

# Local Egyptians cautious about future

By AMANDA HAGGARD  
Associate News Editor

In the aftermath of President Hosni Mubarak's resignation Friday, some Egyptians have expressed concern for the country's path into democracy.

The shift of power leaves the Egyptian military to rule the nation of more than 80 million, a decision that was

facilitated by suspending the Egyptian constitution.

"I don't know how the next few months will play out in Egypt," said Mohammed Albakry, an associate professor of English and applied linguistics. "I think everyone is feeling pretty unsure."

After 18 days of protest led by the Egyptian people, Mubarak stepped down and

transferred power to the military, resulting in a mass celebration in the streets of Cairo.

"[Mubarak] thought he could ride out the wave of anger," Albakry said. "But, he had to realize it wasn't going away."

Mubarak, an 82-year-old retired Air Force commander, resigned at 6 p.m. during evening prayer, leaving Vice

President Omar Suleiman the responsibility of announcing his departure.

The military leaders in Egypt have not removed Mubarak's cabinet, which raises some concern among the Egyptian people as to the length of time it could take to make a transition.

Allen Hibbard, director of the Middle East Center at MTSU, said that because

Mubarak resigned, a new and equally challenging phase for Egypt will begin.

"We can hope that the military leadership now in place will work with civilian leadership to create a path toward greater democracy," Hibbard said.

Hibbard lived in Cairo from 1985 until 1989, while he was teaching at The American University in Cairo, just

off of Tahrir Square, where most of the demonstrations took place.

The military released a statement of support and solidarity with the many protestors following the announcement of Mubarak's exit. Now, experts said the challenge will be how to set

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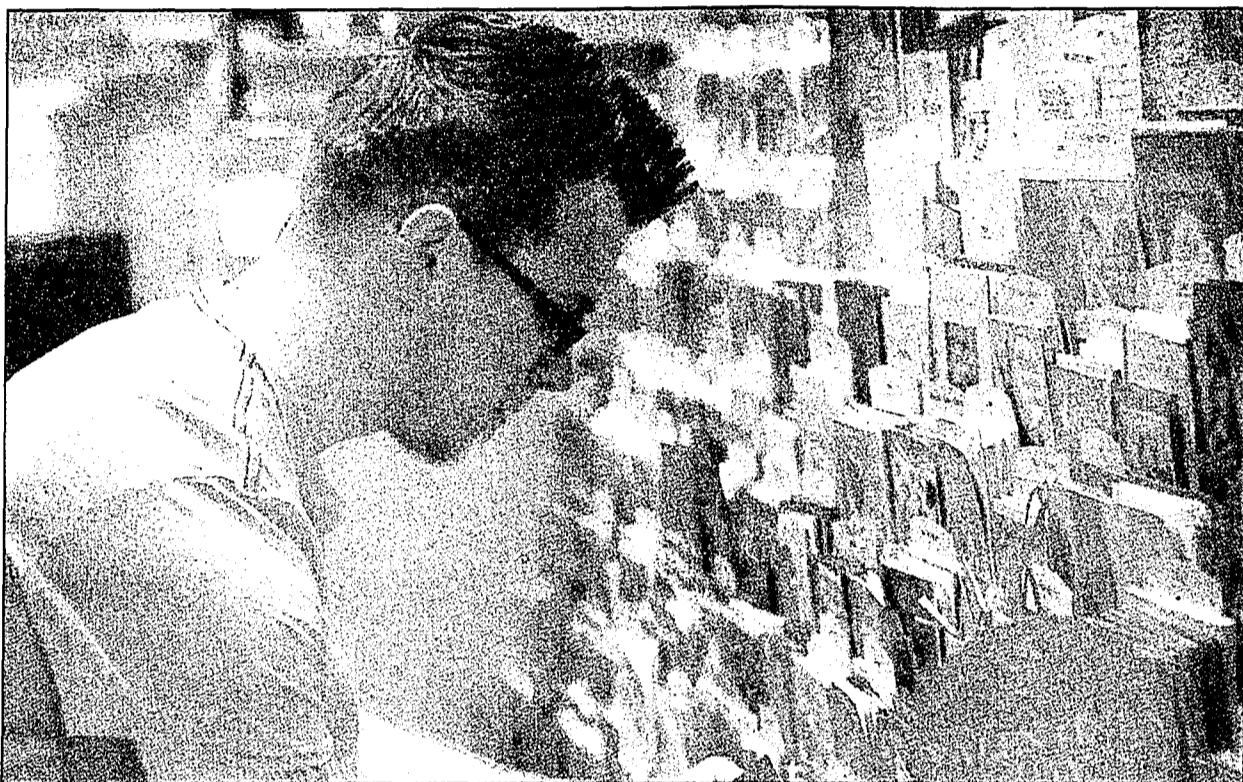


Photo by Bailey Ingram, photo editor  
Curtis Page looks through several Valentine's Day cards Feb. 13 at Amy's Hallmark, located in The Avenue in Murfreesboro.

## Shoppers flirt with splurges

By BECCA ANDREWS  
Associate News Editor

Business owners have high expectations of Valentine's Day profits this year, but many consumers claim to be cutting back because of remaining uncertainty about the economy.

Natasha Larson, a junior majoring in accounting, holds the position of floral manager at the Kroger located on Northfield Boulevard. Larson said despite the yearly price increase, there has been a 16-20 percent increase in floral sales this year compared

with 2010 sales.

"People are still willing to pay," Larson said. "It's Valentine's."

The unseasonably warm weather was also a factor in the unexpected boost, Larson said.

"Sixty-degree weather makes people want to get out of the house, especially after all the snow and rain," Larson said.

The fact that Murfreesboro is a college town makes keeping sales up more difficult, Larson said, but Valentine's Day is important to couples no matter what their budget may be.

"Kroger has the number one floral sales in the world," she said, adding that the reputation for reliably good products makes life a little easier for the department.

Rick Rainwater, the manager of Barnes & Noble, said sales have steadily risen as well this year.

"There have been tremendous digital sales," Rainwater said, referring to the Barnes & Noble Nook in particular. "Digital technology has boosted sales for us, even for Valentine's Day."

SHOPPING, PAGE 3

## Author advocates new direction for economic policies

By EBONY EDWARDS  
Contributing Writer

America can "regain prosperity" by lowering taxes, stopping government spending and bailouts and reducing the national debt, said Stephen Moore Thursday in a lecture sponsored by the Young America's Foundation.

Moore is a senior economics writer for *The Wall Street Journal* and a frequent guest on CNN's "Inside Politics," "Crossfire," and "Moneyline," as well as NBC's "Nightly News" and FOX News' "On the Record." The most recent of Moore's five books is titled *Bullish on Bush: How the Ownership Society is Making America Richer*.

Moore founded the Club for Growth and is the former president of the *Free Enterprise Fund*. Both are political action committees that seek limited government involvement and reduce tax rates.

Moore revealed factors in his lecture that he said have either directly or indirectly hindered America's ability to move forward and held citizens back from wealth and success.

"Every single action that has been taken has been the wrong thing to do," Moore said. "Those things include bailing out the oil companies, the stimulus package, paying mortgages, and even the cash for clunkers car-buying stimulus bill."

Many of these decisions have turned out to be bad ones in

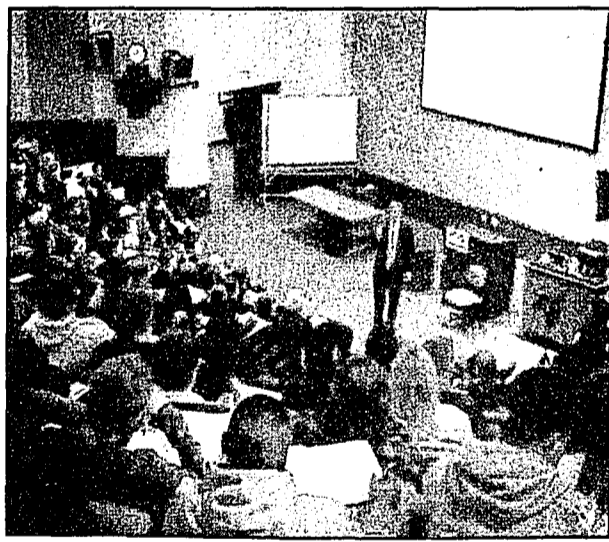


Photo by Bailey Ingram, photo editor  
More than 150 people listen to Stephen Moore, an economic analyst from *The Wall Street Journal*, on Feb. 10 in the State Farm Room of the Business and Aerospace Building.

the long run, Moore said. He also said the U.S. debt sum has reached a "mind-blowing" \$14 trillion.

"The numbers are so gigantic that we can't even begin to comprehend them," he said.

Zac Ingraham, a junior majoring in recording industry management, said he felt Moore was very knowledgeable and easy to relate to.

"He was very easy to follow and supported a lot of thoughts that I already had," Ingraham said.

Moore also discussed tax rates and revenues and how he believes the "Robin Hood" theory of robbing the rich and giving to the poor is "at very best a zero sum transaction."

ECONOMY, PAGE 3

## Professor, alumnus hit the high note at Grammy Awards

By TODD BARNES  
News Editor

A professor and alumnus won separate Grammy awards last night for their work in engineering various music during 2010.

John Hill, a recording industry professor, tied for a Grammy for "Best Engineered Album, Classical," and Clarke Schleicher, a 1980 alumnus, won the "Best Record of the Year" award.

Schleicher won for his work as an engineer/mixer on Lady Antebellum's song "Need You Now" produced by Antebellum and Paul Worley for Capitol Records in Nashville and is his first Grammy award.

The "Best Record of the Year" is awarded to one single or track from an album. "Need You Now" contended with an array of hip-hop artists.

Lady Antebellum snagged four other Grammy's including "Song of the Year," "Best Country Album," "Best Country Song," and "Best Country Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocals."

Schleicher was nominated for another Grammy for "Best Album of the Year" for "Need You Now," but Arcade Fire won for their album "The Suburbs."

Hill won for his work in "Daugherty: Metropolis Symphony; Deus Ex Machina," performed by Giancarlo Guerrero and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and is his first



Schleicher



Hill

Grammy award. Hill tied with "Porter, Quincy: Complete Viola Works" performed by Elisha Nelson & John McLaughlin Williams.

Hill was nominated for another Grammy for "Best Classical Album" but Verdi: Requiem won.

A Grammy Award is an honor by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to recognize outstanding achievement in the music industry and is the music equivalent to the Academy Awards for film.

## Professor to explore life of Colonial poet

STAFF REPORT

The first poet to publish a book of poetry in North America will be explored in a lecture slated for 3 p.m. Thursday in Room 227 of Andrew L. Todd Hall.

Rebecca King, an associate professor of English, will present "Anne Bradstreet: Colonial Poet" as part of the spring 2011 MTSU Women's and Gender Studies Research Lecture Series.

The lecture will explore Bradstreet's Puritan background and the struggles she endured as a female poet in Colonial America.

Bradstreet was a 17th century author, who was considered by many to be one of the earliest feminist writers.

Her role as a wife and her religious beliefs were the most common topics for her poems.

While marriage and faith may not be controversial topics for writers in the 21st century, Bradstreet's writing was considered an affront to God because she questioned religion in any capacity.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

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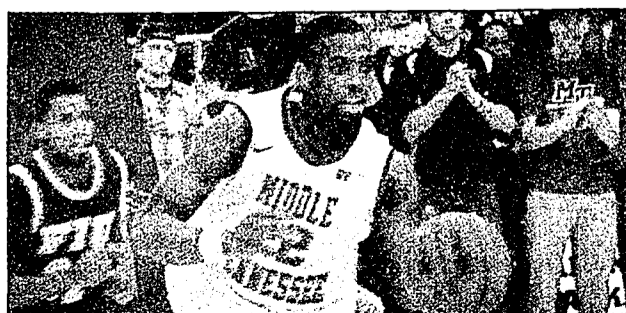
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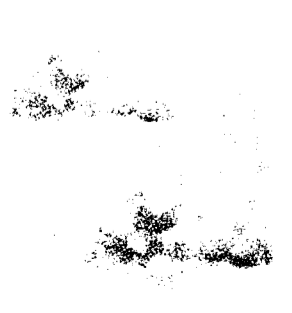
Can a match made in heaven really exist in college? For two MTSU couples, it can.  
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### EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE



Read more analysis on this weekend's basketball victories against Florida International University.  
SPORTS

### WEATHER



MONDAY  
56/30

# Murfreesboro crime rate jumps in 2010

STAFF REPORT

The Rutherford County 2010 crime rate rose 9 percent, although homicide was not committed, domestic violence is the primary cause of the increase, according to the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office.

There were 8,305 crimes reported in 2010 to the Tennessee Based Incident Reporting System.

There were 2,202 major felonies, which is an increase from the 194 cases from last year. Of those, 438 were domestic violence cases, 120 more cases since 2009.

Deputies arrested 3,582 citizens, worked 1,019 traffic crashes, issued 1,642 citations and responded to 43,915 calls for service.

Sheriff Robert Arnold said he is relieved that no one was murdered but is cognizant of the domestic violence increase

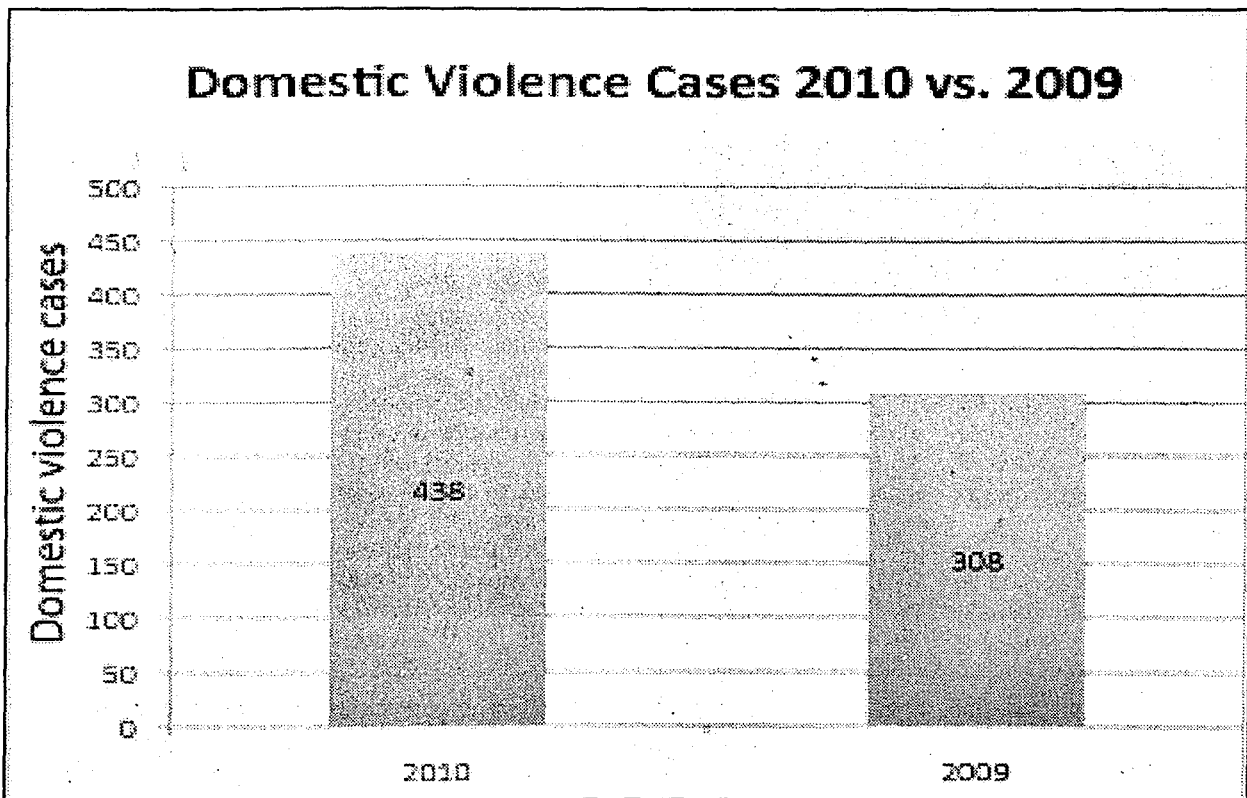
as a "sign of the times, due to the economy."

"We are addressing the problem of domestic violence through the Family Crimes and Special Victims Unit," Arnold said. "A grant allowed us to hire two more detectives who will work on reducing domestic violence cases and providing support for families."

The unit is comprised of one supervisor, four investigators and a deputy who monitors the sexual abuse offenders.

In regards to property crimes, home and business burglaries decreased by five cases, while auto burglaries remained the same. Detectives recovered \$603,195 in stolen property.

CRIME, PAGE 3



Graphic by Amanda Haggard, associate news editor

## Legislature debates halting fluoridation

By APRIL BAILEY  
Staff Writer

For decades, Tennesseans were told that fluoride in the water supply prevented tooth decay.

Now a bipartisan group of legislators wants the state to halt promotion of fluoridated water.

The group, which includes House Speaker Beth Harwell, R-56th District, issued their concerns in a Feb. 7 letter to Tennessee Health Commissioner Susan Cooper.

"Fluorides can cause a lifelong disfiguring of the teeth called 'dental fluorosis,' and even persons with very mild or mild dental fluorosis can find it objectionable," the letter to the health commissioner said.

Other legislators who signed the letter include: State Rep. Frank Nicely, R-17th District, State Rep. Joe Towns, D-84th District, State Rep. Joey Hensley, R-70th, and State Rep. John Deberry, D-90th District.

Fluoridation is the adjustment of the existing, naturally occurring fluoride levels in drinking water to an optimal level, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the prevention of tooth decay, according to the American Dental Association's website.

The Department of Health says 0.7 milligrams is recommended to achieve an optimal fluoride level.

The Tennessee legislators argue that the Center

for Disease Control and Prevention is one of many groups that have not openly discussed scientific studies that prove fluoridation may cause health risks.

But, the CDC proclaims fluoridation to be one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century, according to its website.

In addition, the ADA supports fluoridation and describes it as the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.

Dr. Kevin Dillard, a Murfreesboro dentist, said he supports fluoride in the water supply.

The legislators' letter said that Gerber, a baby products company, is now selling unfluoridated water to prevent parents of babies from using fluoridated water to mix formula.

In their letter, the legislators said that many Tennessee families are unaware of the alternative and that citizens cannot afford to purchase unfluoridated water or afford repair of fluorosis stains caused by fluoridated water.

Sue Craddock, a registered dental hygienist at Murfreesboro Dental Excellence, said she has worked in a dentist's office for 30 years and doesn't find fluoride to be harmful.

"The problem is that we drink so much bottled water, we aren't getting the amount of fluoride that we actually need," Craddock said, adding that even she doesn't drink Murfreesboro's tap water.

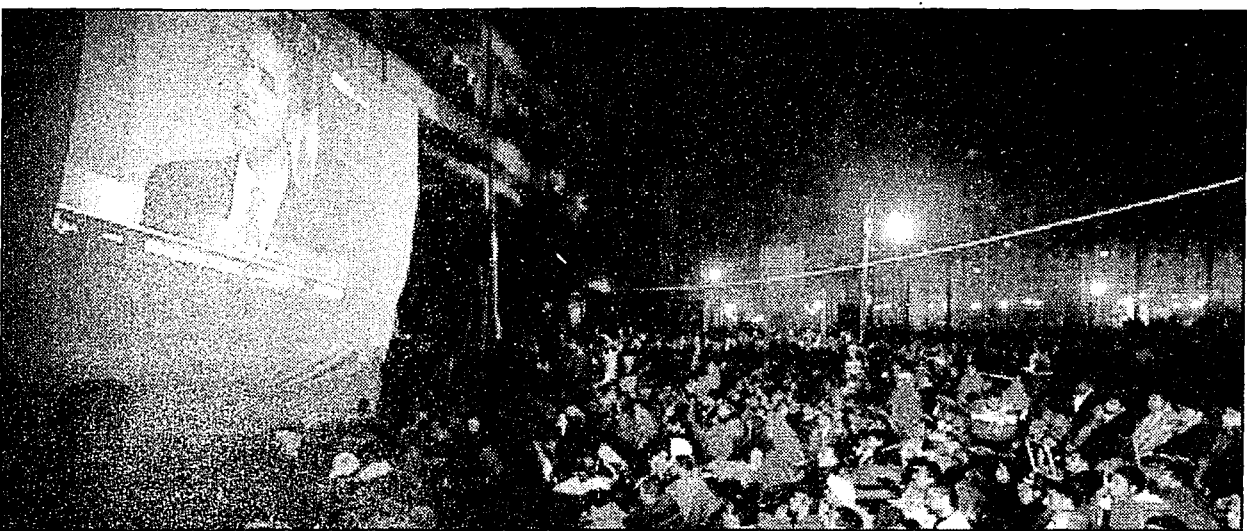


Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of State  
President Barack Obama speaks Feb. 1 about the situation in Egypt, which was broadcast to the country.

## Some worry of political instability

EGYPT  
FROM PAGE 1

up a free and open election in Egypt, to bring stability, and prevent an Islamic revolution like Iran.

"There will be negotiations with different civil leadership," Albakry said. "As of now, I don't see any strong civil institution taking over, but it will be better for the region if they go the slow way for reform."

The next few months will probably remain military rule, but the best choice Egypt could make would be to institute some permanent civil leaders, Albakry said, adding that he does not see a single political leader emerging for at least a year from now.

"As an Egyptian-American, I hope for a better, more democratic future," Albakry said. "It will be a long arduous, messy road, but that's what democracy is about."

Protestors previously said they were not opposed to a military function in the fight for democracy, but now some are unsure of how the military will handle its role.

Albakry said the U.S. played a positive role in all of this by asking for restraint from the regime, by establishing nongovernmental organizations, as well as encouraging pro-democracy in Egypt.

Nongovernmental groups that act independently are often created during a crisis when an area lacks legitimate participation or representation of government, according to the U.S. Department of State.

"[The American] role is only secondary," Albakry said. "This is the people's revolution."

Albakry said he was excited when he learned of the announcement of Mubarak's resignation, but he was also in a state of shock and disbelief. He said the emotion he felt

during that moment was more complex than just celebration.

"I did not celebrate in the conventional sense of the word," Albakry said. "Many said the nonviolent nature of the revolt had much to do with the success of the uprising."

"It was the moral force of nonviolence, not terrorism and mindless killing, that bent the arc of history toward justice once more," President Barack Obama said.

Hibbard said the lack of violence was a "marvelous achievement."

"I am proud of Egypt, particularly all of those who have banded together to challenge the three-decade authoritarian rule of Hosni Mubarak and his corrupt cronies," Hibbard said.

Obama said that day belongs to the "people of Egypt" but that the American people should be moved by these scenes in Cairo and across Egypt

because of whom we are as people and the kind of world that we want our children to grow up in.

Albakry said the revolution could not have happened 10-15 years ago when he lived in Egypt.

"It would be wrong to give too much credit to the Internet," he said. "But, I do think Facebook and Twitter made it easier to channel people together and bring a sense of organization to the movement."

Some have said Egyptian protests and Mubarak's subsequent resignation could have been a ripple effect of Tunisia, but the size of Egypt makes this event pretty significant compared to Tunisia, Albakry said.

"It's going to push other regimes or governments to adopt reform before they are forced to," Albakry said. "They are already trying to adopt reform Syria and Yemen."

## LOCAL EVENTS

### On Campus

### Off Campus

**Events:**  
**Black History Month Events:**  
**QUESday:**  
**Omegas in Space Display**  
Feb. 15, 11 a.m.  
Keithley University Center 2nd Floor  
Tickets: FREE

**Evolution of Black Music**  
Feb. 17, 6 p.m.  
Tom Jackson Building  
Tickets: FREE

**Lectures:**  
**Franco-Peruvian Writer and Diplomat, Ventura Garcia Calderon**  
Feb. 14, 3 p.m.  
University Honors College  
Room 106  
Tickets: FREE

**"Misquoting Jesus: Scribes Who Changed the Bible and**

**Readers Who May Never Know"**  
Feb. 18, 3:30 p.m.  
Business and Aerospace Building  
State Farm Room  
Tickets: FREE

**"Sometimes I feel Like a Motherless Child: Reconstructing the Story of an American Song's Journey"**  
Feb. 21, 3 p.m.  
University Honors College  
Room 106  
Tickets: FREE

**Concerts:**  
**Demonstration of traditional Chinese instruments**  
Feb. 17, 11:30 a.m.  
Wright Music Building  
Tickets: FREE

**Concerts:**  
**St. Bling's 5th Annual Anti-Valentine's Birthday Bash**  
Feb. 14, 9 p.m.  
Gilligan's  
Tickets: FREE, event is 21+

**Blitzkid, Alucard and Spookhand**  
Feb. 16, 7 p.m.  
The Muse  
Tickets: \$6 in advance, \$8 at door

**Doug Stanhope with The Mattoid**  
Feb. 18, 8 p.m.  
Exit In  
Tickets: \$20

**The Long Players perform Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon"**  
Feb. 19, 9 p.m.  
Mercy Lounge  
Tickets: \$15

**Jack Tempchin: "The Story Behind the Song"**  
Feb. 20, 9 p.m.  
Bluebird Café  
Tickets: FREE

**Rooney with Easley, The Old Ceremony, and The Kicks**  
Feb. 21, 8 p.m.  
Loveless Cafe

### Events Policy

Sidelines welcomes current campus and community events submitted by all readers. Please e-mail events to [slcampus@mtsu.edu](mailto:slcampus@mtsu.edu) or [slnews@mtsu.edu](mailto:slnews@mtsu.edu), and include the name, date, time and location of the event, as well as your name and a phone number for verification. We reserve the right to refuse events at our discretion as our space is limited.

Sidelines is the editorially independent, nonprofit student-produced newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University. Sidelines publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and online during June and July. The events listed are not necessarily associated with Sidelines or MTSU.

## CORRECTIONS

In the Feb. 7 issue of *Sidelines*, in the article titled, "Textbook Brokers expands services," a quote was mistakenly attributed to Robert Batchelor when it should have read that Luke Barber made the statement.

Sidelines regrets these errors.

## CRIME BRIEFS

**Alcohol**  
Feb. 6, 12:48 p.m.  
Greek Row, Sigma Alpha Epsilon House  
Wendy Rebecca Cude, 18, was arrested for underage consumption of alcohol. Derek Justin Hopper, 19, was issued a state citation for underage consumption of alcohol.

**Disorderly Conduct**  
Feb. 6, 1:14 a.m.  
Lawrence Anthony Donald, 22, was arrested for disorderly conduct.

**Vandalism**  
Feb. 6, 2:04 p.m.  
Rutherford Parking Lot  
Victim reported that her tires had been slashed while parked in the Rutherford parking lot.

**Weapon**  
Feb. 8, 2:57 p.m.  
Student was reported to have a weapon in his vehicle. The vehicle was located and the student was contacted. Student was issued a Dean Citation for the policy violation and the weapon was removed from campus.

**Traffic**  
Feb. 8, 7:48 p.m.  
Ellington Human Sciences lot  
Victim reported that his car has been struck while parked in the Ellington Human Sciences lot.

**Theft**  
Feb. 9, 12:24 p.m.  
James E Walker Library  
Victim reported that her laptop was stolen from the library.

**Theft**  
Feb. 9, 1:28 p.m.  
Greek Row  
Victim reported that his vehicle was broken into and their belongings were stolen. The vehicle was not locked.

**Traffic**  
Feb. 10, 9:01 a.m.  
Observatory Lot  
Grounds crew reported that a light pole had been struck in the Observatory Lot.

**Alcohol**  
Feb. 11, 2:24 p.m.  
MTSU Boulevard  
Jeremy Burns, 18, and Nicholas Reszka, 18, were issued state citations for underage consumption of alcohol.



Photo by Bailey Ingram, photo editor  
(Top) Faculty and staff from the College of Business, including (Second row, second from left) Dean Jim Burton, listen as Stephen Moore, an economics writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, discusses economic policies Feb. 10 in the State Farm Room of the Business and Aerospace Building.

## Moore urges return to 'Reaganomics'

### ECONOMY FROM PAGE 1

"If you take \$1 from a person and give it to another, you aren't creating wealth — you're just robbing someone who worked hard for their dollar," Moore said, adding that the government raising taxes does not create wealth.

President Ronald Reagan warned in the 1980s that high tax rates suffocate the economy, Moore said, adding that when the two-term Republican president was in office, the U.S. saw a record growth in wealth.

Moore also discussed other topics such as rising technology and education.

Students said they were interested in ways Moore said technology would affect their future.

"The chart that he showed us about how long it took for certain technology to even reach the mass market was shocking," said Kristin Elfritz, a junior majoring in music business. "The iPod taking four years to come out [to the broad market] is hard to believe."

Moore said that rapid growth is apparent because it took 71 years for the telephone to get to a mass audience, while it only took the iPod four years.

Throughout his lecture, Moore said it was important for the U.S. government "to recognize what it needs to do in order to reverse the current situation."

"We must be serious here," Moore said. "We are in debt and it is not one party overspending, it has been both parties."

The U.S. has accrued more wealth in the past 25 years than the previous 225 but has increased its debt within the last 10 years than it did within the first 200 years.

"The problem with borrowing is that somebody has to pay back the debt," Moore said.

Healthcare spending and the "out of control nature of insurance rates" is a cause for concern, Moore said.



Photo by Bailey Ingram, photo editor  
(Bottom) Moore holds up paper currency from Zimbabwe, Africa, to illustrate the dangers of hyperinflation — primarily caused by rapidly increasing the money supply in the economy to finance government spending, which crowds the private market.

"Things are totally dysfunctional because no one knows how much things cost," Moore said. "Neither the doctor nor patients know, so it's left up to the insurance companies." Ingraham said he felt that Moore "hit on all the things he felt are wrong with the U.S."

"I just know that the U.S. is pretty screwed if things continue as they are," Ingraham said. "There definitely needs to be a change somewhere."

Many things indicate the U.S. is going in the wrong direction, but despite the current economic climate, it is still both entrepreneurial and innovative, Moore said.

"This is what makes [our country] so great," Moore said. "We're innovators."

Amanda Haggard, associate news editor, contributed to this report.

# Doubt lingers among jilted U.S. consumers

### SHOPPING FROM PAGE 1

Maxwell Millay, a shift manager at CVS Pharmacy, said that although the economy is bad, spending is good.

"We don't have any numbers yet, but sales have been looking good," Millay said.

However, Hallmark manager Gania Jones said sales have been down this year from previous Valentine's.

"We have not made our goal, and we do not expect to," Jones said. "It's really hurting us."

While Larson said the weather has helped her sales tremendously, Jones cited snow as a cause of the greeting card company's losses. She said snow and rain have kept people from coming out to the store and the fact that Valentine's Day is so close has made matters worse.

"I think people must have gotten their cards and gifts with their milk and bread at drug stores when it snowed," Jones said.

Consumers said they are cutting back on expenses, but still have plans to celebrate.

Norman Washington, a graduate student majoring in sports management, said he and his girlfriend were planning to spend "quality time" instead of dollars this year.

With Valentine's gift in hand, Washington grinned and said neither him nor his girlfriend really care about the amount of money spent on the holiday.

"I guess the economy has affected our spending a little," Washington said. "But, quality time is just better."

Parents are also warning their children to refrain from going overboard with the holiday.

"I had to cut back on my spending [from last year], because my parents have to," said Mikey Smith, a junior at Oakland High School, as he perused the flowers at Kroger.

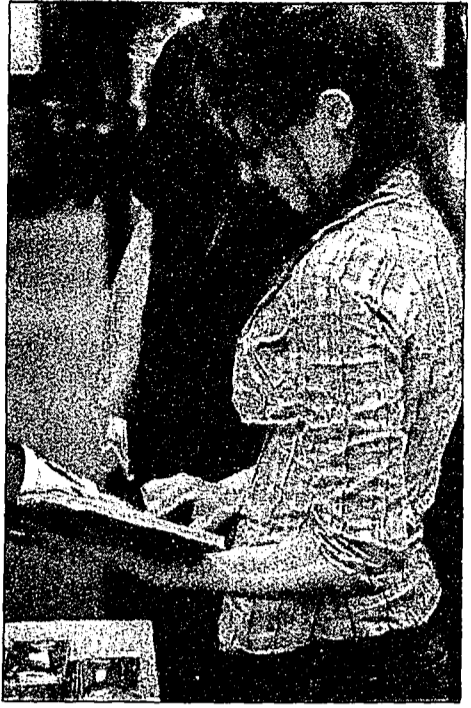


Photo by Bailey Ingram, photo editor  
Brittany Watson and Brett Powers browse through cookbooks Feb. 13 at Barnes & Noble, located in The Avenue in Murfreesboro.

Local resident Donna Croney said there are never any flowers in her Valentine's Day celebration because of the prices.

Although she described the prices on cards as "outrageous," she said she always buys each of her sons a card and chocolate hearts.

"Do the candy and cards," Croney said, giving advice to other consumers looking to save money and headaches during the holiday.

Local couple Brittany Watson and Brett Powers said they plan to celebrate by staying in and cooking dinner, echoing Washington's fondness for "quality time."

"We might splurge on a Redbox rental or a single rose as opposed to a bouquet," Watson said, looking up at her boyfriend and smiling. "It's just not necessary to spend a lot of money."

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## Domestic violence increased last year

### CRIME FROM PAGE 2

Thefts rose by 64 cases, motor vehicle thefts increased by seven, and arsons dropped by 12.

Arnold said he believes that citizens are as responsible as police for deterring crimes from happening.

"It takes a partnership between citizens and the sheriff's office to fight crime," Arnold said.

Neighborhood watches proved to be beneficial to stop local crime.

"The presence of patrol deputies patrolling through neighborhoods and citizens who call the sheriff's office when they see suspicious people in their neighborhoods help deter crimes," Arnold said. "We appreciate citizens who notify us immediately when they see suspicious people or activities so deputies can possibly apprehend suspects or assist detectives with ongoing investigations."

In 2009, three people were murdered, said Preble Acton, commander of the Criminal Investigations Division.

The lack of 2010 murders may be directly attributed to the proactive approach taken by detectives intervening in domestic violence cases and excellent medical care provided by Emergency Medical Services paramedics,

Acton said.

Murders documented in the 1990s primarily were domestic violence related and involved scenarios of when women tried leaving their husbands. The '90s murder increase led to the state passing strict laws regarding domestic violence.

In a scenario of when a family member assaults another relative, an arrest is made to which detective supervisors review the complaint and assign a specially trained domestic violence detective to the case. The detective assigned may add additional charges to be prosecuted in Domestic Violence Court.

In some cases, the detective may direct victims and children to a shelter and other help services through the Domestic Violence Program.

Assigning a detective to every case is not possible, to which felony and personal crimes take precedence, Acton said.

"I'd love to assign every case, but I don't have the people to work it," Acton said. "If we assigned every case, all we would do is paperwork and we would not be able to solve cases. [Law enforcement has] to prioritize. Major felonies and personal crimes take precedence over property."

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# FEATURES

## Saying 'I do' while still in school

By EMMA EGLI  
Features Editor

When Courtney Polivka walked into an Argentine tango dance class three years ago, she never imagined her new dance partner would be her future husband.

"I saw him from across the room," Courtney, a junior majoring in visual communications, says of the experience that made her weak in the knees. "All I could think was, 'Whoa, who is that?'"

Frank, on the other hand, remembers their first encounter a little differently.

"I think I was tying my shoe and not paying attention," Frank says with a grin.

Before Frank came along, Courtney's dance partner had been a 70-year-old man. Needless to say, the change in partners was greatly appreciated.

"When our instructor introduced us to one another, I had to ask him to repeat his name," Courtney says, embarrassed. "I just couldn't think straight."

The chemistry between the couple was undeniable.

"The first time we had a conversation, it lasted for about two hours," Courtney says. "Everything just clicked right away."

It seemed like the perfect match. Both shared similar hobbies and beliefs, and both were sensible and down-to-earth. There was only one slight problem.

"I was 16 when we met," Courtney says hesitantly, weighing the impact of what she is about to say next. "And Frank was 27."

The age gap seems to hang over their heads as the couple sits in awkward silence that lasts no more than a nanosecond. Courtney quickly looks up at Frank, who gives her a reassuring grin and squeezes her hand.

If ever there was a time when their age difference might have been a hurdle, the obstacle has long since been cleared.

"He looks like he's 20," Courtney says, almost to herself, while patting Frank's face.

And it's true — Frank doesn't look a day over 21.

"My mom was in shock for about two weeks," Courtney says, grinning at the memory of breaking the news to her mother. "But then she realized he was still the same guy she had grown to like. She knew he was trustworthy."

Now, at 20 and 29 respectively, Courtney and Frank have no doubts about the decision they made.

The couple sits in their clean apartment where the smells of dinner being cooked waft throughout the rooms. It's been a long day for both of them. Frank spent the day at work. Courtney spent the day in class.

Marriage at a young age isn't an uncommon thing, by any means. But according to Michael Loftis, a licensed clinical social worker who provides relationship counseling in Murfreesboro,

it's essential that both partners realize they are in it for the long haul.

"The first question I ask couples is, 'What are your priorities?'" Michael says. "Because they are going to be different for both males and females, but the key thing to realize is that your main priority should be to provide."

For some, providing in a marriage can prove to be quite a difficult task, especially if one or both partners are still in college.

"There's so much that you get to experience while you're in college," Michael says. "And being attached to someone can interfere with that whole process."

The beginning of a marriage is a crucial time for developing a solid relationship that can withstand the test of time. But developing and pursuing a career path is also a pivotal part of every young adult's life. So is it possible to do both?

**"There's so much that you get to experience while you're in college, and being attached to someone can interfere with that whole process."**

MICHAEL LOFTIS  
SOCIAL WORKER

"My family worried that I wasn't going to finish school," Courtney says.

It's obvious the thought had crossed her mind at that point in time.

"But for me, it wasn't an option," she says.

Courtney and Frank met on the cusp of her transition from high school into college.

So, while most people her age were worrying about picking the right college, Courtney was also busy picking out the perfect dress.

"I knew I wanted to marry him two weeks after meeting him," she says without hesitation. "So my only thought was how do we get to that point?"

While the Polivkas' marriage has panned out in a fairytale fashion, can all young couples hope to experience the same?

"The reality is that sometimes, couples are rushing into whatever the phase is of a relationship too quickly," Michael says. "When couples start talking about serious things so quickly, I ask them, why don't they just let the relationship develop and enjoy the moment?"

Michael also suggests that if the relationship does get serious, it's vital that both partners still maintain their own separate hobbies.



Photos courtesy of: eweddingcake.com and sxc.hu



Photo courtesy of: Mandy Davis  
Mandy and Jason Davis married in July 2010. They met in basic training and are now both students attending the university.



Mandy and Jason Davis broke that rule. But they also aren't your typical couple. It's not very often that you find a pair with almost identical interests, and the same career goals as well. When their paths crossed, they united perfectly.

Both senior international relations majors, Mandy and Jason are on the verge of graduating and officially kicking off their careers after many years of transitions. Both will be turning 27 years old this year.

"That should be indicative that we didn't go straight through college," Jason jokingly says after they mention their ages.

While marriage suits the two now in their final year of school, both agree that the thought of ever saying "I do" never would have crossed their minds when they were younger and starting out.

"We both did the whole partying thing when we first came to college," Mandy says.

Jason nods his head in agreement, grinning, as the memories of his freshman year seem to flood back to him.

"If someone had told me it wasn't good to get married at that age, I would have definitely agreed," he says. "It's just not something we were concerned about at that time."

Unbeknownst to each other, they both attended a university in Kentucky only an hour apart. It wasn't until they both decided to join the military that they eventually met at basic training.

"He actually had a crush on my roommate at first," Mandy says with a laugh. "And I had a crush on his roommate."

But soon the dynamics changed and their mischievous streaks led to their budding attraction. Mandy and her friends snuck off base to hang out with Jason and his. The rest seems to be history.

After graduating from training, they parted ways, but they couldn't stop thinking about one another.

"I told my mom — actually my whole family — that I was going to marry him," Mandy says with a giant grin.

Jason, who loves to tease Mandy, pretends to be shocked by what she says.

"Really? Because I told my family I was



Photo courtesy of: Courtney Polivka  
Courtney and Frank Polivka married in May 2010. The couple met at an Argentine tango dance class and immediately hit it off.

# Young couples prove that marriage in college is possible



Photo courtesy of Courtney Polivka; (Left) Photo by Emma Egli, features editor

(Left) Courtney and Frank on their wedding day. (Right) After being married for almost a year, the Polivkas juggle school and work while still maintaining their relationship.

## MARRIAGE FROM PAGE 4

going to break up with you.” Mandy rolls her eyes. Jason’s grin widens. “I knew that of any long distance relationship, that one was going to work out,” he trails off, staring intently at Mandy.

While the couple knew marriage was inevitable, they strove to keep normalcy somewhat intact. In order to avoid deployment, Mandy relocated back to where Jason was, but made it a point to get a one-bedroom apartment.

“We decided upfront we weren’t going to move in together,” Mandy says. But they both cracked.

“He was living on his parent’s property, but for the first two weeks he was always over at my place,” Mandy says. “Finally, one night, he said he really needed to go back to his place. He left, and I was crying. A few minutes later, he knocked on the door and said ‘Never mind, I’m just going to move in.’”

Accepting the fact that doing things the conventional way just wasn’t their style, the couple finally got married last July. But both agree that Michael’s advice does hold validity.

“It’s good in a relationship to have your own interests and hobbies,” Jason says. “And even though our careers and interests are linked, they are still in different areas.”

Mandy and Jason’s passion for Middle Eastern culture seems to have driven them closer together. Both studied Arabic in California to obtain their associate’s degree, and both are looking forward to eventually obtaining work in an embassy so that they can live in the Middle East.

So, the question still remains: Is it easier or harder to be married while still in college?

“A lot of people think being married is going to make things harder,” Courtney says. “But, it’s actually made things easier. When you’re dating, you’re in two different places and you feel more pressure to go out, but it’s easier to focus now because we are in the same place.”

Jason and Mandy also agree that their marriage has actually been beneficial to their college careers.

“Because we have the same degree, we only have to buy one set of books,” Jason says. “So it’s excellent financially. Some of our classes are also reading intensive, so we can each do separate readings and tell each other about them. It helps us save time so we can spend more time together.”

Both couples have proven that a marriage in college is very much possible. But both couples are very unique in the sense that they seemed to have understood the key

to a successful marriage, regardless of age or situation — knowing who you are and want you want before committing to another person.

“I tell people that the most important thing is to make sure you know who you are and to realize you don’t have to be dependent on a male or female in order to determine your value or worth,” Michael says.

Although Courtney met her perfect match at such a young age, she never let the dream of marriage sweep her off her feet like that first tango dance she and Frank shared.

“I knew what I wanted,” Courtney says. “And Frank has always supported that.”

Mandy knows that it’s a different case for every couple.

“It really just depends on the people and their maturity level,” she says. “If they can handle it, then it will work out for them.”

Michael successfully sums it all up by suggesting that anyone, single or in a relationship, read Shel Silverstein’s “The Missing Piece Meets the Big O.” Albeit a child’s novel, it holds more impact than any textbook on love could ever hope to carry.

“We have to get ourselves to a stable place mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually before we can give,” he says. “Because if we don’t have that, then we won’t ever be able to give it.”



Photos by Emma Egli, features editor; Photo courtesy of Mandy Davis

(Left) Mandy and Jason Davis are both international relations majors and hope to travel to the Middle East after graduation. (Right) Mandy and Jason on their wedding day



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# OPINIONS

Sidelines is the editorially independent, student-produced newspaper affiliated with Middle Tennessee State University and the College of Mass Communication. Sidelines publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and online during June and July. The opinions expressed herein are those of individual writers and not necessarily Sidelines or the university.

## LOVE IN FOCUS

### Love through rose-colored glasses

When asking my ragtag group of Facebook friends to write a cute little opinions article for Valentine's Day, you can expect I got some interesting responses.

There were of course the cynics who, for whatever reason, have lost the true spirit of love, stating that "relationships are overrated," and "love stinks." There were even slightly sexist comments like "women make it all complicated," regardless of the fact that relationships are a two way street.

However, there were those comments that made me smile, laugh, and have a little bit more faith in humanity.

Some compared love – and this is not to go all "Twilight" on college students – to a drug that can last three months, and that a "love high" can last for about two years. If true, that's some powerful stuff and I would like some as soon as possible. But, if someone says I'm like their own personal brand of heroin, I'm walking away – fast.

Others called the idea of love being a drug an absurd notion, but they also had to admit that it was the most amazing thing to ever be experienced. As my friend Marc Cox put it "I'm sure it causes chemicals to change, but true love is a spiritual, mental and emotional experience that overwhelms every sense. Nothing in this world comes close – no drugs, no chemicals, nothing."

It seems that we all have our own definitions for love and different reactions to the thought of love. Some are



**Brandon Thomas**  
Opinions Editor

quick to shun love for fear of a broken heart, while others will take that risk any day of the week for the potential of having that special someone on Valentine's Day.

You can put me in the latter. Call it naiveté. Call it whatever you want, but I am truly a hopeless romantic. Indeed, "you and me could write a bad romance." On Feb. 14, it never fails that many others, myself included, dub this day "Singles Awareness Day."

I often wonder though, are these individuals like the cynics on my Facebook that have done away with love for the time being, or are they trying to hide their loneliness behind dry humor and sarcasm?

Whatever the case may be, this thought quickly passes out of my mind and another one enters: "Marked-down candy!" I always shop off season. When it's summer, I get winter clothes; when it's winter I get summer clothes. When it's Jan. 1, I get Christmas stuff. So, why should Valentine's Day be any different?

Whatever your ritual is on Valentine's Day and beyond, make sure it's one of joy because as RuPaul says: If you can't love yourself, how are you going to love anybody else? Can I get an amen?

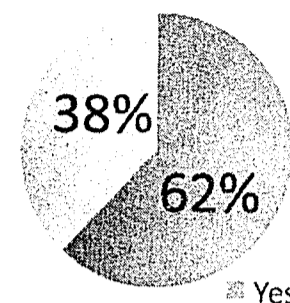
*Brandon Thomas is a junior majoring in political science and can be reached at [muckrakerthomas@gmail.com](mailto:muckrakerthomas@gmail.com).*



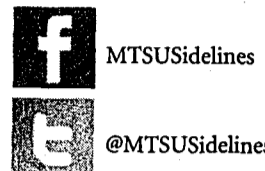
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### Happy stupid Valentine's Day!

I've always had crappy boyfriends. Once, I had a boyfriend who broke up with me and went on a single's cruise on Valentine's Day.

Once, I dated a guy who forgot it was Valentine's Day.

Once, I dated a girl – to change things up – and I guess she thought I was a bad girlfriend when I expected a Valentine in return, for the one I anteed up. Valentine's Day is for the birds.

Valentine's Day is for stupid Americans.

When I walk around campus today, and I see girls mixing pink and red in their outfits, I'm going to pass judgment. Those colors look stupid together unless you're at Bonnaroo.

Maybe, I'll even chuckle underneath the sounds of the quality music in my ear buds.

You Valentine's Day lovers: You suckers of marketing, who walk into Walgreens all glazed over like a Krispy Crème donut over big cardboard hearts full of low-grade chocolate.

Where there's a 50 percent chance of my enjoyment per bite and then the shiny boxes with lipstick kisses printed all over – you don't do it for me.

I have snobbishly never felt the need to buy a man shiny boxes.

I'm giving away little Harry Potter Valentines though because I got mad love for a lot of people and they're cheap. If I had enough money, I'd buy everyone, even the



**Aimee Schmittendorf**  
Columnist

meanest professors, a Valentine and cheer the whole place up.

Who's tired of this weather? This girl.

That's how this girl feels about that.

Give me a Valentine, oh marketing people who have encouraged me to instead hate Feb. 14.

The last thing we all need is another reason to continue on in our bubbles of seasonal depression.

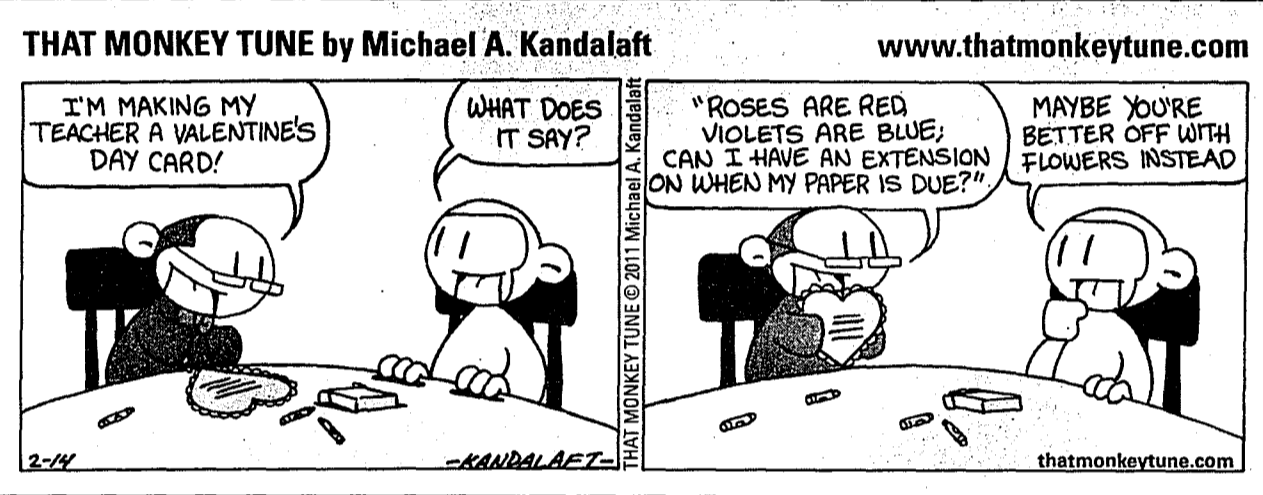
You think I'm kidding, but I want a Valentine.

As much as I hate this holiday, I not-so-secretly need for many friends to give me Valentines. You know, during the course of this article, I seem to have switched teams.

Down with the seasonal loom and gloom and snow and rain. Down with the marketers and their stupid games. Down with everything except love.

Bring it on, Valentine's Day. Bring on the love.

*Aimee Schmittendorf is a senior public relations major and an art minor. Aimee can be reached at [aimee.schmittendorf@gmail.com](mailto:aimee.schmittendorf@gmail.com).*



### Day for lovers, actually for martyrs

Have you ever wondered about the origins of our favorite chocolate-dipped holiday? It turns out there is actually a good deal of mystery surrounding Valentine's Day.

Depending on the source, there are anywhere from two to seven, or more, saints answering to some variation of the name "Valentine." Most accounts have the number at three. All of whom were martyrs – people who died holding dearly to religious or other principles.

According to Merriam-Webster's third definition, and my personal favorite given the context, a martyr is a "victim; especially: a great or constant sufferer."

I don't know about you, but I think this puts an entirely different spin on what exactly we're supposed to be considering here.

After all, the "Valentine" with the most comparatively substantive history, a Roman priest beheaded in the 200s, is deemed the patron saint of not only young love and marriage, but also of epilepsy, fainting, and the plague. As if its "true" meaning were not already muddled



**Kristin Johnson**  
Columnist

enough. In the Middle Ages the accepted notion, such as it was, got tied to the season when birds begin to mate.

Frankly, the whole saga seems a little contrived and arbitrary to me, but assuming its credibility, let's look at what we have: an emotion indistinguishable from the mating impulse, unconsciousness, the plague, constant suffering and an inevitable and gruesome death.

We should be sending restraining orders, not roses! And yet we're compelled, year after year, to pose to similarly uncommitted folk that age-old question, "Will you be mine?"

scrawled across an endless inventory of everything from teddy bears to heart-shaped nuggets of something akin to edible chalk.

Perhaps we misunderstood. What if the men after whom we model this composite "holiday" are not even the right saints?

There was, it seems, a "St. Valentina," another martyr, executed with her friend and "companion" St. Thea, after protesting the arrest and torture of the latter. Valentina pitched such a fit over the governor's treatment of Thea that he had them tied together and burned to death.

Okay, so the ending isn't any happier, but at least it's coherent, loving, and even natural. I could get behind a Valentine's Day based on that story. In fact, I think I'll pick up some roses, and maybe a teddy bear, but I'm still passing on the chalk hearts.

*Kristin Johnson is a junior double majoring in political science and communications studies and can be reached at [kmj3a@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:kmj3a@mtmail.mtsu.edu).*

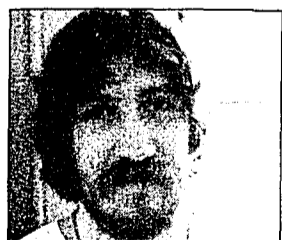
## FACES IN THE CROWD

What do you think about Valentine's Day?



**Brame**  
"I feel like it's more of a fun thing. It's more about cherishing the friends you have."

*Elizabeth Brame, Freshman, undeclared major*



**Owensby**  
"Valentine's Day should be about expressing love for that special someone. However, it's far too commercialized."

*Andrew Owensby, Junior, history major*



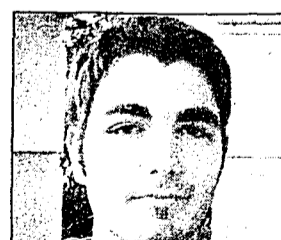
**Washington**  
"It's overrated, people shouldn't base their relationships on what other people are doing."

*Pierre Washington, Graduate student, accounting*



**Brooks**  
"I don't celebrate Valentine's Day due to religious views. But, I feel like you could appreciate the person you're with every day, not just on Valentine's Day."

*Chad Brooks, Junior, global studies major*



**Secret**  
"It's all right. It's better than other holidays. I have a girlfriend, and we're doing the whole dinner thing."

*Bonner Secret, Senior, global studies major*

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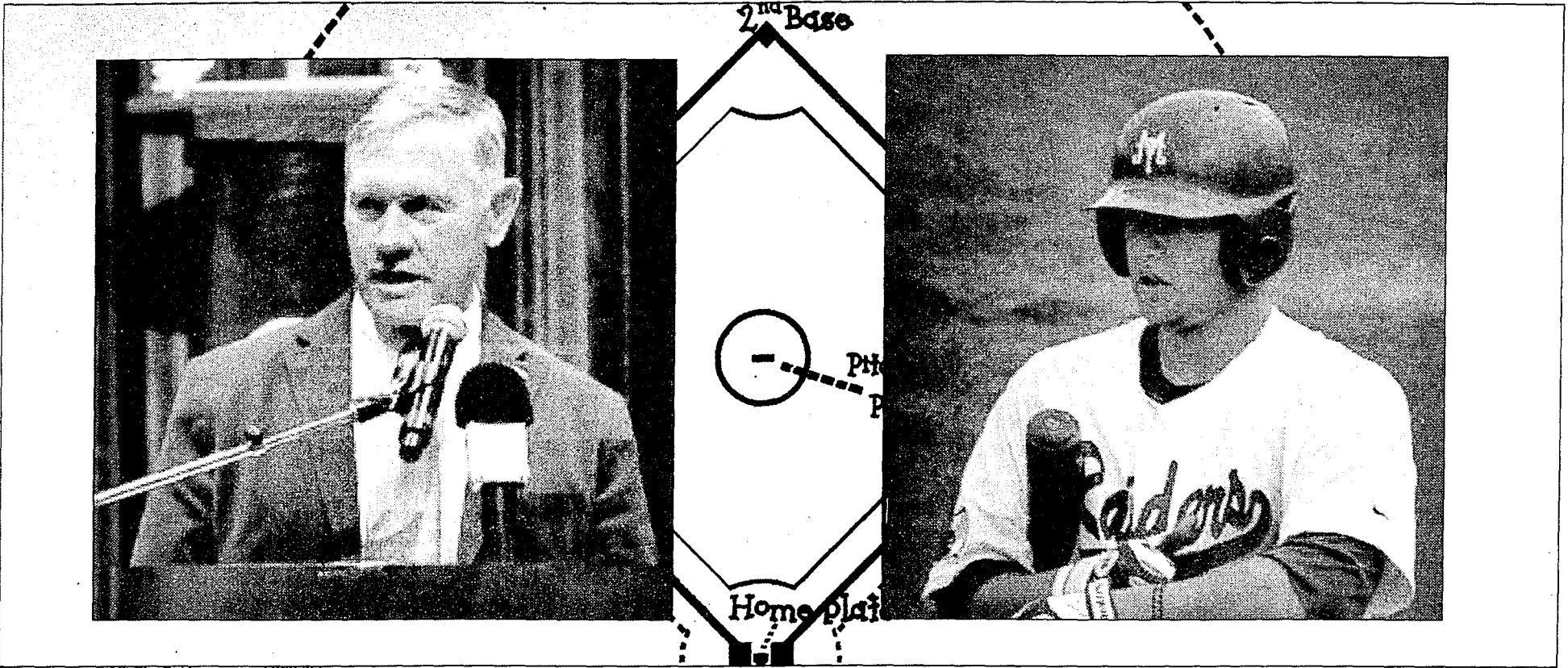
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# SPORTS

## MT Baseball reloaded, ready for 2011 campaign



Photos courtesy of GoBlueRaiders.com and Will Skinner

(Left) Head Coach Steve Peterson spoke recently at the annual Groundhog Day Luncheon at the JUB. Peterson has his work cut out for him this season.. (Right) Senior outfielder Will Skinner (12) will lead the Blue Raider offense at the plate.

By ALEX HUBBARD  
Staff Writer

When asked about his feelings toward this year's edition of the MTSU baseball team, head MT baseball coach Steve Peterson responded with one word, "unknown."

"I think we've got some real talent. I think we've got some guys who can make plays and hit the ball," Peterson said. "I think our pitching will develop, but there is just so much of the unknown about how they are going to handle Division I competition, let alone Sun Belt Conference competition."

Peterson enters his 24th season at the Blue Raider helm with the unenviable task of replacing 14 players lost to graduation, the major league baseball draft or MLB free agency, a group led by Bryce Brentz, who went 36th overall to Boston last June in the MLB first-year-player draft.

"We're going to have some freshman playing and some transfers," Peterson said. "You just don't know what they are going to do until it becomes real."

Last season's squad finished the year with a 35-23 mark, losing a close one, 6-5, to Troy in the Sun Belt Conference tournament to end the year.

Featured prominently in that game were three names: Will Skinner, Eric Gilley and Ryan Ford, all of which will be returning this season, making Peterson's life a little easier.

Skinner, a senior outfielder with significant offensive skill, batted .307 last season with 55 hits, 16 homeruns and 49 RBIs in 49 games.

"Starting with opening day we're going to try to build the lineup around Will," Peterson said. "Will will definitely hit cleanup, but that we have to do is get somebody in front of him and behind him that's swinging the bat pretty good."

Defensively, Gilley and Ford look to be the veterans Peterson will most count on. The senior pitcher Gilley is the pitching staff's most experienced man. He posted a 6-2 record in 16 appearances a year ago with a 4.32 ERA and 40 strikeouts as he moved into the weekend rotation over the course of the season.

"Eric definitely is the leader of the staff in the sense that he knows and has shown the capability of going through the opposing lineup three times and being able to stay in the ballgame," Peterson said. "We expect him, as he expects himself, to grow from last year to this year."

Ford will enter his sophomore season as the starting shortstop. Not necessarily the flashiest player on the roster, Peterson hopes to depend on the keen defensive awareness he exhibited over the course of his freshman campaign, when he started 56 games, racked up 189 assists and helped turn 41 double plays.

MT signed 11 players for this season's recruiting class, four of them transfers. When New Orleans left the Sun Belt and dropped to Division III, Peterson capitalized, signing

two players off the UNO roster, Jay Morris and Johnny Thomas, taking advantage of the NCAA waving its typical requirement for transferring players to sit out a year.

Thomas represents perhaps the class's best find. The starting shortstop his freshman season at UNO, Peterson moved him to second base to help cement the infield behind Ford.

A hitter of some ability, Thomas hit .269 with 15 RBIs and 17 runs scored a year ago, his upside as a sophomore is something Peterson couldn't pass up.

"We're grooming him to be the lead-off hitter," Peterson said of Thomas. "The stat at the end of the season that I hope he's leading the team in is runs score. He's got a good upside and being a sophomore, he's got a good future ahead of him."

Hank LaRue, a freshman from Evansville, Ind., is the true freshman Peterson expects to make the biggest impact initially. A shortstop in high school, LaRue was moved to third base, where Peterson feels he could be the starter if the season started today. Peterson also said Murfreesboro native Ryan Stephens is the team's best centerfielder.

In order to make it through a tough schedule that features SEC competition Vanderbilt and Tennessee as well as home Sun Belt contests against Western Kentucky, Peterson will need solid offense at the top of the order and consistent pitching. Whether or not this mix of veterans and young players are up to the task is as of yet, unknown.

## New players, still same Lady Raiders

A crazy thing happened to MT's women's basketball team in the past year. The Lady Raiders became the Baby Raiders.

For many fans, the thought of head coach Rick Insell taking the court without Jackie Pickel, Chelsia Lymon and Brandi Brown in uniform was unheard of. It's not that they've been around as long as Coach Insell – it just felt that way.

It wasn't as shocking to see Alysha Clark move on. Just like Amber Holt and Chrissy Givens before her, Clark was the focal point of the offense and fans knew that her departure was imminent. But how about this for a thought: All three of those girls at some point played with Pickel, Lymon and Brown.

So you must understand that even though most of us recognize the NCAA eligibility rules, a Lady Raider team without those three seems ... well ... different.

Don't get me wrong.

This is certainly not a negative thing. In fact, as I walked away from MT's 66-52 victory over Florida International on Saturday, the words of French journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr came to mind – the more things change, the more they stay the same.

As of today, the Lady Raiders are 21-5 and 12-1 in Sun Belt Conference play – their only conference loss coming at the hands of FIU on the road. However, with their recent win over the Golden Panthers, the Lady Raiders were able to continue a distinction for a women's basketball program that is full of them.

Since Insell became the head coach, the Lady Raiders are 52-1 in conference home games and has never lost to a Sun Belt Conference team more than once in the regular season.

That level of consistency is seen as even more impressive considering the only things that has stayed the same with MT's women's basketball program have been Insell, strength and conditioning coach Matt Riley



Richard Lowe  
The Lowe Down

**"In a true sign of an Insell led team, confidence is not lacking with this bunch."**

and radio color commentator, Duane Hickey.

Since the 2005-06 season, the program has had 36 players, nine assistant coaches, four directors of basketball operations, three sports information directors and two radio play-by-play announcers. Even the Murphy Center received a new basketball court and two scoreboards and LCD screens since then.

The Lady Raiders have 11 underclassmen on this year's squad – easily making them one of the youngest teams in the nation. Only three players came into this season with at least one collegiate start – seniors Anne Marie Lanning and Emily Queen and junior Tina Stewart.

Lanning and Queen have been in a similar situation in their time at MT. In their freshman season, 7 of the 12 players on the team were underclassmen. That team finished up 22-12, losing in the Sun Belt Conference Tournament final against Western Kentucky and getting eliminated in the second round of the WNIT to the University of Kentucky.

That is the only season out of Insell's past five that the team did not win the Sun Belt Conference championship.

Lanning notes that the situations were very different. "[In the 2007-08 season] We started with 12 players but we got

down to 8 by the end of the year," Lanning said. "This team has more depth and more people that can step up."

"Every night, someone has stepped up. I just want to be a great leader."

Lanning has set the pace for the Lady Raiders, ranking second in the Sun Belt Conference in free throw percentage (87 percent), second in 3-pointers made per game (2.4), fourth in 3-point percentage (42 percent) and seventh in assists per game (4.6).

Lanning also notes that youth is no longer considered an issue in the locker room.

"[Coach Insell] tries to make it known that we're just as good as the rest of the teams in the conference," Lanning said. "Youth isn't brought up anymore."

The young Raiders have certainly done their part, with freshman Ebony Rowe winning three Sun Belt Player of the Week awards and sophomore Icelyn Elie winning the award on Feb. 7.

Rowe is first in rebounds per game (10.2) and offensive rebounds per game (4.4) and second in the conference in points per game (17.3), field goal percentage (61 percent) and defensive rebounds per game (5.8).

Sophomore Kortni Jones is fourth in assists per game (5.2) and steals per game (2.2) and fifth in 3-point percentage (40 percent).

In a true sign of an Insell led team, confidence is not lacking with this bunch.

In preparing for her final games in a Lady Raider uniform, Lanning openly speaks about her high expectations for the rest of this season.

"I'm really confident and I do believe we're going to win it all this year," Lanning said.

Jones isn't shy either with her feelings about the future of MT's women's basketball program.

"With the group of girls we have here, this program will excel in ways that many people didn't think it could."

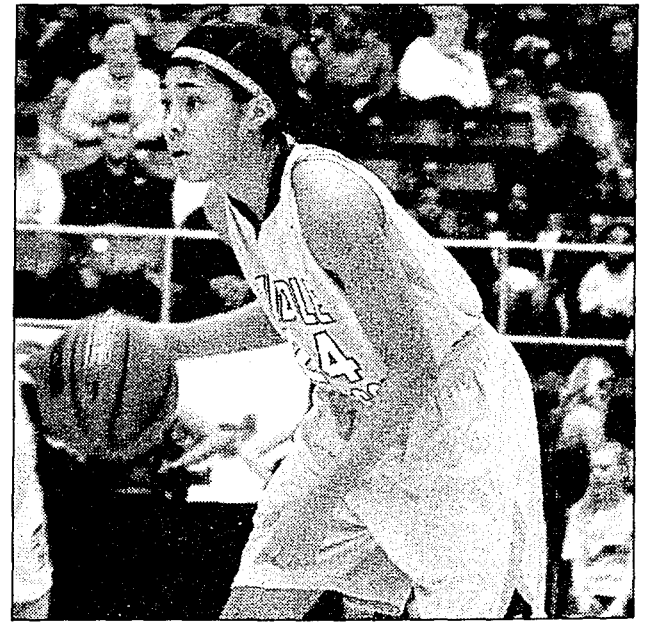


Photo by Erica Springer, staff photographer  
Sophomore Kortni Jones (24) drives down the court Feb. 12 to lead the Lady Blue Raiders to The Sun Belt's East Division title.

## Ladies clinch in pink

By WILL TRUSLER  
Sports Editor

The special pink uniforms worn by the Lady Raiders as part of the WBCA Pink Zone initiative sparked a red-hot start Saturday night as MT used a dominant first half to tame the Panthers of FIU with a final score of 66-52.

FIU boasts the only blemish on MT's Sun Belt record of 12-1, but head coach Rick Insell had his team poised and focused to ensure the outcome from their meeting in January was not repeated.

In the first 20 minutes of play, MT dominated nearly every facet of the game.

Sophomore point guard Kortni Jones hit her first four 3-pointers, including the first basket of the game, to ignite the Lady Raider offense.

That allowed freshman post Ebony Rowe to go to work on the block. Rowe nearly posted a double-double in the first half with 12 points and eight rebounds.

MT totaled 10 assists on 16 made baskets, outrebounded FIU 25-13 and entered

the locker room with a 45-23 lead.

However, the Panthers came out more prepared in the second half and managed to claw their way back to within 15 points.

Jones' career-high tying fifth 3-pointer, a one-handed heave as the shot clock expired, halted FIU's momentum enough to allow MT to slip away with the win.

Jones finished with 15 points and a game-high tying seven assists.

Rowe, meanwhile, finished with her 14th double-double of the season with 22 points and 13 rebounds. She connected on nine field goals and 4-5 free throws. Her 176 free throw attempts on the year is a new freshman single season record.

The Eastern Division title is the third-straight outright crown for MT.

The Lady Raiders will travel to Troy and UALR next before concluding their regular season at home in a game against rival Western Kentucky.

# Softball opens season with split at double header



Photo by Erica Springer, staff photographer  
The Lady Blue Raiders softball team hits off the season Feb. 13 with a team rally.

By KEVIN WARNER  
Contributing Writer

Believe it or not spring is almost here, as evidenced by the start of 2011 softball season.

MTSU softball finished last season with a disappointing 22-32 overall record and a 7-17 mark in Sun Belt play. The Blue Raiders look to improve upon that record this year with the return of seven starters, two pitchers and the addition of six first-year players.

While the team returns seven starters in the field, the circle will look a lot different with the departure Lindsey Vander Lugt who set the team record for starts in a career with 140. She also finished ranked second in wins (68) and strikeouts (625).

The Blue Raiders will look to youth to step in and take the ball in 2011 after her departure.

Sophomore Janelle Robinson, who finished last season with a record of 2-8 with an ERA of 4.80, and Catand freshman Jordyn Fisherback have the confidence of fifth-year head coach Sue Nevar.

"They've had good workouts, and we're seeing the development

we need to see," Nevar said. "Both have good mixes with their pitches, but their stability emotionally and mentally will be key."

The Blue Raiders will look to their defense and returning statistical leaders at the plate to offset their inexperience in the circle.

The Blue Raider's have upperclassmen all over the field. They will be looking for senior shortstop Brittney Banania to help the defense up the middle and the leadership of Kelsey Dortch in the outfield.

MT's batters will be led by another outfielder in 2011. Redshirt-senior Corrie Abel led the Blue Raiders in 2010 with 60 hits and a batting average of .347 (9th in the Sunbelt). The Blue Raiders also return junior catcher Natalie Ysais, their leader in home runs (5), RBIs (27), slugging percentage (.419) and on base percentage at (.402.)

The Blue Raiders will look to improve on their eighth place finish in the Sunbelt regular-season standings. In the conference tourney they finished sixth after losing a heartbreaker to Louisiana-Monroe 1-0.

Florida International, who received some top 50 votes in the preseason polls, and the University of Louisiana-Lafayette enter the season as the preseason favorites to take the conference crown, but the Blue Raiders are part of a group of four or five teams that could really challenge them according to Nevar.

The 2011 campaign began Sunday as the Blue Raiders welcomed the Murray State Racers to Murfreesboro. The contest marks the only home game in February for the team. Coach Nevar saw this first game as an opportunity to fine tune her team.

"It's an opportunity to get the nerves out of their system. Then we go on the road for three weekend tournaments, which will prepare us for the conference slate," said Nevar before the game.

The Raiders looked like they were nervous as freshman pitcher Jordyn Fisherback gave up four runs in just .1 innings of work in her first career start. Redshirt-junior Caty Jutson relived her and gave up two runs in the second inning and two more in third.

In the bottom of the 4th inning the Raider bats exploded with 12 runs on 10 hits capped by a grand slam by freshman shortstop Nina Dever in her first start in the place of the injured Brittney Banania. Dever finished with 5 RBI's as the Blue Raiders scored 16 runs on the way to a 16-13 victory. The 16 runs stand as an opening day record, as well as the 12 runs in the 4th inning

Janelle Robinson, who pitched the final 0.2 of the first game, lost the second game 3-2 in a pitching battle. The difference came when Murray State second baseman Lauren Buch, who was a perfect 6-6 at the plate on the day, hit a solo-home run in the top of the 4th inning.

The Raiders (1-1) had two runners on base in the bottom of the 7th, but failed to bring them around to score

The Blue Raiders will not return home until March 8, when they face Bowling Green State University.

Softball games are free to attend with a valid student ID, and grills are permitted outside the bleachers behind the left-field fence.

## Upcoming games:

Friday: Softball vs. Kentucky at Tallahassee, Fla. 12:15PM then @ Florida State 4:30 PM

Sat. Feb 26: Softball vs. Georgia Southern @ Tallahassee, Fla. 10 AM

Sun. Feb 27: Softball @ Auburn 2 PM

Fri. Mar 4: Softball vs. Louisville @ Cookeville, Tenn. 10 AM

Softball @ Tennessee Tech 3 PM

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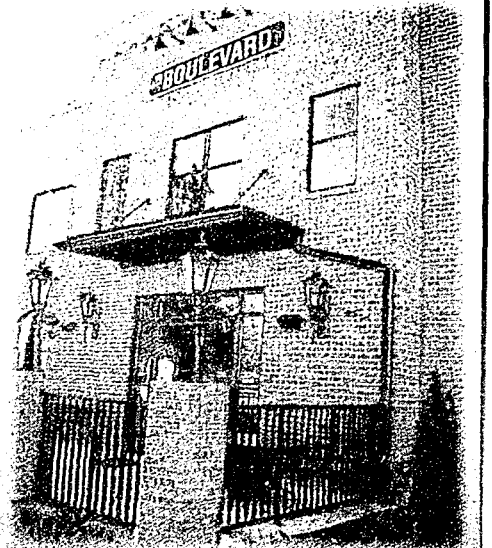
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