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From the Editor

Our 30th Edition!

In 2014, a new lifestyles magazine appeared for the first time in Blount County when Blount County Horizon was born. It's been published quarterly ever since.

This edition, Summer 2021, marks the 30th issue of the magazine, which first began in March 2014 as a partnership between The Daily Times and Sherri Gardner Howell's SGH Enterprises. The focus then and now is on Blount County: the people, places and activities that give a uniqueness to this area we call home. Sherri was the editor of the magazine from its inception through Spring 2017.



The first issue's cover story was a feature on Maryville actor David Dwyer, known for roles in movies such as "Remember the Titans," "The Blind Side" and "October Sky." When the issue was published, Dwyer's "most recent movie credit" was noted as "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues."

Also in that issue was Maryville City Manager Greg McClain's inaugural history column, "Looking Back," focused on Blount County's

namesake, William Blount. Greg continues to write the column for Horizon; in this issue, he discusses Ed F. Harper Furniture and Undertaking, which was located next to what is now Lambert Southern Pies & Bake Shop.

In addition to features on various topics, the Spring 2014 issue included profile pieces on local residents, Blount at Play photo packages, columns on health, economics and books as well as a column written by my former newsroom colleague, Steve Wildsmith. Some of the departments have changed, some of the columnists have changed, but the focus has remained on Blount County since that very first issue came out.

Horizon was available in print at participating advertiser locations, the Blount County Chamber of Commerce and

The Daily Times, was available for download in PDF format at The Daily Times website, www.thedailytimes.com, and was delivered to several thousand select households throughout the county in 2014. The main difference now is that TDT decided to make Horizon available to all seven-day subscribers in 2017. Copies may still be found at the reception desk and online,

although with the COVID pandemic, some of the other locations may no longer provide them.

I was asked to be the editor in 2017, and the first issue with my name on it was published that summer.

The cover story was on the Clayton Center for the Arts.

This 30th issue has a mix of features: A cover story on Remote Area Medical, an organization providing critical medical, dental, vision and veterinary services at no charge to underserved and unserved individuals; Appalachian Ballet Company's 50th anniversary; profiles on Blount County's new archives and records manager and a man with a passion for helping those with mental health issues; and a feature on a Blount County farmer and retired educator who is still going strong at 98. Columns, in addition to Greg McClain's "Looking Back", are from Blount Partnership, Pellissippi State Community College and Quality Financial.

All of us who are involved with Horizon express our appreciation to the people of Blount County for your support. Please feel free to contact us at Horizon@thedailytimes.com for comments and story suggestions.



We would love to hear your ideas and feedback

horizon@thedailytimes.com

Linda Braden Albert

Linda Braden Albert
Editor



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Blount County **HORIZON** SUMMER 2021

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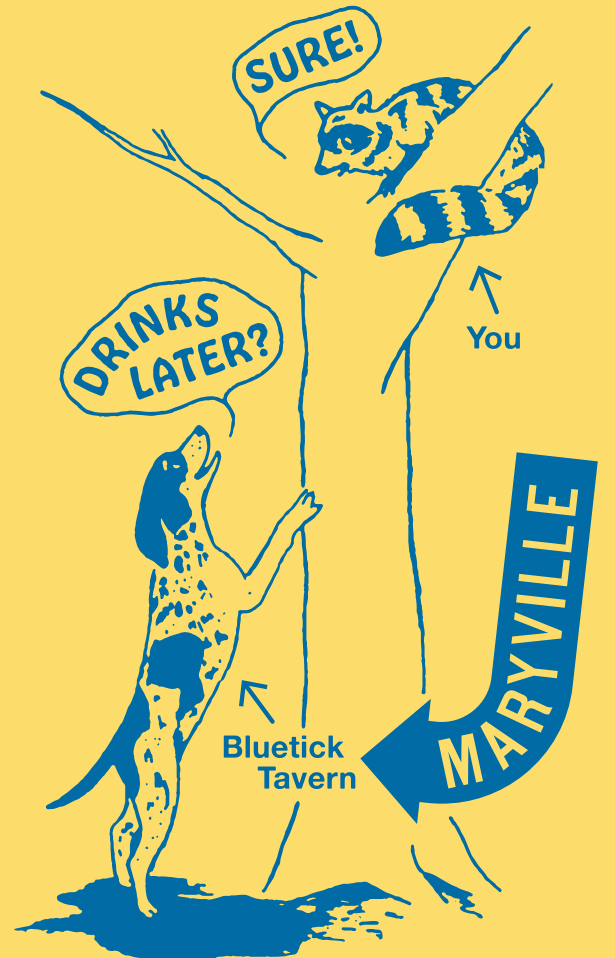
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To the great folks of Alcoa, Maryville, and Blount county, We want to say thank you for all the support you have shown us since opening the local Blackhorse Pub & Brewery. Launching a new restaurant during the time of COVID-19 has been a unique experience. We have found ourselves short on staff and critical pieces of equipment; however, the community has been welcoming and understanding.

We look forward to a time when we have a whole staff to serve the entire restaurant and beer garden.

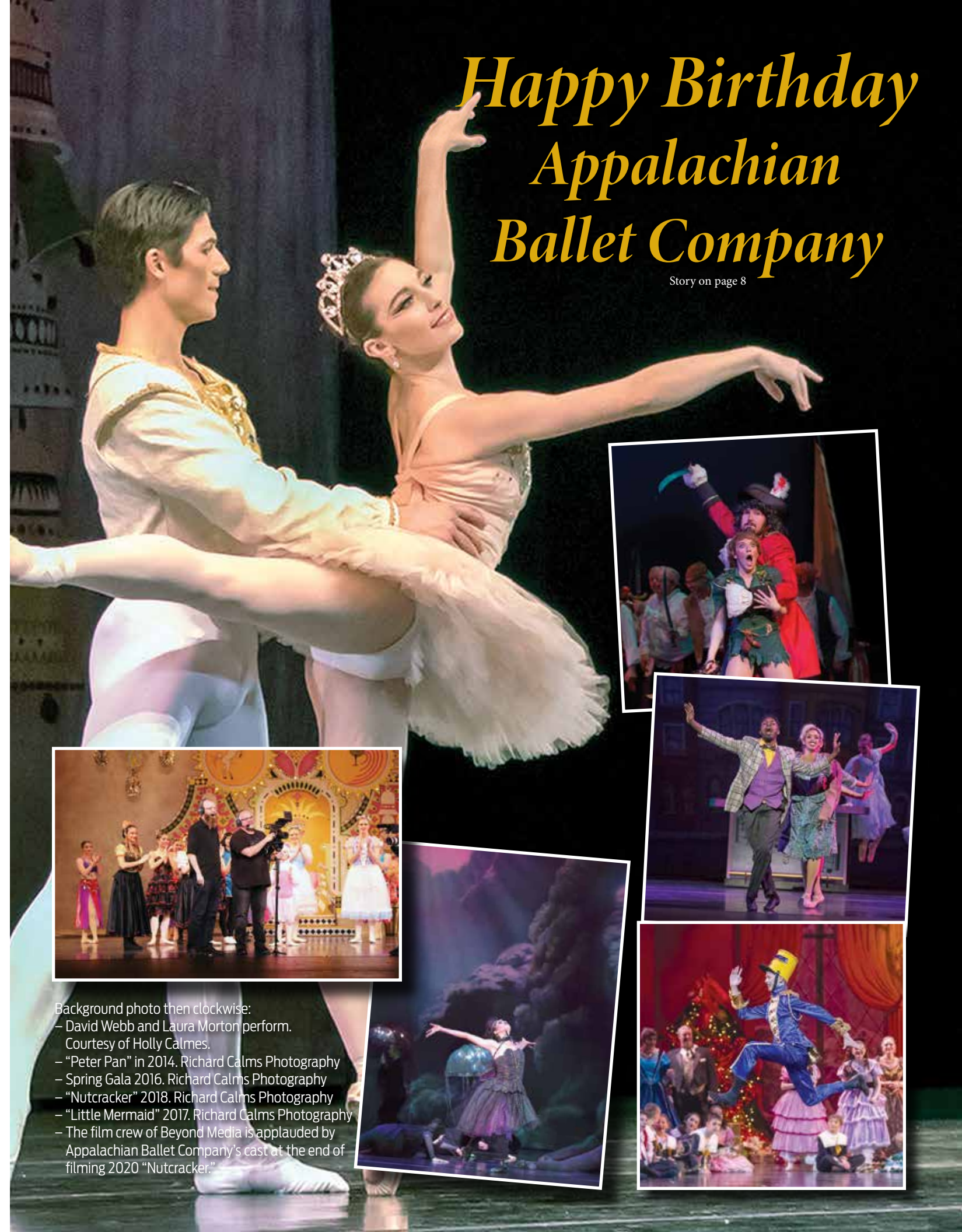
We would also like to announce our first music series, the Full Moon Jam, hosted in the beer garden. This music series will be a monthly Bluegrass and Americana-oriented live music show starting this June on the 26th at 8:30 p.m. Guests are invited to bring lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy mountain music in the valley of the Great Smoky Mountains under a full moon.

We look forward to serving you all soon!

-Owners, Jeff & Sherri Robinson

Happy Birthday Appalachian Ballet Company

Story on page 8



Background photo then clockwise:
– David Webb and Laura Morton perform. Courtesy of Holly Calmes.
– “Peter Pan” in 2014. Richard Calms Photography
– Spring Gala 2016. Richard Calms Photography
– “Nutcracker” 2018. Richard Calms Photography
– “Little Mermaid” 2017. Richard Calms Photography
– The film crew of Beyond Media is applauded by Appalachian Ballet Company’s cast at the end of filming 2020 “Nutcracker.”

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Fifty years on, Appalachian Ballet Company still dazzles through dance

By Lee Zimmerman

There's never a need to consider a cultural chasm when roots and relevance somehow manage to find common cause.

For the past 50 years, Appalachian Ballet Company has done just that by integrating local tradition with the forms and finesse of classical and contemporary dance. ABC, currently the resident dance company of the Clayton Center for the Arts located on the Maryville College campus, originated under the leadership of Founding Artistic Director Cheryl Van Metre and currently operates under the same auspices as the Van Metre School of Dance, which was first founded 63 years ago. The two currently share space at 215 W. Broadway in Maryville.

Both organizations are helmed by Amy Morton Vaughn, an accomplished dancer, teacher and choreographer with 30 years of professional experience. She has served as the Appalachian Ballet Company's Artistic Director for the past 25 years as well as being the owner and operator of the Van Metre School of Dance. Indeed, her dedication to dance runs in the family. Her daughter, Kylie Morton Berry, is the company's principal dancer and rehearsal mistress for Appalachian Ballet and is an instructor in ballet and jazz for the Van Metre School. Vaughn's other daughter, Laura Morton, is a professional dancer with the Staibdance Dance Company and the Terminus Modern Ballet Theatre, both of which are based in Atlanta, and was recently featured in Dance Magazine's January issue as one of "25 to Watch for 2021."

Formerly known as the Maryville/Alcoa Civic Ballet

Company, the organization opted for a name change in the mid-'70s, hoping to expand its artistic appeal while underscoring both its commitment and connection to the local community. Its goal, as stated in its mission statement, is to provide its young dancers with a high



Members of Appalachian Ballet Company perform in the party scene from "The Nutcracker." Courtesy of Richard Calmes.

caliber of classical training and performing opportunities, to produce a first-class season of classical and contemporary ballets showcasing local artists, and to promote and foster a love and appreciation of the arts overall.

Those efforts have clearly paid off. The company's alumni have gone on to join any number of distinguished dance companies — among them, the Martha Graham Dance Company, the Houston Ballet, the North Carolina Dance Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, the Paul Taylor Dance Company,

Contemporary West Dance Theatre, Lexington Ballet, Eglevsky Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet and several others.

Still, the local bond remains the most relevant. It inspires the group's three highly anticipated annual productions, including "Bluejeans and

Ballet," a program which taps tradition while sharing the common threads that bind classical and contemporary themes.

"We developed 'Bluejeans' as a means of cutting through the impression that ballet is too stuffy or highbrow to be enjoyed by the average individual," Vaughn explains. "Once people have an opportunity to experience it, the barriers are broken down and the audience understands that dance can be fun, interesting and exciting."

Vaughn says that there will be a new spin on the

Bluejeans performance this year. "It will encompass 11 or 12 short pieces that are each based on a different book," Vaughn says. "My mother wrote children's books, and that's what inspired this idea."

The books include "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens, "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allen Poe and "Mastering the Art of French Cooking by Julia Child," the latter of which will find Vaughn herself in the title role.

Not surprisingly, the company offers an educational outreach by sharing its performances with nearly 5,000 students every year. In addition, the company plans to establish a satellite school.

Appalachian Ballet's 50th anniversary coincides with its 2021-2022 season. Aside from "Bluejeans, Ballet & Books," it will include a ballet performance of "The Little Mermaid" next March, as well as its ever-popular annual production of "The Nutcracker" in early December. In addition, Beyond Media has helped create a special documentary that includes the performance of "The Nutcracker" that was slated for 2020 but had to be cancelled due to COVID. Current plans call for a screening of the film in either late summer or early fall.

So too, in keeping with the occasion, a commemorative 50th anniversary booklet featuring archival photos and copies of vintage programs is also being printed.

"We're also reaching out to all our alumni and hoping they will reconnect with the company," Vaughn notes. "We're inviting them back to share in this special celebration."



The Appalachian Ballet Company 50th Anniversary Season

"Bluejeans, Ballet & Books"
Clayton Center for the Arts
Dinner and show, 6 p.m. Sept. 23

"The Nutcracker"
Knoxville Civic Auditorium:
School matinee, Dec. 3
Public show, Dec. 4 and 5
Clayton Center for the Arts:
Public show, Dec. 10 and 11

"The Little Mermaid"
Clayton Center for the Arts
School matinee, March 25, 2022
Public show, March 26, 2022

To learn more about the Appalachian Ballet Company Alumni Group go to
appalachianballet.org
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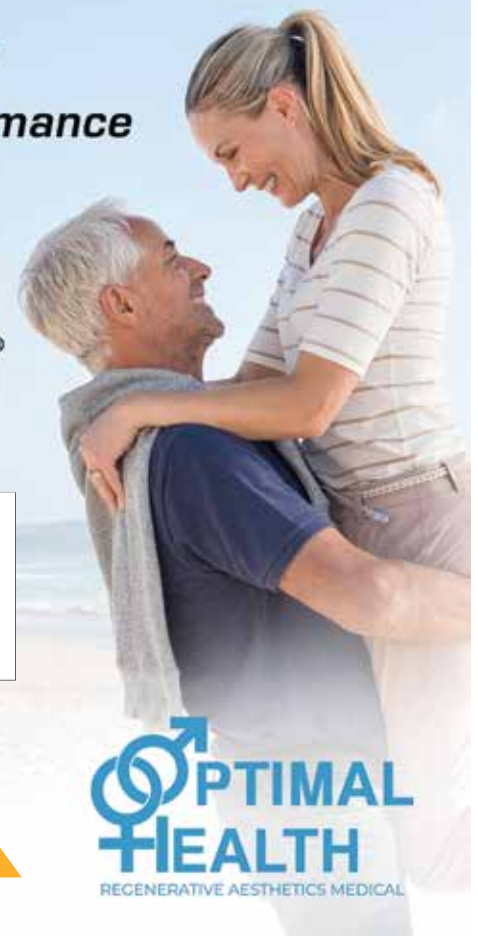
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PROFILE Sterling Hearon



An example of a life well-lived

By Lee Zimmerman

Take heed. At the age of 98, longtime Blount County resident Sterling W. Hearon offers some simple but solid advice. “Don’t worry about things,” he says, sharing an unflinchingly optimistic attitude. “Just know things will be all right tomorrow.”

Given the life he’s lived so far, he certainly seems to have proven that proverb is true. On his most recent birthday this past February, he celebrated by getting his second COVID vaccination.

It’s only natural then that one would ask Hearon to share the secret of his longevity. Here again, his answer is unapologetic and unassuming. “I never had any dangerous jobs,” he says simply.

It’s not that he didn’t have a close call. After enlisting in the Navy following the outbreak of World War II, he served on a submarine supply and maintenance ship, the U.S.S. Pelias. He still remembers seeing an enemy torpedo heading straight for their bow, clearly destined to score a direct hit. Fortunately, the Pelias made a last-minute maneuver and the torpedo passed beneath the hull without inflicting any damage.

After his discharge, his good fortune continued. Born and raised in Happy Valley, one of nine children of Albert and Tenia Hearon, he returned to Blount County where he married his high school sweetheart, Jean Wilson Hearon, the woman who would be his wife for more than 65 years until her passing in 2013. He took a job in a Maryville hardware store before continuing his education and earning his bachelor’s degree from the University of Tennessee, courtesy of the G.I. Bill. He shared his knowledge as a

schoolteacher in Blount County, where he remained for 28 years prior to his retirement in 1985.

Still, it was his love of the land that remained his primary passion most of his adult life. It began when Sterling and Jean bought their first parcel of farmland on Calderwood Road and went from sowing crops to raising Hereford cattle. While his son Dennis continues to manage the farm, which grew from 10 to 125 acres, Sterling still tends to some of

the daily chores. “He keeps saying he doesn’t think he can do them anymore,” Dennis notes. “But he’s been saying that for five years.”

Indeed, that effort has reaped him wide recognition. In 2001, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, which honored him for his meritorious service to the Blount County Farm Bureau and his continuing commitment to Tennessee agriculture and its farmers. Citations from the Tennessee state Legislature still hang on his wall. He served 18 years as director of the Blount County Farm Bureau and a further 14 years as its president. Nevertheless, his

involvement didn’t end there; he was a member of the Blount/Greenback Farmers Cooperative, a charter member of the Tennessee Cattleman’s Association, district director of the Tennessee Cattleman’s Association, director of the Blount County Livestock Association, a lifetime member of the American Hereford Association, director and vice chairman of Farm Service Association and president, vice president and trustee of the Houston Station Community Club.

*Just know
things will
be all right
tomorrow.*

It’s little wonder that Hearon has a lot to look back on. He’s watched the world go from horse-drawn buggies to jet planes to seeing men land on the moon. He’s visited 49 of the 50 states and traveled to several countries, but still says of Blount County, “There’s no place I’d rather be.” His favorite pastimes once included reading Western novels and listening to country western music, and he says he still enjoys watching reruns of old Westerns on TV. While he insists that he was never fond of smoking or imbibing alcohol, he does admit to having a fondness for greasy food. That said, neither he nor his son Dennis enjoy cooking, which is why they go out for their meals without fail twice every day.

“He’s my best friend,” Dennis says of his father. “We’ve never disagreed on anything.”

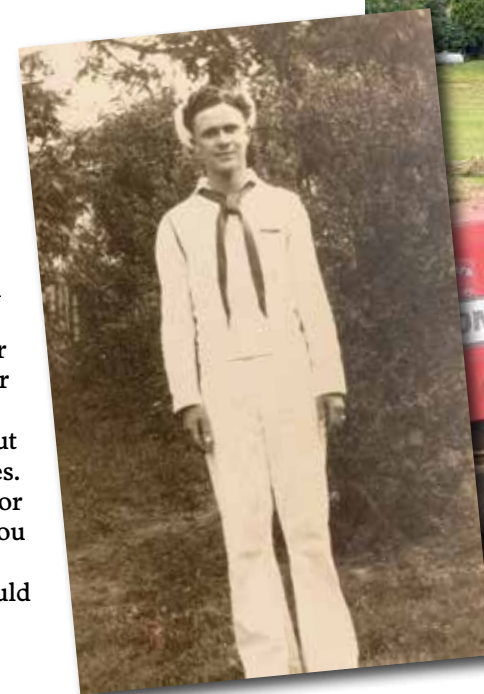
“He should be a role model for everyone,” Hearon’s granddaughter Shanna adds.

It’s little wonder. “Don’t argue ’bout politics and religion,” Hearon advises. “I can’t make you change your mind or tell you what to do. What’s right for you may not be right for me.”

Given the life he’s led so far, it would seem silly to argue.

Sterling Hearon on his tractor.

Hearon served in the U.S. Navy during World War II.



Photos courtesy of Shanna Hearon

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Quotes To Live By



No one has ever become poor by giving.
~ Anne Frank

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ~ Luke 6:38

Money is not the only commodity that is fun to give. We can give time, we can give our expertise, we can give our love or simply give a smile. What does that cost? The point is, none of us can ever run out of something worthwhile to give.
~ Steve Goodier

We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give.
~ Winston S. Churchill

Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give.
~ Eleanor Roosevelt

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PROFILE Amanda Touchstone

Serving the community through records and archives

By Linda Braden Albert



Amanda Touchstone always knew she wanted to be a librarian. She wasn't sure which route she would take, but as a student at the University of Tennessee, her path became clear.

"I luckily got a job in the Special Collections and Archives at the University of Tennessee and really loved it, and the rest is history," Touchstone said.

The Knox County native is now Blount County's archivist and records manager, beginning her tenure on March 1 following the retirement of Jackie Glenn. Prior to that, Touchstone, who earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Tennessee, worked at UT for six years. "I got a lot of good experience there before it was time to move on," she said.

When asked about her duties at Blount County Records and Archives, Touchstone laughed. "How much time do you have?" she asked before giving a general description of what she and the one other person on staff are charged to do. "First and foremost, we are here to serve our community," she said.

"We answer a lot of requests for divorce decrees, and we work closely with several in Blount County government to hold their records as needed. Sometimes we're storage, sometimes we're research assistants.

"We get a lot of requests for genealogy. Currently we're closed to the public due to COVID but hopefully once we're on the other side of that, we will go to an appointment basis if you want to come in and look at what we have. I have only been here a few months so I'm still learning my way around,

really focused on making sure we're on day-to-day needs, and then I'll turn my focus outward to see what I want to accomplish long-term."

Touchstone said what appeals to her about her career is that it has a routine but also that everything is different. "I like that it's a little bit different and it keeps you interested but it still has rules," she explained. "I find that really fascinating as well as being around things that most people don't get to work with.

"In my last position, I worked on the collection of author Wilma Dykeman. I didn't know who she was until we got this collection. She had already passed when we got it, but going through her research and letters and correspondence, it was just so cool. I wish I could have met her. She seemed like one of the coolest people."

She's run across some interesting things while exploring the more than 7,000 boxes at her new office. "We are doing some storage for the sheriff's office so we have some exhibits that were used in trials," she said. "I opened a box

the other day, and it was a box of bullets and shrapnel and rocks! That's probably the most interesting thing I've found so far but I know absolutely nothing about it. There is no supporting documentation; it's kept somewhere else." She explained that with items such as these, her only role is to store the artifacts, but with other items, such as the land maps, plats, letters, etc., her job is to document it and make it available to the public.

"I'm still in the throes of going through everything here

and finding out exactly what we do have," she said. "It takes time to open thousands of boxes and see what's there."

Touchstone has several future goals in mind, including community outreach with guidelines to help people take care of their important documents at home, making the county's more unique holdings more easily accessible through an online inventory and continuing to digitize records.

"The list is long! That's one of the best things. If you get tired of what you're currently working on, there are a million other things you can do. You don't get bored."

Outside of work, Touchstone enjoys reading, cooking, baking, hiking and CrossFit. "I also like to travel, and I really enjoy a good nap," she said. Her family includes her husband, a dog and two cats as well as her mother and father.

Touchstone said she is enjoying the challenge of her new position.

"It's a big job, it's an important job, and I'm so excited that they trust me to do it," she said. "I just want people to know that we are always here to help, and if I don't have the answer, we will figure out who might.

"I am really excited to be here. So far, I'm having a great time and I don't expect that to change."



Touchstone explores the more than 7,000 boxes at her new office.

Photos courtesy of Amanda Touchstone

It's an important job, and I'm so excited that they trust me to do it.

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“Free, quality health care”



Remote Area Medical plans Blount County popup clinic in August

By Linda Braden Albert

Remote Area Medical, now headquartered in Rockford, has long been known for providing free, quality health care to underinsured and uninsured individuals. In August, the international nonprofit agency founded by the late Stan Brock in 1985 will offer services in Blount County — medical, dental, vision and, for the first time, addiction-recovery services.

The event will take place all day Aug. 14 and 15, beginning at 6 a.m. at the Everett Recreation Center, 318 S. Everett High Road, Maryville. For specifics, visit www.ramusa.org/event/maryville-tn.

“Where does it hurt?”

Leadership Blount’s Class of 2020 is the community host group. In March, Daily Times reporter Andrew Jones wrote that the idea of hosting RAM in Blount County with an addiction-recovery component began when Jan McCoy, an outspoken recovery advocate, was approached by Keith Brock and Ron Brewer, both of whom were then serving as mentors with Blount Veterans Treatment Court. They suggested bringing the clinic back, but with an addiction-recovery element.

McCoy is one of a six-person cohort of the Class of 2020 alumni that also includes Don Stallions, Mark Moses, Jeanette Beaverson, Brad Butler and Jessica Hahn. In early 2020, the cohort brought the clinic idea to Leadership Blount Executive Director Pete Carter and others — and the plan to invite RAM and add addiction-recovery services to the two-day event was approved. The clinic had to be scheduled in 2021 due to COVID-19.

Addiction-recovery resources are in addition to the medical, dental and vision services. RAM CEO Jeff Eastman said, “As far as the medical specialties go, we won’t know until closer to the event, but we’ll have vision providers onsite to do complete eye exams. Patients will have hundreds of frames to choose from with glasses made right onsite for those individuals. On the dental side, we’ll be doing cleanings, extractions and fillings. It’s all free. The only question we ask is, ‘Where does it hurt?’ No ID is required. It’s very much a first-come, first-served basis.”

Filling the gap

Eastman said people both within Blount County and all over the region will come to the clinic because they are desperate for health care.

“People come for their immediate needs,” he explained, whether it’s dental pain, no longer being able to function with reading glasses from the drugstore or medical care, such as wound care or even a physical for school. “It’s just all over the board.”

At the clinic, patients have to choose between vision and dental, but everyone can have medical treatment, Eastman said. “They don’t have to worry about being in network. Everyone’s in network with RAM.”

RAM has seen the need for medical services increase significantly over the years. “I think it’s because of the high deductibles, people who are uninsured, the copays — all of that just adds together. Then you throw in the closing of



All are welcome, first come, first served.

(continued on page 18)

hospitals in the area and it's just a recipe for poor outcomes for health care," Eastman said. "Even if you have health insurance, you don't have health care."

"At RAM, we don't have the solution, but we will do our best to fill the gaps that are out there. If you look back to a simple mission statement from Stan — and we never forget the mission — the mission is to prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free, quality health care to those in need. That's what we try hard to do."

Unfortunately, not all who come to the clinic will be seen. "We'll have more than we can take care of, I'm sure. I've been doing this for many years, and the need is always greater than the capacity we have."

All staff and volunteers are tested for COVID-19.



COVID precautions

COVID-19 has impacted RAM's procedures. Eastman said, "When COVID first came out, about a year ago in March, we had to suspend clinics for 90 days to sit down and come up with different processes. During that time, we collaborated with other organizations and entities to provide over 60,000 COVID-19 tests in 13 different states."

Resuming popup clinics required special precautions. Currently, dental procedures are done in a 10- by 10-foot operatory tent with vinyl sides where the air flow is exchanged every one to four minutes, and from there it goes through a HEPA filter. Fogging with an antibacterial/antiviral is done between procedures. "We want to make sure everybody is safe, whether it's patient, volunteers or staff," Eastman said. "All volunteers and staff are screened prior to coming in, with temperature checks, asking COVID-19 screening questions and, of course, masking."

The look of the parking lot has changed significantly, as well. "I'm sure you've seen pictures over the years of people gathered up at the gate," he said. "We've changed that process. Now individuals wait in their vehicles and we bring them up a few at a time to get registered and come in. Once you're in the facility, it is social distancing. That's what clinics look like now."

Volunteers are key

Eastman calls volunteers "the heartbeat of the organization." Locally, Blount County residents who volunteer will be joined by others who travel here at their own expense from all over the country. "Whether we're here in East Tennessee or Texas or out in Florida, it's all volunteers," he said.

Professional volunteers in the medical, vision and dental field are needed, as well as general volunteers. "It takes a whole community to come together to make a difference," Eastman said. "Go to www.ramusa.org and click on the volunteer button to create a profile. If they can't come out to volunteer, they can always go to www.ramusa.org and click on 'donate' to help us."

RAM has a very small staff. "In a normal clinic, there may only be two or three staff from headquarters and easily be 300 or 400 volunteers," Eastman said.

COVID-19 affected the number of volunteers in 2020, especially with traveling restrictions. "Things are getting back to normal now," Eastman said, adding that RAM is also a unique learning experience for vision, dental and medical students, who also travel to clinics to volunteer. "RAM provides a great opportunity for those students to have hands-on learning as they go through their medical training that they're not going to get in a classroom," Eastman said. "However, with COVID, their travel was negatively impacted just like everybody else. We are now beginning to see schools come back, and that makes a big difference in the number of patients we can treat."

Eastman himself began his association with RAM as a volunteer in 2008 after seeing a "60 Minutes" special on the organization. He progressed from being a general volunteer to working in the vision lab to running the lab. "In 2014, I retired from another career, and Stan Brock asked me to come to headquarters to help oversee the business side of the organization," Eastman said. "One year later, in 2015, he made me his first CEO."

"It's a great honor and very humbling that he entrusted, not only the organization, but the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of patients and tens of thousands of volunteers in my hands."

Join the journey

Eastman believes that people inherently want to give back, to do something good for other people, but they have a hard time figuring out how to do it. That's where RAM steps in.

"What's unique about RAM is that we do the heavy lifting," he said. "We have the community host groups that come to us for help. We bring all those individuals, all those volunteers, together. So, if you're a general volunteer or a medical professional, you just have to show up and spend the day giving back to others and having that great excitement that you made a difference. Then you get to go home late that afternoon and share with your friends what you saw, the difference you made for those hundreds of people who came through the door. That's a really great, great feeling."

Funding makes this possible, providing resources for the equipment, supplies, etc. "If you look at that from an invest-



It takes a whole community to come together to make a difference.



RAM started with the vision and dream of one individual.

ment, for every dollar you donate to RAM, we can donate \$3 worth of free care," Eastman said. "I'd like to find a bank account where I could put \$1 in and get \$3 out!"

Stan Brock founded Remote Area Medical in 1985, initially to provide free health care to individuals in Central and South America. Eastman said, "In 1992, he got a phone call from Sneedville, Tenn., where the hospital had closed. He took a truckload of dedicated volunteers up there, saw 62 patients, and the next week, the phone calls started coming. The phone still rings every day with people saying, 'We need RAM to



FACT SHEET

REMOTE AREA MEDICAL - RAM®

OUR MISSION

To prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free, quality healthcare to those in need.

Since RAM's Founding in 1985:

863,700
Individuals Served

\$174 Million
Worth of Free Care Provided

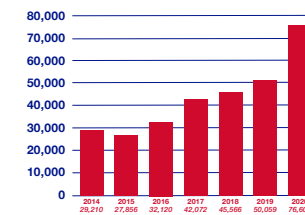
172,900
Volunteers

RAM's Average Cost per Individual Served since 2016

\$82

\$300
Value of Care per Individual since 2016

Individuals Served



2020 Review

Individuals Served **76,604**

Volunteers **4,300**

Value of Care **\$18,761,135**

RAM Veterinary Program

68,600

Animals have received vaccinations, spay/neuter, micro-chipping services, and other veterinary services since 1985.

RAM Disaster Relief
Remote Area Medical frequently responds to natural disasters by delivering relief supplies and operating clinics in impacted areas.
ramusa.org/disaster-relief

RAM Telehealth
In 2020, RAM developed a free Telehealth Program to help provide care to as many patients as possible during the pandemic. For more information about our virtual clinics, visit ramusa.org/ram-telehealth/

RAMUSA.ORG • 2200 Stock Creek Blvd. Rockford, TN 37853 • (865) 579-1530

Photos courtesy of RAM

come to our community."

Brock's vision for RAM began after he suffered a severe horse-related injury when he was a young man running a cattle ranch in British Guiana. Health care was 26 days away, and he vowed to make health care more accessible for the people there. Eastman said, "He learned to fly to bring medicines from Georgetown all the way out to the Brazil-Guianese border. He studied medical books to learn rudimentary medicine. Then Marlin Perkins discovered him for 'Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.' He had that career, and then he did movies. This whole time he was a pilot.

He started RAM when he was 49 years old! He looked back and said, 'I made a promise to bring free health care to people,' and he started this."

Brock served as RAM's president without compensation until his death in 2018.

"This all started with the vision and dream of one individual who brought hundreds of thousands of volunteers together to make it happen," Eastman said, adding, "Come join the journey. Those that volunteer, we get as much if not more out of it than the patients do."



PROFILE Luis Ramos

Breaking the barriers to mental health counseling

By Lee Zimmerman

Luis Ramos is a man on a mission — or more accurately, a pair of missions that actually overlap. As head of youth services at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, he oversees programs for the church's younger parishioners. In addition, he plays an active role with Blount Memorial Hospital's Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Alliance (or MHASPA for short), by being part of a network that connects people at risk with advice and counseling.

"I've always been interested in community service and volunteering," Ramos replies when asked what drives him to give of his time. "From the time I was 14, I was involved in a lot of community organizations. My full-time job is coordinating the youth ministry, but I also serve as a Spanish language interpreter for Blount Memorial Hospital. I was reading The Daily Times and saw that there was a community class being offered at Heritage High School on suicide prevention for young people. So I looked at what I could do to help, and what I learned from that training drew me to a subject I had never understood before."

That experience, in the spring of 2016, proved so fruitful that he decided to initiate an after-school program called "Four; 6" at his church the following fall.

"One of the things that I learned was that there's a high risk for suicide among young people between 4 and 6 p.m., after they get home from school. So I decided to open our doors early, prior to our Wednesday youth ministry meetings. Kids can come directly from school and do their homework,

and we have games and snacks and other things for them as well. Little by little, it was something simple that I could do while putting into practice what I had learned."

Ramos also took additional courses so he could learn and share more.

"I became a trainer for the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network so that I could start teaching suicide prevention classes," Ramos explains. "I've also been trained in post-intervention, which happens after a suicide and involves going to schools and businesses for individual and group debriefings. As a person who speaks Spanish, I've also been able to participate in bilingual training as part of suicide prevention classes. When there are additional factors — like language, for example — we can take the efforts further."

Born in Mexico, Ramos understands that culture can impact the need to share information and dig deeper into other issues that surround suicide prevention.

"There's a certain stigma attached to this topic, especially in Hispanic households," he

explains. "I moved to the U.S. at the age of 6, but I still saw a strong need to convey information to Spanish-speaking households."

Although he's not a clinician, Ramos sits on the board of the Mental Health Association of East Tennessee, and plays an active role in organizing BIPOC (or "Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color") month, which takes place every July.

"I was happy to do a video in English and Spanish where we

It's all about having an open and honest conversation.

were able to talk about those issues," Ramos says. "I like to describe the process as a race, with hurdles you have to jump over. Everybody starts off on the starting line, and the ultimate outcome is to reach those mental health resources. You have people who have hurdles to overcome, and so it's all about jumping the hurdles that revolve around the stigma. Other hurdles involve the need to secure healthcare access and then deal with insurance issues and costs. For some Hispanic people, you've also got the language barrier. And then you might have a cultural barrier. We have to help people jump those hurdles in order to get access."

Ultimately, Ramos is pleased that he's been able to contribute to those essential efforts. "I've found it helpful not only to be trained, but also to recognize the issues," he reflects. "It's allowed me to work directly with families and to recommend services that might be helpful for our students. When suggestions come from the church, it becomes a little less intimidating. It's all about having an open and honest conversation."



Ramos, a youth minister at Our Lady of Fatima, talks with young parishioners at a recent program. Photos courtesy of Luis Ramos

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DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

Ed F. Harper *Furniture and Undertaking*

In my last column, I wrote about the I.A.K. and Pandora Harper family. If you remember, the family experienced tremendous tragedy and loss but there was an equally tremendous impact that their family made in the Maryville community. A major impact was made by their son Ed Harper and his furniture and undertaking business that served the citizens of the town and surrounding area for many years.



Edward Fleming Harper



Mary Belle Gill Harper

Mr. Edward Harper and Miss Belle Gill, of this place, were married on Wednesday night in the presence of a few special friends, at the home of the bride, on Indiana avenue.
Mrs. Harper, the elder of the two daughters of Prof. F. M. Gill, formerly of Ohio, but who, for eight years, has been an instructor in Maryville. The bride is one of the most beautiful young ladies in Maryville. Mr. Harper is the eldest son of the well known A. K. Harper, of this place. He is an energetic and highly esteemed young man.

youngest daughter, Sarah Jenn Harper, was born on Jan. 25, 1924, but she died from complications from a terrible accident which left her with burns on three-quarters of her body. Her death on Jan. 17, 1936, was just

eight days short of her 12th birthday. Edward worked with his businessman father in his early years until he ventured out and started his own business. Ed's first location for his Furniture and Undertaking business was in a building constructed by J.M. Greer, Captain Will Henry and Charles Pfanze. The building, built about 1870,



Ed F. Harper Undertaking horse-drawn hearse

The Undertaker

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ED. F. HARPER

Street in Alcoa is named after him. The Harpers had three children, and only the eldest daughter lived to see adulthood. Venorah Elizabeth Harper was born to the couple on Dec. 30, 1902, and she grew up and married William Arthur "Speedy" Ruble, who played major league baseball for the Detroit Tigers and the Philadelphia Phillies. Their second child, Andrew Knott Harper (named after his grandfather), was born on March 25, 1908, but he only lived to the age of 12. He died on June 28, 1920, from a cerebral embolism. Their



1915 Ed F. Harper Furniture and Undertaking at 117 East Broadway. Pictured (from left) Ed Harper with son Andrew Knott Harper, Roy Ammons, Ish Porter, Pete Hood, David Franklin Young and Bank of Maryville President Joe Burger.



was located at the parking deck now across from the Palace Theater. He operated out of this location until 1913, when his father bought lot 56 and constructed a two-story brick building located next to the original Bank of Maryville building, which currently houses Lambert Southern Pies & Bake Shop. The Ed F. Harper Furniture and Undertaking business operated through the 1920s and '30s until Ed retired.

This building on lot 56 has been home to various businesses for the past 100 years. A couple of those businesses were Coulter's Restaurant that operated in the '40s, the Mutual Loan and Thrift Corporation, the School of Dance, the Maryville Collections Service Inc., a bicycle shop and most recently an event space for Lambert Pies.

The current owners are James Fields and Max Hill.



Postcard of Ed F. Harper business on lot 56 built by his father A. K. Harper.

Mutual Savings and Loan Business in the 1970s.

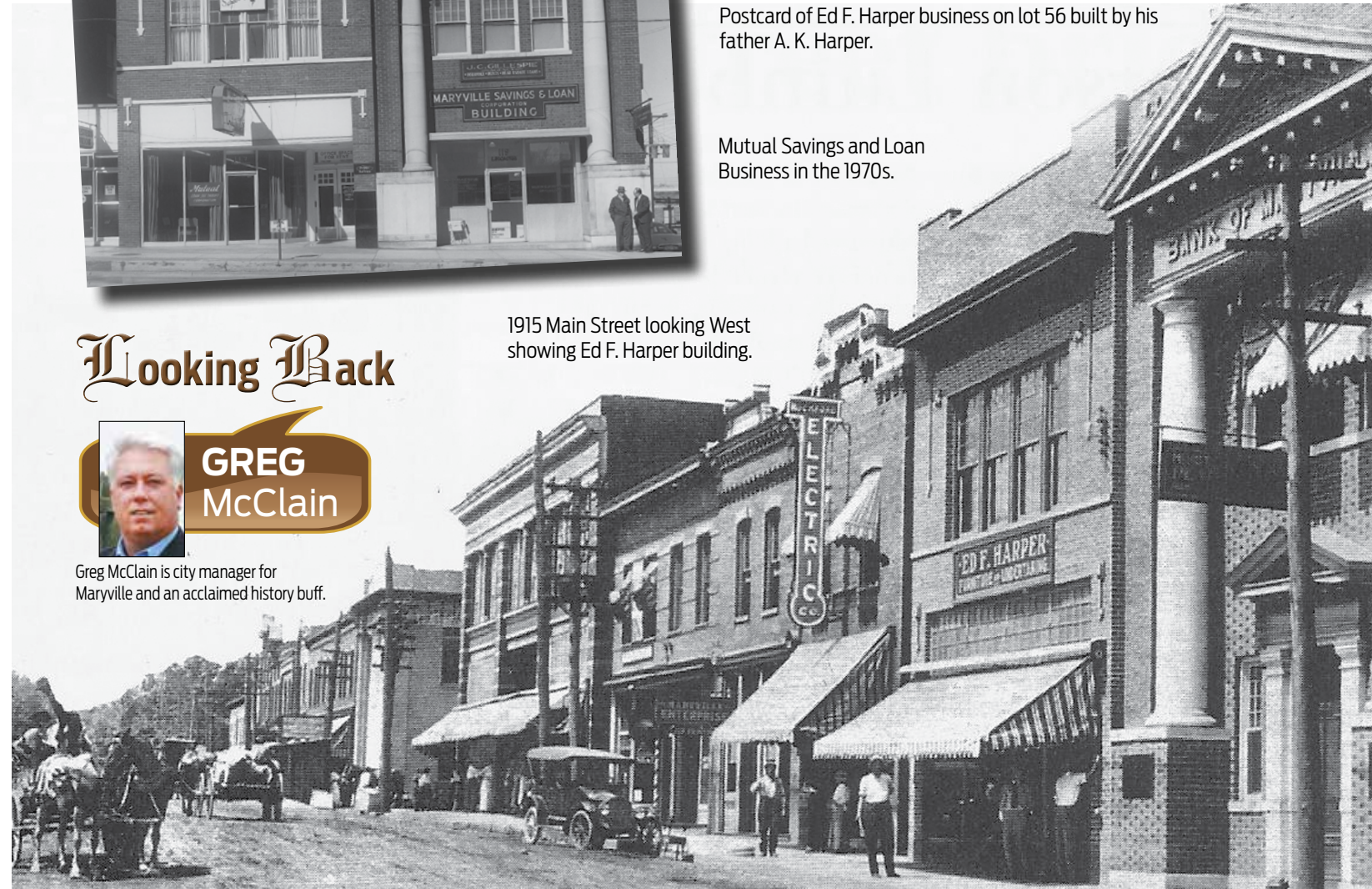
1915 Main Street looking West showing Ed F. Harper building.

Looking Back



GREG McClain

Greg McClain is city manager for Maryville and an acclaimed history buff.



Victoria Williams: Following in her father's footsteps

By Lesli Bales-Sherrod, PSCC

Victoria Williams started taking classes to be a certified nurse assistant as a student at Alcoa High School — and her passion rubbed off on her dad, who was looking for a career change.

When Victoria, now 22, graduated from high school in 2017, her father, Robert Williams, graduated from Pellissippi State Community College with his Associate of Applied Science in Nursing. The former DENSO manager is now the charge nurse in Parkwest Medical Center's emergency department.

Now Victoria has earned her A.A.S. in Nursing as well, also from Pellissippi State. The two took most of their classes on the College's Blount County Campus, the closest of Pellissippi State's five campuses to their home near Greenback.

"My dad had had a great experience at Pellissippi State, and

I was super comfortable at Pellissippi State already because I started taking dual enrollment classes there in 2016," Victoria explains. "I feel like the community is very special on the Blount County Campus."

During her time at Pellissippi State, Victoria worked in the Blount County Campus' tutoring center, where she helped other students with science.

"My coworkers in the tutoring center became like a family to me," Victoria remembers. "I have so many



great memories of line dancing in the hallway or walking out with my peers to get popcorn. There are always fun things to do on the Blount County Campus when you aren't in class."

It was a "huge learning curve," she says, to adapt to online learning when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in East Tennessee in March 2020 — though it was not a shock to those in health care.

"You could see the pandemic coming if you were out in the field," explains Victoria, who was working in the Intensive Care Unit at Fort Loudoun Medical Center in Lenoir City. "Sometimes I'd have to flip to the emergency department or the medical/surgical floor to help because we had so many COVID patients. It was hard."

Victoria later started working at Village Behavioral Health Treatment Center in Louisville, where she says she "fell in love" with helping children with mental health issues. Prior to



her graduation on May 15, Victoria already had accepted a full-time job at Peninsula Hospital, also in Louisville, in their child psych unit, although she planned to stay with Village Behavioral Health part time as well.

"These kids with mental health problems, many of them have been failed by the people meant to take care of them," said Victoria, who would like to eventually get her Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner for children and adolescents. "I want to be the support some of them never got, because I couldn't have made it this far without the support I have."

Robert Williams' story in the Winter 2016 edition of Horizon.

Robert Williams:
Retirement career in nursing is his calling

Going from manufacturing management to nursing at age 50, I sometimes question whether or not I'm doing the right thing. But after a day of work, even a 12-hour shift, I leave knowing this is where I fit.

Robert Williams

Pellissippi State Community College

at Pellissippi State in anatomy and physiology, biology, chemistry and math. Williams says, "I like to help the students understand the material and grow and develop. That's that moment when a student understands something in just another one of those 'aha' moments of my life." Williams says, "I know that when I retired I did not want to just watch the grass grow and let life pass me by." Williams says, "I wanted to find a job that I could do for years yet."

Nursing called him. "It takes a lot to become a nurse," Williams says. "Going from manufacturing management to nursing at close to age 50, I sometimes question whether or not I'm doing the right thing. But after a day at work, even a 12-hour shift, I leave knowing this is where I fit. Nursing is tough, but it is also rewarding."

Williams says, "I love the dual enrollment class. She wants to attend Pellissippi State for two years and then transfer to a university." Williams says, "I'm very intimidated, especially when you have a patient whose only complaint is stress and just you may have a talk to that will listen and show empathy."

Williams says, "I love the dual enrollment class. She wants to attend Pellissippi State for two years and then transfer to a university." Williams says, "I'm very intimidated, especially when you have a patient whose only complaint is stress and just you may have a talk to that will listen and show empathy."

Blount County Campus provides COVID-19 trainings, vaccines

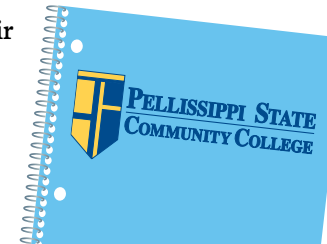
While most Pellissippi State classes moved online during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Blount County Campus stayed busy serving the community in new ways.

In May and June 2020, the Blount County Campus opened its Nursing simulation lab to nurses at Blount Memorial Hospital to train them to care for COVID-19 patients. Sixty-one medical-surgical nurses gained more experience in intubation care, putting patients on a ventilator, adjusting ventilator settings, suctioning and "proning" patients.

In April 2021, the Blount County Campus expanded its COVID-19 support to the community, holding drive-thru vaccination clinics in one of its parking lots. The clinic offered appointments for the one-shot Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine on Fridays and for the two-shot Moderna vaccine on Saturdays. Forty-two Pellissippi State employees and 41 students joined forces to work shifts at the free clinic, where 514 people had received their COVID-19 vaccinations as of May 8.

"The Nursing students who participated in the vaccination clinic greatly enjoyed the experience," said Dean of Nursing Angela Lunsford. "The students feel it has not only increased their comfort giving vaccines but has greatly increased their comfort with the residents we serve."

The clinics ended on June 5.



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Building Net Worth

without spending more

I believe most Americans dream about reaching a point in their life where they no longer “have to” work and can retire. Most Americans know when they receive their Social Security checks, the amount will not be sufficient to sustain their lifestyle. Thus, an additional source of income must be found or created. For some, it is a pension resulting from years of working for a single employer. Many government positions still offer pensions, fewer employers provide that benefit today due to its high cost. The only remaining option is to create a pool of money from which a monthly draw can be taken to meet the retirement income you desire. That pool for most is IRA, Roth, 403b, or 401-k accounts.

So many just contribute to their IRA annually or through their employer 401-k and never give any thought as to whether what they are contributing will actually provide the income they need at retirement and for how long. This leads us to an entirely different conversation, and one for another day. There is a way to help build net worth without increasing the monthly budget, by using dollars already committed in the budget.

For years, mortgage interest rates have been falling and many have taken advantage of this by refinancing their debt. For some, the choice was to reduce the term to 15 years since the lower rate



helped to offset the higher monthly payment. Listening to and believing the pitch that saving all of that mortgage interest was the best option. I disagree, and the following numbers support my assertion.

For discussion, consider this example of a \$225K mortgage. If the homeowner does nothing, they will spend \$211,267.80 over the next 15 years and still owe \$120,489, column A. If they were to refinance to a new 30 mortgage and then invested the savings each and every month without fail, they would spend the same amount of money, and at the end of 15 years, they would owe \$133,459, column C. If they average 6% on their investments, they would have a value of \$67,669, column E. While their debt is about \$13,000 higher, it is more than offset by \$67 thousand they now have in investments. Is this guaranteed? No, but the odds are in favor of a

very beneficial result.

For the homeowner who wants to refinance and can afford the higher payment of a 15 year mortgage, believing saving all of that interest is better, column B, I would still recommend the 30 year

homeowner has \$28,922 left over after spending the same amount of cash and could pay for a lot of rounds of golf during retirement!

Investing the savings does require discipline. It is so easy to allow the savings from a new mortgage just to disappear into life's costs. What if the difference is invested and what if the return is even better than the example of 6%, just imagine the potential increase in net worth which could be created. For those who have already refinanced and did not invest the difference, there is still time to capture that savings back into investments. Investing does not have to be scary. There are hundreds of equity mutual funds that

	A	B	C	D	E
	Current	15 Year	30 Year	Investing	Investing
	Mortgage	Option	Option	6% Return	6% Return
Original Debt	\$225,000.00				
Interest Rate	4.75%				
Years Paid	4				
Current Balance	\$210,067.87				
Prin/Int Payment	\$1,173.71				
Refinance Costs		\$4,800.00	\$4,800.00		
New Debt		\$214,867.87	\$214,867.87		
New Interest Rate		3.15%	3.30%		
New Prin/Int Payment		\$1,499.39	\$941.03	\$558.36	\$232.68
Total Pmts next 15 years	\$211,267.80	\$269,890.20	\$169,384.51	\$100,504.80	\$41,883.29
Remaining Debt in 15 years	\$120,489.93	\$0.00	\$133,459.53		
Investment Value in 15 years				\$162,381.54	\$67,669.14

mortgage but now they could invest a larger difference, column D. At the end of 15 years, the potential investment value of \$162 thousand is sufficient to payoff the remaining mortgage balance of the 30 year debt and have cash left over. So, the debt is still gone in 15 years; now, the

have a ten year or longer track record with an average performance greater than 6% annually. Consistency and discipline should result in a higher net worth. Don't miss the opportunity of low mortgage interest rates to build net worth and add to your retirement security.

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Green with Envy

A View from
the Middle



Blount Partnership
president/CEO

It doesn't seem like there is much in this world that hasn't been discovered.

As the population changes and the next generation enters the workforce, greenways, once thought of as only a means of recreation and exercise, are now becoming economic drivers. As a result, **greenway planning** has taken on a new life.

Trails and greenways provide countless opportunities for economic renewal and growth. Increased property values are one of the largest beneficiaries.

In fact, tourism and recreation-related revenues from trails and greenways come in several forms. Trails and greenways create opportunities in construction and maintenance, recreation rentals (such as bicycles, kayaks and canoes), recreation services (such as shuttle buses and guided tours), historic preservation, restaurants and lodging.

In February, Amazon announced it was establishing a fulfillment center in Alcoa.

That news spurred a flurry of activity when it came to revisiting the establishment of the greenway connection between Knox and Blount counties. The long-term goal is to have 45 miles of paved path that will stretch to Townsend and the Smokies.

Sparking even more discussions are the Springbrook Farms development in Alcoa and the further revitalization of downtown Maryville. Those talks entail greenway locations and how to get storefronts facing these walkable features. Presently, a 1.4-mile greenway stretch along East Hunt Road in Alcoa is being developed and constructed.

Before "greenways" became popular in metro areas, Blount County officials worked to create a continuous trail for pedestrians and bicyclists along the floodplains of Pistol Creek. The process of developing the greenway began in 1985. It was ultimately recognized in a 2002 publication of the "National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, A Guide to Transportation Enhancements, Enhancing America's Communities."

Currently, the greenway between the cities spans a little over nine miles connecting the various parks, including the Pistol Creek PetSafe Dog Park, and winding through downtown Maryville.

Greenways and community trails help ensure that a week or weekend in Blount County is even greater than the sum of its parts. They tie destinations together and are destinations in their own right. They are a key part of what we need to develop to ensure the vitality of our communities and economy.

In a report produced by the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization, the estimated fiscal benefit to Blount County is \$65 million over 10 years. That is \$2.66 in returns for every \$1 invested. That's on top of the health benefits and the community cohesion that greenways bring.

Additionally, the greenway is expected to attract 43,800 non-local users along with 65,700 local users spending roughly \$43 per day to generate \$2.8 million in annual output from tourism. That results in \$170,000 in state and local tax revenue.

With tourism being the state's second largest industry, studies have shown that a growing number of Americans view outdoor activities as a way to enjoy

safe, scenic recreation for the entire family. That is why the creation of greenways and trails needs to be part of our mix of attractions.

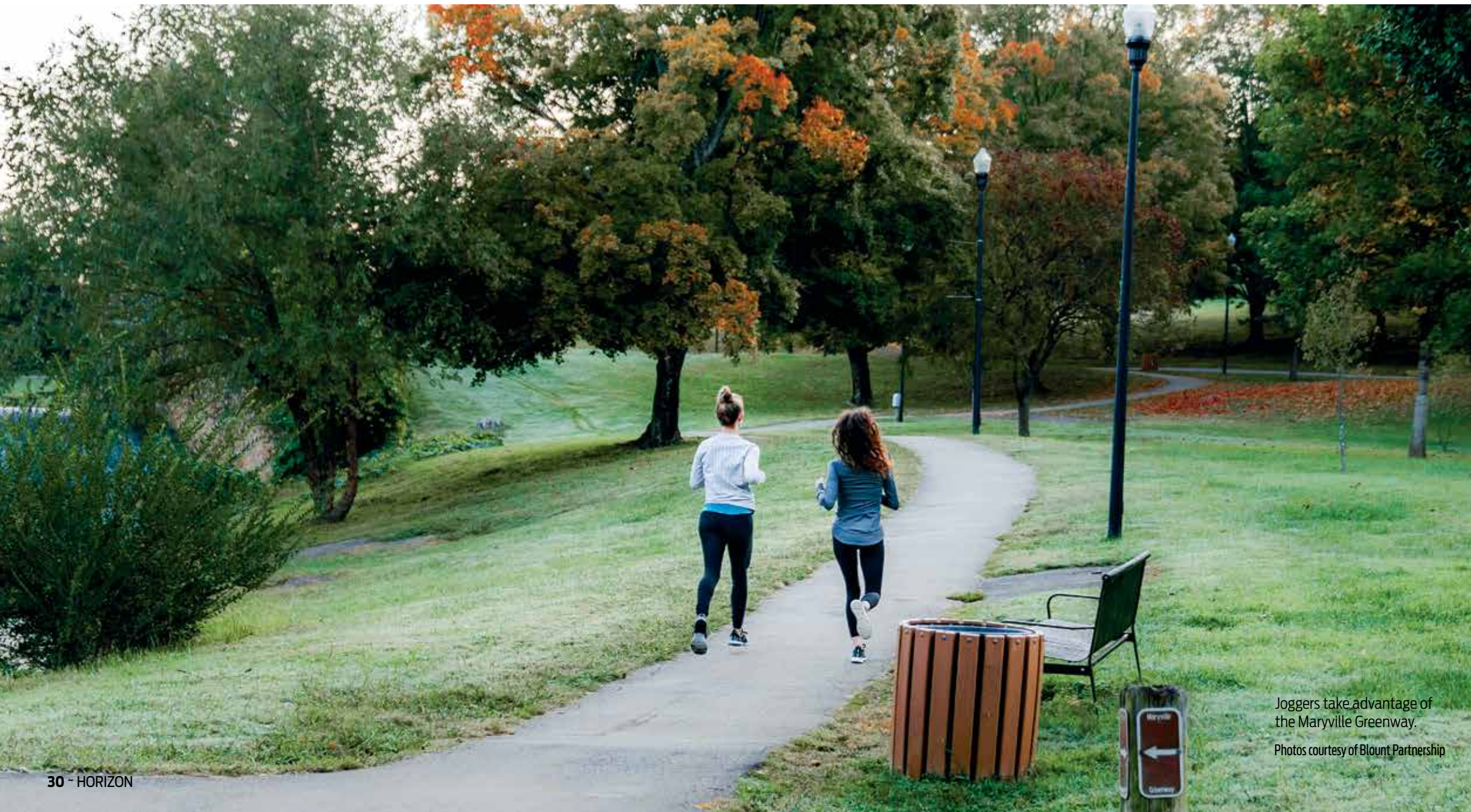
Greenways enhance the quality of life, a critical factor in attracting and retaining businesses. They also inspire renewed civic pride and provide a fresh focus for community activities.

Rising of the list of factors that many business leaders say sways their decision on where to relocate or expand operations are quality of life concerns. Trails and greenways help attract desirable employees by enriching life and make an area a more attractive place to live. They provide all residents with relaxation and exercise options, commuting alternatives, and safe, nearby places for families to enjoy.

According to a study by the real estate industry, an overwhelming majority of home buyers are looking for communities with "walking and bicycling paths" and "lots of open space." These desired features rank well ahead of traditionally thought-of favorites like tennis courts, golf courses and swimming pools.

Involvement in greenway projects offers business owners a visible way to demonstrate a commitment to their community and the environment. Businesses can sponsor employee volunteer workdays, adopt a section of trail or allow trails to cross their property.

Being supportive of greenways and trails is one way to be a catalyst for community revitalization. Behind a strong strategic plan, greenways can transform blighted areas into community centerpieces while becoming a focus of pride and a means of preserving and celebrating what is special about Blount County.



Joggers take advantage of the Maryville Greenway.

Photos courtesy of Blount Partnership



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