant plans to add nearly 200 jobs by 2025

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

In 2022, Sparta gained a new industrial factory that is looking to add almost 200 jobs to the area over the next few years as well as immerse itself in the community and culture of White County.

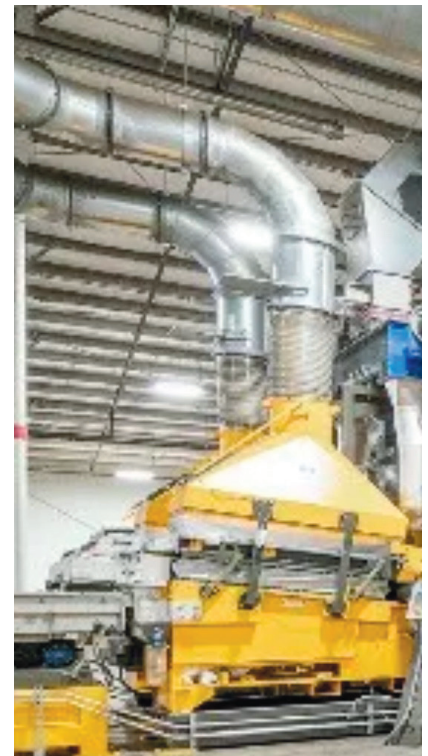
Sparta Metal Processing is a non-ferrous industrial metal processing plant located on 327 Turntable Road that runs a full scale, state-of-the-art chopping line which consumes insulated wire products, including copper and aluminum – or a variation of the two. The finished product is prepared and packaged by major brass mills in North America, specialty consuming homes, and international mills.

“We saw Sparta as a great opportunity to bring some additional business and industry to Sparta as well as the state of Tennessee,” William Hurrle, the plant’s managing partner, said. “Tennessee is a very business-friendly state, and we appreciate their current and future support.”

As for giving back the community in which they have chosen to make their home, the management team at Sparta Metal Processing said that while they started with 20 employees, they intend to double in size for each of the next three-plus years, meaning they would provide jobs for over 150 people by 2025 as well as create a potential opportunity for additional expansions moving forward from that point.

“We will add labor and general commerce but also plan to give back to the community via commitment to local charitable projects and/or financial support for these types of organizations,” Hurrle explained.

While Sparta is a relatively small city, and White County is proud of the amount of open space and natural resources within its borders, being able to provide new industrial growth and add to the workforce opportunities without compromising the culture and beauty of the community is a win-win for Sparta Metal Works and the future of Sparta.





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# Motlow State - Sparta

## Several new programs now available

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

The Motlow State - Sparta campus has had a busy year, including operating under its first full-time director, Thomas Turner, and a lot of work was put in by the College Advisory Partnership to aid the Sparta campus in its efforts to become a leader in post-secondary education in the Upper Cumberland region.

"The advisory board, comprised of community leaders in the public and private sectors as well as city, county and educational government leaders, raised funds so the needed updates to the building could be completed," chairman of the CAP, Bobby Officer, said.

Officer said the campus has seen a remodeled student lounge space, additional classrooms, and updated restrooms.

"But those are just superficial changes," officer said. "The partnership also raises and manages funds that support equipment purchases and scholarships."

Through the partnership, with the assistance of White County executive Denny Wayne Robinson and Motlow State, the Sparta Campus was able to establish an EMS (Emergency Medical Service) and paramedic program. The program has a full-size, state-of-the-art ambulance simulator.

"With two full-time instructors, the program has seen its EMT (Emergency Medical Technician)-Basic class complete the fall semester and are now moving to EMT-Advanced in the spring semester," Officer said. "These courses lead to certificates which have extra costs not included in tuition and fees. These additional costs could be covered by funds managed by CAP and the Advisory Board. When students need assistance, the instructors or program director can ask for assistance. The goal is to provide the students at the Sparta Campus a way to move forward in their educational and career plans."

Other programs being offered at Motlow State - Sparta Campus this spring include Supply Chain Management, AAS and Business Management courses. In addition, Motlow State has approved several new degrees and programs to start in the future, including Associate of

Science degrees in Business Management, Criminal Justice, and Industrial Operations.

"These degrees will enable students to transfer to a university to complete additional courses leading to a bachelor's degree," Officer said, while also acknowledging that not every student wants a bachelor's degree. "Also planned are Associate of Applied Science degrees in

Fire Science and Hospitality-Culinary Arts concentration."

According to Officer, degrees like the EMS/paramedic certificates allow students to go straight to the workforce. In addition, Motlow has partnered with BASF to provide a program that allows students to simultaneously work at the plant in Sparta and continue with college courses.

"These certificate programs allow students to earn a paycheck while gaining a quality education," Officer explained, adding that tuition, fees and books are sponsored by BASF. "This collaboration benefits both the industry partner and the student.

Industry certification and credentials allow our citizens a greater opportunity when looking for employment offers and improves the qualifications of the workforce in our community."

Another improvement that Motlow at Sparta has seen this year comes in the form of upgraded computer hardware and software to allow for greater ease in completing micro-credentials and certifications. Officer said these upgrades also benefit the dual-enrollment students who are White County High School students and White County residents who are over the age of 23 and eligible to use the TN Reconnect program to earn a post-secondary credential.

"CAP provides monies to help the students in the dual-enrollment program with costs not covered by the state grant, scholarships for graduating seniors and non-traditional students who may have costs not covered by federal or state funds," Officer said. "By working with local industries, health care providers, and business owners to offer apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and associate degrees, Motlow State - Sparta Campus is preparing our community for job growth and development."



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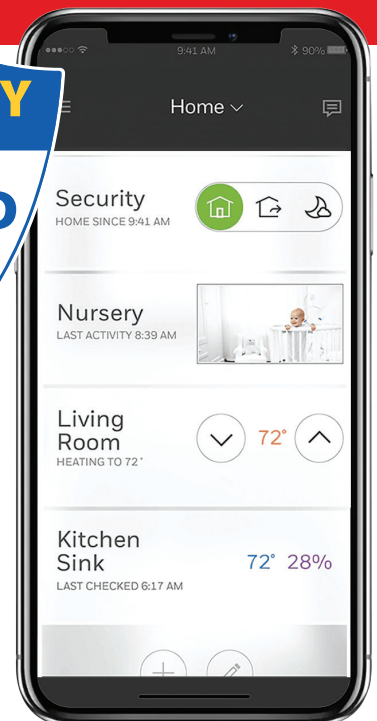
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# Sunseeker Outfitters

## Adventures you can't put a price on

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Samantha Satterfield is choosing to make her life an adventure, and her goal is to teach all those with whom she comes in contact that they have the same choice she has – to make their life their own.

Satterfield was once given a devastating diagnosis and told to mentally and emotionally prepare herself for a life full of disability and decreased quality, but she decided that wasn't what her life's journey was about, and she set out to change the prognosis – and she found that change on the water.

"A doctor once told me my quality of life would deteriorate, and I needed to expect never to work again," Satterfield said, explaining that after two brain aneurysms and a pituitary tumor, she had been diagnosed with a rare one-in-ten-million disorder. "I was devastated. I loved to travel the country as a travel nurse. It felt like my life was being ripped from me because I was born to be a nomadic soul."

Satterfield said she knew she couldn't let her diagnosis be the end of her story, and, on a flight to Mayo Clinic, she made a decision.

"I knew I wanted to give back what the world and

locals had given to me on my travels to this community, so I took my favorite hobby and turned it into a sanctuary where anyone can come and get away from society for a little while without any financial pressure," Satterfield said.

She chose to continue living as active as possible, while sharing her love for adventure with a community she had fallen in love with – White County – and she opened Sunseekers Outfitters, a kayak rental company.

Through Sunseeker Outfitters, which is open year-round by appointment and weekends for walk-in during the months of June, July, August, and September, guests can rent all the gear they need for a day out on the water, including transportation to and from the river.

"We don't put time constraints on the rentals, because it's your experience and we want you to enjoy it as long as you would like," Satterfield said.

She explained that guests can rent kayaks, paddles, lifejackets, and all of the safety gear they need for a day on the river.

"And we operate on a 'pay what you can' philosophy,



because everyone deserves access to the beautiful resources we have right in our back yard," she said.

In addition to kayaks and gear rentals, Sunseekers Outfitters offers guided tours, ACA certified kayaking courses for 101 and river safety, shuttling, brewery and winery tours, and special events.

"These adventures aren't something you can put a price on, and they mean just as much to me as they do my guests," she said.

"Watching a child paddle for the first time, or a widow go out on her first adventure without her partner and letting me be a part of her journey to fill her with compassion and confidence is priceless," Satterfield said.

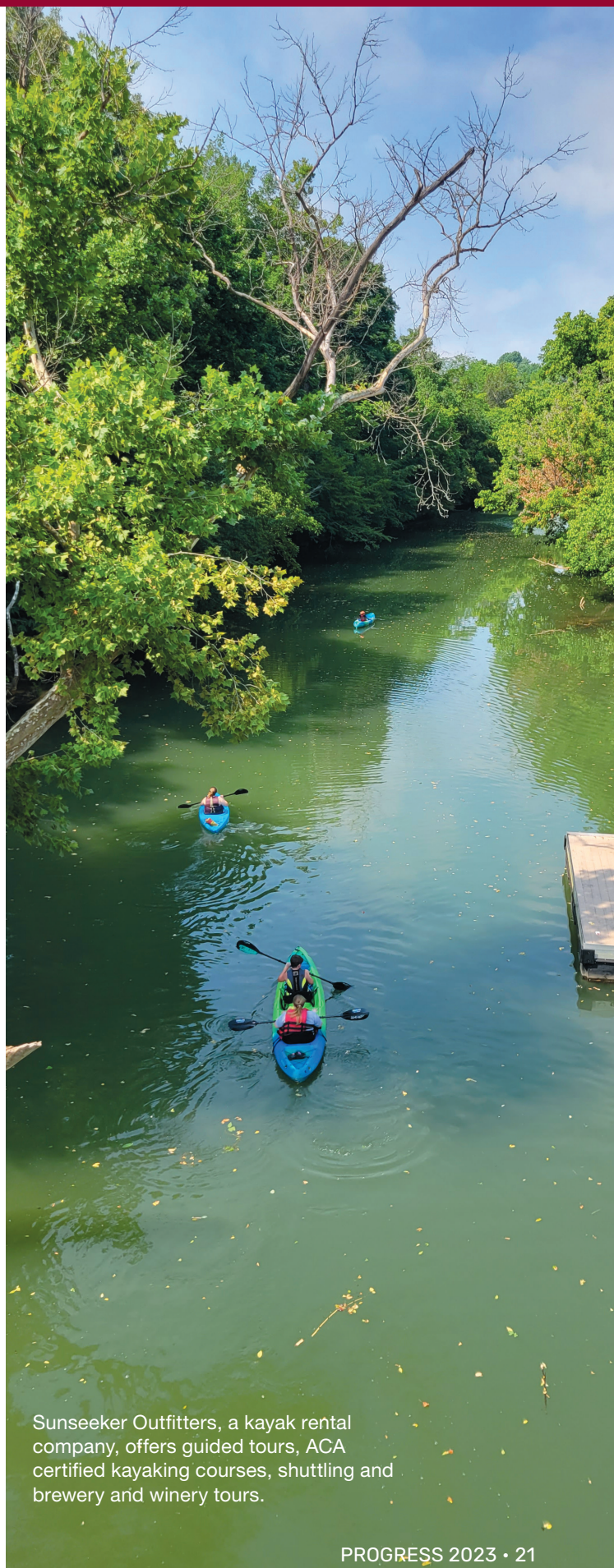
Satterfield is passionate about creating a place for people to enjoy life but also about safety – for both people and the environment.

"Tennessee is number one in kayaking deaths, and we hope to change this," Satterfield, who is running for ACA State Director, is a board member of the TSRA, and serves as chair of the Conservation committee, said. "I'm very much a fan of people getting excited and buying their family their own equipment, but always reach out to instructors about how to keep your family safe. A lot of people don't even know how to fit their life jackets properly."

Satterfield, who was once told she had no future, is now planning to add more experiences to her businesses repertoire in the hopes of creating experiences that change lives.

"Having a geriatric animal rescue that adopts all the geriatric dogs that won't get adopted as well as a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center that's much needed in this area, primitive camping, and an outdoor center for all kinds of experiences such as back packing, hiking, kayaking (whitewater and recreational), climbing, or even just a special place to escape society by the river for a while," she enthusiastically lists all the areas she would like to see her outfitter business expand into. "Most of all a place that is outdoor oriented and accommodates those with disabilities and chronic illnesses. Everyone deserves to experience the beauty of this state, and, truthfully, this world. I want to make it less limiting and more open to adventure for those who have to work a little harder for it.

"I decided that I get to choose my quality of life, and, now, no matter what the ending, I couldn't be happier this town supports me in this adventure. My near-death experiences have given me this ability to feel genuine happiness over small and beautiful things. I just want to leave not only the world a little better than I found it but the people in it, too."



Sunseeker Outfitters, a kayak rental company, offers guided tours, ACA certified kayaking courses, shuttling and brewery and winery tours.



## Synergy Herbal Works

One of Tennessee's largest herbal apothecaries

**BY RACHEL AUBERGER**

Sherri Stickler has taken her passion for helping her neighbors and combined it with a love of herbs and all things natural to create a booming business in downtown Sparta.

Synergy Herbal Works, located at 14 Liberty Square, started as something Stickler worked from her home, in 2014, and has grown into one of the largest herbal apothecaries, in Tennessee. The apothecary, which also

includes a wellness shop and retail space, boasts over 300 different organic or wild-crafted herbs, teas, and single tinctures for the herbal or health-minded enthusiast as well as other health related products and unique gifts.

"Our popular, house-made products are made in our inspected kitchen and come from recipes formulated and tweaked to perfection over many years," Stickler, who is a practicing clinical herbalist, said. "We enjoy meeting and helping our amazing customers and clients that visit us from all over the United States."

As a clinical herbalist, registered with the American Herbalist Guild, Stickler has seen and helped thousands of clients of all ages and degrees of health concerns since Synergy Herbal Works inception, in 2014. However, since herbalists are not licensed in the United States, she warns that she does not diagnose or treat diseases. Instead, Stickler said that, as an herbalist, she partners with her clients to educate, encourage, and support their goals for optimal health and balance, making recommendations for both acute and chronic imbalances on a weekly basis.

"Walking in the woods identifying trees with my grandfather as well as time spent with my grandmother as a child stoked a passion for herbs and natural health from an early age," Stickler said. "My interest in the body and herbs led me into the medical field."

Stickler, who is a retired Registered Respiratory Therapist with a COPD Educator Certificate, explained how she came to have such a strong passion for health and wellness.

"All these things culminated into a passion for people and health," she said. "The last few years have driven home the need to invest in our communities."

There are big changes ahead for Synergy Herbal Works as Stickler will begin seeing clients through a private member association she recently formed. Restored Wellness PHA will be located inside Synergy Herbal Works

and will give the herbalist the opportunity to look for patterns of balance or imbalance for an individual and from there recommend the most appropriate herbal, dietary and lifestyle changes specifically for that person.

"As an herbalist, I believe that the human body is resilient and innately self-healing, and that the correct herbal formulas and lifestyle changes can assist and encourage the body in its effort to return to balance," Stickler said. "Every person is unique in their make-up and needs."

Of course, Synergy Herbal Works will continue to emphasize their dedication to healthy living and education by offering workshops on health, wellness, and herbs as well as facilitating a Weston A. Price chapter and work to connect clients and customers with nutrient dense food, clean living products, and education. (Weston Andrew Valleau Price, Sept.6, 1870-Jan. 23, 1948) was a Canadian dentist known primarily for his theories on the relationship between nutrition, dental health, and physical health.)

"We enjoy meeting and helping our amazing customers and clients that visit us from all over the United States," Stickler said. "It has been amazing serving the community and watching the excitement and growth over the last nine years we have been in business. We are looking forward to the next year and beyond."





# Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen

## Ya'll come eat at the barn

**BY RACHEL AUBERGER**

In May 2022, White County officially welcomed a brand-new shopping and dining experience when Laurel Dunn, along with her husband, Tim, opened Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen.

Chestnut Oaks, which is located at 7355 Burgess Falls Rd., in Sparta, was started as a means to help make the Dunn's farm a little more profitable and allow them to focus on farming rather than have it be a secondary project they managed after their day jobs. But, through the past eight months, Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen has become so much more.

"Our main business and first love is our farm," Laurel said.

Laurel had read an article in the *Cattlemen's* magazine, in 2020, about a farm that was selling their beef individually packaged rather than just on the hoof, and it gave her some ideas about the Dunn's farm.

"I thought that might be a way to actually make a profit farming

instead of working other jobs to pay for the farming business," she said.

Laurel enlisted the help of White County UT Extension agent Scott Swoape and spent 2020 researching rules and regulations surrounding the business of selling homegrown beef.

"I called every USDA inspected slaughterhouse in Middle and East Tennessee," she laughed. "I also made an appointment for a trial run in October of 2021. That was the first available appointment I could find."

Besides just raising their cows, which was going to take some adjusting in itself as the Dunns would now need to keep their calves an extra six months to get them to slaughter weight which would mean that they would need more pasture land, they had to find something to use as a store from which to market and sell their new product.

"We had a rent house on the farm that I thought we could remodel into a store, but, when I first mentioned to Tim, he didn't think people would want to shop at a house," Laurel said and



explained they were afraid the house wouldn't feel like a store. "But then he saw the prices of beef skyrocket (although our prices didn't), and the shelves at the grocery store become very sparse or empty. He decided it might be a good idea after all."

Laurel said after much prayer and reflection, they made the decision to purchase an additional 50 acres of pasture that adjoined the farm they already owned and operated. The acreage, which is near Burgess Falls State Park, also included a barn that was built in 1949, and the idea of a destination store and venue was born.

"The barn was too big for the small store I had envisioned, and, with it being right by the state park, we thought maybe we should sell sandwiches and ice cream," Laurel said. "We really weren't expecting a lot of business in the kitchen, but boy were we wrong!"

Laurel and Tim Dunn hold a contractors' licenses, and Laurel has a Limited Licensed Electrician license, so, together with uncles, brothers, and cousins, the Dunns began creating their new space, getting all of the work completed just before the May 28, 2022, grand opening.

Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen opened with just two tables on the main floor and seven tables in the loft. Laurel said close friends and family even joked about her wanting to gravel the side lot for extra parking, but the joke was on them when, after just two months of being open for business, an expansion was already needed.

"In July, we started tearing down another barn on the property so that we could use the lumber and metal to build a dining room," Laurel said.

The dining room, which seats 100 people, was completed in early October, allowing the Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen to seat and serve over 150 guests.

"The main revenue is now from the kitchen, but we will continue to sell our beef as well as local pork, milk, butter, ice cream, cheese, homemade breads, and sweets," she said.

Laurel said that while they have been pleasantly surprised with the quick success of Chestnut Oaks Farm Store and Kitchen, there is still room to grow and expand in the not-too-distant future.

"I definitely see our business growing more on the agri-tourism side in the next few years, but I'm not sure exactly how that is going to look," she said.

Laurel said she and Tim have a lot of ideas for the property, with the majority of those being geared toward giving the community and the Burgess Falls State Park visitors additional things to do in White County, including the possibility of farm tours, an amphitheater, and putt-putt golf.

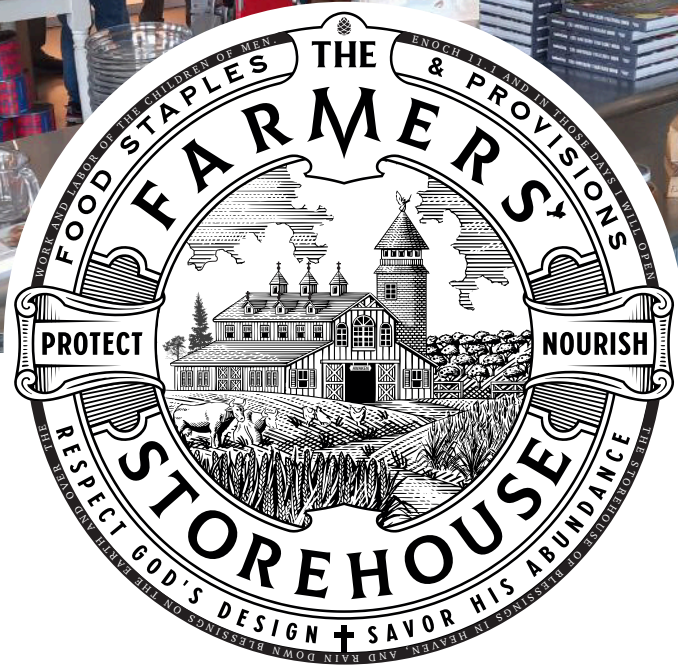
"But for now, those are just some of the ideas we are throwing around," she said. "There's no firm plan or timeline for any of these just yet."

For now, the Dunns are just happy to be able to work their farm full time, providing a way for them to do what they love while giving the community they call home something to enjoy.

"I love to see families enjoying each other in the dining room, playing cornhole on the patio, or looking at the train village that my mom put together in the loft," she said. "I really love to hear people say that they feel like they are walking into a Hallmark movie when they come into our store, because that tells me they feel warm and welcome."

"I hope that our business helps to make our community a little more self-sustainable, providing farm-to-table foods as well as provide a place where our neighbors can bring their families and get to know each other in the community. We've had so many of our neighbors tell us thank you so much for operating our store here, and that really warms my heart."





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## THE FARMERS' STOREHOUSE

### ENJOYING A LIFE OF RICH FOOD AND COMMUNITY

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Sparta is now home to a new farmer's cooperative – one that allows farmers to share their products and goods with each other as well as local shoppers to create a self-sustaining community that is focused not only on the profitability of farms but also the health and quality of life of those who participate, whether as a producer or a consumer.

"We are a Farmers' Cooperative with 32 active farmers and five organic bakers," owner John Costanzo explained about the Farmers' Storehouse located just out of town, at 971 Smithville Highway. "Our standard for any products brought and sold here is that they are organic or beyond."

The Farmers' Storehouse sells locally grown produce that is brought in fresh weekly, along with eggs, local honey, organic cheese, and nitrate-free salami. In

addition, the shop sells 16 types of grains and blends, including nine gluten-free blends. They also have a bakery in which local producers bring breads, pretzels, and other baked goods made with 100 percent organic ingredients.

"We specialize in milling the grains fresh, right in front of the customer," Costanzo said. "We have two separate mills, and we dedicate one to gluten-free blends for the safety and comfort of all of our customers."

In addition, the Farmers' Storehouse is the site of the Cumberland Livestock Exchange where farmers can sell steers to local customers who are looking to fill their freezers with fresh, organic meat.

"If you purchase a steer, we will cover the cost of having it processed," Costanza said. "We also have a variety of high-end cattle hides available for those who are looking for unique rugs, art pieces, or table coverings."



Farmers' Storehouse offers several educational opportunities including classes on how to make artisan baked goods.

The Farmers' Storehouse also has a variety of self-care products – all still in the organic line of thinking. With beeswax candles from local beehives and soaps freshly made at local farms and exfoliating scrubs, making personal care and wellness a priority isn't difficult.

The Farmers' Storehouse also has an entire section of their display room designated to natural baby supplies as well as a small section with gifts and toys for young children.

"We also have diapers, and 100 percent of those sales are donated to Unplanned Joy," Costanza said. "Unplanned Joy is an organization that will help a mother who chooses to not abort her unplanned baby with the expenses she will occur over the first year of the child's life or provide her with a family that is ready to adopt – her choice."

In addition, the Farmers' Storehouse offers classes so that community members can learn the benefits of eating organic, which grains are best for the foods they are trying to make, learn how to make artisan baked goods, sample local wines, and a variety of other opportunities.

"For the farmers, millers, and bakers involved, it's not just about protecting our family and friends from a broken food system, it's about enjoying a life of rich food and community," Costanza said.





## BARGAIN SUPPLY WAREHOUSE SHELVES STOCKED WITH RANGE OF ITEMS

**BY RACHEL AUBERGER**

Bargain Supply Warehouse, at 140 Churchill Dr., in Sparta, is a great way to make the money in that budget stretch a little further.

At Bargain Supply Warehouse, the shelves are restocked daily with items that come into the shop on pallets of returned or overstocked items from Target, Lowe's, Home Depot, Amazon, and Walmart. And, with their new, much bigger show room, there are

even more items to shop every day

With everything from toys to clothing, from power tools to furniture, from appliances to patio furniture, from outdoor essentials to pet supplies, and now with a whole new fishing section, there is sure to be something for everyone.

For fishing enthusiasts, check out the large selection of rods, reels, bait, and other fishing essentials from the best companies such as Duckett, Lew's, Strike King, and Zoom. The

knowledgeable and friendly staff will help you pick out the perfect gear.

There are even great deals on things like laundry detergent and cleaning supplies.

Not sure what deals are happening? Check their Facebook page to see what items are jumping on – and flying off – the shelves each day.

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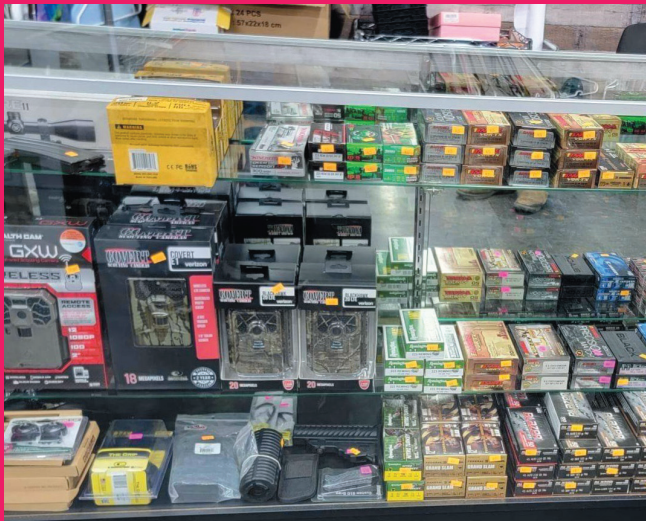


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# Integrative Animal Solutions (IAS)

## Empowering you to help your pets thrive

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Integrative Animal Solutions is Sparta's newest pet-care facility, but, rather than provide traditional veterinary services, IAS focuses on helping pet owners find the best ways to keep their fur-family healthy and happy.

From healthy eating to daily supplements to therapeutic services, the staff at IAS is taking 20-plus years of experience in the veterinary industry and bringing their knowledge to the pet owners in the Upper Cumberland.

"At IAS, our goal is not to take the place of veterinary advice, and we do not diagnose or treat your animals, but we can empower you to help your pet overcome illness and

injury more quickly and efficiently," Tracy Farley, the shop's owner, said. "We can also help you prevent disease and illness with educational information, natural diet, and herbs rather than chemicals and pharmaceuticals."

IAS combines natural diets and homeopathics with science-based methods of treatment to help owners provide a level of care and quality of life for their pets.

"There are many ways to feed a species appropriate (raw or homemade) diet to pets. It's the very first step in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, but it doesn't have to be messy, difficult, or expensive," Farley said.

She stated that most pet parents are concerned with both the difficulty and the cost of feeding pets raw foods,





IAS offers micro-bubble baths and chiropractic services to pets among several other services.

but that it is, in fact, quite economical to purchase raw foods and provide a healthy diet for domesticated pets.

"Information is the key to feeling empowered to help your pet thrive," she said. "You can schedule a consultation with us so we can take the fear out of getting your dog or cat started on a healthier diet."

In addition to raw meats, which IAS offers a variety of – all at wholesale prices, Farley said that it's important to consider vegetables in a diet for dogs.

"Dogs cannot break down raw vegetable matter, so we have ground and dehydrated veggies for you to choose from," she said, and also discussed the price of feeding a dog using the methods offered through IAS. "The cost of to feed a 50-pound dog, on average, can be lower than \$3.50 per day. This is higher than some of your big box store foods, but savings will show in the health of the pet."

IAS also offers a large apothecary with many hard to find items that can help maintain your pet's health. The showroom is stocked with items that have been selected based on years of researching the best and most cost effective supplements that add to the health and well-being of a pet.

Since integrative refers to combining "allopathic and complementary therapies," IAS doesn't just offer pet food; they also offer a variety of therapies - both for at-home use and in-store options.

"We have therapeutic items – such as cold laser and ozone therapy – for rent," Farley explained, saying that both items could be used at home, and then listed the benefits of some of the items for rent or sale through IAS.

Pets with arthritis, wounds and soft tissue injuries are just a few who can benefit from laser therapy. We have a super pulsed, safe, nonburning laser that you can rent to use in your home every day

Ozone therapy is a modality that uses activated oxygen (ozone) to assist with many chronic and acute diseases, especially cancer. It increases oxygen levels and utilization and it activates the immune system. It can be introduced by various means. We supply the owner with the tools and information to utilize the ozone themselves.

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In addition, IAS offers the opportunity for pet owners to consult with a visiting holistic veterinarian, schedule appointments with a chiropractor, and use the store's micro-bubble bath station.

While IAS is neither a veterinary clinic nor a traditional pet-supply store, they are quickly becoming an essential stop for pet owners in the area. Whether looking to maintain the health of a pet, help aid in the recovery from an illness, or simply to enhance the quality of living for those fur-family members, Farley and the staff at IAS are happy to offer advice, share knowledge, or simply enjoy visiting with White County's pets.



## Liberty Oak Oasis

### A place for personal peace and growth

BY RACHEL AUBERGER

Mark Johnson, a U.S. military veteran, and his wife, Vicki, a nurse, have embarked on an endeavor to create a facility that will support ministries that focus on mental health as well as small groups and individuals looking for personal peace, growth, and development.

Liberty Oak Oasis, located on Duck Pond Road, in Sparta, is scheduled to be open mid-June and will provide a space for both single-day as well as weekend retreats.

"Whatever the needs of the organization are, we will have the flexibility to take care of those needs," Mark said. "We want to grow to the point of hosting small business retreats, music writing retreats, ministry staff retreats, golf retreats, and other non-profits that will primarily deal with veterans that struggle with mental health issues."

Liberty Oak Oasis boasts a three-acre pond the Johnsons are planning to develop to create entertainment opportunities for people visiting the property as well as the local

community.

"We are looking to align with a non-profit, Cross Trail Outfitters, that is a father/son/daughter hunting and fishing ministry," Mark said. "We also plan on hosting fishing tournaments and are adding a floating dock to the ponds so that we can have kayaks and canoes to be used by guests as well as offer a location for local photographers to use for photo shoots."

While Liberty Oak Oasis hasn't booked its first visitors (although interested parties can check them out at [LibertyOakOasis.com](http://LibertyOakOasis.com), YouTube, Facebook, and even Airbnb), Johnson already has plans to bring more to the area.

"Growing at this point would require us to get another property to develop, and that could very well happen," he said and added that Liberty Oak Oasis is making plans to import a specialty glamping product from the United Kingdom – LandPods.

"We will have five examples of LandPods at Liberty Oak

Oasis by the middle of summer,” Mark said. “We are very excited to have Sparta the location to introduce them for the first time anywhere in the US.”

Johnson said he and his wife are excited to become members of the White County community, and they feel this is the perfect place to make their forever home.

“The ease in getting to our property – in particular from Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga – played a large role in us choosing Sparta, and our property being so close to Center Hill Lake, Rock Island State Park, and Burgess Falls was a huge plus as well,” Mark said, but was quick to add that location wasn’t the only thing that drew him and his wife to Sparta. “It seems that the entire area knows its potential and wants to strive to grow smartly and allow people to come to the area to take in all it has to offer.”

Johnson said plans to continue that growth and hospitality mindset that attracted him to the White County community.

“We will participate in things that support those in the community that need a helping hand,” Johnson said, expressing his desire to be a community-first minded business. “We are also excited in seeking ways to be ambassadors and cheerleaders to promote more people coming to enjoy the Upper Cumberland and all that this great area has to offer.”



Liberty Oaks Oasis will have five LandPods for folks to enjoy this summer.





## Greene Tree Recycling

### A way to safely recycle used tires

**BY RACHEL AUBERGER**

Soon, the Upper Cumberland will have a new way to get rid of those tires that pile up in fields, driveways, and lots – and it will be a lot cleaner than sending them to the landfill or throwing them in sinkholes.

Greene Tree Recycling is a locally owned business that will offer customers a way to safely recycle their used tires, which the White County company will repurpose into new materials, including rubber mulch and playground surfaces.

“We are proud to offer tire recycling services to help protect the environment and reduce waste in our community,” Danny Randolph, one of the local owners, said. “We pride ourselves in both our customer service and our ability to provide cost saving to our communities through our services.”

Greene Tree Recycling is accepting most tire sizes up to five and half feet in diameter. This means that the new service will

be able to accept not only car and light truck tires but also those commonly used by tractor-trailers as well as agricultural tires.

“We are in the start-up stage and not completely functional yet,” Randolph said, explaining the logistics of getting all of the pieces of the business fully functioning are still being worked through as shipping times can be difficult in today’s economy. “Waiting on equipment to arrive takes time, but we are currently accepting tires.”

Randolph said they are accepting requests from customers looking for information about establishing a partnership with Greene Tree Recycling as well as fielding requests for more information about pricing and services that the company is offering.

“Our goal is to partner with the community to help reduce waste in our landfills and contribute to a more sustainable future for the Upper Cumberland,” Randolph said.



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Sunday Worship - 11:00 am

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Sunday Worship at 11 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday 7 p.m.

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**657-5375**



**YOUR  
Community  
CHURCHES**

The Expositor's  
2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

Landscape/Nature



1st Place  
Ross Cardwell



2nd Place  
David Cantrell



3rd Place  
Shannon Fisher

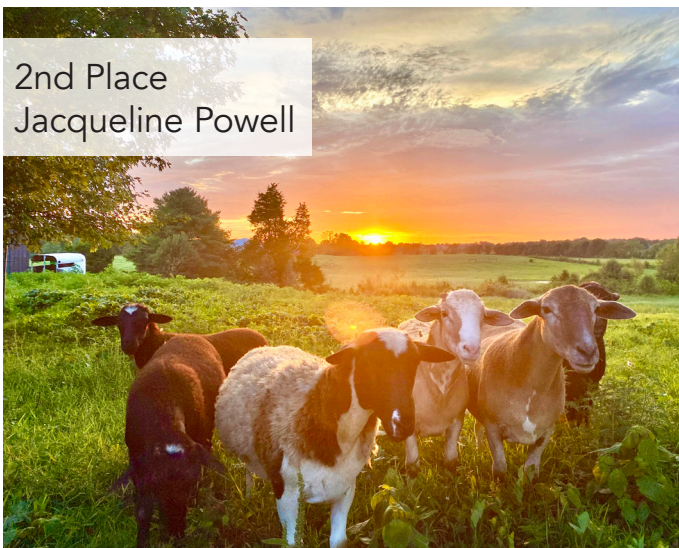


The Expositor's  
2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

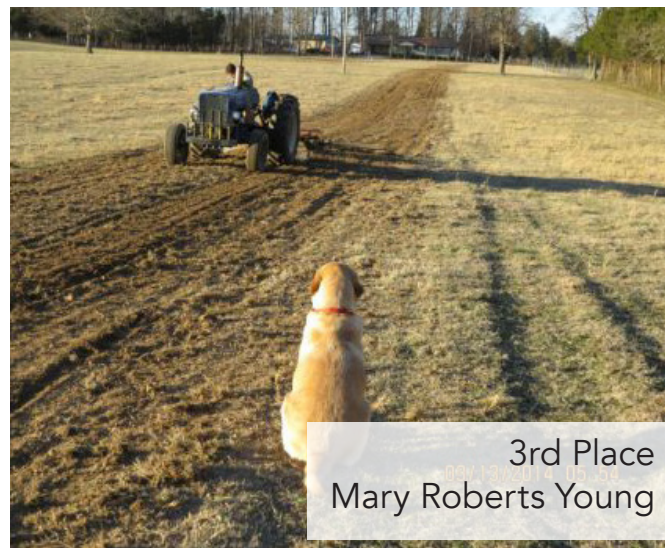
Farm Life



1st Place  
David Cantrell



2nd Place  
Jacqueline Powell



3rd Place  
Mary Roberts Young

The Expositor's  
2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

Holidays/Seasons



1st Place  
Ross Cardwell



2nd Place  
Jacqueline Powell

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2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

Children



1st Place  
David Cantrell



2nd Place  
Danielle Burrier



3rd Place  
Jacqueline Powell

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2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

Sports



1st Place  
Ross Cardwell



2nd Place  
Jacqueline Powell



3rd Place  
Jacqueline Powell

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2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

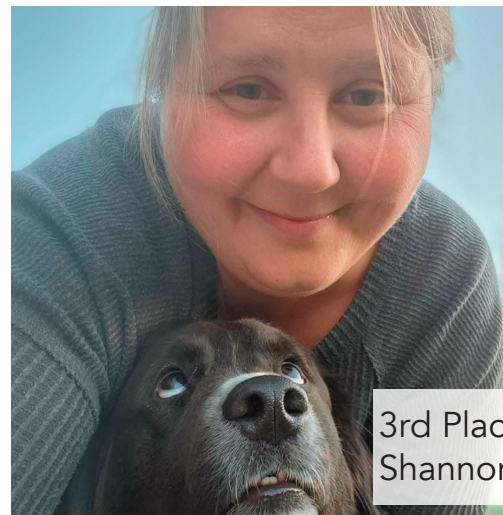
Pets



1st Place  
Mary Roberts Young



2nd Place  
Martha Grissom



3rd Place  
Shannon Fisher

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# 2023 **PHOTOGRAPHY** CONTEST

Hometown Pride

1st Place  
David Cantrell



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- Moonlight through Medical School
  - Be a Contract Medic
    - Offshore Medic
    - Industrial Medic
- Work for a Medical Equipment Co
  - Be a Physician's Assistant
  - Skill-up as a Policeman
  - Advance as a Fireman
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 Proverbs 14:34

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**Middle:** Crystal Wilcoxson, J D Stafford, Michael Phillips and Tyler Selby.  
**Back:** Trent Selby, Andrew Elmore, Billy Jeffries, Dustin Rice, Dylan Brown and Austin Allen.  
**Not Pictured:** Cayce Cope.

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