

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY SIDELINES

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Photo by Aya Matsuo, staff photographer

Students crowd around television sets in the Keathley University Center to watch Barack Obama's inauguration on Tuesday.

Student disputes upgraded charges

By ALEX MOORMAN
Campus News Editor

An MTSU student accused of stabbing another student over a parking space last August says that her upgraded charge of attempted murder is unfair, and plans to take the case to a jury to prove her innocence.

Starlett Custer, 19, was primarily charged with aggravated assault on Aug. 27 after she was arrested in the Bell Street Lot for allegedly stabbing Ashley Ramsay. Ramsay was stabbed several times and hospitalized for her injuries.

"She did not cut anyone; she didn't ram anyone with her car like Mrs. Ramsay did, and if the state does not wish to dismiss this case, we will take it all the way to a jury," said Joe Brandon, defense attorney for Custer.

Brandon said that Ramsay struck his client's car not once but twice, and that Ms. Ramsay drove her own vehicle down the side of his client's car and over the top of it to get to a parking place.

"Ms. Ramsay has given inconsistent statements with the eyewitness that was on the scene, and my client vehemently denies that she did anything wrong," Brandon said.

Brandon said evidence shows Ramsay had scratches on her fingers consistent with using some type of bladed instrument.

Custer's indictment hearing was held Jan. 20. She is scheduled for a hearing on Feb. 6. If no decision is made, there

will be a plea bargain on Feb. 18.

Brandon said that Ramsay is the person who started the entire encounter.

"Custer is appalled by the charges because she was waiting on a parking place and the woman backing out made a statement which said that Custer was waiting first," Brandon said. "She spoke to Ms. Custer in the parking lot and she was giving the spot to her when, from out of nowhere, Ramsay drove her car into the back end of my clients vehicle."

According to police reports no "bladed instrument" was ever found, and according to Brandon's statements from eyewitnesses and 911 calls, Custer did not initiate the confrontation.

"My client does not deny that after someone had rammed her car twice and gets up in her face that she did what most people would do and fight them," Brandon said. "I don't know if Ramsay has some mental issues or what, but her aggression is what started this."

Brandon said that the damage on the cars was proof that Custer had not been the one to start the altercation.

"If you look at the damage, it's all the way down the side of Ramsay's vehicle and on the front fender of my clients car," Brandon said.

William Whitesell, district attorney general for Rutherford County, said that he was not ethically able to comment.

Inauguration gathers students

Students break between classes to watch inauguration coverage

By ALEX MOORMAN
Campus News Editor

Tuesday Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States as millions of people around the world watched, including MTSU students who crowded around television sets all around campus to catch every detail of the inauguration.

Obama is the first African American president and modeled his inauguration after President Abraham Lincoln's inauguration in 1861, down to the Bible that he was sworn in on.

Obama's speech was given with the promise that "the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met."

MTSU's campus had televisions set up at College of Mass Communication Building and the Keathley University Center, allowing students to have the opportunity to watch the inauguration without leaving campus or missing it all together.

"People need to have

access to such historical events," said Jessica Berry, junior nursing major. "I think MTSU did a great job at setting up areas for students to view the inauguration."

The inauguration festivities began early Tuesday morning and around noon; Joe Biden was sworn in as vice president and followed by Obama.

"I followed [Obama's] journey from the beginning and I think that students and the youth of America played a huge role in this campaign," said Kate Hall, senior media design major. "I felt like I should watch what we had worked for."

Prior to the inauguration of Biden and Obama, Aretha Franklin, an American singer, songwriter and pianist, serenaded the crowd with her rendition of "My Country 'tis of Thee." Also among the performers was Elizabeth Alexander, a poet, essayist, playwright and teacher.

Robert Frost gave the first inaugural poem in 1961 for President Kennedy, followed by Miller Williams in 1997 at Clinton's second swearing-in. Williams is



Photo by Erin O'Leary, staff photographer

Faculty, students watch the inauguration in Mass Comm.

INAUGURATION, PAGE 3

Campus reception to celebrate Obama

By FAITH FRANKLIN
Community News Editor

Students ended Tuesday's inaugural celebration with a reception reflecting on the day's events, as well as the inauguration of the nation's first black president.

The reception, hosted by Alpha Phi Alpha and Intercultural Diversity Affairs, began with audio and video recapping the day's events, followed by the program.

The purpose of the reception was to celebrate history, said Cord Martin, a senior music education major who coordinated the event.

"Even though President Obama doesn't actually know that we are doing this for him, we just wanted to

show our appreciation and show him that we recognize this historic moment," said Jeremy Simpson, a senior mass communication major and president of Alpha Phi Alpha.

"We all know that Martin Luther King Jr. was an important person in American History," Simpson said. "Barack Obama being the first African-American president is just another milestone, not only in African American history, but American history and culture as a whole."

Student Government Association President Sondra Wilson spoke during the reception.

Martin said that Wilson is an example of history here at MTSU by serving as the first African-American female SGA president.

"I chose to come out to this event tonight because I was chosen the first female African-American [SGA] president here at MTSU," Wilson said. "With Barack being the first African-American male president, I felt that I needed to attend."

Wilson said that Obama's win is an example of how America has changed. She said that when she looks back at King's "I Have a Dream" speech, she feels like the dream is finally coming true.

"Even though racism still exists, it is evident that people are more willing to accept someone by their character, as the MTSU student body did me by the content of my character and not my color," Wilson said.

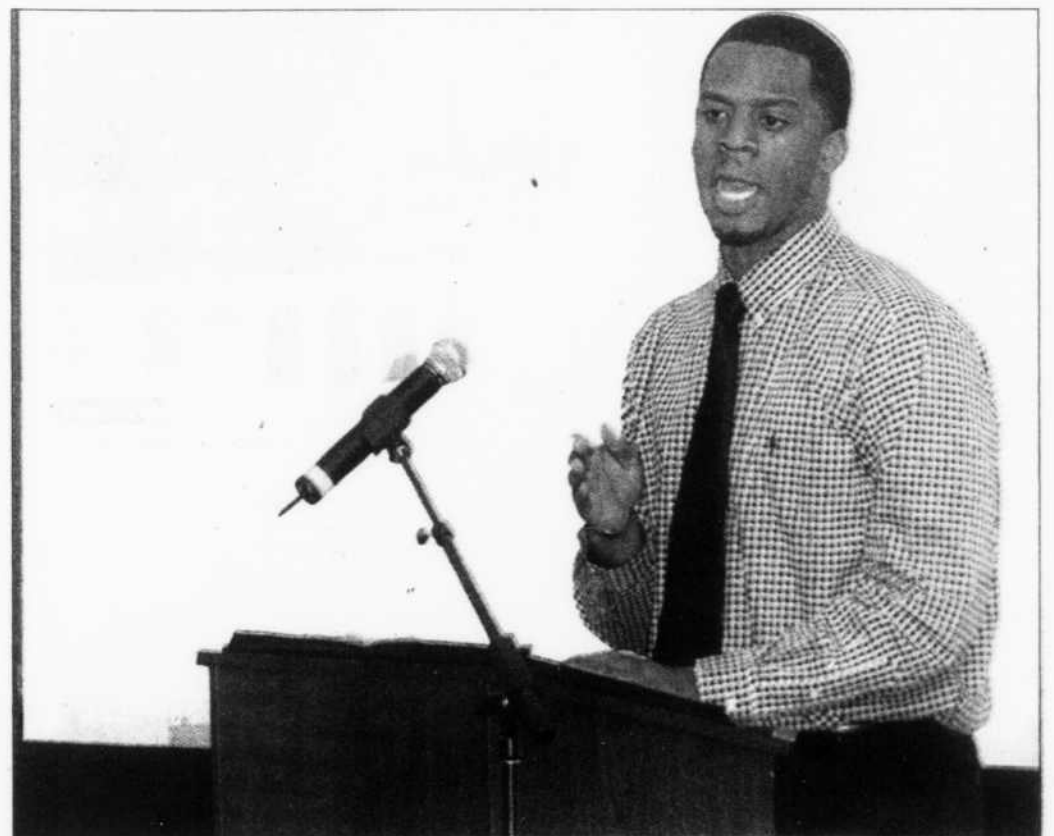


Photo by Erin O'Leary, staff photographer

Bobby Matthews, member of Alpha Phi Alpha, delivers speech at the inauguration reception on Jan. 20 in the Tom Jackson building.

Gas leak in cafeteria ignites fire

McCallie Dining Hall receives minor damage, repairs

By EMMA EGLI
Assistant News Editor

McCallie Cafeteria and Corlew Hall were evacuated after a gas fire erupted in the cafeteria's kitchen causing little damage, however MTSU officials said that precautions have been taken to prevent future piping problems.

The fire, which was extinguished in less than an hour by the Murfreesboro Fire Department, started due to a crack in a gas pipe.

MTSU officials said that all precautions have been taken to prevent any future gas-piping problems.

"The building is perfectly safe, and we have made all the repairs from the fire and everything else looks good," said Joe Hue, assis-

tant vice president of Procurement and Auxiliary Services. "We have taken all the necessary precautions to inhibit this from happening again."

McCallie Cafeteria has undergone numerous repairs over recent years and is scheduled to be renovated next summer.

"Since it is an old building, as you can imagine, we have done a couple of renovations over the past years, so the plan is to put a shunt valve on the other side of the building that will turn off the pipes automatically," Hue said. "One side of the building already has a shunt valve because it had already been renovated."

Hue said the fire may have started after some-

one bumped the pipe, which lead to it cracking. The crack is reported to have started the fire.

"The fire caused very little damage," Hue said. "Really, at most, there was a little soot that needed cleaning, but everything has been cleaned and repaired."

John Tate, food director for Aramark, said that he received the call about the fire and immediately informed MTSU officials and the fire department.

"We just basically let MTSU know that there was a fire in McCallie Dining Hall," Tate said. "The fire department came and put it out, so we let MTSU handle the rest because we don't really deal with electrical problems."



Photo by Alex Blackwelder, photography editor
McCallie Cafeteria, seen above, was evacuated Sunday even due to a kitchen fire.



Photo by Jay Bailey, staff photographer
WMOT is located in the Learning Resource Center near the other MTSU radio station, WMTS.

Budget cuts could silence WMOT

MTSU jazz station may go off air after broadcasting for more than 40 years

By EMMA EGLI
Assistant News Editor

Jazz radio station WMOT tops the list of programs that could be cut altogether as MTSU's budget tightens.

WMOT 89.5 is a non-profit, noncommercial, nationally recognized public radio station of MTSU. The station has been at MTSU since 1969, making this 40-year tradition a fixture

of both the mass communications program and the Murfreesboro community.

"WMOT may not have as many listeners as 107.5 or stations like that, but the listeners that they do have are so dedicated," said Alli Scott, senior music and theatre major and general manager of sister station WMTS. "The listeners are so devastated about this, especially the

jazz community."

Unlike WMTS, which is run by students strictly on a volunteer basis, WMOT is run by employees who hold 11 salary positions. If the station is cut, they would lose their jobs.

"A small portion of WMOT is listener-supported and sponsored, but it's not near the amount needed to support it," Scott said. "The people working there have to get paid."

While the students working at WMTS are working there to gain experience, it has been a long-term career for most of the jazz-loving faculty members at WMOT.

"Our jazz program here on campus is really strong and a lot of the faculty members are artists that we play on the station," Scott said. "They are so worried

WMOT, PAGE 3



Look familiar?

Psoriasis often strikes between the ages of 15 and 25.



1. Guttate psoriasis on chest
2. Inverse psoriasis in armpit
3. Psoriasis of the nails



Get informed at www.psoriasis.org.

Scholar gets seat in D.C.

Student gets front-row seat to Obama's Inauguration from the University Presidential Inaugural Conference

By MICHAEL STONE
Editor in Chief

An MTSU student returned to Murfreesboro after attending Tuesday's presidential inauguration of Barack Obama by the University Presidential Inaugural Conference.

"It was crazy," said Kelman Edwards, a 21-year-old pre-med major. "I had never seen that many people in one place before. There were millions coming from all over just to see [Obama] speak."

Edwards said he was one of about 5,000 students that attended the event after being invited by the UPIC.

The UPIC offers "alumni of the National Youth Leadership Forum...the opportunity to take part in and personally witness the historic event of the presidential inauguration," according to nscs.org.

"Back in 2005, I went to

the National Youth Leadership Forum on medicine in Atlanta that basically introduced young leaders into going into the medical field," Edwards said. "They kept up with me through college, and as a result, they sent me an invitation long before I found out who was running for president."

Edwards, who received the invitation during the summer of 2008, said that he doesn't want people to think that he went just because Obama, the first black president, was elected.

"People kind of see it as 'Oh, you got invited because Barack won,'" Edwards said. "I got invited because of academic performance and received the invitation long before I found out who was running for president."

As an Inaugural Scholar, Edwards said he stayed in Washington D.C. from Jan. 17-21 and heard speeches from various speakers, including Colin Powell and

Al Gore. "I felt a sense of pride when Al Gore talked about MTSU," Edwards said, adding his expenses for the trip, including tuition for the UPIC, totaled around \$3,000.

Tom Cheatham, dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, said Edwards is a "serious student."

"We are very proud of Kelman and very excited for him to get back and tell us about his experience," Cheatham said.

Edwards said he sat in a reserved-seating area behind senators and their families during Obama's inaugural speech at the Capitol building.

"This election showed me I can achieve anything I can put my mind to," Edwards said. "I saw when [Obama] talked about having a sense of hope - coming from the top kingdoms of the world down to the small village where his dad was born."

could choose what to play, resulting in a completely student-run station that shares tower space with WMOT.

While the student station has not been mentioned as a possible cut, many feel that it is only a matter of time before WMTS would go under without the support of the older station.

"For [the budget committees], it would be the most

convenient way to drop a large amount of money quickly," said Zach Troutman, senior recording industry major and production director for WMTS. "We rely on WMOT for a lot of technical things and if they go we would be losing a lot of really valuable resources as far as personnel who help us go."

While WMOT provides music and entertainment,



Photo by Jay Bailey, staff photographer
Students in the Keathley University Center watch as President Obama speaks to a crowd.

INAUGURATION FROM PAGE 1

the most recent poet involved in the inauguration until Obama's inauguration.

Students around MTSU agreed that being involved with this inauguration was very important to the youth of America.

Berry said students and

youth have made a tremendous impact on the voting process during the voting period, and they felt just like many other American's that [the students] were experiencing history in the making.

"It's great to read about history in a book and learn about it in class, but today we actually got a chance to be a part of it, to live in history," said Avery

Nelson, freshman music business major. "It's amazing to watch something so huge."

Shawn Davis, senior recording industry major, said students are getting a chance to see history.

"It was a great experience to finally feel like they were a part of something bigger than themselves," Davis said.

WMOT FROM PAGE 2

because if it wasn't for WMOT, they wouldn't have the careers that they now have today."

It's because of WMOT that WMTS came about. A group of students working at the jazz station felt students should have their own station where they

ness and support from the community, a benefit concert will be held on Feb. 5 at Club 527 on East Main. Admission is free, but donations are greatly encouraged. WMOT will also be holding a joint fundraising concert with the Nashville Jazz Workshop on Friday, Jan. 23.

"There may not be a way that we as students can raise enough money in one night

to appease the president," Nielsen said. "But we need the help of the community to show him that WMOT is so crucial to the mass communication program at MTSU."

"We want to show President Sidney McPhee all the support that the station has so that he will realize that it is a detrimental cut to the campus and the community," Scott said.



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Linebaugh Library moves community to read

New Winter Reading Program proves a good incentive for Murfreesboro residents to read

By DUSTIN EVANS
Contributing Writer

Murfreesboro's Linebaugh Library recently unveiled its 2009 Winter Reading Program, gearing Rutherford County's residents to "Strengthen the Resolve to Read."

The program, which began on Jan. 20 and lasts for five weeks, allows readers to select five books, one book per week from their favorite genres. The readers will then be entered in a drawing to win a prize.

"We want to promote literacy. One of our goals is to encourage patrons to make a resolution to read more this year. The Winter Reading Program is an opportunity to do that," said David O'Flaherty, a library clerk at the Linebaugh Library. "We all benefit from the active brains and hearts of our neighbors."

Library patrons can sign up for the program at the circulation desk, where they will receive a startup packet that explains the program in detail.

Fiction, non-fiction, traditional print, large print, audio books and e-books all count towards the program's goal. All the readers have to do is fill out a review form they receive in the startup packet or online and return it to the circulation desk.

The program, which is

in its sixth year, is geared for adults, unlike the Summer Reading Program that promotes reading to younger students in their months off from school.

The prize drawing, which is held once a week, is an incentive for the readers.

"There are actually six prize drawings: five weekly drawings that begin Friday, Jan. 30," O'Flaherty said. "On Feb. 27, we'll be having a grand prize drawing."

O'Flaherty said the prizes have been donated by the library and community organizations such as the Murfreesboro Center for the Performing Arts and the Doubletree Hotel.

"The Friends of the Linebaugh Library have provided us with a fund so that everyone who finishes five books and turns in five reviews will receive a gift package with a few treats inside," O'Flaherty said.

The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy shows that there are fewer adults with proficient prose and document literacy than there were in 1992. It shows that out of two groups of 11 million adults, seven million could not answer simple test questions.

The NAAL also shows a significant drop in proficiency scores since 1992, including people with



Photo by Erin O'Leary, staff photographer

Dennis Floyd reads a book at the Linebaugh public library during his workbreak. The library is creating a new program for adults to read books throughout January and February.

graduate degrees and college graduates.

Rita Shacklett, the newly appointed director of

the Linebaugh Library said she wishes to promote reading to young adults through this and other

upcoming programs as an inexpensive, local and fun option.

"When people tell me

they don't have time to read, I tell them, 'Oh, you're worth it,'" O'Flaherty said.

Linebaugh public library names new director

Rita Shacklett, library employee for over 30 years takes new position

By DUSTIN EVANS
Contributing Writer

The Linebaugh Public Library System named Rita Shacklett as its new director.

Shacklett has worked for LPLS for 33 years, serving as assistant director since 1985.

"It's very challenging; not very different from the last six months, as I was doing both my previous job and the job of the director during the interim," Shacklett said.

Shacklett said that it requires her to budget her

time. However, she still works with her staff on programs to promote literacy to young adults.

"One of the things that we are sadly lacking is public awareness," Shacklett said. "We are trying

“It's very challenging; not very different from the last six months, as I was doing both my previous job and the job of the director during the interim.”

RITA SHACKLETT
DIRECTOR OF THE LINEBAUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

to target the twentysomethings; they come in, but not as much as younger kids."

Shacklett said that she sees young kids often as patrons, but does not usually

see them return until they have children themselves.

David O'Flaherty, a clerk at LPLS, said that Shacklett's experience in the library brings a lot to the table in her new position.

"I think Rita has done

moting literacy and community service."

Shacklett said that she is working to build a person-to-person system of promotion within the community in lieu of more formal forms of publicity.

"The community could help by participating and sharing with other people," Shacklett said.

"Word-of-mouth is unfortunately our only advertising," Shacklett said.

"We try to encourage people to pass the word on."

Shacklett said that the library is about to see a change in community participation.

every job there is to do at the library, from shelving books on up, so she knows the place inside and out," O'Flaherty said. "She's devoted to the ideals of what a library should do, pro-



Photo by Erin O'Leary, staff photographer

Shacklett poses in front of a shelf of books at the library.

"Our business always increases when the economy is bad," Shacklett said. "We

are cheap and free, and you can take things home with you."

Fire burns NYC hospital

Fire at Mount Sinai Medical Center forces 600 patients to move

By MARCUS FRANKLIN
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A fire at a major hospital sent smoke pouring through an emergency room Wednesday, injuring at least six firefighters and forcing 600 patients to be moved across the sprawling complex.

The fire began shortly before 6:30 p.m. in a second-floor mechanical room at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan and spread to a first-floor emergency room, Fire Department spokesman Frank Dwyer said. The fire was confined to the mechani-

cal room and the cause was not known.

Dwyer said patients were moved from the east wings to the west wings of the 12-story hospital, which has nearly 1,200 beds, as firefighters searched the building. The patients had been on the third through 11th floors.

There were no reports of injuries among patients.

Flames from the Manhattan building were visible from the adjacent Madison Avenue, said Janet Montero, a manager at a nearby restaurant.

Jesus Ochoa, 43, a patient awaiting a surgical proce-

dure, was with family in his eighth-floor room when an alarm went off, said his daughter, Jessica Ochoa.

Jessica Ochoa said she saw and smelled smoke: "We couldn't breathe."

A nurse initially told the family members to stay in the room, but a hospital staffer then instructed them to put wet towels across their faces and led them to the ground floor of a nearby building, Jessica Ochoa said. She said she saw one nurse faint during a brisk but orderly evacuation.

Ellen Marakowitz rushed to the hospital from her Manhattan home after an

aide for her 88-year-old mother, Helen Marakowitz, called to say she was being moved from her hospital room because of the fire.

"I'm sure she's fine, but it would be nice to know where she is," Marakowitz said. "My mother's 88, and the aide is terrified, so I'm not just going to ignore them."

Hospital representatives did not immediately return telephone calls seeking comment.

Mount Sinai, which occupies four square blocks on the city's Upper East Side, was founded in downtown Manhattan in 1852.

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OPINIONS

FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Parking lot 'stabbing' revisited

An MTSU student accused of stabbing another student over a parking space is denying that she started the altercation. The alleged attacker, Starlett Custer's, said that she was acting in self-defense. He said that Ashley Ramsay, who was hospitalized in the incident, attacked Custer, and said he has evidence to prove this in court.

Before, all evidence presented to the public said "Guilty, guilty, guilty." But now, the public is seeing a new side to the parking-lot fiasco.

Until now, Custer hasn't spoken out about whether or not she was guilty. Even though aggravated assault charges are serious, she wasn't willing to fight until her charges were upgraded to attempted murder.

Even though the media has referred to Ramsay as the victim, Custer's attorney make some valid points about the incident.

This just goes to show that anyone accused of a crime should be considered innocent until proven guilty. We, as an editorial board, are not saying Custer is innocent, nor are we saying she is guilty. She has merely been accused of a crime.

Her lawyer said that he has statements from eyewitnesses and 911 calls that prove Ramsay started the whole incident by ramming her car into Custer's twice.

After the incident, police were unable to find a bladed instrument, but since Ramsay has undergone several skin graft surgeries to repair the injuries she suffered during her confrontation with Custer, it's a little suspicious that no weapon has been recovered. At any rate, we feel there should be some explanation as to the absence of the alleged assault weapon.

Brandon said that a bladed instrument was used in the fight; however, he said that Ramsay brought it in, not Custer.

The cuts were made on Ramsay's neck and face, so Brandon's argument leads us to believe perhaps Custer grabbed the bladed instrument and cut Ramsay in self-defense. With valuable evidence and Custer's attorney threatening to take this incident to a jury trial, it appears that Ramsay may be held accountable for her alleged actions.

Whether or not these allegations are true, this is definitely the first report that Custer is innocent.

Custer will enter her plea on Feb. 6. This may lead to long, drawn-out court proceedings. So, with the newfound account presented from Custer's attorney, this is a trial that seemingly could go either way.

We guess it just goes to show that there are two sides to every incident.

A New Day Has Come



Straight Talk
Lauren Collins

The world watched in awe Tuesday as Barack Obama was inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States. The scene in Washington, D.C., can

only be described as electric, and a feeling of sheer energy and excitement that resonated across America was one.

In numerous buildings across campus, televisions were set up in hallways and lobbies to allow students to view the inauguration. It seemed like time stood still for a moment as President Obama began his speech and everyone suddenly stopped to listen.

I looked around the lobby of Mass Comm. at my fellow classmates, and I soaked in this magnifi-

cent moment. For some, the emotions were hard to hold back, and I saw a few people shed a tear or two. Heck, I was struggling not to cry myself!

Obama's presidency marks a new chapter for America. Many never believed they would see this day come in their lifetime. I have parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that still vividly remember the racism and segregation they experienced in America's past.

For all of those who fought for Civil Rights on

the front lines with Martin Luther King, Jr. and so many other activists that contributed to the progression of equality in this country, the inauguration had profound significance.

Obama's inauguration sparked a new hope in the hearts of not just African-Americans, but all Americans. This country is united and coming together behind a common purpose, and that purpose is rebuilding America and investing in its future.

Obama's speech exuded

eloquence and pragmatism. While Obama used some of the lofty rhetoric he is famous for, he also effectively communicated to the American people that patience is the key as we begin this journey together. Let's face it, the United States has some serious issues that need to be addressed, and those problems will not be fixed overnight.

To read more, visit us online.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Veggie options needed to meet increasing demand

Kudos to Raiders Organized for Animal Rights for empowering other students to choose healthier and more humane meals ("Limited veggie options on campus," Jan. 15). Polls suggest a growing number of teens and young adults throughout the United States are opting to leave meat off their plates—for their health, the planet and animals. In fact, in 2005, Aramark conducted a poll of 100,000 college

students, and nearly a quarter of those surveyed said finding vegan meals on campus is important to them. MTSU should follow in the footsteps of college cafeterias nationwide by expanding its menus to include a variety of meat-free options to meet the increasing demand. In the meantime, students can visit TryVeg.com for quick and easy recipes as well as a guide to vegan eating on a budget.

Erica Meier
Washington, D.C.

Reasons for going vegan

I am writing in response to Emma Egli's article "Limited veggie options on campus," from Jan. 15.

I feel compelled to reply to this because it plays upon a stereotype of vegetarians and vegans as merely sentimental animal-lovers. Make no mistake, these are both good reasons for choosing to live a veg lifestyle, however, they by no means represent everyone that has chosen this lifestyle.

Many people choose to

be vegetarian or vegan because they find that they cannot ethically justify the unnecessary killing of animals—that is, they choose this lifestyle on a rational basis, not on a sentimental basis.

As Peter Singer argued in Animal Liberation, "If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration." Another rational basis for choosing to live a veg lifestyle is considering the devastating environmental effects of raising billions of

animals per year for food.

Eric Powell
Senior, Liberal arts

The full version of this letter can be viewed online.

Letters Policy

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

Sidelines is the editorially independent, non-profit student-produced newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University. Sidelines publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and Wednesday during June and July. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and not necessarily Sidelines or MTSU.

Start treating Obama like a politician



Yeah, Whatever
Andy Harper

On Tuesday morning, the world came to a grinding halt as billions of people stopped to watch the inarguably historic inauguration of Barack Hussein Obama as the 44th president of the United States of America. The world witnessed as he became the first black leader of the free world.

At this point, I'm sick of hearing about Obama. Yes – I realize that he is now the president and will make news for the next four years.

But it isn't his politics I'm

sick of hearing and seeing – it's his image. I'm sick of Barack Obama the celebrity, and with the recent passing of the inauguration, the Hollywood glamour will hopefully dissipate.

I am happy that he is our president, but this is precisely what I expect – President Barack Obama – not Obama-rama Spectacular Blowout Bash Supreme.

Supporting a candidate is a necessary aspect of political life. Creating a "rock star" persona and marketing him as a god that excrements rainbows and unicorns only sets up his presidency for failure. It sets the standards bar impossibly high.

He will not make money grow on trees.

He will not smash poverty and successfully enact universal healthcare.

He will not save all failing industries in America or return homes lost due to faulty advice from greedy

bankers.

And he will certainly not make all of his supporters happy.

If Obama manages to successfully end the Iraq conflict, set our economy on a track to recovery and still have a little time to nurture the areas of education, healthcare and international relations, I think his term will be quite successful.

The problem is that many hardcore Obama-rama supporters act no better than concert groupies – sporting fashion buttons, bumper stickers and gaudy t-shirts in lieu of actual awareness. For some reason, the new fad seems to be being politically "active" via star-worship.

Not all Obama supporters have this attitude, but there are definitely those who only have a copy of Shepard Fairey's portrait of Obama because they think it's cool.

The attitude of Obama's supporters, however, was significantly more bearable than hardcore John McCain supporters who thought it cute to show off Curious George plushies with Obama buttons and yell obscenities about Obama during McCain's concession speech.

But once again, the same rule applies. Not all McCain supporters were like this, but I'm sure that the majority of the ones that were only acted like idiots because it was the "popular" way to show support for McCain. This includes Facebookers with "NO-bama," monkey-themed profile pictures.

The atmosphere surrounding the election proves that the celebrity cloud wasn't limited to just Obama but engulfed McCain as well. His supporters were just as eager and willing to turn their presidential candidate into

an entertaining commodity rather than promoting his political platforms. Both are guilty of parading around shows like Saturday Night Live with about as much dignity as a state fair sideshow.

About the only performer in the 2008 political drama that wasn't backstage-pass worthy was Joe Biden. But then again, look who his competition was – Sarah Palin. How do you compete with someone who would probably do just about anything for green-room access?

Despite the better efforts of starry-eyed fans and media outlets obsessed with image over issues, Obama did reasonably well Tuesday, covering his overall goals in the inauguration

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COMICS



"And Friends"

frankhasenmueller@gmail.com

Frank Hasenmueller

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FEATURES



DO YOU THINK THAT THE TBR 12-HOUR CAP SHOULD BE LIFTED TO 15 HOURS?

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Curious Case of Book vs. Movie

Brad Pitt's film adds to ongoing debate

By MALARIE WOODS
Assistant Features Editor

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, directed by David Fincher, opens with a man leaving an infant on a doorstep. The clichés don't end there in this jumbled, Hollywood interpretation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story of the same name.

The premise of the film is interesting enough — a child is born with a strange ailment that causes him to grow backward from old age to infancy. Unfortunately, this premise seems to have been entirely impossible to carry out on the silver screen.

The infant, for one, is infant-sized and acts like a newborn, unlike Fitzgerald's story, in which one of the most memorable parts takes place in a department store where Mr. Button must buy his cranky, smart-mouthed baby a suit.

To change the story in any way changes the plot itself, as it is originally a story about loneliness and mortality. The film's robotic, wrinkled baby doll doesn't do it justice, considering an old man who is as tiny and as mentally developed as an infant isn't really an old man at all.

Fitzgerald's story follows Benjamin as he grows old-

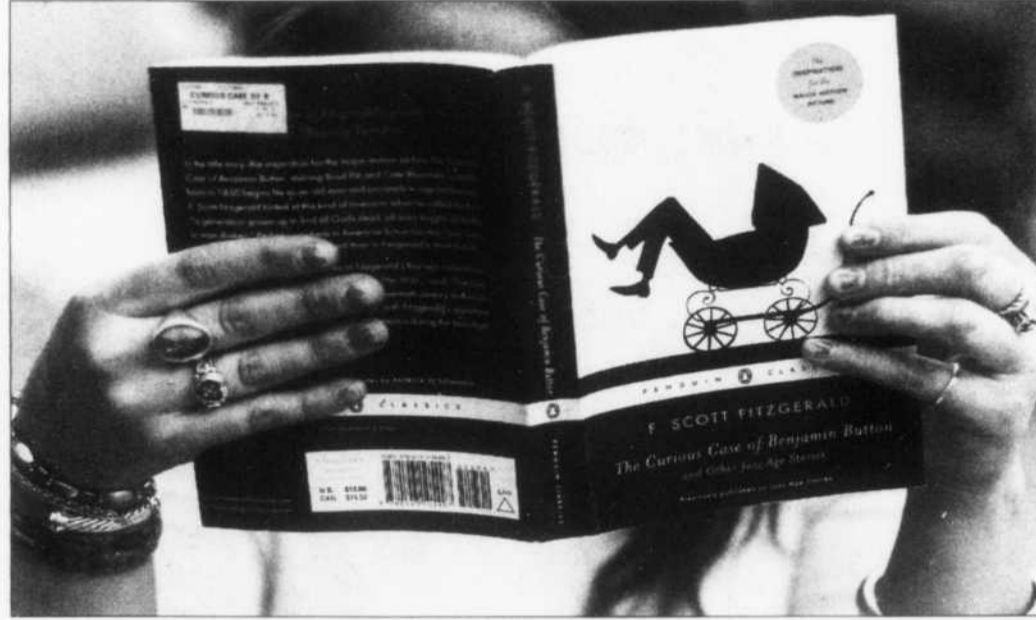


Photo Illustration by Alex Blackwelder, photography editor
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett, was turned into a three hour movie. The original tale by F. Scott Fitzgerald was only a short story.

er, gets married at a young age to a woman who looks far younger than him, then falls out of love with her as he matures and becomes increasingly handsome.

When he is middle-aged he attends college, then prep school, and finally grammar school where the teachers must send him backwards through the grades as he forgets how to do more and more things.

Eventually, he loses his words, his memory, and all senses altogether. This almost whimsical fairy tale ultimately ends up sadly poignant, as old age really isn't that different from infancy after all.

Then in the movie version, the plot is simple — Brad Pitt falls in love with girl (Cate Blanchett), Brad Pitt gets girl, Brad Pitt must let girl go. The title character, who looks less like a backward-aging old man than he looks like Brad Pitt with makeup, receives entirely less second glances than he does in the novel.

Instead of being horrified, the characters in the film seem to think Button is endearing. The sense of alienation is all but obliterated as Benjamin always gets what he wants from all the ever-so-accommodating people in his life.

With such a bleak, melo-

dramatic film, it's only right that the screenplay is infused with something comedic. The one humorous aspect of the film was a feature-length running joke about a man getting hit by lightning, which by the fifth reference only drew a handful of complimentary chuckles from the theatergoers.

Per usual in Hollywood, the studios did nothing but ruin a great story. Rent this one for the great cinematography that everyone at the Oscars will be rooting for, but don't expect something that will entertain you for the full running time of close to three hours.

A Long Way from Home

Artist migrates to find country music

By JESSICA PACE
Staff Writer

She may be a long way from home, but New Jersey native Sarah Flanagan is settling comfortably into the Nashville music scene, hoping to forge her way into country music.

Combining the roots of older country with pop influence, 21 year-old Flanagan is following in the footsteps of country/pop princesses like Taylor Swift and Carrie Underwood.

Growing up in Bound Brook, N.J., where Flanagan says the only semi-country icon was Bruce Springsteen, she discovered how difficult it was to find the music she wanted to hear, and to find venues to perform it. There was not a lot of country music in her upbringing.

"I got into [country music] in high school, first with Toby Keith, and then my brother intro-

duced me to the Taylor Swift song 'Tim McGraw' and I loved it." Flanagan says.

It may seem unusual for a girl from a small town in the Garden State where country music is scarce to be so affected by the genre, but the sincerity of the music ultimately inspired Flanagan to pick up the guitar and begin writing herself.

"I like country music because it's from the heart and tells a story," she says.

Her passion for music and performing actually began earlier in her childhood, which was filled with dance lessons and performances in high school musicals. At the age of 17, Flanagan's boyfriend purchased her first guitar under the condition that she would seriously learn to play the instrument, a memory that Flanagan laughs about.

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Cable TV Hits and Misses

The good and the bad of mudereous lawyers and teen pregnancy

By JARRETT MCCALL
Contributing Writer

January is the time for mid-season replacements and the return of hit series from last year. Two cable networks, FX and ABC Family, have just brought back previous successes such "Nip/Tuck," "Damages," "Kyle XY" and "The Secret Life of the American Teenager."

Two such series, FX's "Damages" and ABC Family's "The Secret Life of the American Teenager," each exemplify the high and low quality of original programming that their networks represent.

"Damages" airs Wednesday nights at 9 p.m. on FX. The series first premiered on July 24, 2007 and is now in its third season. The show is about an up-and-coming lawyer named Ellen Parsons, played by Rose Byrne, fresh out of law school joins a prestigious law firm, headed by Patty Hewes (Glenn Close).

As the first season aired, many twists and turns were unraveled throughout the season, which eventually revealed the sinister deeds of Patty, her firm, and those connected with it. As the first season concluded, audiences found out that Patty was connected with the murder

of Ellen's fiancée, compelling her to seek revenge.

The plot of the series is told through flashbacks and flash-forwards. Throughout most of the season, the flash-forwards are used for the prologue and epilogue of an episode to provide explanations and cliffhangers.

All of the flash-forwards are fully explained at the conclusion of each season. For instance, last season's Made known that Hewes was being the fiancée's murder by showing flashes of the mur-

“Not all-original, story-related cable programming represents the edgy, new material.”

JARRETT MCCALL
TELEVISION CRITIC

der throughout the season.

Yet, the series is not all seriousness. It relies heavily on the use of humor through irony like the songs that are used to contradict a sinister scene or, the use of flashy editing.

Two Oscar winners have joined the cast this season: "Kiss of the Spider Woman's" William Hurt as Danny Purcell and Marcia Gay Harden as "Pollock" as Claire Maddox. In addition, "Cheers" actor Ted Danson

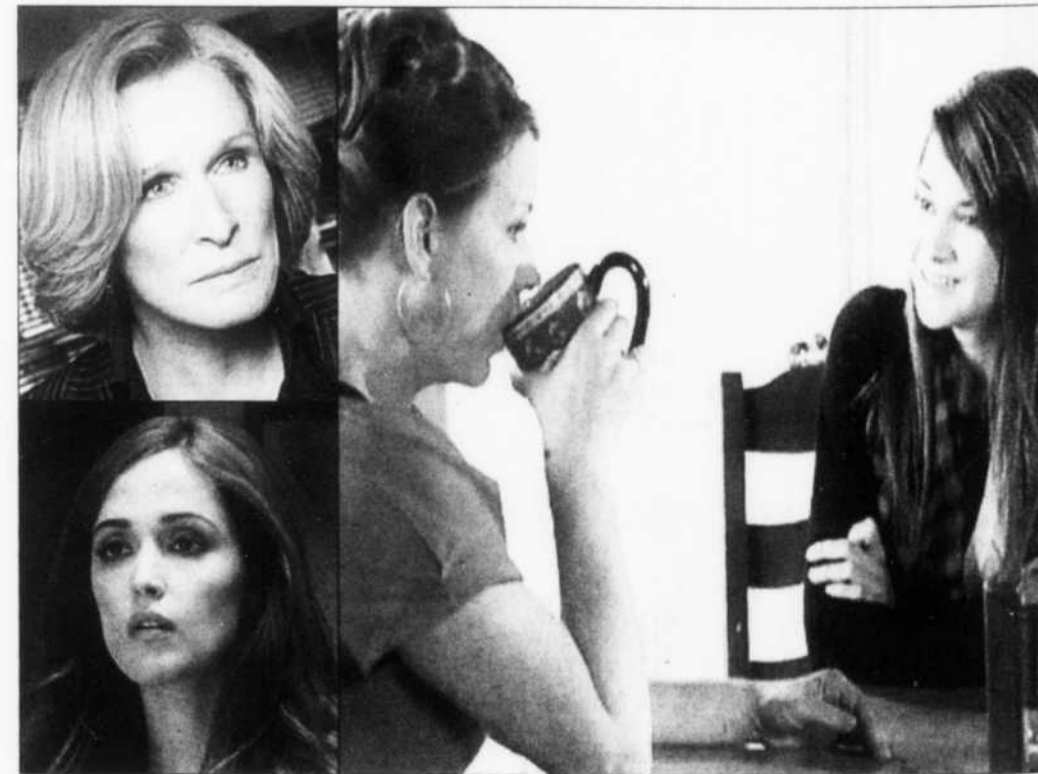
plays Arthur Frobisher, the self-proclaimed "most hated man in America," who is recovering from a gunshot wound to the stomach.

The third season has Patty's mortality taking. Throughout this season, Ellen contemplates whether to offer forgiveness or exact revenge. Judging from the season's first episode, it seems that Ellen might have taken the revenge route. It ends with her addressing someone off camera, saying, "I lied, too,"

and then proceeds to fire off two gunshots.

"Damages" would make a fine addition to anyone's DVD library. It is this devotion to quality that has made FX a worthy competitor with HBO and Showtime when it comes to series television.

However, not all-original, story-related cable programming represents the edgy, new material. ABC Family is a prime example. Case in point is "The Se-



Photos Courtesy of Fox Networks and ABC

Top Left: Glen Close in her role as Patty Hewes Bottom Left: Rose Byrne in her role as Ellen Parsons Right: Mom (Molly Ringwald) and Amy (Shailene Woodley) in deep discussion

cret Life of the American Teenager," which airs at 7 p.m. on Monday. If you long for the return of "7th Heaven"-quality programming or an inferior version of "Gilmore Girls" then this is the show for you. Surprisingly, it is a hit among the teen demographic.

In the previous season, protagonist Amy Juergens (Shailene Woodley) became pregnant with Ricky Underwood's (Daren Kagasoff) child at band camp. The entire cast of teen ac-

tors seems to be in a sleepy state. Kagasoff, perhaps the worst of the male actors on the show and it is obvious that he does not put any sort of effort into his role.

The creators of the series, as if wanting to spread the message to stop exalting single motherhood, Amy decides to elope with her longtime boyfriend, Ben Boykewich (Ken Baumann), who is not the father, so that the baby can be raised properly.

In the spirit of traditional,

issues-related television, the episode ends with Amy telling teen viewers to visit an educational web site to learn how to prevent unplanned teen pregnancy. Unless you are teenager or want to watch it for its camp value, avoid this series altogether.

When it comes to the original programming that cable currently offers, viewers will hopefully learn to steer clear of ABC Family and gravitate towards FX. It will bring a sense of enlightenment to this winter season.

SPORTS

MT RETAINS PERFECT SUN BELT RECORD

UALR fails to best Blue Raiders, Ladies still on top of conference

By CHRIS WELCH
Sports Editor

The Lady Raiders seem to have an affinity for keeping their fans on their toes. After trailing 28-23 at the half, the Ladies burst out of the locker room with a newfound hope to stomp the Lady Trojans 67-62 in overtime.

MT's leading scorer, junior forward Alysha Clark, was shut out in the first half for the first time all season. However, even without the help of the nation's second leading scorer, the Ladies remained neck-and-neck with the Lady Trojans throughout the majority of the first half.

Junior forward Brandy Brown and sophomore forward Emily Queen both had exceptional first halves, scoring 19 points between the two of them in the first half. In a season marked by high MT scores, this may seem like a letdown—but in such a defensive game,

Brown's exceptional performance in the first half hinged on her nine points—all of which were 3 point field goals. Brown came into the game averaging 9.6 points per game and ranked 28th in the Sun Belt for scoring. Brown played just as expected, bringing her nine points a game to Little Rock with her.

Queen was not one to be outshone, however, and went 5-for-7 in the first half, and scored eight of the team's total points. The sophomore forward had an exceptional game, stepping up in the first half to make up for what Clark lacked.

However, despite all the player's efforts, the Lady Raiders still went into the locker room trailing by five points.

"It took some guts to do what they did," said women's basketball head coach Rick Insell, "and I feel very thankful that they believed in me and that they stood behind me and have given



Photo by Jay Bailey, staff photographer

Chelsia Lymon powers down the court for a layup. In one of her first games returning, Lymon helped the Lady Raiders keep their undefeated Sun Belt record.

in the second period, with Clark back to her old self in

a passion.

Junior guard Chelsia Lymon also had her time to shine in the second half. With three good treys, in addition to efforts by Clark and Pickel, she tallied only 3-for-7, but they were three points that counted.

No team led by more than five points throughout the entire game. The teams were at each other's throats for the rest of regulation, with UALR's Chastity Reed and MT's Queen and Pickel fighting to the end, forcing

overtime.

UALR's Kim Sitzman opened the scoring rounds in OT, but was immediately echoed by Pickel. Brown's rebound in the closing minute of play and Clark's subsequent layup sealed the victory for the Ladies.

The Lady Raiders brought the Lady Trojan's streak to an end with an apparent ease, as UALR had won 29 straight games at home. MT extended its own streak, however, to a now-10 game record, the

eighth longest streak in the country. The Lady Raiders will no doubt continue their climb up both major national polls after their major inter-conference win.

The Ladies will be playing a series of inter-conference games starting Wednesday night with a match-up against Arkansas State. The Lady Red Wolves are only 3-4 in the Sun Belt and 9-9 overall. The Lady Raiders will then travel to new Orleans on Jan. 24th.

“It took some guts to do what they did, and I feel very thankful that they believed in me and that they stood behind me and have given us what we need to be successful here.”

RICK INSELL
HEAD COACH, MIDDLE TENNESSEE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

those 19 points meant the world to the Lady Raiders. Junior forward Jackie Pickel also had a good game, scoring 10 points in her tenure on the court.

us what we need to be successful here.”

Insell's legendary half-time speeches were not lost on UALR. The Lady Raiders came out swinging

the first 40 seconds of play. Her layup at 19:18 put the Ladies in high spirits early on. Followed immediately by a good foul shot, Clark was back in the game with

Men's basketball suffers second straight SBC loss

Three Blue Raider starters foul out in 70-65 setback at UALR

By Zach Reves
Assistant Sports Editor

The MT men's basketball team kept the game close for as long as they could but when it mattered the most, all they could do was stand-by and watch.

In a showdown of Sun Belt Conference leaders Saturday night in Little Rock, Ark., the Blue Raiders fell just shy of victory mainly due to one key stat. The Trojans of UALR scored a little bit less than half their points uncontested as they were 29-of-34 from the free-throw line. On the other side of the ball, the Blue Raiders shot just 12-of-14 from the charity line.

Sending UALR to the line that many times also cost the Blue Raiders players on the court as junior forward Desmond Yates, junior guard Montarrio Haddock and senior guard Nigel Johnson all fouled-out of the game. In total, the Blue Raiders were whistled for 22 personal fouls on the game.

Outside of the free shots, the MT men shot a low 39 percent from the floor com-

pared to UALR's 47 percent. Yates led the Blue Raiders with 17 points on 7-of-12 shooting. Senior guard Kevin Kanaskie added 14 points including three 3-point field goals. Haddock contributed 9 points and grabbed a game-high seven rebounds.

MT led in many of the standard stat categories

Middle Tennessee trailed for most of the first half and into halftime, 33-28, but came back strong at the beginning of the second half. Haddock's three-point play with nine minutes remaining gave MTSU a 48-46 lead, MT's largest lead of the game. However, this would prove to be MT's

“That's the glaring state in this game. They were able to get to the line and, to their credit, did a good job of knocking them down.”

KERMIT DAVIS
HEAD COACH, MIDDLE TENNESSEE MEN'S BASKETBALL

throughout the game except for the all-important stat of the final score. The Blue Raiders shot seven 3-pointers compared to the Trojan's three, and the men out rebounded UALR 34 to 27.

With the loss the Blue Raiders have fallen to 5-2 in the Sun Belt Conference. A tough two-game road trip against WKU and UALR provided both of the losses and MT's current two-game losing streak.

last lead of the game as Blue Raider fouls sent UALR to the line 28 times in the second half.

MT attempted many comeback runs in the waning minutes of the game that cut the lead to one on three separate occasions. However, on the following possessions the men were unable to execute their defense without committing a foul and sent UALR to free trips to the charity strip.



Photo by Alex Blackwelder, photography editor

Senior forward Desmond Yates jumps for the tip off at the start of the Houston Baptist game.

Local star QB commits with football team

Rutherford's own Jamal Ramsey returns for Division I NCAA play with the Blue Raiders

By CHRIS WELCH
Sports Editor

When Jamal Ramsey was little, he and his brother would fantasize about playing football at MTSU. This past week, Ramsey made that dream a reality.

Ramsey, a quarterback out of Battle Ground Academy in Franklin, had originally dedicated himself to Miami-Ohio, but reconsidered upon being recruited by MTSU. Ramsey said he was very torn about the decision.

"I had created a good relationship with both sides, so it was a hard decision, especially since Miami-Ohio kept Jay Graham, who was the coach who recruited me," Ramsey said. "But I was already thinking more and more about Middle Tennessee, and I have a real strong relationship with (MTSU head coach) Rick Stockstill."

Ramsey was originally committed over the weekend, but couldn't wait that long. He verbally committed to MTSU this past Wednesday. However, he still fully enjoyed his weekend on the MTSU campus.

"The first day we went out to eat and everybody had their host with them," Ramsey said. "Everybody was really cool and it seemed like everybody jelled really quick. I think a lot of commitments are going to start happening and we are

trying to recruit and get a team together."

With Ramsey already having made his decision, he spent the weekend trying to convince other recruits to choose MTSU. As a whole, the recruits toured the campus, ate lunch in the press box, toured the football training facilities and attended the football banquet held this past Saturday.

Ramsey will be joined this season by at least two other big name recruits. Defensive lineman Jada-reius Hamlin, from Mary Persons High School in Forsyth, Ga., opted for MTSU over UAB and Troy. Hamlin made his decision over the weekend and not even a last minute pitch Monday night could change his mind.

Juno Prudhomm, also chose MT over several other weighty prospects. Prudhomm, a 6-foot-1, 204-pound behemoth from Naples, FL, is listed on Rivals.com as a general athlete, but will likely play safety for the Raiders.

National Signing Day 2009 will occur on Feb. 4. Since there are no early signing periods for collegiate level football, nothing is set in stone, but each of MTSU's 13 commitments feels like they have truly found their niche. The new recruits have a lot to live up to, with the major highlights of the past season—a huge Hail Mary pass to beat FAU on a nationally televised ESPN, a perfect

November record and a new attendance record at Floyd Stadium—but they all feel confident that the

that the best players are going to play, no matter if they are freshmen or what, so I feel like if

ranks his scouting grade at a 74, with praises of throwing well on the run and an affinity for the

even played football for the Raiders. Ramsey has garnered much attention, earning over 2,000 yards and 20 touchdowns for BGA in his senior year. He also won the Tennessee Sports Writers Association All-State honors for his performance.

All in all, Ramsey's dedication to MTSU is the realization of a life-long dream.

"Me and my little brother used to talk about both of us going to MTSU," Ramsey said. "That's when we were younger, so it wasn't a major factor. But it's kind of neat that I'll be going there after all."

“ Me and my little brother used to talk about both of us going to MTSU. That's when we were younger, so it wasn't a major factor. But it's kind of neat that I'll be going there after all.”

JAMAL RAMSEY
BLUE RAIDER QB RECRUIT

new Blue will be the best Blue yet.

Ramsey is also excited about his prospects of starting in the upcoming season.

"They are just saying

I come in and perform then I'll have a shot to play," Ramsey said.

At 6-foot-3, Ramsey is a tall athlete, which makes his agility all the more surprising. ESPN

spread. Truly, Ramsey will fit well in the cut-throat world of NCAA football.

Both of Ramsey's parents are MTSU alumni, and Ramsey's father

Lady Raider team gives back to appreciative fans

Last week, a call to arms was made: I challenged all Blue Raider fans to come out and show some support for their home team.

The first home game was Wednesday, and as of the time that this paper will be printed, the game will have already passed. However, as I write this column, the only indication that Blue Raider fans are not scared to root for their team was the radio broadcast of MT women's basketball Head Coach's Rick Insell Show on Monday night.

I drove over to Coach's Grill with the supposition that the Meet and Greet would be a dignified, quiet night of informed questions and the occasional autograph.

What I found was a standing-room only hub of Raidermania. Parents had brought their kids to shake hands with the Lady Raider's finest. Alumni from decades past crowded the bar in an effort to show support for the team. All of Murfreesboro's frustrated bleacher-coaches came out to further pick the brain of Insell. All supported by a full menu.

It was so packed that I couldn't even find a place to sit down and



The 5th Down

Chris Welch

take notes. I had to come back to the office and listen online.

Insell answered every question that comes with his many years as a coach. He spoke fondly of his memories as a high school coach and vaguely touched on the two WNBA players that MTSU has produced. Assistant coach Allison Clark even got in on the act, digressing about her aspirations to be a head coach and how playing under Insell differs from her coaching under him.

Overall, it was a very good sign for things to come in Blue Raider athletics. If a standing-room only crowd on a Monday night can garner so many attendees, then surely the Ladies further home games will bring a truly excited crowd.

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