Can caravan lets schools help others at Santa’s Village

When Santa’s Village opens Dec. 10 for its 25th year of fun and entertainment, many hours of preparation have already taken place. By then, crews have moved through the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex creating a holiday fantasyland. Thousands of lights, holiday trees and scenes have been placed, musical performers have been scheduled and additional volunteers have been lined up to staff the 20-hour event.

Another part of the preparation is undertaken each year by WCMT and Oldies 95.1, part of Thunderbolt Broadcasting, Inc. The stations conduct a canned food drive in all the county’s schools. The Can Caravan began in 1984 after Paul Tinkle, president and general manager, learned of the success of a similar effort in another city. The next year, the Can Caravan became a part of Santa’s Village. All Weakley County Schools have participated from the beginning when 5,000 cans were collected.

Lana Carpenter, of WCMT and Oldies 95.1, is in her third year directing the effort following Misty Menees, Cindy Prince, Tinkle, Lena Rogers, Barbara Roberts and Laura Rogers at the helm.

“The hardest part each year is making sure that the children at the schools remember to bring cans in,” said Carpenter, “I do my best to send them regular reminders and encourage them to help others.” She added, “The teachers at the schools and parents of students really deserve a lot of credit. They push the kids to get those cans in for people that are in need. Weakley County loves Santa’s Village, and the county schools want to make sure that it is a huge success.”

Carpenter also pointed to the help of the University of Tennessee at Martin Student Athlete Advisory Council during the last several years as a key component of the project’s success. “With the help of athletes from UT, it takes about eight hours to go to all Weakley County Schools,” said Carpenter. Prior to receiving help from the student athletes, radio station staff often spent two days making the collections.

While the exact number of cans collected throughout the 25 years is not known, it is estimated to about 200,000 pounds of food.

“WCMT and Oldies 95.1 is proud to lead the Can Caravan,” said Tinkle. “I have been a part of this since the beginning. I hope it continues to be such a success and that we can be a part of it.”

Carpenter added, “I enjoy spending the day collecting cans and knowing that they will help the people of Weakley County. I couldn’t do it without Danelle Fabianich (UT Martin Athletics business manager) and the athletic department at UT Martin. Giving back to the community is what it’s all about.”

Slated for 6-9 p.m., Dec. 10-11; 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Dec. 12; and 1-5 p.m., Dec. 13, Santa’s Village will feature an “Enchanted Forest” theme in scenes depicting the holidays. Also included will be a giant Christmas tree, wagon rides on Friday through Sunday, MTD model train display, children’s rides and vendor booths. Twenty hours of continuous local entertainment and an expanded petting farm will add to the festivities. Doors open at 6 p.m., Dec. 10. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of nonperishable food and/or toys.

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include: University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital.

For more information about Santa’s Village, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.

Lewellen Scholarship fundraiser planned

A fundraiser to endow a scholarship will be hosted in honor and memory of Ron Lewellen’s birthday on Dec. 3, at Olivia’s Opera House Restaurant, 142 South Lindell, in Martin. The event will be from 5-7 p.m. in the upstairs banquet room. Appetizers will be served, and beverages will be available. All proceeds from the event will go toward the scholarship. The cost of the event is $20 per person and will be payable at the door. Anyone who plans to attend is asked to call 731-881-7629 to R.S.V.P.

Ronnie “Coach” L. Lewellen, 66, of Dresden, died Sept. 16, 2008. He was a coach, principal, State Farm insurance agent and was retired from Tennessee Army National Guard. He was a member of Dresden First Baptist Church, was a former school board member, past president of Dresden Rotary Club, member of UT Martin Ghosts of the Gridiron, the Football Hall of Fame and served on UT Martin Alumni Council.

Computer awareness class offered

The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of Extended Campus and Online Studies is offering a Beginner PC class using Microsoft Windows from 9 a.m.-noon, Dec. 15 and 17.

The instructor for the course is Doug Bloodworth, UT Martin analyst and programmer. The registration fee is $85.

Participants will expand their knowledge of using a computer. Students will learn about the desktop, taskbar, control panel, administration tools, backups, My Documents folder, task manager, how to change common settings and more.

Other topics include browsing the Internet, antivirus and antispyware software, security updates and home networking.

To register, call UT Martin Office of Extended Campus and Online Studies at 731-881-7082.
UTM bass anglers team finishes 13th in tourney

The UT Martin bass anglers team of Jordan Birch and Kevin Shorey finished 13th out of 20 teams in the National Guard FLW College Fishing Regional Championship presented by Land O’ Lakes, Nov. 21-23, on Lake Monroe in Sanford, Fla.

The University of Florida won the tournament and for their efforts, the team received a Ranger 177TR with a 90-horsepower Evinrude or Yamaha outboard wrapped in school colors and $25,000 for the university.

Birch and Shorey earned a spot in the tournament after finishing 4th among 40 teams at the National Guard FLW College Fishing Tournament, May 2, at Santee Cooper’s John C. Land III Landing in Manning, S.C. Birch is a business management major from Drummonds, and Shorey is an agriculture major from Thompsons Station.

The Lake Monroe tournament was one of five regional bass-fishing tournaments being held around the country.

The top-5 finishers from each regional will qualify to compete in the college fishing national championship, April 10-12, 2010, at Ft. Loudon-Tellico lakes east of Lenoir City near Knoxville.

Other Tennessee teams qualifying for the Lake Monroe tournament included UT Knoxville and Freed-Hardeman University.

Complete tournament results can be found at http://www.collegefishing.com/tournament.cfm.

Byford honored at retirement dinner

Jim Byford, University of Tennessee Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean, will be honored Dec. 12 with a retirement dinner to include the launching of the James L. Byford Scholarship Endowment fund.

Dinner is at 6 p.m. in the Duncan Ballroom of Boling University Center. The cost is $30 per person. Reservations are due by Friday.

The celebration will continue at 7 p.m. in Watkins Auditorium, which is free and open to the public.

Byford joined the university in 1987 and also serves as professor of wildlife biology. He received a bachelor’s degree at UT Martin and a doctorate at Auburn University.

The Wildlife Society, based in Bethesda, Md., recently presented Byford with lifetime honorary membership.

As a certified professional wildlife biologist, he spent 20 years as extension wildlife specialist in Georgia and Tennessee, giving presentations and writing articles on wildlife conservation. Byford was featured in the 1983 Sports Afield hunting annual, the June 1985 issue of Outdoor Life and appeared regularly on TNN Outdoors from 1996-98.

He has been a speaker at seminars on agriculture, land management and natural resource conservation throughout the U.S., Ecuador and Japan. He authored a book through U.T. Press titled “Close To The Land.”

For more information about the endowment, call the UT Martin Office of Development, at (731) 881-7620. To make reservations for the dinner, call the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences at (731) 881-7250.

Named national winner

Andrew Thomas Collier, a University of Tennessee at Martin sophomore agriculture major and a collegiate chapter member, recently was recognized as a National FFA Proficiency Award Winner.

Collier, of Lebanon, won in the 2009 Diversified Horticulture — Entrepreneurship/Placement category.

Collier’s interest in nursery and landscaping plants began when he started helping someone with an annual plant sale. As the Wilson Central FFA member continued to help, he began to become familiar with planting, watering and the placement of mums. Along with that familiarity, he also began helping to maintain the farm, mowing and landscaping.

His interest then took a slight turn, when he began to work at the local golf course, where he managed the agricultural-based side of the business, including the putting greens, and made sure the grounds were maintained.

Collier is supported in his endeavors by his parents, Jeff and Melodie Collier, as well as his high school FFA advisors, Beiny McDonald and Pam Walker.
Superheroes join forces in UT Martin photo exhibit

It could be the largest gathering of superheroes since the last time the world needed saving from a notorious comic villain. Trevor Ruszkowski’s “Superheroes Project,” exhibited at the University of Tennessee at Martin, likely will evoke memories of settling in to watch a capped crusader on the big screen or getting lost in a comic book tale. The exhibition will open at 3:30 p.m., November 17, in the Houston Gordon Museum in Paul Meek Library and continue until December 24.

Ruszkowski, UT Martin photographer, is a native of South Bend, Indiana. He graduated from the University of Evansville, where he studied graphic design and photography and minored in mass communications. He also studied at the Portfolio Center, Atlanta, Georgia, and still maintains a freelance studio, TR22 photography and Design. He has served as a team photographer for the WUSA Atlanta Beat, as well as the United Soccer League’s Atlanta Silverbacks and freelanced design projects for various clients. Ruszkowski has been published in Sports Illustrated, Dime Magazine, ESPN.com, the Washington Post, numerous area newspapers, Soccer America and the Studebaker museum book. He also has two Upper Deck basketball cards. He has shot for numerous major sporting events, including the Sugar Bowl. While at Martin, he was the lead designer of the new athletic marks.

“For as long as I can remember, my life and the fictional world of superheroes have intertwined, but the wall between imagination and reality never blurred,” said Ruszkowski. “In this project, I wanted to blur the line.”

The project was conceived while Ruszkowski was in graduate school, but came to life in the spring of 2007, during a UT Martin soccer team trip to a critical-care children’s ward in Jackson. “I asked the nurse in charge if they would like a few superhero pictures to hang on the walls, to help make a hospital experience seem a bit more kid-friendly. She agreed.” He added, “I have always wanted to create ‘supers’ with real people.”

Film-photography technique alone could not integrate superpower effects with portrait photographs. Using both traditional photographic and digital editing skills would achieve the effect. At first, it was to be six images, printed, framed, and presented to the hospital. All he needed were the models and costumes. He picked six prospective models from among UT Martin students. The six were all measured, and with help from Melissa Holli, Department of Visual and Theatre Arts lecturer, the costumes were created.

“After posting the first images, I had a reaction from the students that I did not expect, suddenly everyone wanted to be a super. Now I had plenty of models and characters, but where to get the additional costumes?”

Norman Antonio, who creates custom costumes in Canada, was the answer to the costume question. Ruszkowski picked out the characters and created each costume design, which sometimes was a hybrid between movie wardrobes and comic book drawings. He translated that idea into wearable structures. These supers needed to be real. The fundamental question behind each costume design is, is it something that will be recognizable and could it be worn if this character were real?

“Each model brought with them energy and a willingness to let the costumes and their actions tell who they were. I think each model had a good time pretending to be super human. Each shot became something of a time portal back to being younger and wearing Ninja Turtle Underoos.”

Ruszkowski explained that the digital manipulations were key to the character identity and superhero ‘realism.’ Would it be comic or actual? “I wanted it to feel real visually, but needed help.”

Alex Harrison, of Martin, university relations photography intern, “has been a great help with all the digital manipulation. The effects he created really pushed the project to a higher level,” said Ruszkowski.

“Through some brainstorming, I came up with a visual effect to exemplify a character’s super power and then asked Alex if he could make that happen. It was always yes. It has taken two years to create these supers, but the process has created a quality consistent presentation.”

The project grew from six to 36 different super characters. A large photomontage print of the supers will be printed and mailed thanks to Jowers Printing, of Martin. “I hope that these panels bring smiles to sick kids,” said Ruszkowski. “I also hope that viewers who see them remember what it was like to let their imagination go. Sometimes it is just good to play, to reinvigorate imagination to get lost in a fantastic world that has no bounds.”

For more information, call 731-881-7615.
Can Caravan lets schools take part in helping others at Santa’s Village

When Santa’s Village opens December 10 for its 25th year of fun and entertainment, many hours of preparation have already taken place. By then, crews have moved through the Ned McWhitter Agricultural Complex creating a holiday fantasyland. Thousands of lights, holiday trees and scenes have been placed, musical performers have been scheduled and additional volunteers have been lined up to staff the 20-hour event.

Another part of the preparation is undertaken each year by WCMT and Oldies 95.1, part of Thunderbolt Broadcasting, Inc. The stations conduct a canned food drive in all the county’s schools. The Can Caravan began in 1984 after Paul Tinkle, president and general manager, learned of the success of a similar effort in another city. The next year, the Can Caravan became a part of Santa’s Village. All Weakley County Schools have participated from the beginning when 5,000 cans were collected.

Lana Carpenter, of WCMT and Oldies 95.1, is in her third year directing the effort following Misty Mencer, Cindy Prince, Tinkle, Lana Rogers, Barbara Roberts and Laura Rogers at the helm.

“ ‘The hardest part each year is making sure that the children at the schools remember to bring cans in,” said Carpenter. “I do my best to send them regular reminders and encourage them to help others.” She added, “The teachers at the schools and parents of students really deserve a lot of credit. They push the kids to get those cans in for people that are in need. Weakley County loves Santa’s Village, and the county schools want to make sure that it is a huge success.’ Carpenter also pointed to the help of the University of Tennessee at Martin Student Athlete Advisory Council during the last several years as a key component of the project’s success. “With the help of athletes from UT Martin, it takes about eight hours to go to all Weakley County Schools,” said Carpenter. Prior to receiving help from the student athletes, radio station staff often spent two days making the collections.

While the exact number of cans collected throughout the 25 years is not known, it is estimated to about 200,000 pounds of food.

“ ‘WCMT and Oldies 95.1 is proud to lead the Can Caravan,” said Tinkle. “I have been a part of this since the beginning. I hope it continues to be such a success and that we can be a part of it.” Carpenter added, “I enjoy spending the day collecting cans and knowing that they will help the people of Weakley County. I couldn’t do it without Danielle Fabianich (UT Martin Athletics business manager) and the athletic department at UT Martin. Giving back to the community is what it’s all about.”

Slated for 6-9 p.m., December 10-11; 11 a.m.-9 p.m., December 12; and 1-5 p.m., December 13, Santa’s Village will feature an “Enchanted Forest” theme in scenes depicting the holidays. Also included will be a giant Christmas tree, wagon rides on Friday through Sunday, MTD model train display, children’s rides and vendor booths. Twenty hours of continuous local entertainment and an expanded petting farm will add to the festivities. Doors open at 6 p.m., December 10. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of nonperishable food and/or toys.

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include: University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital.

For more information about Santa’s Village, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-387-6784.

UT-Martin installs new alert system

Officials at the University of Tennessee at Martin have implemented a new outdoor alert system.

The new system, costing approximately $10,000, is similar to a tornado siren, but has the added capability of allowing school leaders to make announcements to campus students.

UTM Director of Public Safety Scott Robbins said the main objective in any type of emergency was to get the word out to students as quickly as possible.

In the past, the University used text messaging, phone, e-mail and word-of-mouth systems to alert students of bad weather and other dangerous situations, but University leaders say sometimes those measures simply take too long.

By reducing critical minutes off the time it takes to warn students in the event of an emergency situation, the new system has the potential of saving lives.

In the event of an approaching tornado, severe thunderstorm, or other emergency that threatens the safety of UT-Martin students, the new system provides warning in seconds instead of minutes.
UT Martin SMACS hosts Merit Badge Clinic for Scouts

The Student Members of the American Chemical Society (SMACS) at the University of Tennessee at Martin recently hosted a science activities clinic attended by local Boy Scouts. Among Dresden Scout Troop #40 participants were (front row, left to right): Blake Caelton, Josh Colley, Dravin Irvine, Thomas Nichols, Zach Purvis; (back row, left to right): Adam Travis (SMACS), Dahlia Haddad (SMACS), Punam Patel (SMACS) and Eddie Capps (Scout Master).

Big band, small jazz group to perform free concert

The University of Tennessee at Martin big band and small jazz group will be performing a concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the Duncan Ballroom of Boling University Center on campus.

The program will include the music of Oliver Nelson, Benny Carter, Charles Mingus, Tito Puente and others.

The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Dr. Kurt Gorman, associate professor of music, at (731) 881-7404 or kgorman@utm.edu.
Fossil donation comes with personal explanation by collector

A collection of trilobites recently joined other fossil collections at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The collector, George Stone, of Cartherville, Illinois, delivered to the university a large number of museum-quality trilobites and, while he was on campus, spoke to students in Dr. Michael Gibson's paleontology class. The trilobites will be the focus of a hallway display, with some (on loan from UT Martin) going into Discovery Park in Union City.

Trilobites, similar to today's horseshoe crabs, are part of a fossil group of extinct marine arthropods that form the class Trilobita. Trilobites first appeared in the fossil record during the Early Cambrian period (540 million years ago), thrived throughout the lower Paleozoic era before facing extinction when, during the Devonian, all trilobite orders, with the sole exception of Proetida, died out. Trilobites finally disappeared in a mass extinction at the end of the Permian about 250 million years ago.

The trilobites were collected by Stone and his wife, Janet, at a site in Bowling Green, Missouri. The fossils were found in Maquoketa Shale. These trilobites belong to the genus Isotelus, several species of which are sometimes found in Tennessee. The Stone Trilobites are special because of their unusually good preservation, even after 500 million years. Most of the specimens are complete, meaning the animals did not go through the typical molting stage to shed their shells to grow larger that usually fragments the exoskeleton. Most likely this is due to rapid burial on the ancient seafloor. The good preservation makes teaching trilobite anatomy and physiology to students much easier.

Stone has donated specimens to a number of institutions in multiple states. Retired as president of the Sangamon State University (now the University of Illinois at Springfield) Foundation, he has spent considerable time amassing his collection, beginning in 1983. He is joined frequently on his quests by his wife, who retired as deputy director of health protection for the state of Illinois. In fact, the couple's first date was to fossil hunt.

"It gives you a glimpse of the life of the Ordovician time (second period of the Paleozoic Era, from about 505 to 438 million years ago)," said Stone, "These only lived about two million years. They lived in a marine environment that is now above water."

Mrs. Stone explained the donations to colleges and universities saying, "It is important that they (students) be able to feel them, to touch them, see how they're put together and how they broke apart and know that they were real."

A trilobite in the collection George Stone recently donated to the University of Tennessee at Martin is pictured.

"We are honored that he has chosen UT Martin as home to part of this collection," said Gibson. "Dr. Stone's collection joins other significant fossil collection donations to the university, including the Witherspoon Collection, Vanderbilt Collection and Hammons Collection." For more information contact Gibson at 731-881-7435.

The Memphis University School Science Bowl team won the 30th annual High School Science Bowl competition at the University of Tennessee - Martin on Nov. 14. Coached by Dr. Michael Schwartz, MUS Science Department chairman, and Analice Sowell, MUS chemistry instructor, members of the team include junior Howard Choi (front row, left); senior Colin Thomas, team captain; seniors Andrew Chinn (back row, left) and Will Taylor; and sophomores Michael Green, Mark Sorensen and Nicholas Rouse.
Gale recognized a Featured Faculty Scholar

Dr. Paula Gale, center, University of Tennessee at Martin professor of soil science, was recently named the Fall 2009 Featured Faculty Scholar, pictured with Dr. Jerald Ogg, UT Martin vice chancellor for academic affairs, left, and Dr. Jim Byford, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean.

Dr. Paula Gale, University of Tennessee at Martin professor of soil science, was recently named the Fall 2009 Featured Faculty Scholar.

Each semester, the university recognizes outstanding faculty for excellence in teaching and scholarship. Gale received a bachelor of science degree in soil science, and a doctorate in soil biochemistry from the University of Arkansas.

Gale joined the UT Martin faculty in 1994 from the University of Florida, Gainesville. Gale teaches in both the Department of Agriculture and Applied Sciences and the Center for Excellence in Experiential Learning in the Agricultural Sciences. She is an adviser to undergraduate students in environmental and agricultural soil sciences. Her work includes teaching courses in soil and wetland sciences, coaching the soil judging team, developing analytical laboratory capabilities for the department and providing leadership in the Tennessee Governor’s School for the Agricultural Sciences. Gale also has an extensive list of publications and presentations.

Other activities include serving as the UT Martin Agronomy Club and Community Garden faculty adviser and chair of the No Child Left Inside Conference organizational committee. She is an active member of the American Society of Agronomy and Soil Science Society of America and has held several leadership positions with these organizations. Currently, she is serving as chair of Division S-10 Wetland Soils. She is also a member of the Tennessee Academy of Science, Soil and Water Conservation Society and Soil Scientist Association of Tennessee. She has received the Teaching Award of Merit from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture and was twice named UT Martin Outstanding Educator, among other honors.

A sample of Gale’s publications and accomplishments is on display in the Paul Meek Library on the UT Martin campus.

Entertainers share talent to help Santa’s Village cause

Performers who will take the stage during Santa’s Village to provide 20 hours of continuous entertainment at the 25th annual event include winners and finalists in several area talent contests.

The Dec. 10-13 lineup features entertainers from across the region. They range in age from 6-65.

Finalists from the Kentucky Opry Talent Contest, as well as winners of the Soybean Talent Show and Soybean Idol, are among the entertainers to be featured this year. Performing among these finalists is 2009 Teen Miss Soybean Tara Marshall Elam of Union City. Also appearing will be youth and adults playing guitars, violins, accordions, bells, banjos, harps and piano. Friday night, there will be a 22-member ballet group performing from 6:30 p.m. On Sunday afternoon, there will be the singing group “Hands Lifted High” performing at 3 p.m.

This year’s Santa’s Village theme is “Enchanted Forest.” It is slated for 6-9 p.m. Dec. 10; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Dec. 12; and 1-5 p.m. Dec. 13 at the University of Tennessee at Martin’s Ag Pavilion. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Dec. 10. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of nonperishable foods and/or toys.

Reba Wade of Reba Wade Music Studio in Martin has volunteered as entertainment coordinator of Santa’s Village for the 25 years.

“Being given the opportunity to help someone in need is the best gift anyone could ever receive,” Ms. Wade said. “It’s a blessing from God. We’re thankful for the opportunity.”

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, the Obion County chapter of Entertainment... (Continued from Page One) the American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional confirmed sponsors of the event include University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital. As part of the event each year, WCMT sponsors a can caravan for canned food donations collected at schools.

For more information about Santa’s Village, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at (731) 587-6784.
See the world via UT Martin travel-study trips

From Egypt to the Amazon, London to Japan, Paris to Washington, D.C., the University of Tennessee at Martin Center for International Education will offer 22 travel-study programs in 2010.

Trips begin in October with a travel-study program to New Orleans led by Glen Byrd, instructor in the Intensive English Language Program. Next, there is a trip planned to the Amazon, Jan. 2-12. Dr. Sue Byrd, professor of family and consumer sciences, Dr. Bradley Ray, assistant professor of fisheries, and Scott Pun, lecturer of health and human performance, will lead the trip. Also in January is a travel-study trip to Egypt. Set for Jan. 3-15, this trip will be led by Dr. Mahmoud Haddad, professor of finance.

A list of other trip dates, destinations and department faculty leaders includes: February—Los Angeles/Southwest, Dr. Donna Anderson, assistant professor of criminal justice; March—Italy/Venice/Florence/Rome, Stan Sieber, professor of history; and Dr. John Overby, Department of Management, Marketing, Computer Science and Information Systems chair; March 10-22—London/Orléans, Dr. Tom Payne, Department of Accounting, Finance, Economics and Political Science interim chair; March 10-22—London/Paris, Ruby Black, professor of nursing, and Linda Luther, assistant professor of nursing; March—Saltillo, Mexico, Dr. Joey Meltz, professor of agricultural economics, and Andrew Brown, International Initiatives assistant director, March-New York, Dr. Brian Donavant, assistant professor of criminal justice, and May 17-31—England/Ireland, Dr. Dan McDonough, professor of history, and Dr. Lionel Crews, assistant professor of physics.

The list also includes: May—Amsterdam, Leslie LaChance, associate professor of English; May 17-25—South Korea, JC Kim, assistant professor of health and human performance; May 17-31—Desert Southwest, Charles Bradshaw, associate professor of English and Dr. Eric Pelten, professor of wildlife biology; May—Germany, Dr. Chuck Hammond, assistant professor of German; May—Oregon, Scott Pun, lecturer of health and human performance; May 22-June 2—Paris/Normandy, Dr. Lucia Flordo, associate professor of French; May—Washington, D.C., Darrell Simmons, Department of Public Safety police lieutenant; May—June—Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland (Holocaust), Dr. Alice-Catherine Carls, professor of history; June—Japan, Kyoko Hammond, lecturer of Japanese; July—Switzerland/Austria/Germany, Stan Sieber, professor of history; Summer—Hawaii, Mike Sudzum, university travel consultant, and Lorrie Jackson, Center for International Education administrative services assistant.

For more information, visit the Web site, at www.utm.edu/departments/globalstudies, or call the center at ext. 1023.

Byford to be honored at retirement dinner

Dr. Jim Byford, University of Tennessee at Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean and former Trenton resident, will be honored December 12 with a retirement dinner highlighted by the launching of the James L. Byford Scholarship Endowment fund. Dinner will begin at 6 p.m. in Duncan Ballroom of Boling University Center. The cost is $30 per person, and reservations are due by December 4.

The celebration will continue in Watkins Auditorium at 7 p.m., which is free and open to the public.

Byford joined the university in 1987 and also serves as professor of wildlife biology. He received a bachelor's degree at UT Martin and a doctorate at Auburn University. In recognition of his contributions to the wildlife profession through four decades as an "exemplary steward, educator, scientist and administrator," The Wildlife Society, based in Bethesda, Maryland, recently presented Byford with lifetime honorary membership.

Dr. Jim Byford

As a certified professional wildlife biologist since 1979, he spent 20 years as extension wildlife specialist in Georgia and Tennessee—giving hundreds of presentations and writing numerous articles on wildlife conservation. Byford was featured in the 1983 Sports Afield hunting annual, the June 1985 issue of Outdoor Life and appeared regularly on TNN Outdoors from 1996-98. He has been a speaker at numerous seminars on agriculture, land management and natural resource conservation throughout the U.S., Ecuador and Japan. In 1999, he authored a book through U.T. Press, titled "Close To The Land."

For more information about the endowment, contact the UT Martin Office of Development at 731-881-7620. To make reservations for the dinner, contact the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences at 731-881-7250.
Service Learning, Volunteer Fair

The Department of Behavioral Sciences and the Institute for Civic Engagement at the University of Tennessee at Martin recently sponsored a Service Learning and Volunteer Fair that included organizations from surrounding Northwest Tennessee, Memphis and Jackson. Twenty-nine diverse organizations were able to recruit many student volunteers who stopped by to discuss volunteer opportunities. A growing number of courses at UT Martin are including services learning or a community service component. Pictured are (from left) Tina McClellan and Rachel Hoyt, representing Girl Scouts, Heart of the South, and Brooklyn Edwards of Trenton.

UT Martin vocal recital scheduled

The University of Tennessee at Martin Department of Music has planned an evening of vocal music performed by students for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Trinity Presbyterian Church of Martin. The recital will feature students of Dr. Roberto Mancusi, assistant professor of music, and Dr. Amy Yeung, associate professor of music, who will perform one song each. Delana Easley, lecturer of music, and several students will accompany the performers on piano.

The performance is free and open to the public, according to a spokesman.
Race a good experience for UT Martin students

The West Tennessee Baja racing team didn’t finish what they started Nov. 19, at the Tecate SCORE Baja 1000, a 24-hour off-road race in Ensenada, Mexico. Although the team’s car was unable to complete its inaugural race, University of Tennessee at Martin engineering professor Bob LeMaster described the competition as “a good experience” while he looks ahead to future races.

LeMaster led the 12-member West Tennessee Baja team to build a Class 1 desert racecar to compete in the Baja SAE Series. The 4,000-pound, 650-horsepower vehicle was built to compete in rugged off-road terrain. He became interested in building the car through the university’s participation in the Little Baja Project. His UT Martin engineering students build a small Baja racecar each year that competes against racing teams from other universities.

Although his West Tennessee Baja team was prepared for adverse racing conditions, “extremely fine” dust proved to be the car’s undoing.

“Our air filters kept getting clogged, which caused the engine to quit,” LeMaster said in a post-race summary. “When the engine quit, the power steering would go out and we would lose control for short periods of time. We also lost a lot of power because the engine couldn’t get enough air. We decided that this was an unsafe condition and packed it in before entering a mountainous region that had 1,500 foot drop-offs along the side of the road.”

Ironically, LeMaster said that the team had a second filtration system that would have handled the dusty conditions much better, but they chose not to bring it to Ensenada.

LeMaster’s original goal was to start and finish this first race (eight of the 22 cars that started the race did not finish), but he’s far from discouraged.

“Everyone was impressed with our car and were surprised that we designed and built it ourselves,” he said. “We made a lot of contacts and now have a better understanding of the environment that we’ll be racing in.”

More about the November race can be found online at www.score-international.com, while information about West Tennessee Baja can be found online at www.west-tennessee-baja.com.

GOSPEL CHOIR PERFORMS
Choir from UTM. 5 p.m. Dec. 10 at Oak Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Jackson. Call 587-5124.

PIANO LESSONS:
INSTANT PIANO FOR HOPELESSLY BUSY PEOPLE
Instructor is David Haynes, 6 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday in University of Tennessee at Martin McNairy County Center, Selmer. Fee: $49 plus a $25 supply fee.

THE WEAKLEY COUNTY PRESS

Santa’s Village marks 25 years, Dec. 10–13

Santa’s Village will celebrate its 25th year on Dec. 10–13. The holiday fantasyland, which provides the sights, sounds and fun of Christmas and benefits local service agencies, is staged each year at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

It is slated for 6-9 p.m., Dec. 10–11; 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Dec. 12; and 1-5 p.m., Dec. 13. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of nonperishable foods and/or toys.

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include: University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, Frontier, MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital.

As part of the event each year, WCMT sponsors a can canvas for canned food donations collected at the schools.

For more information, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.
First race “a good experience” for West Tennessee Baja team

AT THE STARTING LINE – West Tennessee Baja’s entry in the Tecate SCORE Baja 1000 approaches the starting line Nov. 19 in Ensenada, Mexico, for the team’s first-ever professional off-road race. The car was one of 22 entries in the class. Team leader and driver Dr. Bob LeMaster described the race as “a good experience” and is optimistic about future races. More about West Tennessee Baja can be found at http://west-tennessee-baja.com/.

The West Tennessee Baja racing team didn’t finish what they started Nov. 19 at the Tecate SCORE Baja 1000, a 24-hour off-road race in Ensenada, Mexico. Although the team’s car was unable to complete its inaugural race, University of Tennessee at Martin engineering professor Bob LeMaster described the competition as “a good experience” while he looks ahead to future races.

LeMaster led the 12-member West Tennessee Baja team to build a Class 1 desert racecar to compete in the Baja SAE Series. The 4,000-pound, 650-horsepower vehicle was built to compete in rugged off-road terrain. He became interested in building the car through the university’s participation in the Little Baja Project. His UT Martin engineering students build a small Baja racecar each year that competes against racing teams from other universities.

Although his West Tennessee Baja team was prepared for adverse racing conditions, “extremely fine” dust proved to be the car’s undoing. “Our air filters kept getting clogged, which caused the engine to quit,” LeMaster said in a post-race summary. “When the engine quit, the power steering would go out, and we would lose control for short periods of time.

“We also lost a lot of power because the engine couldn’t get enough air. We decided that this was an unsafe condition and packed it in before entering a mountainous region that had 1,500 foot drop-offs along the side of the road.” Ironically, LeMaster said that the team had a second filtration system that would have handled the dusty conditions much better, but they chose not to bring it to Ensenada.

LeMaster’s original goal was to start and finish this first race (8 of the 22 cars that started the race did not finish), but he’s far from discouraged. “Everyone was impressed with our car and were surprised that we designed and built it ourselves,” he said. “We made a lot of contacts and now have a better understanding of the environment that we’ll be racing in.”

More about the November race can be found at http://www.score-international.com/, while information about West Tennessee Baja can be found at http://west-tennessee-baja.com/.
Ford Little is UT Martin commencement speaker

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, will deliver the fall commencement address at the University of Tennessee at Martin, at 11 a.m., Dec. 19, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Approximately 635 degrees are expected to be awarded.

Little (UT Knoxville '86) earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He is a partner with the law firm of Woolf, McClane, Bright, Allen and Carpenter who devotes the majority of his practice to representing construction companies.

Before becoming president of UTAA, Little's involvement began as an undergraduate when he was president of the Student Alumni Associates.

He held offices in the Knox County UT alumni chapter and also served on the Alumni Association Board of Governors and its executive committee.

He currently serves as UTAA National Chair of Annual Giving. Little's history with the UTAA goes back to his grandfather, Joe Little (Knoxville '39), who was UTAA president in 1960.

Little's mother, Becky, (Knoxville '62) is a former UTAA treasurer and also served on the alumni staff. His father, Joe Little Jr. has two engineering degrees from UT Knoxville ('63, '65).

His brother, Dr. John Little is a 1992 graduate of the Health Science Center, and his sister, Mary Helen Little Story, graduated from UT School of Law in 1996.


He is a board member of the East Tennessee chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, and is active in the Construction Financial Management Association and the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel.

Little is also a member of the Inn of Court, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessee Bar Association, and American Bar Association where he is a member of the Forum on the Construction Industry.

He and his wife, Malinda, have two children, son, James, and daughter, Carleen.

UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes will preside over the exercises and confer degrees. Dr. Robert Harthorn, University of Tennessee Alumni Association Alumni Distinguished Service Professor, will be the mace bearer, and the procession marshals will be Jenna Wright, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Janet Wilbert, Faculty Senate vice president; Al Hooten, vice chancellor for finance and administration; and Len Solomons, vice chancellor for university advancement.

A reception will be hosted in Skyhawk Fieldhouse immediately following the commencement ceremony.

---

Humboldt Chronicle, Wednesday, December 9, 2009

UT MARTIN PREVIEW DAY - Jennifer Crews, a student at North Side High School in Jackson, Tenn., pictured with her father, Mark Crews of Humboldt, attended the recent UT Martin Preview Day. More than 370 students were in attendance and received information about a variety of topics, including scholarships and financial aid, college and housing costs and various university academic programs.

---

STATE GAZETTE | WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2009

Barr promoted

UT MARTIN SCIENCE BOWL – Westview High School was one of the ten schools which participated in the 30th annual High School Science Bowl sponsored by the University of Tennessee at Martin chapter of the Student Members of the American Chemical Society on November 14. Mariano D’Aprille received the highest score among the students of Westview High School and made the merit list in the chemistry and physics categories. Timothy Bergman and Rachel Coleman also made the merit list in the chemistry category; Melissa Darroch and Julie Reddick made the merit list in the biology category and Tony Tang made the merit list in the physics category. Pictured left to right are, row one: Ava Abad, Dionna Alaba, Devash Acharya, Timothy Bergman, Chantia Brown, Cara Burnham; row 2: Rachel Coleman, Franco D’Aprille, Mariano D’Aprille, Melissa Darroch, Ashleigh Fabianich, Rayn Farris; row three: Jessica Hightower (teacher), Pauline Ferguson, Rachel Fowler, Miles Gearin, Saba Getaneh, Brandt Gibson; row four: Kim Simmons (teacher), Traneka Harrell, Abraham Haddad, Barkley Legens, Sydney McClure, Katie McKenzie, Jesi Ogg; row five: Saumil Patel, Julie Reddick, Rachel Samuel, Tamika Sanchez, Tony Tang; row six: Dr. S.K. Airee, professor of chemistry, Tyler Willis, Kristin Williams, Bryelle White, Macy Vincent and Charmell Trice.

DRESDEN ENTERPRISE, Dresden, Tennessee, Wednesday, December 9, 2009

UT Martin student is National FFA Proficiency Award Winner

Andrew Thomas Collier, a University of Tennessee at Martin sophomore agriculture major and a collegiate chapter member, recently was recognized as a National FFA Proficiency Award Winner. Collier, of Lebanon, won in the 2009 Diversified Horticulture - Entrepreneurship/Placement category. Collier’s interest in nursery and landscaping plants began when he started helping someone with an annual plant sale. As the Wilson Central FFA member continued to help, he began to become familiar with planting, watering and the placement of mums. Along with that familiarity, he also began helping to maintain the farm, mowing and landscaping. His interest then took a slight turn, when he began to work at the local golf course, where he managed the agricultural-based side of the business, including the putting greens, and made sure the grounds were maintained. Collier is supported in his endeavors by his parents, Jeff and Melodie Collier, as well as his high school FFA advisors, Benny McDonald and Pam Walker.
Ford Little to speak at Fall Commencement

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, will deliver the fall commencement address at the University of Tennessee at Martin, at 11 a.m., December 19, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Approximately 655 degrees are expected to be awarded.

Little (UT Knoxville ’86) earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He is a partner with the law firm of Woolf, McClane, Bright, Allen and Carpenter, who devotes the majority of his practice to representing construction companies. Before becoming president of UTAA, Little’s involvement began as an undergraduate when he was president of the Student Alumni Associates. He held all offices in the Knox County UT alumni chapter and also served on the Alumni Association Board of Governors and its executive committee. He currently serves as UTAA National Chair of Annual Giving. Little’s history with the UTAA goes back to his grandfather, Joe Little (Knoxville ’39), who was UTAA president in 1960. Little’s mother, Becky, (Knoxville ’62) is a former UTAA treasurer and also served on the alumni staff. His father, Joe Little Jr. has two engineering degrees from UT Knoxville (’63, ’65). His brother, Dr. John Little is a 1992 graduate of the Health Science Center, and his sister, Mary Helen Little Stroy, graduated from UT School of Law in 1996.

Little was named to U.S. News and World Report’s “The Best Lawyers in America” (2009) and Knoxville’s Cityview Magazine “Top Attorney” (2007, 2009). He is a board member of the East Tennessee chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, and is active in the Construction Financial Management Association and the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel. Little is also a member of the Inn of Court, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessee Bar Association and American Bar Association, where he is a member of the Forum on the Construction Industry.

He and his wife, Malinda, have two children, son, James, and daughter, Carleen.

UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes will preside over the exercises and confer degrees. Dr. Robert Hartshorn, University of Tennessee Alumni Association Alumni Distinguished Service Professor, will be the mace bearer, and the procession marshals will be Jenna Wright, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Janet Wilbert, Faculty Senate vice president; Al Hooten, vice chancellor for finance and administration; and Len Solomon, vice chancellor for university advancement.

A reception will be hosted in Skyhawk Fieldhouse immediately following the commencement ceremony.

UTM students receive ACS Chapter Award

The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Members of the American Chemical Society chapter recently received a commendable rating from the Society Committee on Chemical Education (SOCED) and the Green Chapter Award from the Green Chemistry Institute of ACS for its activities in 2008-09. The chapter activities of the last year included “chemagic” shows for UT Martin students, a National Chemistry Week observance and, for local high school and elementary school, the High School Science Bowl, Chemistry Merit Badge Clinic for Boy Scouts of America, co-hosting of the Area Collegiate Chemistry Meeting at Murray where the ACS president spoke and five UT Martin presentations were among the 16 student research papers. The local chapter also co-sponsored the new recycling facility in Martin, and three green chemistry speakers, several socials and organizational meetings and participation in the Kentucky Lake Section ACS. The chapter has been rated highly by ACS SOCED for more than 30 years and won the Green Chapter Award every year since the award was established in 2002. The local chapter leads the 900+ chapters nationwide in receiving high ratings and awards. Seated left to right are UT Martin faculty adviser, Dr. S. K. Airee, president, Kayla A. Poindexter of Murfreesboro; Chancellor Tom Rakes; standing, executive committee member, Lepold M. Phiapalath of Memphis; treasurer Ashish J. Patel of Columbia; vice president, Punam Patel of Martin; secretary, Casey Unger of Martin; and executive committee member, James K. Griffin of Lexington. Not pictured are two executive committee members, Elizabeth A. Abernathy of Pulaski; and Carolyn U. Nguyen of Smyrna.
Knoxville attorney to speak at UT Martin commencement

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, will deliver the fall commencement address at the University of Tennessee at Martin at 11 a.m. Dec. 19 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

About 635 degrees are expected to be awarded.

Little (UT Knoxville 1986) earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He is a partner with the law firm of Woolf, McClane, Bright, Allen and Carpenter and devotes the majority of his practice to representing construction companies.

Before becoming president of UTAA, Little’s involvement began as an undergraduate when he was president of the Student Alumni Associates. He held all offices in the Knox County UT alumni chapter and also served on the Alumni Association Board of Governors and its executive committee. He currently serves as UTAA national chair of Annual Giving. Little's history with the UTAA goes back to his grandfather, Joe Little (Knoxville 1939), who was UTAA president in 1960. Little’s mother, Becky (Knoxville 1962), is a former UTAA treasurer and also served on the alumni staff. His father, Joe Little Jr., has two engineering degrees from UT Knoxville (1963 and 1965). His brother, Dr. John Little, is a 1992 graduate of the Health Science Center, and his sister, Mary Helen Little Story, graduated from UT School of Law in 1996.


He is a board member of the East Tennessee chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, and is active in the Construction Financial Management Association and the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel. He is also a member of the Inn of Court, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessen Bar Association and American Bar Association, for which he is a member of the Forum on the Construction Industry.

He and his wife, Malinda, have two children: a son, James, and a daughter, Carlen.

UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes will preside over the commencement exercises and confer degrees on Dec. 19. Dr. Robert Harbison, University of Tennessee Alumni Association Alumni Distinguished Service Professor, will be the mace bearer and the processional marshals will be Jenna Wright, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Janet Wilbert, Faculty Senate vice president; Al Hooten, vice chancellor for finance and administration; and Len Solomons, vice chancellor for university advancement.

A reception will be hosted in Skyhawk Fieldhouse immediately following the commencement ceremony.

Performers who will take the stage during Santa’s Village to provide 20 hours of continuous entertainment at the 25th annual event, include winners and finalists in several area talent contests. The December 10-13 lineup features entertainers from across the region. They range in age from 6-65.

Finalists from the Kentucky Opry Talent Contest, as well as winners of the Soybean Talent Show and Soybean Idol are among the entertainers to be featured this year. Performing among these finalists is 2009 Teen Miss Soybean, Tara Marshall Elam, of Union City. Also appearing will be youth and adults playing guitars, violins, accordions, bells, banjos, harps and piano.

Friday night, there will be a 22-member ballet group performing from 6-6:30 p.m. On Sunday afternoon, there will be the signing group, “Hands Lifted High,” performing at 2:10 p.m.

This year’s Santa’s Village theme is “Enchanted Forest.” It is slated for 6-9 p.m., December 10-11; 11 a.m.-9 p.m., December 12; and 1-5 p.m., December 13.

Doors open at 6 p.m., December 10. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of non-perishable foods and/or toys.

Reba Wade, of Reba Wade Music Studio in Martin, has volunteered as entertainment coordinator of Santa’s Village for 21 of the 25 years.

“Being given the opportunity to help someone in need is the best gift anyone could ever receive,” said Wade. “It’s a blessing from God. We’re thankful for the opportunity.”

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, NW TN Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

For more information about Santa’s Village, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.
Reagan Leave provides research time for three UTM faculty members

Three faculty members representing the Department of Chemistry, Dr. Jozsef Devenyi and Dr. Phillip Davis, and the Department of History and Philosophy, Dr. Christopher Brown, have been awarded Reagan Leaves for FY2009/2010. Devenyi (professor) is conducting research in Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge for the 2009/2010 academic year. Devenyi explained "there has been significant interest over the past several decades in creating active surfaces that respond to cues from their environment." Through collaborative research, Devenyi and his ORNL colleagues are working on the preparation of novel polymeric brushes where a layer of polymer chains are prepared and then tethered to a surface at one end thus forcing the polymer chains to extend away from the surface to avoid steric crowding. In the last phase of his work Devenyi plans to test the response of the prepared polymeric "brushes" to outside stimuli, such as pH, ionic strength, and temperature change.

Davis (professor) will research and revise instructional videos used in introductory chemistry laboratory courses at UT Martin. The revision will include retaping, editing and preparing the videos for delivery in multiple formats. He will also revise procedures for laboratory exercises in introductory chemistry courses at the university, which currently utilize the Calculator Based Laboratory (CBL) data collection interface to make these procedures compatible with the newer Lab Quest interface. "Through the Reagan Leave, I will have opportunities to tie together the various strands of course development currently in progress, which would be a source of considerable personal satisfaction to me and, ultimately, a benefit to UT Martin and its students," said Davis.

Brown (associate professor) will conduct research that will focus on the 13th century philosophical theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, and his views on the nature of objective happiness. Where subjective happiness refers to the experience of an overall positive feeling or mood, objective happiness refers to the satisfaction of those conditions necessary for living a human life that is good in all respects. Brown plans to make progress on a book project that puts the views of Aquinas into conversation with contemporary philosophical discussions of the nature of objective happiness. "The nature of human happiness is a subject getting a lot of attention from philosophers nowadays," said Brown, and "a book-length treatment of Aquinas’s views on human happiness would make a real contribution to contemporary discussions of that topic."

The UT Martin Hal and Alma Reagan Faculty Leave Program is designed to enable participants to become more effective teachers and scholars by engaging in a variety of academic/renewal experiences. Tenured faculty members with six or more years of full-time service at UT Martin can apply for either a one-year leave or a one-semester leave. The Faculty Research and Development Committee reviews completed application packages and determines the awardees based on an intensive rubric. More information about the Reagan Leave Program can be found at www.utm.edu/rgc/Faculty Research and Development.
Former UTM football player's donation establishes ‘walk-on’ scholarship

Wilbur Edmiston came to the University of Tennessee Martin Branch from Tipton County with a desire to play football and get an education. He left with a lot more, but the first year was tough.

"I had worked for two years after I graduated from high school and decided that I needed a college degree," Edmiston said. "I borrowed $250 from my grandmother and thought I would get the balance paid by earning a football scholarship."

Edmiston was devastated when he was cut from the team after the first two weeks of practice. After considering his options, he went back into coach Bob Carroll's office and begged for another chance. Coach Carroll was impressed by his determination and gave Edmiston that chance.

"As a coach, it was very rewarding to see Wilbur develop into an outstanding and versatile player," Carroll said. "His determination, pride, hard work and mental toughness enabled him to excel as a running back, kick returner, punter and defensive back. His story undoubtedly will inspire other young players to emulate his example."

Edmiston went on to become one of the most outstanding football players in UT Martin history, making all-conference two years in the Volunteer State Athletic Conference. He still ranks third among running backs in points scored in a season (64), fourth among running backs in points scored in a career (157) and second in points scored in a game. He ran for four touchdowns and a two-point conversion in 1961 (26 points) against the Missouri School of Mines (now the Missouri University of Science and Technology). Those rankings are even more impressive considering the football team only played an average of nine games per season from 1959-1962. Edmiston was inducted into the UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame in 1988.

Not only did Edmiston leave UT Martin in 1962 with a degree in secondary education (history) and a prominent place in the football record book; he met his future wife, Peggy, who was also a student at the time. Peggy became a successful public administrator and ultimately filled the position of Shelby County director of community services. She was asked to serve as a state commissioner in her area of expertise by two governors but gave preference to family priorities continued her career in Shelby County until her death at the age of 62. Peggy received the UT Martin Distinguished Service Award in 1999 which recognizes meritorious contributions by an individual on the local, state and national level.

As a tribute to the experiences of "walk-on" athletes like himself and in memory of his late wife, Peggy, Edmiston recently donated $50,000 to establish the Wilbur and Peggy Edmiston "Walk-on" Endowed Scholarship. The endowment's income will fund a scholarship for a football, baseball or men's basketball student-athlete who initially participated without any athletic scholarship. In addition, the student-athlete must demonstrate a need for financial assistance.

"After Wilbur first contacted me about this endowment we worked together to finalize criteria that modeled his experience and the experiences of many other hard-working student-athletes," said Phil Dane, director of athletics. "I am so proud that Wilbur is leaving this legacy, and I hope many other athletic alumni will contribute to this endowment as a tribute to their own experience or the experiences of other teammates they know. The walk-on athlete experience is an important part of any successful athletics program because it exemplifies the real history of intercollegiate athletics."
Cox receives ‘Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award’

Dr. Becky Cox, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant professor of educational studies, recently received the “Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award” for 2009 from the Tennessee Science Teachers Association. It was presented at the TSTA annual conference in Franklin. Cox joins three other 2009 recipients designated as Distinguished Science Teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary education divisions. The awardees were chosen from hundreds of science teachers across Tennessee as outstanding and exemplary teachers in the discipline. They have demonstrated a positive impact on the lives of their students by mastering their teaching skills. This award is Cox’s second from TSTA, having been awarded the 1998 Tennessee Science Teacher Association “Science Educator of the Year Grades K-3” while a third grade teacher. Cox joined the educational studies faculty in the fall of 2004. She currently teaches both undergraduate and graduate education students.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD – Dr. Becky Cox, left, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant professor of educational studies, recently received the “Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award” for 2009 from the Tennessee Science Teachers Association. Dr. Mary Lee Hall, right, UT Martin College of Education and Behavioral Sciences dean, was Cox’s guest at the awards luncheon.

RETIREMENT RECEPTION – The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of Human Resources recently hosted a retirement reception for Gertrude Myrick, human resources administrative specialist, in the Tennessee Room at the McCombs Center in honor of her service of 46 years and four months. She is retiring Dec. 31. Among those attending the reception were, from left, back row, Tiffany Franklin (former longtime student worker in payroll) currently in the Office of Admissions; Sherry Shanklin, human resources-benefits; Lara Mueller, temporary employee for human resources-employment; Judy McMorries, human resources-payroll; Marcia Tuck, human resources-employment; front row, J. Phillip Bright, human resources director; Myrick; Caryl Martin, human resources retiree.
Edmiston creates ‘walk-on’ scholarship at UTM

Wilbur Edmiston has not forgotten where he came from, and he has established a “walk-on” scholarship at UT Martin, his alma mater.

Edmiston has donated $50,000 to establish the Wilbur and Peggy Edmiston “Walk-on” Scholarship for a football, baseball or men’s basketball student-athlete who initially participated without an athletic scholarship while demonstrating a need for financial assistance.

Edmiston, 70, participated as a football walk-on from Munford in 1959 at then-UT Martin Branch and walked off with a degree in secondary education in 1963.

And the $250 he borrowed from his grandmother to enroll at Martin paid dividends but not before he was cut from the squad.

Edmiston’s love of the game led him to talk with UTMB coach Bob Carroll about playing for the Vols, but it didn’t take long for Carroll to make another suggestion.

“I was 5-feet-6 and weighed 120 pounds,” Edmiston said. “And I couldn’t see over the center, and (Carroll) told me the best thing I could do is get on the bus and go home.”

Edmiston said he told asked Carroll for another try since he didn’t have anything to do and his first quarter (semester) was paid for.

Edmiston, who makes his home in Memphis, was determined after working two years after graduating from high school where he earned 50 cents an hour while working 60 hours a week for Millington Auto Parts.

“I knew there was something better than what I was doing, and college was the furthest thing from my mind,” Edmiston said. “I had heard of scholarships but was never offered one.

“I developed speed, grew two inches and weighed 150 pounds, and by the end of the quarter, I was playing first team and had a scholarship.”

The opportunity evolved into Edmiston becoming one of UT’s most outstanding players in the Volunteer State Athletic Conference where he still ranks third among running backs in points scored in a season (64) and fourth among backs in points scored in a career (157).

Edmiston’s totals came when UT’s schedule consisted of nine games.

He was named all-conference twice and was inducted into the UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame in 1988.

Edmiston met Peggy, now deceased, at UT, and she became the director of community services in Shelby County.

“I was in the insurance business, an insurance broker,” Edmiston said. “I had a scholarship and graduated and was successful, and as you get older, you learn to think differently about things. UTM hopes other alumni have the same thoughts.

“This will help someone not fortunate enough to have a scholarship,” UT sports information director Joe Laffaro said. “It was a real eye opener ... that amount of money considering today’s economy.

“He hasn’t forgotten where he came from.”

Marsha Mitchell, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant director and bursar in the Office of Business Affairs, received the exempt UT Martin Fall 2009 Outstanding Employee Award recently presented by Chancellor Tom Rakes. The award, which recognizes outstanding service to the university, is presented each fall and spring semester to two employees. Included as part of her nomination were comments such as, “She strives for excellence in all that she does, taking the extra time necessary in helping our students, giving them her undivided attention, to solve their problems. Her professionalism and leadership make Business Affairs a more efficient and effective environment. She is committed to providing good customer service by cross-training the staff and implementing new procedures. Someone commented that they liked UT Martin because we have a lot of ‘human beings...those who care for the welfare of others.’ Marsha Mitchell certainly fits that description.” Presenting Marsha Mitchell with her Outstanding Employee Award is Chancellor Tom Rakes.
Little to speak at commencement

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, will deliver the fall commencement address at the University of Tennessee at Martin, at 11 a.m., Dec. 19, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Approximately 635 degrees are expected to be awarded.

Little (UT Knoxville '86) earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He is a partner with the law firm of Woolf, McClane, Bright, Allen and Carpenter, who devotes the majority of his practice to representing construction companies. Before becoming president of UTAA, Little’s involvement began as an undergraduate when he was president of the Student Alumni Associates. He held all offices in the Knox County UT alumni chapter and also served on the Alumni Association Board of Governors and its executive committee. He currently serves as UTAA National Chair of Annual Giving. Little’s history with the UTAA goes back to his grandfather, Joe Little (Knoxville '39), who was UTAA president in 1960. Little’s mother, Becky, (Knoxville '62) is a former UTAA treasurer and also served on the alumni staff. His father, Joe Little Jr. has two engineering degrees from UT Knoxville (’63, ’65). His brother, Dr. John Little is a 1992 graduate of the Health Science Center, and his sister, Mary Helen Little Story, graduated from UT School of Law in 1996. Little was named to U.S. News and World Report’s “The Best Lawyers in America” (2009) and Knoxville’s Cityview Magazine “Top Attorney” (2007, 2009). He is a board member of the East Tennessee chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, and is active in the Construction Financial Management Association and the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel. Little is also a member of the Inn of Court, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessee Bar Association and American Bar Association, where he is a member of the Forum on the Construction Industry. He and his wife, Malinda, have two children, son, James, and daughter, Carlen.

UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes will preside over the exercises and confer degrees. Dr. Robert Harshorn, University of Tennessee Alumni Association Distinguished Service Professor, will be the mace bearer, and the processionals marshals will be Jenna Wright, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Janet Wilbert, Faculty Senate vice president; Al Hooten, vice chancellor for finance and administration, and Len Solomons, vice chancellor for university advancement.

A reception will be hosted in Skyhawk Fieldhouse immediately following the commencement ceremony.

Dresden Enterprise, Dresden, Tennessee.

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

UTM recognizes Outstanding Employees

David Rinks, University of Tennessee at Martin HVAC foreman, received the non-exempt UT Martin Fall 2009 Outstanding Employee Award recently presented by Chancellor Tom Rakes. The award, which recognizes outstanding service to the university, is presented each fall and spring semester to two employees.

Included as part of his nomination were comments such as, “In his role as HVAC foreman, David’s actions, many times, go unnoticed by the entire campus, but he spends many hours ensuring that our building temperatures are acceptable and working out complex HVAC problems in the field with contractors. He helps to ensure quality work on HVAC projects so that we can enjoy a comfortable environment in our classrooms, our offices, and meeting rooms. David is a total team player and embodies the spirit of the “campus that cares” attitude in his dealings with UT Martin staff as well as associates outside the university.”

Pictured here are Chancellor Tom Rakes and David Rinks, University of Tennessee at Martin HVAC foreman.
Santa's Village has been holiday staple for 25 years

By DAVE PHILLIPS
P-I Staff Writer

Most great holiday gatherings have several things in common. Obviously, decorations are musts. Some musical entertainment always helps, and the warm feeling that comes along with helping a good cause is a bonus.

Folks looking for a gathering like that can fulfill their needs in Martin this weekend, where Santa's Village will be on display.

Featuring all of the characteristics described earlier, the event will take place from 6-9 p.m. today, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Admission is free, but a donation of $5 worth of toys or non-perishable food items is suggested.

With the assistance of several groups, those items will be donated to several local organizations in an effort to help the less fortunate this holiday season.

Kim Kirby, program director of the Martin Parks and Recreation Department, said more than 1,750 area families will use the items that will be donated during this year's event. During its previous 24 years, the event has raised more than $835,000 worth of food and toys.

Kirby has been involved with the event for 21 years, and, when asked for her favorite memory of Santa's Village, she had a quick answer.

"All the giving hearts," was Kirby's reply. "Even the people that you wouldn't expect would be willing to donate or do things to be trying to help— they're the ones that come in with armloads of stuff," she said.

Attendees will struggle to cram in all that Santa's Village has to offer.

For starters, there is a "fantasy enchanted forest wonderland," as Kirby described it, with different displays depicting the holidays.

There also will be rides, and they're not just for the children.

"There's a merry-go-round, and there's a Scooby Doo ride that parents can ride if they want," Kirby said.

Another offering that should be able to bring out the kid in anyone is the model train display, where five trains will be running continuously.

Belgian horses will be on hand to provide wagon rides, and children will have an opportunity to interact with other animals at the petting farm.

Of course, the kids will be able to pay a visit to Santa Claus to negotiate their gift wish list, and a big Christmas tree will be shining brightly.

"This tree is one of the fattest we've ever had," Kirby said. "It's actually about twenty-four feet around."

Also, more on the adult side of things, 54 arts and crafts booths will be on hand.

Finally, rounding out the event will be 20 hours of continuous live entertainment. The music will be Christmas-based but may also feature other types as well.

According to a press release, finalists from the Kentucky Opry talent contest and 2009 Teen Miss Soybean, Tara Marshall Elam, will participate in the entertainment.

A mixture of performers from age 6-65 will take the stage during the event, and instrumentation will include guitars, violins, accordions, bells, banjos, harps and piano.

A ballet group will perform at 6 p.m. tonight, and gospel singing group Hands Lifted High will perform at 2:10 p.m. Sunday.

With so much to offer, the planning phases for Santa's Village take months.

"We prepare and have meetings about what we're going to do about as soon as the Soybean Festival is over in mid-September," Kirby said.

"As far as the set up of the pavilion, we move in the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and students from the university come in and volunteer."

Kirby said between 60-90 students assist with the setup, working two hours each night until it's finished.

The hard work is noticed by many. Kirby said about 12,000 people attended last year's festival, donating more than $60,000 worth of items. She's hoping for a slight increase in both numbers this year.

"We were really kind of surprised (about last year's numbers)," Kirby said. "Last year the hardships were starting, but people came out. We're expecting people are staying closer to home to try and do activities and stuff. It's a free event, so come and enjoy and help other families."
Weather enthusiasts benefit from new courses at UTM

The University of Tennessee at Martin is offering a new meteorology concentration that is the only program of its kind in the state. Part of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources, the meteorology program is designed to train students for a career in the atmospheric sciences and to supplement their training in geosciences.

"Successful students will be well positioned to enter graduate school to complete their professional meteorology training or to follow careers in the geosciences in which foundational knowledge in weather and climate is required," said Dr. Mark Simpson, associate professor of geography.

Potential career fields include working as forecasters, broadcast meteorologists, research meteorologists, climatologists and meteorologists in the armed forces.

Others are as consultants in forensics, agriculture, energy, manufacturing, commodities markets, environmental planning, emergency preparedness, transportation and teaching.

Potential employers include private industry and consulting services, academia and federal government agencies.

The proposed concentration complements the existing concentrations in the geosciences as well as the existing programs in the new academic home in the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources.

The meteorology concentration will give students a solid foundation by which they can pursue the discipline further.

"It is also worth noting that many universities are starting Bachelor of Science degrees in meteorology emphasizing forecasting. The market is being flooded with ‘forecasters’ and ‘storm chasers,’ but the training offered at UT Martin will allow students flexibility in career choices, thus enhancing marketability," said Simpson.

"The program is flexible enough to allow students to be trained in other avenues of geosciences while being engaged in a rigorous study of the fundamentals of meteorology. For those students who wish to pursue forecasting as a career, the concentration will be thorough enough to prepare them for the top graduate programs."

For more information about the meteorology program, contact the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources at 731-881-7260.
Dr. Nola Jones is the Director of Bands at the University of Tennessee Martin. Prior to her appointment at UT Martin, she served as the Associate Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music Education at Northern Arizona University. A native of Mississippi, Dr. Jones has enjoyed a successful career as a middle school and high school band director in Mississippi and Tennessee. Dr. Jones received the Bachelor of Music Education degree from Mississippi State University and the Master of Music Education degree from Mississippi College. She received her Doctorate of Musical Arts in wind band conducting from the University of South Carolina where she was a student of Dr. William J. Moody.

Dr. Jones serves as an active adjudicator and clinician for Bands of America, Drum Corps International, and Winter Guard International. Dr. Jones’ professional affiliations include Music Educators National Conference, Tennessee Music Educators Association, West Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association, National Band Association, College Band Directors National Association, Phi Beta Mu, Sigma Alpha Iota, Tau Beta Sigma, and Kappa Kappa Psi.
College heads talk dual enrollment

Representatives from area colleges meet to weigh JCM magnet possibilities

By STANLEY DUNLAP
sdunlap@jacksonsun.com

On Tuesday, area colleges gathered at a local hospital to talk about the dual enrollment possibilities for a new magnet program at Jackson Central-Merry Academy of Medical Technology. Representatives from the University of Tennessee Martin, Lambuth University, Lane College and Jackson State Community College were among the partners of the new program at an information meeting at Jackson-Madison County General Hospital.

Having a strong technology magnet program is important for the city and area colleges, said principal Eric Jones. Currently, the school's vocation wing is being transformed into a medical wing with the latest technology. Smart boards are being put into 20 classrooms by early next year, he said. A lottery will be held Feb. 12 for 225 open slots, of which 113 will go to students zoned for JCM. The program is being funded by a $1.5 million federal grant over a three-year period.

"After the lottery, we'll have mandatory meetings where we're going to talk with you about exactly what your expectations are," Jones said. "We're going to challenge their children as students and prepare them for a high level of academic rigor." UT-Martin dual enrollment coordinator Carrie Arant said students would be able to take courses such as English, history and math to earn college credits. "We require the same level of work they would have to do if they were on campus taking the course," Arant said of the classes that will require a 3.0 GPA.

Lane College President Wesley McClure said he was misled about what the magnet program entails. There is a fundamental difference between a health science and health and science program, he said.

Among the services to be offered by Lane include dual enrollment, academic coaching and a summer enrichment program. "This program has been configured, at least for the early days, as a technical program whose clear intent is to provide workers to West Tennessee Healthcare and others (health care institutes)," McClure said.

McClure said he supports students having an opportunity to work but is concerned that the program will steer students to lower level jobs in health care. "... It's not an opportunity that goes to the skies, it's an opportunity that has a ceiling," McClure said.

Jackson-Madison County Schools Superintendent Nancy Zambito said the expectations for the program is that all students will go to college. "It is absolutely not the intent of this program to produce workers for this hospital or anyone else," she said. "Unless we have workers who at the same time are in college to get their bachelor's, master's and doctorate. I don't think we are being shaped by this client. The intent of this school district is that these students will be exposed to every level of medical experience."

Clayton Phillips came to the meeting with his 15-year-old daughter and North Side High freshman Aliyah Phillips to learn more about the program.
Dr. Cox receives award

Dr. Becky Cox, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant professor of educational studies, recently received the “Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award” for 2009 from the Tennessee Science Teachers Association.

The award was presented at the TSTA annual conference in Franklin.

Dr. Cox joins three other 2009 award recipients designated as Distinguished Science Teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary education divisions. The awardees were chosen from hundreds of science teachers across Tennessee as outstanding and exemplary teachers in the discipline. They have demonstrated a positive impact on the lives of their students by mastering their teaching skills.

This award is Dr. Cox’s second from TSTA, with her having been awarded the 1998 Tennessee Science Teacher Association “Science Educator of the Year Grades K-3” while a third grade teacher.

She joined the educational studies faculty in the fall of 2004 and currently teaches both undergraduate and graduate education students.

Little to deliver address

Ford Little, Knoxville, Tenn., attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, will deliver the fall commencement address at the University of Tennessee at Martin, at 11 a.m., Dec. 19, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Approximately 635 degrees are expected to be awarded.

Little (UT Knoxville ’66) earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University. He is who was UTAA president in 1960. Little’s mother, Becky, (Knoxville ’62) is a former UTAA treasurer and also served on the alumni staff.

His father, Joe Little Jr. has two engineering degrees from UT Knoxville (’63, ’65). His brother, Dr. John Little is a 1992 graduate of the Health Science Center, and his sister, Mary Helen Little Story, graduated from UT School of Law in 1996.

Little was named to U.S. News and World Report’s “The Best Lawyers in America” (2009) and Knoxville’s Cityview Magazine “Top Attorney” (2007, 2009). He is a board member of the East Tennessee chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, and is active in the Construction Financial Management Association and the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel. Little is also a member of the Inn of Court, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessee Bar Association and American Bar Association, where he is a member of the Forum on the Construction Industry.

UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes will preside over the exercises and confer degrees. Dr. Robert Hartshorn, University of Tennessee Alumni Association Alumni Distinguished Service Professor, will be the mace bearer, and the processional marshals will be Jenna Wright, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Janet Wilbert, Faculty Senate vice president; Al Hooten, vice chancellor for finance and administration; and Len Solomon, vice chancellor for university advancement.

A reception will be hosted in Skyhawk Fieldhouse immediately following the commencement ceremony.
New Pacer singers plan choir tour

The New Pacer Singers, the chamber choir from the University of Tennessee at Martin, will perform at several stops as part of its January tour. The first stop will be Jan. 4 at St. Lucas United Church of Christ, Evansville, Ind.

That concert will be followed by a Jan. 5 performance at Kanawha United Presbyterian Church, Charleston, W.Va.; Jan. 6 at Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Va.; Jan. 7 at Trinity Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, Va., and Jan. 11 at Centenary United Methodist Church, Lexington, Ky.

The concert will include a cappella music from across the spectrum of choral music, with one highlight being the performance of "Misssa Brevis," by Ruth Waton Henderson.

The saxophone quartet from UT Martin will also perform. The concert is free and open to the public and everyone is encouraged to attend.

For more information about the choir, contact Dr. Mark Simmons, assistant professor of music, at 731-881-7412 or marks@utm.edu.

Cox awarded Science Teacher of the Year

Dr. Becky Cox, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant professor of educational studies, recently received the "Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award" for 2009 from the Tennessee Science Teachers Association.

The award was presented at the TSTA annual conference in Franklin. Cox joins three other 2009 award recipients designated as Distinguished Science Teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary education divisions. The awardees were chosen from hundreds of science teachers across Tennessee as outstanding and exemplary teachers in the discipline. They have demonstrated a positive impact on the lives of their students by mastering their teaching skills.

This award is Cox's second from TSTA, having been awarded the 1998 Tennessee Science Teacher Association "Science Educator of the Year Grades K-3" while a third grade teacher. Cox joined the educational studies faculty in the fall of 2004. She currently teaches both undergraduate and graduate education students.

Local students graduate pharmacy technician class

Seventeen students from Henry County and the surrounding area graduated Dec. 8 from the pharmacy technician certification program at the University of Tennessee at Martin Office of Extended Campus and Online Studies.

The class, which was offered in Paris, began Oct. 13 and was taught by pharmacist Willard Alls. Students learned about medical terminology specific to the pharmacy, reading and interpreting prescriptions and defining drugs by generic and brand names. Students also studied dosage calculations, intravenous flow rates, drug compounding, drug conversions, dispensing of prescriptions, inventory control, billing and reimbursement.

The 50-hour course prepared the graduates to enter the pharmacy field and take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board's exam. Graduating Henry County students included: Rhonda Burton, Chris Duke, Joell Dunaway, Tonya Ford, Sarah Hancock, Jan Jackson, Kaitlyn Johnson, Briehette Kintner, LaTrisha Love, Linda Sue Morgan, Cale Seaton, Laura Smith, Tammy Trevathan, Stephanie Webb, Katherine Wheatley, Shatophoria White and Sharon Wilbanks.
Hard work is a way of life for Menta Thompson of Union City. So, when she decided to enter college in 2004 at the age of 40, she knew that earning a degree wouldn’t be easy.

She was rewarded for her efforts Saturday when she received a bachelor’s degree in social work during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s fall commencement ceremonies. Her achievement has added meaning, as she was the first of seven children in her family to attend college, let alone earn a degree.

Menta was raised by Mae and the late Montrell Thompson Sr. Her mother was employed in the Obion County General Hospital’s laundry department, and her father worked construction jobs, coming home only on the weekends.

She graduated from Union City High School in 1982, where she played basketball and ran track. The school’s 440-relay team finished second in the state, earning her a place in the Union City High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

Financial circumstances made it necessary for Menta to begin working at age 14 in a summer program for low-income families. She later participated in the high school’s co-op program that made possible a part-time job at the local Sonic Drive-In. After high school, she was employed by the Obion County Nursing Home’s dietary department, and in 2001, she took a position at the Subway Restaurant located on 206 East Reelfoot Ave., where she is now the manager.

Menta’s path to college began several years ago during an innocent family conversation with her daughters. As they talked, she urged them to pursue an education so that they could be self-sufficient if something ever happened to her.

A short time later, Menta received letters from a couple of colleges, including UT Martin. She had not applied to any colleges, so she called Tamisha, her oldest daughter and now a registered nurse, who confessed that she had completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for her mom. Menta remembered her daughter saying, “Well, I signed you up because I don’t want to see you have to work after you retire like a lot of people have to.” So, determined to enter the social work field, Menta enrolled at UT Martin to earn a college degree.

For Menta, social work was a natural career choice, having been raised in a family that had limited financial resources. “I came from a family of seven kids,” she said.

“We didn’t have a lot of money, but, you know, my parents gave us the (necessities) and the basic things that we needed. …”

Becoming a full-time student wasn’t an option for Menta. She held her full-time position at Subway, worked a part-time job Friday and Saturday nights, and attended classes when she wasn’t working. This continued for about two years until she needed more study time, and she quit her part-time job. Her manager’s position required five days a week and a minimum of 35 hours at the restaurant, so she carried her books to work and studied during breaks. Then, after leaving work at night, she would sometimes have to study into the early morning hours.

“It would get stressful,” she remembered. “But sometime(s) I would just like have to sit back and think, you know, you can do this.”

Besides her work and school responsibilities, Menta also had a family to consider. Her daughter, Marcetta, played basketball at Union City High School until her graduation is 2009. She tried to schedule night classes so that she could attend games, after which she sometimes returned to work.

“It was hard, you know. It was really, really hard, but I figure if it’s something that you want out there, (and) you motivate yourself, you can do it,” she said. Her support for Marcetta paid dividends as she now attends Niagara County Community College in Sanborn, N.Y., where she plays basketball and majors in criminal justice.

Menta credited her husband,
Willie, for supporting her throughout her college experience. A Goodyear retiree who has endured serious health problems, Willie supported Menta by doing housework and preparing meals. She remembers sometimes being so tired at the end of the day that he would bring a plate of food to her.

"The only thing I don't like is do my laundry," she kidded. "He doesn't know how to do laundry." Instead of putting stress on their marriage, Menta said that the challenges have made their marriage much stronger.

Her final year in school introduced a new set of challenges as the possibility of graduating was within reach. Last summer, she enrolled for an online class and also drove daily to the UT Martin Ripley Center for a Spanish class. Then, this fall semester, she had to complete a required 40-hour unpaid internship. She worked at Miles Head Start Center in Union City from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, an experience that mirrored what a professional social worker would do.

"Most of the time I would have to take my work clothes to work with me at Miles Head Start," she said. "As soon as I left Miles Head Start, I would go to Subway and work my night shift." Menta wouldn't leave Subway until midnight or later, sometimes have to do homework until 3 or 4 a.m., and then be back up at 6 a.m. to start all over again. She also had a night class Tuesdays from 6 to 8:50, so it wasn't unusual for workweeks, including her internship, to exceed 80 hours.

Through it all, Menta said some people doubted that she would finish her degree. Among those who believed in her were her daughters who, Menta said, tell her, "We knew you would do it." Most importantly, Menta believed in herself. "You know, it's like a dream come true," she said. "You know how people become millionaires, a dream come true? Well, to me, this is like a millionaire life to me, having a degree. I mean money couldn't even beat this degree."

Next up for Menta is more education. She applied to Western Kentucky University and UT Knoxville, hoping to begin graduate school this fall. She wants to earn a master's degree before she begins working and to also take advantage of her current motivation. As with anything that Menta has attempted, it won't be easy. The UT degree is offered online but requires travel to Nashville one Saturday per month. The WKU degree would mean even more travel, and both degrees require internships. Her goal is to complete her master's degree in a year to that she can fulfill her ultimate "dream to help troubled teens and adolescents."

Cindy West, chair of the UT Martin Department of Behavioral Sciences and associate professor of social work, sees Menta's blend of "social work knowledge, skills, values and personal life experiences" creating a "dynamic combination" that will serve her well as she pursues her career. "Menta will not let others give up on themselves," West said. "She will be there to be supportive and encouraging as they seek to reach their goals."

Shortly before graduation, Menta faced one final challenge in her college experience. Although she would graduate, a procedural problem would prevent her name from being included in the commencement program. However, almost as if meant to be, circumstances later came together that allowed her name to be added before the program went to press. When she learned in a telephone call that her name would be included, she said that she "sat there and cried for 15, 20 minutes."

Menta Thompson worked harder than anyone will ever know to earn her place among UT Martin's December 2009 graduates. Her name on page 10 of the commencement program proved once again that dreams do come true.
Little tells UT Martin graduates, ‘Opportunities ... are limitless’

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, told graduates at Saturday’s commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin, “You have invested a significant amount of time in each of your lives in your education, and you should be excited about your achievement.” He added, “The opportunities that lie ahead of you are limitless.”

Little urged graduates to take a moment to look around the Elam Center and find the members of their families who were with them to share this occasion. “As you do that, I want you to think about the sacrifices that were made to allow you to be in the position that you are in today.” He asked them to remember where they come from and be grateful for the contributions that others make to their success.

He then told graduates that those who have come before them have demonstrated that a degree from the University of Tennessee prepares them for success. He cited several graduates, including UT women’s basketball coach Pat Head Summitt, all-time winningest coach in college basketball history; Howard Baker, congressman, senator, White House chief of staff and ambassador to Japan; Charles Ergen, co-founder of EchoStar Communications Corporation/DISH Network; Dr. Diane Grob Schmidt, chemist and leader of the team at Proctor & Gamble that created Pert Plus Shampoo; and Min Kao, co-founder of Garmin Ltd., manufacturer of GPS devices.

“Therefore, like those who have come before you, you have a degree from an institution which prepares you for future endeavors. It’s up to you to decide what you choose to do with that degree.”

Little noted the graduates are “blessed to live in a time and in a country where anything is possible. So I hope you are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of you. We are blessed to live in a country that is based upon Judeo-Christian principles.” He then suggested they consider the words of the Declaration of Independence and their rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. “Each and every one of you ... has a say in what happens in our country – one person, one vote. You have the right and the responsibility to elect officials at the local, state and national levels.”

Little also reminded graduates of the opportunity they have to live in a safe and secure country, where people can enjoy the freedom to express opinions and worship without fear of persecution. He cited a fair and just legal system and the opportunity to have the necessities in life as other advantages. “Each of you is blessed to live in a great country, and I challenge you to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead of you because they are limitless.”

He closed congratulating graduates on a significant accomplishment, and added, “I wish you the best of luck as you leave the university and embark on your lives ...”

Saturday’s graduates represented 48 different Tennessee counties and 18 states including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Graduates also represented the countries of Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan.

Dr. Tom Rakes, UT Martin chancellor, presided over the exercises and conferred degrees. He congratulated graduates and asked them to maintain contact with UT Martin, offer advice and support and be supportive of higher education. “You are joining over 37,000 graduates of UT Martin located throughout the world. Your potential for success has increased significantly by completion of your degree.”
Cox receives ‘Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award’

Dr. Becky Cox, University of Tennessee at Martin assistant professor of educational studies, recently received the “Higher Education Science Teacher of the Year Award” for 2009 from the Tennessee Science Teachers Association.

The award was presented at the TSTA annual conference in Franklin. Cox joins three other 2009 award recipients designated as Distinguished Science Teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary education divisions. The awardees were chosen from hundreds of science teachers across Tennessee as outstanding and exemplary teachers in the discipline. They have demonstrated a positive impact on the lives of their students by mastering their teaching skills.

This award is Cox’s second from TSTA, having been awarded the 1998 Tennessee Science Teacher Association “Science Educator of the Year Grades K-3” while a third grade teacher. Cox joined the educational studies faculty in the fall of 2004. She currently teaches both undergraduate and graduate education students.
Jones to direct U.S. Army All-American Marching Band at Bowl in Texas

Dr. Nola Jones considers herself fortunate to have had many memorable opportunities as a band director. She'll add another one when she directs the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band. The band is slated to perform during halftime of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Texas, on January 9.

"I am very excited and humbled by the appointment," said Jones, University of Tennessee at Martin director of bands. "The U.S. Army and Music Educators National Conference have deemed the ensemble worthy of their effort and support. The confidence they have placed in me by asking me to serve as director... is a tremendous honor and responsibility."

Band members come from 32 states, were involved in one of 90 Army tour stops for competitive presentations and have a collective grade-point average of 3.74.

Preparations for the January 2010 presentation got under way even before the 2009 band had its first rehearsal. "When I served on the staff of the 2009 band, I knew I would be the director of the 2010 USAAMB. I took copious notes during bowl week in order to prepare," Jones said. "This past summer at Ft. Meade in Washington, D.C., I attended a meeting with U.S. Army Field Band Colonel Thomas Palmatier and his staff. We've held numerous design meetings to plan the show and have assembled a staff of outstanding professionals in the music field to instruct the band. It has been a monumental task."

Large audiences are not new to Jones. When she taught at McGavock High School in Nashville, the band performed in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. However, the bowl game will have the largest indoor audience, as the San Antonio Dome will be filled to capacity on game day. "A large percentage of the audience will be military personnel and their families, so performing for them will be a great honor for all of us."

While the January event is a career highlight, Jones has conducted the U.S. Army Field Band, has conducted at the Singapore American School Music Festival and has judged in Japan and Amsterdam.

Both Jones' parents were band directors. "...my mom says my first memory has to be of hearing band music. They positively impacted their students' lives and the communities where they lived through music." She added, "Mom really didn't consider herself to be a woman in a field that was predominately populated by men. She just believed in the value of music education as a means of enhancing her students' lives and providing them with life skills." Her parents will not be able to travel to San Antonio, but will watch it streamed on the Web.

Jones thinks creating music makes people more tolerant, more loving, more human and enhances lives as a result.

"Marching band helps us develop team building skills, responsibility to others and problem solving through pursuit of collective excellence. Students who come to college need a 'place to belong' and a creative outlet outside of their academic rigors." She said that by serving as ambassadors of the university, the UT Martin band enhances the lives of others through music, assists in recruiting and promotes alumni relations, while enjoying performing for enthusiastic audiences everywhere.

Jones, who holds bachelor and master's degrees in music from Mississippi State University and Mississippi College, respectively, and a doctorate from University of South Carolina, joined UT Martin in 2006. She thinks the best part about her position at UT Martin is the potential. "Our students are bright and curious. Our faculty members are scholarly and committed. Our administration is visionary and supportive. Our legacy can be whatever we want it to be and are willing to collectively create."

"Once in a music periodical I read, 'you pick the gig,' and it resonated with me," she said. "I get paid to do what I love every day. How many people can say that? I am happy that I feel obligated to be enthusiastic."
Little tells UT Martin graduates, ‘Opportunities ... are limitless’

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, was the University of Tennessee at Martin commencement speaker on December 19.

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, told graduates at Saturday’s commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin, “You have invested a significant amount of time in each of your lives in your education, and you should be excited about your achievement.” He added, “The opportunities that lie ahead of you are limitless.”

Little urged graduates to take a moment to look around the Elam Center and find the members of their families who were with them to share this occasion. “As you do that, I want you to think about the sacrifices that were made to allow you to be in the position that you are in today.” He asked them to remember where they come from and be grateful for the contributions that others make to their success.

He then told graduates that those who have come before them have demonstrated that a degree from the University of Tennessee prepares them for success. He cited several graduates, including UT women’s basketball coach Pat Head Summitt, all-time winningest coach in college basketball history; Howard Baker, congressman, senator, White House chief of staff and ambassador to Japan; Charles Ergen, co-founder of EchoStar Communications Corporation/DISH Network; Dr. Diane Grob Schmidt, chemist and leader of the team at Proctor & Gamble that created PertPlus Shampoo; and Min Kao, co-founder of Garmin Ltd., manufacturer of GPS devices.

“Therefore, like those who have come before you, you have a degree from an institution which prepares you for future endeavors. It’s up to you to decide what you choose to do with that degree.”

Little noted the graduates are “blessed to live in a time and in a country where anything is possible. So I hope you are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of you. We are blessed to live in a country that is based upon Judeo-Christian principles.” He then suggested they consider the words of the Declaration of Independence and its rights that include liberty and the pursuit of happiness. “Each and every one of you ... has a say in what happens in our country - one person, one vote. You have the right and the responsibility to elect officials at the local, state and national levels.”

Little also reminded graduates of the opportunity they have to live in a safe and secure country, where people can enjoy the freedom to express opinions and worship without fear of persecution. He cited a fair and just legal system and the opportunity to have the necessities in life as other advantages. “Each of you is blessed to live in a great country, and I challenge you to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead of you because they are limitless.”

He closed congratulating graduates on a significant accomplishment, and added, “I wish you the best of luck as you leave the university and embark on your lives ....”

Saturday’s graduates represented 48 different Tennessee counties and 18 states including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Graduates also represented the countries of Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan.

Dr. Tom Rakes, UT Martin chancellor, presided over the exercises and conferred degrees. He congratulated graduates and asked them to maintain contact with UT Martin, offer advice and support and be supportive of higher education. “You are joining over 37,000 graduates of UT Martin located throughout the world. Your potential for success has increased significantly by completion of your degree.”

Joaquin Lopez, of Martin, celebrates graduation at the University of Tennessee at Martin commencement ceremony, December 19.

UTM New Pacer Singers perform

The New Pacer Singers, the chamber choir from the University of Tennessee at Martin, will perform at several stops as part of its January tour. The first stop will be January 4, at St. Lucas United Church of Christ, Evansville, Ind. That concert will be followed by a January 5 performance at Kanawha United Presbyterian Church, Charleston, West Virginia; January 6, at Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia; January 7, at Trinity Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, Virginia; and January 11, at Centenary United Methodist Church, Lexington, Kentucky.

The concert will include a cappella music from across the spectrum of choral music, with one highlight being the performance of “Missa Brevis,” by Ruth Waterson Henderson. The saxophone quartet from UT Martin will also perform. The concert is free and open to the public and everyone is encouraged to attend.

For more information about the choir, contact Dr. Mark Simmons, assistant professor of music, at 731-881-7412 or marks@utm.edu.
USDA Rural Development recently presented the University of Tennessee at Martin WestStar Leadership program with a $20,000 check in Jackson. The USDA Rural Enterprise Business Grant will help sustain and grow the WestStar Leadership Program.

"UT Martin’s WestStar program has proven itself to be a great investment in the future of West Tennessee communities," said Bobby Goode, USDA Rural Development state director and WestStar alumnus. "Participants in the program come out energized and effective thanks to the skills learned and contacts made. Best of all, the program alumni continue to make outstanding contributions to local economic and community development in the region."

WestStar, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2009, is the state's oldest and largest regional leadership development program with more than 550 graduates. The program consists of eight specially designed seminar programs addressing contemporary issues important to the future of West Tennessee. Each seminar takes place over a two-day period from January through May in various locations throughout West Tennessee. Topics vary, year to year, depending on changing events in the region.

Focusing on the challenges and potentials in West Tennessee, WestStar stresses the importance of regional and civic responsibility for progress and prosperity. From sessions about economic development and government to education and tourism, presenters are some of the most knowledgeable people in their fields.

Among those on hand for the presentation of $20,000 for the WestStar leadership development program are, from left, first row, Brad Thompson, U.S. Rep. John Tanner’s representative; Charley Deal, WestStar executive director; Bobby Goode, USDA Rural Development state director; Harriet Cannon, USDA Rural Development area director; Matt Varino, U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander’s representative; second row, second from left, Virginia Grimes, WestStar coordinator; and Van Wyile, USDA Rural Development area specialist. WestStar Board of Trustees members include, second row, left, Anne Banks, City of Brownsville; and third row, Allen Hester, Dyersburg/Dyer County Chamber of Commerce; Pat Riley, Gibson County Utility District; Dennis Henderson, TLM Associates, Inc., Jeff Lewis, First Bank; Mike Philpot, West Tennessee Industrial Association.

"USDA Rural Development has been a tremendous partner with WestStar for over nine years," said Charley Deal, WestStar executive director. "When leaders remove the imaginary borders placed around communities and counties and embrace a regional concept, it is a win-win for West Tennessee. USDA Rural Development encourages this type of regional cooperation, and WestStar is proud to be in the forefront of helping to shape the future of West Tennessee."

For more information about WestStar, call Virginia Grimes, coordinator, at 731-881-7298.
Santa’s Village nets bounty during 25th Anniversary

The recent 25th annual Santa’s Village, December 10-13, at Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex at the University of Tennessee at Martin, recorded the second largest attendance in the event’s history with 13,033 visitors. Food and toy donations totaled $47,054.

Santa’s Village featured 26,000 square feet of lights, holiday displays and continuous entertainment. Admission was the donation of $5 of food items or toys.

Santa’s Village gets off to a good start each year with food provided by Weakley County schools, via the WCMT can caravan. WCMT reported a total of 11,223 canned goods collected this year.

“On behalf of the City of Martin and the University of Tennessee at Martin, we once again would like to extend our thanks to the volunteers who implement Santa’s Village and the visitors who have donated food and toys to help people in the area have a good Christmas,” said Brian Moore, Martin Parks and Recreation Department director.

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include: University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, Frontier, MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital.

For more information, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.

Retirement reception honors Myrick

The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of Human Resources recently hosted a retirement reception for Gertrude Myrick, human resources administrative specialist, in the Tennessee Room at the McCombs Center in honor of her service of 46 years and our months. She is retiring December 31. Among those attending the reception were, from left, back row, Tiffany Franklin (former longtime student worker in payroll) currently in the Office of Admissions; Sherry Shanklin, human resources-benefits; Lara Mueller, temporary employee for human resources-employment; Judy McMorries, human resources-payroll; Marcia Tuck, human resources-employment; front row, J. Phillip Bright, human resources director; Myrick; Caryl Martin, human resources retiree.
New meteorology concentration being offered at local university

The University of Tennessee at Martin is offering a new meteorology concentration — the only program of its kind in the state. Part of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources, the meteorology program is designed to train students for careers in the atmospheric sciences and supplement their training in geosciences.

“Successful students will be well positioned to enter graduate school to complete their professional meteorology training or to follow careers in the geosciences in which foundational knowledge in weather and climate is required,” said Dr. Mark Simpson, associate professor of geography.

Potential career fields include working as forecasters, broadcast meteorologists, research meteorologists, climatologists and meteorologists in the armed forces. Others are as consultants in forensics, agriculture, energy, manufacturing, commodities markets, environmental planning, emergency preparedness, transportation and teaching.

The proposed concentration complements the existing concentrations in the geosciences as well as the existing programs in the new academic home in the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources.

“It is also worth noting that many universities are starting bachelor of science degrees in meteorology emphasizing forecasting. The market is being flooded with ‘forecasters’ and ‘storm chasers,’ but the training offered at UT Martin will allow students flexibility in career choices, thus enhancing marketability,” Simpson said.

“The program is flexible enough to allow students to be trained in other avenues of geosciences while being engaged in a rigorous study of the fundamentals of meteorology. For those students who wish to pursue forecasting as a career, the concentration will be thorough enough to prepare them for top graduate programs.”

For more information about the new program, contact the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources at 731-881-7260.

By BUD GRIMES
Special to The Messenger

Hard work is a way of life for Menta Thompson of Union City.

So, when she decided to enter college in 2004 at the age of 40, she knew earning a degree wouldn’t be easy. She was rewarded for her efforts when she received a bachelor’s degree in social work during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s fall commencement ceremonies recently.

Her achievement has added meaning since she was the first of seven children in her family to attend college, let alone earn a degree.

Ms. Thompson was raised by Mae Thompson and the late Montrell Thompson Sr. Her mother was employed in the former Obion County General Hospital’s laundry department and her father worked construction jobs, coming home only on the weekends. She graduated in 1982 from Union City High School, where she played basketball and ran track.

The school’s 440-relay team finished second in the state, earning her a place in the Union City High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

Financial circumstances made it necessary for Ms. Thompson to begin working at age 14 in a summer program for low-income families. She later participated in the high school’s co-op program that made possible a part-time job at the local Sonic Drive-In.

After high school, she was employed by the Obion County Nursing Home’s dietary department and, in 2001, she took a position at the Subway restaurant on 206 East Reelfoot Ave., where she is now the manager.

Ms. Thompson’s path to college began several years ago during an innocent family conversation with her daughters. As they talked, she urged them to pursue an education so that they could be self-sufficient if something ever happened to her.

A short time later, Ms. Thompson received letters from a couple of colleges, including UT Martin.

She had not applied to any colleges, so she called Tamisha, her oldest daughter and now a registered nurse, who confessed that she had completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for her mom.

Ms. Thompson remembers her daughter saying, “Well, I signed you up because I don’t want to see you have to work after you retire like a lot of people have to.” So, determined to enter the social work field, Ms. Thompson enrolled at UT Martin to earn a college degree.

For Ms. Thompson, social work was a natural career choice, having been raised in a family that had limited financial resources.

“I came from a family of seven kids,” she said. “We didn’t have a lot of money, but, you know, my parents gave us the necessities and the basic things that we needed...” she said.

During those years, she said families didn’t have many options for assistance, “but now, there are a lot of resources out there for these families to get help, and I can actually say when I sit and talk to a client, I’ve been where they’re going. I have empathy for his family because I have been through the same situation that they’re going through. And that’s what made me want to be a part of their life, because I can empathize with these people.”

Becoming a full-time student wasn’t an option for Ms. Thompson. She held her full-time position at Subway, worked a part-time job Friday and Saturday nights and attended classes when she wasn’t working. This continued for about two years until she needed more study time and she quit her part-time job.

Her manager’s position required five days a week and a minimum of 35 hours at the restaurant, so she carried her books to work and studied during breaks. Then, after leaving work at night, she would sometimes have to study into the early-morning hours.

“It would get stressful,” she said. “But sometimes I would just, like, take a break and think, you know, you can do this.”

(See Page 11, Col. 5)
College...

(Continued from Page One)

Besides her work and school responsibilities, Ms. Thompson also had a family to consider. Her daughter, Marcetta, played basketball at Union City High School until her graduation is 2009. She tried to schedule night classes so that she could attend games, after which she sometimes returned to work.

"It was hard, you know. It was really, really hard, but I figure if it's something that you want out there, (and) you motivate yourself, you can do it," she said.

Her support for Marcetta paid dividends as she now attends Niagara County Community College in Sanborn, N.Y., where she plays basketball and majors in criminal justice.

Ms. Thompson credited her husband, Willie, for supporting her throughout her college experience. A Goodyear retiree who has endured serious health problems, he supported Ms. Thompson by doing housework and preparing meals. She remembered sometimes being so tired at the end of a day that he would bring a plate of food to her.

"The only thing I don't let him do is my laundry," she said jokingly. "He doesn't know how to do laundry."

Instead of putting stress on their marriage, Ms. Thompson said that the challenges have made their marriage much stronger.

Her final year in school introduced a new set of challenges as the possibility of graduating was within reach. Last summer, she enrolled for an online class and also drove daily to the UT Martin Riple Center for a Spanish class. Then, this fall semester, she had to complete a required 40-hour unpaid internship. She worked at Miles Head Start Center in Union City from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, an experience that mirrored what a professional social worker would do.

"Most of the time I would have to take my work clothes to work with me at Miles Head Start," she said. "As soon as I left Miles Head Start, I would go to Subway and work night shift."

Ms. Thompson wouldn't leave Subway until midnight or later, would sometimes have to do homework until 3 or 4 a.m. and then be back up at 6 a.m. to start all over again. She also had a night class Tuesdays from 6 to 8:50, so it wasn't unusual for work weeks, including her internship, to exceed 80 hours.

Through it all, Ms. Thompson said some people doubted that she would finish her degree. Among those who believed in her were her daughters who, she said, tell her, "We knew you would do it."

Most importantly, Ms. Thompson believed in herself.

"You know, it's like a dream come true," she said. "You know how people become millionaires, a dream come true? Well, to me, this is like a millionaire life to me, having a degree. I mean money couldn't even beat this degree."

Next up for Ms. Thompson is more education. She has applied to Western Kentucky University and UT Knoxville, hoping to begin graduate school this fall. She wants to earn a master's degree before she begins working and to also take advantage of her current motivation.

As with anything that Ms. Thompson has attempted, it won't be easy. The UT degree is offered online but requires travel to Nashville one Saturday per month. The WKU degree would mean even more travel and both degrees require internships. Her goal is to complete her master's degree in a year to that she can fulfill her ultimate "dream to help troubled teens and adolescents."

Cindy West, chair of the UT Martin Department of Behavioral Sciences and associate professor of social work, sees Ms. Thompson's blend of "social work knowledge, skills, values and personal-life experiences" creating a "dynamic combination" that will serve her well as she pursues her career.

"Menta will not let others give up on themselves," Ms. West said. "She will be there to be supportive and encouraging as they seek to reach their goals."

Shortly before graduation, Ms. Thompson faced one final challenge in her college experience. Although she would graduate, a procedural problem would prevent her name from being included in the commencement program. However, almost as if meant to be, circumstances later came together that allowed her name to be added before the program went to press. When she learned in a telephone call that her name would be included, she said she "sat there and cried for 15, 20 minutes."

Ms. Thompson worked harder than anyone will ever know to earn her place among UT Martin's December 2009 graduates. Her name on Page 10 of the commencement program proved, once again, that dreams do come true.

Editor's note: Bud Grimes is director of University Relations at the University of Tennessee at Martin.
Brittany McGruder of Collierville and Ashley Niven of Milan received Paul and Martha Meek Awards presented at the Dec. 19 commencement exercises at the University of Tennessee Martin, according to a news release.

Dr. Margaret Toston, vice chancellor for student affairs, presented the awards, the only awards announced during commencement.

The Meek Award is a cash award given to graduating seniors who have demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership while at UT Martin and is made possible by the children of Paul and Martha Meek.

Both recipients distinguished themselves as leaders in the ways they have served their student colleagues, the university and the community.

McGruder received a bachelor's degree in business administration, economics/international business. While a student, she served as Student Government Association president, UT board of trustees student representative, student ambassador, Peer Enabling Program leader and Spanish Club president. She was a College of Business and Public Affairs Faculty Scholar and was a member of the national business and national collegiate Hispanic societies.

Niven received a bachelor's degree in family and consumer sciences. As a student, she served as a Department of Family and Consumer Sciences student ambassador, PEP leader and American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Student Group president.

She was a summer program specialist for Children's Museum of Memphis. She was also the recipient of numerous scholarships.

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, told graduates at the commencement, "You have invested a significant amount of time in each of your lives in your education, and you should be excited about your achievement."

He added, "The opportunities that lie ahead of you are limitless."

Little urged graduates to take a moment to look around the Elam Center and find the members of their families who were with them to share this occasion.

"As you do that, I want you to think about the sacrifices that were made to allow you to be in the position that you are in today," he said.

He asked them to remember where they come from and to be grateful for the contributions that others make to their success.

The Jackson Sun

---

LOCAL GRADUATE – Ashley Wright, of Milan, posed for a photo with her father, Will Shinn, of Medina; sister, Tiffany Shinn, and Peter Dawson, both of Springfield, Mo., prior to the Dec. 19 commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Wright graduated with a bachelor of University studies in music education.
WestStar program awarded funding of $20,000

USDA Rural Development recently presented the University of Tennessee at Martin WestStar Leadership program with a $20,000 check in Jackson.

The USDA Rural Enterprise Business Grant will help sustain and grow the WestStar Leadership program.

"UT Martin's WestStar program has proven itself to be a great investment in the future of West Tennessee communities," said Bobby Goode, USDA Rural Development state director and WestStar alumnus. "Participants in the program come out energized and effective thanks to the skills learned and contacts made. Best of all, the program alumni continue to make outstanding contributions to local economic and community development in the region."

WestStar, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2009, is the state’s oldest and largest regional leadership development program with more than 550 graduates. The program consists of eight specially designed seminar programs addressing contemporary issues important to the future of West Tennessee. Each seminar takes place over a two-day period from January through May in various locations throughout West Tennessee. Topics vary, year to year, depending on changing events in the region.

Focusing on the challenges and potentials in West Tennessee, WestStar stresses the importance of regional and civic responsibility for progress and prosperity. From sessions about economic development and government to education and tourism, presenters are some of the most knowledgeable people in their fields.

For more information on WestStar, call coordinator Virginia Grimes at (731) 881-7298. USDA Rural Development invests in jobs, businesses, community infrastructure, homeownership and affordable rental housing in rural communities. Last year, Rural Development assisted more than 866,000 Tennessee families and businesses with more than $619 million in financial assistance through affordable loans, loan guarantees and grants. For more information, contact the Union City area office at 885-6480, Ext. 4.

LOCAL STUDENTS RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARDS FROM UT MARTIN — Brittany McGruder, left, of Collierville, and Ashley Niven, of Milan, received Paul and Martha Meek Awards presented at the recent commencement exercises at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Dr. Margaret Toston, center, vice chancellor for student affairs, presented the awards, the only awards announced during commencement. The Meek Award is a cash award given to graduating seniors who have demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership while at UT Martin and is made possible by the children of Paul and Martha Meek. Both recipients distinguished themselves as leaders in the ways they have served their student colleagues, the university and the community. McGruder received a bachelor’s degree in business administration, economics/international business. While a student, she served as Student Government Association president, UT Board of Trustees student representative, student ambassador, Peer Enabling Program leader and Spanish Club president. She was a College of Business and Public Affairs Faculty Scholar and was a member of the national business and national collegiate Hispanic societies. Niven received a bachelor’s degree in family and consumer sciences. As a student, she served as a Department of Family and Consumer Sciences student ambassador, PEP leader, American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Student Group president and Returact Club president. She was a summer program specialist for Children’s Museum of Memphis. She was the recipient of numerous scholarships.
JAKE MALLARD, of Milan, was among graduates at the Dec. 19 commencement ceremony at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Mallard graduated with a master of science in agriculture and natural resources systems management.

RETIREMENT BANQUET — Dr. Jim Byford and his wife, Daryl, were guests of honor at a recent banquet hosted in honor of Dr. Byford’s retirement. Byford, University of Tennessee at Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean, is retiring at the end of the year. Byford, who also was a professor of wildlife biology, joined the University of Tennessee in January 1972 and UT Martin in 1987. He is retiring with 38 years of service.

PARSONS RECEIVES CARL SEALE STUDENT TEACHER AWARD — Kayla Parsons, of Buchanan, is the recipient of the University of Tennessee at Martin Carl Seale Student Teacher Award for fall semester 2009. The Carl Seale Student Teacher Award is given in memory of Dr. Carl Seale, who served the university from 1971 to 1992 in numerous capacities. The recipients are chosen by the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Scholarship Selection Committee from students with a major in education/teacher licensure, who have been nominated for exhibiting exceptional classroom instruction, excellence in classroom management, professionalism and potential for leadership in the teaching profession. The presentation of the award was made at the recent student teacher recognition reception held at the Boling University Center on the UT Martin campus. Pictured from left to right are Jennifer Champion, cooperating teacher from McKenzie High School, Parsons, and Dr. Robert Hartshorn, UT Martin professor of educational studies and university student teaching supervisor.
USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS WESTSTAR – Among those on hand for the presentation of $20,000 for the WestStar leadership development program are, from left, first row, Brad Thompson, U.S. Rep. John Tanner’s representative; Charley Deal, WestStar executive director; Bobby Goode, USDA Rural Development state director; Harriet Cannon, USDA Rural Development area director; Matt Varina, U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander’s representative; second row, second from left, Virginia Grimes, WestStar coordinator; and Van Wylie, USDA Rural Development area specialist. WestStar Board of Trustees members include, second row, left, Anne Banks, City of Brownsville; and third row, Allen Hester, Dyersburg/Dyer County Chamber of Commerce; Pat Riley, Gibson County Utility District; Dennis Henderson, TLM Associates, Inc., Jeff Lewis, First Bank; Mike Philpot, West Tennessee Industrial Association.

USDA Rural Development recently presented the University of Tennessee at Martin WestStar Leadership program with a $20,000 check in Jackson. The USDA Rural Enterprise Business Grant will help sustain and grow the WestStar Leadership program.

"UT Martin’s WestStar program has proven itself to be a great investment in the future of West Tennessee communities," said Bobby Goode, USDA Rural Development state director and WestStar alumnus.

"Participants in the program come out energized and effective thanks to the skills learned and contacts made. Best of all, the program alumni continue to make outstanding contributions to local economic and community development in the region."

WestStar, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2009, is the state’s oldest and largest regional leadership development program with more than 550 graduates. The program consists of eight specially designed seminar programs addressing contemporary issues important to the future of West Tennessee.

"Each seminar takes place over a two-day period from January through May in various locations throughout West Tennessee. Topics vary, year to year, depending on changing events in the region."

"Focusing on the challenges and potentials in West Tennessee, WestStar stresses the importance of regional and civic responsibility for progress and prosperity. From sessions about economic development and government to education and tourism, presenters are some of the most knowledgeable people in their fields."

"USDA Rural Development has been a tremendous partner with WestStar for over nine years," said Charley Deal, WestStar executive director.

"When leaders remove the imaginary borders placed around communities and counties and embrace a regional concept, it is a win-win for West Tennessee. USDA Rural Development encourages this type of regional cooperation, and WestStar is proud to be in the forefront of helping to shape the future of West Tennessee."

For more information about WestStar, call Virginia Grimes, coordinator, at 731-881-7298.

USDA Rural Development invests in jobs, businesses, community infrastructure, home-ownership and affordable rental housing in rural communities.

Last year Rural Development assisted more than 866,000 Tennessee families and businesses with more than $619 million in financial assistance through affordable loans, loan guarantees and grants.

For more information, contact the Union City Area Office at 731-885-6480 x4 or find more details at www.rurdev.usda.gov/tn.
Pharmacy technician students graduate

Members of the Pharmacy Technician Certification Program, offered in Paris by the University of Tennessee at Martin Office of Extended Campus and Online Studies, graduated on December 8. The class began October 13 and was instructed by pharmacist Willard Alls. Patsy Davidson, retired Henry County Hospital x-ray technician, spoke to the 17 graduates during the ceremony.

During the certification program, students learned medical terminology specific to the pharmacy, reading and interpreting prescriptions and defining drugs by generic and brand names. Students also studied dosage calculations, intravenous flow rates, drug compounding, dosage conversions, dispensing of prescriptions, inventory control and billing and reimbursement. This 50-hour course prepared the graduates to enter the pharmacy field and take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board's exam.

Students graduating included: Rhonda Burton, Chris Duke, Jodell Dunaway, Tonya Ford, Sarah Hancock, Jan Jackson, Kailyn Johnson, Brishette Kintner, LaTrisha Love, Linda Sue Morgan, Cale Seaton, Laura Smith, Tammy Trevathan, Stephanie Webb, Katherine Wheatley, Shatopha White and Sharon Wilbanks. These students were from Trenton, Buchanan, Paris, McKenzie, Holladay, Camden, Puryear, Springville, and Gleason.

LOCAL STUDENTS RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARDS FROM UT MARTIN - Brittany McGruder, left, of Collierville, and Ashley Niven, of Milan, received Paul and Martha Meek Awards presented at the recent commencement exercises at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Dr. Margaret Toston, center, vice chancellor for student affairs, presented the awards, the only awards announced during commencement. The Meek Award is a cash award given to graduating seniors who have demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership while at UT Martin and is made possible by the children of Paul and Martha Meek. Both recipients distinguished themselves as leaders in the ways they have served their student colleagues, the university and the community. McGruder received a bachelor's degree in business administration, economics/international business. While a student, she served as Student Government Association president, UT Board of Trustees student representative, student ambassador, Peer Enabling Program leader and Spanish Club president. She was a College of Business and Public Affairs Faculty Scholar and was a member of the national business and national collegiate Hispanic societies. Niven received a bachelor's degree in family and consumer sciences. As a student, she served as a Department of Family and Consumer Sciences student ambassador, PEP leader, American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Student Group president and Rotaract Club president. She was a summer program specialist for Children's Museum of Memphis. She was the recipient of numerous scholarships.
LOCAL GRADUATES – Leah Faulkner, of Alamo, Sam Stephens, of Dyersburg, Nadine Breece, of Lynchburg, Joseph Howard, of Columbia, and Joseph Anderson, of Martin, were among graduates at the Dec. 19 commencement ceremony at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Faulkner and Stephens each graduated with a bachelor of arts in English; Breece, bachelor of arts in history; Anderson, bachelor of arts in communications; and Howard, bachelor of arts in English.

EARNED DEGREE – Alyssa Brock (second from left) of Union City posed for a photo with her parents, Darrell and Celeste Brock, and her grandmother, Jo Ann Cary, all of Union City, prior to recent commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Miss Brock graduated with a bachelor of science degree with a concentration in child and family studies.
Little is guest speaker at UTM commencement

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, told graduates at Saturday’s commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin, “You have invested a significant amount of time in each of your lives in your education, and you should be excited about your achievement.” He added, “The opportunities that lie ahead of you are limitless.”

Little urged graduates to take a moment to look around the Elam Center and find the members of their families who were with them to share this occasion. “As you do that, I want you to think about the sacrifices that were made to allow you to be in the position that you are in today.” He asked them to remember where they come from and be grateful for the contributions that others make to their success.

He then told graduates that those who have come before them have demonstrated that a degree from the University of Tennessee prepares them for success. He cited several graduates, including UT women’s basketball coach Pat Head Summitt, all-time winningest coach in college basketball history; Howard Baker, congressman, senator; White House chief of staff and ambassador to Japan; Charles Ergen, co-founder of EchoStar Communications Corporation/DISH Network; Dr. Diane Grob Schmidt, chemist and leader of the team at Procter & Gamble that created Pert Plus Shampoo; and Min Kao, co-founder of Garmin Ltd., manufacturer of GPS devices.

“Therefore, like those who have come before you, you have a degree from an institution which prepares you for future endeavors. It’s up to you to decide what you choose to do with that degree.”

Little noted the graduates are “blessed to live in a time and in a country where anything is possible. So I hope you are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of you. We are blessed to live in a country that is based upon Judeo-Christian principles.” He then suggested they consider the words of the Declaration of Independence and their rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. “Each and every one of you... has a say in what happens in our country – one person, one vote. You have the right and the responsibility to elect officials at the local, state and national levels.”

Little also reminded graduates of the opportunity they have to live in a safe and secure country, where people can enjoy the freedom to express opinions and worship without fear of persecution. He cited a fair and just legal system and the opportunity to have the necessities in life as other advantages. “Each of you is blessed to live in a great country, and I challenge you to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead of you because they are limitless.”

He closed congratulating graduates on a significant accomplishment, and added, “I wish you the best of luck as you leave the university and embark on your lives...”

Saturday’s graduation represented 48 different Tennessee counts and 18 states including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Graduates also represented the countries of Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan.

Dr. Tom Rakes, UT Martin chancellor, presided over the exercises and conferred degrees. He congratulated graduates and asked them to maintain contact with UT Martin, offer advice and support and be supportive of higher education. “You are joining over 37,000 graduates of UT Martin located throughout the world. Your potential for success has increased significantly by completion of your degree.”
Fields graduates
Charity Fields (back right) of Trenton posed for a photo with her children, Maya and Marlon Anderson, and her sister, Martha Fields of Trenton, prior to the December 19 commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Fields graduated with a bachelor of science in elementary education.

Graduates
Elizabeth Patterson (left) of Ripley, Sarah Jenkins of Cordova, and Chris Vaughn Trenton were among graduates participating in the University of Tennessee at Martin fall commencement ceremony, December 19. Each received a bachelor’s degree in music education.
VISIT UT MARTIN — John South Wilson and his mother, Linda Elam of Kenton, recently had the pleasure of touring the University of Tennessee at Martin, where they paused for a photo in the Paul Meek Library. Wilson had the privilege of meeting Dr. Nola Jones, UT Martin director of bands and assistant professor of music, and was invited to play with UT Martin’s marching band during the final football game of the season. “Both days were very exciting,” Ms. Elam said.

LOCAL GRAD — Michelle Hurst of Obion was among the graduates at the recent commencement ceremony at the University of Tennessee at Martin. She was joined by Rod O’Connor of Clarksville.
Bowl game’s halftime performance to be directed by UT Martin’s Jones

Dr. Nola Jones considers herself fortunate to have had many memorable opportunities as a band director. She'll add another one when she directs the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band.

The band is slated to perform during halftime of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio on Jan. 9.

"I am very excited and humbled by the appointment," said Jones, University of Tennessee at Martin director of bands. "The U.S. Army and Music Educators National Conference have deemed the ensemble worthy of their effort and support. The confidence they have placed in me by asking me to serve as director... is a tremendous honor and responsibility."

Band members come from 32 states, were involved in one of 90 Army tour stops for competitive presentations and have a collective grade-point average of 3.74.

Preparations for the January 2010 presentation got under way even before the 2009 band had its first rehearsal.

"When I served on the staff of the 2009 band, I knew I would be the director of the 2010 USAAMB. I took copious notes during bowl week in order to prepare," Jones said. "This past summer at Ft. Meade in Washington, D.C., I attended a meeting with U.S. Army Field Band Colonel Thomas Palmatter and his staff. We’ve held numerous design meetings to plan the show and have assembled a staff of outstanding professionals in the music field to instruct the band. It has been a monumental task."

Large audiences are not new to Jones. When she taught at McGavock High School in Nashville, the band performed in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

However, the bowl game will have the largest indoor audience, as the San Antonio Dome will be filled to capacity on game day.

"A large percentage of the audience will be military personnel and their families, so performing for them will be a great honor for all of us," she added.

While the January event is a career highlight, Jones has conducted the U.S. Army Field Band, has conducted at the Singapore American School Music Festival and has judged in Japan and Amsterdam.

Both of her parents were also band directors.

"... My mom says my first memory has to be of hearing band music. They positively impacted their students’ lives and the communities where they lived through music," she said. "Mom really didn’t consider herself to be a woman in a field that was predominately populated by men. She just believed in the value of music education as a means of enhancing her students’ lives and providing them with life skills."

Her parents will not be able to travel to San Antonio, but will watch it streamed on the Web. Jones thinks creating music makes people more tolerant, more loving, more human and enhances lives as a result.

"Marching band helps us develop team building skills, responsibility to others and problem solving through pursuit of collective excellence. Students who come to college need a ‘place to belong’ and a creative outlet outside of their academic rigors," she said.

She said by serving as ambassadors of the university, the UT Martin band enhances the lives of others through music, assists in recruiting and promotes alumni relations, while enjoying performing for enthusiastic audiences everywhere.

Jones, who holds bachelor and master’s degrees in music from Mississippi State University and Mississippi College, respectively, and a doctorate from University of South Carolina, joined UT Martin in 2006. She thinks the best part about her position at UT Martin is the potential.

"Our students are bright and curious. Our faculty members are scholarly and committed. Our administration is visionary and supportive. Our legacy can be whatever we want it to be and are willing to collectively create," she said. "Once in a music periodical I read, 'you pick the gig,' and it resonated with me. I get paid to do what I love every day. How many people can say that? I am happy that I feel obligated to be enthusiastic."
December UTM graduates represent 18 states

Ford Little, Knoxville attorney and past president of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association, told graduates at the Dec. 19 commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin, "You have invested a significant amount of time in each of your lives in your education, and you should be excited about your achievement." He added, "The opportunities that lie ahead of you are limitless."

Little urged graduates to take a moment to look around the Elam Center and find the members of their families who were with them to share this occasion. "As you do that, I want you to think about the sacrifices that were made to allow you to be in the position that you are in today." He asked them to remember where they come from and be grateful for the contributions that others make to their success.

He then told graduates that those who have come before them have demonstrated that a degree from the University of Tennessee prepares them for success. He cited several graduates, including UT women's basketball coach Pat Head Summitt, all-time winningest coach in college basketball history; Howard Baker, congressman, senator, White House chief of staff and ambassador to Japan; Charles Ergen, co-founder of EchoStar Communications Corporation/DISH Network; Dr. Diane Grob Schmidt, chemist and leader of the team at Proctor & Gamble that created PertPlus Shampoo; and Min Kao, co-founder of Garmin Ltd., manufacturer of GPS devices.

"Therefore, like those who have come before you, you have a degree from an institution which prepares you for future endeavors. It's up to you to decide what you choose to do with that degree."

Little noted the graduates are "blessed to live in a time and in a country where anything is possible. So I hope you are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of you. We are blessed to live in a country that is based upon Judeo-Christian principles." He then suggested they consider the words of the Declaration of Independence and the rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. "Each and every one of you has a say in what happens in our country – one person, one vote. You have the right and the responsibility to elect officials at the local, state and national levels."

Little also reminded graduates of the opportunity they have to live in a safe and secure country, where people can enjoy the freedom to express opinions and worship without fear of persecution. He cited a fair and just legal system and the opportunity to have the necessities of life as other advantages. "Each of you is blessed to live in a great country, and I challenge you to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead of you because they are limitless."

He closed congratulating graduates on a significant accomplishment, and added, "I wish you the best of luck as you leave the university and embark on your lives."

The graduates represented 48 different Tennessee counties and 18 states including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Graduates also represented the countries of Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan.

Dr. Tom Rakes, UT Martin chancellor, presided over the exercises and conferred degrees. He congratulated graduates and asked them to maintain contact with UT Martin, offer advice and support and be supportive of higher education. "You are joining over 37,000 graduates of UT Martin located throughout the world. Your potential for success has increased significantly by completion of your degree."

DRESDEN ENTERPRISE, Dresden, Tennessee, December 30, 2009

Kayla Parsons, of Buchanan, is the recipient of the University of Tennessee at Martin Carl Seale Student Teacher Award for fall semester 2009. The Carl Seale Student Teacher Award is given in memory of Dr. Carl Seale, who served the university from 1971 to 1992 in numerous capacities. The recipients are chosen by the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Scholarship Selection Committee from students with a major in education/teacher licensure, who have been nominated for exhibiting exceptional classroom instruction, excellence in classroom management, professionalism and potential for leadership in the teaching profession. The presentation of the award was made at the recent student teacher recognition reception held at the Boling University Center on the UT Martin campus. Pictured from left to right are: Jennifer Champion, cooperating teacher from McKenzie High School, Parsons, and Dr. Robert Hartshorn, UT Martin professor of educational studies and university student teaching supervisor.

Parsons receives Carl Seale Student Teacher Award
Martin’s recent Santa’s Village records second largest attendance

The recent 25th annual Santa’s Village, Dec. 10-13, at Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex at the University of Tennessee at Martin, recorded the second largest attendance in the event’s history with 13,033 visitors. Food and toy donations totaled $47,034.

Santa’s Village featured 26,000 square feet of lights, holiday displays and continuous entertainment. Admission was the donation of $5 of food items or toys.

Santa’s Village gets off to a good start each year with food provided by Weakley County schools, via the WCMT can caravan. WCMT reported a total of 11,223 canned goods collected this year.

“On behalf of the City of Martin and the University of Tennessee at Martin, we once again would like to extend our thanks to the volunteers who implement Santa’s Village and the visitors who have donated food and toys to help people in the area have a good Christmas,” said Brian Moore, Martin Parks and Recreation Department director.

Service agencies receiving food and toys collected at Santa’s Village this year include: Chimes for Charity, We Care Ministries, Obion County Chapter American Red Cross, Santa’s Helpers, Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, Department of Children’s Services and Weakley County Head Start.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include: University Plaza, Hamilton-Ryker, First State, Frontier MTD Products, Tyson Foods and Volunteer Community Hospital.

For more information, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.

---

Students receive Leadership Awards from UTM

Brittany McGruder, left, and Ashley Niven, received Paul and Martha Meek Awards presented at the recent commencement exercises at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Dr. Margaret Toston, center, vice chancellor for student affairs, presented the awards, the only awards announced during commencement. The Meek Award is a cash award given to graduating seniors who have demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership while at UT Martin and is made possible by the children of Paul and Martha Meek. Both recipients distinguished themselves as leaders in the ways they have served their student colleagues, the university and the community.

McGruder received a bachelor’s degree in business administration, economics/international business. While a student, she served as Student Government Association president, UT Board of Trustees student representative, student ambassador, Peer Enabling Program leader and Spanish Club president. She was a College of Business and Public Affairs Faculty Scholar and was a member of the national business and national collegiate Hispanic societies. Niven received a bachelor’s degree in family and consumer sciences. As a student, she served as a Department of Family and Consumer Sciences student ambassador, PEP leader, American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Student Group president and Rotaract Club president. She was a summer program specialist for Children’s Museum of Memphis. She was the recipient of numerous scholarships.
New meteorology concentration offered at UT Martin

The University of Tennessee at Martin is offering a new meteorology concentration that is the only program of its kind in the state.

Part of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources, the meteorology program is designed to train students for a career in the atmospheric sciences and to supplement their training in geosciences.

“Successful students will be well positioned to enter graduate school to complete their professional meteorology training or to follow careers in the geosciences in which foundational knowledge in weather and climate is required,” said Dr. Mark Simpson, associate professor of geography.

Potential career fields include working as forecasters, broadcast meteorologists, research meteorologists, climatologists and meteorologists in the armed forces. Others are as consultants in forensics, agriculture, energy, manufacturing, commodities markets, environmental planning, emergency preparedness, transportation and teaching.

Potential employers include private industry and consulting services, academia and federal government agencies.

The proposed concentration complements the existing concentrations in the geosciences as well as the existing programs in the new academic home in the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources. The meteorology concentration will give students a solid foundation by which they can pursue the discipline further.

“It is also worth noting that many universities are starting Bachelor of Science degrees in meteorology emphasizing forecasting The market is being flooded with ‘forecasters’ and ‘storm chasers,’ but the training offered at UT Martin will allow students flexibility in career choices, thus enhancing marketability,” said Simpson. “The program is flexible enough to allow students to be trained in other avenues of geosciences while being engaged in a rigorous study of the fundamentals of meteorology. For those students who wish to pursue forecasting as a career, the concentration will be thorough enough to prepare them for the top graduate programs.”

For more information about the meteorology program, contact the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources at 731-881-7260.

Local graduate of UT Martin

Christine Herndon, of Gleason, center, posed for a photo with family and friends prior to the December 19 commencement at the University of Tennessee at Martin. With her are, from left, Tom and Pam Tabor, McKenzie; her husband, Kenny Herndon; Kenny Wilson, McKenzie; and Brock (front) and Crystal Polinski, McKenzie.
UTM band director has ‘monumental task’

Nola Jones directing U.S. Army All-American Band at bowl game

The Jackson Sun

Nola Jones considers herself fortunate to have had many memorable opportunities as a band director. She'll add another one when she directs the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band, according to a news release.

The band is scheduled to perform Jan. 9 during halftime of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio.

"I am very excited and humbled by the appointment," said Jones, University of Tennessee Martin director of bands, in the release. "The U.S. Army and Music Educators National Conference have deemed the ensemble worthy of their effort and support. The confidence they have placed in me by asking me to serve as director ... is a tremendous honor and responsibility."

Band members come from 32 states, were involved in one of 90 Army tour stops for competitive presentations and have a collective grade-point average of 3.74.

Preparations for the January 2010 presentation got under way even before the 2009 band had its first rehearsal, the release said.

"When I served on the staff of the 2009 band, I knew I would be the director of the 2010 USABB. I took copious notes during bowl week in order to prepare," Jones said. "This past summer at Ft. Meade in Washington, D.C., I attended a meeting with U.S. Army Field Band Col. Thomas Palmatier and his staff. We've held numerous design meetings to plan the show and have assembled a staff of outstanding professionals in the music field to instruct the band. It has been a monumental task."

Large audiences are not new to Jones. When she taught at McGavock High School in Nashville, the band performed in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. But the bowl game will have the largest indoor audience, as the San Antonio Dome will be filled to capacity on game day.

While the January event is a career highlight, Jones has conducted the U.S. Army Field Band, has conducted at the Singapore American School Music Festival and has judged in Japan and Amsterdam. Both Jones' parents were band directors.

Jones holds bachelor and master's degrees in music from Mississippi State University and Mississippi College, respectively, and a doctorate from the University of South Carolina. She joined UT Martin in 2006.

Jones thinks the best part about her position at UT Martin is the potential.

"Our students are bright and curious. Our faculty members are scholarly and committed," Jones said. "Our administration is visionary and supportive. Our legacy can be whatever we want it to be and are willing to collectively create."

Retirement Banquet held in honor of Dr. Jim Byford

Dr. Jim Byford and his wife, Daryl, were guests of honor at a recent banquet hosted in honor of Dr. Byford's retirement. Byford, University of Tennessee at Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean, is retiring at the end of the year. Byford, who also was a professor of wildlife biology, joined the University of Tennessee in January 1972 and UT Martin in 1987. He is retiring with 38 years of service.
UTM band director to lead Army’s All-American Band in Texas

Dr. Nola Jones considers herself fortunate to have had many memorable opportunities as a band director.

She’ll add another one when she directs the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Marching Band. The band is slated to perform during halftime of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Texas, on Saturday, Jan. 9.

“I am very excited and humbled by the appointment,” said Jones, University of Tennessee at Martin director of bands.

“The U.S. Army and Music Educators National Conference have deemed the ensemble worthy of their effort and support. The confidence they have placed in me by asking me to serve as director... is a tremendous honor and responsibility.”

Band members come from 32 states, were involved in one of 90 Army tour stops for competitive presentations and have a collective grade-point average of 3.74.

Preparations for the January 2010 presentation got under way even before the 2009 band had its first rehearsal.

“When I served on the staff of the 2009 band, I knew I would be the director of the 2010 USAAMB. I took copious notes during bowl week in order to prepare,” Jones said.

“Last summer at Ft. Meade in Washington, D.C., I attended a meeting with U.S. Army Field Band Colonel Thomas Palmatier and his staff.

“We’ve held numerous design meetings to plan the show and have assembled a staff of outstanding professionals in the music field to instruct the band. It has been a monumental task.”

Large audiences are not new to Jones. When she taught at McGavock High School in Nashville, the band performed in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

However, the bowl game will have the largest indoor audience, as the San Antonio Dome will be filled to capacity on game day.

“A large percentage of the audience will be military personnel and their families, so performing for them will be a great honor for all of us.”

While the January event is a career highlight, Jones has conducted the U.S. Army Field Band, has conducted at the Singapore American School Music Festival and has judged in Japan and Amsterdam.

Both Jones’ parents were band directors.

“... My mom says my first memory has to be of hearing band music. They positively impacted their students’ lives and the communities where they lived through music.”

She added, “Mom really didn’t consider herself to be a woman in a field that was predominately populated by men. She just believed in the value of music education as a means of enhancing her students’ lives and providing them with life skills.”

Her parents will not be able to travel to San Antonio, but will watch it streamed on the Web.

Jones thinks creating music makes people more tolerant, more loving, more human and enhances lives as a result.

“Marching band helps us develop team building skills, responsibility to others and problem solving through pursuit of collective excellence. Students who come to college need a ‘place to belong’ and a creative outlet outside of their academic rigors.”

She said that by serving as ambassadors of the university, the UT Martin band enhances the lives of others through music, assists in recruiting and promotes alumni relations, while enjoying performing for enthusiastic audiences everywhere.

Jones holds bachelor and master’s degrees in music from Mississippi State University and Mississippi College, respectively, and a doctorate from University of South Carolina, joined UT Martin in 2006.

She thinks the best part about her position at UT Martin is the potential.

“Our students are bright and curious. Our faculty members are scholarly and committed. Our administration is visionery and supportive. Our legacy can be whatever we want it to be and are willing to collectively create.”

Once in a music periodical I read, ‘you pick the gig,’ and it resonated with me,” she said. “I get paid to do what I love every day. How many people can say that? I am happy that I feel obligated to be enthusiastic.”