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CASSVILLE MERRY CHRISTMAS WINNERS ANNOUNCED — PAGE 3A



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Lady Trojans post best local team finish in third place. — 1B

CASSVILLE Democrat

JANUARY 7, 2026 | CASSVILLE-DEMOCRAT.COM

FATAL WRECK

When: 6:19 p.m. Dec. 29, 2026
Where: Farm Road 1090, two miles north of Purdy
Who: 84-year-old female, of Monett

Pedestrian killed in crash near Purdy

Driver charged with DWI following incident

BY KYLE TROUTMAN

ktrotman@cassville-democrat.com
A Monett woman was killed and Purdy woman arrested following a single-vehicle wreck at 6:19 p.m. on Dec. 29, 2026, on Farm Road 1090, two miles north of Purdy.

According to a Missouri State Highway Patrol report, a 42-year-old female, of Purdy, was driving a 1991 Mazda CV southbound when her vehicle struck a pedestrian in the roadway.

The pedestrian, an 84-year-old female, of Monett, was pronounced dead at the scene at 7:10 p.m. by Barry County Coroner Gary Swearingen.

The driver was wearing a safety device, and the vehicle sustained moderate damage.

According to a Missouri State Highway Patrol arrest

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2A

FELONY CHARGES

Who: Phoenixia Williams, born 1986, of Shell Knob
What: Is charged with three counts of felony stealing
More: Notice of court hearing sent

Woman charged with theft of purse from bathroom
Shell Knob resident faces 3 counts of felony stealing
BY KYLE TROUTMAN

ktrotman@cassville-democrat.com
A Shell Knob woman is charged with three counts of felony stealing after allegedly taking a victim's purse from a bathroom at a Cassville business.

According to a probable cause statement filed by Jesus Perez, officer with the Cassville Police Department, on Nov. 28, 2025, at about 2:34 p.m., police were dispatched to an address within the city limits of Cassville in reference to stealing.

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Former resident's passing leaves questions

Groundwater contamination could explain cancer, other neighbors' diagnoses

By Sheila Harris
sheilaharrisads@gmail.com
Thirty-year-old Springfield resident, Britney Carlo Shurtz — a former Purdy area resident and a 2005 graduate of Purdy High School — spent Christmas of 2017 in the hospital, recuperating from emergency surgery

two days before.

When Shurtz, a tall, slender brunette with a quick wit and an unflappable nature, began experiencing back pain in July of that year, she chalked it up to a strained muscle and tried to tough it out. When increasing pain prompted her to seek medical treatment, her doctor prescribed physical therapy, fully expecting the problem would be resolved.

Instead, Shurtz's pain increased.

Although an MRI could

quickly reveal the source of Shurtz's pain, her health insurance wouldn't cover the cost until she'd exhausted other options, said her mother, Donna Carlo, of rural Purdy.

By December, Shurtz's pain had become so intense that she could find no relief.

"Finally, the Monday before Christmas, Brit was able to get an MRI," Carlo said. "Her doctor called as soon as he read the results and told her she needed surgery as soon as possible. Brit had a large, tadpole-shaped

tumor filling her spinal cord, pressing on nerves in that region."

After surgery to remove the tumor, Shurtz found relief from her disabling pain, but the biopsy results were grim: anaplastic ependymoma. Of the three grades of ependymomas categorized within the central nervous system, anaplastic (Grade 3) ependymomas are the most uncommon and represent the worst-case scenario. Tumors tend to rapidly recur and grow

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7-8A

MCDOWELL GOLD JUBILEE KEEPS MUSIC KICKIN'



The performing stage at the McDowell Gold Jubilee on Dec. 27 included, front row from left, Mandy Henry on guitar, Carl Hendrix on dobro, and Jimmy Townsend, with Debbie Jones on bass at rear left, Aubrey Blevins on guitar, and Justin Blevins on banjo. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Cassville Democrat

Venerable venue returns for another acoustic music season

BY MURRAY BISHOFF

Special to the Cassville Democrat
You could hear the music seeping through the doorway as you approached on the barely lit gravel driveway.

The old McDowell schoolhouse is back in action, as the McDowell Gold Jubilee is continuing its twice-a-month concert series of acoustic music. Shows are on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month.

The venue hasn't changed much over decades of use. Padded pews take up three-quarters of the hall, with individual theater-style chairs in several rows in the front. Messages and the schedule are written on chalkboards on the walls. On stage, the musicians gather, often backed by players who double as the stock band.

On Dec. 27, these included Bob Gideon on banjo, Debbie Jones on bass, Lonnie Lawson on guitar, and Wayne Clevenger on

mandolin. James Townsend took his turn as master of ceremonies for the evening.

Performers come from near and far to play what is commonly referred to as old-time music — classic country from the Carter Family to Loretta Lynn and Ray Price, bluegrass and gospel. This occasion featured Don Joy and Melanie Lynn from Lynchburg, Va., and Larry Hayworth,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2A

Man charged with meth possession, sexual misconduct

FELONY ARREST

Who: Jason Rayburn, 45, of Mountain Grove
What: Is charged with possession of a controlled substance, first-degree harassment and misdemeanor second-degree sexual misconduct in one case, and possession of a controlled substance and misdemeanor first-degree sexual misconduct in a second case
More: Rayburn is being held in the Barry County jail on cash only bonds of \$25,000 in the first case and \$25,000 in the second case

business.

Jason Rayburn, 45, of Mountain Grove, is charged with possession of a controlled substance, first-degree harassment and misdemeanor second-degree sexual misconduct in one case, and possession of a controlled substance and misdemeanor first-degree sexual misconduct in a second

case.

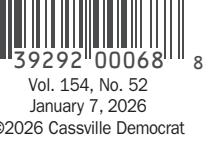
According to a probable cause statement filed by Jesus Perez, officer with the Cassville Police Department, on Dec. 22, 2025, at about 8:11 a.m., police were dispatched to an address within the city limits of Cassville in reference to a lewd note allegedly placed on a vehicle. The victim said

she found the note on the driver's side window of her vehicle after going out on the Greenway Trail.

The note said the person had been looking at her a few times and made lewd suggestions of a sexual nature toward the victim.

The victim said she saw a male sitting on a bench along the trail wearing black clothing and a black hat. Perez

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2A



LOCAL

NEWS BRIEFS

Barry County Democratic Central Committee to meet

The Barry County Democratic Central Committee will meet on Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the El Mariachi Restaurant, located at 482 Hwy. 76 in Cassville.

Multiple road district meetings upcoming

The Purdy Special Road District will meet at 4 p.m. on Monday at the Purdy District Road Barn, located at 200 South 9th Street (Farm Road 1085). The Corsicana Special Road District will meet in regular session on Tuesday at 7 p.m., at the home of Garry and Pam Bartkoski, located at 5086 Farm Road 2057 in Monett. The public is welcome to attend. The Capps Creek Special Road District will meet in regular session on Thursday at the home of Garry and Pam Bartkoski, and again, the public is welcome to attend.

GoFundMe set up for Barry County deputy's wife

A GoFundMe account has been set up on behalf of Barry County Deputy Ray Clevenger and his wife, Shawna, who is battling Myotonic Dystrophy Type 1, a rare and progressive neuromuscular disease. Between prolonged ICU care, long-term rehabilitation, constant travel and time away from work, the financial burden on the Clevengers has become immense. The GoFundMe has been created to help ease that burden so Ray can focus on being by Shawna's side and supporting their children during this difficult time. For more on Shawna's diagnosis and prognosis, and to donate to the Clevengers, people may visit <https://gofund.me/fao5fb16b>.

Cassville Farmers' Market open on Saturdays

The Cassville Farmers Market is open weekly on Saturdays on the Barry County Courthouse Square, from 8 a.m. to noon. Vendors are offering eggs, vegetables, handmade crafts, baked goods and more. Those interested in becoming a vendor may contact Chad Sprinkle at 417-846-3539.

Wheaton Depot Museum to reopen in April

The Wheaton Depot Museum is closed for the winter and plans to reopen in April. For more information, or special requests, people may call 417-846-3146.

Lessons offered before Seligman's Saturday dances

The Seligman Chamber of Commerce country dances at the Seligman Chamber Event Center are every Saturday from 7-10 p.m. No alcohol is allowed. Admission is \$10 per person, and 18-and-under are free. There is a potluck, 50-50 drawing and door prizes. Free dance lessons will also be given from 5-6 p.m. For more information, people may call 479-903-3640.

OATS rides available in Barry County

OATS Transit offers regular transportation services for the rural general public of any age, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. People may call the local OATS Transit office at 417-887-9272 or 800-770-6287 to schedule a ride or find out about services in the Barry County area. People may also visit the OATS website at oatstransit.org to view local schedules under "Bus Schedules," then click on the county of service. OATS Transit is hiring drivers statewide to continue serving riders. Openings are listed on the OATS website.



Performing at the McDowell Gold Jubilee with Cathi and David Warren, center, of Lampe, were, from left, Bob Gideon on banjo, Kenneth Foster on guitar, Debbie Jones on bass, Lonnie Lawson on guitar, and Wayne Clevenger on mandolin. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

Jubilee: Expenses covered by passing of the hat

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

visiting from Summit, S.D. Others had more local roots, like Carl Hendrix and Mandy Henry, of Washburn; Jimmy Blevins, of Anderson; and Aaron Brooks, of Star Holler near Exeter.

The rules are simple. Come early and sign up. Singing lasts from 6-9 p.m., though it may run over. Each performer or duo or group presents six numbers. Even that's a bit flexible. David and Cathi Warren, of Lampe, assembled a group to accompany them and played 10 songs, a set that ran from Andru Bemis's "Two Dollar Bill" and the traditional "Careless Love" to Flatt and Scruggs' "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" to the Carter Family's version of the turn-of-the-century "Keep on the Sunny Side of Life."

According to Shirley Fletcher, Lonnie and Cheryl Lawson have taken over run-

ning the venerable music venue, run for more than four decades by Benny and Betty Henderson, of Monett. The McDowell Gold Jubilee was started by Raymond and Norma Clevenger as an outgrowth of their house parties in the 1950s. Wayne Clevenger, leader of the popular Flyin' Buzzards band, is their son. Raymond Clevenger moved the event into the old McDowell school in 1971, where it ran monthly for seven years. Betty and Benny Henderson started running it regularly in 1977.

"We put on a new roof a month ago," Fletcher said. "When we reopened, people flocked back here."

The venue remains rustic. The only toilet is an outhouse where users are urged to dump scoops of sawdust on their business. Back rooms serve as warm-up areas for

the musicians. The stage now has additional lights and a multi-miked sound system. Otherwise, it looks much the same as it has for decades. Janice Henson, who used to run a restaurant at Silver Dollar City, runs the concession stand.

Expenses are covered by passing the hat.

Townsend pointed with pride to two teenagers, Justin Blevins and his sister, Aubrey, of Shell Knob, who played along on several sets, with Justin on banjo and Aubrey on guitar. Both are still learning their instruments, but had a chance for solo performing and singing along.

"People just getting together and having a good time is what this is all about," Townsend said. "There's no generation gap in music."

That was all the more

evident in looking at the performers, most of whom were over 50. Nor was age a measure of talent. Marcele Craig, an older solo performer backed by the house crew, sang "I Want To Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart," a 1935 hit for Patsy Montana, whose real name was Rubye Blevins, including Patsy's characteristic yodeling, done as well done as any professional, obviously a skill she learned at a young age.

A brightly lit sign helps motorists on State Highway VV find the old schoolhouse, a little way north of State Highway B. The McDowell Gold Jubilee has social media posts but does little additional promotion.

The next shows will be Jan. 10, then twice a month on Feb. 14 and 28, and March 14 and 28. The posted schedule ran to May 9.

Misconduct: Suspect allegedly exposed himself at business

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

made contact with the suspect, identified as Rayburn, near the trail wearing clothing the victim described.

Perez said Rayburn allegedly admitted he had been walking the trail that day and that the note belonged to him.

The victim state the note made her feel uncomfortable and scared.

Upon a search of Rayburn's person, Perez allegedly located a white clear bag containing a white crystallized substance in a bottle within Rayburn's

backpack. The substance allegedly field tested positive for methamphetamine.

In the second case, another probable cause statement filed by Rayburn said on Dec. 14, 2025, at about 9:15 a.m., police were dispatched to an address within the city limits of Cassville in reference to a male captured on video with his pants down inside the property, owned by the victim.

The victim sent the video of Rayburn to police, alleged-

ly depicting him sitting on a bench with his pants around his knees exposing his genitals and allegedly performing an act resembling masturbation.

Rayburn was located and taken into custody and allegedly stated he had methamphetamine on his person. Upon a search, a white clear bag containing a white crystallized substance was allegedly located in his front left pocket.

The substance allegedly tested positive for meth.

Perez noted in both prob-

Fatal: Trooper said suspect 'did poorly on' sobriety tests

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

report, Amberel Macdermant, 42, of Purdy, was arrested at 7:36 p.m. and charged with felony driving while intoxicated (death of another), no valid license and no insurance.

According to a probable cause statement filed by

Trooper J. Prater, with the Missouri state Highway Patrol, Macdermant stated she was not been drinking or was under the influence of any drugs, but said she had smoked marijuana earlier in the day. Prater said Macdermant sub-

mitted to field sobriety tests, which she "did poorly on."

A chemical test of Macdermant's blood has been submitted to the Troop D crime lab for analysis.

Macdermant, Prater noted, also had five outstanding war-

able cause statements that Rayburn has a prior felony conviction for forgery in Barry County in November 2024, and he is currently on probation or parole.

Rayburn is being held in the Barry County jail on two cash-only bonds, \$25,000 for the first case and \$15,000 for the second.

He has been arraigned, and a bond appearance hearing was held on Tuesday at 9 a.m. in the courtroom of Judge Robert Foulke.

rants in Jasper County.

Macdermant is being held in the Barry County jail on no bond. An initial appearance has been held, and a bond heard was held on Tuesday at 9 a.m. in the courtroom of Judge Robert Foulke.

CORRECTIONS

The Cassville Democrat corrects factual errors or clarifies information promptly and courteously. If you have a correction or clarification, please email Publisher Kyle Troutman at ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com.

CASSVILLE Democrat

COVERING BARRY COUNTY LIKE THE MORNING DEW

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More than \$16K raised for Share Your Christmas



Cassville Merry Christmas candidates raised more than \$16,000 in December to donate to the Share Your Christmas fund. Candidates include: Hopelyne Thompson, Shailey Hodge, Makenzie Thompson, Julie Gregory, Bri Still and Kamden Beebe. Contributed photo

Cassville's Merry Christmas candidates went beyond the call in 2025, organizing a drive for the Cassville Pantry at the girls basketball jamboree. Candidates include: Hopelyne Thompson, Shailey Hodge, Makenzie Thompson, Julie Gregory, Bri Still and Kamden Beebe. Contributed photo



Through the efforts of Merry Christmas candidates and community donations, \$16,299.91 was raised this year for Share Your Christmas, the local effort to provide gifts for families in financial need. Bri Still, left, was crowned Merry Christmas Queen by Joei Blankenship, right, 2024 Miss Merry Christmas. Julie Gregory (not pictured) was the runner-up. Contributed photo

Barry County Health Corner

WIC services available at Barry County Health Department

The Barry County Health Department offers WIC (Women, Infant, and Children) services to clients that qualify. The WIC program is a supplemental nutritional program for women, children, and infants. Eligibility includes pregnant women, women breastfeeding their infant up to the infant's first birthday, and postpartum women up to 6 months. It also covers infants up to their 1st birthday and children through the age of 5 years. You must live in Missouri and the household income can be no more than 185% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

WIC offers a variety of foods including: milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, peanut butter, whole grains, fresh and frozen fruits/vegetables. It offers supplemental infant formula, infant cereals, and infant fruits/vegetables. WIC can offer an average monthly savings of \$60.00 per child.

A very vital part of WIC is offering nutritional education and support to our clients. We encourage our clients to participate in goal setting and discuss topics related to nutrition and activity. WIC believes that breastfeeding is best for the baby if possible and offers education and support through our program. Our nutritionists and Breastfeeding Coordinator can offer one-on-one counseling with new moms in order to promote a successful breastfeeding journey.

Please call The Barry County Health Department at 417-847-2114 to see if you qualify and make an appointment for certification.

Publisher's note: This article is courtesy of Barry County Health Department, located at 90 Barry County Drive in Cassville. The Department may be reached at 417-847-2114.

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COMMENTARY

PUBLISHER'S VIEW



KYLE TROUTMAN

Charting new territory

As we wrap up the first week of 2026, there's a pep in my step. Maybe it's enjoying the last bit of fall weather brightening my days. It could that the kids went back to school this morning and routines can fall back into place. Or, better yet, it's more likely I'm excited about what's to come in the next 359 days.

In 2025, we accomplished more than we ever imagined. Our facade renovation was an incredible experience, and we are beyond grateful for all the compliments we've received in the last six months. We are equally grateful to the Cassville Downtown Restoration Fund, as frankly, none of that would have occurred without that partnership.

In September, we won another Gold Cup, naming us the best small weekly newspaper in Missouri for the eighth time in 11 attempts. And while keeping that pace with the quality of our news product, I have also began incorporating more and more video into our social media pages. If the 33% boost in followers is any indication, it seems the community is enjoying the new media.

In November, we launched a new community event, the Barry County Bake Off & Dessert Benefit Auction, which raised \$1,500 each for two Cassville non-profit organizations to combat food insecurity.

And, finally, in the last few months, we've been restructuring our website services and circulation system, working with companies on the forefront of community journalism's ever-changing landscape.

That may only be five things, but looking back, they've all played a huge role in the direction of the Cassville Democrat — and there's more to come.

Building-wise, we are hoping to soon enter the second phase of our three-phase renovation plan. We are nearing the point of developing a commercial space on the west side of our first floor. By knocking down a few walls and putting one new one up, installing a new interior door and adding a new bathroom, we hope to get a business neighbor settled in this year.

The third phase we hope to start shortly after — a full renovation (a rescue if we're being honest) of the second floor. My wife, Jordan, has blueprints drawn for a three-bedroom, two-bath apartment, with plans for us to go back in time more than a handful of decades and live above our business. While it will take time, we are anxious for the end result.

After writing last week's column and putting together our top 10s, I am confident we will be in the running for our ninth Gold Cup this year. Having had the success we have in the Missouri Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest year after year, it's always a thrill to comb through our best work of 2025 and submit stories, designs, photos, videos and more to be judged against the works of our peers. That submission process is in March, and I'm already antsy.

Video-wise, I'm antsy for winter to be over and more opportunities to arise! We had a few really big ones (one hitting 2 million views), but all told, our reels had a combined 5 million views last year. I hope to keep building on that momentum and providing content that hits one of a community newspaper's vital roles — showing Barry County folks doing the things they love.

With the success of the Barry County Bake Off & Dessert Benefit Auction the Saturday before Thanksgiving, we fully intend to keep that momentum going. It was the first use of our non-profit, Troutman Foundation, with the mission of supporting Barry County non-profit organizations. The Foundation is also taking over our Back-2-You initiative, in its third installment this year. We hope to have those figures (2% of all special project ad sales over the course of 2025) determined and donation recipients selected soon.

Finally, we are in the final stages of our online and circulation revamp. Within the next few weeks, news, sports and opinion content online, as well as the e-edition, will be considered premium content, requiring a subscription for access (\$25 annually, or \$20 for seniors or military). Obituaries, features in special sections and lifestyle content will all remain free to all.

With that change, we plan to put in more work. Within the next month, I plan to begin sending newsletters via email at least four times per week. That will likely come with a more modern, timely approach to posting stories online. Rather than uploading everything at once like we have for the last 10 years, I hope to start providing new content almost daily, recapping the days events in newsletter format to keep you all in the know, on time.

Who says a weekly paper can't behave like a daily these days?

While 2025 saw many successes, we also endured our fair share of challenges. We expect the same this year, as we take aim at new goals and chart new territory for the Cassville Democrat.

We hope you enjoy going along on the ride with us.

Kyle Troutman has served as editor of the Cassville Democrat since 2014 and owner/publisher since 2023. He is a three-time ISWNE Golden Dozen award winner. He may be reached at 417-847-2610 or ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you have an opinion, send a letter to Kyle Troutman, Cassville Democrat, P.O. Box 486, Cassville, MO 65625, by email to ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com or online at <https://forms.gle/RmdQfYe86PtkTKp8A>.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Creating opportunity together: A new year's vision for our community in 2026

Here we stand at that annual strange feeling each year as we start to say goodbye to the year before, reflecting upon what has filled the past 365 days of our lives and beginning to see the possibilities which come with the shifting of the calendar to a new year.

In many ways, a new year invites reflection — and responsibility. As we step into 2026, our community stands at a powerful crossroads, the crossroads of challenges and new possibilities. These crossroads provide the choices between reacting to change, or we can choose to shape it.

Creating opportunities in our community isn't the work of one leader, one organization or one moment. It's a shared commitment to build pathways where our collective talents can grow, neighbors and businesses can thrive, and a future that provides the sense of possibility for everyone.

Opportunity often begins with access and open doors to education, skill enhancement, and information. That is why I'm so proud that our communities have great public schools. And, for those who desire to further their education beyond high school, having Crowder College here is such an incredible opportunity for those who want to remain and work in the area while obtaining a college degree.

Speaking of Crowder, the past year has provided me with the opportunity to become acquainted with Terry Held, who became an instructor at their Cassville campus



JON HORNER

during 2025. Terry brings a great perspective for what our community can strive to be while cherishing our heritage and the attributes that make Cassville uniquely special and a place we are proud to call home.

Opportunity is also about place. Vibrant communities, such as ours, are built in spaces where people feel safe, welcomed and inspired to gather together. On that note, I am excited about the improvements that will take place in the coming year for our town. From the opening of the new Seventh Street bridge, significant improvements for our airport, to the development of the Hall Theater Pocket Park we have a lot to look forward to in 2026, I truly believe that improvements of this magnitude, along with our incredible partnership with Barry Electric-goBEC fiber optic internet have the potential to be incubators for ideas, solutions and innovation for our community.

Our community is poised to take advantage of growth in our surrounding communities because

of the current and future advances in our town.

Opportunity also comes from the power of connection. Strong bonds and networks — between our neighbors, community organizations, churches, schools and local businesses — have the ability to turn our individual efforts into collective impact. In 2026, let us continue to prioritize the power of connection through the various opportunities available to all of us in our communities.

Finally, opportunity grows where optimism lives. Belief matters. When one person steps forward to take action for the betterment of our communities that invites and initiates participation by others. It becomes contagious, but in a good way.

Volunteering, mentoring, engagement, and simple acts of kindness all compound. Progress isn't only measured in policies or projects, but in the everyday choices to show up for one another.

The year ahead will bring challenges we can't predict. But it will also bring chances we can create. 2026 can be a year where opportunity isn't a slogan — it's a lived experience.

And, we all have the opportunity to build it together. Happy New Year.

Jon Horner is a local community bank president, published author, newspaper columnist, motivational speaker, and mayor of America's Real Hometown. He can be reached at jonhorner77@gmail.com.

AMERICAN INSIGHTS

Liberty or death



DAKODA PETTIGREW

He rose, a Baptist clergyman recalled, "with an unearthly fire burning in his eye." It was Thursday, March 23, 1775, and the fate of American liberty was on the patriot's mind. To Thomas Jefferson, he was "the greatest orator that ever lived." To Roger Atkinson, a spectator, he was "a son of thunder." To his enemies, he was an insolent traitor to king and empire, a man as infamous for his utterances as the Apostle Paul when he stood on Mars Hill and preached to the people of Athens.

Not yet thirty-nine, Patrick Henry dressed like a dour Puritan, "a grave-looking member, in a plain dark suit of ministers gray [with an] unpowered wig," a delegate of the First Continental Congress recalled. As a boy, he was "mild, benevolent, humane...quiet, thoughtful," Samuel Meredith, his brother-in-law, wrote. "He had a nice ear for music [and] was an excellent performer on the violin."

His voice, however, and not his violin, made him a popular and esteemed (and detested) defender of English liberty; it was as melodious as any musical instrument. Henry was the "complettest speaker I ever heard," the Connecticut statesman, Silas Diane, wrote. "But in a letter I can give you no idea of the music of his voice, or the highwrought yet natural elegance of his style and manner."

Following a religious habit, George Washington, who sat representing Fairfax County, carefully observed the weather and recorded it in his diary: "Cloudy & chilly—with appearances of snow—wind being Easterly but none fell. Afternoon clear." The oldest church and largest building in Richmond, Virginia, St. John's could

and rigid like whip-cords," Henry Randall recalled. "His voice rose louder and louder, until the walls of the building, and all within them, seemed to shake and rock in its tremendous vibrations."

In a climax that resembled a Greek tragedy, Henry "let his left hand fall powerless to his side and clenched an ivory letter opener in his right hand firmly, as if holding a dagger," and aimed it at his heart. "I know not what course others may take," he declared. "But as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

One observer outside the church, Edward Carrington, was so moved by the oratory that he exclaimed, "Let me be buried on this spot!" a wish that was later granted upon his death.

Thomas Jefferson, who had witnessed Henry's "sublime eloquence" in 1765, was once again dazzled by the words of his fellow Virginian. "His eloquence was peculiar," Jefferson recalled, "it was impressive and sublime beyond what can be imagined."

Edmund Randolph remarked that "after every illusion had vanished, a prodigy yet remained...rousing the genius of his country, and binding a band of patriots together to hurl defiance at the tyranny of so formidable a nation as Great Britain." Henry's climactic phrase was sewn on the shirts of men of all ages who volunteered in throngs to defend North America from the armies of George III.

More than three hundred miles away in New York, a young Alexander Hamilton marched solemnly in front of the tombstones in the churchyard of St. Paul's Chapel near King's College with Henry's rousing cry stitched across

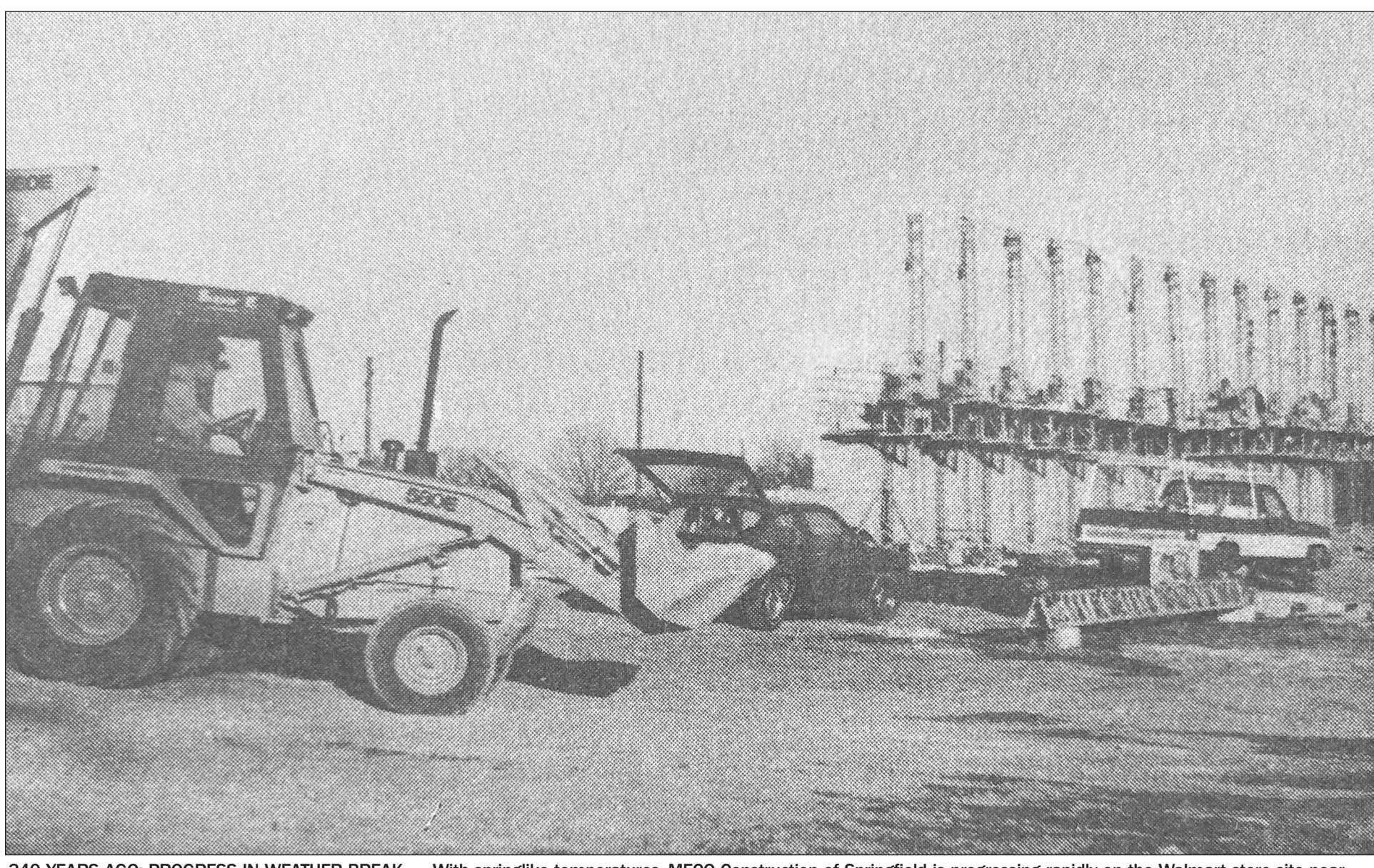
his leather hat. On his military jacket, he proudly bore another phrase: "God and Our Right," a creative American adaptation of the official motto of the English monarch (which reads "my right").

Exactly one month before Henry's speech, Hamilton published an essay in the New York Gazetteer. "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records," he wrote. "They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

A year later, on Thursday, July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress chose liberty over death, unity over division, and principle over compromise. "For the support of this Declaration," the Congress resolved, "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

The sentiments of the Revolution and the Declaration, Lincoln said in February 1861, "gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time." The question Americans must ask themselves every July (and every day) is one Lincoln asked in one of our darkest hours: "Can this country be saved upon that basis?" It is, as it was for Henry, a choice between liberty or death.

Dakoda Pettigrew is a summa cum laude graduate of Liberty University with a Bachelor's of science in political science and history. Pettigrew's father went to school in Cassville, and he lives in Tennessee. He can be reached at pettigrewdakoda6@gmail.com.



340 YEARS AGO: PROGRESS IN WEATHER BREAK — With springlike temperatures, MECO Construction of Springfield is progressing rapidly on the Walmart store site near Cassville. South wall construction and concrete pouring are underway, and the store is scheduled to open in mid-1986. Supervisors say the project is on schedule. Democrat file photo

50 years ago

Jan. 14, 1976

- CASSVILLE TURNDOWN OF PROPOSED JUNCTION CHANGE

Property owners and business interests rejected a proposed redesign of the Highway 37, 112, 76, 86 and 248 junction during a meeting Tuesday. Missouri Highway Department District Engineer Wilbur Stegner said the plan would have eliminated more than half of existing parking along the right-of-way. Following discussion, Stegner said the project would be terminated, noting it is not department policy to build facilities not desired by the public. Estimated at \$235,000, the project would have signalized intersections and installed curbing to handle about 4,000 vehicles daily. Business owners expressed concerns about parking loss, and Stegner said alternate plans were unlikely due to surrounding structures. Chamber officials thanked Stegner for his efforts, and he assured them the department would not force unwanted projects.

- EAGLE ROCK BOAT DOCK UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

Eagle Rock Boat Dock has been purchased by Charles "Chuck" Edwards of San Jose, Calif., from Charles and Maxine Ryter, with operations assumed Jan. 9. Edwards has submitted proposed operational and facility changes to the Army Corps of Engineers, including improved launching facilities, swimming docks and expanded services. The dock will be renamed Eagle Rock Landing. Located near the Highway 86 bridge, the facility serves the upper regions of Table Rock Lake, with public camping and use areas on both sides of the highway. Edwards said additional services and staff-

ing will be announced later.

40 years ago

Jan. 15, 1986

- COUNTY CONCERN: IN BUDGET, COMING SALES TAX VOTE

January 15 is the deadline for county departments to submit budget requests, while a Feb. 4 sales tax election could address Barry County's financial problems. Presiding Judge Lloyd Dilbeck said budget reviews will begin this week, with all but four departments having submitted requests. County Clerk Rex Stumpff said early review suggests little increase in proposed spending, though reductions from last year's \$702,348.43 in general revenue expenditures may be necessary. The county spent \$86,220.66 in federal revenue sharing funds in 1985, with only about \$50,000 expected in 1986. More than \$200,000 in 1985 tax collections went toward loan and interest obligations. The proposed sales tax would levy a half-cent for general revenue and a half-cent for road districts, each expected to raise about \$500,000.

Dilbeck said passage would allow a sharp reduction or elimination of the general property tax levy. County officials plan public meetings, including Jan. 28 at the Purdy Community Center, to explain the proposal. Assessment ratios are also under review by the Missouri Tax Commission.

- SLIGHT DROP IN SALES TAX REVENUE FOR CITY

Cassville sales tax revenue declined in 1985 for the first time in four years, according to City Clerk Jo Ledgerwood. December receipts of \$18,099 brought the annual total to \$237,640.11, down slightly from the previous year. The one-cent sales tax has fund-

ed street projects, park upgrades and general administration, with major street expenditures near \$200,000. Ledgerwood said sales tax funds are invested at variable interest rates averaging about six percent.

- BASYE COMPLETES NAVY RECRUIT TRAINING

Navy Seaman Recruit David J. Basye, son of James and Barbara Basye of Cassville, completed recruit training at Great Lakes, Ill. During the eight-week program, Basye studied general military subjects, seamanship, drill, naval history and first aid. Completion qualifies him for three hours of college credit.

30 years ago

Jan. 10, 1996

- NEW CONCESSIONS MANAGER AT ROARING RIVER PREPARES FOR OPENING

Roaring River State Park's new concessions manager has arrived and is already busy preparing for opening day. Sheldon Smith comes to Roaring River from Yosemite National Park, where he served as manager of Yosemite Lodge. The Rochester, N.Y., native also worked for 10 years at Grand Canyon National Park. "I started washing pots and pans and worked my way up in the company (Fred Harvey Inc., the company who has the concessions contract at Grand Canyon)," said Smith, who holds a bachelor's degree in education from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.

Since arriving at the park one week ago, Smith has been inventorying park facilities and acclimating himself to the surroundings and is currently living in one of the cabins. This week, Smith is joined by a team from Delaware North Inc., the Buffalo, N.Y.-based company that now holds the concessions con-

tract for Roaring River. Smith said the team will install computer systems and determine where improvements are needed. A portion of Delaware North's bid included money for capital improvements to existing buildings, which Smith said has been set aside but not earmarked for specific projects. He said a limited-service restaurant will likely be installed in the lower level of the lodge, serving soup, sandwiches, beverages and ice cream, with rolling carts stocked with coffee, soda and snacks available to fishermen and other visitors. In the next two weeks, Smith said he will hire managers for four key areas: food and beverage, the lodge, accounting, and quality control and customer service. He said the positions will be advertised locally. Smith said his first descent into the park valley reminded him of where he grew up in New York and the farm country where his grandfather lived.

- AMBULANCE DISTRICT PLANS PUBLIC MEETING IN LAKE AREA

Officials want public input on ambulance service in Shell Knob. South Barry County Ambulance District and Cox Paramedics are seeking public input on ambulance service in the Shell Knob area and will host an open forum Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. at the Shell Knob Community Building. One issue to be discussed is whether Shell Knob residents would be better served

by a local ambulance station. District officials received a February letter from the Shell Knob Chamber of Commerce medical committee requesting the service be put up for bid in 1996 with a 24-hour station included. Dr. Richard Taylor, representing the committee, met with the board Oct. 10, when members expressed concern about costs and whether Shell Knob generates enough calls to justify a station. Board chairman Dr. Dale Assing said the district is supported by limited tax revenue, totaling \$94,035.73 in 1995. Taylor suggested increasing fees per ambulance run district-wide, but the board said it could not raise rates for the entire district to serve one area.

Mark Alexander, director of Cox's pre-hospital services, said staffing a 24-hour station would cost at least \$125,000 annually and that Cox will provide statistical information at the meeting.

Cox Paramedics currently holds the district contract, which renews automatically each December. The service is based in Cassville with three ambulances, one operating 24 hours a day.

Pat Brown, county ambulance services manager, said crews responded to 2,226 calls in 1995, with 1,228 in the Cassville area and 208 in Shell Knob.

Average response time to Shell Knob was 26.1 minutes, compared to 20.8 to Jenkins, 19.9

to Wheaton, 21.5 to Eagle Rock and 20.2 to Seligman. Brown said Shell Knob has a strong First Responders group trained to provide immediate care until ambulances arrive. Assing said a previous Shell Knob station was often pulled to respond elsewhere. The board urges lake-area residents to attend the meeting.

- SOUTHWEST GRADUATE STATIONED IN BOSNIA

Navy Airman Recruit Brandon H. Deschane, son of Barbara Deschane of Seligman, is serving aboard the aircraft carrier USS America in the Adriatic Sea near Bosnia.

Deschane is among more than 5,000 sailors and Marines supporting peace implementation operations in the former Yugoslavia. The USS America Battle Group includes 11 ships, more than 80 aircraft and submarines armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Since leaving Norfolk, Va., in late August, the ship has traveled more than 15,000 miles. Deschane recently returned to the Adriatic after assisting with enforcement of the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, traveling more than 4,000 miles in nine days.

During NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets, aircraft from USS America flew more than 360 missions.

The ship is not scheduled to return to the United States until late February. Deschane is a 1994 graduate of Southwest High School.

Haven of the Ozarks Pet of the Week

Meet Phil! He's a very adorable and energetic boy. Phil is very friendly and social and is a family dog. He likes other pups but wants to play and rough house, so a playful dog sibling will be the best match. Phil loves toys, is active, smart, and responds very well to instruction. He is extremely trainable. Phil is likely a cattle dog and can be a little mouthy, so he probably isn't a good choice for small children at this point. Phil's estimated date of birth is June 2, 2024, and his weight is about 45 pounds. Phil says "no thank you to cats."

Adopters can complete an application at www.havenoftheozarks.org/adopt. No appointment is needed. The Haven is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days a week. All Haven of the Ozarks pets are fixed, up to date on their vaccinations, and microchipped. For more information, people may email havenozarksanctuary@gmail.com, or call at 417-835-3647. Contributed photo



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Perez made contact with the victim, who stated she left her purse in the female restroom and went to exercise. The victim said there were only two females in the building at the time, including her and another female later identified as Williams.

The victim said she

allegedly observed Williams enter the restroom, and when she returned, to retrieve her purse, it was not there.

A witness, who is employed at the location of the incident, said the victim and Williams were the only two females who went into the restroom.

The victim said two

debit cards and a credit card were in the purse at the time of the alleged theft.

A notice of court hearing has been sent to Williams, and there is no warrant for arrest. The hearing is set for Feb. 26 at 8:30 a.m. in the courtroom of Judge Robert Foulke.

The victim said two

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OBITUARIES

**EVELYN ELAINE HOPKINS**

Evelyn Elaine Hopkins, 86, of Cassville, Mo., passed away Saturday, January 3, 2026, at her home.

She was born October 1, 1939, in Washburn, Mo., the daughter of Loy and Flossie (Hendrix) Wade, who preceded her in death.

Also preceding her in death was her husband, Joe Kent Hopkins; sister, Anna Mae Burns and brother-in-law, Mickey Burns.

Survivors include her son, Russell Hopkins and wife Renee of Collinsville, Okla.; daughter, Teri Jo Shackles and husband Doug of Cassville; four grandchildren, and two step grandchildren.

She grew up and attended school in Washburn. She had lived in this area all of her life. She was a homemaker,

and she was a member of Corinth Baptist Church.

Services will be held at 10:00 A.M. Thursday, January 8, 2026 at Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville. Pastor Donnie Spears will conduct the services. Burial will be at Corinth Cemetery in Cassville, Mo.

The family will receive friends from 6:00 until 7:00 P.M. Wednesday at Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville.

Contributions may be made to Corinth Baptist Church in memory of Evelyn.

FOHN FUNERAL HOME
Cassville, Missouri
417-847-2141

Visit www.fohnfuneralhome.com for online obituaries, guestbooks and private condolences

**JOHN TONG LEE**

John Tong Lee, 69, of Inola, Okla., passed away on Sunday, December

14, 2025, at Saint Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Okla.

He was born on September 29, 1956 (1960) in Dok Mai Village, Xieng-Khouang, Paek Province, Laos; The only immigrant son and eldest son of father Naocha Lee and deceased mother Sheng (Vue) Lee.

Also preceding him in death was his wife, Ong Chang Lee.

Survivors include nine children, five sons, from eldest to youngest: Major Lee of Springfield, Mo., Alexander Lee of Sacramento Calif., Tully Lee of Leominster, Mass., and Komeng Lee and Tou Lee, both of Springfield, Mo.; four daughters, oldest to youngest, Wonder (Lee) Yang of Greer, S.C., Jennifer (Lee) Good of Minneapolis, Minn., Aimee (Lee) Xiong of Broken Arrow, Okla., and Linda Lee of Inola, Okla.; four siblings, two brothers, Bouahue Lee of Borkhamxay, Laos, and Kao Lee of Xieng-Khouang, Laos; two sisters: Yee Lee and Ya Lee both of Xieng-Khouang, Laos; and 11 grandchildren.

He was born and raised in a small peaceful Hmong village Dok Mai in the Xieng-Khouang forest of Laos, to farmers Naocha Lee and Sheng Vue. He excelled in middle school. Especially in English, which he helps teach other students and while home helps his parents farm. In 1979, at the age of fifteen, he joins fellow villagers making an early departure, fleeing from the Vietnamese soldiers in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, towards Thailand. Unfortunately, his family was forced to stay in the village. But he alone reached the Mekong River, he paid a Thai boatman to row him across. Once in Thailand, he walked to the nearest bus station where he was transported to and settled in Ban Venai refugee camp, Thailand.

He took a job as a bus attendant. In 1980, he obtained an American sponsor and flew to the United States to settle down in San Diego, California. He enrolled and received a graphic arts certificate on July 24, 1981, at Midway Community College in San Diego, Calif. He got a job as an English tutor, then he joined a home construction team, and pursued electrical training.

In the summer of 1996, he moved his family to Fitchburg, Mass., and went to work at Weetabix Company in Clinton, as a maintenance technician. He continued his education and received a certificate in maintenance engineering.

In June 2004 they bought a poultry farm in Cassville, Mo. He then started Reliable Poultry in Neosho, MO (formerly Barnhill Poultry) as an Electrical Technician

from 2005 to 2017 for 12 years.

He also volunteered all of his extra time to help Hmong farmers resolve personal and technical issues on their own farms. He was able to assist the growing Southwest Mo. Hmong community in founding and expanding their non-profit organization, the Southwest Mo. Hmong Association, where he served as Vice President and as President for two consecutive years.

The last nine years of his life were spent enjoying vacations in Laos.

Services will be held from 8:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. Saturday, January 10, 2026 at McQueen Funeral Home in Wheaton. Burial will be at 3:00 P.M. at Maplewood Cemetery in Exeter, Mo.

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**LILY ANN PETERSEN**

Lily Ann Petersen, 84, of Monett, Mo., passed away Monday December 29, 2025.

She was born March 27, 1941, in Worthington, Mo., the daughter of Klon Noah and Iris Letha (Hatfield-Tade) Followill, who preceded her in death.

Also preceding her in death were six of her seven siblings; her former husband, James Stonehouse and her husband, Harlan Petersen.

Survivors include her daughters, Kathryn and husband Scott of Ill., Kristine of Iowa, Karren of Mo., Kimberly and husband Doug of Iowa; Kelly and husband David of Utah; and son, Kurtis and wife Cindy of Fla.; her only surviving sister is Linda and husband Doug; eighteen grandchildren, thirty-six great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren with one more due to arrive in March 2026.

In the summer of 1996, he moved his family to Fitchburg, Mass., and went to work at Weetabix Company in Clinton, as a maintenance technician. He continued his education and received a certificate in maintenance engineering.

In June 2004 they bought a poultry farm in Cassville, Mo. He then started Reliable Poultry in Neosho, MO (formerly Barnhill Poultry) as an Electrical Technician

Memorial services will be held at 6:00 P.M. Friday, January 6, 2026, at Body of Christ Ministries in Wheaton, Mo. Pastor Gene Robinson will conduct the services.

Donations of seeds/bulbs or starter plants will gladly be accepted by the family for a memorial garden in her honor to be established in the Spring.

Cremation arrangements are under direction of Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville.

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417-847-2141

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**JOHN RILEY SULLIVAN**

John Riley Sullivan, 76, of Cassville, Mo., passed away peacefully on Friday, January 2, 2026, at his home.

Born June 24, 1949, in Jefferson City, Mo., John was the youngest of three children born to Raymond and Melba (Farwell) Sullivan, who preceded him in death.

Also preceding him in death was his sister, Patty Gardner; and her husband, Bob Gardner.

Survivors include his wife, Janet Sullivan of Cassville; his daughter, Shelly Beel, and her husband, Chris, of Blue Springs, Mo.; his son, Brian McCarthy, and his wife, Jacqulyn, of Marshall, Mo.; his sister, Sharon Coker, and her husband, Norman, of Springfield, Mo.; his four beloved grandchildren; as well as numerous sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, cousins, and thousands of cherished friends and customers.

He graduated from Cassville High School in 1967, he worked for Gambles, Contel, and Barry Electric before proudly establishing his own extermination and catering businesses.

He was a devoted lifelong member of the First Christian Church of Cassville for 74 years. His commitment to his community was equally steadfast, as he served on the Cassville School Board for approximately 30 years, was an active member of the Cassville Chamber of Commerce and contributed his time to the Flat Creek Road District.

Memorial services were held at 10:00 A.M. Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at First Baptist Church in Cassville under direction of Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville. Pastor Donnie Spears and Pastor James Weaver conducted the services.

Memorials may be made to the Sullivan Family in memory of John.

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Cassville Democrat

Sacramento, Calif., Mike Williams and wife Jo of Paradise, Calif., Ricky Williams and wife Olga of Sacramento, Calif., Steven Lazaroe and his husband David of Rogers, Ark., William Lazaroe and wife Cindy of Tampa, Fla., Tony Lazaroe and wife Candy of Muskogee, Okla., Charles Casey of Berryville, Ark., and Edward Casey of Fayetteville, Ark.; three daughters, Dewella Williams of Calif., Leetta Bailey and husband Jay of Fla. and Pam Cannon of Covington, La.; twenty grandchildren; thirty-six grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

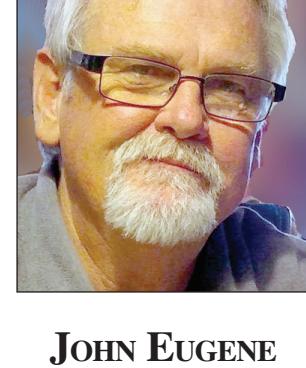
He joined the Navy in 1951 and served as an Aircraft Engine Mechanic during the Korean War. He attended Lee Bible College in Cleveland, Tenn. He established Charlie's Cabin and Canoe Rentals with his beloved wife, Mary Lou. He was also a skilled barber. He was a member of the New Salem Baptist Church in Seligman.

Services will be held at 2:00 P.M. Friday, January 9, 2026 at New Salem Baptist Church in Seligman, under direction of Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville. Pastor Perry Morgan will conduct the services. Burial will be at Seligman Cemetery in Seligman, Missouri.

Contributions may be made to Missouri Council of the Blind in memory of Charles.

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417-847-2141

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**JOHN EUGENE MILLER**

John Eugene Miller, passed away from cancer on December 23, 2025.

He was born on October 30, 1954, in Des Moines, Iowa to Carol and

Darlene Miller. Who preceded him in death.

Also preceding him in death was his stepmother, granddaughter, Samara Miller, and beloved sister, Linda Lemon.

Survivors include his wife, Teresa; his four sons, Matthew and wife Sarah of Clive, Iowa; Dustin of Des Moines, Iowa; Joshua and wife Lauren of Clive, Iowa; Sean of West Des Moines, Iowa; and nine grandchildren.

He graduated in 1973 from the Fremont-Mills school district.

They created JTVairs. Dubbed "the Corvair Rescue Team" they began a mission of educating, encouraging and rescuing Chevrolet's air cooled, rear engine 1960's vehicles. He

Teresa moved to Paris Springs Jct., Mo., an unincorporated village on Route 66 in 2015. John was a member of the Sac River Cowboy Church.

A memorial has been established at the Corvair Museum of America in Hastings NE. www.corvairmuseum.org Two services will be held with the first service at 2:00 P.M. January 17, 2026 at the Sac River Cowboy Church, 6448 State Highway 66 in Springfield, Missouri, and in the spring a celebration of life is being organized for our vintage

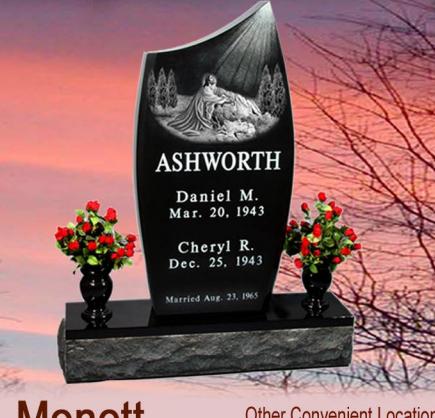
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Passing: TCE a possible factor

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aggressively, anywhere along the length of the spinal cord, from the tail bone to the brain.

The long-term prognosis is not favorable. According to the American Cancer Society, from 2000-2016, only 948 cases of anaplastic ependymoma were diagnosed in the US in people over the age of 15.

Shurtz took the news in characteristic stride. With verdict in hand, she prepared for battle for the sake of "her boys," her husband, Zach, and their 9-year-old son, Kade.

"Everyone around her was falling apart," Donna Carlo said. "But, Brit stayed calm. She was the voice of reason in the middle of chaos."

The following years brought chemotherapy, radiation, more surgeries and clinical trials with experimental drugs at research institutions around the country. The most they could do was buy time; more time for Shurtz to spend with her family, more time to watch her son grow, and to attend his wrestling matches and football games.

The cause of anaplastic ependymoma is unknown. Unlike with glioma brain tumors, environmental risk factors associated with ependymomas are not well established, states a Nov. 13, 2025, study published in the National Library of Medicine.

Shurtz's case, however, raises questions.

While in their early 20s with a newborn son, Britney and Zach Shurtz jumped at the chance to rent a brand-new duplex on West Commercial, a four-block segment of street in northwest Springfield, when it became available in 2008.

"It was a really nice location, we thought, with open [undeveloped] fields behind it, so it offered some privacy — kind of like living in the country, but in the city," Carlo said.

City water lines weren't installed along the street until 1997 — not long before construction on the duplexes began — said former City Utilities spokesperson, Joel Alexander.

Unbeknownst to Britney and Zach Shurtz and their families, the Tom Watkins Neighborhood upgrading to the north and east of their duplex was well-known among City and Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) personnel for its proximity to hazardous waste sites.

Three miles to the west and slightly to the north of the Shurtz duplex lay the former Litton Systems site, currently owned by Northrop Grumman, where, from 1964 through the early 1980s, Litton employees had dumped the industrial solvent trichloroethylene (TCE) into unlined lagoons and sinkholes on the property, after using the chemical as a cleaner on the circuit boards the company manufactured. With oversight by the DNR, the sampling and remediation of groundwater and soil on and beyond the property is ongoing.

By the end of 2023, approximately 998.5 pounds of [TCE] had been removed from the groundwater since groundwater extraction systems began operating in June 2019.

TCE is considered a known human carcinogen by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) characterizes the solvent as carcinogenic to humans by all routes of exposure, with "effects to the liver, kidneys, and immune and endocrine systems [observed] in humans exposed to TCE occupationally or from contaminated drinking water."

Chronic exposure to TCE by inhalation also affects the human central nervous system, cites the same EPA document.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6A

In some areas of the country, a three-mile separation between the Shurtz home and a toxic waste site would make contamination unlikely. However, in the Ozarks fractured karst hydrogeology — riddled with sinkholes, caves, losing streams and springs — contaminants in groundwater can travel rapidly. TCE has been detected in monitoring wells on and off the Litton property, including a site four miles to the east, where the DNR is searching for its source.

According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), as reported in 2016, TCE is the most frequently reported organic contaminant in groundwater.

Shurtz learned of the Litton site's pollution of groundwater in early 2018, shortly after her cancer diagnosis, when news broke that TCE vapors from Litton had infiltrated Fantastic Caverns, a commercial cave located four miles north of Springfield. Wondering if her cancer diagnosis could be connected with possible exposure to Litton's waste, Shurtz and her family moved to another area of Springfield a year or two later, after living at their West Commercial Street address for almost 10 years.

After moving, Shurtz recalled a site much closer to her previous home, a more likely source of pollution, she thought. Her aunt investigated.

Three blocks northeast and upgradient from the former Shurtz home, a chain-link fence, with posted notices that the site within was subject to a Hazardous Waste Management Permit, encircled a 68-acre property.

Official records for the site, located at 2800 West High Street, read like a serial saga, with the ending still anybody's guess.

The American Creosote Corporation and its successor, the Kerr-McGee (KM) Corporation (operating at times under different names) pressure-treated railroad ties with creosote on the property, from 1907-2003. For the majority of those years, personnel dumped creosote process waste into unlined lagoons on the site, which lies along a "peak" or "divide," above the surrounding terrain.

As is common in the Ozarks, the waste did not remain where it was "stored." The creosote sank, partially dissolved and migrated through soil and fissures in the karst bedrock, into groundwater, then traveled on and offsite in diverse directions.

Under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the former KM site is now considered a Closed Hazardous Waste Disposal Facility.

The site is now owned by the Greenfield Environmental Multistate Trust (the Trust) as the result of judicial appointment in 2011, following a bankruptcy settlement with a KM spinoff company, Tronox. Under the auspices of the Trust, with oversight by the DNR, the site has been, and continues to be, the subject of ongoing testing and attempted remediation of soil, air and groundwater, both on and beyond the property.

According to Trust documents filed with the DNR, a historic flooding event occurred in the neighborhood in June, 2017. Afterward, Outfall No. 2 contained elevated levels of Total Suspended

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8A

tion and capture creosote.

Contaminants of concern (COCs) from the KM site include, among other chemicals, Benzene, Toluene, Ethylene, and Xylenes and Naphthalene.

Aside from the chemical cocktail, the long-term side effects of Benzene, on its own, according to Drugwatch.com, include aplastic anemia, blood disorders [including leukemia], cancer, chromosomal abnormalities, excessive bleeding, reproductive issues and a weakened immune system.

Exposure to Benzene can occur through inhalation of airborne emissions (sometimes from vapors released upward through soil from groundwater), through oral ingestion, and through skin absorption by contact with contaminated water.

Although the EPA established a maximum permissible level of Benzene in drinking water at 5 parts Benzene, per billion parts of water (5 ppb), some scientists believe there is no safe exposure level.

"The Multistate Trust has removed more than 114 million gallons of water (about 8.7 million gallons a year) and 7,500 gallons of creosote from the ground (subsurface) since 2011, as part of the ongoing cleanup," Multistate Trust Springfield program director, Tasha Lewis, stated in an email to the Cassville Democrat in November 2025.

Attempted remediation at the KM site began in 1976, four years after a creosote-like substance was spotted surfacing in nearby Vich Spring after heavy rains. No attempt was made (in 1972) to determine the substance's origin, until after environmental laws were passed in 1976, state DNR records. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) then tracked the substance back to the KM facility.

New production methods and different waste-disposal means were implemented, but the pressure-treating of ties continued, until production ceased in 2003.

In 1990, the EPA developed the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Program in response to 1987 Amendments to the Clean Water Act, which require permits industries in several categories, including hazardous waste management. Per the new requirements, KM constructed two stormwater outfalls (a third was later added) which directed stormwater off the property to the northeast and to the west.

Outfall No. 2, on the west side of the property, directed stormwater downhill to the south and southwest, toward the Shurtz property and the Wilson's Creek drainage, beyond.

Stormwater outfalls, per NPDES regulations, are checked quarterly for COCs.

According to Trust documents filed with the DNR, a historic flooding event occurred in the neighborhood in June, 2017. Afterward, Outfall No. 2 contained elevated levels of Total Suspended

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8A

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car family.

Cremation arrangements are under direction of Fohn Funeral Home in Cassville.

FOHN FUNERAL HOME

Cassville, Missouri

417-847-2141

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Zach Shurtz, left, Britney Shurtz and Kade Shurtz are pictured a year or two after Britney's anaplastic ependymoma diagnosis. Contributed photo



Jan Goosey, foreground, a resident of West Commercial Street, in Springfield, points out the direction of stormwater flow to Tasha Lewis, Multistate Trust's Springfield program director. The Trust is responsible for the ongoing remediation of soil and groundwater on and off the former Kerr-McGee site at 2800 West High Street, approximately one half-mile northeast of Goosey's home. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads.com



Front: Britney Shurtz, as a Purdy High School graduate in 2005. Rear: Britney Shurtz, with husband, Zach, and son, Kade. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads.com

Passing: Shurtz did not know about contaminants prior to signing lease

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7A

Solids (TSS) — particles of debris to which toxins from the facility (if they were present) could attach and hitch a ride.

Shurtz first began experiencing the back pain that later proved to be cancer in July 2017 (one month after the June flooding event), Carlo said.

According to Trust documents, in December 2020, northwest Springfield experienced another major rain event while a cracked sewer main and sewer lines to the KM facility were being replaced by City employees. Outfall No. 2 again contained elevated levels of TSS.

The cracked sewer main adjacent to the KM facility was discovered in September 2020, when City employees smelled, then spotted, sewage emerging from a stormwater outfall. It isn't clear how long the sewer main had been cracked before the sewage was spotted, but the damage could have allowed sewage to infiltrate ground and surface waters, Trust documents indicate.

Remediated groundwater from both the Litton and the former KM facility are released into the Springfield sanitary sewer system.

The recovery-well system at the KM facility was offline between October 30, 2020, and April 15, 2021, while the City replaced sewer lines.

In July 2023, five-and-a-half years after her initial diagnosis, Britney Shurtz laid down her sword, choosing not to fight a brain tumor that had grown too large to safely remove by the time it was discovered.

"Brit had a total of 28 different treatments (including multiple surgeries) during five-and-a-half years," Carlo said.

Not once did Shurtz give in to despair.

"The outcome is in God's hands," Shurtz said often, from faith that remained steadfast until she drew her last breath.

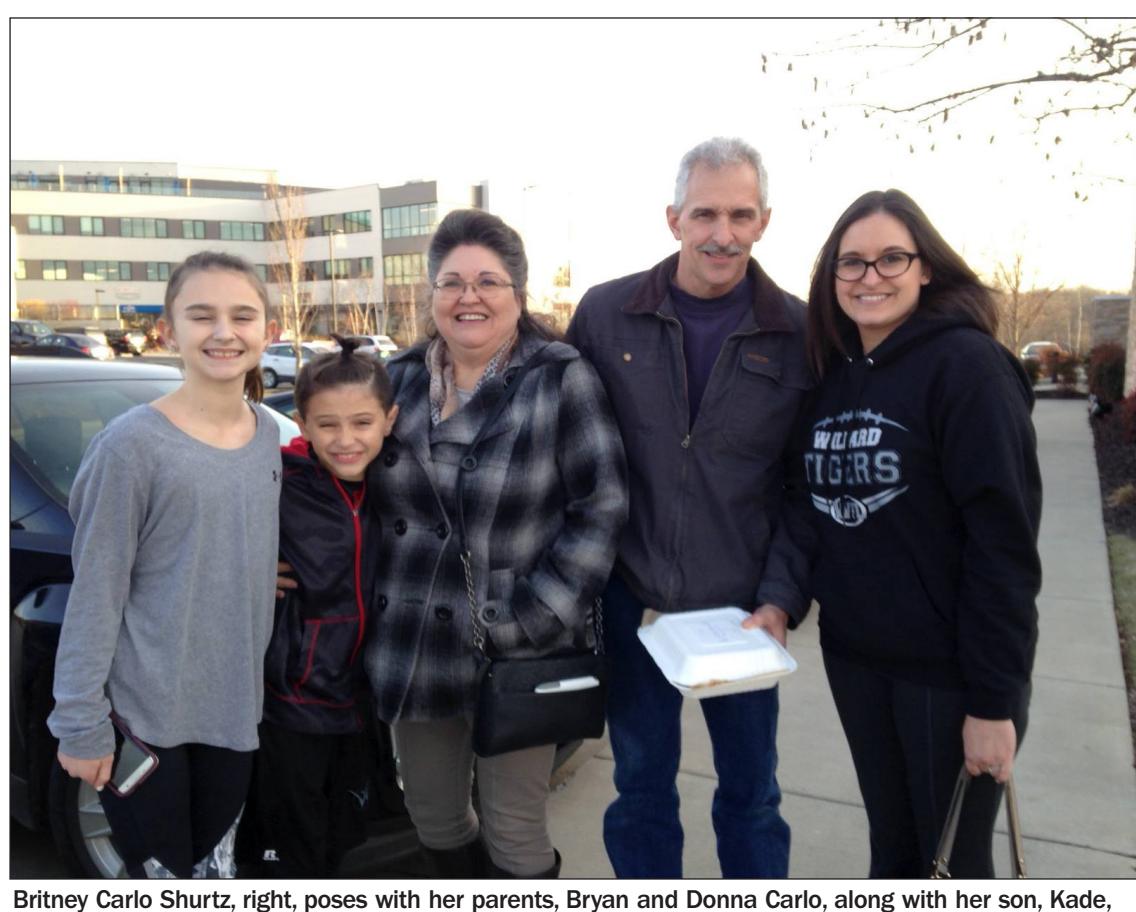
Her example of faith, on its own, will stand as Shurtz's legacy. With her courage in the face of adversity, she cleared the way for her family and close friends, showing them how the path should be traveled.

However, her passing may also serve the purpose of alerting prospective tenants and home-buyers to the importance of researching the surrounding area prior to renting or purchasing. Currently, there are no laws in Missouri requiring the disclosure of nearby hazardous waste sites.

In 2024, a year after her niece's death, Shurtz's aunt learned that other residents on West Commercial Street had been diagnosed with illnesses that could also be associated with exposure to chemicals. Jan Goosey, 74, was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune liver disorder two years before, and another neighbor's child had been diagnosed with leukemia at about the same time. Yet another neighbor, who lived two blocks northeast of the Shurtz home (and nearer to the KM site), had been diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder that affects the central nervous system during the same time frame.

Many neighbors to the north and east of the facility, Shurtz's aunt also knew, had experienced health anomalies, although many of theirs had occurred while the facility was still operational.

The serious health issues among the handful of neighbors



Britney Shurtz, right, poses with her parents, Bryan and Donna Carlo, along with her son, Kade, and niece, Lily, not long after her first surgery in 2018. Contributed photo



The former Kerr-McGee Corporation, along with its predecessor, the American Creosote Corporation, pressure-treated railroad ties with creosote on the 68-acre property, located at 2800 West High Street, in Springfield, for almost 100 years. The site lies, where recovery wells work around the clock (barring interruptions) to contain contaminated groundwater, lies within a half-mile upgradient from Britney Shurtz's former home on West Commercial Street. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads.com

in close proximity to the former Shurtz home, all of which could be associated with chemical exposure, seemed, to Shurtz's aunt, to be more than a coincidence.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS) initiated a cancer study of the neighborhood, focused solely on anaplastic ependymoma, the specific (and rare) type of cancer that Shurtz had been diagnosed with. Other types of cancers and illnesses were not taken into consideration.

"I felt like the cancer study was only designed to pacify me, not because of any concern for other neighborhood residents," Shurtz's aunt said.

Tracking contaminants in karst can play out like a game of cat-and-mouse, with detectives often on the losing end, Shurtz's aunt knew.

Some happenings defy explanation, cancer diagnoses included. Individual variables stack the deck, including genetic factors, length of exposure to toxins, incubation periods, a person's lifestyle and the strength of a person's immune system.

"Brit was always susceptible to issues with water," Donna Carlo said. "She quit wading in the creek when she was young because she'd break out with red bumps on her feet. Nobody else had a problem."

Since the Trust assumed responsibility for the KM site in 2011, most of the remedial focus of the project has been along a northeasterly trajectory from the facility, in the direction of Fulbright Spring, a public drinking water source. Samples from several monitoring wells in that direction consistently show contaminants of concern above Groundwater Protective Standards (GWPS), although no facility-related contaminants above health limits have been found in Fulbright, Lewis said.

In comparison to the area along the Clifton drainage to the northeast of the facility, scant attention has been paid to areas to the southwest of it, where groundwater and surface water drain southwesterly toward the former Shurtz home and Wilson's Creek.

Of two monitoring wells installed in the residential area southwest of the facility a few

years ago, one was dry, and the second showed no contaminants of concern above GWPS. Trust personnel decided no further testing was needed, even though the possibility of downward percolation and flow of contaminants in that direction could, in theory, still exist.

Based on a tip, Shurtz's aunt took a closer look at the neighborhood south/southwest of the facility in 2024.

She discovered that an Environmental Site Assessment (EA) had been performed on a property that revealed the presence of five Underground Storage Tanks, installed in 1975 and closed in place — contents included — sometime before state tank-closure regulations were established in 2004. Two of the tanks contained solvents, one contained petroleum, and two others were reportedly empty. The tanks, stated the results of the EA, posed a direct threat to properties to the south if they were to leak.

According to industry experts, the single-walled steel tanks used in 1975 are subject to corrosion and typically have no more than a 30-year lifespan.

To complicate contaminant-tracking, if the tanks south of the KM site were to leak, their analytes would be the same as those of KM's hazardous releases, Ken Koon, then-director of the DNR Tanks Division, told the Cassville Democrat in 2024.

In October 2024, Lewis took a walking tour of the neighborhood where Britney Shurtz had once lived. Lewis looked at the site where the five solvent tanks were buried, and she spoke with Shurtz's neighbor, Jan Goosey, who explained how stormwater impacted the property after major rain events, how it descended from streets above and pooled across the backyards of the duplexes, before subsiding and wending southwesterly.

"Kade and I used to get out and play in the stormwater-lakes in our yard after it rained," Shurtz once told her aunt.

The neighbor two blocks northeast of Shurtz, who was later diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder, played in the pooled stormwater with her son, too.

After the tour, Lewis made plans to sample the soil in the yards of two residences to the south of the facility's Stormwater Outfall No. 2, where stormwater exited to the west and made its way south along Golden Avenue, in the direction of the former Shurtz home.

That soil sampling never happened.

"I wasn't able to get the property-owners' permission," Lewis said in November 2025.

She implied that no further attempts would be made.

While a concrete answer regarding an environmental source of Shurtz's cancer will likely never be pinned down, multiple possibilities have been unearthed, including contaminated stormwater; contaminated ground or drinking water; pollution from leaking storage tanks; and the release of toxic vapors from soil contaminated with more than 100 years of run-off from the KM facility — perhaps unearthed when the West Commercial Street duplexes were constructed in the previously undisturbed field in the Wilson's Creek drainage.

Carlo questions why Springfield officials ever allowed residential housing to be built so near a known hazardous waste site.

"It's got to be about money," she said.

Most of the residences located nearest to the former Kerr-McGee facility are income-generating, rental properties, and most were constructed prior to Hazardous Waste Management legislation enacted in 1976.

Neither Britney Shurtz nor any of the neighbors her aunt spoke with were aware that an ongoing hazardous waste remediation site existed so close to their homes. Current law does not require that landlords disclose such sites.

Britney Shurtz said that if she had known about the nearby contaminated site before she and Zach signed a lease, she would never have moved into that neighborhood.

Kimberly Mullins, a former resident of the John B. Hughes apartment complex to the east of the KM facility, said she didn't have many options when she moved into her apartment.

"It would have been nice to be able to make an informed decision, though," Mullins said.

CASSVILLE HOOPS

What: Boys and girls teams both go 1-2 in Berryville, Ark., tournament
Boys: Played first two games well and bouncing back from third
Girls: Won opener, saw things to work on not noticed earlier in season

Cassville squads both 1-2 in Berryville

Wildcats, Lady Wildcats look toward conference play

BY KYLE TROUTMAN

ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com
The Cassville boys and girls basketball teams both played in the Berryville Holiday Tournament in Arkansas last week, each posting 1-2 records after playing well in two games and struggling in their third.

Mike Ray, Cassville boys basketball coach, said in the Wildcats' opener against host and eventual champion Berryville (Ark.), the team played solid.

"We had a chance late in the fourth quarter to tie it, but we lost by 6," he said. "We played well against Valley Springs (Ark.) in a 50-42 win, then we lost the last game to Mountain View (Ark.), 53-30. I don't know if we ran out of gas or didn't handle the break well. Mountain View is a good team but not 23 points better than us. We played those first two games well and have to bounce back from the third and see where we are this week."

Clayton Bagby, Cassville girls basketball coach, said the Lady Wildcats shared a similar fate.

"In our first game against Green Forest (Ark.), we got off to a slow start, but our defense played well," he said. "When we didn't have our best day shooting, we were able to pull away in the third quarter and get the win, 53-34. Our last two games, we played two really good teams with 26 wins between them."

"We're trying to figure out our starts. We went down 18 to Berryville and had a chance in the fourth quarter to cut it to 2, but they extended it back out. Against Valley Springs, the toll of the last two games got to us, and we were a little tired. We didn't execute or play defense as well. We held them to 41, but we didn't give ourselves a chance to win with our execution."

Ray said while the final contest was a tough one, over the course of the tournament, the Wildcats progressed.

"We are starting to get our roles more identified," Ray said. "We've had a lot of guys missing for injuries or other reasons. In fact, we haven't had a practice all season where we've had the full team. We enjoyed some continuity over the break, but we still have a long way to go."

Ray said his upperclassmen performed well in Arkansas, and that helped the underclassmen level up as well.

"It's a more physical style of play in Arkansas than we see in Missouri, and we hope that last day was an outlier," he said.

Bagby said the Lady Wildcats knew they were facing stiff competition in Arkansas, and he echoed the sentiment about physicality.

"We knew it would be tough to play for first in that tournament because there were two 13-win teams," he said. "But I thought we did a good job playing a little different type of basketball. It was more physical, and we were able to handle that better as it went on. We hope that benefits us as we move into conference play."

Ray said on Monday the Wildcats were prepping for Tuesday's Big 8 contest against Aurora.

"They won districts last year and return a couple of players, so that's a good test for us," he said. "On Friday, we play at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6B

EAST NEWTON SWEEPS HOLIDAY TOURNEYS



Southwest's Jaretsi Quintanilla rises for 2 in a win over Wheaton at the Southwest Girls Holiday Tournament. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

Lady Trojans post best local finish in 3rd place

BY KYLE TROUTMAN

ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com
It was a patriotic four days of basketball at Southwest High School over the winter break, as East Newton's boys and girls doubled up in tournament titles.

The Patriots defeated Monett, 40-23, in the championship of the 43rd Annual Southwest Boys Holiday Tournament, and the Lady Patriots topped Forsyth, 58-38, in the 12th Annual Southwest Girls Holiday Tournament.

Of the six local teams participating, the Southwest girls posted the best finish, taking third place with a 54-52

victory over Seneca. Wheaton's girls finished in fifth place and Purdy took seventh.

In the boys tournament, the Trojans finished in fourth place, Purdy took sixth and Wheaton landed seventh.

Southwest boys coach Jeff Treat said the Trojans, the No. 7 seed, got off to a hot start and gained some early confidence with a 39-29 upset of No. 2 seed McAuley, 36-29.

"We got another confidence booster from beating a quality McAuley team," he said. "At the beginning of the year, the question was, can we beat good teams and win close games, and that

game helped us realize that we can do that. We know scoring has been a struggle all year, but we are not striving to be a good defensive team, we're striving to be elite. We are not quite there yet, but we are on the right track."

"We also saw hadn't seen much zone before this tournament, and every team this tournament we played against, the majority of the time, the other team went zone."

Southwest went on to fall to Monett, 40-32, then to SWMO Rush, 60-44. Leading a young squad, Treat said the tournament provided a solid learning

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6B

Wrestling teams grapple in Diamond State Duals

Wildcats garner 9 medals in Arkansas

The Cassville boys wrestling team took 19 wrestlers to the Diamond State Lady Invitational in Springdale, Ark., Jan. 2-3, coming home with nine medals and a third-place team finish among 17 squads. Full results include:

113: Boni Lopez (20-4) placed 3rd and scored 5.5 team points

• Round 2 - Boni Lopez 20-4 won by tech fall over Emerald Emerald (Springdale) 0-5 (TF-1.5 1:17 (15-0))

• Round 3 - Boni Lopez 20-4 won by fall over Zhan Baker (Mountain Home) 9-8 (Fall 1:05)

• Quarterfinal - Boni Lopez 20-4 won by fall over Timothy Kaiser (Greenwood) 8-12 (Fall 1:05)

• Semifinal - Caleb Kelley (Salina) 10-5 won by decision over Boni Lopez 20-4 (Dec 7-3)

• Cons. Semi - Boni Lopez 20-4 won by fall over Zhan Baker (Mountain Home) 9-8 (Fall 0:27)

120: Trevor Garnett (9-11) placed 7th and scored 9.5 team points

• Round 2 - Trevor Garnett 9-11 won by decision over Helten Aikuj (Har-Ber) 10-4 (Dec 11-10)

• Round 3 - Trevor Garnett 9-11 won by forfeit over Denver Sponer (Southside) 2-3 (For.)

• Quarterfinal - Asher Copeland (Har-Ber) 20-7 won by fall over Trevor Garnett 9-11 (Fall 3:57)

• Cons. Round 2 - Boston King (Salina) 3-3 won by decision over Trevor Garnett 9-11 (Dec 4-1)

• 7th Place Match - Trevor Garnett 9-11 won by tech fall over Antony Serrano (Green Forest) 2-4 (TF-1.5 1:32 (15-0))

120: Noah Uria (1-4) placed 16th.

• Round 1 - Kolten Terwilliger (Salina) 11-2 won by fall over Noah Uria 1-4 (Fall 0:42)

• Round 2 - Noah Uria 1-4 won by forfeit over Kimothy Rodgers (Greenwood) 0-4 (For.)

• Round 3 - Antony Serrano (Green Forest) 2-4 won by fall over Noah Uria 1-4 (Fall 5:49)

• Cons. Round 1 - Jaxson Garcia (Seneca) 5-9 won by forfeit over Noah Uria 1-4 (For.)

• Cons. Round 2 - Denver Sponer (Southside) 2-3 won by forfeit over Noah Uria 1-4 (For.)

126: Rylen Holman (14-4) placed 5th and scored 17.5 team points

• Round 1 - Jared Hooe (Shiloh Christian) 5-1 won by fall over Rylen Holman 14-4 (Fall 1:17)

• Round 2 - Rylen Holman 14-4 won by fall over Nolan Davis (Neville) 4-13 (Fall 1:24)

• Cons. Round 2 - Rylen Holman 14-4 won by fall over Mikey Hess (Salina) 4-8 (Fall 1:00)

• Quarterfinal - Landon Herman (Lakeside) 20-4 won by fall over Rylen Holman 14-4 (Fall 5:38)

• Cons. Round 2 - Rylen Holman 14-4 won by fall over Dylan Friend (Greenwood) 13-5 (TF-1.5 2:20 (16-0))

• 5th Place Match - Rylen Holman 14-4 won by major decision over Seth King (Mountain Home) 12-6 (MD 13-4)

126: Michael Winchell (2-4) placed 12th.

• Round 1 - Michael Winchell 2-4 won by tech fall over Fabian Rangel (Berryville) 2-6 (TF-1.5 4:15 (23-8))

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Girls Wrestling

1/9	Monett Tournament	Away
1/13	Joplin	Away 1:30 pm
1/16	Branson Tournament	Away
1/20	Cassville/Reeds Spring/Hollister	Away 5:00 pm
1/21	Big 8 Girls Tournament	Home 5:00 pm
1/22	McDonald County	Away 6:00 pm
1/27	Seneca	Home 5:00 pm
1/29	Monett	Away 6:00 pm
2/5	Rogersville/Bolivar	Away 5:00 pm

1/9	McDonald County	Away 7:15 pm
1/12-17	59th Annual Crane Invitational	Neutral
1/19	Hollister	Home 8:00 pm
1/23	Neosho	Away 7:15 pm
1/27	Lamar	Home 7:00 pm
1/30	Seneca	Home 7:15 pm
2/3	Monett	Away 7:15 pm
2/6	Skyline	Home 6:00 pm
2/10	East Newton	Home 7:15 pm
2/13	Mt. Vernon	Away 7:15 pm
2/17	Southwest	Home 7:15 pm

Girls Basketball

1/9	McDonald County	Away 6:00 pm
1/15	Central	Home 7:15 pm
1/19	Forsyth	Away 7:30 pm
1/20	Springfield Catholic	Home 7:15 pm
1/22	Pleasant Hope	Away 6:00 pm
1/26	Lamar	Home 7:00 pm
1/29	Seneca	Home 7:00 pm
2/2	Monett	Away 7:00 pm
2/5	Ash Grove	Away 7:15 pm
2/9	East Newton	Home 7:00 pm
2/12	Mt. Vernon	Away 7:00 pm
2/20	Nevada	Home 7:00 pm
2/24	Neosho	Away 7:00 pm

1/10	Monett Tournament	Neutral
1/13	Joplin	Away 1:30 pm
1/17	Branson Tournament	Neutral
1/20	Cassville/Reeds Spring/Hollister	Away 5:00 pm
1/22	McDonald County	Away 6:00 pm
1/23	Big 8 Conference Tournament	Away
1/27	Seneca	Home 6:00 pm
1/29	Monett	Away 6:00 pm
1/31	Peoples Bank of Seneca	Away
2/5	Rogersville/Bolivar	Away 5:00 pm

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Have a story idea? Email it to ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com, or call 417-847-2610!

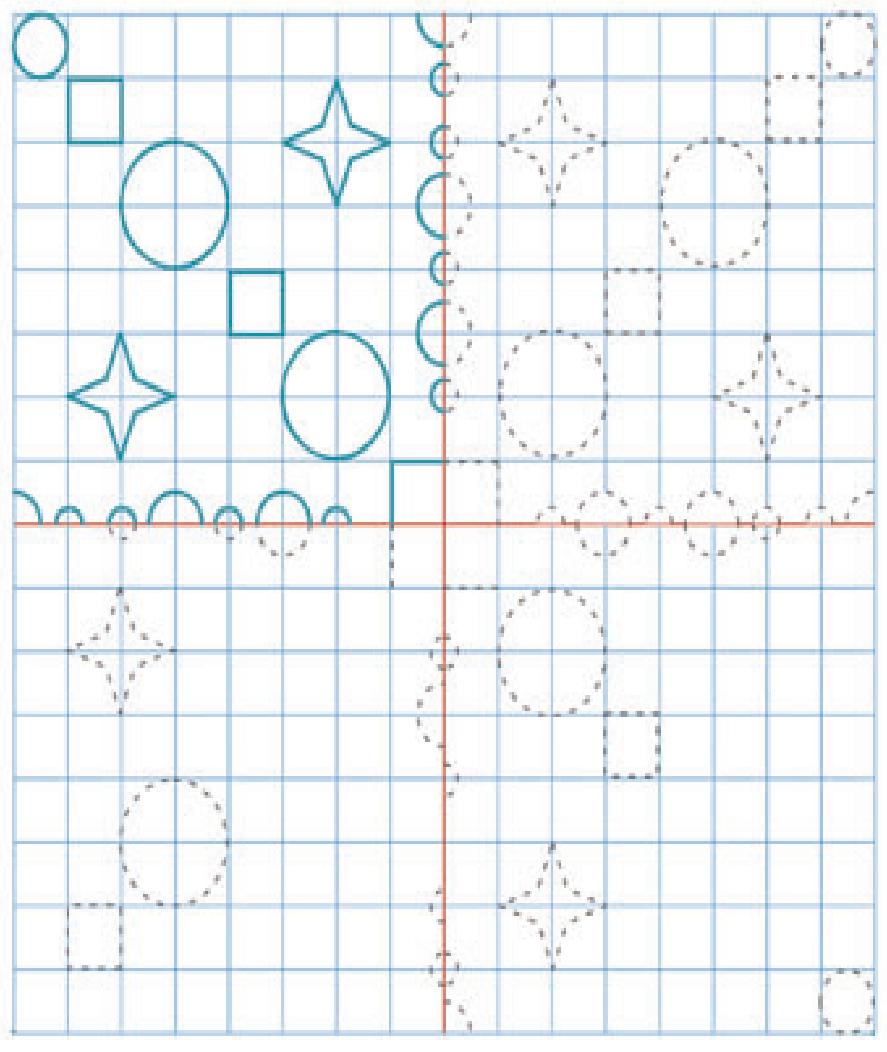
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MIRROR IMAGE

DRAW THE MIRROR IMAGE OF THE PICTURE YOU SEE



JUST kidding

Q: How do you shoot a killer bee?

A: With a bee-bee gun.



JUST kidding

Q: Why did the tree go to the dentist?

A: To get a root canal.



JUST kidding

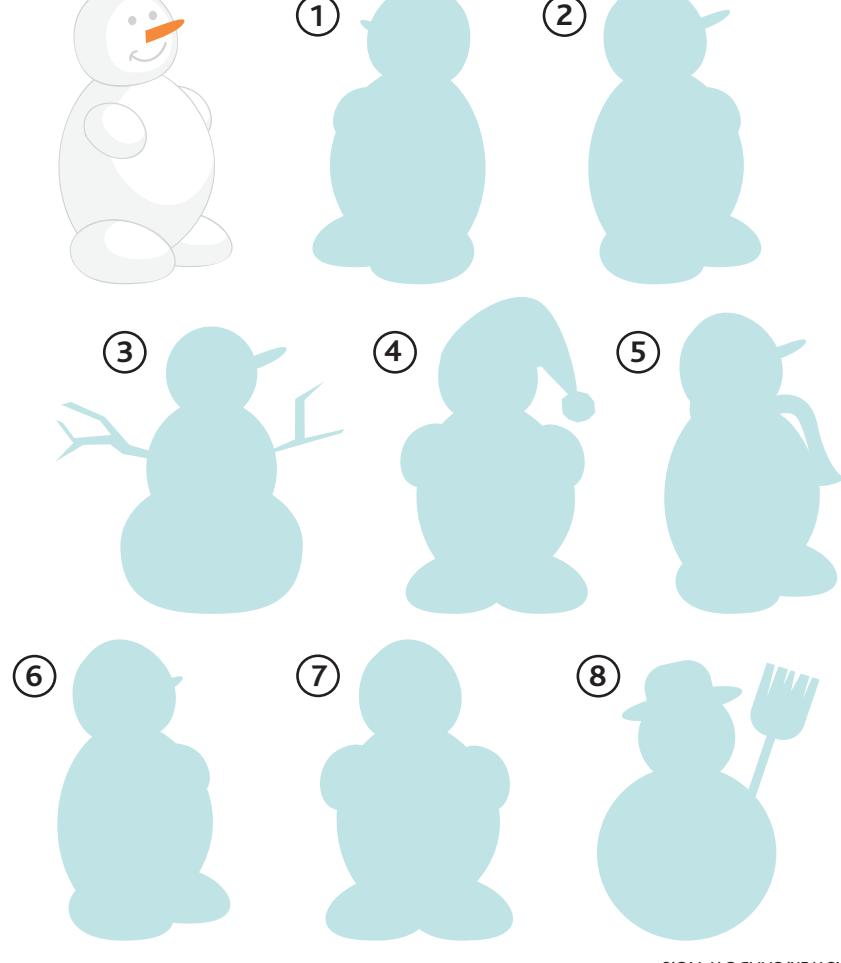
Q: What's blue and has big ears?

A: An elephant at the North Pole!



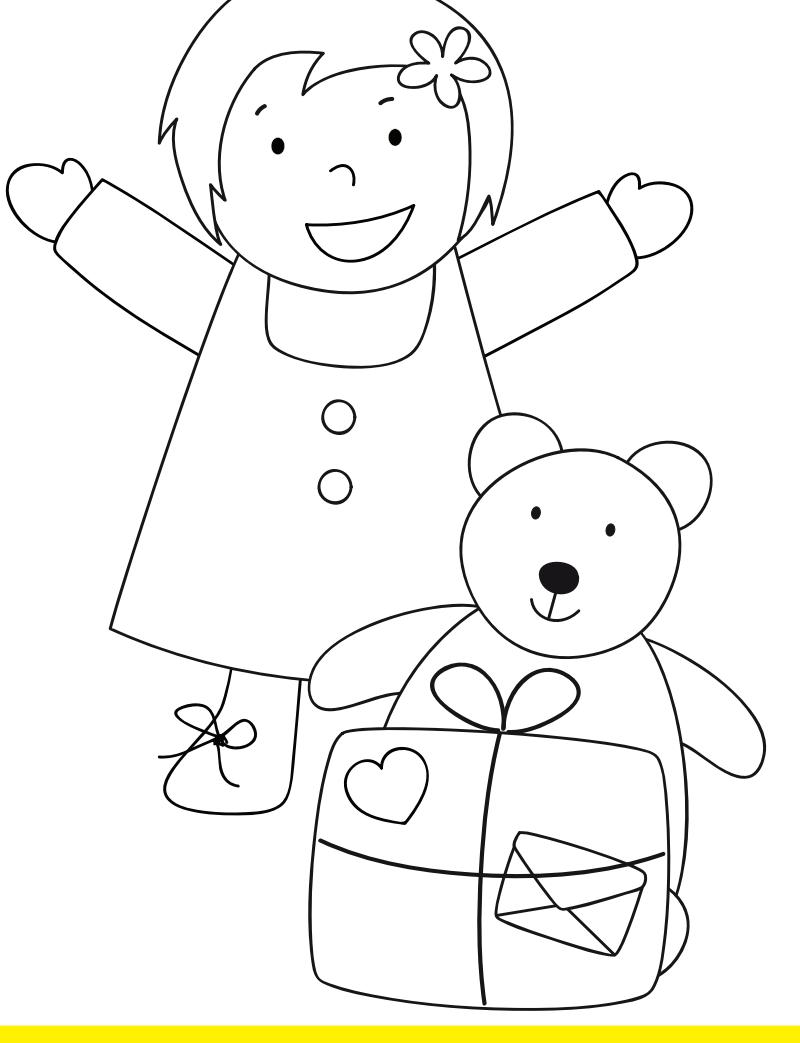
Private eye

Can you find the snowman's shadow?

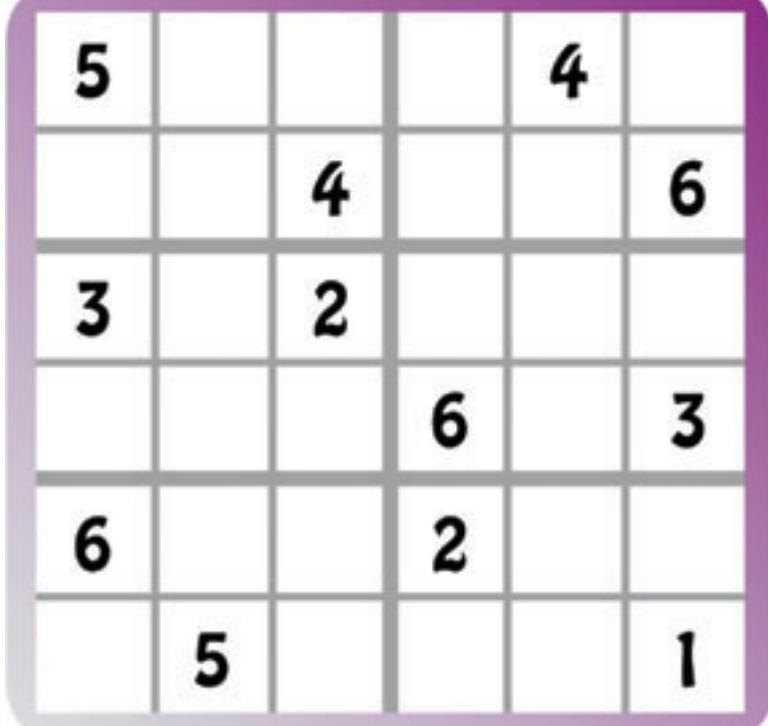


ANSWER: SHADOW NO. 6

For the up-and-coming artist



Sudoku 6x6



COMPLETE EACH GRID WITH NUMBERS FROM 1 TO 6, KEEPING IN MIND THAT:

- a number can only appear once per row
- a number can only appear once per column
- a number can only appear once in each box of 6 squares

1	2	3	4	5	6
2	3	4	5	6	1
3	4	5	6	1	2
4	5	6	1	2	3
5	6	1	2	3	4
6	1	2	3	4	5

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CASSVILLE AREA DEVOTIONAL PAGE

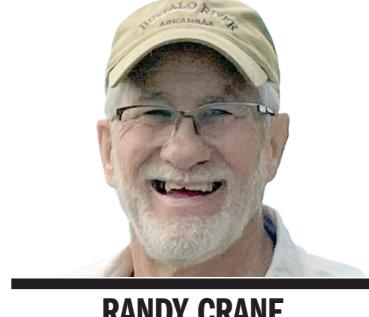
This devotional and directory is made possible by these businesses who encourage all to attend worship services.

A Godly resolution: Make it a priority to be like Jesus Christ

"A true and faithful Christian does not make holy living an accidental thing. It is his great concern. As the business of the soldier is to fight, so the business of the Christian is to be like Christ." Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).

Lots of people make New Year's Resolutions, many of which will have to do with losing weight or exercising more. I'd like to suggest a more significant resolution. In the quote above, Jonathan Edwards says to be Christ-like should be the "great concern" of every true and faithful Christian. For Christians, this should be a high priority 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, all our life — a powerful, profound resolution for every year!

Christ-like character can be gained from studying Christ, his life and his own priorities. When we do so, we will see that it was the will of the Father and the truth of the Scriptures that motivated him. One suggestion then, is that you read the four



RANDY CRANE

Gospel accounts through several times this year. Besides reading of Jesus' life and listening to his teaching in the Gospels, let me offer the following quotes to guide you along in a greater knowledge of God and His will for your life. (Suggestion: besides the suggestion to read through the Gospels, save these quotes and read through them each week of the year.)

"There's a difference between knowing God and knowing about God. When you truly know God, you have energy to

serve Him, boldness to share Him, and contentment in Him." — J. I. Packer

"Faith is not an instinct. It certainly is not a feeling — feelings don't help much when you're in the lions' den or hanging on a wooden Cross. Faith is not inferred from the happy way things work. It is an act of will, a choice, based on the unbreakable Word of a God who cannot lie, and who showed us what love and obedience and sacrifice mean, in the person of Jesus Christ." — Elisabeth Elliot

"It is grace at the beginning, and grace at the end. So that when you and I come to lie upon our death beds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us there is the thing that helped us in the beginning. Not what we have been, not what we have done, but the Grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with

grace. Grace wondrous grace. By the grace of God I am what I am. Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me." — D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength — carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength." — Corrie Ten Boom

"The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by acceptance. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives." — Rebeca

Manley Pippert

"All of us have areas of weakness. God wants these character flaws to show us how totally dependent we are upon Him. When we handle them properly, they drive us into a deeper, more intimate relationship with the Lord. But uncontrolled weakness wrecks havoc in a person's life." — Charles Stanley

"What do we want? What would we be doing? What do our souls desire? Is it not that we might have a more full, clear, stable comprehension of the wisdom, love, grace, goodness, holiness, righteousness, and power of God, as declared and exalted in Christ unto our redemption and eternal salvation?" — John Owen.

Rev. Randy Crane is the pastor at Waldensian Presbyterian Church in Monett. He may be reached at cranes5@hotmail.com.

BIBLE VERSE:

"Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

— ISAIAH 1:16-17

CHURCH DIRECTORY

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
Please check your ad the first day of publication. If it contains an error, report it to the *Cassville Democrat*. Errors will be corrected, and credit will be issued for the first day of publications only. The *Cassville Democrat* shall not be liable for any loss or expense that results from the publication (whether published correctly or not) or omission of an advertisement.

FOR RENT

FOR RENT: 2BR, 1BA, country setting, close in Cassville, \$850 per month. Serious inquiries only. 417-848-5556.

FOR RENT: In Purdy, 2BR house, central air & heat, fenced yard, storage building, \$850/mo plus deposit. Call 417-847-2808.

PETS

PUPPIES: 4 female Frenchies for sale. 6 months old. \$500 each. Call 316-579-6316.

MISCELLANEOUS**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given of my claim of homestead and land rights in and to the following property:

Property Address:

16384 Fr 1227
Jenkins,
Barry county,
Mo 65605

Patent number
136666

Legal Description:
the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of section 20, towns p 25-range 25, Barry county, Missouri, except any part taken or used for roads As yet forth in the Deed Of Trust recorded in Barry County Recorder of Deeds, Bock 24, Page 4015, Instrument No. G24-152227, and fully incorporated herein by reference.

Said property is claimed under homestead rights and is hereby withdrawn from all presumptions of abandonment. This claim is for the protection and preservation of said property for the benefit of my family, heirs, and assigns.

This notice is published in accordance with homestead/land patent requirements.

Dated this 26 day of November, 2025.

Jeffrey Buchanan

1st insertion 12/17/25

49-52

is Petition for Dissolution of Marriage for which affects the division of personal property and custody of children.

The names of all parties to the said suit are stated above in the caption hereof and the name

and address of the attorney for petitioner is Fares H. Masri,

405 Broadway,
P.O. Box 151,
Monett, MO 65708.

You are further notified that, unless you file an answer or pleading or shall otherwise appear

and defend against the aforesaid petition within forty-five (45) days after the 24th day of

December 2025, judgment by default will be rendered against you.

It is ordered that a copy hereof be published according to law in The *Cassville Democrat*, a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of Barry, State of Missouri.

Witness my hand and seal of the Circuit Court, State of Missouri, the 17th day of

December 2025.

Craig Williams
Circuit Clerk
By Katie CORREIA/DC
First Publication:

DECEMBER 24, 2025
Second Publication:

DECEMBER 31, 2025

Third Publication:

JANUARY 07, 2026

Fourth Publication:

JANUARY 14, 2026

1st insertion 12/24/25

50-1

PUBLIC HEARING

Public hearing for the property at 7509 Little Street in Seligman, MO 65745.

Parcel Number
27-5-0-22-001-002-0002.000.

I wish to go before the Seligman Planning and Zoning Commission and request their recommendation to rezone this property. Their recommendation will then be taken before

the Seligman City Council to request the actual rezoning.

The property is currently zoned as Agricultural on the south side of State Hwy DD and RI on the north side.

I wish to rezone the south side to RI so that all the property is zoned the

same, with the end goal of adding a city street and house lots for new construction.

Any comments or concerns can be addressed at the hearing during the scheduled Planning and Zoning Meeting on January 19, 2026, at 7:00 PM

1st insertion 01/07/26

52-1

TRUSTEE'S SALES**NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE**

For default in the payment of debt secured by a deed of trust executed by

Betty Szekely;

Zara A. Wright,
dated December 30,

2024, and recorded on

January 2, 2025, Document

No. 202500005, in Book No.

25, at Page 5 in the Office

of the Recorder of Deeds,

Barry County, Missouri, the

undersigned Successor

Trustee will on February

4, 2026, at 9:30 AM, at

the East Front Door of the

Barry County Courthouse,

Cassville, Missouri, sell at

public vendue to the highest

bidder for cash:

LOTS 1, 2, AND 3, BLOCK 2, SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION TO THE CITY OF CASSVILLE, BARRY COUNTY, MISSOURI.

ALSO, A TRACT OF LAND DESCRIBED

175: Colton Roark (26-1) placed 1st and scored 44.0 team points

• Round 1 - Colton Roark 26-1 won by fall over Ulises Rodriguez-ayala (Springdale) 0-4 (Fall 4:41)

• Cons. Semi - Mason Rillstone 14-4 won by fall over Corbin Lefevres (Mountain Home) 15-6 (Fall 2:54)

• 3rd Place Match - Mason Rillstone 14-4 won by fall over Cason Irvin (Shiloh Christian) 5-2 (Fall 4:37)

190: Zachary Myers (22-3) placed 3rd and scored 30.0 team points

AS FOLLOWS: COMMENCING AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF LOT 1, BLOCK 2, SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION TO THE CITY OF CASSVILLE, MISSOURI, THENCE SOUTHERLY AND ALONG THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF THE PUBLIC ROAD A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 25 FEET AND TO THE CENTER OF THE VACATED STREET THAT WAS 50 FEET WIDE, THENCE WESTERLY AND PARALLEL TO THE SOUTH BOUNDARY LINE OF SAID LOT 1, BLOCK 2 AFORESAID A DISTANCE OF 162 FEET, THENCE NORTH 25 FEET TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER

OF SAID LOT 1, BLOCK 2 AFORESAID, THENCE EASTERLY ALONG THE SOUTH BOUNDARY LINE OF SAID LOT 1, BLOCK 2 OF SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION AFORESAID TO POINT OF BEGINNING, SAME BEING THE NORTH HALF OF A VACATED STREET THAT WAS IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF LOT 1, BLOCK 2, SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION TO THE CITY OF CASSVILLE, BARRY COUNTY, MISSOURI. ALSO, ALL THAT PART OF THE EAST 5 FEET OF AN ALLEY 10 FEET WIDE RUNNING NORTH AND SOUTH BETWEEN LOTS 42 AND LOTS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

6 AND 7, BLOCK 2, SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION TO THE CITY OF CASSVILLE, BARRY COUNTY, MISSOURI, THAT JOINS LOTS 1, 2 AND 3, BLOCK 2, OF SMITH AND HAYES ADDITION TO THE CITY OF CASSVILLE, MISSOURI, commonly known as 1600 Main St, Cassville, MO, 65625 subject to all prior easements, restrictions, reservations, covenants and encumbrances now of record, if any, to satisfy the debt and costs.

SouthLaw,
Successor Trustee
First Publication:
January 7, 2026.
For more information,

visit www.southlaw.com

NOTICE

Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §1692c(b), no information concerning the collection of this debt may be given without the prior consent of the consumer given directly to the debt collector or the express permission of a court of competent jurisdiction. The debt collector is attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose (Casefile No. 256047-1078475).

1st insertion 1/7/26

52-3

Wrestling: Girls 7th as a team in Springdale, Ark.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

- 1st Place Match - Eli Manley (Seneca) 16-0 won by tech fall over Kellen Welyd 17-8 (TF-1.3:18 (16-1))
- 144: Logan Parsons (15-10) placed 11th and scored 5.0 team points
 - Round 2 - Jack Hooe (Shiloh Christian) 3-2 won by fall over Logan Parsons 15-10 (Fall 1:38)
 - Round 3 - Caddo Gilmore (Lake Hamilton) 4-1 won by tech fall over Logan Parsons 15-10 (TF-1.5:4:09 (15-0))
 - Cons. Round 1 - Logan Parsons 15-10 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 2:02)
 - Cons. Round 2 - Julio Roman (Lakeside) 15-10 won by fall over Logan Parsons 15-10 (Fall 1:50)
 - 11th Place Match - Logan Parsons 15-10 won by fall over Matthew Velasquez (Southside) 2-4 (Fall 1:50)
 - Round 1 - Brant Laughlin (Seneca) 18-0 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 1:08)
 - Round 2 - Asher George (Har-Ber) 13-7 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 1:05)
 - Round 3 - Emanuel Mondragon (Springdale) 2-3 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 4:50)
 - Cons. Round 1 - Logan Parsons 15-10 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 2:02)
 - Cons. Round 2 - Zaiden Hall 1-5 won by fall over Kiptin Stanley (Shiloh Christian) 0-5 (Fall 0:20)
 - 13th Place Match - Gannon Smalley (Fairland) 1-4 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 4:43)
 - 11th Place Match - Kamareus Shepherd (Northside) 2-3 won by fall over Tyler Annecharico 2-4 (Fall 2:26)
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 - Round 2 - Brant Laughlin (Seneca) 18-0 won by fall over Zaiden Hall 1-5 (Fall 1:08)
 - Round 3 - Caddo Gilmore (



Purdy's Damon Mahurin goes for a rebound in action at the Southwest Boys Holiday Tournament. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com



Southwest's Skyler Reines releases a layup in a contest at the Southwest Boys Holiday Tournament. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

Southwest: Local coaches break down performances at annual tournament

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experience.

"With our young group, it was a good experience to play in front of a lot of people in pressure environments," he said. "When you get deeper into the season, the pressure is going to start rising, and hopefully, the experiences we got in the tournament will help us."

Brad Stewart, Purdy coach, said for the Eagles, each game was a tale of two halves. Purdy fell to SWMO Rush, 64-46, then defeated Wheaton, 62-42, and fell to McAuley in overtime, 48-47.

"We played an excellent first half versus all three teams," Stewart said. "After a tougher first half against Rush, we played them dead even 34-34 in the second half. We were up by double digits against Wheaton and McAuley, 22 and 12, and we were unable to hold off a late McAuley surge."

Like their southern Barry County counterparts, Stewart said the Eagles also endured a learning experience.

"We learned we are capable of some stellar play," he said. "We need consistency and the ability to finish games moving forward."

Sean Crane, Wheaton boys coach, said the Bulldogs may not have hit marks they hoped, but it was positive to finish on a win.

"We didn't play our best in this tournament, but we did bounce back and play pretty well against Seneca," he said. "I think we have made major strides so far this season, and I look forward to that continuing. I'm not sure the tournament itself helps us a ton, but all of games combined so far this season has set up well. We are playing good competition so far. At 6-7,



Wheaton's Brody Bateman handles a ball by the baseline during action at the Southwest Boys Holiday Tournament. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com



Wheaton's Perla Hinojosa puts up a shot during play at the Southwest Girls Holiday Tournament. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

we have already doubled last year's win total, and we look to keep growing and build off of our first half of the season."

Wheaton fell to East Newton in the opener, 52-29, then to Purdy, 62-42, ultimately taking seventh with a 63-36 victory over Seneca.

On the girls' side, Shawn Johnson, Southwest girls basketball coach, said the Lady Trojans made important strides in consistency and composure at the tournament.

"We improved in how we handled pressure situations, especially responding to runs and closing out quarters with more focus and confidence," he said. "Each game helped us grow mentally and reinforced the importance of staying locked in for four quarters."

"[The tournament] helped our team identify areas where we can continue to improve while building confidence in what we do well. Most

importantly, it strengthened our chemistry and mental toughness. We're better prepared to handle adversity, make adjustments and compete consistently as we enter conference play and push toward our goals for the rest of the season."

Southwest defeated Wheaton, 54-17, fell to Forsyth in the semifinals, 44-43, and bested Seneca, 54-52, for third place.

Jessica Dermott, Wheaton girls coach, said the three games played showed strides in playing with the right mentality.

"Learning to get tougher was something we got better at, and we need to continue to do that going into conference play," she said. "Playing both ends of the court and continuing to do the little things will help as we continue our season play."

Wheaton fell to Southwest, 54-17, and Forsyth, 48-24, before defeating SWMO Rush

to take fifth place.

Only getting two games because the tournament had seven girls teams, Purdy's girls fell to Seneca, 61-49, and SWMO Rush, 30-20.

"I thought we played decent our first game in the tournament," said Stephanie Heman, Lady Eagles coach. "I saw some positive things, especially coming off of our win over Verona before Christmas. However, our second game, we came out flat and couldn't get any momentum. Our biggest thing right now is our lack of consistency."

"We have a lot of potential, but we start out slow and dig ourselves into a hole that we can't recover from. Our finish was disappointing, but I'm hopeful that we will learn from our performance and make the necessary adjustments going into the second half of the season."

Boys All-Tournament Team

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| MVP: Caden Youngblood, East Newton | Lane Hendrix, Southwest |
| Kellen Hathcock, SWMO Rush | Jack Stephens, Monett |
| Brody Bateman, Wheaton | Olivia Hnem, Southwest |
| Grady Mahurin, Purdy | Harmony Loftis, Wheaton |
| Conner Taffner, McAuley | Jolie King, Seneca |
| Ethan Bales, East Newton | Halle Cook, East Newton |
| Benny Graves, SWMO Rush | Taylor Braden, Forsyth |
| Kaden Cole, East Newton | Olivia Haase, Seneca |
| | Jaretsi Quintanilla, Southwest |
| | Lauren Turner, Forsyth |

Jack Stephens, Monett

Girls All-Tournament Team

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| MVP: Sylvia Larsen, East Newton | Lane Hendrix, Southwest |
| Kelby Rinehart, East Newton | Jack Stephens, Monett |
| Olivia Hnem, Southwest | Olivia Hnem, Southwest |
| Harmony Loftis, Wheaton | Harmony Loftis, Wheaton |
| Jolie King, Seneca | Jolie King, Seneca |
| Halle Cook, East Newton | Halle Cook, East Newton |
| Taylor Braden, Forsyth | Taylor Braden, Forsyth |
| Olivia Haase, Seneca | Olivia Haase, Seneca |
| Jaretsi Quintanilla, Southwest | Jaretsi Quintanilla, Southwest |
| Lauren Turner, Forsyth | Lauren Turner, Forsyth |



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WILDCAT PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

Isabella Bauman

Tyson Bohmke



Ethan Sizemore

Tomi Blankenship



Berryville: Cassville looking to Big 8

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McDonald County. They have a new coach but are playing really well lately. We've been on the road a lot, and it's tough in this conference because coaches do well scouting and preparing their teams."

Beyond the two conference contests, the Wildcats will open the Crane Tournament against an all-too-familiar Purple and Gold foe.

"Next week, we are the No. 5 seed in the Crane Tournament and open against the No. 4 seed, Monett," Ray said. "That will be a tough rivalry game for the first round of a tournament."

Bagby said the Lady Wildcats are also gearing up for Big 8 competition, also facing Aurora and McDonald County on the road this week.

"You learn more in

losses than you do in wins, and we got a good idea of some stuff we need to work on that did not show up earlier in the season," he said. "We have two tough games this week, but we expect to compete for a conference title, and our district has a lot of conference teams; so, if we continue to work on ourselves, we expect to compete for that title, also."

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