Best Of Barry County

PERSON OF THE YEAR: TERESA PHILLIPS

Efforts to keep Imagination Library going in Barry County recognized

BY SHEILA HARRIS
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Readers of The Cassville Democrat voted for Teresa Phillips as 2026 "Person of The Year."

"There's not a person more deserving of the honor," said Morgan Williams, Cassville Area Chamber of Commerce director, who works as a volunteer with Phillips for Barry County's Imagination Library.

Phillips was instrumental in bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to children in Barry County beginning in 2021. Through Parton's early childhood literacy program, the Dollywood Foundation mails a free, age-appropriate book to children under the age of five, every month.

After the State of Missouri took over management of Parton's library in 2023, Phillips and board members of the Barry County Imagination Library formed a non-profit group with a broader umbrella: the Community Care Coalition (CCC). The CCC provides books and library services to homebound individuals through the Books on Wheels program and maintains literacy resources in various locations throughout the county, in the form of Little Libraries.

In addition to Little Libraries, the CCC teams with Roaring River Adventures and the Cassville Chamber for various events, including the season Festival of Trees fundraiser at Emory Melton Inn.

Phillips has also been instrumental in forming another CCC project — the Open Minds Initiative: an educational program for individuals incarcerated in the Barry County Jail. The program, which is going into its second year, offers traditional classes that students need to pass their High School Equivalency Test, as well as classes in Life Skills.

"We have a 10 to 12-week curriculum," Phillips said.

Phillips teaches classes, along with Cheryl Williams, CCC board member, and her husband, Jim Williams.

"When Teresa sees a need, she goes after it," Cheryl Williams said, in reference to Phillips' initiation of the Imagination Library and the Open Minds Initiative at the jail. "I'm very proud of her for being voted as Person of The Year."

Earlier this year, the State of Missouri decided to no longer fund the Imagination Library, so Teresa Phillips once again took on the position of affiliate and fundraiser for the Barry County chapter.

"The amount of time Teresa gives back to the community is unreal," Williams said. "She works nights and weekends, in addition to her other full-time job. I don't know anyone else who has a heart that gives so unconditionally. The fact that she's embarrassed by the recognition proves to me that Teresa is doing what she does for the right reasons."

Congratulations, Teresa Phillips!



Teresa Phillips, right, accepts her Person of the Year award from Kyle Troutman, Cassville Democrat publisher. Readers of the publication voted Phillips Person of the Year in the annual Best of Barry County contest. Jordan Troutman/cassville-democat@outlook.com



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Hair Salon — Xpressions Beauty Studio
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Barbecue — BBQ Station
Breakfast — Cr-Ose Cafe
Burger — Captain Jack's
Coffee — Sunshine Coffeehouse
Desserts — Wildcat Ice Cream
Doughnuts — 7Day Donuts
Family Restaurant — El Mariachi
Fast Food — Sonic
Food Truck — Sips & Flips
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Italian — Geraldi's
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FUN/ENTERTAINMENT

Campground — Roaring River State Park
Children's Activity — Zone 4 Mini Golf & More
Community Event — The Depot Exeter Auto Show
Date Night — Zone 4 Mini Golf & More
Event Venue — The Gathering Place
Family Activity — Zone 4 Mini Golf & More
Watersports Retailer — On The Water Powersports

HEALTH

Dental Office — Spears Dental
Home Health Care — Amazing Grace Home Health Care
Natural Products — Harvick Farms
Physical Therapy — Mercy Hospital Cassville

HOME & SERVICES

Funeral Home — Fohn Funeral Home
Hardware Store — Michael's Hardware
Heating & A/C Service — Speer Heating and Air Company
Home Builder — Stillings Builders
Home Repair/Remodeling — Stillings Builders
Insurance Agent — Terri Lynn Degraffenreid Brattin, Shelter Insurance
Insurance Company — Barry County Farm Bureau
Law Firm — Ellis, Cupps, & Herrin
Lawn Care/Landscaper — Adrian's Lawn Service
Nursery/Garden Center — Harvick Farms
Painting Company — Stilling Builders
Pest Control — C4 Pest Control
Plumbing Company — Clint Hoppes Plumbing
Print Shop — Fury Printing
Real Estate Agent — Scott & Amy Greek, Fathom Realty
Residential Care/Hospice Provider — Compassus
Roofing Company — Magee & Sons Contracting
Siding/Windows — Stillings Builders
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PEOPLE & PLACES

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Child Care — God's Little Kingdom
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Best of Barry County

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Place to Work — Security Bank of Southwest Missouri
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Preacher — Donnie Spears, Corinth Baptist Church
Tattoo Artist — Dustin Golightly
Taxidermist — Scott Odenbrett, Scott's Taxidermy
Teacher — Darla Horner, Exeter Elementary

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Grocery Store — King Cash Saver
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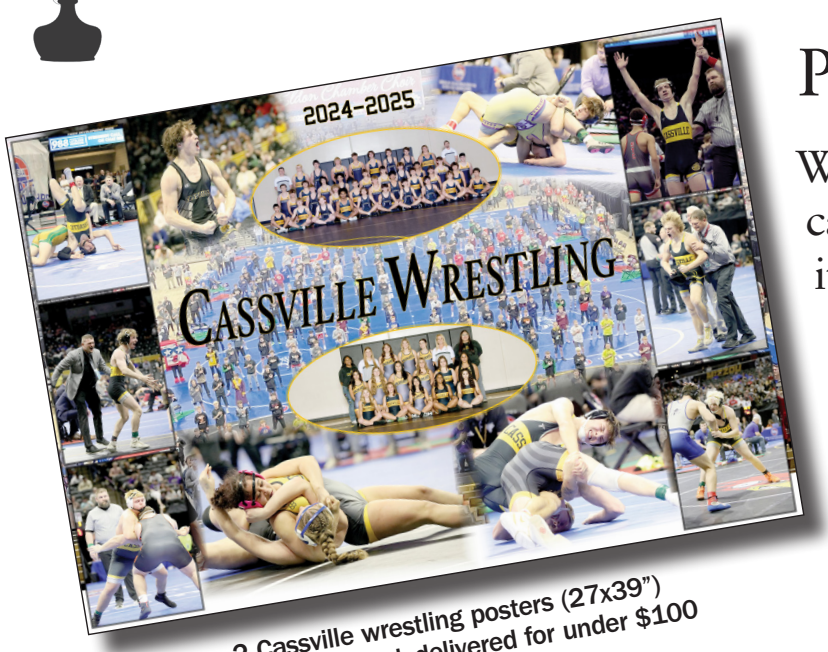
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