

THE DAILY TIMES

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VOLS BEAT FLORIDA, EARN NO. 4 SEED IN SEC TOURNEY. 1B

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RIVER RESCUE. 8A

Reaching past barriers

Pellissippi State finding ways to support students' mental health

BY AMY BETH MILLER
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The counseling office at Pellissippi State Community College usually helps students with a mix of personal, academic and career topics, but since the pandemic, referrals for personal counseling have risen significantly.

"It centers around the isolation and loneliness for the students," said Angela Obear, a licensed clinical social worker who has been a counselor at the Blount County campus since 2018.

Community college students typically have more barriers to continuing their education. They may be caring for children or their parents, and the pandemic has added concerns ranging from illness to housing for families. Plus most classes are online in some form.

"It's not exactly what they expected for their college experience, doing it from their bedroom or trying to find a quiet place in their house," Obear said. "It's been really tough on them emotionally, mentally."

A nursing student may have to balance clinical experience requirements with children being quarantined at home. Even finding a quiet space for a study group has been a challenge. "They've had to get very creative," she said.

With some classes meeting in an asynchronous online format — students working on their own time and the class never meeting together even online — one freshman told the counselor, "I don't even know what my professors look like."

Obear said more students have reported suicidal thoughts in the past year than the previous two.



ALYSSA RUTKIEWICZ WORKS ON her laptop in the Relaxation Station outside the office of counselor Angela Obear in 2020 at the Blount County campus of Pellissippi State Community College.

SEE HEALTH, 5A

Fulfilling promises

Herron pushes bulk-trash service

BY ANDREW JONES
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Freshman Maryville City Council member Sarah Herron is pushing to fulfill on something she stressed during 2020's campaign season: bulk-trash services.

Herron ran her campaign equipped with a set of issues she wanted to address when she won her seat. Like fellow campaigners Drew Miles, Suzette Donovan and Tom Taylor, she emphasized family, community and small businesses advocacy.

But she also evolved her platform beyond the basics, using social media to advocate for issues including homelessness, transparency, budget cuts and bulk-trash collection — areas she believed could use improvement.

Herron was the second-highest vote-getter in the 2020 race and said in a recent interview with The Daily Times her platform was shaped by people.

"The great thing about a campaign is, you go to people and you ask them, 'What are the issues that you care about? Tell me about things you wish the city would do,'" she said.

Last fall, she received answers to those questions and wasted no time addressing them online.

"Let's talk trash," Herron posted on her campaign's Facebook page in September 2020, months before she won her seat. "Several voters have asked me about brush and bulk-trash curbside pickup."

In a Sept. 27, 2020, post, she proffered one idea to help improve what she noted was already a very good service routine.

"A scheduling system would allow residents and businesses to make an appointment for pickup by phone or online," Herron

SEE HERRON, 5A

Friendsville mulls committing \$5,000 for Pellissippi State project, reviews audit

BY ANDREW JONES
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Friendsville leaders want to invest \$5,000 in Pellissippi State's Ruth and Steve West Workforce Development Center — an unfinished project coming to life in the city's backyard.

Director of Major Gift Development Marilyn Roddy with the Pellissippi State Foundation pitched the funding opportunity to Friendsville commissioners during their Thursday meeting; most expressed enthusiasm about finding room in upcoming budgets to back the college's cooperative effort to grow Blount's workforce.

"I personally think that we could probably do \$5,000 over five years," Friendsville

Mayor Andy Lawhorn told Roddy. It was a funding model and number she suggested during her presentation.

"I think it's important we do it because it's going to be kids in our area that are going to be using (the development center) and adults, too," Lawhorn said.

"You know my heart's in education and I think this is something that we have needed for a long time," Commissioner Sandy Bell said. "I'm thrilled to hear this is going to be an opportunity for our students. I hope we can find the money to help do our part."

Lawhorn noted that when he was a Knox County Schools student, classes the development center plans to offer were part of the standard curriculum. That's inspired

him in recent years to take an active role in growing the city's workforce by connecting with local high schools.

"I've reached out to William Blount and Heritage and tried to talk to ... the building trades classes," he said. "And I'm not going to lie, I was trying to recruit employees."

He noted DENSO and Arconic needed the development center "more than anybody."

"I think our students need it even more," Bell said. Lawhorn agreed, noting college is not for every student and that tradespeople are becoming scarce in Blount.

Commissioners did not formally commit to the \$5,000, but Lawhorn suggested they use the March 23 budget workshop to develop a line item and spend \$1,000 a

year through 2026.

The workforce development center originally was set to open this fall, but Pellissippi Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Julia Wood told The Daily Times on Friday that the timeline has been delayed.

Though the workforce development center already reached initial fundraising goals, Wood said the foundation is still raising money for "ongoing, additional needs the building might have."

Backing local education efforts wasn't the only budgetary matter under scrutiny during Thursday's Friendsville meeting.

Commissioners also heard a report from

SEE FRIENDSVILLE, 5A



Bible Verse.....2A	Comics.....6B	Deaths.....4A	Opinion.....6A
Blount Records.....4A	Crossword.....7B	Horoscope.....7B	Sports.....1B
Bridge.....3B	Daily Calendar.....10A	Life.....8A	Sudoku.....7B
Classified.....4B	Dear Abby.....9A	Money & Markets.....7A	Weather.....7B

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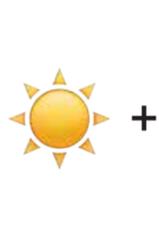


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