

# The Hartsville Vidette

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Started by Civil War General John Hunt Morgan, bringing Trousdale County's news for more than 150 years and counting

## Inmate's family seeks answers in death

BY CHRIS GREGORY  
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Family members of an inmate at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center are demanding an investigation into what they called a murder inside the facility last month.

CoreCivic, which owns the Hartsville prison, confirmed the death in a press statement by Public Affairs Manager Ryan Gustin.

"At approximately 2:07 a.m. (CST) on Thursday, December 17, Trousdale Turner Correctional Center staff discovered

an unresponsive inmate. Staff immediately called a medical emergency. Facility medical staff immediately responded and begin administering emergency first aid and life-saving procedures. EMS responded to the facility, but the inmate passed away prior to being transported.

"Facility administrators notified the Tennessee Department of Correction's (TDOC) Office of Investigations and Conduct (OIC). A full investigation of the

incident by the TDOC OIC is underway, and Trousdale Turner staff are cooperating fully," the statement read.

CoreCivic declined to identify the inmate, citing privacy requirements and referred all other inquiries to TDOC. A letter sent to media outlets, TTCC Warden Raymond Byrd, TDOC offices and to the District Attorney's office by the inmate's family identified him as Aaron Blayke Adams, 29. Tennessee's TOMIS inmate identi-



Aaron Blayke Adams

fication system also lists Adams as 'deceased.'

"He was murdered at Trousdale Turner," Deborah Henson, Adams' grandmother, said. "He was in protective custody because he was due to be released."

CoreCivic would not confirm whether Adams had been in protective custody or was scheduled for release.

The letter claims that Adams "obtained broken bones and blunt force trauma, to his face and head, along with multiple bruising throughout his body,"

and Henson added that the funeral home had to reconstruct Adams' head while preparing the body for memorial services.

"It has been devastating to know that he was beaten so badly they had to recap his head and build up his lower jaw just so we could have an open casket," she said.

The family's letter alleges that Adams was killed by "a menace to society... who was already serving time for murdering his own father."

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## 2020: YEAR IN REVIEW

BY CHRIS GREGORY  
MANAGING EDITOR

With 2021 here and 2020 in the rearview mirror (and good riddance, I imagine most of us would say!), The Vidette takes a look back at the biggest headlines from Trousdale County in the previous year. While COVID-19 obviously dominated the headlines, there was plenty more to report on. This will be the first of a three-part series.

### JANUARY

Discussions continued about future use of Trousdale County's historic courthouse. The Historical Society wants space for a museum, while county officials intend to eventually move the Election Commission there as well.

The Early Bird Café reopened under new ownership. The restaurant, one of Hartsville's favorite breakfast stops, would close again later in the year and reopen in the fall.

An audit released by the state cited the Tennessee Department of Corrections and CoreCivic for alleged failure to provide medical care for inmates, properly investigate sexual abuse and maintain necessary staffing levels.

Three Trousdale County players — Kobe Ford, Tarvaris Claiborne and Camer-



Metro Creative Connection

on Rankins — were named to the Tennessee Football Coaches Association's Class 2A all-state football team.

The Industrial Development Board completed the sale of property on Industrial Park Drive to a Smith County man who is building a meat processing plant on the site. The plant was expected to open in January 2021.

Trousdale County's grand jury indicted a man on charges of attempted first-degree murder and aggravated rape in an August 2020 incident at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in which a CoreCivic employee was assaulted. The case remains ongoing.

Wilson Bank & Trust promoted Seth Thurman to office manager and Jenesia Ellis

to assistant manager of its Hartsville branch after Lisa Dies transitioned to semi-retirement.

### FEBRUARY

Trousdale County held three open forums over a three-month period to discuss potentially increasing the local option sales tax and/or extending the wheel tax. A vote on increasing the sales tax by a half-cent failed overwhelmingly at the August election.

The County Commission approved an ordinance requiring the display of address numbers at all residences, with violators subject to fines per day of up to \$50. A 180-day grace period was built in, with the ordinance taking effect in September.

Kobe Ford and Tarvaris Claiborne both signed to play football at Cumberland University.

Trousdale County held its basketball homecoming ceremonies. The 2020 Homecoming King was Jay'dynn Hayward, while the Queen was Tori Simmons.

The Hartsville Rotary Club held its fourth annual Father-Daughter Dance, raising over \$2,500 for the group's local projects.

Commissioners received a master plan for proposed improvements to Hartsville City Park, including redesigning the Little League fields, adding a splash pad and building an indoor recreation center. The \$11.6 million plan was designed to be implemented in multiple stages over years.

A former prison guard at Hartsville's CoreCivic prison sued the company, claiming sexual harassment, sex discrimination, wrongful termination and defamation. A U.S. District Court judge dismissed part of the complaint in October, while the remainder of the case is ongoing.

Two teenagers were killed in a Feb. 12 crash on Highway 10. The THP's report stated that the driver pulled

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## County seeks grant for sewer rehab

BY CHRIS GREGORY  
MANAGING EDITOR

Trousdale County will seek up to \$630,000 in grant funding to upgrade sewer capacity and improve performance.

County Mayor Stephen Chambers addressed the need at a public meeting Monday evening to discuss the county's application for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

Funded by state and federal government, CDBGs are designed to fund community development activities to benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

"This is a very competitive grant

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## TN launches statewide reading initiative

The Tennessee Department of Education released details Monday on a new \$100 million statewide initiative, "Reading 360," to ensure Tennessee districts, teachers, and families are equipped with tools and resources to help students read on grade level by third grade.

To help support literacy development in Tennessee, the state will leverage approximately \$60 million of one-time federal COVID-19 relief funding and \$40 million in federal grant funding to immediately launch Reading 360 and invest in optional reading resources and supports at no cost to the state or districts.

Reading 360 will provide optional grants and resources to help more Tennessee students develop strong phonics-based reading skills by supporting districts, teachers, and families.

"When our students succeed our

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## Check your vaccine status online

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced a new digital tool Tuesday to help inform Tennesseans when they will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

"In addition to creating a strong infrastructure for distribution, we're currently one of the top states in the nation for total doses administered, vaccinating more than 150,000 Tennesseans in just two weeks," Lee said in a press statement. "This tool is yet another step we're taking to provide Tennesseans with critical information as our vaccine supply increases and more phases become eligible."

The eligibility tool allows users to opt-in to receive updates and notifications about their vaccine phase and provides risk-based and age-based phase information at the county level.

Vaccine phases and the current estimated vaccine timeline can be found at covid19.tn.gov/covid-19-vaccines/eligibility.

Tennessee's vaccine availability information by county as of Tuesday had Trousdale County with vaccines available for those in phases 1a1 and 1a2, and for those aged 75 and over. Phase 1a1 covers hospital and home health care staff, first responders, staff and residents of long-term care facilities and those over age 18 who cannot live independently. Phase 1a2 covers other health care workers with direct patient exposure. For more information on obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine, call the Trousdale County Health Department at 615-374-2112.

Tennessee's teachers moved up the list for the COVID-19 vaccine last Wednesday, just behind frontline health care workers in the state's distribution plan.

When educators will actually be able to receive the vaccine is still unclear, but the Tennessee Department of

Health estimates it could be in February or March. The decision moves them ahead of adults with high-risk conditions and other critical infrastructure workers.

"It has to do with risk to our society and economy," Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey said during a news briefing. "When children are in school, their societal and economic impact is strengthened, when they are educated and when they are more literate. So we want to do it for children, we want to do it for parents, in order to have kids in school so parents can go to work."

Teachers and childcare workers have been moved to Phase 1b in the state's vaccination rollout plan.

— From staff reports

Contributing: Ethan Steinquest, Lebanon Democrat

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### THE PEOPLE'S AGENDA

The Economic Development Committee will meet on Thursday, Jan. 7 at 6 p.m. in the upstairs courtroom of the

courthouse. The Personnel Committee will meet on Thursday, Jan. 7 at 7 p.m. in the upstairs courtroom of the courthouse.

### MORE INSIDE

Four Trousdale players named to all-state teams.

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