

Health & Education

The Greeneville Sun



Benchmarks – March 19, 2016

Greene Valley DC Closure A Lengthy Process

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities continues to work toward closure of Greene Valley Developmental Center as a condition to exit a nearly 20-year-old lawsuit against state-run facilities for disabled people.

However, officials say that the original June 30, 2016, closure deadline dictated by the exit plan is not likely to be met, meaning at least one of two six-month extensions allowed in the agreement will be used.

In March, a DIDD spokeswoman confirmed that the department is now actively working toward closure by the end of the 2016 calendar year, rather than the June 30, 2016, deadline referenced in the lawsuit exit agreement.

DIDD's 2016-17 budget proposal included a request of approximately \$6.5 million in additional state funds to continue operating the center through the end of 2016.

The most recent census of Greene Valley residents was reported as 67 in early March, down just 29 from late



Attendees at a 2015 rally applaud in support of comments by others opposed to state plans to close Greene Valley Developmental Center.

SUN FILE PHOTO

January 2015, when the closure plan was accepted.

EXIT PLAN ACCEPTED

In January 2015, an exit agreement between the State of Tennessee and

People First of Tennessee Inc. and other plaintiffs in a 1996 lawsuit against the state was presented in U.S. District Court in Nashville.

The lawsuit alleged civil rights violations at three large, state-run insti-

tutions for intellectually disabled people, including Greene Valley.

In that hearing, U.S. District Judge Kevin Sharp heard from attorneys representing the state and the lawsuit's plaintiffs and DIDD officials in favor of the agreement, as well as family members and conservators of Greene Valley residents and others opposed to the plan.

Later that month, Sharp accepted the exit plan proposed by DIDD and People First of Tennessee and other plaintiffs, which dictated a number of requirements.

Among them was closure of Greene Valley by June 30, 2016. However, a provision to extend the date of compliance to June 30, 2017, if needed, was included.

Sharp's order also denied a motion filed in January 2015 by a group of several family members and conservators of Greene Valley residents and the group Citizens For A Better Tennessee, who sought to become parties in the case to have additional legal

standing. In his conclusion, the judge wrote, "The court concludes that the exit plan

PLEASE SEE CLOSURE | 5

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On The Cover

Sun shines through windows on the second floor of the Walters State Community College Greeneville campus expansion, which is expected to be ready for students by fall 2017. See page 4 for a full story. Cover photo and design by Hala Watson.

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GVDC Residents Plan Move Into New Community Homes

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

As state officials work toward Greene Valley Developmental Center's closure, expected later this year, private-sector care providers are busy planning for new community homes for the facility's current residents.

In January 2016, officials at the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities confirmed that three private care providers have submitted plans to operate eight not-yet-constructed community homes in Greene County.

Those homes were said to be the only new ones planned in Greeneville and Greene County to accommodate former Greene Valley residents.

However, private providers have planned four additional facilities in Knoxville, two in Roane County and two others near Chattanooga for people currently living at the center.

Those decisions, DIDD Communications Director Cara Kumari said, were based on Greene Valley residents' and their conservators' preferences for locations and providers.

Although plans for most of the new residential-style intermediate care facilities have advanced with little complication, others, such as a proposal for 640 Old Shiloh Road, in Greeneville, have not been without controversy.

EIGHT NEW HOMES

In March, the Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency was set to review three applications from D&S Community Services for construction of four-bedroom intermediate care facilities at 1010 Old Stage Road, 2609 Erwin Highway and



SUN FILE PHOTO

Resident David McGill and Home Manager Kristi Anderson tidy up outside of McGill's Meadowbrook Road home. McGill has resided there with three other housemates since transitioning out of Greene Valley Developmental Center in 2010.

2619 Erwin Highway in Greene County.

Review of those plans followed applications for four sites considered in February: 680 Quaker Knob Road, Chuckey, to be operated by Sunrise Community of Tennessee Inc., and homes at an unaddressed lot on Chuckey Pike and two unaddressed lots on East Church Street, to be operated by Open Arms Care Corporation.

In January, HSDA reviewed plans from Sunrise for a four-bedroom home at 640 Old Shiloh Road.

NEIGHBORS OPPOSED

In early January 2016, some property owners along Old Shiloh Road, Oliphant Drive and Hampton Court made clear that they wanted the HSDA to deny Sunrise's request to oper-

ate a four-bedroom care facility at 640 Old Shiloh Road.

In a public hearing regarding Sunrise's Certificate of Need application, held by HSDA in Greeneville, comments spanned more than two hours, with about 30 people expressing opposition either in written or verbal comments.

Eleven people spoke against the plans, including State Rep. David Hawk, R-5th, of Greeneville, who reiterated his disagreement with plans to close Greene Valley.

Nearby neighbors and property owners cited a litany of concerns with the proposal, including its effect on area property values, placement of a commercially-operated site in a residential area, drainage issues with the lot and its placement

at what some said is a dangerous intersection, among others.

Greeneville Mayor W.T. Daniels spoke against the plans as well, citing area residents' opposition and disagreement with state laws that exempt group homes for disabled persons from local zoning ordinances.

Under state law, intermediate care facilities for eight or fewer individuals are considered single-family residences, meaning that, even if they are operated by a commercial entity, they can legally be constructed in residential-only zones.

"I think you've heard from our community," Daniels said. "These people do deserve to have a decent place that they can call their own. But, the choice of property goes beyond com-

mon sense and needs to be rethought."

Greeneville Police Chief Terry Cannon also spoke at the public hearing, indicating he, too, opposed plans for the home on Old Shiloh Road.

"We are constantly going to these group homes and answering calls because the people that are operating these things cannot control their people or their employees," Cannon said. "The state has dumped these group homes on us like crazy ... I have no problem with the individuals coming from Greene Valley, but I don't trust the State of Tennessee."

OLD SHILOH HOME APPROVED

Although opposition to plans for the home at 640 Old Shiloh Road is

well documented in various files related to the site's approval process, state officials signed off on the project in late January 2016 during the HSDA's monthly meeting.

Daniels, Cannon, Hawk and City Administrator Todd Smith were all present at that Nashville meeting to again speak against plans for the home.

"The project raises great safety concerns because of the increased traffic on narrow, neighborhood streets. The project puts adjacent residents at risk due to the increased amount of traffic and the larger vehicles that will service the project," Smith said. "Furthermore, residents are concerned about the impact on property values. While it is hard to predict future property values, the neighborhood residents certainly have a valid concern."

Ultimately, the HSDA board voted 9-1 to approve the Certificate of Need for the home. Board Chairman Lynn Johnson voted against the application, while another board member, Lisa Jordan, a Greeneville native, recused herself from the discussion, deliberation and vote.

Local officials said they were disappointed by the HSDA decision.

"Obviously, it's disappointing that our local citizens' voices weren't really heard," Smith said. "I understand the HSDA operates within a very narrow definition of the law. That's what they have to use to make a decision. It's just frustrating that the state has powers and authorities through its code that take away control from local citizens."

Daniels echoed that sentiment, saying, "At

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Builders Back At Work On Downtown WSCC Campus

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

After a months-long hiatus, work to expand Walters State Community College's downtown Greenville campus has resumed.

The college is in the midst of a dramatic 104,000-square-foot expansion to its Greenville/Greene County campus, at the intersection surrounded by North Main Street, Tusculum Boulevard and College Street.

In May 2015, the first phase of the project (exterior construction) wrapped up, meaning plans and bids for the second phase (interior site development) started to move forward in summer 2015.

But work was not visible at the site in the months between May 2015 and February 2016, when WSCC officials announced that updated contracts for the second phase of work were approved by the state, allowing for more of the building's interior to be completed upon its opening than originally planned.

With materials now ordered and site preparations underway, contracted crews returned to the site in early March 2016 to begin work on the interior.

College officials now estimate the building will be open to students in fall 2017.

At that opening, about 41 percent of the interior is expected to be done. Plans originally called for about 35 percent of the work to be done.

Portions of the interior that will be complete upon opening include the portion that faces College Street, the entrance area that includes a clock tower and faces the intersection of College Street and Tusculum Boulevard and a portion of the building facing Tusculum Boulevard.

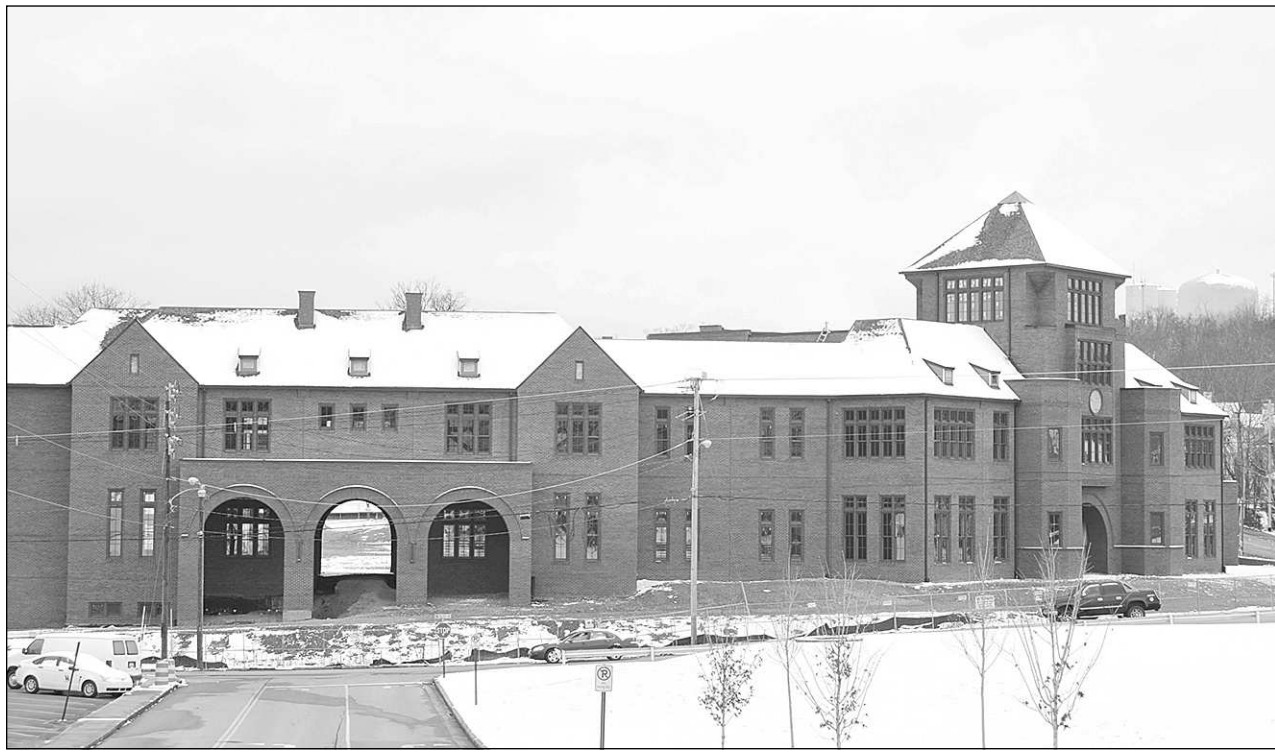
Completed interiors will include a science wing, learning center, student services center for tutoring and advising, faculty offices, a resource center, main entry and reception areas and the building's mechanical plant.

Key infrastructure will also be completed for the majority of the building, including mechanical, electrical and technological components, wall studs and ceiling tile grids.

A portion of the exterior wall facing North Main Street that has not yet been bricked will also be completed during this second phase of work, WSCC Vice President for Communications and Marketing J.B. Pectol said.

THIRD PHASE BEING PLANNED

Although work on the second phase of the project was just getting underway in early



SUN FILE PHOTO

Walters State Community College officials say that, when the expanded downtown Greenville campus opens to students in fall 2017, about 41 percent of its interior will be completed. Interior space expected to be finished when students arrive include wings that face College Street, the main, clock tower entrance facing the intersection of College Street and Tusculum Boulevard, and a portion facing Tusculum Boulevard.



SUN FILE PHOTO

After a months-long hiatus, work has resumed at Walters State Community College's downtown Greenville campus. With the first phase of work on the exterior completed, crews are moving indoors to complete much of the facility's interior space.

March 2016, WSCC officials are already moving forward with plans for the third phase (exterior site development) to begin in summer 2016.

Grant funds linked to the site's exterior development stipulate a July start date.

"We have to clear some hoops through the state as far as rights of way on our campus," Pectol explained in late February. "There's a process and they have to sign off on one process before you can move forward."

He added that drawings and other plans are being fine-tuned for state approval, but the third phase is to include completion of an amphitheater in the campus courtyard, improved sidewalks around the

site, connecting sidewalks on the interior of the campus, pedestrian lighting and relocating existing utility lines underground.

Plans are also in the works for as many as three improved crosswalks around the campus. One on North Main Street and another linking Greenville High School to the site via College Street will be updated to improve visibility, while a new, third crosswalk may be added near the WSCC main entrance by crossing Tusculum Boulevard, Pectol said.

FUNDRAISING CONTINUES

Throughout the planning and construction phases, the college continues its fundrais-

ing campaign with the stated goal of raising enough funds to complete all of the building's interior.

In August 2015, WSCC officials announced that construction of the building's interior was to begin in the following weeks.

However, a successful fundraising push as part of a "silent" capital campaign sparked a change of plans, when college officials realized they had sufficient funds to complete more of the building's interior than originally planned.

Original plans, approved by the college's governing board, the Tennessee Board of Regents, called for a completed exterior

shell and 35 percent completion of its interior space.

In October 2015, WSCC officials confirmed that the school had raised enough funds to exceed that goal, prompting a process of revising the project's specifications and bids to obtain a greater value for the next construction phase, Pectol said.

The fundraising push is continuing for the project, which has a current pricetag of more than \$20 million.

Prior to the contract revisions, WSCC officials reported the school had raised an additional \$12.8 million through a silent campaign funded by the private sector, state and federal

grants, bonds and the institution itself.

That amount does not include Laughlin Memorial Hospital's donation of the former Laughlin Square commercial site where the new building is situated.

The \$12.8 million figure also does not account for a \$9 million competitive grant from the Tennessee General Assembly, with a local match from Greenville businessman and philanthropist Scott Niswonger, in 2010.

Another funding source for the project are two grants totaling \$2.3 million grant from the Tennessee Department of Transportation, awarded to the Town of Greenville on WSCC's behalf.

Those funds will be dedicated to pedestrian mobility and safety issues around the campus site. The college funded the local matches to those grants.

A 'PREMIER INSTITUTION'

In fall 2015, WSCC President Dr. Wade McCamey unveiled artist renderings of the site's interior at a gathering hosted by the Greene County Partnership.

Depictions of the school's entrance hall, library, dining hall and theater were unveiled, and McCamey emphasized that, even though the building has traditional styling, the facility will be state-of-the-art.

He described "active learning spaces" that "integrate technology with physical space" and support WSCC's status as an Apple Inc. Distinguished Program.


In recent years, the school has been recognized among the most "tech-savvy" community colleges nationwide, he noted.

"Our new building in Greenville will be the first one in which we create spaces that fully complement our mobile-learning initiatives," McCamey said, announcing that the facility would be "one of the premier community colleges in the state."

He noted that, although the project had surpassed a five-year planning and construction period, strong and "creative" public-private collaborations had resulted in a quick turnaround.

"To put this in context, the last building we built — our Student Services building at the Morristown campus — took over 18 years to go from project approval to funding appropriation to construction," he said.

The project was expedited by utilizing a variety of partnerships to secure funding rather than relying solely on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, McCamey explained.



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Closure

Starts on Page 2

presented by the parties is 'fair, reasonable and adequate' and provides the next iteration of improvement to the lives of those with disabilities in Tennessee.

"It will test political will and legislative leadership to continue that progress and to determine how best to care for those often left in the shadows."

Other obligations dictated in the plan included development of behavior and respite services in East and Middle Tennessee; revision of support plan templates for persons supported and requiring training for support coordinators; development of training for licensed physicians on the use of psychotropic medications for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and training for law enforcement who may come into contact with persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The plan also included revision of the state's Freedom of Choice form, which sets forth "the rights of persons choosing to receive care at an intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities."

All of those conditions have been completed, leaving closure of Greene Valley the last provision remaining before DIDD can fully exit the lawsuit.

LAST LARGE STATE FACILITY

Since fall 2015, when Clover Bottom Developmental Center in Nashville was closed, Greene Valley has been the last remaining large, state-run facility for the

intellectually disabled.

Clover Bottom closed in November 2015. Arlington Developmental Center, near Memphis, and Nat T. Winston Developmental Center, in Bolivar, had already closed.

The People First lawsuit, filed in December 1995 by that advocacy organization and the U.S. Department of Justice, alleged civil rights violations at large state-run institutions, including Greene Valley.

In 1999, a settlement agreement was reached that dictated the most integrated setting possible for DIDD clients.

In 2006, Greene Valley was dismissed from the portion of the lawsuit pertaining to institutional conditions, apparently leaving many — including family members and conservators of residents there — to believe the facility would not face closure.

However, during the January 2015 hearing in U.S. District Court, attorneys for DIDD maintained that the department reserved the right to close the facility at any time through its own policies, and recommended that the plan be accepted.

The judge's order alluded to that argument, and indicated that closure of Greene Valley through the lawsuit exit agreement would mean that process would have additional oversight and protections that may not have been available to residents if closure had been carried out under different conditions.

According to the judge, proponents of the exit plan "highlighted aspects of the settlement that would have been unattainable through litigation, specifically, establishment of a Quality Review Panel to oversee closure of Greene Valley,

a detailed framework for training of Independent Support Coordinators and the strengthening of mental health intervention services to avert behavioral crises."

Therefore, Sharp said, "it appears collaboration has fostered what may be a more positive result ... than would be achievable even through successful litigation ..." and that the plan "goes farther than the court could require."

RESIDENTS TRANSITIONING

In April 2015, details about the process of transitioning Greene Valley residents into the care of private providers emerged with the public release of the center's Closure and Community Transition Plan.

By March 2015, families and conservators of Greene Valley residents had already been notified that the center was no longer a willing provider of services and that residents would have a choice between service through Home and Community Based Care waivers or in private intermediate care facilities.

To facilitate that transition, each Greene Valley resident has had an individual, detailed transition plan developed.

Each person's move has been planned with input from the individual, their "Circle of Support," facility management and a transition team from the East Tennessee Regional Office, which administers DIDD's community services system.

Steps included introductory meeting with individuals, their family and conservators, their case managers and a transition team member; selection of a service model, agency and

home; preparation of an Individual Support Transition Plan; selection of an Independent Support Coordination Agency; enrollment in a managed care organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the TennCare system; assessment of necessary therapeutic sites and accommodations; final move preparations; and post-placement monitoring.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES

In planning for Greene Valley's closure, DIDD also outlined a variety of steps to support the center's nearly 600 employees.

The Closure and Community Transition Plan called for affected staff to be provided counseling, information, training and job fairs.

"Needs Assessment" forms were also provided to employees to survey their employment wants and needs, and representatives from the Tennessee Department of Labor and the "Mobile Career Coach" have visited the center's campus to assist with writing resumes and submitting job applications.

Representatives from the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System scheduled regular visits to the site to advise employees considering retirement, while adult education classes were planned for staffers without high school diplomas or general education equivalency certificates.

Additionally, workshops were planned to assist Greene Valley workers with applying for new jobs and preparing for interviews and for those interested in applying for unemployment benefits or utilizing the college tuition portion of their severance package.

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Meen Center Construction Sees Significant Progress

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

Progress on Tusculum College's new Ronald H. and Verna June Meen Center for Science and Math has been steady over the last several months.

After groundbreaking ceremonies in 2013, Rentenbach Constructors Inc. began work on the new 100,000 square-foot structure in May 2015.

Since then, progress has been visible as the college has outlined an expected completion date in September of this year.

Amid the excitement about the new facility, however, Tusculum College officials are mourning the loss of a major benefactor in Verna June Meen, the building's namesake, who died in October 2015.

STEADY PROGRESS

Shortly after Rentenbach crews arrived in May 2015, progress at the site, visible from the Erwin Highway, became noticeable.

Within just three months, crews had finished the facility's stair and elevator towers and northern-most retaining wall and connected the site's water taps.

By month four, the building's masonry was completed with the exception of brick.

By the start of October 2015 — the five-month mark — the second phase of steel construction was well underway. At the same time, crews began pouring concrete and started installation of the facility's plumbing, electrical, fire and mechanical systems, metal studs and dry-wall.

In February 2016, progress became more noticeable as crews began working on exterior brick for the structure.

At the same time, the roofing structure was completed, gutters were linked to the storm system and window installation began.

Concrete for the facility's lecture hall was also poured in early February, while crews were also busy working on the site's mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire-protection components.

Columns and footers were added, and interior framing was more than half complete.



Progress has been steady at the site of Tusculum College's new Ronald H. and Verna June Meen Center for Science and Math, under construction since May 2015. The four-story, 100,000 square-foot facility is expected to be completed in September 2016.

SUN FILE PHOTO

In recent weeks, concrete for the transformer pad was poured while panels for the main electrical room were set.

BUILDING 'TOPPED' IN OCTOBER

In October 2015, Tusculum College officials celebrated the new facility with a "topping out" ceremony to commemorate placement of a beam at the highest point of the structure.

During that ceremony, two special beams were hoisted into place atop the structure.

The first contained a quote from the Rev. Dr. Angus Shaw, a lifetime trustee, stating, "Join hands and heart in our mission to develop educated citizens distinguished by academic excellence, public service and qualities of Judeo-Christian character." It was signed by Meen and Tusculum College President Dr. Nancy B. Moody.

The second contained the Latin quote "Sit Lux," which translates to "be the light," or, "let there be light."

The two beams were placed at the center of the building and provide the framework for the center's arched entryway.

The "topping out" ceremony marked the first time Meen was able to see the facility named in honor of her and her husband.

"It means an awful lot, because I feel like,

maybe, I've contributed a little bit to somebody's education," she said. "And that means more than I can say, because I know I could not have gone to college without a Merit Scholarship. And I was so grateful."

Less than two weeks later, Meen died as the result of a sudden illness. She was 85.

"Verna June was part of the Tusculum family for a relatively small portion of her life, but she grew to love Tusculum and wanted to leave a legacy for her and her husband, Ron, by paying it forward to change the lives of students," Moody said after Meen's death, adding that the Meen Center will play a role in educating future leaders, professionals, nurses, chemists, mathematicians, educators and more.

"It was absolutely divine intervention that brought Verna June and Tusculum together. She has left a tremendous legacy that even she did not realize, not only with the building, but through her endowed scholarship and the endowed professorship for chemistry established in Dr. Meen's honor," Moody said. "Verna June's legacy will live on through the good work of thousands of Tusculum College alumni who benefit from her generosity and whose lives have been transformed through education."

SEVERAL FUNDING SOURCES

In 2012, Meen had provided a gift of \$3.87 million to benefit construction of the facility in memory of her husband, the late Dr. Ronald H. Meen, who died in 2008.

Dr. Meen was a long-time chemist at Eastman Chemical Company in Kingsport. Verna June Meen moved to Northeast Tennessee to take a job as an accountant at the chemical company shortly after graduating college at Indiana University.

In addition to supporting Tusculum College with a gift for construc-

tion of the Ronald H. and Verna June Meen Center for Science and Math, Meen established the Verna June Meen Endowed Scholarship Fund to be used primarily for female accounting majors and the Ronald H. Meen Endowed Distinguished Professorship in chemistry.

In addition to the gift from Meen, Tusculum College has utilized other funding sources to make the new facility a reality.

A \$4.7 million Community Facilities Loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a \$39 million low-interest loan from the USDA

Rural Development Program have provided much of the backing for the center.

In 2014, the college began a \$25 million fundraising campaign called "Tusculum First," designed to benefit the institution's academic programs, scholarship endowments and facilities.

'STATE-OF-THE-ART' FACILITY

College officials have touted the new Meen Center for Science and Math as a "state-of-the-art" facility.

It is planned to serve students studying math, various sciences and health-related programs along with accommodating staff and student research, general classes and lectures.

Its interior will include wings for biology, chemistry, mathematics, computer science and environmental science.

The ground floor features an environmental science wing with a loading dock, as well as larger general classroom spaces and classrooms equipped for distance learning programs.

A large lecture hall will also be included on the ground floor.

Space is allocated to house the Bachelor of Science degree program in nursing and at least one other graduate-level health-related program, college officials have said.

The site's plans also call for a 130-seat auditorium and a board room.

Homes

Starts on Page 3

the local planning commission, we're concerned with what the neighborhood thinks, and we try to work through those issues. I don't know how many times I pointed out to the agency that we were never included in the discussion of where any of these community homes were going to be built. I think that's what we're missing here."

NO APPEAL FILED

Although officials disagreed with HSDA's decision to advance plans for the Old Shiloh Road home, the Town of Greeneville did not appeal approval of the Certificate of Need for Sunrise Community of Tennessee Inc. to operate it.

Smith described the appeal process as a "time consuming and costly" undertaking.

If the project continues to move forward, building and stormwater permits must be obtained from the Town of Greeneville for the site before construction can begin. Smith indicated the town will comply with the state's decision.

"We're going to do what's right," he said.

"If they've got plans that show the building is up to snuff, then they're going to get the permit."

Although nearby residents and other town officials have expressed concerns about stormwater drainage near the site, Town Engineer and Public Works Director Brad Peters expressed confidence that the issue would be properly handled.

"I have been contacted by Sunrise's engineers over the last few months about stormwater requirements," he said in February. "They're not ignoring the stormwater (issues)."

Storm water drainage and alleged sewer overflows were the focus of a complaint filed against the site with the Environmental Protection Agency by a local resident, who referenced the construction plans, earlier this year.

The EPA forwarded the complaint to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, which followed up on the issue with the Greeneville Water Department.

Neither EPA nor TDEC required addi-

tional action to be taken by the local water utility related to construction plans for the site.



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Laughlin Memorial Hospital Remains Independent

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

While “merger” appears to be the buzzword for many hospitals these days — especially in this area — Laughlin Memorial Hospital continues to stand independently.

The local hospital, which is in its 76th year of operation, remains independently owned and operated in Greeneville.

Across town, Takoma Regional Hospital continues to wait as its current owner, Adventist Health System, continues talks about the hospital's full purchase by the Kingsport-based Wellmont Health System.

Just up the road, Wellmont is carrying on another conversation about a likely merger with its regional rival Mountain States Health Alliance.

While all of this is happening, Laughlin officials say they don't expect to see an impact — whether the two regional health systems merge or not.

“No, we don't anticipate it affecting us,” Laughlin Hospital President and CEO Chuck Whitfield said. “We've always maintained good working relationships with both Mountain States Health Alliance and Wellmont — and I fully expect that to continue whether they merge or don't merge.”

Laughlin continues to maintain a cardiology service agreement with the Wellmont CVA Heart Institute, which has managed Laughlin's cardiac services in Greeneville, including the hospital's cath lab, for about four years.

Whitfield did note that Laughlin is one of a declining number of independent hospitals remaining. Thus, the

hospital will continue to rely heavily on the local community in order to retain that independence.

“We can't survive if we don't have community support,” Whitfield said.

While Laughlin currently does not have any additional building construction in the works, Whitfield said the hospital has been developing some new services during the past year.

Mostly recently, the hospital announced that it will begin offering 3-D mammography service through its Women's Center.

According to Jesse Taylor, Laughlin's director of medical imaging, the Women's Center installed the unit in February.

“We continue to use one of the 2-D digital mammogram machines that we have had, and will continue to do so for non-3D indications, as our exam volumes require two machines,” Taylor said.

The Women's Center at Laughlin, Taylor noted, has been a provider of “true digital mammography in Greeneville for the last eight years.”

Another new service that came to Laughlin during the past year was a new state-of-the-art endoscopy system, which the hospital acquired last fall.

Endoscopy is a nonsurgical procedure used to examine a person's digestive tract.

The new endoscope, they said, is better at detecting digestive disease in its earliest stages — with even greater comfort to the patient than its previous technology.

Hospital officials noted that Laughlin is the first hospital outside of Knoxville, including the Tri-Cities area, to acquire the high-definition Olympus Evis Exera

III video endoscopy system.

Another recent reinvestment project at the hospital has been an upgrade to its emergency generator system, which provides power to the hospital in the event of an electrical outage.

“The old system had reached the point of obsolescence, so we have taken the opportunity to not only replace the system but also further enhance it,” said Chad Martin, director of facilities at Laughlin.

For example, Martin said, “given its importance, the power distribution panels for the new system are now housed separate from the building in order to ensure they are protected and isolated from other utility systems.”

Additionally, “the new system will have total redundancy in the event in the event our primary emergency power source fails,” Martin said.

“The new system is also equipped with a portable backup generator that we will be able to use to also back up our nursing home facility across town,” Martin added.

For its dedication to energy efficiency, Laughlin earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star certification during the past year.

The certification signifies that the hospital building performs in the top 25 percent of similar facilities nationwide for energy efficiency and meets strict energy efficiency performance levels set by the EPA, officials say.

“Through this achievement, we have demonstrated our commitment to environmental stewardship while also lowering our energy costs,” Whitfield said.

Commercial buildings that earn EPA's Energy Star certification use an average

of 35 percent less energy than typical buildings and also release 35 percent less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Laughlin Hospital improved its energy performance by managing energy strategically across the entire organization and by making cost-effective improvements to its buildings, hospital officials said.

The Energy Star website shows a total of 36 hospitals that have achieved the Energy Star award for 2015, and Laughlin Hospital is the only one in Tennessee, hospital officials say.

A building that scores a 75 or higher on EPA's 1-100 scale may be eligible for Energy Star certification.

Laughlin Hospital scored a 93 in 2015.

Commercial buildings that can earn the Energy Star include offices, bank branches, data centers, financial centers, retail stores, courthouses, hospitals, hotels, K-12 schools, medical offices, supermarkets, dormitories, houses of worship and warehouses.

Laughlin was recognized by the Tennessee Hospital Association's Tennessee Center for Patient Safety for reducing the number of early elective births at the hospital.

There is a greater risk of complications associated with births prior to 39 weeks, and waiting until 39 weeks allows for better growth and development of vital organs such as the brain, lungs and liver, state officials say.

In order to be recognized, a hospital must decrease the number of babies delivered electively between 37 to 39 weeks gestation to 5 percent or less and maintain this goal for a minimum of six consecutive months.

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Ownership Change Still In Works At Takoma

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

Takoma Regional Hospital is still in the process of undergoing a change of leadership and ownership.

In July, Daniel Wolcott, who had served for the previous six years as the hospital's president and CEO, left that position in order to accept a similar role with a larger hospital in his native northern California.

In August, it was announced that the Kingsport-based Wellmont Health System was in the process of fully acquiring the Greeneville hospital from Adventist Health System, a faith-based, health-care organization headquartered in Altamonte Springs, Fla.

Shortly after making the Takoma acquisition announcement, Wellmont entered into merger talks with its regional hospital system competitor, the Johnson City-based Mountain States Health Alliance.

Although Wellmont officials still insist that plans continue to proceed with the Takoma purchase, no date has yet been officially announced as to when the acquisition will become complete.

Wellmont officials said in a statement: "We continue to work on this matter, but it is taking additional time due to the many elements involved. Because of the importance of this transaction, we want to ensure we proceed in a thorough and deliberate manner."

This merger does not have to occur before Takoma can be purchased, though, officials said.

"The Takoma Regional transaction can occur first," a Wellmont spokesperson said.

"Generally, as with any important transaction of this type, they do take time to complete. We prefer to do this thoroughly and



From right, Wellmont Health System CEO Bart Hove, Wellmont Chief Operating Officer Eric Deaton and Takoma Regional Hospital Interim President and CEO Dennis Kiley answer questions during an interview at The Greeneville Sun in August 2015.

SUN FILE PHOTO BY O.J. EARLY

completely," said Takoma's Interim President and CEO Dennis Kiley.

Kiley became Takoma's interim president and CEO on Aug. 3, following Wolcott's departure.

He will continue to serve in that role until a permanent hospital head is named.

Kiley had previously served as president/CEO of Emory-Adventist Hospital in Smyrna, Ga., from 2000 to 2014.

Takoma Hospital has been owned entirely or partly by either The Seventh-day Adventist Church or the Adventist Health System since 1954.

Takoma Hospital was founded in Greeneville in 1928 by the late Dr. L.E. Coolidge and was named Takoma Hospital and Sanitarium.

Takoma Hospital's name

came from Takoma Park, Md., where Coolidge had been affiliated with a clinic.

In 1954, the hospital's original stockholders sold their financial interest back to Coolidge, who then deeded the hospital to the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The hospital then became Takoma Adventist Hospital.

In 1974, the hospital became a member of the Southern Adventist Health and Hospital System (which later evolved into Adventist Health System).

AHS became a minority owner of Takoma in 2007, after Kingsport-based Wellmont Health System purchased a majority share of Takoma.

Under that agreement, Wellmont was a 60 percent

partner in the relationship with AHS, which retained management and 40 percent ownership of the hospital.

In 2014, Takoma Hospital's majority owner and controller once again became Adventist Health System.

In November, Adventist Health System reach a \$115 million settlement with the U.S. government in a civil settlement focusing on doctor referrals to hospitals.

As part of the settlement, AHS was also ordered to pay an additional \$3.7 million to Tennessee and three other Southern states as part of the agreement.

Despite the ongoing changes of ownership and leadership, the hospital has continued to receive awards of excellence.

For the fourth consecu-

tive year, Takoma Regional Hospital was awarded the top grade for patient safety in 2015 by The Leapfrog Group, an independent organization that rates hospitals on how well they protect patients from accidents, errors, injuries and infections.

Takoma received its latest 'A' grade during the organization's fall 2015 "Hospital Safety Score," which is compiled under the guidance of the nation's leading experts in patient safety and is administered by Leapfrog.

Takoma has received an 'A' each year since the organization began giving out grades in 2012, hospital officials noted.

Another major award received by Takoma during the past year was the 2016 Women's Choice Award for being one of the country's

"Best Hospitals for Obstetrics."

Criteria for the recognition centered on female patient satisfaction, clinical excellence and what women say they want from a hospital, according to Tammy Albright, Takoma's chief nursing officer.

"This award recognizes hospitals offering exceptional obstetric services that rank above the national average in patient safety," Albright said. "We are proud to receive this distinction, which recognizes our passion to provide excellent birthing experiences at Takoma. We realize that new moms have many choices when delivering their babies, so we are thankful that they trust us."

Dr. Harry Nelson, a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist with the Women's Center of Greeneville, said, "We are gratified to have received this prestigious award. The dedicated obstetrical team at Takoma works very closely together to ensure top-notch professional, personalized care for moms and their babies."

Wendy Fairchild, director of Takoma's women and children services, said the award also recognizes hospitals with low early elective deliveries (between 0-1 percent). "At Takoma, we do not offer any early elective deliveries before 39 weeks unless it is medically indicated," she said. "A newborn's brain does the majority of its growth in the last month prior to birth, so it is best to wait as long as possible."

Fairchild said she is proud of her staff. "We believe that giving birth is a life-changing event, so we offer strong support and respect the mom's wishes," she said. "Both help create positive birth experiences."

PLEASE SEE TAKOMA | 16



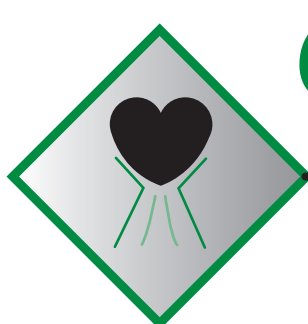
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David McLain Took Charge Of County Schools June 1, 2015

BY BRAD HICKS
STAFF WRITER

Leadership of the Greene County Schools system changed in May when David McLain was chosen by the Greene County Board of Education to serve as the district's director.

But the road to McLain's appointment began several months earlier.

In March 2015, Dr. Vicki Kirk, who had served as director of Greene County Schools for the prior five years, announced that she had accepted a position with the Tennessee Department of Education as the department's chief academic officer.

State Education Commissioner Candice McQueen announced Kirk's position as one of three deputy commissioners.

Kirk brought to her new position with the TDOE more than two decades of education experience in Tennessee, with around seven years spent in the classroom and 16 years in leadership positions. Prior to her directorship with Greene County Schools, Kirk served as the assistant director of Greeneville City Schools for about a decade.

"I've worked in (the Greeneville School System) and here, and I have loved every job I've ever



David McLain, right, speaks to the Greene County Board of Education in May 2015 prior to officially beginning his stint as director of schools. Assistant Director of Schools Bill Ripley is at left.

had," Kirk said in March 2015. "This job with Greene County has been the most fulfilling. It's been special."

Kirk worked her last day for Greene County Schools in early April.

Retired Assistant Director of Schools Judy Phillips in late March signed a contract to serve as the

interim director of the county schools system until the appointment of a new director.

The Greene County Board of Education formed a search committee to help locate a new director, with the intent of this committee narrowing the search field to five candidates and presenting that list to

the full school board.

But only five individuals applied for the open director's position, and one of these — Dr. Jeffrey Moorhouse, then-principal at Morristown West High School — withdrew his application. He would eventually be hired as the Greeneville City Schools director in May.

The four candidates in the running were Greene County Schools employees. They were:

- George Frye, then-principal at Baileyton Elementary School;
- David McLain, who was at that time the system's assistant director of operations and student services;

• Dr. Gerald Miller, then-principal at Glenwood Elementary School; and

• Dr. Melinda Pruitt, special education supervisor.

This quartet of candidates was interviewed forum-style on May 12. Throughout the day, McLain stressed the importance of seeing more graduates seek a post-secondary education or certification, pointed out that the school system has built only one new school in the past 33 years, and emphasized the importance of dual enrollment, Advanced Placement programs and extracurricular activities.

McLain also said there is a need for school resource officers in every high school and a need to focus on improving the culture in schools.

The Greene County Board of Education met on May 14 to interview the candidates individually and consider the hire of the school system's next director.

During his interview, McLain emphasized leadership and his experience. He also called for an outside agency to conduct a study of the school system's facilities and to look at the

SUN FILE PHOTO BY O.J. EARLY

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Greeneville City Schools Under New Leadership As Of May 2015

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

The 2015-16 school year brought with it a new director for Greeneville City Schools.

In May 2015, the Greeneville City Board of Education inked a three-year deal naming Dr. Jeff Moorhouse director of the district following Dr. Linda Stroud's retirement at the end of the 2014-15 year.

Moorhouse previously served as principal at Morristown West High School in Hamblen County for 10 years.

He started in his new role as leader of the Greeneville City School system on June 1.



Dr. Jeff Moorhouse, hired as director of Greeneville City Schools following the retirement of Dr. Linda Stroud, speaks during a meeting of the Greeneville City Board of Education in 2015. Board Vice-Chairman Cindy Luttrell listens.

dates for Stroud's replacement in December, with the initial goal of identifying a successor the following spring.

FINALISTS IDENTIFIED

In March 2015, the board announced it had selected three finalists for the job: Dr. John Dalton, of Blount County Schools; Beverly Miller, current assistant

director of schools for administration and chief technology officer of GCS; and Moorhouse.

Board members then planned for individual interviews with each candidate and a public forum at Niswonger Performing Arts Center featuring questions prepared by the board, GCS staff and the public.

About a week after the

finalists were announced, however, the school system issued a news release announcing that Miller had withdrawn from the selection process, as she was ineligible for the position under existing board policies.

"Several board policies spell out the recruitment, selection, compensation, duties and qualifications of

the director of schools. One such policy, board policy 5.802, specifies that a director of schools shall hold a valid teachers' license with appropriate endorsement," board chairman Craig Ogle said. "One of three finalists for the position, Beverly Miller, does not hold this credential, and has therefore voluntarily withdrawn from the selection process."

In announcing Miller's withdrawal, Ogle noted she was a "highly qualified" candidate for the position, but was unable to serve as director due to the established policy.

"I accept full responsibility for this oversight. It was simply missed, and was caught internally as the search process began to narrow down and focus on all the required credentials of the three finalists," Ogle said. "Mrs. Miller graciously agreed to withdraw her name from consideration upon learning of this situation. She continues to be a vital part of this system and looks forward to working with the selected director of schools, whoever that may be."

In April 2015, Moorhouse and Dalton took turns fielding a number of questions in a public forum after holding individual interviews with board of education members.

Some questions were submitted by the school system's teachers in advance, and touched on topics like how each candidate, if hired, would build on already-successful academic, athletic and artistic programs; how they would work with the

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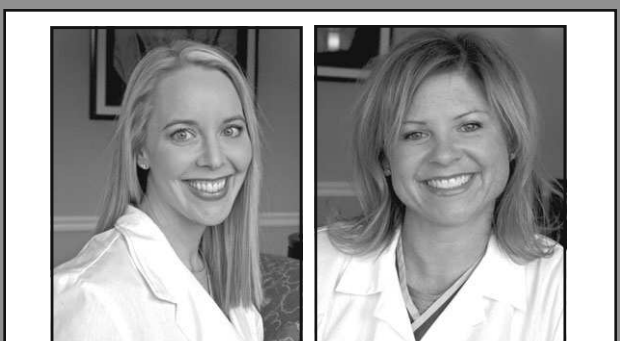
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*October 20, 2015 Consumer Reports Publication.

Four award certificates are displayed, each with a yellow background and a paperclip graphic at the top.
 1. Top left: "#1 Selling Vehicle In U.S. for 33 Years in a Row*" featuring a red Ford F150. Text includes "Ford F150" and "*USA Today January 2015".
 2. Top right: "#1 Non-Luxury Car Brand*" featuring the Mazda logo. Text includes "*Consumer Reports October 2015".
 3. Bottom left: "#1 Car Brand in Sales in World*" featuring the Ford logo. Text includes "*Automotive News February 2015".
 4. Bottom right: "#1 Selling Vehicle In the world*" featuring a blue 2015 Ford Focus. Text includes "2015 Ford Focus" and "*CNBC April 2014".



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State Legislator Opens Door To Medicinal Cannabis Oil

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

The medical use of an oil derived from marijuana is now legal in Tennessee — due largely to efforts of a local legislator and two families.

On April 13, 2015, a bill that decriminalized the possession and use of cannabis oil for people in Tennessee who suffer from disabling seizures was passed without opposition by both chambers of the Tennessee General Assembly.

The legislation was championed by State Rep. Jeremy Faison, R-Cosby, who represents portions of Greene and Cocke counties, and advocated by Greene County residents Stacie and Logan Mathes, of the Glenwood community, and Ellen and Andy McCall, of Greeneville.

Both couples have young daughters who suffer from disabling seizures. The families banded together, and along with other similarly affected families, lobbied state lawmakers for the bill's passage.

While FDA-approved drugs were available for their children's conditions, the cannabis oil, they say, is more effective at controlling seizures and has few, if any, side effects.

After its legislative passage, the bill became state law after it was signed on May 4, 2015, by Gov. Bill Haslam.

The State of Tennessee had never considered doing anything with the cannabis plant until this legislation, Faison said.

"The most amazing thing is this was spurred by someone in Greene County — a little girl named Josie," the legislator said, referring to the Matheses' young daughter.



SUN FILE PHOTO BY LISA WARREN
State Sen. Becky Duncan Massey, of Knoxville, far left, and State Sen. Jeremy Faison, of Cosby, far right, were the primary sponsors of the cannabis oil legislation that was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly last year. Also shown, from left, are: Andy and Ellen McCall, holding their daughter Penelope, Chris Ford, government relations officer for the Tennessee Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and Logan and Stacie Mathes with their children, Astor and Josie.

Faison said that the Mathes family had been in Nashville weekly, helping him educate legislators and state organizations that had initially opposed the bill.

Stacy Mathes also connected with the McCalls, whose daughter Penelope also suffered from seizures and who were seeking the use of cannabis oil.

The local families frequently attended committee meetings at the Tennessee General Assembly in Nashville to explain to lawmakers how some children suffer hundreds — or even thousands —

of seizures a day. These ongoing brain seizures — as well as the traditional prescription drugs used to control them — both severely impact normal child development, the families said.

"I'm overjoyed!" Stacie Mathes said immediately following the bill's final passage.

Josie Mathes battles daily seizures, despite taking four different types of traditional medications — each of which can cause major, debilitating side effects.

Cannabis oil, on the other hand, has been

found to be much more effective in more patients like Josie — without the harmful side effects, Mathes said.

"We have worked so hard on this," she continued. "I'm overjoyed that we can bring some life back into these babies and give them exactly what they need."

"My daughter was technically out of medical options — and this is her only chance. This is a chance at life not for just Josie, but also for others who are suffering as well," Mathes added.

Andy McCall said the vote was a "history-mak-

ing" day for children who would benefit from such medical treatment.

"They are finally going to get the help they need," McCall said.

Thanks to the use of cannabis oil, the families report that their children are now more alert and focused thanks to their new therapy regimen. They have also experienced fewer seizures.

Under the legislation, only persons diagnosed with conditions that create seizures or with epilepsy may use cannabis oil as a treatment.

The patient must have a recommendation from a

doctor to use the oil. The bill doesn't establish a legal method for processing the oil in Tennessee, so those who want to use it must purchase it from one of the roughly two dozen states where the oil and other marijuana products are legal for medicinal purposes and have the oil shipped here.

Eligible people were able to legally use cannabis oil in Tennessee as soon as Haslam signed the legislation in early May.

Following the cannabis oil legislation, Faison said he would like to see his fellow state lawmakers open up research opportunities to four-year universities across Tennessee in order to further study the medical benefits of the marijuana plant.

At the beginning of the present legislative session, Faison said he had hoped that the Tennessee General Assembly would have considered legislation to make it legal for veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder to use medical marijuana within the state.

The idea, so far, has been met with some uncertainty from key state leaders.

"I don't see a big chance for that passing, but an effort could surprise me," Gov. Bill Haslam told members of the media prior to the beginning of this year's state legislative session, which began Jan. 11.

While pain management is the biggest reason most patients seek medical benefits of marijuana, according to WebMD, doctors may also prescribe medical marijuana to treat:

- muscle spasms caused by multiple sclerosis;
- nausea from cancer

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Health & Wellness Guide

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Greene County Schools Face Food Services Shortfall

BY BRAD HICKS
STAFF WRITER

The decision of whether food services within Greene County Schools will continue internal self-operations or if they will be outsourced faces the Greene County Board of Education in the near future.

Each year since the 2011-12 fiscal year, the school system's food service fund's balance has seen a decrease. At the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year, the fund balance was approximately \$1.2 million. The following year, the balance decreased to \$893,000. The balance to close the 2013-14 fiscal year was around \$592,000, and the fund would realize another decrease during the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The food service fund entered the 2015-16 fiscal year with a \$483,000 fund balance.

Even though food services has lost money for several consecutive years, food services became a particular focus of the Board of Education in August.

During an Aug. 18 school board workshop, then-Greene County Food Services Coordinator Colby Wagoner told the board that the food services fund was projected to face a \$208,000 deficit by the end of September.

Wagoner advised the board that several factors, including the failure to budget food service expenditures during the non-revenue generating summer months, decreased cafeteria participation across the district, and the paying of food service staff for days missed due to snow, contributed to the projected deficit.

At its Aug. 27 meeting, the school board voted



Christy Curtin, a Greene County Schools food services worker, serves breakfast at Chuckey-Doak Middle School in February.

SUN FILE PHOTO BY BRAD HICKS

to transfer the \$208,000 from the school system's general fund to the food service fund to clear the projected deficit. The Greene County Commission on Sept. 21 approved a resolution permitting the transfer.

In late November, Wagoner, who was appointed as the system's food services coordinator in 2013, resigned from the position.

The next major food services-related move would come in December. At the board's Dec. 17 meeting, Ellen Myers, who was appointed that same evening to serve as the system's interim food services coordinator,

advised the board that the school system's food services fund had lost more than \$100,000 since August.

After hearing Myers' report, the school board voted to have Greene County Director of Schools David McLain explore the outsourcing of the school system's food services.

At the board's February meeting, Myers told the board that food services, which has seen month-to-month gains and losses throughout the school year, lost nearly \$2,800 in the month of January. She said the brought the current food services fund balance to approxi-

mately \$365,400, adding that the overall loss for the 2015-16 school year was approximately \$118,000.

On Jan. 12, the school board voted to terminate the system's agreement with NETCO, also known as the Northeast Tennessee Cooperative. Through this cooperative, participating school systems can order food and food-related items in bulk, allowing them to pay lower prices than through a distributor.

This termination, which takes effect at the end of the current school year, cleared the way for the school board to either pursue outsourcing or,

if it wishes to continue self-operations, have the school system be responsible for bidding out food for school cafeterias and food services supplies.

More action would be taken in January. At its Jan. 28 meeting, the board voted to enter into an agreement with Alabama-based LEAN Frog Business Solutions, Inc. to have the company develop the food services request for proposal for Greene County Schools. If the school board decides to outsource the system's food services, this request for proposal, or RFP, would be used to solicit bids from interested companies.

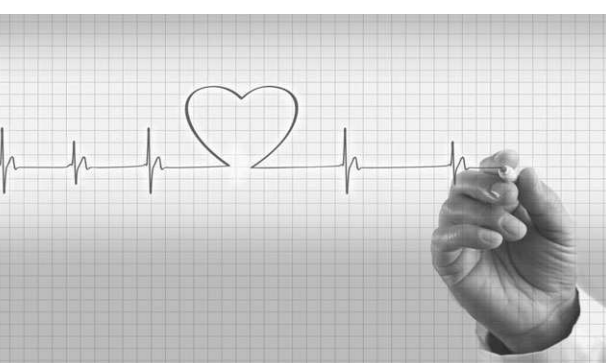
The RFP must first be approved by the state and by the board. Once this has been done, the document can be used to solicit bids.

At the school board's Feb. 25 meeting, McLain said the RFP had been sent to the state for review and that local officials were hoping to receive approval by the end of March.

School system officials have stated that if the school board proceeds with the outsourcing of food services, they hope to have the company selected and under contract by July 1, the start of the 2016-17 fiscal year.

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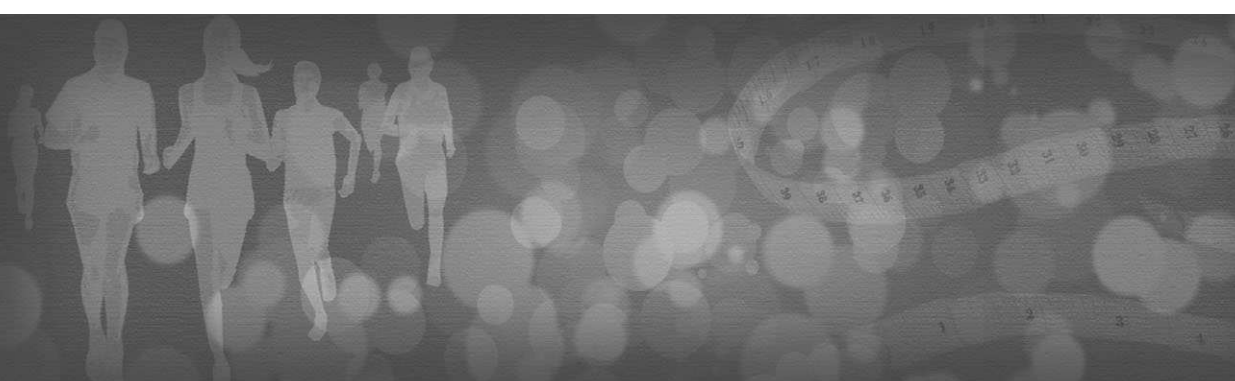
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Holston Home Celebrates Anniversary, New Campaign

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

Holston United Methodist Home for Children had a lot to celebrate in 2015.

The agency not only marked its 120th anniversary, but it also launched a capital campaign to help fund a new worship center on its main campus in Greeneville.

Initial plans for the proposed project were revealed in September during Holston Home's annual "Friends of Children" benefit dinner at the General Morgan Inn.

During the event, Holston Home president and CEO Bradley Williams said the proposed worship center would be built just off the Tennessee Rt. 70 truck route, behind Beacon School, the institution's on-campus educational facility.

Holston Home's current chapel facility is located within Beacon School.

Williams explained that the 80-seat chapel no longer offers enough seating capacity for Holston Home's youth and their family members who attend services, as well as staff members and other guests.

He noted that \$1 million has already been set aside by Holston Home in matching funds to go toward campus expansion projects.

The theme for the 2015 "Friends of Children" benefit was "Building Winners."

The master of ceremonies for the event was Greeneville native Dale Keasling, chairman, president and CEO of Home Federal Bank of Tennessee in Knoxville, who serves on the Holston Home board of trustees.

The keynote speaker at the well-attended event was Terry Hull Crawford, a Greeneville native and highly decorated track athlete and coach, who now serves as director of coaching for USA Track and Field.

"It's an honor to be here and to be here as a Greene County native," Crawford said. "My life is filled with a lot of great memories of growing up here."

Crawford left Greeneville in 1966 to attend the University of Tennessee, where she became a pioneering female in track and field and then started on a career path that has taken her around the world as an Olympic coach.

In addition to the worship center campaign, another fundraising effort at Holston Home to benefit its on-campus private school.

"A private school has limited funding, and for



Organizers toss clouds of colorful powder on participants during the United Way 5K Run and Dye held at the Holston Home cross country course. The event was held as a benefit for the United Way of Greene County.

SUN FILE PHOTO



Bradley Williams, the president and CEO of Holston Home, speaks at the 2015 Friends of Children benefit dinner.

SUN FILE PHOTO

this budget year, we are looking at a \$200,000 shortfall for Beacon School that we have to make up through charitable gifts," Williams said.

"We're committed to taking Beacon School forward," Williams said, praising the work of the school that provides "needed individualized attention" to its students in grades K-12 who may otherwise have trouble succeeding in a traditional educational setting.

"At least 69 percent of our graduates enroll in college or a technical school," Williams noted. Nationwide, only 20 percent of children in foster care enroll in higher education, he added.

Last year, 87 percent of the students who began classes at Beacon School were behind grade level. And Williams said that Holston Home and the school's staff are committed to helping those children achieve their educational goals.

The Rev. Charles Hutchins, who had served as Holston Home's VP of Development and Church Relations for 16 years, announced in January that he would be moving to the sole position of director of church relations for Holston Home.

A long-time fixture and advocate for the children's home, Hutchins has served in varied capacities at Holston Home for more than 50 years, including

as a case worker, director of social service, director of professional services and associate executive director.

"The Bible doesn't say anything about retirement," Hutchins said, "but this new role will allow me to spend more time with the people I love and focus my attention on the churches that have been, and always will be, the backbone of this mission."

In February, Mary Frank Madera, who has nearly 30 years of experience in fund development, was named as the new Holston Home vice president of Development.

Madera has been previously affiliated with the United Way, the American Red Cross and other organizations from New York to Florida. Most recently she served as the director of development for North Naples Church and The Village School of Naples, in Naples, Fla.

A native of Chattanooga, Tenn., Madera said moving back to East Tennessee is a homecoming for her.

"Holston is my home conference and I am so ready to come home to Tennessee," she said.

She also noted that the move will also allow her and her family to enjoy "real barbecue and country ham" again!

In accepting her new role at Holston Home, Madera said, "Years ago I discovered that my strengths are in connecting with others, staying positive, taking action, communicating and encouraging others to join the cause. I know

I am made for fundraising."

When asked when she accepted a position with Holston Home, Madera said, "I believe with all my heart God is calling me to be here."

Hutchins said he is pleased with Madera being named to his former position.

"We have been praying for someone with her incredible passion for the Lord and for the children here at Holston Home," Hutchins said.

"The fact that she is deeply rooted and connected to the conference that gave birth to this mission is a bonus," Hutchins added.

Holston Home president Bradley Williams added that Madera certainly has the talents needed for the job, but "her heart for people and our ministry to kids sets her apart."

Also during the past year — on Dec. 15 — Holston Home debuted a new Christmas-themed community event called Winter Wonderland.

The public was invited to view lighting displays on the campus and refreshments, plus pictures with Santa — all at no cost.

Holston Home youth have several Christmas events for the facility's immediate neighbors, but the agency's president said the idea behind Winter Wonderland was to do something for the entire Greene County community.

Williams said he hopes it become an annual Christmastime event for the community to enjoy.

Another area Christmas season event enjoyed by the Tri-Cities region also continued its financial support of Holston Home during the past year.

Earlier this year, Bristol Speedway Children's Charities donated \$8,000 to Holston Home from this past season's Speedway In Lights event at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Since 1996, Speedway Children's Charities has distributed more than \$10 million to area children's organizations, and Holston Home has been among the many benefactors.

"We are excited about our ongoing partnership with Bristol Speedway Children's Charities," Hutchins said. "They are a wonderful corporate friend."

For more information on Holston United Methodist Home for Children or how to donate to its "Friends of Children" campaign, visit www.holstonhome.org.

Childhood Education Guide

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<p style="text-align: center;">The Early Learning Program</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Offering developmental screening and evaluation of 3 and 4 year old children. <i>For more information, call</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Melinda Pruitt, Greene County Schools Special Education Supervisor • 639-4194 Jeff Townsley, Greeneville City Schools Special Education Supervisor • 787-8009</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tender Heart Day Care</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pre-School Program Children 6 weeks thru 12 years. Open 5:30 am - 5:15 pm Mon. - Fri. Director/Owner - Kathy Holt 310 West Greene Dr. (Located across from West Greene High School) (423) 422-7344 Mosheim, TN</p>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Towering Oaks Christian School</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1985 Buckingham Road 423-639-0791</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Classes for Toddlers - Eighth Grade Nurtured in Academic Excellence Rooted in God's Word</p> </div> </div>

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Franklin Graham Shares Value Of Family Ministries

BY LISA WARREN
STAFF WRITER

For the second time in nearly four years, Free Will Baptist Family Ministries played host to one of the leading evangelical leaders in the U.S.

The Rev. Franklin Graham, son of famed evangelist the Rev. Billy Graham, was the keynote speaker at Family Ministries' annual Hope Center Celebration in 2015.

It was the second time that Franklin Graham, who is president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Samaritan's Purse outreach ministry, had addressed the Hope Center gathering. He was also the keynote speaker in 2012.

The annual event is a fundraiser for Family Ministries' crisis pregnancy center.

Located at 314 Tusculum Blvd., the Hope Center offers a variety of helpful, free services for teens and women who find themselves in an unplanned pregnancy situation. The goal of the center is to provide these mothers an alternative to abortion through giving them access to a slew of services and resources.

Proceeds from the annual Hope Center Celebration help to continue and expand the center's services and Christian ministry.

During his address, Graham lauded the work of the Hope Center and organizations like it.

"I believe these types of ministries are widely important," the evangelist said.

The Hope Center is a place where young women can come for godly counseling, love and support, he said.

"We look at the Hope Center and the young girls who pass through it, and it is my hope that every girl who goes through there ... will come to know him as their Lord and Savior."

Previous keynote speakers for the Hope Center's annual benefit celebration have included famed neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson (2013) and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (2014). Both Carson and Huckabee sought the Republican nomination for U.S. president this past year, but the two have since dropped out of the presidential primary race.

The crisis pregnancy center is just one of many services at Family Ministries.

Also during the past year, Family Ministries, in conjunction with the Camp Creek Ruritan Club, announced the opening of a rural medical clinic in the Camp Creek community.

Family Ministries leased some of its property for the Camp Creek Medical Center, which is located at 2880 Camp Creek Road, directly across from Fam-

ily Ministries' main campus and Camp Creek Elementary School.

The medical center is owned and operated by the Rogersville-based Rural Health Services Consortium Inc., which operates 11 primary rural health-care medical centers in Upper East Tennessee.

The Camp Creek medical facility is staffed with a medical assistant and a family nurse practitioner under the supervision of a medical doctor.

"It's one of the greatest things that's happened in our community," said Wayne Bettis, president of the Camp Creek Ruritan. "This is going to save lives."

Founded in 1939 as a Christian-based orphanage, Family Ministries has grown into a multi-dimensional service agency that includes residential group homes for youth in state's custody, an on-campus school for youth in its care on the main campus in Camp Creek and a foster care program.

The organization also has family and children's services in the state of Arkansas, where it has continued to expand operations.

Late last year, plans were announced for a new youth home in Chaffee Crossing, Ark., after Family Ministries received a \$1.6 million donation.

In a statement about the donation, Family Ministries President Frank Woods said, "We are truly humbled to

receive a gift of this magnitude. I am so thankful that God is so faithful in meeting the needs of this ministry. I truly give God praise for this gift."

The home at Chaffee Crossing, located near Fort Smith, Ark., will provide care to children. It will be named the Curt, Cliff and Opal Young Family Home in honor of its benefactors.

On Dec. 1, 2015, Family Ministries cut the ribbon and dedicated another Arkansas-based facility, a 33-bed residential home for children in Charleston, Ark.

Called Maggie House, the facility began receiving children on Dec. 10. The facility is housed in a former nursing home, which was renovated into a children's home.

"We are so thankful for what God has done through the people in the state of Arkansas as well as many other states in the support of this much needed facility," the Family Ministries president said.

"Through all their efforts a total of \$470,000 has already been raised for the Maggie House project," Woods said. "The total cost of remodeling the facility was just slightly under \$1 million," he added.

In addition to children and family services, Family Ministries also operates two assisted-living facilities: Governor's Bend in Erwin, Tenn., and The Laurels in Wise, Va.



A bill legalizing the medical use of cannabis oil in Tennessee was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in April, 2015.

Oil

Starts on Page 12

chemotherapy;

- poor appetite and weight loss caused by chronic illness, such as HIV, or nerve pain;
- seizure disorders and
- Crohn's disease.

According to the National Center for PTSD, some veterans use marijuana to relieve symptoms and several states have specifically approved the use of

medical marijuana for the disorder.

Faison says he would like to see this applied to veterans in Tennessee as well.

"I've spoken with many veterans who have fought for our country, who have looked and know the side effects of prescription drugs. They know the side effects of alcohol, and they desperately want to be able to use the cannabis plant," Faison said.

While the issue of legalizing medical marijuana

in Tennessee seems to be dead so far this year among state legislators, Faison says that he is not giving up on the matter for the future — especially when it comes to helping veterans who are struggling with the mental trauma of war.

For now, the state legislator says he is supporting the call for legislation during this year's general assembly to allow scientific researchers at all four-year universities within Tennessee to conduct stud-

ies on marijuana's medicinal benefits.

With the exception of a four-year research study granted to Tennessee Tech in 2014, it is illegal for medical researchers to study the plant in Tennessee — and Faison thinks that's wrong.

"We have allowed this plant to be demonized for years," Faison said.

The plant, he said, "offers benefits to society and we need to support it."

Takoma

Starts on Page 8

Takoma Regional Hospital has installed new state-of-the-art 3D mammography equipment, producing clearer images that better detect cancers often hidden by traditional 2D imaging, particularly in women with dense breasts.

"This cutting-edge technology can increase breast cancer detection by more than 40 percent for some women and reduce the need for worrisome follow-up appointments by 15 percent," Dr. Raymond Kohne, radiologist at the Diagnostic Center for Women's Health, said. "That is significant improvement over the current 2D machines being used in our area. The new technology provided by the 3D Breast Tomosynthesis machine will take our diagnostic and preventative care to an entirely new level."

Added Dennis Kiley, the hospital's interim president and CEO: "We are very excited to acquire this top-of-the-line equipment, which will enable us to provide a superior level of care for our patients that is often only found in

larger cities. Takoma is the only Tennessee facility east of Knoxville that offers this level of breast imaging equipment."

The new 3D view is similar to a computed tomography scan, but with low doses of radiation. "We can examine the breast in thinner sections, allowing us to find abnormalities that would otherwise be missed," Dr. Kohne said. "This equipment allows us to view breast tissue in thin sections, like pages of a book, instead of just the top and bottom view of the breast. It also provides us with greater clarity into suspicious areas that might have required a call-back visit before."

The main difference from a routine mammogram, in which the machine is stationary, is that in tomosynthesis the machine moves around the breast, he noted.

The new state-of-the-art technology is currently producing significantly improved 2D mammography until the FDA gives final approval on 3D mammography, according to Vickie Henegar, director of radiology and imaging services at Takoma. "We are thrilled to be the first in our region offering this potentially life-saving service to our patients," she said.

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Carnegie Hall Performance Capped Busy Year For GHS Singers

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

It's been a busy year for the Greeneville High School Advanced Chorus.

After finishing a summer concert tour of Italy that included a performance for Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the singers have chalked up numerous other achievements in the 2015-16 school year.

The group has performed with award-winning bluegrass duo Dailey & Vincent, and parlayed that experience into a once-in-a-lifetime invitation to New York City's Carnegie Hall to participate in the world premiere of a new concert.

The students have also shared the stage for a sold-out show at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center with classic rock band Foreigner.

WITH DAILEY & VINCENT

In December 2015, the GHS Advanced Chorus provided backing vocals for acclaimed bluegrass duo Dailey & Vincent, who are billed as one of the music industry's "most exciting, reputable and elite Bluegrass bands in America" for two shows at NPAC.

The shows were part of the award-winning duo's Spirit of Christmas Tour.

By all accounts, the professional musicians were so impressed with the students, they invited them to share the stage at Carnegie Hall.

"This has all happened really fast," GHS choir director Kathryn May said in January 2016 when announcing plans for the group's trip to New York City. "The students performed with Grammy-nominated bluegrass ensemble Dailey & Vincent on Dec. 11 at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. The band was so impressed with the students' performance and preparation that they asked them to return for a second show. After that concert, the band invited them to join them on stage for the Carnegie Hall performance. Everyone is extremely excited, as you can imagine."

Amid the excitement, however, was a logistical challenge. The opportunity arose so quickly, students had no time to raise funds.

"We didn't learn of the



The ensemble of "Mortals and Angels: A Bluegrass Te Deum" at New York City's Carnegie Hall included 42 students from the Greeneville High School Advanced Chorus.

invitation until after the NPAC concerts, and then we were off on school break," May said. "Scott Niswonger, who is a friend of Dailey & Vincent and attended both NPAC concerts, has graciously offered to pay for the participation fees, airfare and lodging for the trip, which is around \$1,500 per student. But, the students will need to contribute about \$600 each for meals, baggage fees, ground transportation, museum entrance fees and a show ticket."

To help defray those costs, May appealed to the community for financial backing. Donors throughout the community were offered VIP seating and treatment for the chorus' spring concert at NPAC in May 2016.

Ultimately, enough contributions were secured to provide for the students' meals, baggage fees, ground transportation, show ticket and entry costs for other sites.

"We would not be able to do this without the support of the community," May said in January as the group prepared to leave for the trip. "Students only had to bring their own

spending money."

BIG SNOW, BIG SHOW

In the final hours before the 42 chorus members and their 12 adult chaperones departed for New York City, Winter Storm Jonas blanketed much of the eastern U.S. in snowfall.

The winter weather had little effect on the chorus' travel plans to New York City.

One group was able to fly directly from Knoxville to Newark, N.J., just outside of New York City early on a Friday. A second group traveled from Knoxville to Chicago before flying into Newark later in the afternoon.

Plans were made for the group to visit Times Square and have dinner at Hard Rock Cafe before a stop at Central Park's Bethesda Gardens. Weekend plans, ahead of a Monday performance at Carnegie Hall, included daytime tours of New York City, rehearsal, a Broadway musical, a performance at a New York City church and visit to Rockefeller Center.

But, Winter Storm Jonas had changes in store for the group. Saturday evening plans for dinner and the Broadway production

of "Finding Neverland" didn't seem real until I had to be altered. Instead, the group secured tickets to Broadway's "Les Miserables."

Students stopped at Times Square, where they posted up on the stairs to perform the GHS Alma Mater.

Near-record snowfall provided a chance for the teenagers to throw down in a snowball fight in Central Park.

Although there was plenty of fun to be had, students also had much work to do to prepare for their Carnegie Hall debut. Their Saturday, Sunday and Monday in New York City included hours-long rehearsals ahead of a Monday evening performance.

After taking the stage at the famed music hall, the GHS singers performed seven pieces with Dailey & Vincent and other ensembles in the world premiere of "Mortals and Angels: A Bluegrass Te Deum."

The show fused traditional bluegrass hymns with a classical structure and incorporated ancient scripture and contemporary prayer.

"The concert was beyond words," said May. Students agreed.

"This entire experience

didn't seem real until I walked onto the stage at Carnegie Hall," said Nancy Katherine Burkey, a junior who sings second alto. "I couldn't believe that so many seats would be filled to watch us sing. The auditorium was beautiful, and I felt very honored to have the opportunity to sing there."

Mark McKee, a senior who sings second tenor, echoed those sentiments.

"I had no prior expectations for Carnegie Hall itself, but if I did, they would nevertheless be surpassed. Carnegie Hall is a music lover's dream."

He added that the trip was a dream-like experience.

"We have Mr. Niswonger and the surrounding community to thank for so quickly and so generously turning our chorus' dream into reality," he said. "The snowstorm was magical. Trudging through the streets in the snow made it feel as if we were in a movie."

Allison Chudina, a sophomore who sings first alto, said the entire experience was unforgettable.

"New York City is large and busy, but exciting," she said. "My favorite part of the trip was seeing

'Les Mis' because I love musicals. The blizzard was freezing, but beautiful. And, Carnegie was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was just an amazing experience that I will never forget."

PERFORMANCE WITH FOREIGNER

In October, the GHS Advanced Chorus also accompanied classic rock band Foreigner to close its sold-out show at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center.

The high school singers backed the band on an encore performance of its No. 1 Billboard chart hit, "I Want To Know What Love Is."

Throughout the concert, the volume and energy in the NPAC auditorium were set on full blast, while stage lights scanned and strobed over the band and crowd in sync with the music.

The audience stayed on its feet for most of the show, clapping and singing along as the band performed its most popular singles, including "Double Vision," "Hot Blooded," "Urgent," "Feels Like The First Time," "Cold As Ice," "Dirty White Boy," "Head Games," "Juke Box Hero" and "Waiting For A Girl Like You."

Foreigner front man Kelly Hansen worked the audience from the moment the band took the stage, taking advantage of frequent guitar solos to hop into the crowd, dish out high fives and snap pictures with fans.

Earlier that day, Hansen joined the GHS Advanced Chorus at Gateway Ford in support of Ford Motor Company's "Drive 4 UR School" program, which provides donations for each test drive taken during a promotional period.

Donations from test drives, combined with a \$500 grant from Foreigner and matched with another \$500 by Ford, netted the chorus program almost \$2,300.

"This group sounds absolutely fantastic," Hansen said after hearing the students perform a cappella renditions of songs by Foreigner, Gladys Knight and The Pips and Earth, Wind & Fire in the Gateway Ford showroom.

"Traveling the nation, I've heard different levels of talent. This choir sounds great," Hansen said.

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Greeneville Education Association, which represents the system's teachers; how they would prepare for the new school year; and their views regarding career-technical education, among others.

MOORHOUSE SELECTED

In late April 2015, the board of education voted unanimously to begin negotiating a three-year contract with Moorhouse.

"After soaking up all the information, I feel I want to support Dr. Jeff Moorhouse for the position," said board member Craig Shepherd. He added that he'd heard "only glowing reviews" about Moorhouse from his subordinates and superiors, and "liked his enthusiasm, preparation, leadership, love of kids and his vision."

Board members used the term "visionary" to refer to Moorhouse several times, while Ogle noted that comments gathered from those who attended the public form also frequently referred to Moorhouse's "vision."

Moorhouse had also been named a finalist for the director of schools position in Unicoi County, but withdrew his candidacy after the Greeneville School board voted to pursue contract negotiations with him.

Within a week, Ogle and Moorhouse had successfully negotiated a three-year contract.

The deal was inked in a brief, special called meeting in early May 2015.

The contract provided for a \$112,000 annual salary, a monthly vehicle allowance, the same insurance, vacation and retirement benefits other GCS employees receive and a \$5,000 allowance for moving-related expenses.

"I would like to just thank the board for the confidence you've shown in me to select me as your director of schools," Moorhouse said after the board voted unanimously to approve the contract. "I am very excited to join a world-class school system like Greeneville City."

MANY HIGHLIGHTS

In a recent interview, Moorhouse said there have been many highlights to his first year leading the school system.

"What has been really neat coming in is that the culture is already established that people really value what's happening in the city school system," he said. "We want to continue to create value — that people have made an investment, and we want to be able to show the return on investment that they've made."

He added that growing relationships with the various people who work within the system has been the standout part of his first year.

"What's unique about the school system is the people. Everybody's rowing in the same direction," he said. "It's about excellence in everything. The standard has been set, and we're going to maintain that standard of excellence."

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City Schools Reaps Benefits Of Reach4It Campaign

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

More than 1,100 new computers — enough for each third- through eighth-grade student — are now in use each day in Greeneville City Schools, thanks in large part to a communitywide fundraising effort.

Funds pledged to the Greeneville City Schools Education Foundation's \$750,000 Reach4IT campaign are aiding in the school system's "digital transformation" initiative.

Director of Schools Dr. Jeff Moorhouse says the efforts are a vision held by school system leaders for decades.

"This is an example of what can be accomplished in a community when people work together," Moorhouse said while watching a group of elementary school students unbox new computers at the start of the spring semester.

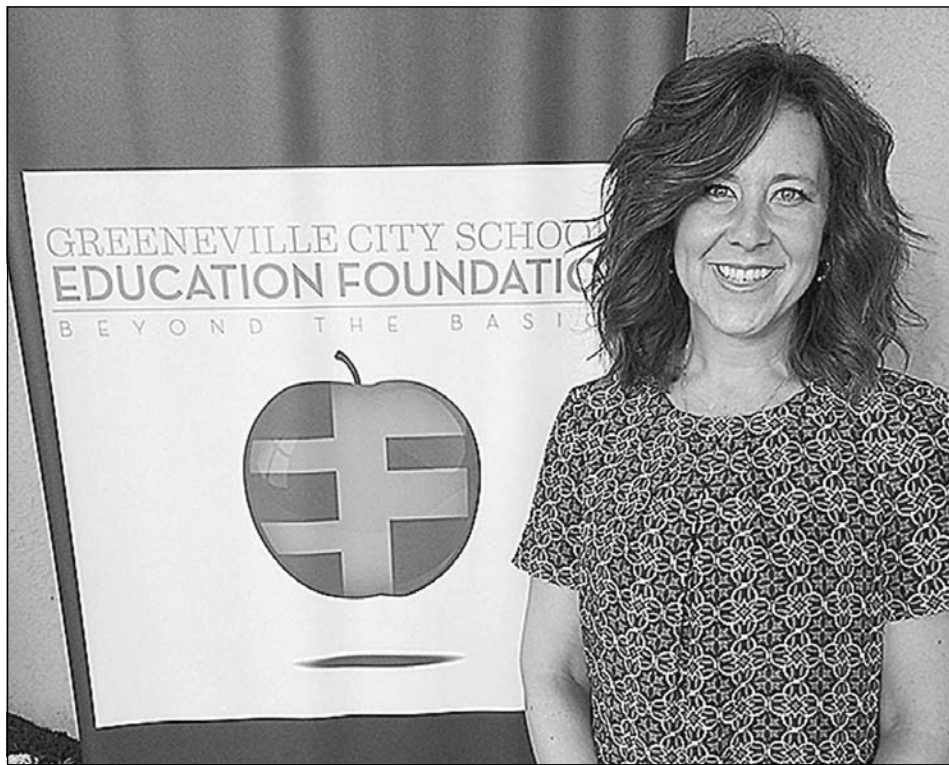
The new laptops aren't the only devices put in city students' hands in recent months.

Pledges from Reach4IT have also provided students with Apple iPads, other tablets and e-readers.

GCSEF Executive Director Amanda Waddell said the fundraising effort was undertaken, in part, because the district has been a "responsible steward" of its funds and resources.

"Reach4IT created a greater community buy-in for this vision and generated vested stakeholders" she said. "The success of the Reach4IT campaign speaks to the generous and engaged nature of the Greeneville community."

The GCS Instructional Technology team has invested innumerable hours in preparing the devices for student use, preparing the school system's network, setting up each device with educational programs and linking each one to an individual student's online account, complete



FILE PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN
Greeneville native Amanda Waddell began work as executive director of the Greeneville City Schools Education Foundation in 2014.

with cloud storage.

The devices add "a new tool in our teachers' toolboxes," said Tusculum View Elementary School Principal DeAnna Martin.

After helping distribute new laptops to students earlier this semester, Martin explained that the software on each system enhances the "personalized learning" concept by allowing teachers to make assignments tailored to help students meet and exceed their own learning goals.

Across the school district, the computers are also teaching students other skills, like personal responsibility and good "digital citizenship."

LAUNCHED IN 2013

A goal of providing new technology to transform every class in all six Greeneville City schools prompted GCSEF to launch the Reach4IT campaign in September 2013.

At a special launch event, held in the courtyard at Greeneville High School, more than 40 community, business and

industry leaders, GCS friends and alumni and other GCSEF supporters gathered to hear about the four-year, \$750,000 fundraising drive.

Established in 1996 by a group of local private citizens, GCSEF is a non-profit organization that strives to "go beyond the basics" that government funding provides to the city school system.

In launching the effort, GCSEF Trustee Bob Leonard explained that the school system had laid the groundwork to support Reach4IT's goals.

"Greeneville City Schools has improved their technology infrastructure through internal funding and state grants. The backbone of the system is in place," he said. "The school system has provided the technology for the educators and administration. Over the years, the system has been able to provide technological tools to the students, but these tools are aging, and there are simply not enough to go around."

That, Leonard said, meant "it's time to pro-

vide the tools students need for success, and Reach4IT can make it happen."

To start the effort, Leonard announced that his family and their related businesses had pledged commitments.

The Greeneville City Board of Education committed networking and other infrastructure to support the in-classroom devices and committed \$100,000 toward Reach4IT's goal.

Those funds were used toward new devices from Greeneville Middle School and Greeneville High School.

Meanwhile, the Greeneville Schools In Action parent organization pledged to provide a portion of its annual fundraising proceeds to the campaign.

Initial plans called for the purchase of about 1,400 computers and about 600 Apple iPads.

21ST CENTURY CLASSES

According to the foundation, the "bottom line" is that a lack of electronic access equals lost opportunities for students.

"The 21st century classroom is one that is undergoing a rapid transformation into a highly flexible, configurable and collaborative learning environment," said then-GCSEF Executive Director Allison Adams when the Reach4IT effort was launched.

Then-Director of Schools Dr. Linda Stroud agreed.

"Technology devices as educational tools are as critical today as paper, pencils and encyclopedias have been in the past," Stroud said. "Our students simply cannot succeed in the present or future worlds of education and work without them."

Now, with the city school system in the midst of a self-titled "digital transformation," current administrators appear to agree with their predecessors' assessments.

"There is a responsibility we feel as an education system to make this transform teaching and learning in our schools," Moorhouse said of students' new devices. "We want to express thanks to the individuals and businesses in the community for making this happen."

REACH4IT SUCCESS

Although Reach4IT was launched as a four-year fundraising drive, the campaign earned pledges totaling 97 percent of goal within one year.

Just before the 6-month mark, pledges and contributions had already totaled \$600,000.

"The Greeneville City School System sells itself. Its reputation as an innovative, collaborative, high-performing school system is valued

by our business community, and the business community recognizes the importance of making an investment in the school system," Leonard said. "This community has always exhibited a rich history of supporting education, with the generosity shown towards this initiative making me very proud of my hometown."

Tom Ferguson, then-president and CEO of the Greene County Partnership, said that local business and industry leaders invested in their own workforce by supporting the campaign.

"Equipping our students with technology skills that can translate into the workplace is imperative to producing a qualified workforce," he said. "Prospective companies want to see that our school systems are capable of producing a workforce that is comfortable with technology and can adapt to its quick-paced changes. Technology is where the future is, and we have to prepare our students for both local and global competition in the job market."

So far, just under \$400,000 has been collected, with just under \$300,000 deployed in four separate installments.

Fewer than 70 organizations, businesses and individuals have pledged amounts ranging from \$25 to \$100,000, Waddell said.

Those contributions, educators say, are paying dividends.

"Reach4IT has provided equal access to devices that some of our students could never afford at home. These devices have broken down many barriers — economically and educationally — to provide a world-class education for all of our students," said Hal Henard Elementary School Principal Janet Ricker.

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economic advantages of consolidating some schools, adding that consolidation needs to be a community decision.

Other components of McLain's proposed five-year plan included a focus on curriculum, building morale, bringing higher-level courses to middle school grades and more of these types of courses into high schools, and expanding extracurricular activities.

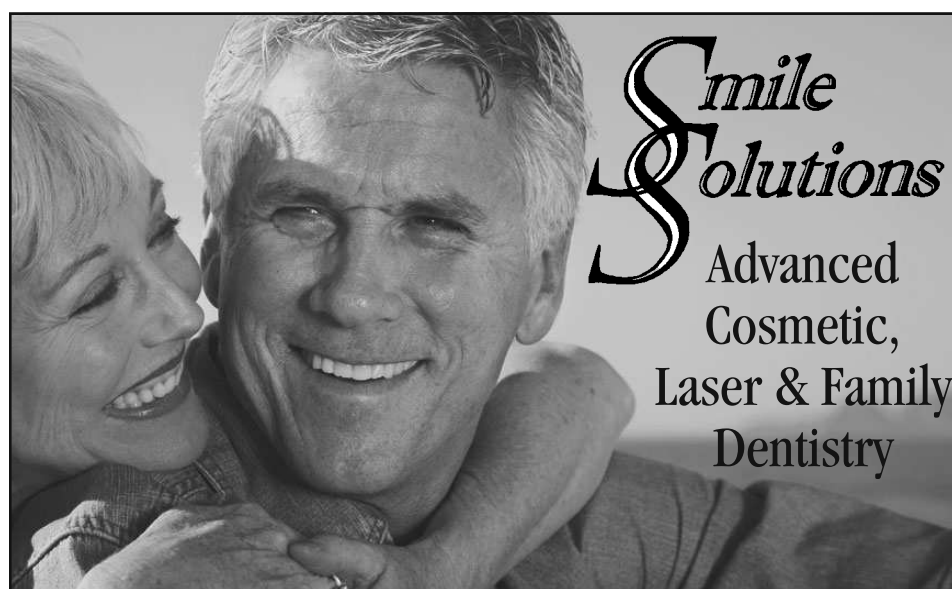
At the end of the more than six-hour meeting, McLain received six of the seven possible school board votes. Board member Tommy Cobble voted in favor of Frye's hire, but also voiced support of McLain.

"I'm just humbled to be selected," McLain said following the May 14 meeting. "Hopefully we can all work together to just make the county better for the kids."

Prior to his selection, McLain had served as the system's assistant director of operations and student services since 2013. Before that, he had served as principal of North Greene High School since 2007, and had taught in local schools from 1997 up until he became principal.

McLain signed his director's contract at the May 28 meeting of the Greene County Board of Education. That contract, which took effect on June 1, was for a period of three years.

The contract provides McLain with an annual salary of \$100,000 and the same insurance benefits as other certified school system employees. His salary is to remain at that level throughout the three years of the contract, unless the school board determines to increase it based on performance evaluations to be conducted annually.



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- Greeneville Middle School Niche School Ranking 8th Best Public Middle School in Tennessee
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Director of Schools

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Area School Systems Honor Employees, Alumni

BY BRAD HICKS
STAFF WRITER

Employees and alumni of both Greenville City and Greene County school systems received a number of awards during the 2015 calendar year.

In April, the Greenville City Schools Education Foundation named its 2015 CORE Champions. Scott Niswonger, local businessman and the first recipient of Outstanding Patron CORE award, former Greenville City Schools director Dr. Linda Stroud, Julie Fannon, the city schools' systems analyst, and Greenville Board of Education member Dr. Mark Patterson introduced the honorees.

CORE Champions named in 2015 were:

- Dr. Katie Baker — Outstanding Young Alumni;
- Dr. Charles T. Hankins — Distinguished Alumni;
- Allison Adams — Distinguished Service; and
- Bob Leonard, representing Reach4IT supporter — Outstanding Patron.

Each year, the GCSEF presents CORE Champions Awards to those four categories who "commit to a cause, optimize their resources, reinvest in their com-

munity and equip others for success."

In May, Greenville City Schools celebrated its employees during an annual personnel breakfast held at Greenville High School.

Stroud, whose last day as director of Greenville City Schools was on May 26, received the Kathryn W. Leonard Outstanding Service to Students Award. This award is presented on behalf of the Greene County Partnership and is named for the late Kathryn W. Leonard, who was a long-time advocate for education and chair of the Greenville Board of Education.

The recipient of the Kathryn W. Leonard Outstanding Service to Students Award is selected by a staffwide vote.

Jerry Ayers, principal and career technical education director for the Greene Technology Center, was named Principal of the Year.

Teacher of the Year honorees were: Lorraine Amos, Joy Lander, Finette Craft, who was also the systemwide Teacher of the Year for pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, Candice Wiggin, Aundrea Gunter, who was also the systemwide Teacher of the Year for fifth through eighth grade, Robyn Shipley, and John Morrell, who was also systemwide Teacher of the Year for grades nine through 12.

Members of the Greenville Fire Department were awarded the school system's Robert Keasling Friend to Education Award.

The Robert E. "Eddie" Jordan Character Education Award went to Mary Freshour of Tusculum View Elementary School.

Bob Fortel of Greenville High School received the Technology Excellence Award.

The Dr. Lyle Ailshie "Only The Best" Award went to Kenny Gross of Highland Elementary School. Kathy May of Greenville High School received the Dr. Earnest W. Martin "Champion for Children" Award.

The Paraprofessional of the Year Award went to Mary Ellen Honeycutt, and the Excellence in Professional Learning awards went to Marsha Highbarger, Stacy King, Deanna Martin and Richard Tipton.

The Greene County School System also honored many of its own in May during the 2015 Greene County Schools Personnel Reception held at Chuckey-Doak High School.

Chris Ricker of South Greene High School received the Outstanding Service to Students Award, which was presented by Greene County Partnership Board of Directors member Al Giles.

Then-Baileyton Elementary School Principal George Frye was recognized as the system's Principal of the Year.

West Greene High School teacher Reece Baughard received the Judy Thompson Phillips Lifetime Contribution to Education award.

Greene County Schools Teachers of the Year were named for each school within grade-level divisions.

Of those, three teachers were named District Winner. They were: Angel Early of McDonald Elementary School for pre-kindergarten through third; Katie Jo Knight of Glenwood Elementary School for fourth through eighth; and North Greene High School's Julia Hensley for ninth through 12th.

Other Teachers of the Year at the school level included: Callie Nease, Virginia Cooter, Michelle Smith, Dianna Thompson, Sherry Ripley, Jean Smith, Elizabeth Ferguson, Cindy Walker, Debbie Whitehead, Jessie Beth Miller, Robin Morelock, Donna Grugg, Beth Ricker, Erica Williams, Wendy Connor, Melanie Smith, Melissa Mittlesteadt, Mario Leon, Joanie Rigney, Reece Baughard, Jennifer McAmis and Donna Shannon.

West Greene High School custodian was honored with the "Go-Getter" Award for staff person of the year.

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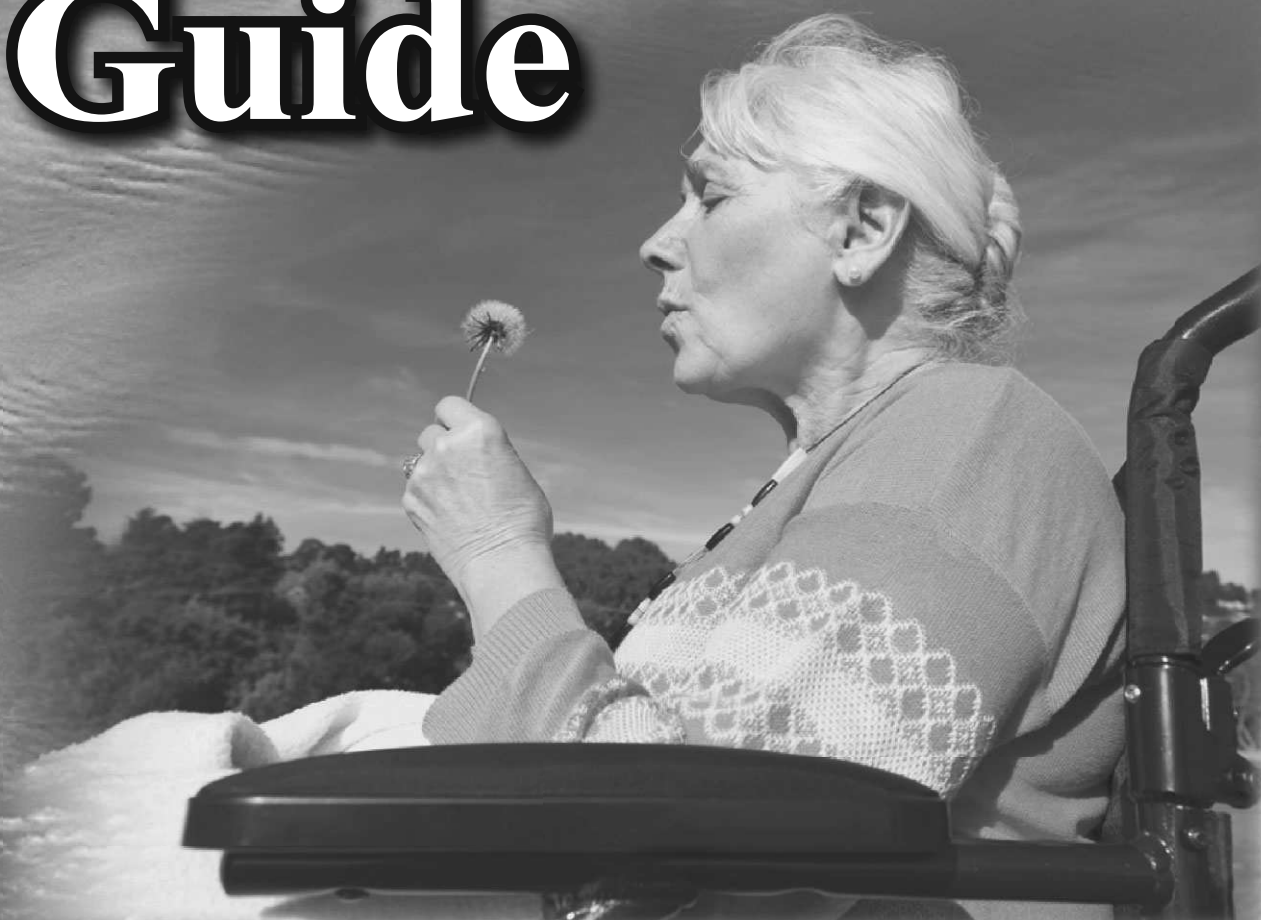
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Director Eyes Further Expansions At Greene Technology Ctr.

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

The Greene Technology Center is looking to expand the programs it offers to adult students through development of an advanced manufacturing institute.

The school's administrators have announced a concept to boost the skill sets of local workers by forging new relationships with area industries.

In the last year, the school has also added new equipment to train students in various industrial-type programs, while considering cuts to some offerings in favor of bringing new ones to fruition.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING INSTITUTE

In early 2015, GTC Principal Jerry Ayers outlined concepts behind plans currently in development for an advanced manufacturing institute at the facility.

The goal of the program is to boost the skill sets of local workers to provide the skilled labor force local industries need — then use it as a tool to recruit new manufacturers to the area.

GTC, Ayers said, "is positioned to provide a model advanced manufacturing program, designed for smaller communities to develop a skilled workforce to enhance and grow our local economic base."

According to Ayers, local industries have expressed a need for more immediately available skilled workers as older workers that hold key positions retire.

Although the center already provides career-technical education to high school students in an effort to provide a skilled workforce in the future, many local industries need skilled adult workers now, Ayers told members of the Joint Board of Education, which oversees the school.

The solution, he said, could lie in the advanced manufacturing institute, which would build in GTC's existing partnerships with the Tennessee College of Applied Technology and forge new relationships with local industries.

A new one-year program would give adult learners more opportunities to take advantage of GTC's welding, machine tool and industrial electricity offerings.

Completion of those three courses

would provide skills, needed for industrial maintenance positions, that can't be obtained elsewhere in Northeast Tennessee, Ayers said.

"What we have at the center, no one else has," he said. "We have all three."

While formal action hasn't been taken, school board members appeared supportive of the plan.

Similarly, administrators at TCAT have expressed interest in the concept, Ayers said, adding that he has presented the concept to councils of local manufacturers.

Discussions with some plant managers have shown promise.

Some have indicated a willingness to pay for their employees to take advan-

tage of GTC's programs, Ayers said.

Manufacturers would provide training funds for their employees. Teachers, curriculum and materials would be provided by TCAT. The facility and equipment would be provided by GTC.

"Financially, this will cost us nothing. We're the facilitators," Ayers said.

Such a program, he added, would make GTC "a hub" for learning advanced manufacturing skills.

"This could be great. It could fill up the program here and take care of immediate needs here," he said.

NEW EQUIPMENT IN PLACE

In spring 2015, GTC added new equipment for students in its Industrial Elec-

tricity, Welding and Pre-Engineering programs.

Two programmable logic controller training units, at a cost of \$34,000, for the Industrial Electricity program were purchased in spring 2015 using federal Carl Perkins Grant funds.

At the same time, a new plasma cutter, at a cost of \$22,450, was purchased for the Welding program using the same grant.

Both pieces of equipment match machinery used by local industries, meaning the students who train on them will be workforce ready, members of the Joint Board of Education were told.

Later, in fall 2015, 25 new desktop computers for the center's Pre-Engineering program were purchased.

"We need computers that are pretty high-end machines to power the Autodesk Suite" of engineering software used in the class, Ayers explained.

Previous computers, which dated to 2009, no longer met the computer-aided design software's minimum standards.

Like other equipment, the \$30,600 cost for the new units was funded by federal Carl Perkins Grant allocations, Ayers said.

PROGRAMS CHANGING?

At the start of 2016, Ayers outlined some potential changes to GTC programming that may be coming in the future.

Some changes are being considered as teachers in the center's automotive collision and early childhood education programs have indicated their intent to retire.

In past years, some other GTC programs have seen updates as instructors have retired, Ayers said.

He noted that he's discussed different career-technical education possibilities with officials from Walters State Community College, TCAT at Morristown, the Greene County Partnership and the Niswonger Foundation.

Programs like culinary arts, small engine repair, aerospace aviation maintenance and diesel mechanics are among those being considered, Ayers said.

Surveys were sent to the five high schools in Greeneville and Greene County to gauge student interest.

Possible programming changes could be considered by the Joint Board of Education in the coming months.



SUN FILE PHOTO BY SARAH R. GREGORY

Greene Technology Center Principal Jerry Ayers gives a report on increased enrollment at the center during an October 2015 meeting of the Joint Board of Education.

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