

CAMPUS MOURNS

Tina Stewart fatally stabbed Wednesday night

By AMANDA HAGGARD
Associate News Editor

The MTSU community awoke today reeling from shock, experiencing a deep sense of loss and asking many questions about last night's stabbing death of Lady Raider basketball player, Clantina

"Tina" Stewart. "It's sad that something like this had to happen for MTSU to come together," said Shanita Mclaurin, a junior majoring in elementary education. "We came to college to learn - to graduate, not to be killed."

Stewart, a 21-year-old sophomore majoring in

exercise science from Memphis, was found in her apartment at Raider's Crossing by police who were tipped off by an anonymous caller.

She was taken to Middle Tennessee Medical Center where she was pronounced

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READERS' REACTIONS

"My heart goes out to her family, her friends, her teammates, and her school. We will miss you."
- Dianna Melton

"Our thoughts and prayers go out tonight to the friends and family of MTSU basketball player Tina Stewart and to the entire MTSU community."
- Belmont University

"Why do some people think things can only be settled with violence? A special young lady is dead and for what?"
- Kathy Davis



Photo and page design by Andy Harper, design manager. More than 200 mourners gather Wednesday outside of the Keathley University Center to honor Lady Raider Tina Stewart, who was murdered earlier that evening.

State unions to hold rally

By ALEX HARRIS
Staff Writer

State lawmakers are busy pushing legislation that some view as anti-union, but the sponsors behind the legislation insist that they have nothing against the unions.

What started as a way to balance the budget in Wisconsin has spread to other states as they begin to follow the lead of Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin.

"I'm not anti-union," said Ohio Gov. John Kasich to *The Columbus Dispatch*.

Kasich said he thinks that unions are an important

part of the American fabric.

"What we're doing here is basically to start sticking up for taxpayers and private-sector workers who have made enormous sacrifices over the last decade," Kasich said.

Walker told "FOX News Sunday" that he wants people to have the choice to join the union, rather than being forced to join and pay dues just to get a good paying job.

"People can continue to vote to certify that union, and they can continue to voluntarily have those union dues and write the



Photo courtesy of Chip Curley. Protesters stage a rally Feb. 26 at the state Capitol to urge lawmakers from passing "anti-union" bills.

check out and give it to the union to make their case, but they shouldn't be forced to be a part of this if they don't want to," Walker said.

Tennessee also faces a bill that would repeal the 1978 law that gave teachers the right to bargain collectively, and United Campus

Workers is co-sponsoring a rally to protest this bill on March 15 at the state Capitol.

This will be one of many rallies that have been held nationwide over the past couple of weeks since the

UNION, PAGE 4

Valentine's Day shooter appears in county court

By AMANDA HAGGARD
Associate News Editor

The trial date for the student arrested on Feb. 14 following the shooting outside of the Keathley University Center was deferred until April 20 by a Rutherford County judge yesterday.

The defendant, Justin Macklin, 20, was arrested on suspicion of shooting a former student in the thumb with a .32 caliber handgun.

Macklin bailed out of jail on an \$18,500 bond the morning after being detained around 1 p.m. outside of the Business and Aerospace Building.

The university was placed on lockdown for about 45 minutes while the Murfreesboro Police Department searched for Macklin.

After police officers pursued Macklin into the BAS and took him into custody, law enforcement officials said they later found two small bags of marijuana, a T-shirt and a gun inside one of the building's classrooms.

The alleged victim, Austin Morrow, was not present at the hearing when General Sessions Judge Ben Hall McFarlin called for Macklin and his attorney.

Macklin is facing felony charges for possession of a firearm on campus grounds, a aggravated assault, reckless

endangerment and could also face additional charges for possession of marijuana.

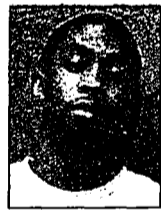
The suspect's attorney, Kirk Catron, was overheard telling Macklin that he believed they were in good shape.

Catron made one statement about the delayed case.

"Nothing really happened here today," Catron said.

Catron could not be reached for further comment.

Both Macklin and Morrow are banned from campus until the investigation and judicial process are finished, according to MTSU officials.



Macklin

Poll reveals mixed feelings on tenure

By TODD BARNES
News Editor

A narrow majority of Tennesseans said teacher unions should not be eliminated, while President Barack Obama backs unions, he may have a difficult campaign for his second term, according to an MTSU poll.

MTSU finished conducting a statewide poll concerning politics,

religion, education and gun control among other issues that is designed to give Tennesseans a true perspective of reality.

"The democratic value of giving the people of the state a voice, as well as their political, social, business leaders, and also providing the news media with what we believe to be a very accurate reflection of what the people in the state think - I think are the two

primary values that our poll brings," Reineke said.

The two-week poll consisted of 589 Tennesseans chosen randomly through a random digit-dialing system and consisted of up to 100 questions about different topics.

The topics picked for poll questions came from national and state issues that are discussed heavily throughout the media, said Jason Reineke, the

poll's associate director and journalism professor.

"Through that random selection and getting a large enough sample, we can say with a high degree of confidence that the percentages we obtain are pretty close to what they are in the population," Reineke said.

Recently, Reineke and Ken Blake, the poll's

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IN TODAY'S ISSUE



Find out what students are planning to do for spring break.

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EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE



View video coverage of Wednesday's on-campus candlelight vigil in memory of Tina Stewart.

NEWS

WEATHER



THURSDAY
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NATIONAL AP NEWS

Replacement execution drug ample, but has issues

ATLANTA (AP) – The drug that states are increasingly counting on to replace a sedative used in executions shares several drawbacks with the one that's no longer readily available. But there's one key difference: Experts say there's plenty of the replacement—a drug called pentobarbital. And it's not likely the lone manufacturer will touch off a supply crisis by abruptly halting production. That's what happened when Hospira Inc. said in January it would no longer make sodium thiopental. The move sent most of the nation's 35 death penalty states scrambling for an alternative. Lundbeck Inc. said there is no pentobarbital shortage in sight, and an independent firm showed the drug's sales have steadily increased since 2005.

Federal Reserve report says U.S. economy expanding

WASHINGTON (AP) – The U.S. economy expanded in January and early February in all parts of the country, but businesses are under pressure to raise their prices. A Federal Reserve survey shows that all 12 of the Fed's regions reported growth at a "modest to moderate pace," though growth in the Chicago region was slower than at the end of last year. Retail sales picked up in all regions, except for Richmond and Atlanta. Factory activity rose in all districts except St. Louis. The survey hints at some inflationary concerns. Costs are rising for manufacturers and retailers in most areas. Manufacturers in many districts said they are increasingly able to pass on those costs to customers. Retailers in some districts said they have or soon will raise prices.

Former bank executive pleads guilty to fraud

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) – A former executive at Alabama-based Colonial Bank has pleaded guilty to a nearly billion-dollar fraud conspiracy that contributed to the bank's collapse. Fifty-year-old Catherine Kissick of Orlando, Fla., entered the plea Wednesday in federal court in Alexandria. Colonial Bank's 2009 collapse was the sixth largest in U.S. history. Kissick admitted that she conspired with executives at mortgage lender Taylor, Bean & Whitaker in Ocala, Fla., to buy hundreds of millions of dollars in worthless mortgages from Taylor Bean. A Taylor Bean executive pleaded guilty to similar charges last week.

LOCAL AP NEWS

State border marker replaced

CHATTANOOGA (AP) – A new marker has been erected where Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama meet, just south of the Tennessee River. The previous cornerstone, which had been there for a century, disappeared in 2007. It occurred as some were arguing that Georgia should have access to the Tennessee River and would have if the line had been properly drawn in 1826. A tri-state survey team placed the new marker on Tuesday, according to the Chattanooga Times Free Press. Jim Hunt, chief of survey operations for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said the marker helps surveyors determine boundaries. If the state line had been designated along the 35th parallel, it would be in the main channel of the river. It is, instead, about a mile south of it.

Federal funding cuts unlikely to affect Planned Parenthood

NASHVILLE (AP) – A Planned Parenthood official in Tennessee says the organization will continue if it loses federal funding. Jeff Teague, the president of Planned Parenthood of Middle and East Tennessee, told The Tennessean losing federal grants would force what he called hard choices, but would not cause the group to close its doors. About 15 percent of Planned Parenthood's funding comes from government grants. An amendment to a spending bill before the U.S. Senate would end federal Title X grants to the group. Planned Parenthood provides abortions, but it also offers a number of other health services that include birth control, annual health examinations, and the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. By law, federal money can't be used for abortion services.

Marine's pregnant widow says he died American hero

COLUMBIA (AP) – The pregnant widow of a Columbia Marine who died in Afghanistan says he died a hero. Twenty-two-year-old Crissie Carpenter buried her husband, Lance Cpl. Andrew Carpenter, on Monday. Crissie Carpenter, who is due to give birth to her son Landon March 28, told The Daily Herald she knows exactly what she will tell her son about his father: "He was a hero." The 27-year-old Carpenter was shot in the neck while on patrol in the Helmand province, Afghanistan. He died five days later after doctors declared him brain dead and family members decided to take him off life support. Crissie Carpenter said when Landon gets older, he'll see what a great man his father was. "Andy's not only mine and Landon's hero, but he's everybody's," she said.

Goodwill to host Wedding Gala

STAFF REPORT
Brides will have the chance to scour the racks for discounted designer wedding gowns March 19 as part of the second annual Wedding Gala, a fundraising event sponsored by Goodwill Industries. From 6 a.m. until 9 a.m., the Goodwill in Rivergate will offer hundreds of brand-name gowns – all priced between \$99 and \$399 – as well as tuxedos donated by Street Tuxedo. "Most of the bridal salons throughout Middle and West Tennessee have generously donated dresses for this year's event," said Suzanne Kay-Pittman, manager of public relations and communities for Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee. "This event is great for those who are planning a wedding or have a formal on the calendar," Kay-Pittman said. Last year, more than 500 people attended the event. To accommodate the crowd this year, Goodwill partnered with the newly renovated Gaylord Opryland Resort to create a "Look Book" to showcase some of the gowns that will be available on sale. "The Wedding Gala is a fun event and an opportunity for brides with varying budgets to find the gown of their dreams for a fraction of the cost," Kay-Pittman said. "We're excited to be able to help be a small part of the most important day for many of our guests."



THROUGH THE SIDELINES LENS

Photo by Amanda Haggard, associate news editor
Alpha Chi Omega Sorority raised more than \$2,300 at a benefit concert Feb. 28 for one of its members, Aimee Bond. Bond was in a near fatal car accident in December and lost her home and possessions in a fire only weeks later. After learning how to walk and tie her shoes again during the past few months, she said she remains hopeful for the future.

SGA homecoming director reappointed

By CALLAHAN DYLAN MILLER
Contributing Writer
The Student Government Association's homecoming selection committee re-elected Donald Abels as homecoming director in order to prepare for MTSU's centennial festivities. The selection committee, consisted of students, faculty and alumni, chose Abels in late February. "Everyone else had been involved [in the] SGA, but Donald stood out from the rest because he had already been through homecoming last year and had the most experience and very good ideas that appealed to the committee," SGA President Brandon Batts said. "He did a great job, probably the most fun I had at homecoming in my four years." Abels, a junior majoring in organizational communications, said he is working hard to assure that the 2011 homecoming festivities have a mixture of tradition and special activities to mark the momentous occasion. Students can expect to see the traditional activities such as Fight Song, banner competition, Chili Cook-off and parade as usual, Abels said, adding he would like to add some special activities

to commemorate the centennial and make this homecoming really special. Homecoming is slated for Oct. 1, which is earlier than in years past, but with advance notice from President Sidney McPhee this should give the committee more time to start preparing Batts said. "What I'm trying to do is get people gathered up to be a part of the homecoming committee. In the meantime I am also sitting in on the University Centennial Events Committee," Abels said. The committee is designed to brainstorm and plan events revolving around the 100-year anniversary of MTSU. The centennial is a yearlong event, and homecoming is just a small portion of how the university plans to commemorate the milestone, Abels said. The idea of holding an event once a month for the entire year, and hosting homecoming activities for a whole month has been brought up by the committee, Batts said. The homecoming committee members will be selected, and once the committee itself has formed, they will be working throughout the spring semester into the summer. Abels said

he is really interested in what ideas the students have and that it is great to hear creative thoughts from the campus community. SGA normally picks the theme. However, one has not yet been selected. They are open to contributions from students for theme ideas as well, Abels said. "It's good that I've done this before considering that it is the centennial because there will be a lot more expected. I am much more prepared because I have seen it, and I have done it," Abels said. Students can now pick up applications to be a part of the homecoming committee, either online at the SGA website or in the Keathley University Center. The committee will be selected soon and students will begin working within the next few weeks. "I am really excited about it, and I wouldn't have done it if I didn't love MTSU, and it's an honor to be able to serve a second term and it being the centennial makes it that much more special," Abels said. He is still in the process of getting dates and times in order, but he said that he encourages those interested for homecoming committee to apply in the SGA office.

LOCAL EVENTS CRIME BRIEFS

ON CAMPUS

Softball vs. Rutgers March 12, 4 p.m. Softball Field Tickets: FREE	Sports Club Info Fair March 15, 10 a.m. Keathley University Center 2nd Floor FREE
Men's Tennis vs. Murray State March 14, 2 p.m. Buck Boulding Tennis Center Tickets: FREE	"A conversations with Bela Fleck" March 15, 5 p.m. Tucker Theatre Tickets: FREE
Senior Flute Recital: Jenny Davis March 14, 6 p.m. Wright Music Building Tickets: FREE	Red Cross Blood Drive March 16, 10 a.m. Keathley University Center Room 320

Feb. 25, 8:42 p.m.
Alcohol
 Rutherford Boulevard
 Tushar Kumar, 19, issued was issued a state citation for failure to obey a traffic control device and for underage possession of alcohol.

Feb. 25, 9:08 p.m.
Theft
 Recreation Center
 A complainant reported that her cell phone was stolen.

Feb. 26, 10:01 p.m.
Warrant
 Blue Raider Drive
 Christopher Hrinda, 19, was arrested for an outstanding warrant for failure to appear.

Feb. 27, 2:02 a.m.
Harassment
 Womack Lane Apartment E
 A complainant reported that they were receiving harassing text messages and phone calls.

OFF CAMPUS

International Lens Film Series: "Opera Jawa" March 3, 7 p.m. Vanderbilt University, Sarratt Cinema Tickets: FREE	DJ Hashbrown March 6, 8 p.m. Gilligan's Tickets: FREE
Nashville / Murfreesboro Rock Block Showcase March 4, 6:30 p.m. The End Tickets: \$7	International Women's Day Fete March 8, 7 p.m. Scarrit Bennett Center, gallery F Tickets: FREE
Streetlight Manifesto with Terrible Things, A Loss for Words, and Larry and His Flask March 6, 6:30 p.m. The Exit/In Tickets: \$15	"How Old is the Universe?" March 8, 7 p.m. Vanderbilt University Tickets: FREE
	Murfreesboro Writer's Group March 9, 6 p.m. Barnes & Noble at The Avenue FREE

Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m.
Assault
 MTSU Boulevard
 Two male students reported that they had been physically assaulted on campus by an undetermined number of suspects. The suspects were described as black males, wearing all black clothing and full masks. The suspects left the area in a dark colored truck or SUV.

MTSU CRIME STOPPERS 615-898-2424

A cash reward of up to \$300 is being offered for information that leads to the arrest of the person or persons who backed into a green Toyota Prius that was parked in the Fairview Building Lot and drove off Feb. 1, causing more than \$200 worth of damage.

A cash reward of up to \$1,000 is being offered for information that leads to the arrest of the person or persons who burglarized and stole an iMac desktop computer from Jones Hall, room 230 C.

A cash reward of up to \$1,000 is being offered for information that leads to the arrest of the person who pulled the fire alarm on the first floor of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity house at 1:04 a.m. on Feb. 6.

EVENTS POLICY
 Sidelines welcomes current campus and community events submitted by all readers. Please e-mail events.sidelines@mtsu.edu. Include the name, date, time and location of the event, as well as your name and contact information. We reserve the right to refuse events at our discretion as our space is limited.

Anyone with information about these incidents should contact MTSU Crime Stoppers. All callers will remain anonymous.

Chi Omega crowns Mr. MTSU

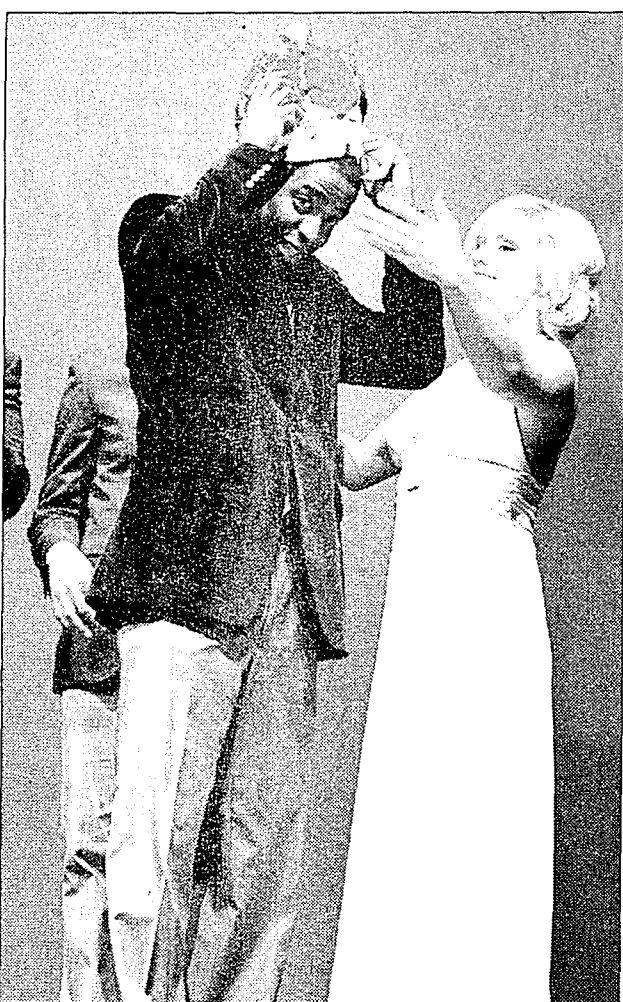


Photo by Drew Gardonia, staff photographer
Samuel Smith of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity receives his crown March 1, after being named Mr. MTSU.

By AMANDA HAGGARD
Associate News Editor

Mr. MTSU was crowned Tuesday night after contending in a pageant with 12 other men, in order to raise money Chi Omega Sorority's philanthropic Wish Week.

This year's Mr. MTSU was Samuel Smith of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

"It was a lot of fun," Smith said. "Just having the opportunity to hang out with guys from different fraternities was a great experience."

The Las Vegas themed pageant was the finale for Wish Week, a weeklong series of events and activities held to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"The charities made it worth it," Smith said.

First runner-up, Justin Hart, echoed Smith's sentiments.

"It was a great experience for me, but it was more about the great cause," said Hart. "It was fun to perform for a purpose."

The sorority raised over \$7500 during all their events for the national organization that grants wishes to children with life-threatening medical conditions.

"That's enough to grant a wish and then some," said Rachel Young, an organizer for the event.

Jan Seymour, community outreach manager for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Middle Tennessee

said she appreciated the efforts of Chi Omega Sorority.

"We grant almost 100 wishes a year for kids in Middle Tennessee. We did about five wishes for kids in the Murfreesboro area alone," Young said.

The Mr. MTSU pageant is in its 42nd year, and is the oldest running charitable event on campus.

Attendees watched a performance by Southern Movement, a local hip-hop dance crew that appeared on Season 4 of "America's Best Dance Crew."

Contestants were judged in swimwear, talent, formal wear and interview.

Will Trusler, sports editor, contributed to this report.

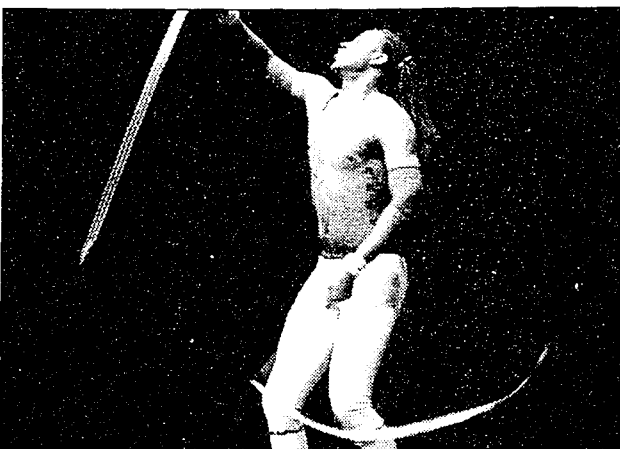


Photo by Drew Gardonia, staff photographer

(Left) A contestant performs during the talent portion of the pageant. (Right) Contestants wait to hear who will be crowned as the next Mr. MTSU on March 1 in the Tucker Theatre.



STEWART FROM PAGE 1

dead on arrival.

"The entire community is grieving over the loss of Tina Stewart," President Sidney McPhee said, "[She was] a wonderful, talented and vibrant young woman and gifted student athlete and I speak for the entire Blue Raider family in expressing our deepest sorrow in Tina's passing and our most profound sympathies to her family."

Stewart's roommate Shanterrica Madden, 18, also from Memphis, has been charged with first-degree murder.

Murfreesboro Police arrested Madden at the apartment complex.

A male and a female, both unnamed, were also

taken into custody, but were later ruled out as a suspect.

As news of the tragedy spread through the social network, more than 150 mourners organized a candle light vigil in front of the Keathley University Center.

The group prayed and sang songs, as many wiped away tears.

"[My fondest memory was] playing volleyball with her on the court," McLaurin said. "She always made us laugh."

Another vigil will be held tonight at 6 p.m. at Murphy Center.

Stanley Reid, a junior majoring in entrepreneurship, organized the event through Twitter.

"It goes to show that we need more unity and

structure around MTSU right now," Reid said. "A lot of people are just lost."

At a press conference, President Sidney McPhee said he had fond memories of Stewart.

"My wife, Liza, and I knew Tina well and we were blessed to have her as a guest in our home for Thanksgiving dinners when she could not make it home to Memphis," McPhee said. "We shall treasure those memories." Campus counselors will be on call today to comfort students who are dealing with the loss of the student athlete.

McPhee spoke with Stewart's father shortly before the press conference to extend his condolences. "The anguish I feel not only as the University president, but as a father myself - cannot be adequately expressed," McPhee said.

Chris Massaro, the director of athletics, was visibly shaken when he addressed the media at MTMC.

"This is an unspeakable tragedy to one of our family members," Massaro said. "Our biggest concern is with Tina and her family. The team is devastated and we will work through this together."

With regard to this weekend's Sun Belt Conference tournament, Massaro said no decision about when the team would leave had been made. Prior to Stewart's death, they were scheduled to leave on Friday.

"This is a coach's nightmare," said Rick Insell, head women's basketball coach. "My only concern right now is with Tina, her family and her teammates."



Photo courtesy of Myspace.com
Shanterrica Madden



Photo by First Name, Last Name
Athletic Director Chris Massaro and President Sidney McPhee speak to the press March 2 in the lobby of Middle Tennessee Medical Center.



Photo courtesy of the Stewart family
(Center) Tina Stewart poses for a family photo in Memphis.

President's support falls in region

POLL FROM PAGE 1

director and a professor, comprised their poll with questions about President Barack Obama, Gov. Bill Haslam, tenure and collective bargaining for teachers, freedom of religion for Muslims, gun control, the economy and immigration, as well as other issues.

Reineke said tenure for teachers is a hot topic for Tennesseans and the nation, and the poll shows 54 percent of Tennesseans chose the statement "Tenure makes it hard to get rid of bad teachers," while 29 percent chose the opposite, "Tenure protects good teachers from being fired without just cause."

Sixteen percent said they do not know. "The public takes a dim view of teacher tenure, or at least seems to say that the downsides are more recognizable than the positive outcomes of teacher tenure," Reineke said.

Additionally, Tennesseans are perplexed when it comes to collective bargaining for teachers, a process of negotiating salaries, benefits and working conditions between employers and unions, and have no consensus on its future.

"Compared to public opinion about teacher tenure, public opinion for teacher unions seem to be still taking shape in Tennessee," Blake said. "The people most likely to have any opinion at all on the collective bargaining issue are also, based on other measures in the poll, the ones most likely to be politically active and politically knowledgeable. They probably are creating a framework for the debate and soon will start contending with each other for the support of those who are undecided."

However, 41 percent of Tennesseans said that they support teacher unions, whereas 37 percent said they favor eliminating them, and 22 percent said they do not know.

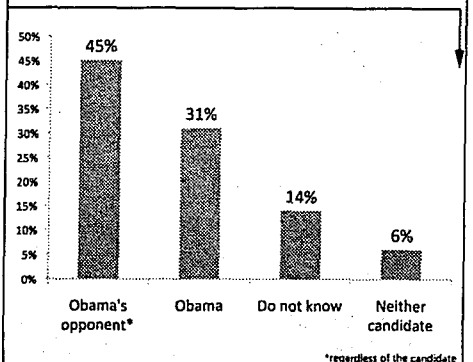
In regards to Obama, the poll shows a 39 percent approval rating, while 52 percent disapprove. When compared with last fall's numbers, Obama's approval rating has increased 4 percent.

"He's still down quite a bit compared to his 53 percent approval rating in the spring 2009 MTSU poll," Reineke said.

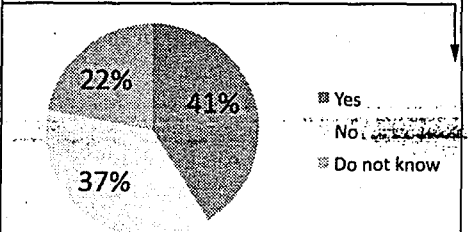
Forty-eight percent of Tennesseans would vote for Obama's Republican opponent, no matter who the candidate is, whereas 31 percent said Obama has their vote. Tennesseans that said they do not know what candidate they would vote for is 14 percent, and 6 percent said they would not vote for either candidate.

"I was surprised by the margin by which the generic Republican candidate was preferred over President Barack Obama for election in 2012 because that candidate can be anybody," Reineke said.

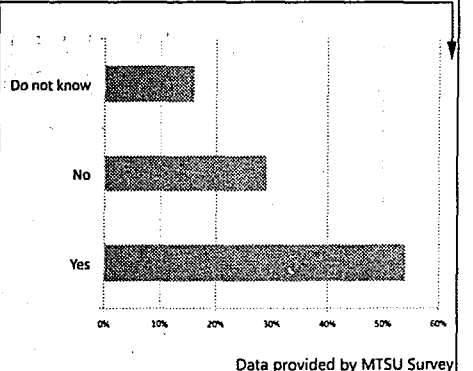
Who are you voting for during the presidential election of 2012?



Do you support teachers unions?



Does tenure make it harder to get rid of bad teachers?



However, Reineke said he believes that when a face is attached to the Republican candidate that numbers could change.

"I think part of what's happening there is it allows people to imagine an idealized Republican candidate versus a known Democratic candidate," Reineke said.

The percentage of Tennesseans that said they would vote for an unnamed Republican candidate may correlate with the fact that 48 percent of Tennesseans believe Obama is not cooperating with Republicans, whereas 41 percent said the opposite.

However, Republicans in congress received worse ratings for cooperation, with 56 percent of Tennesseans that said they do not cooperate, and 28 percent said the opposite. The other 16 percent said they had no opinion.

Although, these numbers are worse, they are better from last fall's poll that said 61 percent said Republicans in congress do not cooperate, and 23 percent said the opposite.

Reineke and Blake conduct this poll twice a year, once in the spring and in the fall, but Reineke said he has not set the date for the next poll.

SIDELINES

AND THE SEARCH FOR NEW CONTRIBUTING STAFF

A

AWESOMENESS

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Imam to speak on campus

STAFF REPORT

The Muslim Student Association is sponsoring a presentation Thursday, hosted by the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, to discuss legislation proposed by state lawmakers that would outlaw Shariah law.

Imam Osama Bahloul of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, who has been with the mosque since April 2008, will conduct the presentation titled "Shariah Law 101."

The presentation is in response to state Sen. Bill Ketron and state Rep. Judd Metheny's legislation regarding Shariah law, which is a form of religious governance often practiced in Muslim countries.

The legislation regards giving the attorney general the authority to "designate" a "Shariah organization." The proposed bill also includes what defines and constitutes material that supports the funding of terrorist organizations and provides a civil cause of action against terrorists if an individual is injured or suffers property or financial damages as a result of terrorist acts.

"Tennessee, like the federal government, has a compelling state interest to protect our citizens from Jihad terrorism," Matheny said. "The legislation aims to prevent acts of terrorism before they occur."

Despite the controversy surrounding the legislation, lawmakers said the bill protects the right of political speech and the right of citizens to practice freedom of religion.

"This is not about religious rights or about those who practice Islamic beliefs," Ketron said. "It's about protecting our citizens from acts of terrorism that come from Shariah Jihad, which is a growing threat in all our states."

Additionally, Ketron and Metheny's legislation would require all presidential candidates to show proof that they were born within the United States because Ketron has expressed doubts about where President Barack Obama was born.

Bahloul's presentation is open to the public, and will be held in the Tennessee Room of the James Union Building at 6 p.m.



Imam Osama Bahloul of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro.

"Tennessee, like the federal government, has a compelling state interest to protect our citizens from Jihad terrorism."

REP. JUDD METHENY
STATE LEGISLATOR

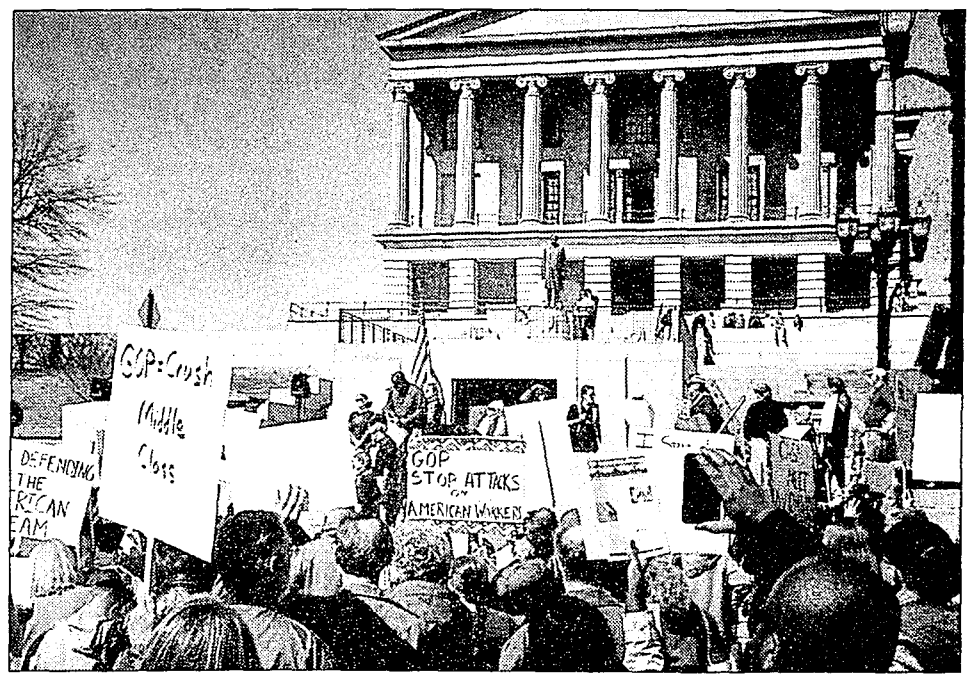


Photo courtesy of Chip Curley

Members of several state unions protest Feb. 26 outside of the state Capitol in Nashville in response to legislation that would dramatically change how teachers would be paid.

State lawmakers, union bosses battle over proposed legislation

UNION
FROM PAGE 1

Wisconsin bill was introduced. The past weekend saw rallies held across the nation in many state capitals, sponsored by MoveOn.org in support of Wisconsin and the other states that face the right to work legislation.

The Tennessee Education Association is holding a rally in Bicentennial Park on Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. to protest legislation that they said they feel would hurt teachers.

President Barack Obama said that bills like the ones in Ohio and Wisconsin, which mirror each other, are more of an attack on unions than their state's lawmakers said.

"Some of what I've heard coming out of Wisconsin, where you're just making it harder for public employees to collectively bargain, generally seems like more of an assault on unions," Obama said.

On Monday, Obama addressed the members of the National Governors' Association and expressed his continued support for workers' rights.

"I don't think it does anybody any good when public employees are denigrated for vilified, or their rights are infringed upon," Obama said.

Walker's press secretary Cullen Werwie issued a response to the president that said the governor's office is sure that Obama misunderstood the issues in Wisconsin and they repeatedly praised the more than 300,000 government workers who come to work every day in Wisconsin.

"I'm sure the president knows that most federal employees do not have collective bargaining for wages and benefits while our plan allows it for base pay," Werwie said. "And I'm sure the president knows that the average federal worker pays twice as much for health insurance as what we ask for in Wisconsin."

Collective bargaining is the process of employee, union and employer negotiations on a contract the employer and employee agree on.

If passed, the Wisconsin bill would require state workers to contribute more pay to health insurance and pensions, end government collection of union dues, let workers opt out of unions, require unions to hold recertification votes each year and only allow collective bargaining on wage increases up to the rate of inflation.

Other states have begun to follow suit with their own legislation to promote the right-to-work initiative. There are currently 22 states that hold the title of a right to work state, with approximately 11 more pending right to work legislation.

Jerry Torr, a state representative from Indiana, authored the right to work bill for his state, which would make Indiana a state free from union requirements, with an exemption for the construction industry.

Torr said Indiana lost manufacturing jobs because it is not a right-to-work state, and the bill would bring more jobs to the state.

However, not all Americans are against the right to work legislation. The National Right to Work Committee exists primarily to combat compulsory unionism and work for legislation that would outlaw all forms of forced unionization. Compulsory unionism is the practice of requiring workers to join a union in order to work for a company, rather than giving employees the choice.

"The legislation would give most

government employees the right to work without having to pay tribute to a labor union and take state government out of the hands of big labor and put it back where it belongs, with the tax payers," said Mark Mix, a member of the committee.

Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute said there is no problem with collective bargaining not being allowed in the public sector. A dozen states that do not allow it are doing just fine without it, Edwards said.

"Unionism seems to coincide with poor state government management," Edwards said. "States with higher public sector union shares tend to have higher levels of government debt."

About 26 states have collective bargaining for almost all state and local workers, while another 12 have collective bargaining for a portion of state and local workers. The remaining 12 states do not have public sector collective bargaining at all, Edwards said.

The states that are right-to-work laws that free workers from being forced to join a union and pay dues, and the differences in unionization between the states affect their fiscal policy.

"Statistical studies find that unionized public sector workers earn a wage premium of about 10 percent over non-unionized public sector workers," Edwards said. "This is important because employee compensation represents half of all state and local government spending."

Unions, such as the United Auto Workers, said that they feel differently than these committees and institutes.

The UAW website indicated that Wisconsin was on track for a \$120 million budget surplus, a statistic it attributes to the state's Congressional Budget Office, but that the new governor gave away \$140 million in tax breaks to businesses, and said he now wants to make the workers pay.

Prevailing wage laws are essential to creating jobs that pay decent wages and support local economies, according to the UAW website.

Prevailing wage refers to the hourly wages; employment benefits and overtime paid to equally employed workers across the nation.

Chris Conley, a mechanic who is a member of the United Auto Workers, said that he thinks that the union is the only means of job security, and that the union's purpose is to protect the laborers from the overly oppressive employer's demands.

"Right to work hurts the worker because they are at the mercy of the company," Conley said. "Right to work was only conceived to protect profits, not the worker's well-being."

However, not all union workers feel the same way about the unions. Adam Grider, a department manager at Kroger and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers, said that he thinks unions have outlived their usefulness.

"It seems that companies are willing to go above and beyond with benefits to keep the union out, to keep the red tape to a minimum," Grider said.

Historically unions did great things for the American worker, but now that there are enough laws in place to protect the workers, it seems almost a hindrance, Grider said.

"Because I'm a unionized worker, my pay is topped out," Grider said. "I don't have the opportunity to get a merit-based pay increase because the union has to bargain for me to receive higher pay."



File Photo
Members of the Middle Tennesseans for Religious Freedom rally in July 2010 in Murfreesboro on behalf of the Muslim community.

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Monday, March 7, 2011



Photo courtesy of Chip Curley, Nashville Capitol

Local Tennesseans hold signs in protest of pending legislation Feb. 26 in Nashville to show disapproval of pending legislation that would curb union power in the state.

FEATURES

Is Panama City Beach losing its luster?



Photo courtesy of Collegiate Marketing Group LLC

Students may choose other spring break options

By **JOE PATRICK**
Staff Writer

Panama City Beach has been spring breakers' most popular destination for decades. The Gulf Coast area is notorious for hosting the likes of MTV and other entertainment corporations, drawing in the crowds and leaving the remnants of the partying in their wake.

This year, however, city officials are planning on enforcing more rules in order to control the revelry.

The Panama City Beach City Council announced in January that they would be adding extra security this month in order to crack down on the madness that so often happens when thousands of college student congregate at its beaches during spring break.

According to *The News Herald*, normal protocol for Panama City Beach's police force during spring break is to add 12 Florida Highway Patrol officers that handle the traffic flow so local police can handle other duties.

The City Council also voted to heavily enforce the noise ordinances in the city for both residential and commercial venues, but after an appeal by several local businesses, the noise ordinance changes will not go into effect until June 1.

Even with all of the increased security, many students are indifferent to the changes, and surprisingly, some are even in support of the upgrade in security.

"I don't care if there's more police," says Ashley Hall, a senior majoring in education. "I'm not planning on going to Panama City [Beach], but even if I was, I'm 21 [years old] anyways, so it wouldn't really affect me."

Hall says that she would actually feel more secure about going there for spring break, especially since crime can run rampant in trendy party towns like Panama City Beach during peak tourism times.

Panama City Beach is not the only popular spring break destination where authorities are beefing up security.

After six reported rapes in Daytona Beach, Fla., last year, the Daytona Beach Police Department has reported on its website that police officers will be using bicycle patrol to help prevent similar criminal breakouts from occurring.

But while security will be amped up in the area, it still isn't deterring tourism officials' attempts to draw in the crowds. In fact, many have held promotional events at universities all over the country, giving away prizes and convincing college students that Panama City should be the choice for their spring break destination.

In the wake of the oil spill off the Gulf Coast, some vacation communities even see spring break as a critical time to kick

start tourism, draw in more crowds and bring in more money.

This year, spring breakers making the trek down to the Florida Panhandle can expect to see Kenny Chesney and other Country Music Television celebrities performing.

However, the more conventional, economic and most popular spring break destination for some students at MTSU this year is a place its visitors know quite well – their homes.

With the current state of the economy, many students are opting to utilize this spring break as a time to work without the stresses of school and even look for new career opportunities.

Jonathan Moore, a senior majoring in business, says he is going to spend the break trying to interview with potential employers.

"It's going to be nice to have a break from schoolwork," Moore says. "I already have a part-time job that I will be working, and I will also be trying to get some interviews with companies for a full-time job after graduation."

Moore admits he could've gone to the beach or elsewhere on vacation, but he wouldn't have been able to completely enjoy it, knowing that he is only a couple months away from being unemployed if he doesn't find a job.

"I can't wait to go home to get some home-cooked meals from my mom...my mom is a great cook so I can't wait."

JOSH SMITH
JUNIOR, COMPUTER SCIENCE

But for some, there are reasons other than jobs or the money that lead them to choosing the option of spending spring break at home.

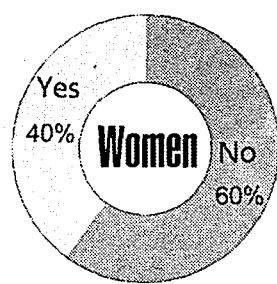
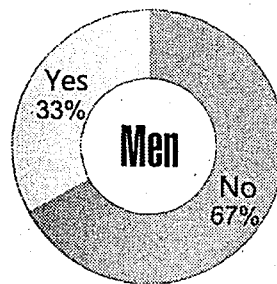
"I can't wait to go home to get some home-cooked meals from my mom," says Josh Smith, a junior majoring in computer science. "I eat lots of cheap, quick meals when I'm here, and my mom is a great cook, so I can't wait."

Smith says that some of his friends from back home will also be on spring break, and he will be able to see them. He also said that he could enjoy himself just as much at home as on vacation with friends, and he can save the money he would've otherwise spent in the process.

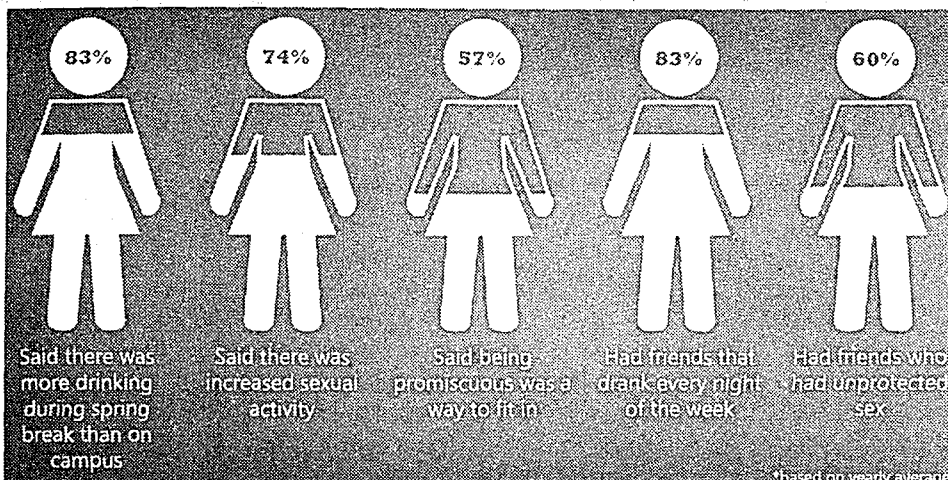
"I guess I've never been big on road trip parties anyways," Smith says. "I would much rather spend that money on something else. I just want to relax."

Spring Break Facts:

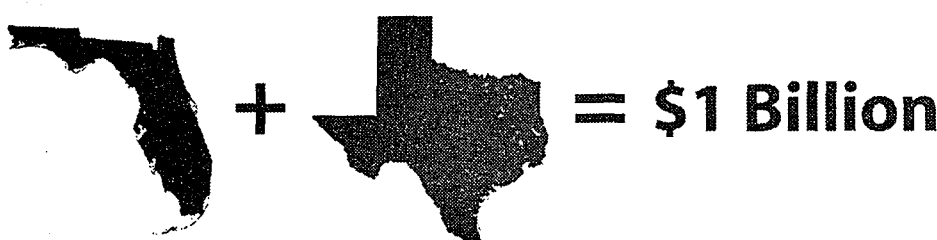
Drinking throughout entire day



≈1,300 are arrested in Panama City alone*
≈2,600 are arrested abroad



Between Texas and Florida, college students collectively spend \$1 Billion during spring break



Students' spend on average \$1,100 on spring break, transportation and rent account for less than half that figure.

A normal family of four spends less than \$1,100 per month on groceries.

Graphic by Josh Fields, production manager. Based on an infographic by www.onlineschools.org.

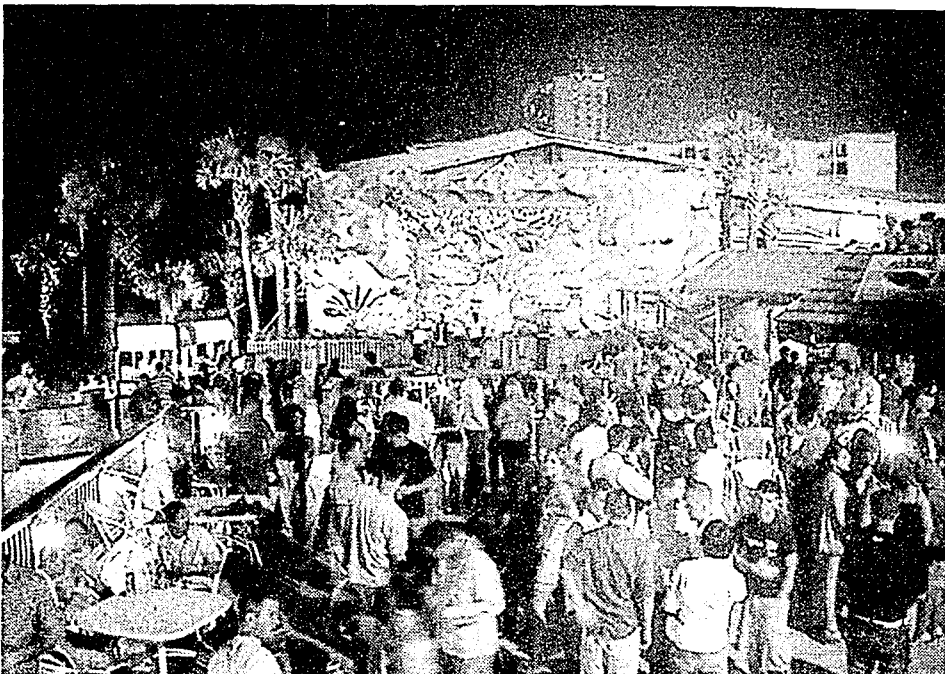


Photo courtesy of Collegiate Marketing Group LLC

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'I Am Number Four' takes latest seat on teenage bandwagon

By WILL TRUSLER
Sports Editor

Let's take some pretty faces, make them fall in love, and throw in a paranormal twist for kicks.

Sound familiar? "I Am Number Four" is Hollywood's latest shameless attempt to steal the hearts — and the money — of America's young-adult demographic.

The movie tells the story of John Smith, played by new teenage heartthrob Alex Pettyfer, who is one of nine alien children who were sent to Earth while the evil Mogadorian was attacking his planet of Lorien. He is Number 4.

Of course, as with many of its predecessors, the movie fails to elaborate much on this larger-than-life backdrop.

Instead, audiences are first thrown into the bombardment of eye-candy this movie attempts to pass off as a high school scene. The bikini-clad ladies and six-packed gentlemen are enough to make any college student cringe at the thought of the upcoming spring break.

As the story progresses, we learn that the Numbers 1, 2 and 3 have been systematically killed and that the Mogs are now after this story's protagonist, the aforementioned Smith.

Number 4 is forced to leave his Florida home with his guardian Henri, played by Timothy Olyphant, after Smith is exposed by a viral video. The pair settles down in Paradise, Ohio, and upon their arrival, Smith abruptly decides to declare his newfound independence and enroll in the local high school, despite the risks of once again being exposed as an alien and in turn putting the whole planet at jeopardy.

Furthermore, Paradise's cheerleader-turned-photographer nerd Sarah, played by Dianna Agron from "Glee," only bats her mere eyelashes before Number 4 all but poses for a photo shoot for her online website for all the world and outside visitors to see.

Of course, unknown to audiences, the two have actually already fallen for each other in the now cliché way that is mystically bound for eternity.

Throw in some brown hair dye and change Number 4 from an alien to a vampire, and you've basically got the premise for the worldwide phenomenon known as the "Twilight Saga" — as well as a recipe for a box

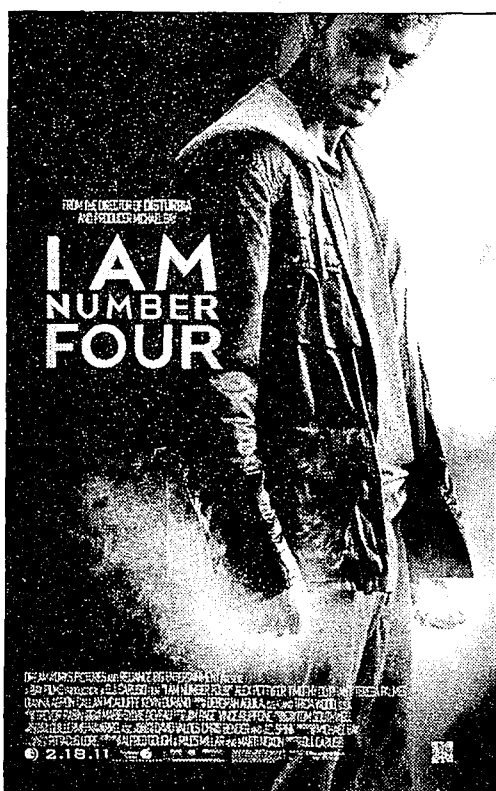


Photo courtesy of DreamWorks Studios

office success.

To be fair though, the film slightly differs from its genre forerunners by pumping up the action for the latter part of the movie.

And just to make sure that guys are fully comfortable being seen entering or exiting "I Am Number Four," let's throw in another hot blonde who is not afraid to join in on the Mog butt-kicking fun.

Number 6, played by the gorgeous Teresa Palmer, joins Number 4 in the exciting battle finale that results in several dead aliens and a demolished high school. Indeed, action lovers will enjoy the fast-paced fighting and well-executed special effects.

Now together, the two must journey to find their remaining Lorien brethren and stop the Mogadorians from destroying their new home planet.

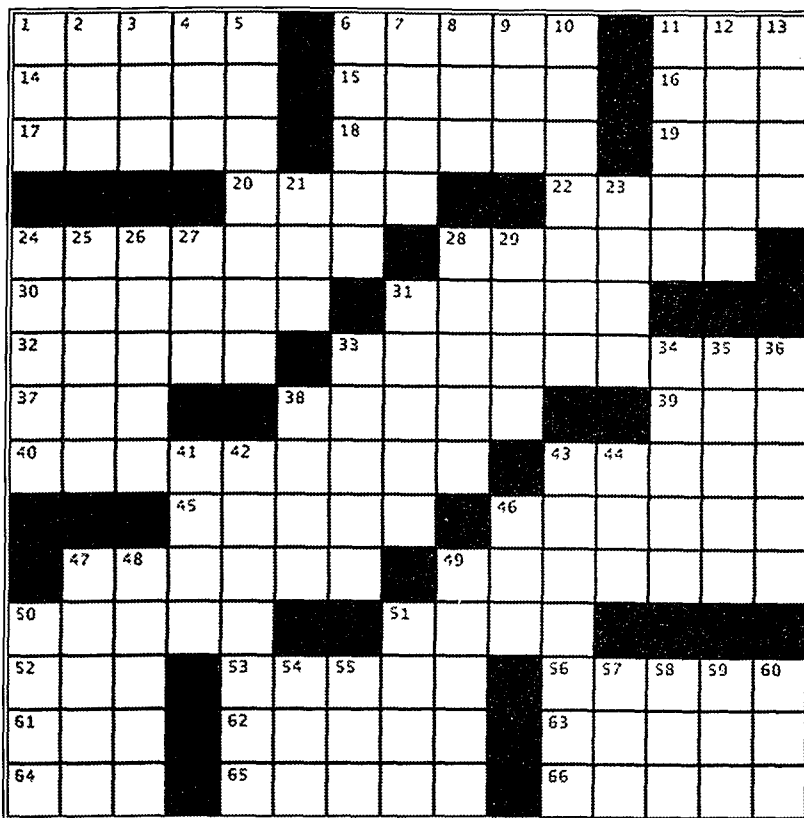
Roll credits.

Cue five sequels, an accompanying book series and teenage hysteria.

Despite the filmmaker's blatant attempt to regurgitate the formula of so many other successful plots, the movie will no doubt succeed in attracting a fan base whose dollars will see it through to the end.

SIDEWORDS

The weekly Sidelines crossword puzzle



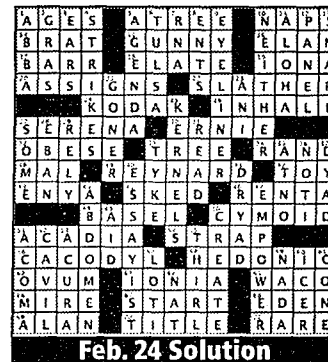
Crossword courtesy of bestcrosswords.com

ACROSS

1- Spanish river; 6- Gives up; 11- Besides; 14- Icon; 15- Bloodsucking worm; 16- It breaks daily; 17- Turkish title; 18- Metallic mixture; 19- Actress Balin; 20- Lean and sinewy; 22- Sudden impact; 24- Roast; 28- Dull; 30- Speaks publicly; 31- Staggering; 32- Favored; 33- Capable of being generated; 37- Bill's partner; 38- Band; 39- Black gold; 40- Revocation; 43- Abu ____; 45- Chairs; 46- Rubbed out; 47- Yellowish brown pigment; 49- Clattering noise; 50- Italian composer; 51- Mil. leaders; 52- Nabokov novel; 53- Large wave caused by tidal flow; 56- Earth; 61- Convened; 62- Low point; 63- Atoll unit; 64- Chemical ending; 65- Delicious; 66- Brahmin, e.g.;

DOWN

1- Apex; 2- Doc bloc; 3- Beetle juice?; 4- Exclamation of disgust; 5- Kelp; 6- Strongly fragrant sage; 7- Hard to hold; 8- Singer Shannon; 9- Author Umberto; 10- Unprofessional lawyer; 11- "Farewell!"; 12- John ____ Garner; 13- Aborigine of Borneo; 21- Conditions; 23- Hawaiian native dance; 24- Puccini heroine; 25- Betelgeuse's constellation; 26- Radioactive gas; 27- Hwy.; 28- Ready ____; 29- High-pitched tone; 31- Ages; 33- Actress Scacchi; 34- Brag; 35- Defamation; 36- Exclude, remove; 38- Counterfeiter catcher; 41- Not new; 42- Not strict; 43- Severe; 44- Covering for the head; 46- Directional ending; 47- Four-door; 48- Angry; 49- Drunken; 50- Flower holder; 51- Pluck; 54- Battery size; 55- Mds.; 57- Conductor ____-Pekka Salonen; 58- "Treasure Island" monogram; 59- Emeritus; Abbr.; 60- Broke bread;



Feb. 24 Solution

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Letters Policy

Sidelines welcomes letters to the editor from all readers. Please e-mail letters to slopinions@mtsu.edu and include your name and phone number for verification. Sidelines will not publish anonymous letters. We reserve the right to edit grammar, length and content.

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.

Family loses daughter, team loses 'sister'

There is no perfect lead for a column that says goodbye to a family member. As a journalist, you are not supposed to show bias, but when you walk around every day with a conference championship ring on your left hand, it tends to be something you can't hide.

My heart will always be with the Lady Raiders, and right now, my tears fall for Tina Stewart.

No matter how much this hurts me, my thoughts keep focusing on the pain of her family in Memphis and her teammates in Murfreesboro.

Her family lives in Memphis, a city that is just more than three hours away from MT's campus. I cannot imagine the phone call or the trip to see their child.

The team had just returned to practice yesterday after having the first part of the week off. The only thing on their mind at practice was winning the Sun Belt Conference championship. Now, it's hard

to see past this moment to even think about their first game, which is scheduled for Sunday.

Stewart's death will be felt beyond her family and her teammates. It's the nature of playing for this university.

The Lady Raider family is a large one. Head coach Rick Insell keeps it that way. The family members range from the Next Level Club, message board writers, athletic administration, Rutherford County school students and staff as well as countless community members, alumni and admirers of the program from afar.

Athletes and coaches from several teams at MT were at Middle Tennessee Medical Center and at on-campus vigils after her death



Richard Lowe

Columnist

was announced.

If there is one positive that can be taken away from this tragic situation, it is that this collection of people will be able to look to each other for support. This is a time for the entire Blue Raider family to be there for one another and I have never known this university to back down in times like this.

In a statement released last night, Insell said, "this is a coach's nightmare."

In a time where most faculty and staff were dreaming of spring break, Stewart's death has become a university nightmare.

The final memory of Stewart for a lot of Lady Raider fans took place on Sunday afternoon. In the regular season finale

against rival Western Kentucky, the Hilltoppers cut an 11-point deficit down to four points. With 3:31 left in the game, Stewart hit a 3-pointer, which ended the momentum for the Lady Toppers and brought the home crowd to their feet. Stewart hit four free throws that sealed the victory for the Lady Raiders.

After the game, fans said their final goodbyes to departing seniors who were playing their final home game on the Murphy Center court.

And now, we say our final goodbye to Tina Stewart - a player who always had a smile on her face off the court, the drive of a prizefighter on the court and the heart champion in life. She was the epitome of a Lady Raider.

Richard Lowe is a graduate and majored in electronic media journalism and can be reached at richardlowejr@gmail.com

Saving coastal Louisiana essential

It is important for me to start this article by stating that I believe there are few professional callings as important as that of teaching. It is often a thankless job that requires long hours and limited pay.

Those who answer the call do so with the understanding that what they do is not rewarded by wealth, but instead by the impact that they make on students' lives. Teachers often do not receive the credit that they deserve, but always remain dear to those who they have taught.

With that said, it may be difficult for some to understand why I agree with the Senate Education Committee's recent decision to advance State Senate Bill 113, which would end the requirement that school boards negotiate with teaching unions.

It may seem like a contradiction, considering my previous statements, but in actuality my agreement comes from those beliefs.

The intention of the bill is to improve our public school system. For years we have heard the complaints of the failings of our public schools and little has been done to rectify the situation. With the decline of the current system, the status quo can no longer be accepted. The time for change is now.

The new proposals include moving the time before teachers are tenured from three years to five, removing tenure or dismissal after two years of bad evaluations, allowing non-union teachers more say into the direction of their classrooms, and the easier removal of teachers that should rightfully



Matthew Blanchard

Columnist

be terminated.

If a teacher is committed to teaching, the difference between five years and three should be negligible in the context of a career. Five years allows for more experience to be gained and for the teacher to be a more efficient educator.

If a teacher has difficult circumstances that affect their ability to teach, aren't two years a reasonable length of time to see those problems corrected? And who can argue that poor teachers shouldn't be removed

as soon as possible?

The Tennessean documented a case in its Feb. 20 issue that one teacher "was accused of insubordination, falsifying student reports, taking cell calls in class." The teacher was finally terminated in 2009 after another two years of this behavior.

Teachers receive our children as little blank slates, and through the years have the ability to fill that slate with the knowledge to create the future generation. It is a job of great importance.

It is because of this importance that change must occur to make it work.

We need to reward those who do this job well, but under no circumstances can we continue to accept those who cannot.

Danny Owens is a senior majoring in pre-law and can be reached at dannyowensgop@gmail.com

Folly of using terrorism for politics

In a 2009 broadcast of Chris Matthews' "Hardball," Matthews discusses the gap between President Barack Obama and the American people with former advisor to President Bill Clinton, Mark Penn, in a disturbing interview.

Penn states, "Remember, President Clinton reconnected through [the] Oklahoma [City bombing], right? And the president right now, he seems removed. It wasn't until that speech that he really clicked with the American public. Obama needs a similar kind of happening."

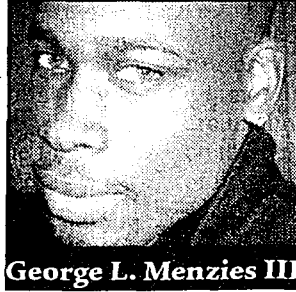
But Mark Penn is not the only former Clinton official to voice that America needs a terror attack to help the president.

A former economic advisor to Clinton, Robert Shapiro, also said, "[Obama] has to find some way between now and November of demonstrating that he is a leader who can command confidence and, short of a 9/11 event or an Oklahoma City bombing, I can't think of how he could do that."

The claims by these officials would suggest that terrorism exists in the deck of political cards, if public opinion needs to be adjusted to continue the agenda.

But is there any basis to the claim that governments stage crises?

According to Seymour Hersh, a Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist, "neocons" met with Vice President Dick Cheney on how to jumpstart a war with Iran.



George L. Menzies III

Columnist

They suggested having the army "build four or five boats that look like Iranian PT boats. Put Navy seals on them with a lot of arms." Then they would have them start a shoot-up.

The news of dead Navy SEALs would enrage Americans and cause them to call on their president to attack the "evil" Iranians, just as their leaders have called for.

Many historians recognize the idea that governments stage crises to start wars. According to an article in The Telegraph, "Historians find 'proof' that Nazis burnt Reichstag."

After reviewing documents in archives from East Germany and the Soviets, they concluded that the Nazis staged the event that Adolf Hitler used to launch his war and his tyrannical clampdown on Germany.

Though many Americans could accept the fact that other governments could stage a false-flag, none would think it was

possible for elements within their own government to be behind something so outrageous or nefarious.

In a declassified military document titled, "Operation Northwoods," elements of the U.S. government drafted plans to stage a false-flag event to provide the reason to attack Cuba.

An article by ABC on the document stated, "In the early 1960s, America's top military leaders reportedly drafted plans to kill innocent people and commit acts of terrorism in U.S. cities to create public support for a war against Cuba."

The operation called for blowing up a U.S. ship, attempting to hijack commercial airplanes, arresting Cuban agents to make the attack appear legit and creating a communist Cuban terror campaign in Miami and Washington.

Such an event would enrage American leaders, invite the support of the international community and frighten Americans who would call on their leaders to avenge the dead and keep them safe.

According to Hitler: "Terrorism is the best political weapon, for nothing drives people harder than a fear of sudden death."

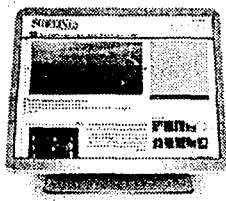
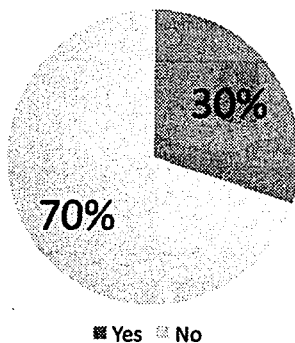
George L. Menzies III is a senior majoring in computer information systems and can be reached through his blog at lrepublic.com.



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HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT TINA STEWART'S TRAGIC DEATH?

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RESULTS: DO YOU PLAN TO VOTE IN THE SGA ELECTIONS?



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f "Tina we love you, and I know your looking down on us right now!! We're going to get this for you babe, you're truly going to be missed. I love you and thank you for being such a great friend, teammate [and] sister! Everyone thank you for all the prayers and kind words!" - Anne Marie Lanning

f "My prayers go out to the friends, family and teammates of MTSU's Tina Stewart." - Austina Wolverton

f "My university has been through the ringer in the past 3 weeks. But the Lord is watching over us all, and I'm still proud to be a [Blue] Raider!" - Brittany Cary

f "I don't know what people are thinking about these days? Is it the music? Is it the media, the water? I know things happen any and everywhere... but why must you have so much hatred that you would put your life and someone else's life in danger only to feel sorry and suffer the consequences later?" - Dornedria Cross

f "MTSU has dealt with some major blows this semester specifically. We are not defeated and we are still a great school." - Val G.

f "Just left campus... It's a sad, sad day for MTSU. Reminder of how truly blessed I am - thankful and moved." - Sarah Josovitz

f "Thoughts and prayers going out to the Lady Raiders." - Donald Abels

f "Lord, [Rest in peace] Tina Stewart. Didn't know you personally but it pains me to lose fellow peers." - Chanera Yvonne Pierce

f "It is so sad to hear the news about Lady Raider Tina Stewart. What is wrong with people?" - Rebecca McGrath

f "One tragic event, two wasted lives - how disappointing and sad." - Adam Whortman

f "That is devastating news - thoughts are with her family." - Amanda Carter

f "From this day forward I'm putting all the beefs behind me... It's time to grow up." - Joseph Taylor-Gang.

f "Put them behind bars for life!" - Janet Wade

f "[Our] thoughts and prayers are with you, Anne and the rest of the team. God bless all you all and keep you safe - lost a great one. Let's bring it home for Tina." - Jason Begley

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SPORTS

Getting to the point



Photo by Erica Springer, staff photographer

By WILL TRUSLER
Sports Editor

After winning the regular season Sun Belt Conference championship and losing three graduating starters last year, all eyes looked to senior point guard James Washington when talk shifted to the 2010-2011 season.

He wouldn't have it any other way.

Washington has embraced his role as the Blue Raider's floor general, top scorer and unquestioned leader for this year's squad.

The St. Louis native currently leads the team in

minutes, 3-pointers made, free-throw percentage, steals, assists and points per game.

When head coach Kermit Davis needs to get the offense moving, he goes through Washington. When he needs to ratchet up the defense, he goes through Washington. When he needs a big three, he goes through Washington.

In close games or pressure-packed situations the ball often finds its way to Washington's hands. He recently sat down with Sidelines at the Murphy Center to talk about his role with the team and how he hopes to lead them to victory yet again.

James Washington thrives with the ball in his hands.

SL: What were your thoughts on your final regular season?

JW: We didn't finish as strong as we'd like to. We had a five-game winning streak, and then we lost three in a row, so that was kind of unexpected. But I think having a good win against our rival, Western [Kentucky University], right before the tournament gives us some momentum going in.

SL: Has it sunk in that the game against Western Kentucky was your last game at the Murphy Center?

JW: Not really. I think I'm more worried about getting to the NCAA tournament and win the conference tournament. My family was here, and they kind of [that] mentioned to me. But I blew it off. I'm not trying to think about that right now, but I think after the season, it will really sink in.



Photo by Erica Springer, staff photographer

SL: What are your plans after you graduate?

JW: After I graduate, I'm going to try to get in Portsmouth, Va. It's an NBA camp for the top seniors in the country - try to get in some NBA trials, get an agent, and if I don't get drafted, I want to play overseas.

SL: What do you tell your teammates as you enter the SBC tournament?

JW: I just try to tell them that we have so many competitive practices so just make it like our practice. If you lose you're out, so play every single game like the championship game until the championship game comes.

SL: What's been the hardest part of this season so far?

JW: Besides playing my last game here, just the losses we've had. We were picked to be better in the preseason than our record shows. There have been a lot of games we should have won. We've had a lot of close games. I just feel like after those losses I could have done more as the point guard to help us win some more games.

SL: What kind of impact has your dad had on your basketball career being that he was a coach?

JW: He's probably impacted about 95 percent of what I do on and off the court. He's always been that mentor coming home every day. We always watched basketball together. He's always telling me to pick up my fundamentals and what's right and what's wrong. He taught me what it meant to be a great point guard and just have that leadership on and off the floor.

SL: Point guard is often considered the hardest position on the floor. Is that position one you've always thrived at or did you just fall into it?

JW: Ever since I was little, I've always been short, so I didn't have too much of a choice (laughs). At the same time, putting the ball in my hands, my dad did that when I was growing up. I love talking a lot too, so that helps. It's fun running the team, telling everybody what to do.

SL: What are your goals for the postseason?

JW: Obviously, we want win the conference tournament. The only way to do that is play MT basketball like coach Davis has told us. If we do that, we've got a good chance to win. It'd be great to go out with a bang and make it to the NCAA tournament.

SL: What do you enjoy doing off the court?

JW: I like to call back home and talk to my family, make sure they're doing OK. I like to spend time with my beautiful girlfriend, Kortni Jones, a point guard here at MT. I play video games and then just chill and hang out with my teammates. Sometimes, it's hard for me to get off the court though. Even if we don't have practice, I come in here late at night and just get shots up.



Photo by Erica Springer, staff photographer

James Washington is attempting to lead the Blue Raiders to their first NCAA tournament appearance in 22 years.

Blue Raider Spotlight

Name: James Washington

Hometown: St. Louis, Mo.

Major: Business Marketing

Minor: Sports Management

Favorite food: "My mom's macaroni and cheese."

Favorite movie: "Love and Basketball"

Favorite artist: T.I.

Role model: Chris Paul

Pre-game rituals: "Prayer, no naps, I don't like to take naps. And just watching a lot of basketball."

Blue Raiders look toward upcoming Sun Belt tournament

By BLAIZE PENNINGTON
Contributing Writer

The MT Blue Raiders men's basketball team will try and make a run at the conference championship and possibly earn their first NCAA Tournament bid since 1989.

The Blue Raiders come into the tournament ranked fourth in the division and second in the East, which has earned them a first round bye. Their first game will be Saturday at 9 p.m. in Hot Springs, Ark.

After a poor 7-11 start to the season, the Blue Raiders finished

the season strong, winning eight of their final 12 games including a strong 57-39 win over Western Kentucky University in the last game of the season.

In the tournament, MT is scheduled to play the winner of the first round game between the Denver Pioneers and the FIU Golden Panthers. This season, the Blue Raiders are 3-0 against these two teams.

This puts MT in a position to at least make the semifinals where they would most likely be matched up with the top ranked team in the West, Arkansas State

University, which MT lost to 69-65 earlier this season.

The Florida Atlantic Owls are the top team in the Sun Belt, but the Blue Raiders would not have to play them until the championship game. MT has had problems with the Owls this season losing by at least 10 points both times they have played.

While the Owls are favored, according to ESPN, the conference tournament is still wide open according to head coach Kermit Davis.

"We have counted eight or nine teams that we feel like have

a legitimate chance to win the tournament," Davis said. "It's going to be balanced, and there is going to be a ton of close games."

The winner of the Sun Belt Conference Tournament will be invited to join the NCAA's best in the NCAA Tournament. MT has not been there since they made it to the second round of the 1989 NCAA Tournament.

MT finished the season strong thanks to the senior leadership of James Washington and the outstanding play of sophomore Jason Jones, who now leads the team in scoring in conference play.

Jones ranks eighth in the conference in points per game in Sun Belt play, while Washington is not far behind at 11th.

Jones and Washington may lead the team in scoring, but the team as a whole is second in the conference in defense.

Another big factor for MT as they look ahead, is the recent emergence of sophomore post J. T. Sulton.

"J. T. Sulton came out with great confidence," Davis said of Sulton's play in their final game. "He's been shooting the ball extremely well lately, and he's had great practices."