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# SIDELINES

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MTSU Athletics Director Chris Massaro and President Sidney McPhee announced in the Student Union after sending out invitations to the entire campus that the Blue Raiders will leave the Sun Belt and join Conference USA. Photo by Matt Masters

Cover photo by Matt Masters

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# State considering further tuition hikes for TBR universities

By Alex Hubbard  
Campus news editor

Students next fall may feel a further financial squeeze from tuition bills.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission last month proposed up to 6 percent tuition hikes for state universities. The proposal, which went before Gov. Bill Haslam during a budget hearing for the next fiscal year, also calls for a \$35.5 million increase in state funding for higher education.

A second THEC proposal called for 5 percent cuts in state funding, but that proposal came at the request of Haslam, who asked all state agencies to assemble plans that included cuts of that size.

If adopted, the proposal could charge MTSU students up to an additional \$449 per year or more if state funding is cut. Haslam will submit his proposal to the legislature in January.

"THEC's recommendation is the first step in a very long budgeting process for the next fiscal year," said David Smith, Haslam spokesman. "With the hearings recently finished, it's premature to say what would be in his budget proposal."

The threat of a tuition increase comes as THEC acknowledged a greater dependence on financial aid. Of the students with available data, 101,700 who attended state universities or community colleges were eligible for Pell

and state grants in 2011, according to a THEC analysis. That marks an increase from 62,800 eligible students in 2007.

MTSU tuition shot up 41.9 percent in the last five years. The rapid increase, coupled with slower growth for grants and other forms of aid means time is of the essence for students seeking financial aid, said Celia Bradley, assistant director in the financial aid office.

"A lot of students think 'I can't file because I haven't done my taxes yet,'" Bradley said. "In the olden days, I would cringe at the thought of telling them to use estimates, but now it's a necessity... As soon as you ring in the New Year, it's time to do your financial aid."

Approximately 74 percent of university students receive some form of financial aid, Bradley said, adding that although limits for unsubsidized loans — or loans that the federal government does not pay interest on — were adjusted upward in recent years, dependent students who are not grant eligible were left out.

Furthermore, students who transfer from community colleges often find the higher financial responsibilities difficult.

"Their money goes so much further at those schools, and it's kind of like a shock to them when they come here because they're used to — in some cases, in some of the

even smaller community colleges — their Pell almost paying their tuition," Bradley said.

MTSU took advantage of a 2011 Tennessee Board of Regents policy change, which allowed universities to request specific rate changes, rather than a uniform change throughout the system. MTSU's 6.8 percent increase in 2012 marked the third largest in the TBR system, which does not include the University of Tennessee system, ranking behind East Tennessee State and the University of Memphis and ahead of Tennessee Tech, Tennessee State and Austin Peay.

The different rates allow for campuses to address specific needs and will allow MTSU to convert temporary faculty to permanent status, according to a TBR report.

TBR sets tuition rates in reaction to the legislature's final budget amount allotted for higher education. The rates must be enough to ensure a balanced budget.

University enrollment fell 4 percent this year, or by 1,048 students. The drop was greater than the TBR system as a whole, which saw a nearly 3-percent decline.

"Across the country, tuition is rising often in the double digits, and there is the risk of pricing middle-class families out," Bradley said. Haslam embarked on a listening tour of the state last summer as he sought to address the

needs of higher education. Although he occasionally mentioned the need to end the state's downward trend on higher-education funding, Haslam stressed the need for colleges to act wisely in spending practices.

"When we look at capital for post-secondary education, we're going to look at: are we putting that where the demand is," Haslam told a Chattanooga roundtable in July, according to the *Chattanooga Times-Free Press*. "I think you'll see us funding post-secondary education more strategically because of some of these conversations." ■

## Tuition increase among TBR schools

Middle Tenn. State University	\$7,492	\$7,846
Austin Peay State University	\$6,918	\$7,260
East Tenn. State University	\$6,997	\$7,352
Tennessee State University	\$6,702	\$7,048
Tennessee Tech. University	\$6,948	\$7,293
University of Memphis	\$8,234	\$8,653

■ 0% increase ■ 3% increase ■ 6% increase

Tuition is projected to rise next year, according to a recent Tennessee High Education Commission meeting. Infographic by Kelsey Klingemeyer.



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TENNESSEE  
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GUARD**

# Murfreesboro pays less at the pump in Tennessee

By Quint Qualls  
Staff writer

Murfreesboro residents enjoy the lowest gas prices in Tennessee, primarily as a result of an ongoing price war between convenience stores.

Home to the current lowest price per gallon of gasoline in Tennessee, Murfreesboro pays \$2.96 at the gas pumps. Well below the national average of \$3.41 per gallon, the price of gas in Murfreesboro is a welcome relief for consumers in rough economic times.

"Sometimes there can be pricing wars that go on for days, weeks, years or even decades," said Emily LaRoy, executive director for the Tennessee Fuel and Convenience Store Association. "Fuel is a common 'lost liter' for many businesses, which means they sell it below its cost to facilitate more business. A lot of times if you get one store that's selling gas as a 'lost liter,' it's kind of a domino effect. Typically when you have a pocket of stores that are selling gas at a much lower price, it's usually a gas war that's going on."

The average gas price in Tennessee rests at \$3.16 per gallon, but students driving home for the holidays will be paying above the state-wide average and well above the Murfreesboro-level of pricing. After quick drive to Brentwood, drivers see gas prices increase by 30 cents per gallon.

"In addition to federal and state taxes, you can

have county and municipal taxes that can be applicable in one part of the state and not in another," said Gregg Laskoski, senior petroleum analyst for Gasbuddy.com. "Another thing that can impact prices is if you have a high population density area. Retailers are going to be doing a greater volume of sales there, so they can get better prices for their customers as opposed to in more rural areas."

Gas pricing takes into account a number of variables. Retailers set their prices based on their competitors, taxation, the logistical cost of delivery, the cost of their next load, conditions such as natural disasters and the type of gasoline required — just to name a few.

"There are two main factors in pricing. One is generally what the next load will cost. Retailers and wholesalers get price changes every day at the terminal level, which is where fuel originates in the state," LaRoy said. "So typically, a retailer will look at what they have to pay next and use that as a pricing start. Another is that most retailers do pricing surveys of what their competitors are charging daily and use those to price their own fuel."

On a national scale, Tennessee generally falls below the average gas price — about 35 cents below — along with much of the Southeast.

According to Las-



MTSU employee Chris Strickland fills up his truck at the Shell station on South Rutherford Boulevard. Photo by Emily West.

koski, the Gulf Coast region remains responsible for keeping the low gas prices in the Southeast, which holds about 50 percent of the nation's fuel refinery capacity and operates at the highest level of efficiency.

"It's the different conditions that occur in different parts of the country that cause price differentials," Laskoski said. ■

## CRIME BRIEFS

### TRAFFIC McFarland Health Services Nov. 26, 9:53 a.m.

Authorities discovered a vehicle that appeared to have been struck while parked on campus, and the other vehicle involved appeared to have left the scene. The owner was contacted and confirmed that the vehicle was not damaged when he parked it.

### ARREST Middle Tennessee Boulevard Nov. 26, 9:53 a.m.

Authorities arrested Richard Johnson Jr.,

28, for driving under the influence, violation of implied consent and simple possession of marijuana.

### ARREST Greenland Drive Nov. 27, 8:55 p.m.

Authorities arrested Ronald Nichols, 36, for public intoxication after walking into traffic on Greenland Drive.

### THEFT Ned McWherter Learning Resources Center Nov. 28, 10:43 a.m.

A complainant reported that piece of

construction/maintenance equipment had been stolen from the KUC Courtyard near the LRC.

### THEFT Todd Hall Nov. 28, 6:33 p.m.

A complainant reported that his iPad had been stolen.

### TRAFFIC Middle Tennessee Boulevard Nov. 29, 2:15 a.m.

Authorities arrested Jonathan Honig, 29, for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

# During holiday season, poverty is priority in community

By Nick Carey  
Contributing writer

Persisting economic struggles this holiday season have placed a greater emphasis on the work of local organizations dedicated to easing the worst effects of poverty.

The Rutherford County Salvation Army, Room at the Inn Day Shelter and the MTSU Food Pantry make up just a few.

According to U.S. Census Bureau findings, 12.7 percent of Rutherford County and 13.7 percent of Cannon County residents live under the federal poverty line, which the U.S. Department of Commerce set at an income of \$11,702 or below in 2011.

The Room at the Inn Day Shelter provides not only a shelter for those who have fallen on hard times but assists other local agencies in need. The average age of the temporary resident is 33, according to Director Christine Huddleston. Past residents range in age from 85 years to 5-days-old, and the shelter is home to any in dire straits.

Some of those affected do not have the proper documentation to get assistance from food banks or food stamps, so Huddleston and The Room at the Inn "try in any way to assist their needs," Huddleston said.

Along with the Rutherford County Salvation Army, Room at the Inn serves as the only other shelter housing for those in need within the Mur-

freestboro city limits.

The Salvation Army delivers a multitude of services for individuals in the Murfreesboro area. Along with operating its 34-bed shelter, the organization provides hot meals each night, hygiene kits, food baskets and a fully functioning church.

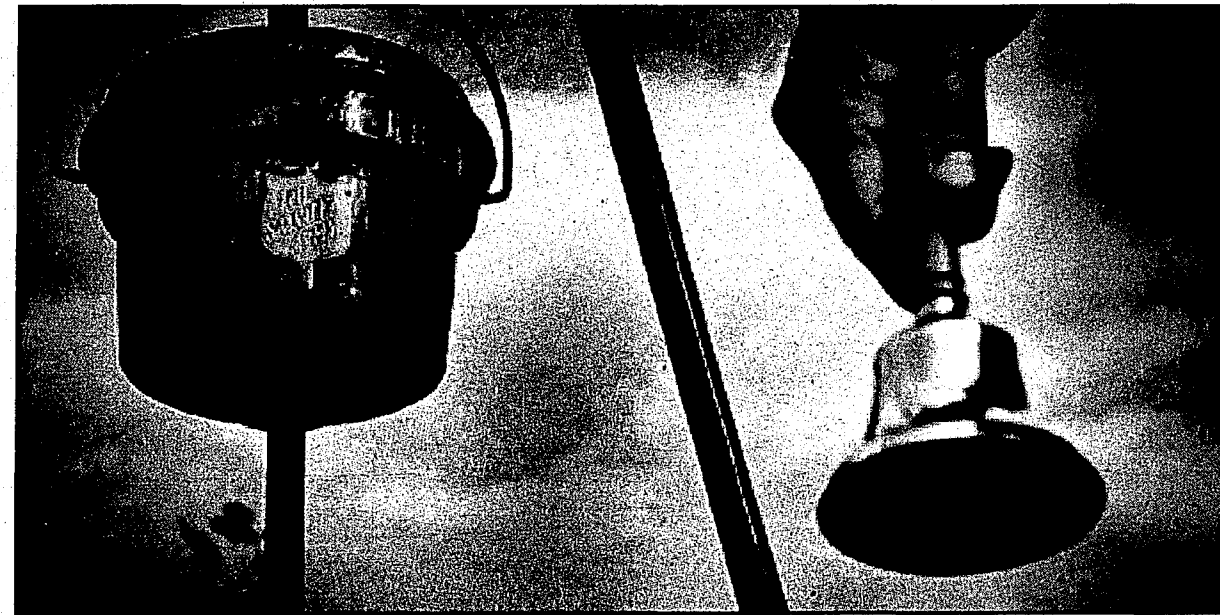
"We always have and need volunteers because of all the things we do — from volunteers serving our daily meals or going out and bell ringing and Angel Tree projects during the holidays," said Lt. Andy Seiler, one of two Corps Officers serving the Murfreesboro area. "We have great community involvement year round."

The Salvation Army's bell-ringing project serves as the most noticeable of its activities during the holiday season. Local, unemployed individuals work as bell-ringers, which is a short-term resolution to unemployment, Seiler said. The donations gathered through the event fuel the budget of the Rutherford County Salvation Army for the year.

College students represent another demographic who might experience lean holidays. The two-month-old MTSU Food Pantry serves only university students on and off campus.

Becca Seul, who serves as an academic adviser, said an increase in the number of homeless students in the last two years triggered the pantry's opening.

Approximately 70



Charities around Middle Tennessee are striving to spread holiday cheer to those in need. Photo courtesy of blog.salvationarmyusa.org

students have utilized the facility.

"We plan to continue to provide as much support as possible to our students," she said. "For those students with larger needs — food, clothing and shelter — we have community partners in place to help them to get back on their feet."

"Despite financial constraints at some food pantries nationwide, MTSU's continues to garner support from the campus and community," Seul said.

"We'll continue to do all we can as long as we can," Seul said. ■



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# Second Harvest serves Middle Tennessee's hunger needs

By Mary-Margaret Weatherford  
Staff writer

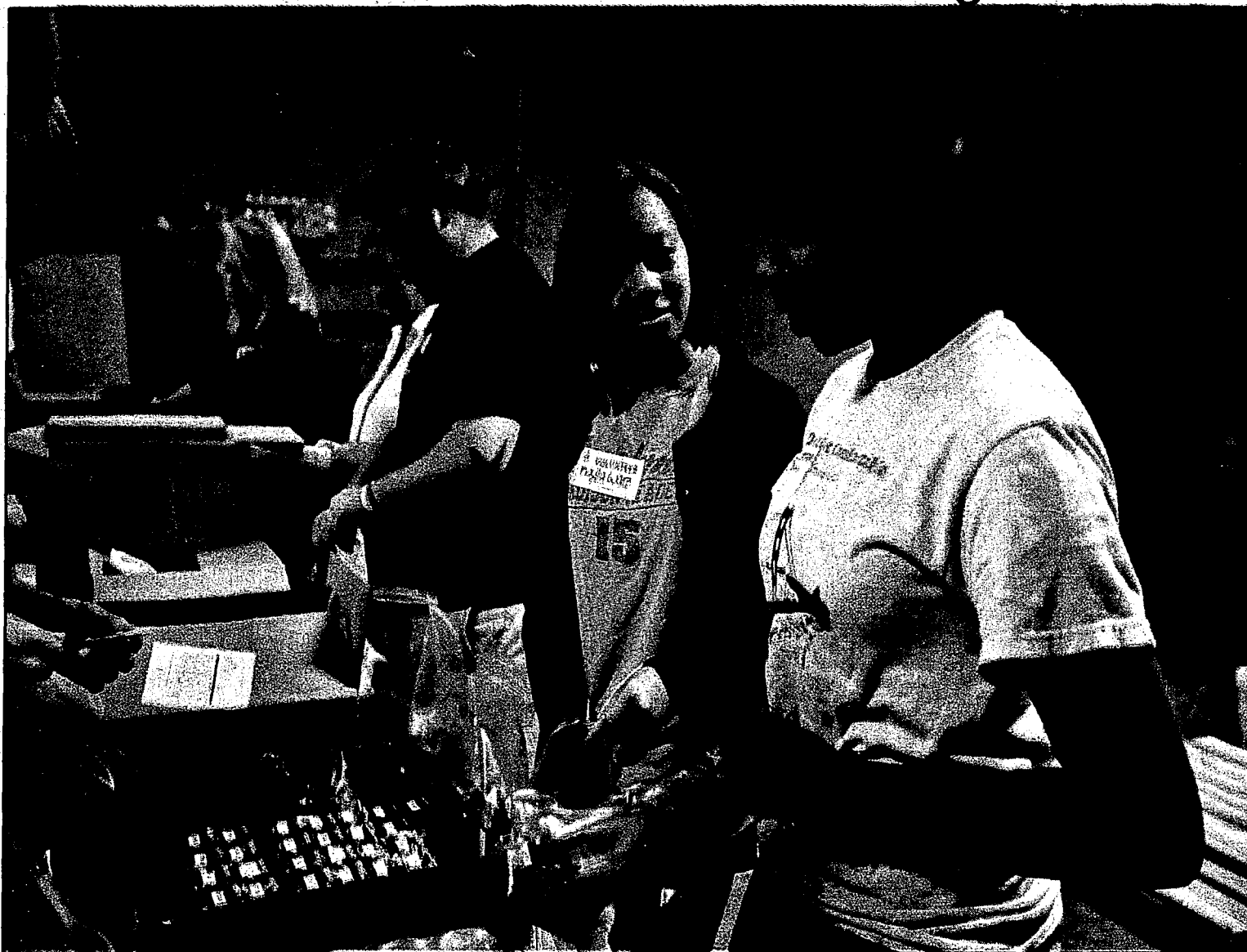
Most college students probably didn't add "food" to their holiday wishlist this year. Many don't question if they will have enough food for their next meal, tomorrow or next week. Most holiday meals will likely include a bevy of scrumptious eats, but not everyone has the privilege of anticipating such a spread in the coming weeks.

Almost 400,000 Middle Tennesseans don't know where their next meal is coming from. Since 1978, Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee in Nashville has provided nourishment to those in need. They now distribute food to 46 Middle Tennessee counties and partner with more than 400 agencies.

This holiday season, some have to choose between affording a roof over their heads and providing nourishment for their family. Tennessee winters show no mercy for those struggling with this decision.

Ally Parsons, the marketing manager of Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, has been with the organization for two years, and she strives for people to see the importance of nonprofits like Second Harvest.

"It's serving a basic need that everyone is entitled to, but not everyone can afford at this point," Parsons said. Second Harvest distributes food to soup kitchens, shelters, pantries



Volunteers sort food at Second Harvest in Nashville. Photo courtesy of Second Harvest Nashville.

and other organizations geared toward helping those in need.

"I think we all work together," Parsons said. "We're there to add another component to what [other nonprofits] are trying to do in the community as well, so it's a very mutually benefiting relationship."

Parsons came from a for-profit background and now sees the dif-

ference of being on the nonprofit side.

"You really have more of that understanding of why you do what you do every day," Parsons said. "What you're doing is truly making a difference."

Like Parson, all Second Harvest employees are encouraged by supervisors to participate in the organization's programs by working

hands-on in soup kitchens and at events.

"[We] stay in touch with what we're really here to do, which is feed hungry people," Parsons said.

Second Harvest often serves people who are finding themselves in need for the first time — those who have been laid off, underpaid or don't make enough for both food and rent ex-

penses. Parsons said it is critical for people to understand that those in need are not necessarily the stereotypical face of poverty.

"The face of hunger is just like your next-door neighbor," Parsons said emphatically. This issue — hungry people — is not something happening only in "other towns." It is happening here and in

all 46 counties Second Harvest serves.

"When you come and volunteer here, you're able to get hands-on experience and know that as you've sorted this food, it's actually going to go to a family in need," she added.

Volunteers at Second Harvest sort the food to make it easier when goods are distributed to

## FEATURES

other nonprofits. The organization can connect volunteers who can't make it to Nashville with other local partner agencies.

The holiday season is Second Harvest's busiest time of year, so they need all the help they can get – the need for their services has increased 18 percent since last year.

"We have to be in a position to meet that growing need," Parsons said.

This year, Second Harvest is encouraging Middle Tennesseans to participate in the "Feeding Hope Challenge," which aims to acquire 10 million meals before Dec. 31.

Food products can be taken directly to the Second Harvest Food Bank in Nashville or dropped off at a local Kroger. Parsons said non-perishable food items of any kind are helpful, but items like peanut butter and canned meats are most needed. Monetary donations are also welcomed, and for every dollar donated, four meals are provided.

Sai Pedireddi volunteers at the Martha O'Bryan Center in East Nashville, which is a recipient agency of Second Harvest's food. In his four months at the center, he has encountered both enlightening and startling experiences.

"It's made me look at the world as a totally different place," said Pedireddi, a former psychology major.

Pedireddi prepares and hands out emergency food boxes. He also helps with Meals on Wheels, which is geared

A volunteer loads up a truck with food to be distributed across Middle Tennessee. Photo courtesy of Second Harvest Nashville.

toward disabled and elderly people. Some people they serve are unable to even step out of their homes, he said.

The Martha O'Bryan Center aids a wide array of people, but they also encounter children living in government housing who are without family. Pedireddi said they not only provide them with food, but also

a place to play and role models to follow.

At times, people who have not eaten in weeks will show up at the doors of the center, said Pedireddi, just asking for any kind of food.

"This is the lowest that people can get without –" he paused briefly – "actually dying."

Through these experi-

ences, Pedireddi sees the importance and need for people to get involved in organizations like Second Harvest. He attended high school in the Nashville area, so he feels connected to the people.

"You give back to your community, basically, and help out people in need," Pedireddi said. "There are

some people who can't help themselves."

The Martha O'Bryan Center, as well as many other Second Harvest recipient agencies, will deliver and distribute Christmas meals this year.

"We can really do the most good with your dollars, and with your time and with your food," Parsons

said.

Not only during the holiday season, but year round, it is essential to be aware of hunger issues. Many people are without the basic necessity for life – nourishment. ■



# Santa Train lifts Appalachian spirits amidst economic downfall

By Emily West  
Community News  
editor

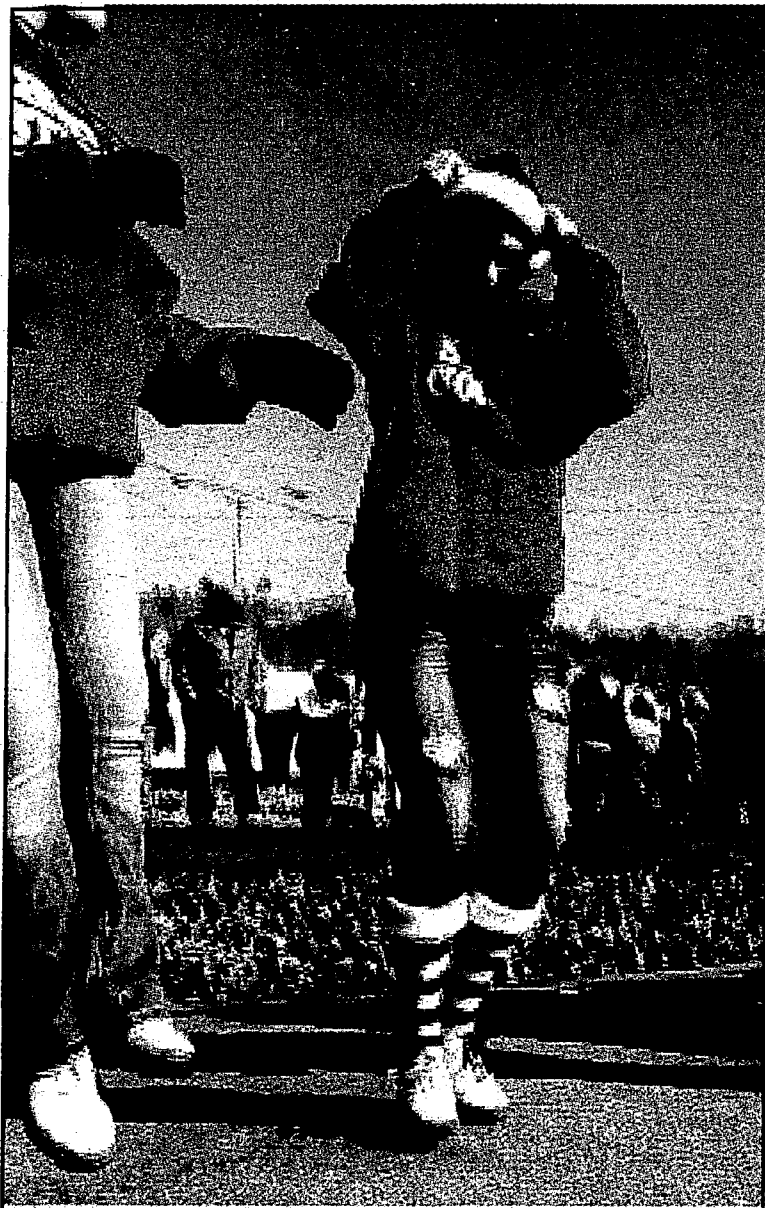
Brenda Grizzle stood at the tracks in her khaki jacket and straight leg jeans. The day was warming, but a thick chill hung in the air. Through her clear-framed glasses, the retired farmer turned part-time seamstress watched her grandchildren, River and Slade, kick plum-sized chunks of gravel across the CSX rails.

"Be careful now, River. Don't trip yourself up on the tracks," she cautioned in her warm tone.

Today is special in St. Paul, Va., a coal mining community in the center of the finger of Virginia that separates Kentucky and Tennessee. For 70 years, on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, a southbound train bearing Santa and tons of gifts has brought a slice of Christmas cheer to thousands in this section of Appalachia.

As Grizzle knows all too well, the Santa Train is more than an icon of the region; for many families, the gifts from the rotund man in red standing on the caboose help fill kids' stockings.

"This is the first time they ever got to see it," Grizzle said, referring to her grandsons, still playing in the gravel. River, a brown-haired 11-year-old who stands a few inches taller than his petite grandmother, and Slade, his 6-year-old younger sibling, gathered close to her in anticipation of the train's arrival.



(L) Center Stage Clogger Kassie "Crazy Legs" Large clogs with the rest of the group to Christmas music before the train arrived. (R) Brenda Grizzle watches her grandchildren, Slade and River, play in the gravel and on the railroad tracks. Photo by Matt Masters

"They live upstate, so they don't get down here in the school year. This year they had a day off, and they got to come down. I thought, 'We will go see that.' They need to see it," she said.

As more than 1,000 people gathered at the tracks, CSX workers strung yards and yards

of yellow caution tape in an attempt to keep the crowd from getting too close to the tracks. Yet, spectators stood elbow-to-elbow, inches away from the tracks as they waited to hear the locomotive's horn, a cue that Santa was near.

Before the train arrived, the throng grew by the hour. By 9 a.m., residents in the small

town of 974 began setting up booths to sell handmade items and crafts. St. Paul, founded in the early 20th century, has weathered many economic downturns but maintains a certain charm. With the exception of a few chain businesses, the economic life of St. Paul is its mom-and-pop businesses — a florist, a Christian

book store, a pharmacy and a hardware store. With a captive crowd before them, a group of local cloggers took to the stage — rather, a concrete loading dock next to the tracks. Donning red Santa hats, the Center Stage Cloggers clicked and clacked their way through "Santa Train" by Patty Loveless.

"We clog every year for the Santa Train," said Natasha Mullins, a clogger. "Everybody likes it. The kids like it. I think it's just everyone getting together, and its tradition. Everyone likes to come out and see who is on the train, but I think it's mainly tradition."

At 11:07 a.m., the Santa Train rolls into





## COVER STORY

town.

Eight passenger rail cars, navy blue and polished, came slowly into view, stopping when the caboose reached the platform. When Santa appeared, he and his helpers, including members of the best-selling country duo, Thompson Square, began chucking presents from the train as the crowd formed a Christmas mosh pit.

The gifts were large and small. Bags of Doritos were tossed. Oatmeal creme pies sailed like Frisbees. Scarves and knitted hats fell in colored showers. Hundreds of plush toy reindeer were sent flying toward the outstretched arms of kids sitting on their parents' shoulders.

With his white-gloved index finger, Santa pointed to select children to claim some of the bigger presents in his bag.

One of the children he pointed to was a 6-year-old girl. He crooked his finger to get her attention, and the girl's mother, holding her daughter on her hip, reached with a free hand to grab Santa's gift. Her prize was a hot pink and turquoise play makeup set, complete with a mirror and other accessories.

Many people filled trash bags full of Santa's loot, while one woman filled her blue flannel shirt until she, too, bulged like the man in red.

"I have seven grandbabies, and they all got something today," said Delmen Ramey, a longtime fan of the train. "I have been coming to the Santa Train for 30 or 40 years, and this is one



Residents from Wise County, Va., catch food among other gifts from the Food City truck after the Santa Train left St. Paul. Photo by Matt Masters.

day we set aside just for this."

The McGraw family from Norton, Va., is much like the Rameys. Stephanie witnessed her blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl get excited about the day. Not to mention, all the pieces of candy and stuffed animals she received. But presents are not the only element of Christmas that matters to her family.

"I know Christmas to a lot of people has slipped away, but to us it is still one of the major holidays," McGraw said. "It means a lot to me because of Jesus, and it has nothing to do with presents. My daughter loves presents,

of course, but we try to make sure that [religion] is part of her life, too."

In addition to presents from the train, residents were also given food and other treats from Food City and the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, two of the Santa Train's sponsors. CSX is also an official sponsor.

"A lot of these people are loyal and shop with us day in and day out," said Henry Maggard, Food City manager in Coeburn, Va. "This is just another way to show our appreciation. It's a little tough with the economy and uncertainty [and] a lot of people are out of work and unstable. I think it

brings them a sense of hope, and it's a tradition. They can count on it being here."

Grizzle understands struggle. Her daughter works two jobs at O'Reilly Auto Parts and Hardee's, taking the role of the main provider of the family because her husband has been out of work for more than five years.

"I asked the bigger grandchild what he wanted for Christmas, and he didn't say anything," Grizzle said. "I told him, 'I know what you want, and how about if I help Momma with it?' He said, 'Granny that would be great.' He know (sic)

they couldn't afford it." However, the Grizzles aren't alone in their struggle. Because of the downturn in coal mining, this area of southwest Virginia continues to experience an unemployment crisis.

Freddie Solce, a retired law enforcement officer, stood in his leather hat and denim, watching the people around him. He said he sees how the region has been affected by the lack of a thriving economy.

"They have shut down so many mines, and so many people are out of work," Solce said. "It's the worst thing they could have done. If it continues

on, it will cripple this part of the world. There won't be anything left of this part of the world. Southwest Virginia just won't be anything without the coal mines."

But on this day, the economy is forgotten, for a while, as the crowd's spirit is refreshed by a celebration at the train tracks. All too soon, the locomotive sounds its horn, and the train cars slowly chug out of town, as Santa waves goodbye.

Until he returns next year.

## RANTS AND RAVES

**Wednesday, Dec. 5th**

The Wooten Brothers  
3rd and Lindsley Bar  
and Grill  
818 3rd Ave. S.,  
Nashville  
9:30 p.m.  
Admission: \$5



It would be a grave disservice to you to not let you know every time The Wooten Brothers are playing. It is not a rare occurrence, but it's still a treat. Victor Wooten is a name surely most of you are familiar with. His virtuoso bass playing has earned him a spot

with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, and he has several albums with that band and several albums of his own. Victor and his four brothers form the Wooten Brothers Band. Regi, one of the brothers, taught Victor how to play bass at the ripe young age of two. They're all ridicu-

lously talented, and five bucks gets you in. Grab a burger and a beer (if you're 21) while you're at it. Food from the grill is actually pretty good.

**Thursday, Dec. 6th**

Emmylou Harris, Ashley  
Cleaveland, Kennedy/  
Rose  
Bluebird Café  
4104 Hillsboro Pike,  
Nashville  
6 p.m.  
Admission: \$20



The Bluebird Café is one of those places gaining nationwide notoriety because of our hometown show, "Nashville." It's no secret to those who have been in Nashville long that the Bluebird Café is the place to be heard if you are a singer-songwriter of high

caliber. Emmylou Harris is no doubt an exceptional singer-songwriter. Extremely accomplished, Harris has worked alongside the likes of The Band, Ryan Adams, Bob Dylan and Neil Young, just to name a few. She hails from Alabama and has that Southern charm

and authentic vocal style to prove it. She worked with T-Bone Burnett to record the sound track to "O Brother, Where Art Thou," along with other greats. Oh yeah, she's won 12 Grammys over the course of her career, and she's still going.

**Thursday, Dec. 6th**

Kenny G Holiday Show  
Schermmerhorn  
Symphony Center  
1 Symphony Place,  
Nashville  
7 p.m.  
Admission: \$49-\$109



This is it guys. This is the show you've been waiting all year for. Get ready for the hot brass, the curly cues, and the flowy silk button downs. It's time for the Kenny G Holiday Show. Relive the past. Relive the '80s. Relive your childhood, when your parents

thought smooth, holiday jazz sax would last for years to come. The trend may not last for years, but the passion it stirs up in folks 40 and older might. So if you visit home this Christmas and want to relive this magical night, make sure your parents aren't

in the house when you play it or else the seductive sounds of Kenny G's magical sax will inevitably draw them together.

**Friday, Dec. 7th**

Kink Ador w/ the Fu-  
ture, Schools & Hotel  
War  
Exit/In  
2208 Elliston Place,  
Nashville  
9 p.m.  
Admission: \$10  
18+



It's a rock show. Not sure how much hair you'll see in the crowd, but odds are good there will be plenty of it on stage. There are four acts at this show, and all of them have unique qualities that should make it a fast-paced, perpetually interesting show. The

headliner for the night, Kink Ador, is fronted by Sharon Koltick, a girl with raw, spirited vocal ability, backed by guitarist Nick Hamilton and drummer Pearce Harrison. The three-piece rock ensemble has an album out now called *The Shape of Life*. A four-piece outfit

hailing from Nashville, the Future is sure to have great things in store, but really, who knows what the Future holds? Schools and Hotel War are a hard-hitting rock group as well. If you want to check out some new music, this is your show.

**Friday, Dec. 7th**

First Friday Art Scene  
Downtown Franklin  
6-9 p.m.  
Admission: Free



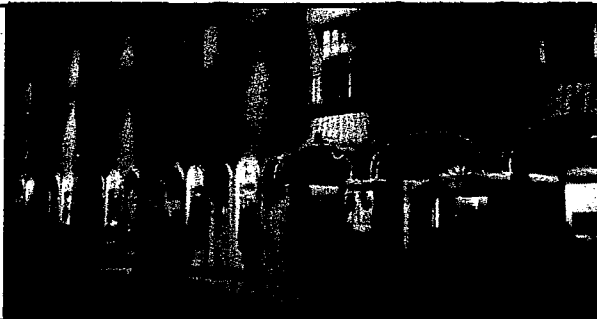
Art is a great gift to give. And receive. And produce. Some people are good at it; others, not so much. It would be time well spent to head over to downtown Franklin for an art crawl that features galleries from some people who are very good at it. In fact, the art scene

will be featuring more than 30 galleries from artists from all over the area. This art crawl is just like the one that happens in Nashville at the Arcade, so most galleries will have complimentary adult beverages and hors d'oeuvres. It's free to explore historic downtown

Franklin and browse the art galleries, but there will be a \$5 trolley to escort your tipsy tail between the exhibits. But that's confusing, because can you really appreciate art if you can't walk 10 yards?

## RANTS AND RAVES

**Friday, Dec. 7th**  
 The Room  
 Belcourt Theater  
 2102 Belcourt Ave.,  
 Nashville  
 Midnight  
 Admission: \$7.25 w/  
 student ID  
 Rated R, 18+



This was going to be a post for the opening night of "A Royal Affair," but on the same night, the movie "The Room" is going to be shown for one of two nights. It would make your life a little bit better to log onto the Belcourt's website and watching the trailer for

this movie. The reason they are showing it at the Belcourt is because of how terrible the movie is. Literally everything from the plot, to the acting, to the music revolting. It's probably the worst trailer ever made, which would lead one to believe that it might just be the worst

movie ever made ... in the best way possible.

**Saturday, Dec. 8th**  
 Music in the Vines: 9  
 Volt Romeo  
 Arrington Vineyards  
 6211 Patton Road,  
 Arrington  
 3-7 p.m.  
 Admission: Free



During the month of December, Arrington Vineyards is hosting a series of Saturday events called Music in the Vines. Each Saturday, they will have a band playing on the premises. It's not going to be hard-hitting rock or post-hardcore screamo, but it will be the

kind of music you would expect to listen to while enjoying a handcrafted bottle of wine and a beautiful sunset. The group playing this Saturday is 9 Volt Romeo, a jazzy, blues trio from Nashville. They're old and unsigned, and they have a MySpace page, but don't

let that deter you - it's a free show at Arrington. And don't forget, Arrington Vineyards has free wine tasting.

**Saturday, Dec. 8th**  
 Embellished  
 Instruments  
 Country Music Hall of  
 Fame  
 222 5th Ave. S.,  
 Nashville  
 12:30 p.m.  
 Admission: Free  
 5+



Warning: family content. It's not very often that we highlight a family event for Rants and Raves. But the reality is there are some of you who care for children or live with children, whether yours or a sibling. This could be a fun way to make ornaments or a gift

for this holiday season. The Country Music Hall of Fame is hosting a Family Program called Embellished Instruments. Here, anyone can get a wooden cutout of a banjo, guitar, mandolin or fiddle and decorate it. It's free to get in, and it's a family-friendly event.

Grab your kids or your kid brother or sister, and do something that can kill two birds with one stone - gifts and entertainment.

**Saturday, Dec. 8th**  
 Trey Songz with  
 special guests Miguel  
 and Elle Varner  
 Munciple Auditorium  
 417 4th Ave. N.,  
 Nashville  
 8 p.m.  
 Admission: \$49.50-  
 \$69.50  
 All ages



How come every R&B/hip-hop artist looks like they've been working out for years? Trey Songz is pretty ripped. But, ladies, that's not the only reason to check him out. He's a talented artist and has had huge success in the hip-hop scene. His latest album,

*Chapter V*, was released earlier this year and was received with generally positive reviews and debuted at No. 1 on U.S. Billboard 200. Songz has a documentary out, "Trey Songz: My Moment," detailing his time on the road with mega-star Jay-Z. If you're a mega-fan

of Trey Songz, there's a ticket option for The Ultimate Meet and Greet. It gets you on one of the first 10 rows for the show and a backstage pass to meet Songz himself as well as some other sweet surprises.

**Sunday, Dec. 9th**  
 Nashville's Nutcracker  
 Andrew Jackson Hall  
 505 Deaderick Street,  
 Nashville  
 2 p.m.  
 Admission: \$35-85  
 All ages



It is the holiday season and Christmas is upon us. The Nutcracker is one of those quintessential ballets that everyone needs to go to at least once in a lifetime during the Christmas season. Maybe this season is the one. You could take your family, or you could make

it a romantic date night with your significant other. The Dec. 9 show is the first one of the season and should be laden with energy and talent. It is at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center near downtown Nashville, so there are plenty of food options for a big lunch before

or a big dinner after. Or both. Or you might feel super inspired to dance and want to go line dancing. It's all seconds away from TPAC.

# Get creative with finger foods for the perfect holiday party

By Jessica Kryza  
Food critic

The most wonderful time of the year will be here before you know it. On top of making plans for travel and gift giving, you're probably anxiously waiting parties and gatherings that include any tasty goody you can imagine.

If you're throwing a holiday party or two, money can be a little tight.

The solution to this is simple: finger foods. That's right, celebrate Christmas a little differently this year.

Instead of serving a traditional feast — a roast, feast, tons of fattening sides and cookies and pies for days — have a stress-free holiday party with an assortment of tasty and inexpensive finger foods. Your guests, who will be contributing to the party, will thank you for it because they will more than likely be on a tight budget as well. This will allow everyone to eat and socialize at the same time, and it will keep you out of the kitchen so you can enjoy your company while eating — no utensils required.

## Appetizers:

**Cheese tree** — Cut up different kinds of block cheese into cubes and place them on a large platter in the shape of a tree. Feel free to be creative and include different vegetables to add color.

**Triscuit Bruschetta** — Put a twist on a classic by mixing up chopped



Finger foods decorated with peppermint are festive on any holiday table. Photo courtesy of trialx.org.

tomatoes, green onions, basil, garlic, Italian dressing and Parmesan cheese and spooning it onto Triscuits. If you want to take a shortcut, then buy prepared bruschetta if you can find it. About a tablespoon should be plenty for each cracker.

**Ham roll-ups** — These little bites are simple and very cheap. Choose your favorite deli ham, smear cream cheese on top, and place a green onion in the middle lengthwise. Roll it up and cut it in to pieces. Secure with a toothpick.

**Stuffed olives** — All you need is a good qual-

ity brand of olives that are already stuffed with cheese, garlic, jalapeno, etc. Put a toothpick through each one and arrange on a nice dish or platter. World Market carries an assortment of stuffed olives that you may want to check out.

## Entrées:

**Turkey roll-ups** — Instead of making this crowd favorite with tortillas, roll your cheese and veggies with the turkey. Choose any desired vegetables, shredded cheese and spreads and wrap it all up with a slice of turkey. Try it with lettuce, cucumber, red pepper, honey

mustard and basil. Remember to cut your veggies lengthwise so that the turkey can wrap all of the ingredients up. Cut the rolls in half and secure with a toothpick. You should be able to make plenty with your entire pack of turkey.

**Pesto pizza** — Pesto is sometimes easier to buy than to make, and it doesn't hurt your wallet. Buy a jar of your favorite pesto, Pillsbury pie crust, tomatoes and Parmesan cheese. Bake a single roll of pie crust, top with pesto, tomato slices and sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top. Cut it into pizza slices. Two rolls of pie crust

come in each package, so you might want to go ahead and make both for your guests.

## Desserts:

**Santa brownies** — Don't be afraid to be corny during the holidays. These brownies are sure to make someone at your party smile a little. All you need is mini chocolate brownies, white icing and a strawberry to put on top of the brownie to look like Santa's hat.

**Fruit tree** — Same idea as the cheese tree but with fruit. Buy different kinds of fruit to add interest and color to

the platter. Also, New Year's resolutions will be coming up soon, so some of your guests might want to get a headstart on the track to becoming healthier.

**Doughnut snowmen** — This is super easy, and your guests will definitely love them. Buy a box of mini powdered donuts, place a piece of candy corn through the center, and pipe the eyes and mouths with black frosting. These treats would be a perfect ending to your party with a steaming pot of coffee to go with them. ■

# Get out of the house to celebrate the holidays this year

**By Amanda Gambill**  
Contributing writer

Rather than sit around eating fruitcake and listening to Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" on repeat, try a different approach to getting in the holiday spirit. Here are 10 different festivities you can enjoy:

## Christmas in the Village

Dec. 6 | 5-8 p.m. | FREE

Hillsboro Village is adding a cool edge to the Christmas season. During Christmas in the Village, artists and musicians will show their work as you enjoy carolers, Santa and his elves, the possibility to win a raffle and hot cider and cocoa. Throughout the village, businesses will also join in with discounts and additional festivities. Feeling bad about blowing off Study Day? You can also donate a toy for Toys for Tots at Fido.

## The 60th Annual Nashville Christmas Parade and Christmas Tree Lighting

Dec. 7 | Tree Lighting: 6:30 p.m.; Parade: 7 p.m. | FREE

Supporting soldiers, police officers, firefighters and public servants while also catching candy thrown to you — what could be better than that? Come see the mayor light the Christmas tree and stay for a wintery night full of fun and cheer.

## Holly Trolley

Dec. 6-22 | Trolley A: 6:30 p.m.; Trolley B: 8:30 p.m. | \$16

Do you miss the times when you would ride packed in your car with your parents and look at Christmas lights? The Holly Trolley is a close substitute, offering rides all December to "ooh and aww" at the lights in Franklin, Brentwood and Williamson counties. Buy your ticket fast — the seats are filling up like Santa's belly with cookies!

## Dickens of a Christmas

Dec. 8-9 | Saturday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday: noon-5 p.m. | FREE

Experience the way Christmas was 150 years ago with Dickens of a Christmas. An annual tradition in Historic Downtown Franklin, Dickens offers carriage rides, a holiday bazaar, Victorian foods and costumed characters. Caroling and a Christmas tree lighting will be on Sunday at 4:30. A \$1 donation is requested, but not required. So decide: Are you a Scrooge or a Tiny Tim?

## North Pole Express

Dec. 8 & Dec. 15 | 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. | \$32 for regular seats

A real life Polar Express, except instead of searching for Santa, he's sitting on the same train, and you can see beautiful country landscapes instead of mounds and mounds of snow. If you're looking



The Nashville Symphony can serve as a romantic holiday outing for Christmas couples. Photo courtesy of thecenterforperformingarts.org

for a way to escape after finals, this two-and-a-half-hour train ride is the place to zone out and soak up the holiday spirit.

## Holiday at Cheekwood

Nov. 23- Dec. 30 | Times vary | Prices vary

From reindeer and concerts, to photo ops with Santa and adult gingerbread decorating classes, Cheekwood has the ultimate Christmas package. If you're unsure of what festivities you want to partake in this holiday season, head out to the beautifully-decorated Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and choose from more than 15 activities.

## Carriage Rides at The Square

Every Friday through Dec. 21 | 5:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. | FREE

In almost every romantic, Christmas-themed movie, a moonlit carriage ride is featured. Instead of hailing one off the street and scrounging for cash to pay, come to The Square in Murfreesboro where free carriage rides are offered every Friday. Snuggle under a plaid blanket, maybe sneak some hot chocolate on board and enjoy the ride.

## A Nashville Symphony

Dec. 13 | 7 p.m. | \$44+

If you still have some money left over from all your holiday shopping, splurge a little on tickets to the Nashville Symphony. During its orchestra and chorus concert, audience mem-

bers will hear sleigh bells, famous carols and Christmas songs we all know and love. If you buy tickets to the symphony, you also get free tickets to the Frist Center. Great present idea, anyone?

## Gaylord Opryland

Anytime | Anytime | FREE

If you've already spent all your money this season, go down to the Opryland Hotel to check out the beautiful lights display. You don't even have to bundle up to enjoy the hotel's acres of decorations. If you do have money to spend or are in a bind for a Christmas gift, Opryland also offers multiple holiday packages to enhance the Christmas spirit.

## The Murfreesboro Salvation Army

Deadline for Angel Tree donations: Dec. 15

Christmas is about giving, and what better way to celebrate the holiday than by volunteering to ring a bell outside storefronts for red kettle donations? If you'd rather skip the cold, Angel Tree sign-ups are still on. Either way, you'll feel great after spreading your holiday cheer. ■

Check out [mtsusidelines.com](http://mtsusidelines.com) for links to these events.

# Holiday Playlist: Christmas classics to sync to your iTunes

By Kelsey Griffith  
Staff writer

It's the time of year for Christmas trees, icicle lights and gift giving. Although caroling is not as popular as it once was, the holiday songs have not been forgotten. This playlist of unforgettable Christmas classics will make even scrooges sing along.

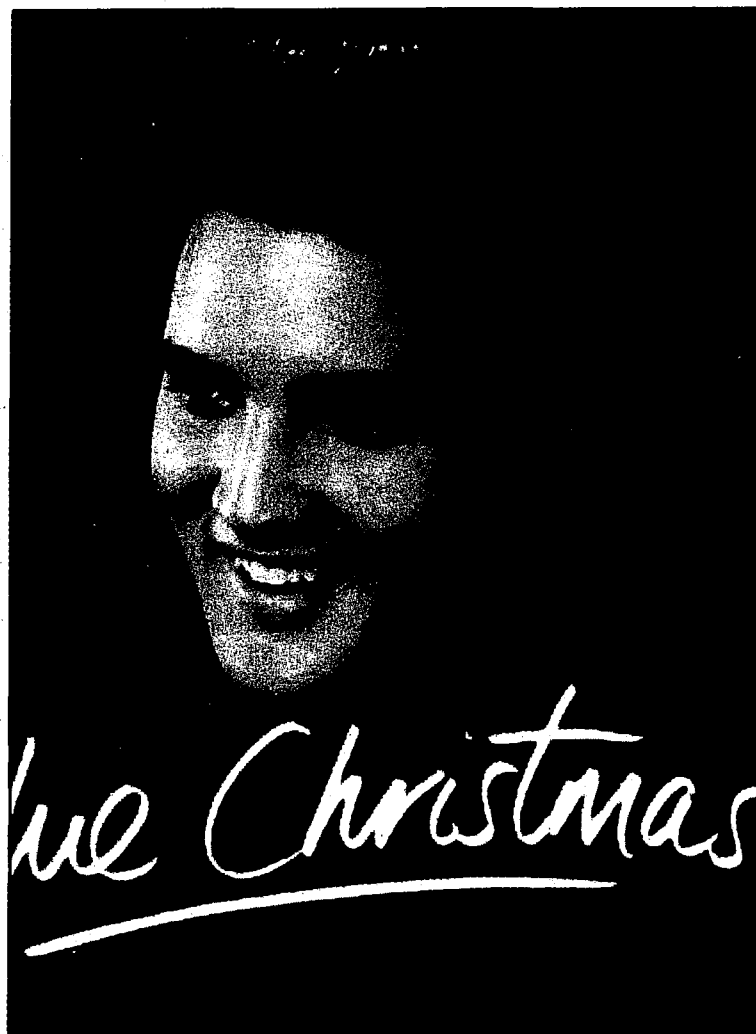
**1.** "Baby, It's Cold Outside" – Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Jordan (1949) This winter duet is a perfect balance between playful and romantic. The lyrics set the scene of snowy night with a couple inside a cozy home.

**2.** "Blue Christmas" – Elvis Presley (1957) The King sang this song the only way it should be sung – from a broken heart. It's slow and sad, and reminisces about his past love that left him lonely.

**3.** "All I Want for Christmas is You" – Mariah Carey (1994) Carey co-wrote and co-produced this sweet song. With heavy backup vocals, this upbeat pop hit describes the joy of having love, not gifts, during the holidays.

**4.** "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" – Brenda Lee (1958) Perfect for Christmas parties, this fun song celebrates Christmas the "new, old-fashioned way."

**5.** "Run, Rudolph, Run" – Chuck Berry (1958) Flawlessly used



Christmas classics will get any listener in the holiday spirit. Elvis (left) courtesy of bluechristmasdigitalz.org; Mariah Carey (right) courtesy of spotplanet.org.

in Home Alone during the airport running scene, this classic rock-and-roll song makes Rudolph a star.

**6.** "Feliz Navidad" – Jose Feliciano (1970) "Feliz Navidad" is a happy song that beautifully blends Latin and American music and language. Half the lyrics are in Spanish, the other half is English.

**7.** "The Chanukah Song" – Adam Sandler (1994) First performed on Saturday Night Live,

this hilarious song celebrates Hanukkah while cracking jokes about Jewish Americans.

**8.** "Jingle Bell Rock" – Bobby Helms (1957) "What a bright time, it's the right time to rock the night away," sings Helms as sleigh bells jingle to put you in the Christmas spirit.

**9.** "The Christmas Song" – Nat King Cole Trio (1946) "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" is the opening lyric to this tune that brings a

fireplace of comfort to your ears.

**10.** "Let it Snow" – Dean Martin (1959) This smooth song is a popular one to sing to a lover when the snowflakes are falling.

**11.** "Winter Wonderland" – The Andrews Sisters (1946) These three harmonizing sisters from the boogie-woogie era bring "walking in a winter wonderland" to life.

**12.** "Happy Holidays" – Bing Crosby (1942) "Happy Holidays" is a warm song that wishes happiness for Christmas and every holiday forward.

**13.** "You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch" – Thurl Ravenscroft (1966) You know this one from the Christmas classic, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Ravenscroft's bass voice is so recognizable, it will take you back to the film.

**14.** "Silent Night (Acapella)" – Boyz II Men (1993) Boyz II Men sing this song a capella and sound like a full choir. They bring heart and soul to the song originally composed in 1818.

**15.** "Santa Baby" – Eartha Kitt (1953) This flirty song is from a lady to her lover, "Santa," asking for yachts and convertibles for Christmas. ■



# More economic freedom will produce more prosperity

By Alex Harris  
Opinions editor

Due to the poor state of the economy, high unemployment numbers, even higher under-employment numbers and the decline in the financial status for many families, jobs and job creation are much politicized and discussed these days.

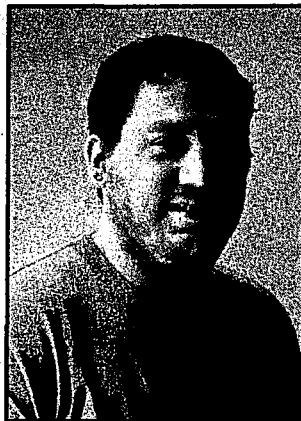
The argument is generally between whether entrepreneurs or consumers have more claim over "job-creation." The entrepreneurs' side claims that they create jobs because they provide the capital and take the risk to start a company, while the side of the consumers claim that, without their demand, the entrepreneurs would have no reason to create jobs.

Although the consumers are right that without their demand, the entrepreneur would have no need to produce anything, a source of income is necessary for consumers to have money to consume.

The capital of the entrepreneur, or capitalist, not only provides the means to produce goods but also the means to buy labor or "create jobs."

The entrepreneur's job is to interpret consumer demand and provide goods or services that are demanded and desired.

Sometimes entrepreneurs do this correctly, and they increase production, and there is economic growth producing more jobs. Sometimes, though, they do this incorrectly – they fail to anticipate



Alex Harris

demand, and they lose money and have to lay people off, thus losing jobs.

This is not to say that consumer spending does not have any effect on the economy. The higher the demand,

**“The argument is generally between whether entrepreneurs or consumers have more claim over ‘job creation.’”**

more is produced to meet that demand. With more produced, the prices drop lower, and more people can afford more goods, fulfilling demand further.

However, without someone taking the initial risk with his other capital to meet some interpreted or anticipated demand, there would be no new goods created to meet the demand. There would be a lack of economic growth, which would result in a lack of job growth.

That being said, it does not necessarily follow that solely en-

trepreneurs create jobs either. Or that job loss is ultimately bad, or even that "job creation" is, or should be, the goal.

Whenever a new technological innovation takes place in the economy, or a new product is introduced that creates a new demand, there is a general growth in production. This can also often lead to job loss in other industries as other goods and services become obsolete.

For example: the lightbulb vs. the candlestick; automobiles vs. the horse and buggy; and digital cameras vs. Kodak. Yet, even with the losses in those industries and jobs, would anyone argue that

we are not better off? That more people don't enjoy a higher standard of living?

In reality, many factors ultimately contribute to economic growth, and, therefore, to job growth. Factors such as education, population and abundance of natural resources, all ultimately affect the productivity of an economy.

But the factor that seems as if it affects economic productivity the most is that of economic freedom – the freedom for individuals to engage in trade with

each other.

Countries with economic policies promoting free trade between individuals with minimal restrictions from government agents have been consistently improving over the years. Whereas in the United States, as we continue to lose economic freedom, we see our economy suffer.

The U.S. has significantly dropped on the economic freedom scale.

According to a recent CATO Institute report on world economic freedom, the U.S. has dropped from being in third place before 2000, to eighth in 2005, and now to eighteenth in 2012. The study's

authors suggest growth of government spending and regulations, weakening of the rule of law and property rights, the war on terror and the growth of crony capitalism as reasons for the decline.

The annual cost of regulations, which by nature restrict market freedom, increased by \$38 billion under Obama by mid-fiscal year 2011. And under Bush (no friend of free markets himself) annual costs grew by \$60 billion over his presidency. The effect of this regulatory state, with

its agencies headed by former industry executives and its regulations written by lobbyists, is to limit competition to the established entities in the market.

Meanwhile, China enjoys a steady incline to more prosperity, as it has loosened its grip on its economy and allowed its citizens more economic freedom.

Though not yet ideally free, they are moving in the right direction, and their citizens are seeing a steady increase in their standard of living.

Additionally, Somalia, though also not in an ideal situation, has enjoyed more prosperity in the years since the dissolution of their state. This is due to an internally well-regarded rule of law.

Their telecommunications industry has also boomed, with the result that a cell phone call can be made from anywhere within the nation, according to an article by Benjamin Powell, who also co-authored a study on Somalia for

the Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization.

Instead of focusing solely on "job creation" our goal should be to have a healthy economy with a higher standard of living for all, which can be achieved through a freer economy, stronger private property rights protected by a simple and well-respected rule of law.

Full employment is easy to attain – the unemployed could dig ditches and refill them if that was the end goal.

But would the jobs created be productive and worthwhile? It would be better to work toward being able to afford a higher standard of living across the board with lower employment and more leisure time.

A return to greater economic freedom will do more to create satisfactory, productive jobs and a prosperous economy than any economic stimulus or job creation policy undertaken by the government. ■



Countdown to finals. Cartoon by Matt Masters.

## SPORTS

# Teammates, family and NFL dreams fuel McLendon on the gridiron

By Sam Brown  
Staff writer

After a dismal 2-10 season last year, the Blue Raiders' football team finished 8-4 overall and 6-2 in Sun Belt play in 2012, thanks to improvement in almost every defensive category and the efforts of senior defensive end Omar McLendon.

Senior defensive end Omar McLendon is a major reason why. A Georgia native, McLendon came to Middle Tennessee in 2009 and saw action in 11 games as a freshman. This year, he anchors a defensive line that ranks in the top 50 in rushing yards allowed per game and has been a focal point in the Blue Raiders' ability to stop the run.

McLendon wasn't always the football player he is now. In fact, football took a backseat to basketball for Omar until his junior year of high school.

"My junior year, I was still thinking about basketball, and people started asking me if I was thinking about playing [college] football because they were thinking I was pretty good," McLendon said. "After that, my junior year I went to a Nike combine, and I did pretty well with that, so I said, 'Maybe I should try this football thing out.'"

McLendon was a part of the 2009 team that won the New Orleans Bowl, as well as the 2010 team that fell short in the GoDaddy.com Bowl. Of all his memo-

orable games at MT, Omar considers this year's dominant victory over Georgia Tech to be one of the best.

"Georgia Tech, this year, that game was amazing for me because I'm from Georgia, so I'm back home. Getting to beat an ACC team that no one thought we would beat, and we didn't win by just three points. We dominated them the whole game," McLendon said. "Defense played outstanding. Offense played great. I got to see one of my brothers [Benny Cunningham] run the ball for over 200 yards on an ACC defense that they never would have thought that we would have got that many yards on."

McLendon is big on family, of which he has two; one that shares his bloodline, and one that he bleeds with. He credits his mom, dad and brother for his success, focus and motivation off the field, but says that on the field, his brothers motivate him.

"I would say my motivation is my teammates — to see guys going out and giving their all for each other. There's not a stronger bond than seeing your teammates bleed with you and sweat with you and to see the highs and the lows of each other. Most people don't get to see a guy cry because he won't let you see him in his lowest moments because he'll go somewhere. But when you're playing with these guys, you've been through it all, your brother doesn't mind crying on your

shoulder or being there for him when he needs you," McLendon said.

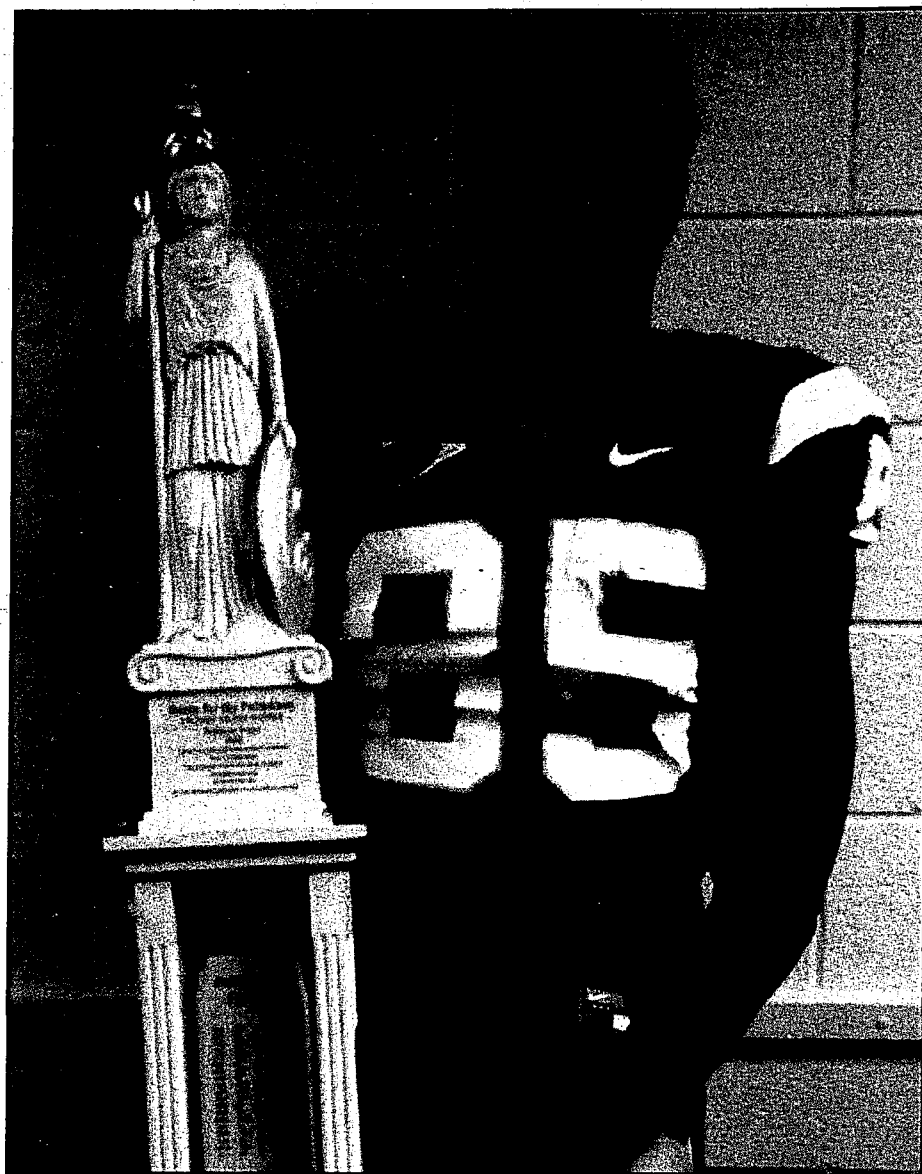
McLendon said the Blue Raider team consists of a father, a bunch of brothers and some uncles, all of who are always willing to talk and offer support. The father of the team, Head Coach Rick Stockstill, said that Omar's attitude and willingness to work hard every day is what makes him such an outstanding player.

"He's a great example of doing things the right way, both on and off the field," Stockstill said of his star defensive end. "He's a tremendous young man, as well as a tremendous football player. He comes to work every day, and he competes at a high level. No matter what drill we're doing or if it's fourth down in a game, he's going to compete and give you his best effort."

McLendon's passion and commitment carry over to his off the field activities as well. His leadership, work ethic and overall good attitude are the things Stockstill says he will miss when McLendon moves on.

"It goes back to coming to work every day. He's passionate about what he does, he loves the game of football, he loves this school, he loves his team, and I guess I'm going to miss him more just as a person, as a man, as much as I am as a player," Stockstill said.

Hopefully for McLendon, as well as his supporters at MT and beyond, his foot-



Senior Omar McLendon stands with the The Palladium, the trophy awarded to the winner of Middle Tennessee versus Troy. Photo by Sam Brown.

ball career will not end with the Blue Raiders. McLendon plans to spend the offseason this year preparing for the NFL.

"That's always been my goal," McLendon said. "That's something that I've always looked forward to, and I've seen from other players going on to play. All I need is an opportunity, and I believe I'll take advantage of them."

It won't be easy, though; going to the NFL is a testament to McLendon's work ethic and preparation.

"You have to train after the season is over with, and even during the season. Jason Spray, our strength coach, is always harping on us about taking care of your body. I'm a senior, but he's on all of us about taking care of our bodies because you nev-

er know, injuries come, and if you're healthy, you're going to be less susceptible to getting injured," McLendon said.

McLendon has contributed more than just tackles, sacks and a great attitude in his four years as a Blue Raider, and whoever takes his spot on the roster will have some big shoes to fill—literally and figuratively. ■