

The Expositor

Vol. 145, No. 30

SpartaLive.com | Thursday, April 22, 2021

Sparta, TN • \$1.00

SPORTS



TENACITY. WCMS softball team held their last home game, on April 14, 2021, against Prescott Middle School. The ladies battled hard and took the game to the seventh inning to pull out the win of 4-6. Abigail Shock hit the ball hard down the third base line to bring in two runs that took WCMS to victory. Pictured is Breanna Powell as she takes her turn at bat.

Valedictorian and salutatorian are recognized by commissioners

Director of schools informs the board about Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

During the regular called meeting of the White County Board of Commissioners, White County High School's valedictorian, Mackenzie Johnson, and the salutatorian, Eleanor Summers, were recognized by the board and presented with copies of a proclamation honoring their achievements.

"This is one of the fun parts of my job," County Executive Denny Wayne Robinson said as Johnson and Summers made their way to stand before the board of commissioners. "I get to recognize some of the excellent students we have here in the White County school system."

"Whereas, the White County Commission is proud of and wishes to recognize the accomplishments of this fine student, her family, teachers, and administrators who had a part in providing the motivation, atmosphere, learning tools and skills necessary for scholastic excellence," Robinson said as he read the proclamation to the audience.

"It Is Further Proclaimed, that the families, teachers, and school administrators who have invested their time and expertise in nurturing students who will be graduating in the White County High School Class of 2021 be recognized and praised for their contributions to the lives of these students and toward raising the level of literacy in White County,"

COMMISSION 2A



Communities in Schools program helps students with their needs

Closets created at school to meet basic needs of students

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

Communities in Schools, a nationwide program that works in 2,500 schools across 25 states, has been working in Van Buren County High School since fall 2019, and site coordinator Allison Dodson has found unique ways to meet the needs of her students over the past 12 months.

"The overall goal of my program is to reduce chronic absenteeism," Dodson said. "It has definitely been challenging since March 2020. Not seeing the kids every day for several months made me have to seek other ways to connect with them and be sure that they had the tools

they needed to be successful."

The non-profit program, which receives funding from the governor to fight chronic absenteeism, seeks to bring community resources into the schools and make them accessible to students, while holding the students accountable for their own success. School-based staff partner with teachers to identify the challenges students may be facing both in the classroom and at home.

"It's relationships, not programs, that change children," Bill Milliken, of Communities in Schools, once said. "A great program simply creates the environment for healthy relationships to form between adults and children. Young people thrive when adults care about them on a one-to-one level, and when they also have a sense of belonging to

VAN BUREN 2A



Unemployment drops in nearly every TN county

Four counties record an increase in jobless rate

EXPOSITOR REPORT

As a further indication the state of Tennessee's economic turnaround continues, unemployment rates for February 2021 dropped in nearly every county, according to new data from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Ninety counties experienced lower unemployment during the month. Four counties recorded an increase in unemployment, while Smith County's February rate remained unchanged from

the previous month.

Unemployment rates are less than 5 percent in 39 of the state's 95 counties and under 10 percent in the remaining 56 counties.

Williamson County continued to have the state's lowest jobless rate in February at 3.1 percent, down 0.1 of a percentage point from January.

Moore County recorded the second-lowest rate for the month at 3.4 percent, a 0.4 of a percentage point drop, followed by Wilson County's rate of 3.7 percent, which was down 0.3 of a percentage point.

At 8.6 percent, Lake County

RATES 3A

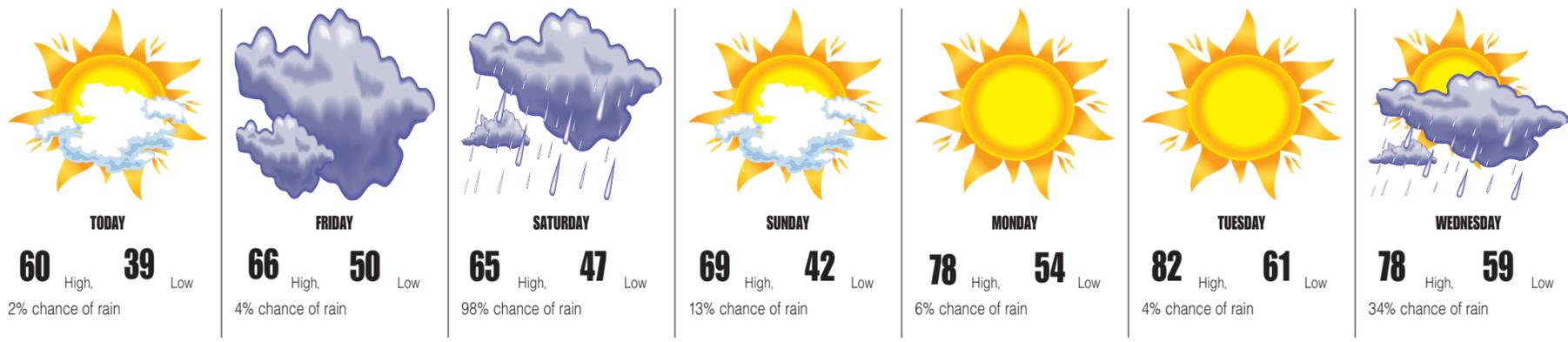
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AUCTION
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ACHIEVEMENTS. White County Board of Commissioners honored White County High School's valedictorian, Mackenzie Johnson, and the salutatorian, Eleanor Summers, during the board's April 19, 2021, meeting. Pictured with the students is White County Executive Denny Wayne Robinson.

COUNTY
CONTINUED FROM 1A
 Robinson continued.
 Resolutions to approve the issuing of the proclamations were passed unanimously by the 11 commissioners in attendance.
 In other business, the commission also passed a resolution to appoint new commissioner Kyle Goff, who was selected to replace Bobby McCulley (District 7) who resigned earlier this year, to Steering Committee A.
 Other resolutions passed during the meeting included:
 •Resolution No. 20-04-2021 - Occupational Safety and Health Program Plan which stated,

among other things, that the White County Legislative Body in electing to update the established Program Plan will maintain an effective and comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Program Plan for its employees.
 •Resolution No. 21-04-2021 - Surplus Fire Truck which resulted in a 1988 E-1 Pumper Truck 903 being donated to the Eastland Fire Department as it had been declared surplus property.
 •Resolution No. 22-04-2021 - General Purpose School Fund where the commission resolved to amend the budget by appropriating funding for a transfer

from the General Purpose School Fund to the School Federal Projects Fund to assist with the cash flow of reimbursable Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grants expendable through Fiscal Year 2024.
 Kurt Dronebarger, director of schools for White County, was present to inform the board of the various ways the school system is using the ESSER Funds (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief). He told the board they are non-recurring funds that have been part of presidential relief and

recovery plans, and, therefore, they can't be used for salaries as the money will not be available in four years and the salary money would then have to come from elsewhere.
 Dronebarger told the board the funds have been used to provide technology to students for distance learning as well as for purchasing new school buses and capital improvements on several of the county's school buildings.
 Commissioners absent from the April 19 meeting were Lee Broyles, Lonnie Crouch, and Terry Alley.

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VAN BUREN
CONTINUED FROM 1A
 a caring community."
 Through the program in the Van Buren County High School, Dodson provides supportive guidance, both in one-on-one and small group settings, and connects with the students to help them through an array of academic concerns that cover everything from struggling with a particular subject to choosing career or college paths to filling out financial aid paperwork for graduating seniors.
 But her work isn't just focused on the academic portion of the students' lives.
 "I do a little bit of everything," Dodson said.
 Through her position, she has created closets at the school to meet the basic needs of students, including clothing, hygiene needs, and school supplies. Dodson said that having access to these needs makes students feel better about coming to school and staying in the classroom, which is her goal for each student.
 "CIS site coordinators like Allison provide student support services that are unique to the school and community, but often include things like as-

istance securing food, housing, and transportation to health care, counseling, and mentoring services depending on the students' needs," Ann Waller Curtis, CIS's media relations spokesperson, said. "And as you can imagine, those needs have evolved considerably over the last year."
 Dodson said that when schools closed in March 2020, she began delivering basic needs to the students' homes. She sought ways, whether virtual or through those home visits, to help them stay on course, study for exams, and ensure that they knew they were still important and their success was still the focus of her day.
 "There was just as much need during those months, maybe even more, for these students to feel connected," Dodson said of last spring's semester.
 Dodson said she did everything in her power to keep that connection, from phone calls to writing letters, to hand delivering food and school packets, so they were sure to keep seeing her face and knowing she cared.
 "It was an adjustment, but I wanted them to know we were in this together," Dodson said.
 Dodson said returning to in-

person learning wasn't the easiest transition either.
 "When we came back to school this year, everything was different, so I adjusted along with the kids," she said. I listened to what was on their minds. I am striving to meet the needs that they present and ensure that they have what they need to keep being at school day after day. It seems like the past couple of months we are slowly returning to normal.
 "Some of the students and families can be a little skeptical when they are first introduced to the program," Dodson admitted and said that she puts a lot of energy into building a connection with the families. "Once they realize that I'm not leaving them, that this isn't the same thing they've heard over and over, that this isn't just somewhere to get a few basic items, but someone they can come to and talk to about their struggles and their hopes and what's going on in their lives, they start to really open up. My goal is to keep building those relationships and connections and helping those kids in whatever way I can. [I] want to see them be successful."

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The Expositor (SSN. 1044-1166) is published semi-weekly by Sparta Newspapers, Inc., at 34 W. Bockman Way, Sparta, Tennessee 38583. Periodical postage paid at U.S. Post Office, Sparta, Tennessee 38583.
 Subscription rates:
 •\$57, one year in county
 •\$27.50, six months in county
 •\$74, one year out-of-county (within Tennessee)
 •\$38, six months out-of-county
 •\$149, one year out-of-state (any age, including seniors)
 Publication No. 509380.
 POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to: The Expositor, P.O. Box 179, Sparta, TN 38583. Expositor telephone number: (931) 836-3284.