New members elected to KCS board

BY CHLOE McCONNELL

Jim Welsh and Julie Byers were elected earlier this year to serve a four-year term on Kingsport’s Board of Education. They are both first-time members and join returning members Carrie Upshaw, Eric Hyche and Todd Golden on the board.

The Kingsport Board of Education makes many decisions that affect the school system and John Sevier Middle School, specifically.

“I have 3 kids; two at Dobyns-Bennett and one at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville,” Byers said. “I am an Ohio State University alumnus with a bachelor’s in chemistry and a minor in English. My husband of 20 years works at Eastman Chemical.”

Since she has kids in the school system, Byers is personally interested in the choices the Board of Education makes.

Jim Welsh was a teacher for 30 years, so he has a good understanding of students and how schools operate. He also understands what students need to have the best learning environment.

“I taught U.S. History at Robinson Middle,” he said. “I was the head of the 8th grade Washington trip for about 20 years. I was thinking about being a lawyer, but I had always wanted to teach.”

Byers does not have a background as a teacher, but has been deeply involved with her children’s education.

“I have been a mentor to elementary school kids to help with reading and math and social skills,” she said. “I do science demonstrations in classrooms, career fairs and for STEM nights.”

The process of campaigning for the school Board pushed both Welsh and Byers out of their comfort zones.

“I have always been in the business of promoting others, not me,” Welsh said. That was difficult. That was one of the reasons why I never really pursued politics, because you have to want to do that. You have to want to promote yourself.”

Byers had been asked for several years to run, but the timing was never right, until now.

Student hairstyles cause controversies across nation

BY AUBREE PUCKETT

In New Jersey, a referee forced a high school wrestler to cut his dreadlocks before he could participate in a match. In Texas, a 14-year-old named Michael Scott had to cut his long hair before he could go to school. These cases are part of a national trend: students’ hair choices are increasingly criticized in schools around the nation.

Paige Baker is an 8th grade student. Like many middle school students, she is unsure if there are any specific hair rules at her school.

“I don’t know of any haircut or hair color rules,” she said.

John Mallick, an 8th grade teacher, agrees.

“I have not seen any specific rules,” he said.

In the 2016 Kingsport City Schools Student Handbook, there is only mention of hair. “No unnatural hair color—i.e. pink, orange, purple, etc.—is permitted,” the handbook states.

The current handbook, however, does not specifically mention hair at all. Instead, it states that a disturbing appearance is unacceptable, although it mostly focuses on clothes.

“If a student’s dress or appearance is such that it constitutes a threat to the health or safety of others, disrupts the attention of other students or staff from their work, or otherwise violates this dress code, the principal or designee may require the student to change his appearance and/or be sent home according to the handbook,” it states.

See HAIR, page 4

First African American Miss Tennessee visits Sevier

BY ASAH BELL

A teacher from Nashville, Brianna Mason, has become the first African American “Miss Tennessee.” While preparing for her time in the “Miss America” pageant, she visited Sevier Middle School to speak with students about her journey.

Mason was born in Nashville. She attended the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and became a teacher. She now teaches first grade in Murfreesboro, where she lives with her cat, named Knight.

“I grew up in Nashville, the big city,” she said.

Mason had a good childhood; her mom kept her busy.

“I did theater at my school, I acted in musicals and plays,” she said. “I just did a lot of activities, a lot of extracurricular activities. I was the oldest of five, so we were always very busy when I was a kid.”

When she went to college, she was inspired to become a teacher. She has a long history of teaching in her family, including her grandmother, who was a teacher.

“My father was a teacher and is now a principal, and so education has always been in my blood,” Mason said. “I always loved kids, and one day I came to the realization: what better way to work with kids than to teach them?”

Mason did her first pageant when she was a freshman in college and she fell in love with it. “I did the ‘Ms. and Ms. Freshman Pageant’ at UT and I just thought it was a lot of fun,” she said.

See Tennesseee, page 4

A TENNESSEE PIONEER: Brianna Mason, the first African American Miss Tennessee pageant winner, addresses a group of middle school students.
The death penalty is doing more harm than good

The death penalty has been around for thousands of years, but it is not the most effective way to deliver justice. Today, the justice system is different and it is time to reconsider Tennessee’s support of the death penalty.

The death penalty costs countless dollars. According to “Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty,” taxpayers pay $253 million more for the death penalty than they would have for life in prison without parole. This means that the taxes the people of Tennessee paid went to maintain criminals instead of helping society and helping to improve the justice criminal system.

The death penalty is also often unfair. Studies have found that since 1980, no person condemned to death row could afford their own lawyer. This means that the person could only provide their own defense or use a court-appointed attorney while going up against a trained prosecutor. People with the money to hire a better lawyer might have received a lesser punishment, even if they committed the same crime.

Another way the current system is unfair is that it is racially biased. People of color have a higher chance of being sentenced to death compared to white people. According to the Tennessee Department of Corrections, the state of Tennessee has executed 86 African Americans and only 50 whites. This means that people of color could have been executed while others might be sentenced to a lesser punishment just because of how that person looked.

The death penalty has gone through many changes over the years, including firing squad, hanging, electrocution and now lethal injection. These injections, however, are not humane way to execute criminals. According to the “Tennessee,” lethal injections have caused victims to endure pain and a sense of drowning.

“This is essentially torturing the criminal, and it is against the United Amendment of the Constitution. It states that cruel punishments are unlawful. It is also morally wrong, plain and simple.”

Mental illness is another reason why the death penalty should be reformed. According to “Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty,” mental illness can directly influence someone's actions and cause people to commit a crime, as well as affect how reliable their statements are. This means that a convicted person might literally have not been able to keep themselves from committing the crime. Instead of just executing them, it would be better to help someone with mental illnesses.

Finally, sometimes the jury can get it wrong. One hundred and sixty four people on death row across the United States have been released due to new evidence proving their innocence. This proves that the death penalty might not be the best solution, because it also executes innocent people who didn’t actually commit a crime.

Essentially, the Tennessee death penalty system should be reformed. Not only are innocent people executed, hundreds of thousands of dollars are wasted on these executions. Our society needs to be better than that. The government should not kill people in order to avenge murder. It is time for Tennessee to change its method of justice.

Commentary

Tennessee needs to get rid of prior review

In 2005, Oak Ridge High School principal Becky Ervin was found dead outside the school’s student newspaper before they could be handed out to students. According to the Student Press Law Center, she was not happy about several articles, including one about body art and piercings.

So far, this has been the most extreme example in Tennessee of a major problem across the state with prior review and prior restraint.

According to the Journalism Education Association, prior review is when anyone not on a publication's staff requires that they be allowed to read, view or approve student material before publication. Prior restraint is when a school principal, a member of the school board, or superintendent makes changes or removes content.

Prior review needs to be banned from Tennessee. Students cannot become well-informed and educated citizens without their First Amendment rights. Many states have already passed laws protecting student journalists, but Tennessee is not one of them.

Schools and colleges all around the state are legally student newspapers. They provide students with a chance to express themselves, to explore problems and suggest solutions. These newspapers are an important part of any student’s First Amendment rights.

Often, students will call attention to problems that adults ignore or never even noticed. One example is a group of high school journalists who investigated a new principal’s credentials and found that she had lied on her resume. Days later, she resigned from her job as principal of Pimlico High School in Kansas. If prior review had been enforced, no one would ever have known that the principal was不合格.

President Trump’s special envoy to Ukraine resigned, a student newspaper reported the story. The story was widely shared on the president’s dealings with Ukraine, but clearly, students can and should be able to explore big, important stories.

There is even an interesting case from Sevier. Several years ago, the “Scrabe” called attention to the fact that many bathroom stalls were broken. Thanks to the article, the KCS maintenance department became aware of this problem and installed new locks.

When principals use prior review, students lose the opportunity to develop skills they need, including the ability to recognize real journalism and fake news. Students should not have to choose the content of their newspapers to make their principal happy.

According to the Journalism Education Association, students who are in charge of their own publication have to their audience’s right to know and people’s right to privacy. They have to judge sources and learn to be fair and accurate. When they make mistakes, they have to admit to them and deal with the consequences. They learn important lessons about responsibility.

There is a campaign called “New Voices” that is trying to get state laws passed that protect student journalists from prior review and prior restraint. There are “New Voices” laws in 18 states. Tennessee needs to get rid of prior review from the school board and all school newspapers.

Commentary

Tennessee needs to get rid of prior review

BY KYLIE MOORE

The Sequoyah Scrube is published as part of an academic year by the students in the Sequoyah Journalism program at Sequoyah Middle in Kingsport, Tennessee. Content is determined by the staff and does not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of John Sevier Middle school’s faculty, administration or advisor/staff body. The editors reserve the right to exercise their exercise of press free speech.”

Signed editorials and columns reflect the views of the writer. Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of the editorial board.

Letters to the editor and guest columns are encouraged and must be signed. The editors reserve to review the content, advertising and all submissions and reserves the right to edit and refuse publication. Letters can include length, clarity, believability, objectivity, material disruption to the educational process or violation of copyright laws. Sequoyah does not allow comments from sequoyahscrube@td2tk.com.

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January 2020

Well, you killed someone, so now what, wrong don’t make a right.

Remember, students, thos es wrong don’t make a right.

Scirbe Cartoon/ANNA HARRINGTON
POINT/COUNTERPOINT
SHOULD MUSIC BE ALLOWED IN CLASS?

Teachers should be more open to letting students listen to music in class

YES  Listening to music is a desired activity in class. It helps some students study and improves their focus. Many teachers dislike this activity and will not allow students to listen to music in their classes. Music, however, can be helpful in many ways.

According to neuroscientists.com, students who listen to music while studying can distinguish memory information from noise. Music can also help students with learning, language and memory.

So, is it not possible that students may find it more effective to study and do independent work while listening to music? Listening to music can also help motivate a student to work in class and bring positivity to their state of mind. Music can put a student in a brighter mood.

Some teachers believe that only certain genres of music could affect the way a student learns in a positive way, such as classical music. That is wrong. All genres of music are helpful and have a positive effect on the way students work.

According to PBS, music stimulates parts of the brain. That is why music can help bring back memories to people who have Alzheimer’s disease, dementia or other memory-loss illnesses.

So, while students are listening to music in class, the lyrics and melodies can enhance the memory of what students are studying.

Listening to music in class also helps students get work done quicker and helps them concentrate more than talking to classmates. Listening to music creates a more peaceful environment in classrooms and creates a more studious solitude for students.

According to a Colorado State University, music can even help people control their emotions. Students who don’t “feel” like learning can change their minds thanks to music.

The right song or type of music can create more attention and focus and draw students away from boredom. Music creates more positivity, motivation and energy for students to work.

Music can also help with stress. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, music can reduce stress for people with health problems or ordinarily healthy people.

Research proves that soothing music can decrease blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety levels. Since school can be very stressful, students need music to help relieve this stress.

Considering these facts, teachers should be more open to letting students listen to music in their classes. Music has clear health and learning benefits. It is not a distraction, it is a benefit.

BY SOPHIE WILLIAMS

Focusing on classwork is too difficult while listening to music in class

NO  Students come to school to learn and prepare to get a good job. In order to get a good job, students need to get good grades, and to get good grades, they need to listen and learn at school.

Music, however, can make it more difficult to study. Although students are always looking for an excuse to listen to music at school, it is a bad idea.

People singing in your ear is a lot like reading a book while somebody is trying to talk to you. You can’t focus on your work. It is true that some music can help calm students down and relax them. In middle school, however, students will take advantage of the privilege and avoid learning.

Another problem in middle school is that students often try to listen to inappropriate music. Inappropriate lyrics can distract students from what they need to do to be successful in school.

Some students believe that music helps them study and learn. New research from the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff, however, states that listening to music can damage your performance on certain study tasks.

A lot of people like music and like to listen to their favorite songs while they work or drive in a car. People who listen to their favorite songs sometimes can get carried away and sing or hum the lyrics. This is a big problem in class, where students don’t just focus on the lyrics of the songs instead of the work, but can also become a distraction for other students’ learning.

Also, some students like to tap their foot or tap the desk or make other sounds while listening to music. Some try to make sounds to follow the beat with their hands, feet or mouth. This is also a serious distraction to others around them.

Music in class can be a huge distraction for other students. According to a small study from Taiwan, 133 students performed reading comprehension tasks while listening to either light classical music, hip hop, or no music at all. Students who did not listen to music while reading had the highest scores.

Focusing on classwork is hard to do while listening to music. Music can make students too comfortable and done off. Listening to music while working isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but it is a distraction for students who are trying to learn.

Music with lyrics is more distracting than lyrics without music, according to studies. Loud music is an even bigger distraction. Listening to loud music with lyrics makes it almost impossible to learn anything.

Based on research, it is best to try to focus without listening to music in class in order to grow students’ learning ability.

BY SAMAYAH WOLFE

HEARD IN THE HALLWAY

Should students be allowed to listen to music in class?

Damiyan Menya 6th Grade
“Okay kids should be allowed, because it helps not get distracted by other things going on in the room.”

Cooper Barnett 7th Grade
“Yes, kids should be allowed, because it helps not get distracted by other things going on in the room.”

Taylor Huffman 8th Grade
“Yes. With some kids, it helps them focus.”

Abbie Kilgore Teacher
“Yes, because it helps some people focus better and concentrate on their work.”

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CORRECTIONS

Accuracy is one of the most important fundamental principles of journalism. “The Squawh Scribe” strives to correct all factual errors in a timely manner.

If you notice any inaccuracies in this or a past issue, please contact the editor-in-chief at squawh-scribe@k12k.com.

COMPILED BY KATLYN BURRELL
"TENNESSEE: pageant winner prepares for Miss America contest"

continued from page 1

I did some research and found the Miss Tennessee organization, and I found out how I could be a part of it and found out how I could get on that stage and compete for the title of Miss Tennessee."

Her favorite things about pageants are all the skills she has developed through competing.

"There are a lot of opportunities involved with winning titles," she said. "I have a lot to work with the judges about why you are the best person to win. So, those skills I've gained from training for interviews have helped me with every job I've ever interviewed for."

She did her "Miss Tennessee" pageant at the same place she had graduated from college. This year, the Miss Tennessee pageant was in Murfreesboro, she said. "I was crowned at Thompson Boling Arena, the same place where I graduated from college. That was pretty cool."

Mason had to compete with 26 other contestants.

"It was an interview portion, and then there's an onstage interview, a talent portion, and evening wear portion," she said. "You have to wear a gown and walk up to a microphone and give a social impact statement. It's basically when you are passionate about. You have at least 10 seconds to do a quick commercial about what you stand for and why."

The moment Mason won was the time of her life.

"I don't remember a lot of it because it was such a whirlwind," she said. "I do remember crying my eyelashes off. It was amazing to finally achieve a goal! I've worked so hard for it!"

Becoming the first African American Miss Tennessee was extremely special to Mason.

"Especially looking at the history of 'Miss Tennessee,' there are girls who have never seen themselves represented in this role, it's very important to me," she said. "I take it as a huge responsibility."

She has a clear message for African American girls.

"You can do anything you set your mind to, even if you don't see yourself represented in your goal, whether that is a title you want to get or a job you want to be on or a job you want," she said. "If you don't see yourself represented, that's okay. You can make your own history."

She took one year off from competing to be Miss Tennessee. She was working events, such as community events. She has spoken at a church. She also participates in a lot of fundraising events and other events that raise awareness for community service.

"I'm the Tennessee Department of Education, I serve as our spokesperson for literacy and the 'Whole Child initiative,'" Mason said. "I also work very closely with a lot of organizations that do something to help with autism. My social impact initiative is autism awareness, I work closely, for example, with 'Autism Tennessee' in Nashville."

The big day of her competition in the Miss America pageant is just around the corner, and Mason is preparing for the competition.

"I'm practicing my talent, I play piano and I practice as often as I can," she said. "I also go over interview questions. That's my main goal of the competition; the girls showcasing their talents, but also how well-spoken they can be on less of different issues."

Want to become a pageant star? Mason knows how to get started.

"Definitely find a mentor, find someone who has been around the system or who has done it before," she said. "It took awhile for me to find that for myself. You can't do it on your own. If you have a title you have set your mind on, you can do it. You just have to work hard. Don't be afraid of not winning. You can always learn from each time you don't win."

She also has some advice for middle school students.

"Never give up, no matter the circumstances," she said.

"HAIR: KCS has no specific rules about student hairstyles"

continued from page 1

Teachers generally feel that anything done in the classroom from learning is a bad thing. Kristin Duan is a 6th grade Language Arts teacher and assistant principal. She explained.

"Haircuts and color should not be distracting to learning," she said. "Some styles that are outrageous can be distracting. If it is so over the top that other students start and become off-task, it is too much. Also, it causes a student to keep messing with their hair, it is distracting."

Kyleigh Hardee, a 7th grade student, disagrees.

"No one really cares," Hardee said. According to Hardee, students' haircuts at Sever Middle "are cool and unique."

Baker feels that haircuts really do not create much of a distraction at school.

"If a person in front of you in class has tall hair, it could be distracting but as long as they just look over and move it not to be a problem," she said.

Malick has seen no distracting hairstyles. Duncan agrees.

"I've never seen a distracting haircut, but I have had students who are consumed with touching or combing their hair," she said. Although hair policies seem

Group protests KCS partnership with local church

A group from Wisconsin called the "Freedom from Religion Foundation" has claimed that the Christian Fellowship Church's mentoring program at Adams Elementary School is unconstitutional. The group reports that the program is "being warned" Kingston City Schools that the partnership with the Public Library violates the separation of church and state. According to the school system, this is a situation where religion is being brought into the school. Kingston Superintendent Jeff Moonhouse has stated that the program is about "having more hands grabbing an ear" to help students move forward.

WORKING ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN.

Scribe photo/SHARLEIGH HONAKER

Baker agrees. "If it is just wrong to do because that's just a hair style," she said. "I don't see how that could be inappropriate."

According to the Washington Post, some states have started passing laws to stop discrimination against African American hairstyles in the workplace and in public schools. These are called CROWN Acts, which stands for "Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair."

New York and California both have CROWN Acts on the books.

"I think the school can tell you on restrictions on some things that could be important, but not about hair," Baker said.

She does not believe these kind of incidents could happen at Sever Middle.

"They let students have their hair as they want," she said.

In the end, there is a fine line between helping students learn and unfairly restricting their rights.

"Schools have a right to set an expectation that ensures all students to have the opportunity to get an education free from discrimination," Duncan said. "However, I don't feel that this should include the school's opinion on styles."
Board: Byers and Welsch have big plans for the future of KCS

continued from page 1

I did not want to run when my kids were younger, since I wanted to be a part of their lives and their visited schools rather than people viewing me as a school board member," she said. "With my kids in high school now, I decided this was an opportune time.

Campaigning was fun for Byers as she loved the applause of spending thousands of dollars. "I would rather put the dollars on those items because I had to," she said. "I did take out billboard ads on the bill billboard. I also purchased some yard signs and participated in every forum.

For Welsch, the key to success was getting someone knowledgeable involved.

"One of my former students is a marketing expert, her mother owned a communications firm," he said. "I know a lot about communications, but it is how a physician or a lawyer should never be their own physician or lawyer.

The school board is the key to the superintendent. It approves policies that are either more or less. You are responsible for approving the school calendar. "We approve the budget and any major changes," Byers said. "The board is the key to the school system." Welsch said. "It is not just the meetings. "If you are not there, the board is divided amongst the members. We are the last resort if a parent has an issue and you are the last埵 of the chain of command.

Making these decisions involves many meetings. "It is not just the meetings. "I am not comfortable with "we are good enough", since I believe we have challenges ahead and we can be even better," Byers said. "I want us to continue to improve our schools and continue to work on the state's best.

Welsch believes that there are still big challenges ahead. "The biggest challenge that public schools face is that there is a rather concerted effort to demonize public schools," he said. "That we are somewhat turning you into socialists or robbers.

Byers and Welsch also have some specific changes they would like to see happen. "I want students who have brought their own devices to be able to have the same Wi-Fi speed as those students who have school issued computers," Byers said. "Those that have personal devices are not able to do some tests or even other activities due to the Wi-Fi speed being too slow.

Welsch would like to get middle and high schools in Kingston to start later in the day. "Studies show that post-graduate students do better if school starts later in the day," he said. "So, let our elementary school schedule, time wise, probably the middle school and high school schedule ought to be. Instead of you all starting first, it should be them starting first.

In the end, the new board members need to lose sight of what is most important: student learning.

"To me, the most important thing about education is that we teach children to keep learning," Welsch said. "If you learn how to learn, you can learn anything. If you can demonstrate to people that you can learn anything, you can do anything."
Robinson Middle tests "Harry Potter" inspired house system

BY ADYN SMITH

In the "Harry Potter" stories, the school of Hogwarts is divided into houses. Students are sorted into these houses based on their traits and their own wishes. In the House Cup challenge, house points are awarded to each for the most points at the end of the year. Now, a school in Kingsport has created a similar system.

As of this school year, Ross N. Robinson Middle School has created a house system. The goal is to improve the school's atmosphere by giving points for good behavior, kind deeds and being a good student.

The Robinson houses are Riveron, Altruismo, Amistad and Isibindi. They were inspired by the Ron Clark Academy. This academy is a private middle school in Atlanta that uses its own type of house system to motivate students.

Cameron Ruck is a math teacher at Robinson Middle and part of the House of Amistad.

"Students are randomly sorted throughout the houses and students can earn points by being nice and doing hard work, but these are not always rewarded because this is what we want them to do," he said. "Robinson put this in place to encourage our students to be generally good people and to work hard in their classes."

Points are awarded to the four different houses as rewards and it is very much a competition. Students have to work together.

"Points are given by doing things that are expected of you and they can't be taken away," Evie Bennett, a 7th grade student at Robinson Middle, said. "I believe that other schools should have it, but not the high school, because there are too many people."-

The house system is very popular with students because it opens them up to meet a lot of new people that are in other grades. It also poses a challenge for them because they get points for being a generally good student.

"I like being grouped into a house because you get to meet other students," Gracie Steen, a 6th grade student, said. "We have a set of rules about it and they are called the RNR 44."

There is no reward for being in the lead other than recognition.

"The goal is to have the points themselves be the reward, so there is no need to pay for a party or reward for 50 students," Ruck said. "We have seen success, but it requires a lot of planning if another school would want to do something similar."

Cooper Height, an 8th grade student at Sevier Middle, does not think this system is a good idea.

"Some people, including me, don't like "Harry Potter," he said. "I feel that it is making your whole school year into one reference that some don't even enjoy. If there is a good prize for winning, like something you can't buy, people will be motivated to win that prize, but if it's something that is easily accessible, or people don't like it, they won't be as motivated to get the points."

Kiera Walsh, a 7th grade student, disagrees. She thinks a similar system could work at Sevier Middle.

"Some RNR teachers are already doing something like it, so it wouldn't be too bad," she said. "If there is a prize, students will be motivated because they could get something good out of it."

Since it doesn't go by grade level, it means that if one teacher stops, it won't ruin the experience. Hollywood's head principal, is very supportive of Robinson's experiment.

"It is RNR doing anything that they feel is best for their school," Flora said. "RNR has its own traditions, including ISS and OSS, so as a staff, they chose a house system to help fix it."-

However, Flora does not necessarily believe the same system should be used at her school.

"Sevier has been in half, that is from help with our "Way of the Warrior" action team, which puts systems in place to support positive student behavior," she said.

Norie-Anne Young, an 8th grade Language Arts teacher at Sevier, would like to see their school try a house system.

"I think it is a neat idea to promote unity and a positive school culture," she said. "A prize system could help motivate students depending on the type of prize. I believe that Sevier already has a positive culture, but it could help with behavior with our students."

Ruck believes that dividing students into houses has already had a positive impact.

"In our first rally, we saw some students who normally stick to the back of crowds become leaders and be cheered on by their peers," he said. "Those kinds of interactions don't always happen, and the students were extremely excited to get to have friends to cheer them on for once."

New coach takes over girls varsity basketball team

BY JAYLA CHAMBERS

The basketball team is in the midst of the season, and the girls varsity basketball team is off to a 9-3 start. Head coach Stephen Williams said he is excited for the upcoming year of the team.

The basketball team is just one of the many athletic teams at the school, which include football, volleyball, soccer, basketball and more.

Building a Stronger Team.

Stephen Williams, center, oversees girls basketball team tryouts. Williams took over coaching the varsity team this school year.

BY JAYLA CHAMBERS

The basketball team is in the midst of the season, and the girls varsity basketball team is off to a 9-3 start. Head coach Stephen Williams said he is excited for the upcoming year of the team.

The basketball team is just one of the many athletic teams at the school, which include football, volleyball, soccer, basketball and more.

Communication is a huge part of building a strong team.

"We split time each practice working with position players and JV and Varsity," Williams said. "We run the same plays and our communication is great. That is the key to building successful programs."

His hope for the basketball team this year is for the ladies to continually grow and get better each day.

"My hope is that they work for each other and are unselfish in everything they do," he said. "If all those things fall into place, we will win games. We have started strong, I hope we can keep that up."

As a coach, Williams likes to pay attention to details.

"I feel like that is the only way players get better," he said. "We teach fundamentals mostly in practice and spend very little time scrimmaging. We try to break as many things as possible and work on that."

Williams has some advice for girls who want to join his team in the future.

"Have a good attitude and remember that school comes first," he said. "You must succeed in the classroom to play sports. Also, be unselfish and work for each other. Practice throughout the year also lets me know what kind of dedication you have to the sport."
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Be part of the extraordinary difference.
A divided nation continues to grapple

BY MICHAEL FANNING

Michael McCormick was sentenced to death for murder in Chattanooga in 1985. He was convicted due to a strand of hair found at the crime scene. After twenty years awaiting his execution, however, the DNA of the hair turned out to belong to another person. In 2018 alone, 25 people have been executed in the United States. Since the 1970s, over 1600 people have been executed across the country.

Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have outlawed the death penalty. Instead of decreasing the number of executions, Tennessee has recently decided to increase the number. There are over 550 inmates currently waiting for their execution at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution.

The death penalty has recently become a major controversy in Tennessee and the nation because of the drugs used in lethal injections. Sometimes now believe that these drugs cause pain and suffering.

Robert Reburn is the Public Information Officer for the Tennessee Department of Correction. Reburn has been with the TDOC for 12 years. He attended Northeast State Technical Community College, where he earned his Associate’s degree in Mass Communications and completed his Bachelor’s degree in Broadcast Journalism at East Tennessee State University.

“We talk to prisoners about their crimes. We show them pictures of their victims,” Reburn said. “We do not play any role in the decision to pursue capital punishment during the trial process, nor do we play any role in the sentencing.”

Offenders on Tennessee’s death row, depending on their rank, can get special privileges from the guards. Every offender starts at level C, but after a year and a half, they can move up and get more privileges. Offenders are given three meals every weekday, with two meals on holidays. They are woken at 5:30 am and are in their cells at 9:00 pm.

Still, death row can be a tough place for inmates. Conditions in prison are sometimes not up to par and medical care has been reported to be inadequate in several prisons nationally.

Jonathan Russell, a 7th grade student, is for the death penalty. “I think that a person will only be sentenced to death if they have committed horrific crimes and are a danger to other inmates,” Russell said.

Eric Thomas, another 7th grade student, agreed. “If they commit murder or manslaughter, then the electric chair or any form of execution is reasonable,” he said.

Not everybody believes the death penalty is the best way to punish criminals.

“I personally think that in some cases it is necessary, but we overuse it,” Loraine Carter, a 6th grade student, said.

Katrina Muick, a 7th grade science teacher, also disagrees with the death penalty. “I do believe the victims’ opinions should determine its use,” Muick said. “I wouldn’t want it to happen for a crime against me, even murder.”

Those who are for the death penalty feel that certain crimes should be punishable by death. “Murder, acts against your country or military should be punished by death,” Russell said. “Terrorism and child abuse, too.”

Mercy Adekukan, a 7th grade student, agrees. “Killing should be punished with the death penalty,” Adekukan said. “Only los of it, though.”

PRO DEATH PENALTY: A large percentage of students surveyed support the death penalty, despite the fact that they also believe innocent people have been sentenced to death.

SOUND OFF

“I disagree, because I feel that life in prison without parole is worse than a lethal injection.”

John Mallick

“No, it is too harsh. What they do is just bad.”

Taylor Gordon

“No, there is no reason to kill someone.”

Akedah Osborne

“Yes, because they deserve it. What goes around comes around.”

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with the morality of the death penalty

Stacy Rector, a revered figure in Nashville, is against the death penalty. She is part of an organization called “Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.” Rector attended Rhodes College in Memphis and Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. She graduated with a Master of Divinity degree.

"During my time in both college and seminary, I became more aware of the connections between poverty, race and the criminal justice system, as well as my faith informed my understanding of the system, including the death penalty," Rector said. "Faced with the overwhelming problems that I saw, I also became increasingly aware of my responsibility to act for change."

Rector believes that the death penalty is an insufficient, arbitrary and expensive way to have people executed.

"The death penalty is way more expensive than life without parole," she said. "These cases tend to be more expensive at the trial level, they take longer to be sorted and appealed. So, the dollars add up."

The cost of a normal death penalty case is $46,791, but life in prison without parole costs $131,009 and life in prison with the possibility of parole costs $108,622.

"Those are taxpayer dollars that we’re not spending on preventing crime, like access to drug treatment programs, no healthcare, or helping at-risk kids that have been abused or traumatized get help," Rector said.

"Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty" is a major organization trying to stop the death penalty. This organization tries to achieve their goal by educating people. For example, it takes an average of 28 years for death row inmates to be executed.

"I think it is a little outrageous," Carter said. "For some people who are older or have serious health problems, they would have already been dead before their death penalty."

\[ \text{Many people believe that the death penalty actually helps prevent crime. Research, however, doesn’t have a lot of evidence to show that this is true.} \]

\[ \text{Basically, researchers just simply can’t determine any effect either way,} \]

Rector said. "He believes that lethal injections are a good method of execution."

"Death is supposed to be pain," Russell said. "If someone has done something really bad, then they deserve it."

Carter disagreed.

"Lethal injections are probably the worst of the ways to," Carter said. "That is horrible and probably does hurt to get drugs put into your body for you to die."

The state of Tennessee is convinced that the drugs in lethal injections are humane.

"We feel confident in the studies we’ve been presented showing that the specific drugs used in executions here in Tennessee that the condemned do not feel pain and therefore do not suffer," Reburn said. "There have been no complications with any of our most recent executions."

According to Rector, the death penalty should be replaced with life in prison.

"We have life without the possibility of parole in Tennessee, which means exactly what it says," Rector said. "You will, in effect, die in prison. The other sentence is life with the possibility of parole, in Tennessee, which is one of the highest life sentences in the country."

Many states have sent people to death row that were later found to be innocent. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, there are over a dozen cases of people who were executed that could have been innocent.

"Some people with mental illness can’t help themselves when it comes to crime. Many people believe that they shouldn’t be sentenced to death, but instead need treatment. Even international law states they should not be sentenced to death. Still, people with mental illnesses have been sentenced to die."

Despite all the controversy surrounding the death penalty, the goal for each side of the debate is to keep people safe.

"One of the powerful missions is to enhance public safety in Tennessee," Reburn said. "We strive to achieve this mission by operating safe and secure prisons, providing effective community supervision, and providing offenders with the necessary tools and resources they need to address the criminogenic factors that led them to commit their crimes.”
KCS sports mascots are part of a national controversy

BY MEREDITH MOONEY

The football players walk on the field, the wet grass on their cleats. Sweat trickles down their backs as the crowd erupts in cheers. Their cries echo across the stadium: "Redskins! Redskins! The lights flash. The horns blare. Their team spirit is crushing millions of spirits across the country.

The Washington Redskins are a professional football team from Washington, D.C. Their mascot, the Redskins, has been a very controversial topic. Many Native Americans across the country consider the term "redskin" a racial slur.

Both of Kingsport City Schools’ middle schools, and its high school, have a Native American theme. Robinson Middle School is known as the "Redskins," Sevier Middle School’s teams are known as the "Warriors," and Dobyn’s Bennett High School athletes are referred to as the "Indians."

The term "Indians," however, is a fallacy. "Christopher Columbus thought he was in India," Jim Welsh, the newest member of the KCS Board of Education, said. "He thought he was on islands off the shore of India. He thought that, because Indians had red skin, that these people, too, must be Indians. We call them Indians, but they’re not close to India. They’re 13 thousand miles away."

Many people have had an effort to find a better way to describe Native Americans. Canadians, for example, call Native Americans "First Nations."

Some feel it is appropriate to use Native Americans as school mascots. "I feel like we are honoring Native Americans, and using the words to strike fear into our opponents," student council president Charles Wissert said.

Amanda Cox, an eighth-grade math teacher, agreed. "When I think of a ‘warrior,’ I think of someone who is brave and who fights for what they believe in," she said.

Jasmine May, an eighth-grade student, feels like the mascot am a good way to make up for the past. "We are representing the nations that lived here in the past before we took their land," she said.

Jenny McKivern, a STEM teacher, disagrees. "I think that rather than honoring Native Americans, the caricature is stereotypical and not honoring Native Americans," she said.

Michael Friedman, a clinical psychologist, wrote a research report on behalf of the Oneida Nation titled "The Harmful Psychological Effects of the Washington Football Team."

"It’s clear that the presence of Native American mascots results directly in lower self-esteem and lower mood among both Native American adolescents and young adults, as well as increased negative attitudes towards Native Americans among non-Native Americans," the report said. "Importantly, these effects occur regardless of whether the Native American mascot is considered offensive."

In addition to causing harm to Native Americans, the image that Kingsport City Schools is helping pass on to future generations may be inaccurate and stereotypical. "It is wholly inaccurate for Native American tribes of our region," band director Hunter Mullins said. "My understanding is that those depictions were worn by very few tribes and nearly all of those tribes are west of the Mississippi."

The Native American mask used at pep rallies is of particular concern to many students and teachers. "A lot of the concern or disrespect comes from the actual visual of the mascot that is used," Jesse McCormick, an eighth-grade teacher and coach, said. "Some mascots have been made to look like cartoon characters and that image could be disrespectful."

Children introduced to this depiction of Native Americans will understand it as the social norm, furthering problems among Native Americans. "Native American people inhabit the highest level of psychological distress of any other group in the nation, including among the highest levels of depression, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorders," Friedman said in his report.

This year, KCS opened a new science and technology center. In the near future, Sevier Middle will also move to a new building, the former Sullivan North High School. These new changes in the school system may provide an opportunity to change the mascot.

The new construction at DII and eventual transition to the Sullivan North campus is the perfect window of opportunity for such progress," Mullins said.

Making such a change, however, requires a willingness in the community, and that is not necessarily present in Kingsport. In 2018, a KCS committee looked into the possibility of changing mascots and school colors once Sevier moves to its new home in 2022. Part of that effort included a survey. Of the 262 student survey responses at Sevier, 82.10 percent wanted to keep the school name and 80.5 percent wanted to keep the warrior mascot. Of 654 student respondents at Robinson, 77.8 percent wanted to keep the school name and 63.4.4 percent wanted to keep the Redskins mascot. Even among adults surveyed, support for Native American mascots never dropped below 60 percent.

Additionally, there is an exception for Native American mascots of Sevier Middle. "[Johns Sevier] was obviously fiercely independent and became Tennessee’s first governor, but he also owned slaves and fought the Cherokee his whole life," Luke Holt, an eighth-grade history teacher, said. "It’s a little ironic to me that a school named after someone who fought Native American as much as Sevier did has a mascot that represents the people he fought."

According to the National Congress of Native Americans and the 2010 Census, there are 2.9 million Native Americans living in the United States today. "Native Americans are often perceived as a people of history who are not here or relevant today," Holt said. "The truth is that Native Americans exist today, and they represent one of, if not the, poorest subsets of American society."

The United States government forced Native American Reservations years ago and dehumanized them. President Andrew Jackson, who was from Tennessee, actually ordered the removal of the Cherokee from Tennessee. Because of this, there is not a strong willingness to change the mascots in Tennessee.

Multiple dictionaries have begun to identify the word “redskin” as an offensive racial slur. "Change the Mascot," is an international effort to stop the use of Native American mascots. "The United Nations’ independent expert, whose job is to defend the rights of indigenous people, called on the NFL to stop using the R-word because, as the UN said, it is a "horrible reminder of the long history of mistreatment of Native American people in the United States,“ according to the organization’s website.

Recently Maine banned the use of Native American mascots. According to the New York Times, “The National Congress of American Indians, a public education and advocacy group, said it applauded Maine for its new law and hoped other states would follow "on the right side of history." They were in America hundreds of years before white settlers, and yet people make fun of them and stereotype them. They led successful nations, and today they are mocked. They fought for their beliefs and for each other, and now they encounter racism.

Schools and professional sports teams call themselves “Indians” or “Warriors” or “Redskins” without knowing what those powerful words truly mean and how they impact the Native Americans still alive today.

"Given the significant challenges already faced by the Native American community related to their mental and physical health, the Washington team should cease using the R-word, which constitutes a racial slur, and change the name of their team," Friedman said in his report.

Friedman’s report is that the only team that should reconsider its mascot.

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Female athlete Katie Hartsock tackles football

READY TO TAKE THE FIELD. Katie Hartsock stands on the sidelines during a Sevier football game. Hartsock was the only girl on Sevier’s football team this school year.

BY ANNA HARRINGTON

Football is a physically demanding sport that is most often played by boys. It’s fairly rare for a girl to join a football team, but not completely unheard of. In the past, there have been girls that occasionally tried out for the football team at Sevier Middle. This year, Katie Hartsock did, too.

Hartsock is an eighth-grade student and was the only female on the football team this season.

“The most challenging thing for me was people doubting me and saying I wasn’t as good as the boys,” Hartsock said. “It was tough, but you gotta be tough to play football.”

She was treated differently by some members of the team, as well.

“Most of the boys on the team acted like I wasn’t as good as them,” she said. “Most of them were nice to me and some of them acted like I wasn’t good enough for the team.”

Her friends, however, were all for her football ambitions.

“They were excited for me and they were very supportive,” she said.

Her parents were also very supportive of her pursuits.

“I was doing something that made me happy, so they were supportive,” Hartsock said. She also participates in some other sports so that she can stay in shape for football.

“I wrestle for my uncle at his show,” Hartsock said. He works with “Pro Wrestling South” out of Brimfield.

She believes that her biggest success was that she got healthier and stronger. Hartsock also has goals for the future.

“I wanna play football at Dobyns-Bennett High School,” she said. “I love everything about football, but my favorite thing is becoming stronger and making new friends.”

Just like any other player, she had to go through tryouts to join the middle school football team.

“It was tough, but I stayed strong and pushed myself through it,” Hartsock said. Her inspiration to join the team came from a long history of loving football.

“I’ve always liked sports, and growing up, my brothers always played football,” she said. “They inspired me to play.”

Hartsock believes that more girls should join the football team because girls can play just as well as boys can.

“The boys need some girls to show them they’re not better than everyone,” she said. “Girls are strong too. Any girl that wants to play should try out.”

SPORTS COMMENTARY

Students should stay involved in sports

BY MADISON BALL

The participation rate of kids ages 6 through 12 playing sports has decreased by over 8% in the past decade. According to the Washington Post, almost 45 percent of children ages 6 to 12 played a team sport in 2008. Now, only about 37 percent of children participate in a team sport.

High Schools are also affected. According to the Annual High School Athletics Participation Survey, participation in high school sports declined in the 2018 to 2019 school year for the first time in 30 years.

There has been a decrease of over 40,000 students joining sports. That is very bad news.

There are multiple reasons kids should stay involved in sports. It is important for children to stay involved in sports to promote physical fitness. Sports can improve endurance, breathing, and strengthen muscles.

According to The British Journal of Medicine, exercise is one of the least expensive ways to stay healthy. Some examples of inexpensive exercises include running, stretching, and dancing. All of these activities happen in some form or another in school sports activities.

Playing sports can improve things such as joint and bone strength, and it can also help control weight. Having healthier bones can reduce the amount of fractures and protect the brain and other organs. One way to strengthen your bones is to exercise and eat healthy foods.

Sports can improve mental health, just like physical health. Sports can boost self-confidence since the team encourages each member. Winning a game also boosts confidence. Sports also help with stress.

Sports can even improve the mind because athletes have to think and come up with a strategy.

Children who play sports and exercise are more engaged in learning, according to a study that tracked kids from kindergarten through fourth grade.

Physical activity in general leads to improved academic achievement. Participating in physical activities for at least 30 minutes a week can provide mental benefits such as critical thinking, better concentration, balance, and better judgment.

Sports can also teach life skills such as teamwork. Athletes learn to work together as a team to reach a goal together.

Another life skill sports can teach young athletes is leadership and perseverance. Even in the face of obstacles, athletes have to find a way to get through or find a way around problems.

This is an important skill for every adult.

The children that have never had the opportunity and the children who have decided to quit playing sports are not benefiting from the multiple advantages that may be offered to them in the future. These same children may not have the same work ethic as those children who participate in sports.

College students who play sports are likely to be more successful. According to the Women’s Sports Foundation, high school athletes are more likely to graduate from a four-year college compared to non-athletes. Children who played sports are more likely to have a better paying job in the future.

Although children should stay involved in sports, their sports involvement will not be the final factor for their success in life. However, sports can enhance their chances at future success. Students should keep getting the benefits from sports.
McMurray named ‘Event Chair of the Year’ for volunteer work

BY ALREY EDOVIA

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital is an organization whose mission is to find cures for children. It is located in Memphis, Tennessee. Their slogan is “Finding cures. Saving children.” They have helped many children overcome their illnesses as they work to cure cancer.

Sevier teacher Tina McMurray has devoted a lot of time to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. She has helped organize events like a run in Bristol to raise money and awareness for the hospital.

“The St. Jude run is a 5K run or walk held every year in Bristol, Tenn.,” McMurray said. “Individuals can sign up to form teams and raise funds for St. Jude. On event day, participants walk or run 3.1 miles to show support for St. Jude. This past year, we had 100 participants.

People that get involved with St. Jude often do so for personal reasons. McMurray got involved for a deeper reason than just wanting to help others.

“One of my daughter’s friends is a cancer survivor and patient at St. Jude,” she said. “While she was in treatment at the hospital in Memphis, we found out that she was going to attend a half marathon in Memphis and the money raised went back to the hospital. I signed up to run in the race.”

She didn’t know that the Memphis marathon would go on to change her life.

“It’s my first marathon and I was very scared,” she said. “On the morning of the race, I looked up and saw my daughter’s friends picture on the start line and immediately started to cry. I decided that if she could endure what she endured fighting cancer, then I could run 13.1 miles. I wanted to get more involved somehow.”

McMurray started volunteering because of friends like her who kept volunteering so she could help.

“I served on the planning committee for the St. Jude Run in Bristol, Tennessee,” she said. “I served for one year as a member of the committee, then three years as the event chair. Some of my duties included meeting with local businesses about sponsoring the event, announcing community events to promote the run and to get people to sign up, and appearing on local TV news and radio stations promoting the event.”

How did someone with such a busy schedule find time for a job and volunteer this much?

“I don’t know that I have figured out yet,” she said. “I am a list maker. I have lists on post-its on my iPhone and in my planner. I look at those lists and then prioritize what needs to get done in order of what is most important or pressing at the time.”

While she wasn’t able to work with kids directly, she met many patients, survivors and families of patients at St. Jude’s through her work.

“I have formed friendships with many of these folks that I will cherish for a long time,” McMurray said. “I communicate with many of them regularly.”

All the work and volunteer hours that she put in and all the money she raised helped St. Jude quite a bit. This led to the award of ‘Event Chair of the Year’.

“I was caught completely off guard when my name was chosen,” McMurray said. “I had been invited to an award dinner at St. Jude as part of a Volunteer Leadership Conference I was attending.

Although she had been told that she had been nominated for the award, she knew she was up against competition from other event chairs from larger cities like Boston, Chicago, St. Louis and Miami.

“Sevier is such a small community that it is hard for them to get support to make big events happen. I don’t know if they are even aware of the big events that are happening in their cities or if they just don’t have the support to make it happen.”

McMurray has always wanted to give back to the community and work as an event chair provided her with that chance.

“During my tenure as event chair, I led the efforts for our Tri-Cities region to raise almost $500,000 for St. Jude,” McMurray said.

McMurray recently decided to step down from her role as event chair.

“I stepped away from the role as event chair this past September due to my commitment to teaching and my teaching responsibilities here at Sevier,” she said. “I was fortunate to be able to donate my time to the organization before I was hired at Sevier. Even though I am not event chair, I will continue to financially support St. Jude as well as help out with the event behind the scenes.”

McMurray believes that kindness is one of the most important aspects of life.

“Every person has the ability to make this world a better place,” she said. “Do something for someone else can lead to that person doing something else, and it begins to spread. I encourage readers to say hi to someone in the hall, you don’t know, hold a door open, or do something nice in the community. You will be happy you did.”

WORLD-CLASS VOLUNTEER. Tina McMurray was recently named “Event Chair of the Year” for her work assisting St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Rewarded Sevier student, football star returns as a teacher

BY ELLE JACKSON

It’s May of 2008. Students are walking onto the Sevier auditorium stage to receive their middle school diplomas. In just a few hours, all of the eighth grade students would be free from the grasp of middle school. One former student in particular would never have imagined that Sevier Middle would one day return to his life.

After fifteen years, former Sevier student by Hayworth is now a teacher at his old school. Hayworth attended Sevier for the entirety of his middle school career.

“I don’t have a clear memory of middle school, but I do remember running track with my friends and I really enjoyed playing some of the great teachers that I was here,” Hayworth said. Sevier Customs from Hayworth’s time are still in place.

“One of my most memorable events from middle school was the Washington DC trip,” he said. “I had so much fun with my friends and getting to experience all that DC and Williamsburg had to offer was a blast.”

Hayworth has a great deal of history beyond Sevier, as well. He played football at Dobyns-Bennett High School and even got to play in the NFL with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

To his disappointment, he was cut from the team three days after joining, so he had no choice but to move back home unemployeed.

Hayworth’s passion for football remained prominent in his younger years. A spot for an assistant football coach at Dobyns-Bennett High School opened up, and he decided to take a shot at it.

“From there, I realized that if I could find something I was passionate about, Hayworth said. “I decided to return to school and obtained my teaching certification.”

Quickly after he furthered his education to learn more about teaching, Hayworth began searching for his first of formal teaching jobs. When he was an opening for a job at Sevier, he was quick to sign up.

“My job here at Sevier is hard to describe, because I do a lot of different things,” Hayworth said. “As the Behavior Mod teacher, I am in charge of teaching positive behaviors and Social Emotional Learning to my students, but at the same time I teach them Math and Reading during academic periods as well.”

Returning to Sevier Middle has been a pleasure for Hayworth.

“It is great to be back in a familiar place, but in a new position,” he said.

Despite the fact that he now teaches at Sevier, Hayworth still helps coach football at Dobyns-Bennett. Being a football coach, he has high opinions on extracurricular participation.

“If there is an activity that you are passionate about, you should absolutely do it, but if you are unsure about what you like, give sports a try,” he said.

“I am biased to football, but any sport is great for teaching life skills, leadership and teamwork.”

Although there are many qualities that Sevier has maintained since Hayworth’s time, things have changed, as well. The teachers have probably changed the most. There are just a few teachers that I had in class that still work here, Hayworth said.

“Other than the doors into the front office lobby being put in right after I left, a lot of the school is about the same from when I was a student.”

Even though most teachers from Hayworth’s time are gone, some have remained.

“I had Mr. Baker coach me in football and basketball, Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Tipon for 9th grade, and I had Mr. McElveen for 8th grade,” Hayworth said. “Mr. Furse was my tech teacher and I had Mrs. McQueen, coach Earle, and Mrs. Pons for gym class. Mr. Moore even coached me in baseball.”

Working alongside the people that once taught him at Sevier, he said. “I have such a good time just interacting and getting to know my students everyday.

Some days are harder than others, but it is a fun work environment.

Since working for and inspiring students is his passion, he has some advice for students.

“Give your best every day and work to be the best that you can be,” he said.
Local student becomes a champion in new sport Disc Golf

BY CAMILLE CARTER

If travel, playing your favorite game and winning sound like fun, then take a look at the life of Dakota Benton, a disc golf champion.

Benton is 14 years old and attends the 8th grade at Sevier Middle. He has also been playing disc golf for six years.

Disc golf is an unknown sport and not many people play it. It combines golf and frisbee. Players toss discs into metal baskets throughout a course.

In six years, his dad has been practicing with him and has helped him to become successful.

“My dad got me started with disc golf,” Benton said. “He always took me out to play.”

It takes a lot of hard work and a variety of skills to become a successful disc golf player.

“You need a lot of practice and to play in lots of events,” Benton said. “It takes arm speed, working well with distance, and keeping your mind on track.”

His practice has made a champion out of him, with Benton winning five straight “Fun Fest” events. But the game is not without setbacks, even for a champion. Sometimes, even Benton gets frustrated playing the game.

When is it most frustrating?

“It has to be when you have a bad shot, but you can always bounce back on the next play,” he said.

Still, Benton enjoys disc golf a great deal.

“The most rewarding part of being a disc golf player is when you win Pro Worlds,” Benton said.

Pro Worlds is an international disc golf championship that is a big deal to disc golf players and fans.

At this stage in his disc golf career, Dakota is still pretty independent.

“I’m not part of a team as of right now,” he said. “The closest thing I have to a coach is my dad. He is always there when I tour.”

In 2019, Benton, who participates in the Professional Disc Golf Association at the intermediate level, competed in 7 tournaments in the Tri-Cities area. He placed first in the Return to Whitetail Ridge Tournament, and second in both the Discmania Game of Thrones; Battle at Warroad Path and The Appalachian Amateur Championship.

Disc courses are on the grass, in the woods, even beaches. As Benton travels to different places, he plays a variety of courses.

A RISING STAR ATHLETE.

Eighth grade student Dakota Benton has become a champion in a new sport, disc golf. He has won several events and is event ranked by the official disc golf association.

Sevier student fondly looks back on his time living in Japan

BY CARLEE CRADIC

Chay Stansberry is an 8th grade student who spent many years living in Japan before he moved to Kingsport, Tennessee. Living in the small Asian island was a very different experience for Stansberry.

Stansberry’s connection to Japan was actually related to the military.

“My dad was in the military and stationed in Japan,” he said. “We lived there for 6 years.”

The move to Kingsport was difficult for Stansberry.

“Moving to Kingsport was not that fun because I wasn’t used to it,” he said. “Some place around June we moved because it was cheap and had good schools.”

Stansberry’s first impression of Kingsport was not that great, but over time, he got used to living in a different environment.

“My dad was in the military and stationed in Japan. We lived there for 6 years.”

Chay Stansberry

The weather differences between Japan and Tennessee meant that Stansberry now spends more time outside than before.

“It was too cold to play outside in Japan,” he said.

Stansberry has adjusted to school in Tennessee, but he does not have to adjust much. Even in Japan, he attended an American school.

“I went to a school closer where I lived,” he said. “The school was not Japanese.”

Although he has adjusted to his new life, Stansberry still misses a lot about his old life in Japan. Most of all, he misses the friends he had to leave behind.

“I miss the beach, the mall and my friends,” he said.

Stansberry hopes to return to Japan.

“My parents love Japan because they grew up there,” he said. “I hope eventually we will go back to Japan, because it was way more fun.”

Stansberry has some advice for any other who are considering moving to Japan and starting a new life there.

“Enjoy living there and have fun,” he said. “Don’t just go to the big places like Tokyo. Go to other places, too, and explore.”
**THE STORY**

"Aladdin" is a live-action remake of the original Disney cartoon "Aladdin." The movie came to theaters on May 24, 2019 and was recently released on DVD and Blu-Ray. This movie was made based on a story from "One Thousand and One Nights," a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales.

The movie begins with Aladdin, a poor "street rat" in the Arabian city Agrabah, stealing bread. He meets Princess Jasmine at the market, and assumes that she is a handmaid. They quickly fall in love.

Aladdin gets recruited by Jafar, an evil vizier to the sultan of Agrabah, to find a treasure in the Cave of Wonders. There, Aladdin meets a genie who grants him three wishes. Will the genie be set free? Will Aladdin use his wishes to be reunited with Jasmine? Will he defeat Jafar?

**THE GOOD**

This movie is full of laughs, and almost anyone could watch it. "Aladdin" is a wonderful movie and is perfect for the whole family.

Special effects artists must have had a tough time making all the special effects for the genie. Thanks to these effects, the genie's character is incredibly believable, even when he is a bright shade of blue.

Every actor's costume made them look so much more like their character. The clothes that Jasmine wore, for example, were perfect to represent a princess.

Jasmine also has a more independent female role. For example, in the original movie, the sultan has to change the rules for Aladdin to marry her. In this new version, Jasmine becomes sultan and makes her own rules.

**THE BAD**

There are a lot of big differences in scenes between the original movie and the remake. Jasmine's character, for example, was a little flat. She didn't express as much emotion as the original Jasmine.

The actor playing Jafar, on the other hand, almost expressed too much emotion. He didn't really seem like the smooth sultan of the cartoon.

Many "Aladdin" fans thought that the movie would be more grown-up, since all the characters are actually played by real actors. In this regard, the movie was a big disappointment.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

Despite some problems, "Aladdin" is a great movie for anybody who has never heard the story before. I would not, however, recommend this movie to people that grew up watching the original movie.

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**THE STORY**

"Back in Black" was released by the Australian metal band AC/DC on July 25, 1980. Nowadays, heavy metal has significantly decreased in popularity, but in the 1980s, metal was one of the most popular music genres.

The album was a tribute to former lead singer Bon Scott, who passed away 5 months before the album's release. Brian Johnson is the singer on the "Back In Black" album, replacing Scott. Johnson has been the lead singer of AC/DC ever since.

The songs of "Back in Black" are still popular to this day. It is the second-highest-selling record of all time. Some of the songs are still used in commercials and movies, such as in Marvel's "Iron Man" movies.

**THE GOOD**

One of the best songs on the album is the title track, "Back In Black." "Back in Black" is one of AC/DC's most popular songs. The main guitar riff played by lead guitarist Angus Young, is the best part of the song and is iconic. The lyrics, "Forget the heartache I never die," references how Bon Scott will be remembered for his music, even after his death.

"Hell's Bells" is another iconic song, from its introduction of ringing church bells to the driving beat. Angus Young once again propels the song forward with his guitar skills.

Another iconic song on "Back In Black" is "Shot In the Dark." This song is not as famous as "Back in Black." The guitar, played by Young, is very upbeat, especially towards the end. Johnson's singing is also very upbeat and energetic. The song is quiet at the beginning, then builds up and becomes louder and more powerful.

**THE BAD**

Like many metal music music from the 1980s, the lyrics in the songs in "Back In Black" are very hard to understand. Most of the time, the singing sounds just like screaming. Johnson was trying to imitate Scott and would continue to do so for later songs. It is a pretty distinctive way of singing, and for some metal fans, it may be an acquired taste.

"Shot In The Dark," despite being a catchy song from an instrumental standpoint, is actually about drugs. "Shot" refers to injection, and "dark" means to get high. This is a good example of much of the album; the music is catchy and fun, but the lyrics can be pretty inappropriate for younger fans.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

"Back In Black" is a good album. It's fairly energetic and upbeat, even though it can be hard to understand the singing. It is an iconic album for good reason, and deserves an 8.5/10.

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Shrek hits Sevier on Stage

BY KARMIKA WHITE SIDE

Over the last two years, the theater program “Sevier on Stage” produced “Aladdin Jr.” and “Anne Jr.” This year, the group, under the direction of Gabriel Bates, a 11th grade student, produced “Shrek: The Musical Jr.” What does it take to get ready for these performances? What happens behind the scenes to create these successful productions?

Gabriel Bates is an 11th grade student and star in Sevier’s production of Shrek.

“I played the green ogre Shrek,” Bates said. “He is a grumpy person that just wants to live alone in his swamp and will stop at nothing to make it happen.”

Emma Kinbler is an 8th grade student, plays clarinet in band, and has a strong passion for performing on stage.

“I played donkey,” she said. “He is fun, really annoying, and hilarious. He’s a matchmaker and probably the best friend you could ever have. He really clings but you’ve got to love him.”

Both Bates and Kinbler auditioned because they have a passion for theater.

“I enjoy entertaining people,” Bates said. “Also, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to be Shrek.”

The reason Kinbler auditioned was because acting is fun.

“Right when I step on that stage, I shine,” she said. “I’ve been in plays since before I can remember. Singing, acting and dancing are what I am best at.”

This year’s play was directed by Angela Miller, a veteran of past productions, and new director Amanda Greer.

“Sevier on Stage is a great tradition here at Sevier,” Miller said. “I knew from my own experience directing Aladdin Jr. last fall that there were many talented students ready to perform in another show. The whole reason to direct the show is to give students an opportunity to sing, act and be involved in an excellent production.”

Although he enjoys acting and singing, there is one part of performing on stage Bates dislikes.

“My favorite part was the acting,” he said. “I enjoy singing, but the acting is more fun. However, I do not enjoy choreography. It feels like my entire body is being micromanaged.”

Choreography is the sequence of steps and movements in dance, especially in ballet or other staged dance. Since “Shrek” is a musical, all of the actors had to dance, as well.

Up there in front of the whole school, singing and dancing, all sorts of stuff can go wrong. A voice could crack. A wrong step could lead to a fall while dancing. There are many challenges as a part of play.

“I would probably say memorizing all of the lines is the most difficult part of the production,” Kinbler said. “If you are one of the main characters, it is especially difficult, because you have so much to memorize and do.”

Bates agreed.

“Remembering all of my lines was the hardest,” he said. “I was the lead character, so I had the most lines by far, and remembering all of them is very difficult.”

Even the directors faced some challenges.

“The most challenging thing is that there is so much to do,” Miler said. “After students leave rehearsal, the directors are still working very hard. Creating light cues, sound cues, ordering and creating costumes, working on set, and planning rehearsals are just a few of the things the directors do outside of rehearsals.”

Stage fright is nervousness before or during an appearance before an audience. It can be a serious problem for actors.

“Yes, I get stage fright,” Kinbler said. “The way I overcome stage fright is by making either myself or other people laugh, or just get used to the adrenaline of theater.”

There are around 30 practices before the first performance, ranging from 30 minutes to three and a half hours after school.

“After school, the rest of the cast and I went to the auditorium to practice lines, songs and choreography for an hour or two,” Bates said. “When we go home, we’re supposed to work on memorizing those things for a few minutes.”

The starting point for all rehearsals is learning music and choreography for big ensemble numbers.

“There are parts of the show that involve almost the whole cast,” Miller said. “Then we add in blocking, directions for the characters on stage, and work on scenes and musical numbers with fewer characters. Students also have to practice their music at home, especially students with big solo roles.”

Singing and dancing with your fellow classmates can lead to funny, embarrassing and memorable moments during rehearsal and even performances.

“At a weekend rehearsal, my friend and I were sent up to Mrs. Green’s room to get a sharpie and a pack of people followed us,” Kinbler said. “I didn’t get anything of it, though. They were going up the elevator and I thought ‘I need the exercise’. I get up to the top of the stairs and I’m waiting for them, they come up the elevator and scream in surprise that I am already there.”

Singing, dancing and acting at the same time can be a serious challenge.

“For me, it is very difficult,” Bates said. “If I have to dance in a song, I’m focused on the dancing, but then I realized I’m not singing. If I start singing, I start to forget certain dance moves. So, basically, I have to switch between focusing on dancing and focusing on singing constantly.”

In the end, all of the work behind the scenes was worth it.

“This year’s cast did a fantastic job,” Miller said. “Many students, even first-time students to the program, showed a huge amount of dedication and commitment to their role. This is what makes a show really fantastic.”
LEARNING HOW TO BE BETTER JOURNALISTS. Samson Ogbazghi, Meredith Mooney, Anna Harrington, Charles Deng, Michael Flamini, and Chloe McConnell pose with adviser David Planaty on the campus of Lipscomb University.

Scribe editorial team travels to Nashville.
Lipscomb conference provides training, inspiration

BY ALY BOGUE

The Sequoyah Scribe's editorial team recently had the chance to take a trip to Nashville to learn more about journalism. Meredith Mooney has been a member of the Scribe staff for three years. This year, she serves as the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief.

"All the newspaper editors took a trip to Lipscomb University in Nashville to learn about ways to better our work," Mooney said. "We all spent time getting to know our fellow editors, all the while learning about journalism."

In order to get to Lipscomb University, they drove a van from Kingsport to Nashville.

"We all piled into an 8-passenger van and drove to and from Nashville, stopping at bookstores and restaurants along the way," Mooney said.

Chloe McConnell is the Scribe's investigations editor.

"During the ride, we played games and came up with new ideas for the newspaper," she said.

Then, after their long trip, they finally arrived at Lipscomb University.

"Being at Lipscomb University was very humbling," Mooney said. "It was very interesting to learn about other journalists and some careers in which journalism can be helpful."

Charles Deng, the student life editor of the Scribe, enjoyed the conference.

"We had lessons about writing and taking photos," he said. "We came up with ideas for the newspaper.

Deng's favorite part of the trip was the conference itself.

"We learned a lot of new things and got to see how the campus looked," he said.

The editors learned how to do many things, such as taking better pictures and creating good leads. Leads are what hooks the readers in; without a strong lead, not as many people may want to finish reading the article.

"The editors split up," Mooney said. "We took different courses, which included how to take good pictures, how to write good leads, feature pieces and sports pieces."

The Scribe's entertainment editor, Samson Ogbazghi, learned some important lessons on this trip.

"I learned that you should be comforting people you're interviewing," he said.

Ogbazghi enjoyed a stop at "McKay's" bookstore the most.

"It has a lot more than books," he said. "It has everything."

Although the trip was a great experience, Ogbazghi felt odd being around older and more mature kids.

Michael Fanning, the Scribe's sports editor, learned more about photography at Lipscomb University. He learned that in order to take a good picture, a photographer has to put himself or herself out there.

"My favorite part was going to the restaurant Buca Di Beppo, because I got to be myself and the food was excellent," he said.

Mooney, among other editors, also made some new friends on the way.

"I only enjoyed getting to know the editors," she said. "Before we went on this trip, the other editors were acquaintances, but we came home friends."

The Sequoyah Scribe was the only middle school journalism program that attended the conference held at Lipscomb University.

"I felt very proud to be representing John Sevier as the only middle school at the conference," Mooney said. "The editors and staff on the newspaper are extraordinary writers under an amazing supervisor, and this conference showed just that."

Fanning believes that these trips are important because they...

"...can make our newspaper better and can help us win many awards."

McConnell's opinion about the trip is a bit different.

"It wasn’t what I had expected," she said. "We knew just as much, if not more, about journalism as the high school kids did."

McConnell believes that the Scribe is ready for the annual THSPA competition, which begins in December.

"We have learned so much about journalism since last year, and have got so many talented 6th graders," she said.

Mooney's view on journalism is that it is an important skill in multiple professions.

"You should totally try journalism," she said. "It makes all the difference in school, home and even in your future. You can’t go wrong."

Working as a newspaper editor in middle school is hard work, but experiences like the THSPA conference make it a fun experience.

"It takes time and effort, but it is worth it," McConnell said.

Mooney agreed.

"The Sequoyah Scribe is the only middle school in the THSPA conference and the only newspaper representing 'Em-"n-Se" in the Pacemaker competition," she said. "The Sequoyah Scribe represents every single student and faculty at Siever Middle. By respecting it, you respect yourself and your peers."

STUDENT VIEWS ON NEWS

LOCAL
Kingsport installs blocks on park benches

In September 2019, wooden blocks were added to park benches in Glen Bruce Park, the Greenbelt, and other public spaces in Kingsport. City manager Chris McCann made this decision to keep homeless people from sleeping on these benches. McCann hoped this would cut down on crime and violence in these areas. Many people in the community have been critical of this decision because Kingsport does not have enough homeless shelters.

"Kingsport should not have wooden blocks on their benches. The homeless need to sleep somewhere."

Micah Hale, 7th Grade

STATE
Kingsport Mets, other teams, may be cut

Major League Baseball plans to cut 42 minor league teams in the near future, which could include the Kingsport Mets, to cut costs. Nine of the teams that have a probability of being cut belong to the 10-tea Appalachian League. If this were to happen, Kingsport, Bristol and Johnson City would all lose their baseball teams. Members of Congress have sent a letter to the MLB opposing this decision.

"They should not be taking away our local team."

Timmy Baker, 6th Grade

NATION
California electric company turns off power

Pacific Gas and Electric, a power company in California, has been turning off electricity to customers. They believe that the electricity wires, wind, and the fact that it is so dry, can spark up more wildfires. The weather conditions can knock down towers and land them in dry areas and catch on fire. So, the company turned off the electricity for about 450,000 people for 48 hours or more. A lot of people in California have been critical of this decision and believe it is time to buy the power lines.

"Maybe they can cut the power off, but not all the time. So, they will be preventing wildfires, but people will still have electricity."

Mela Brice, 6th Grade

WORLD
Rain forest is burning down in Brazil

The Amazon rainforest is burning with all of the creatures inside of it, putting these animals out of their habitat. Since January, more than 70,000 fires have been detected in Brazil's Amazon rainforest. The Amazon spans over many more countries, not just Brazil. The golden lion tamarin in monkey is one of the rarest animals in the Amazon but is in danger because of the raging fires. People who are trying to clear forest areas are the ones causing these fires.

"I think it is good because they are replacing it with more plants that will help feed people."

Cameron Hadly, 7th Grade