

# TAFCE CREATIVE WRITING



## 2025

**POETRY**

*any style*

Karen Hale  
Central Region  
Warren County  
Poetry

## Getting Old

Getting old is quite a drag,  
My body has begun to sag.  
What used to be the bottom is now on the top,  
And the top is dragging the floor like a mop.  
My hair's falling out and what's left is thin,  
My poor old eyes are growing dim.  
My kids took the car and said no more driving for you,  
All 'cause I thought the mailbox was McDonald's drive thru.  
My hands tremble and my knees want to knock,  
I can't see my TV or my old alarm clock.  
I got my cataracts fixed and new glasses changed things,  
But they don't me get around, I need me some wings.  
My bunions have bunions, my feet are a mess,  
I can't really see them so it's just a big guess.  
The faster I try to go, the slower I get,  
My get up and go has got up and went.  
My sitter don't sit and my bender don't bend,  
Oh, to be a little younger again.  
Stairs are an enemy; yes, they are mean,  
You can fall up them not just down them it seems.  
I play the radio too loud say the friends next door,  
They say they can't take old Willie singing much more.  
To repeat something that's said can come out wild,  
So hard of hearing is putting it mild.  
I just can't repeat any gossip about,  
For I can't tell it unless I shout.  
I got hearing aides but they really tickle,  
I can't say they help unless I hear them whistle.  
My teeth have fell out, I got some dentures new,  
But steak, corn or apples I cannot chew.  
My preacher says I should think of the hereafter and doom,  
I told him I did this always whenever I enter a room.  
Each time I do so, my head rings with laughter  
As I have to ask myself "what am I here after."  
It's said it's better to laugh than to cry,  
"Oh so old," I say with a sigh,  
A shot of Maalox is my bed time snack,  
And a little Doan's Pill for my aching back.  
The double bed is a little crowded with me plus three,

There's Ben Gay, Arthur Ritis, Charley Horse and me.  
I place on the shelf; my teeth, glasses, and aides,  
Then before I turn out the lights, I draw the shades.  
I crawl into bed, say my prayers, and then I ask myself,  
"Is there anything else that I need to put on the shelf?"

Karen Hale  
Warren Co.  
Central Region

Poetry

Debbie Schmidt

Houston County

## **“Help is on its Way”**

**When you see a troubled friend  
Whose heart is breaking so  
Don't say I know what you're going through  
Cause you don't really know  
Unless you wore a crown of thorns  
And saw the darkest day  
Say “ lift your hands to the Lord above  
Cause help is on its way”**

**You bend down to pick him up  
When a baby starts to cry  
Still depending on his mother's touch  
He can only reach so high  
So helpless is a baby child  
All he can do is lay  
Now close your eyes little baby child  
Cause help is on its way**

**As I watch the crippled hands  
So aged and so drawn  
Try to fold up saying one last prayer  
On the day of his last dawn**

He said "Lord I'm getting weaker"

So hear me as I pray

The middle is where I'm meeting him

Cause help is on its way

Debbie Schmidt

Houston County



Franne Brandon

Marshall County

Central Region Category 1 : Poetry

## TRANSFORMATION

The winter hills stand stark and bare  
Save for the trees, gray sentries there.

The gray repeating in the sky  
With clouds so low, scudding by.

Then the air begins to speak  
A subtle whisper, first quite weak.

And while initial raindrops fall  
The air speaks louder, an icy call  
To change the rain, slow its descent,

But in elation, not lament.

As crystals form, first shards of ice,  
Then flakes that grow, spin down to light  
On winter's shades of tan, obscuring  
All to white, as Nature's lilt  
Covers earth and trees with a crystal quilt.

## **Poem**

Jean Cross  
Bradley County  
Eastern Region

## **The Path**

There is a path for each to choose.  
A choice to make, we win or lose.

Our path be it smooth or filled with stones.  
We may have company or be alone.

The trials that come into our lives the way we  
receive them can make us wise.

A friend may aid us on our way, so we have a  
brighter day.

A song can help lift our load if we are walking  
a lonely road.

A word of kindness may shorten the way, let  
words of encouragement be easy to say.

A smile may strengthen a sad lonely heart, to  
help us all feel a part.

As we walk along, our path each day may we  
bring sunshine along the way.

Jean Cross  
Bradley County  
Eastern Region

# **Aging Gracefully**

## **Poetry**

**Carole Pickard**

**Lawrence County**

**Western Region**

# Aging Gracefully

It seems to follow me everywhere  
On the floor and in my chair.  
Enough to knit a sweater or rug  
Just lift my shoulders and give a shrug.  
Down it will float like a leaf in the wind  
Like all good things it will come to an end.  
It's served me well, it's kept me warm  
Made me look crazy when out in a storm.  
Sitting in church I brush off my dress  
Wearing dark colors adds even more stress.  
What used to be black and healthy and full  
Is now gray and stiff and feels like steel wool.  
Each day it gets thinner, less time to comb  
But that's ok, I'll face it head on.

Carole Pickard  
Lawrence County  
Western Region

# ESSAYS

*any subject or person*

Janie Jones

Dickson

Western

Category 2 Essays: any subject or person



## Traditions Come and Go

A tradition is a system of beliefs or behaviors (customs) passed down within a group of people or society with symbolic meaning or special significance. I am reminded of a tradition my mother had as my sisters and I grew up. On New Year's Day, every year Mother—always, always—gave each one of us a permanent. As I think about that day, I can still smell that permanent. For some unknown reason, I felt compelled to do the same for my girls. Just so you know, there are some traditions that should not be passed forward. After one painful New Year's Day attempt at giving Deb and Allyson a permanent, the three of us decided that my daughters should be in charge of their own hair. As I pondered this subject for this essay, some experiences I have had since the 2024 state conference jump-started my thought processes.

My mother's birthday was Christmas day, so Christmas became a special time at our house when I was growing up. Gifts to each other and not from Santa were opened on Christmas Eve so that Mother's birthday could be celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Another tradition at Christmas involved my grandfather. We ate Christmas lunch with him either in Dickson or McKenzie, where several of my mother's brothers and sisters lived. Traditions change. After my grandfather passed, we did not have Christmas lunch with my mother's family anymore. Not sure why. Instead Mother cooked. My dad's sister and her family joined us. That tradition remained in place as my sisters and I grew up. Although my dad passed and I went on to college, we still ate Christmas lunch together and gifts were opened on Christmas Eve. We continued this as I married, had children, who later had children, until Mother was not able to have Christmas Eve at her house or Christmas lunch as well.

To me that first Christmas Eve not going to my Mother's was strange. Since my girls were busy with their families, my husband and I went to Denny's for supper. That was weird for me to be sitting in Denny's on Christmas Eve with only three or four others in that restaurant. No gifts, no laughter, no fun.

A few years later my mother passed in April. We discovered in July that my sister had a brain tumor. We did have Thanksgiving at my home as that tradition had passed to me several years before. With Mother's passing, there were no gifts, and with Peggy fighting brain cancer, my family decided to go to Gatlinburg on Christmas Day. Our Christmas tradition changed. I still hosted a meal on Christmas Day, but not with hen and dressing that Mother always served on Christmas Day.

My daughter, Allyson, began Christmas Eve at her home, with just our immediate family. We continued for several years until this past year. To help my other daughter, Deb, not having to travel back and forth from Hendersonville, Allyson decided not to

have Christmas Eve at her home. What should my husband and I do? We upgraded from Denny's and went to Carrabba's. No gifts, some laughter, some fun, and yes, Sangria.

Traditions continued to change in 2024. I mentioned experiences for me since the 2024 state conference. Those experiences involved me having a kidney stone for the first time in my 79 years. After two surgeries in two weeks, my get up and go was slowed to whatever. Instead of decorating every room in my house with a different Christmas tree, I had to cut back on Christmas decorating and hosting. An important tradition for our family was decorating the den tree. With me not up to par at Thanksgiving and the grandchildren not home from college, that tradition was modified. Decorations were done together, but not till the middle of December.

It was interesting to me that the subject I was given to co-teach at FCL training was "Being Prepared for Change." We all know that change is coming. I was blessed to be able to embrace the change and not worry or stress over the fact that some of my traditions from the past were continuing to change. Change is a constant in our lives. Traditions are important as well.

While preparing this essay, I wondered what traditions my children remembered from their childhood. Since my girls are eleven years apart, their memories are different. Deb, our oldest, said sleeping in the den in front of the fire and going to Magene's (my mother) on Christmas Eve. Our youngest, Allyson, had more memories. Her memories included Magene making her Easter dresses, eating together at Granny's (my husband's mother) on Wednesday night before church, and going to another town—White Bluff—to church on Mother's Day to be with Magene and taking her a corsage. Allyson did say that although traditions are good, sometimes we can be too wrapped up in a tradition. She thought that the most important aspect was simply being together.

While our traditions are important, they do not take the place of spending time anywhere or at anytime with our families. We should consider ourselves blessed whenever we can share time with one another and not let the changing of a tradition dampen our spirit. It is not the changes that are important, but the constancy of being together that makes any tradition a memorable part of our lives.

Janie Jones  
Dickson  
Western

Janie Jones  
Dickson  
Western  
Category 2

Susan Baughman

Madison County – Western Region

Essay

## Community

What is community? We hear that term thrown around in health and wellness programs. You are always encouraged to have a supportive network of people around who have the same priorities as you do. You hear it in church settings. "We do life in community," when the leadership team is encouraging people to sign up for small groups. But what does that really mean and what is it about community that seems to make it so important to success in health or success in life?

Community by definition is a group of people living in the same area however it is so much more than just a geographical location. Community is also about shared vision, about moving in the same direction. Facebook is considered an online community. Can someone really find a community on the internet? Does that kind of community offer the same feelings as those who are in proximity in community? Do you have to share the same values or beliefs to stay in community?

I believe that there are varying levels of community and that community will grow as strong as the amount of effort put in by each member of the community. While FCE has varying types of community, club, county, region and state, how much effort do we really put into strengthening those communities? Yes, life is busy, however, is it too busy to reach out to a club member to see how they are feeling, or to invite someone for coffee or lunch? Even dropping a card in the mail when you are thinking of someone is such a simple and thoughtful way to build community. Community is built by frequent interaction. There are so many opportunities to build community at the club level.

Last month, one of my fellow club members, whom I now consider a dear friend, and I went to a fundraising event for one of the Selmer UT-Extension workers who lost everything in the devastating tornado. It was a wonderful event, with so much fun, food and community. While the Selmer club was the host, the other clubs in the county came together to help them with this project. I was so grateful that they reached out to nearby FCE clubs and invited us. Not only was it an inspiration to see what a few FCE clubs working together can achieve, but I was honored to be offering some support to someone in need, because that is what the heart of FCE is. I left that garden party inspired to think bigger than my own club; to begin to look for ways that our clubs and our county council can work together to accomplish so much more.

Although this is only my second year in FCE, it has captured my heart. I have learned so much from the ladies in my club. They are my community. They are the reasons I love FCE. I feel a sense of belonging with this group and each month I am inspired by how strong these women are, how resilient and independent these women are, and by how caring these women are.

But here's the thing. There are so many people, right in front of us, who are looking for community. They are looking for their tribe, a group of like-minded people, who want to be part of something bigger than themselves, who truly know and care about each other, and who are working together to create something meaningful and impactful.

I used to joke that FCE was the best kept secret in our town. But now, that responsibility for sharing this community falls on me. I need to tell others that I have found what they are looking for. I need to be looking for people who want to join this amazing group. I need to build this community not only for those that are here now, but for those that are future generations of FCE members.

I want to start challenging all FCE members to begin to strengthen the community that is FCE, by reaching out to new members and making them feel welcomed and part of your established community. Start reaching out to club members that you may not know as well and get to know them. Start thinking about ways that you can partner with another club or ways that the county council can be made

stronger in your community. What we build in each club and each county will ultimately strengthen our regions and our state organizations. Now is the time to take that first small step that could potentially change the course of FCE history!

Susan Baughman. Madison County, Western Region

Deborah Womack

Warren County

Central Region

Essay



## Loss of A Chance

Every day we cross paths with people who are walking around us, passing us by, or participating in activities with us. There are those who wait with us in terminals, sit in an office waiting area with us, or even the people in cars next to us waiting in traffic. Did you ever wonder how many of these people have someone's heart—not romantically, or in friendship, but physically have someone else's heart? I mean a heart, donated to them, at a time when family or friends made a difficult decision, or, when a person wished to donate their heart and made their wishes known before their death. It could not only have been a heart that was donated; it could have been other organs also.

I have often thought about heart and other organ donors and their families and friends; how the ones left behind had to honor the wishes of the donor. Or, if there was no "wish made ahead" by the donor, the permission to donate is granted by the loved ones left behind. When one is deciding whether they want to donate, the decision might have been a heartfelt one. I have considered it always an act of love. Someone did act in love when they granted permission on the back of their Driver's License. Someone did act in love when they donated their loved one's heart or organs to another person.

Then there is the other group of "Would Be Organ Donors"; those who wish to donate but it was/ is not possible due to unfortunate health circumstances. I have seen and known those who wished to donate but could not. I often think of these people as ones who lost a chance. A chance to do more for others. After all, life is full of chances. Sometimes life is hard to live with in the loss of that chance.

I have listened often to the song titled Chances, by Five for Fighting. While the group may be singing about relationships in life and love, or other life problems, the beginning lyrics are poignant. Listen to that song sometime. The opening verse-how true- "Chances are when said and done, who'll be the lucky ones who make it all the way?" I think of the lucky ones who did get that chance to live longer with a donated heart or other organ that made life better for them.

One of my husband's wishes was to be an organ donor. He did not get that chance due to his own medical circumstances. I think of his heart and the person who might have received it. His heart was normal in size, strong in beat, but large and loud in love for all those around him. The loss of that chance for someone to have received his heart or other organs floats through my mind sometimes. Realistically, the person who would have received his heart would not have had his personality, his looks, his large booming laughter and his sense of adventure. But they would have received a very vital organ to live on. And for that, I do feel it was a loss of a chance.

I cannot dwell on all the "What ifs", "The might have beens". I cannot dwell on the loss of chances. Instead, I comfort myself with the thought that his heart still beats -in my life every day, in every way. That the color of his hair and his eyes were passed on to my children and my grandchildren. That his joy in life and adventure has been passed on when I hear the joy of their laughter and listen to their stories about their big adventures. And then there are their conversations of "I remember when Papa"... are heard. And the family gatherings where someone says, "You look and act just like your Dad". I don't feel that loss

of a chance then; I feel blessed because I got another chance, this chance to be able to see and hear this moment and feel my heart beat with joy.

February is considered the "Heart Month". For those of you who celebrate the heart and love, always remember that you have chances in life. You have people's hearts in your hands every day. Some day you may feel like you can't give them a chance to make a difference in their life. Consider giving someone a chance to live by the choices you make. Be an organ donor. Give them a chance. Then you will know that you tried your best to avoid the loss of a chance for someone to live life longer and stronger. They will be the lucky ones.

Deborah Wornack  
Warren County  
Central Region

**COVER SHEET**

Dorris Turrentine

Bedford County

Central Region

Category: Essays: any subject or person

## **“bloom where you are planted”**

To bloom where you are planted or grow where you're planted encourages you to make the most of your current situations and circumstances, rather than wishing for something different. To bloom where you are planted means to capitalize on your talents and gifts regardless of where you live and apply them to bear fruit, to be productive to your benefit. Bloom not just for yourself but for those around you too.

Take advantage of the opportunities you have in your life. That is what it means to truly bloom. Not all plants and flowers are planted in the very best soil, but they find a way to bloom like dandelions or a sun flower.

A tree is known by its fruit, a man by his deeds. A garden requires patients, labor and attention. It is only the farmer who faithfully plants seeds in the spring, who reaps a harvest in the fall. You've got to water your plants to blossom like a flower which means to thrive in life.

Bloom where you're planted means to be content where God has placed you in life and make the most of your opportunity. Be happy where you are and leave something for others.

To me this is what it means to truly “BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED”.

Dorris Turrentine

Bedford County

Central Region

**Betty Beene**

**Bledsoe County**

**Eastern Region**

**Category: Essay**

## KINDNESS

**"Kindness is a type of behavior marked by acts of generosity, consideration, or concern for others without expecting praise or reward. It is considered a virtue and is recognized as a value in many cultures and religions. Kindness can be expressed through kind deeds or favors."**  
(Wikipedia)

**Mother Teresa has a quote that reads, "Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier."**

**Kindness needs to be shown every day. How hard is it to smile at someone and greet them with a, "Hello, beautiful day isn't it?" This may make someone's day happier.**

**What can a person do to show kindness? Following are some suggestions that can be used:**

**Send a letter to a soldier. Buy a stranger coffee. Bake cookies for the firehouse. Leave a great tip for lunch. Hold a door open for someone. Give hugs to people you love. Smile at people in passing. Volunteer at a local charity. Compliment a coworker. Donate items to a thrift store. Donate blankets to a shelter. Give flowers to someone. Actively listen when others talk. Take a friend to lunch. Walk in a park with a friend. Fix a meal for someone who isn't feeling well. Visit the elderly, they would enjoy having someone to talk with.**

**How does kindness impact health? "Engaging in acts of kindness significantly improves both mental and physical health boosting happiness, reducing stress, and even contributes to a longer life span." (Howard University)**

### **Mental Health Benefits:**

**Performing acts of kindness can boost happiness, reduce stress and anxiety, strengthens solid connections.**

**Physical Health Benefits:**

Cardiovascular health, improves immune functions, may prolong life span.

**Mechanism Behind Kindness:**

Release of hormones; Contagious nature -- showing kindness to others can be contagious, witnessing or receiving kindness can inspire others to act kindly.

**Practical Implications:**

Doing small acts of kindness in your daily life such as complimenting someone, helping a neighbor or volunteering can yield health benefits to the giver and receiver. Being kind to oneself is very important. This can lead to better emotional balance and health outcomes.

Kindness is a silent smile, a friendly word, a nod of encouragement. Kindness is the single most powerful thing we can teach children. (Raktivist)

Betty Beene  
Bledsoe County  
Eastern Region





## **Wisdom**

One of the traits most lacking today in our society is wisdom. We have more knowledge, facts and figures than any generation before us, yet we lack wisdom.

Wisdom is knowing how to apply the facts and knowledge in a way to make it more productive and beneficial for us.

Wisdom may be gained from experiences that we have had, and we learned, as from observing the actions of others around us.

Wisdom is an accumulation of things learned, in our own lives or by observing the lives of others. We gain insight from these events in life or we can learn from the other person.

Wisdom teaches us that we do not have to experience trials, but learn how to escape them by taking advice from someone who has been through the trial.

Wisdom is gained over a period of time as we grow and learn. Today we want everything to be accomplished in an instant, but wisdom is not gained in this manner.

To be wise we should listen more, talk less and build on the things we already know. This will help us discern the right way and arrive with an answer that is the correct one for the problem.

Jean Cross  
Bradley County  
Eastern Region

# **SHORT STORIES**

Cindi Lindsey

Bedford County

Central Region

Creative writing: short story

## Hogan

It's true, I found him on the side of the road lying on a blanket with a bowl of water and a bag of dog chow next to him! I stopped of course...

That's how an eight month old puppy came to live at my house. He was black as night with a single, thin streak of white running between his eyes down the center of his nose. I often cupped his face in my hands and told him not to ever be concerned about being abandoned again because he held my heart within those big brown eyes of his. His tail moved at the speed of light from side to side at my words.

The vet called him a boxer mix... I called him Hogan. Hogan followed me everywhere I went during the day as together we fed the chickens, ducks, a mule and the few horses that were residents of our little country farm. As he grew, Hogan never really allowed me to get too far out of his sight. He was always running after those elusive barn cats, and wandering annoyingly under my feet as I poured out feed and water into various troughs and buckets. He learned to jump with ease into the back of my old truck to travel with me to the Co-op in order to pick things up and run errands. He held his head and tail high as the wind blew around him; his wagging tail always expressing his love for life as we drove along.

At night, Hogan slept at the foot of my bed. No matter how weary I was, I just couldn't seem to relax into sleep until I felt that little bounce on my mattress as he jumped onto the bed, rumpling the comforter with small movements of his paw before settling down comfortably to rest in the center of his nest.

Oh, how that dog loved the outdoors! He chased after butterflies, and sniffed the ground with fervor to see what had recently passed by. Hogan would go on the circuit around the pasture with me while I inspected and repaired fencing in this place or that. After daily chores were done, we would sit on the front porch together listening to the sounds of life chattering their noisy conversations all around us as twilight came on. I would sit in my grandfather's oak rocking chair with its soft, methodical creak, and Hogan would lay on the door mat whose

painted greeting of "Welcome!" had completely worn off. Each time I looked over in Hogan's direction, that black tail of his would beat a happy tattoo on the wooden porch floor planks.

Years passed and Hogan had advanced in age. He wasn't able to jump into the truck bed due to arthritis, so I would lift him into the cab of the truck where he rode along beside me with his head lying on my leg. Hogan slept more in those latter days, but, should I start out of the door to do farm chores, that sweet, old dog would follow right along with me. He walked much slower and followed more and more steps behind me as days went by, but he was never too far away. During the day, he would normally be seen lying in the grass soaking up sunshine rather than being pesky by getting under my feet. However, when he noticed me looking towards him, his tail would beat a slow rhythm on the ground.

Life was good like that until the day that I had my heart attack and had to be rushed to the hospital. I was released a few days later and went home to rest. Yes, of course, there was Hogan, lying on the front porch waiting for my return. There was my faithful old boy; his tail whisking the floorboards clean as his tail swept slowly from side to side. My visiting neighbor lifted Hogan onto the foot of the bed for me and we both settled down to rest.

I woke up one morning, only two days later, to discover that Hogan was lying right beside me with his head on my chest. He wasn't moving and he wasn't breathing. I don't know how long I lay there smoothing his fur and speaking to him softly while silent tears ran down my face. I just couldn't bring myself to move from that spot. This time I was the one that felt abandoned.

One night, about a week after we buried my companion, just as I was just starting to fall asleep, I felt a little bounce on the mattress at the foot of my bed. Then I felt small movements, as if the bedspread was being moved around just a bit. I sat bolt upright! What just happened? Was it my imagination? Was it just a memory of something from years before? Oddly enough, the bedclothes were just a tiny bit rumpled into a small nest with an ever so slight indentation in the middle. As I lay back down on my pillow I smiled to myself because I knew that Hogan hadn't abandoned me. He was not too far away after all.

**Brenda Craven**

**McMinn County**

**Eastern Region**

**Short Stories**

## Mother and Son: Small-Town Trailblazers

As a self-acknowledged country girl at heart who grew up in a farming community of 1,500, but who's also lived in cities during my 72 years, I've often found that it's less intimidating to "buck the system" or challenge popular opinion in a city than in a small town, *particularly one's hometown*. In the latter, you're meeting folks face-to-face whom you've known and often admired for much of your life but whose personal regard may be forever altered by daring to question a viewpoint or challenge the status quo. Fortunately, though, in some cases, unlikely mavericks emerge for the best of reasons, ultimately gaining the admiration of even the most cynical observers.

One woman, in particular, falls into that category. Mary Barker shocked and ultimately earned the admiration of an entire community. A petite housewife. A mother of three. A 30-year-old woman with a quiet, unassuming personality who'd participated in few if any formal groups outside the church. Amazing friends and family alike, this young woman with a high school education demonstrated that a mother's love can overcome seemingly overwhelming social and political odds. All of this in a quiet Midwestern farming town in 1956.

Mary's challenge? To achieve a "first" for the community's small school district: admittance of her disabled wheelchair-bound son Jim to the public school's first grade class. Jim, suffering from crippling cerebral palsy from birth, would be age-ready to enter school in just a few months. The issue? The Board of Education would undoubtedly view Jim as a child who would be "best served" learning at home or residing in an institution since, in the members' opinion, he faced a limited future at best and would never adjust to the "hub-bub" of the school environment. At best, the school district could place Jim in an overcrowded special

education class on a trial basis. Due to Jim's physical limitations, however, that seemed unlikely.

Yet Mary Barker, a woman who had never addressed a public forum in this small town or any other venue, asked to speak to the all-male School Board comprised of a local attorney, family physician, area farmers and businessmen. Her husband, who commuted to a distant night-shift job in Kansas City, could not attend and lend his wife support. Mary would make her points alone. No doubt, some of the Board were dumbfounded by her presence, although the physician may have had a suspicion. The members were unaccustomed to women—other than the superintendent's secretary—attending Board meetings. Certainly, a woman presenting such an unusual request was facing an intimidating—and, possibly, antagonistic audience.

Mary was prepared. She explained—citing specific examples—that Jim was bright, articulate—despite somewhat halting speech—and enjoyed socialization with other children. Outwardly unintimidated by the board's discouraging comments and seeming dismissal of her position, the board members either tired of dealing with Mary, or her points finally hit home. Ultimately, Jim, in his tiny wheelchair, joined other six-year-olds in the first grade class of 1956 in the district's new one-story building with the school nurse and principal volunteering to assist with restroom and cafeteria transport.

Time passed. Jim excelled in his schoolwork, gained friendships, and became a point of pride for those peers who were “awarded” the privilege to push his wheelchair to the cafeteria. However, middle school created another challenge. Housed—along with the high school—in a three-story, high-ceilinged structure built in 1912, that had no elevator, Jim would have no access to the second and third floors. Once again, Mary approached the Board of Education. While her husband felt her argument with board members was futile, Mary continued to attend



meeting after meeting. The board's argument: The school district could not afford and/or would not be willing to pay anyone to carry Jim from floor to floor between classes.

Undeterred, his mother found a solution: Some husky, athletic high school boys would be more than happy to carry Jim from floor to floor between classes—and transport him to the restroom.

Jim's witty sense of humor, refusal to accept special treatment—aside from transportation from room to room in the school setting—resulted in his peers, parents, and the community forgetting that he had challenging disabilities. He had a witty retort for any occasion, and he didn't hesitate to ask girls for dates for pizza or movies with his mother's sister acting as chauffeur. In short, he reflected his mother's indomitable spirit in social situations, as well as the classroom.

Upon graduation, Jim attended the University of Missouri where true freedom of mobility, access to every class, extracurricular activity, gathering of disabled and non-disabled students alike was afforded. He excelled in advancing his educational path at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he pursued graduate studies, ultimately obtaining a doctoral degree in philosophy. Here he met Angela, a fellow graduate student and his future wife of 43 years.

For more than 30 years, this "disabled" man served as an analyst for the Wisconsin Health Services. In retirement, he taught classes as a university faculty member. And was his life *all business*? Not Jim's. His career also included work as a freelance journalist, reviewer of computer games and his true love—next to wife Angela—competition at computer game conventions.

However, Jim epitomized the adage "pay it forward." As a founding member of a

cooperative in Madison, he and others oversaw the rehab of abandoned buildings into affordable housing units, and he served and chaired nonprofit organizations supporting persons with disabilities.

Unfortunately, in his late 60's, Jim succumbed to the flu, but his life epitomized J. R. R. Tolkien's words that "[i]t is not the strength of the body that counts, but the strength of the spirit." Such is the lesson this man learned from his mother—the unlikely maverick—who exemplified the courage to overcome any and all obstacles for the benefit of her son.

Brenda Craven, McMinn County, Eastern Region

## Short Story

BRENDA Mitchell

Warren County  
Central Region

## The Escape

All things “seemed” ok at the old animal shelter, but there was unrest among the residents, who were bored to animal tears. Oftentimes there was no one to play with. They occasionally had visitors who walked around, trying to decide on a pet, but they usually kept on walking.

When you are old or scruffy looking, you just got passed over for a cute puppy or a sweet kitten. Each time they got overlooked, it hurt their feelings a little more---and believe me-----they do have feelings!

Every animal in the shelter had a story to tell, of why they wound up here. There was a huge, handsome Great Dane, who had been owned by Nick and Joanna. They were a “power couple”, who were on their way up in their careers. They loved getting praise over their new, beautiful home. Joanna was very fussy about the fancy furniture, and Maverick was far too rambunctious for them. Believe it or not, they got rid of him at the Happy Tails Shelter!

Herbert and Martha lived on a farm. which was over-run with mice. so they needed a cat or two. Martha was so tender-hearted that she couldn't bear for them to stay outside at night. There was a problem though. She loved to knit and crochet. The cats kept attacking the balls of yarn, sending them flying, and the cats had to go. Bye-bye, Cats!

Duane and Skye enjoyed their peaceful, calm, Hippy lifestyle. They sat on the floor on big pillows and read lots of books and did charts on inner peace. They lit lavender candles, did horoscopes, and read Tarot cards of the future. Their spider monkey, Mad Max, caused havoc in their Zen atmosphere.

Skip and Bonnie had been high-school sweethearts. He was a football jock, and she had been a cheerleader. They borrowed money from Bonnie's father for a mobile home. There was nothing better than pizza and beer on a Friday night. Everything changed when they had Baby Tyler. So naturally, they didn't have any time for Squeaky, their guinea pig

Caroline was a do-gooder who was proud of her cooking and sewing, but she was lonely for another voice in her house. She went to church every time

the doors were open and prayed often. She decided to get a parrot, and she could teach him to talk and say cute things like "Lord, have Mercy" and "Amen". He was fun to be around and learned quickly. She loved for him to quote "Praise the Lord". Caroline's boyfriend, Jasper, thought it would be funny to teach him other things though. It was quite a shock when Freddie squawked "Give me a Kiss, Baby!" and "You're a Hot Mama!" Freddie had to go-Quick!

Emily and her butter corn snake, Slytherin, lived in an apartment uptown. She was always busy riding her bike, going to Starbuck's, and having her friends come over. Slytherin became nervous and got a rash. He began losing weight and hid under an artificial tortoise shell. *Emily chose her friends over her pet.*

*Arthur wanted a pet that wouldn't be too rowdy or hard to take care of. Now walking with a walker, Arthur was unsteady on his feet and subject to falling. He got an Eastern box turtle and named him, Benjamin. They got along great until Arthur became forgetful and needed the care of a nursing home. He was forced to ask Happy Tails to come get Benjamin.*

*Although the animal shelter was clean, it didn't feel like a real home. They had food, but sometimes the workers were late feeding them and bathing them too. The main helper, Todd, got in trouble because he was always on his phone and didn't take good care of the animals. He got mad and took it out on the "rescues". He would mistreat them when no one was looking, and when he, actually had to touch them, he became mean and yanked them around. They hid in the corner of their enclosure, with fear in their eyes. He even cussed them when he had to clean up their cage. They became very sad and lonely.*

*The poor, scared animals had a meeting. There was only one solution. They would make their escape on the next super cloudy night. That way, no one would see them making their break-out! As luck would have it, the next cloudy night was Saturday. They had visitors during the afternoon, but they had all gone home. And now their plan began to work.*

*The spider monkey, Mad Max, nimbly worked on his lock with his long, skinny fingers, and his cage door popped open. He then went to rescue his friends Cat 1 and Cat 2. Together they release Maverick and Freddie, the parrot. Of course, Freddie wasn't allowed to say a thing! It only took a minute to get Squeaky, the guinea pig, and Slytherin, the snake. He was not behind bars because you know, he could slither right through them! He loved that joke. Next it was time to release Benjamin. It was funny to hear him say "Hurry, Hurry", since when would a turtle EVER be in a hurry?*

Our escape artists rushed out the door and down the sidewalk. They didn't have far to walk. With Slytherin and Benjamin in the rear, they weren't too fast. Luckily the Golden Oldies Nursing Home was just down the street, and that was right where they were headed. Maverick, the Great Dane, scratched at the front door, and Charlie, the night watchman, was so shocked that he opened the door to let them in.

The old folks gradually woke up and were so delighted to have visitors, even if they were "Dangerous" escape artists!

What a wonderful, joyous event took place that day. Happy animals needing love and attention and Happy Oldsters with a new lease on life.

Brenda Mitchell  
Warren County  
Central Region

Title: What Happened to the Good Ole Days  
Obion County  
Western Region

Category: Short Story

## What Happened to the Good Ole Days

I remember when weekends meant visiting with grandparents. Saturdays were usually spent with Daddy's parents, and Sundays, we'd go see Mama's mother. No matter where we ended up, there were always uncles, aunts, and cousins around, and plenty of space for kids to play. If you needed something for Sunday dinner, it had to be bought before the local grocery store closed on Saturday afternoon, because nothing was open on Sunday.

Neither set of my grandparents had indoor bathrooms, so it was the outhouse for everyone. At Grandmother Jones's, that meant facing off with her mean white rooster. That old thing would chase us kids every chance he got—and sometimes, he caught us! One Sunday, Daddy and a few uncles decided enough was enough. They caught the rooster, wrung his neck, and served him up for supper. That was the end of our rooster problems.

In the summer, we had to watch out for wasps and bees on the way, but once you made it inside, you could flip through the Sears catalog and daydream. Of course, that same catalog doubled as toilet paper in the outhouse. The grown-ups swore if you rubbed the pages together enough, it'd feel soft as Charmin. I'm not so sure about that.

Eventually, playing outside turned into helping in the kitchen. My job was peeling potatoes—for 30 people or more on a normal Sunday. I once sliced a fingernail into the bowl and thought surely Grandmother would let someone else take over. Nope. She told me to fish it out and keep peeling. Mama and each of her siblings had four kids, so there were cousins everywhere—older ones, younger ones, and plenty in between.

At Grandmother's, the men always ate first at her big dining table—none of the chairs matched the table or each other, but no one cared. After the men finished, the women and children ate. When the meal was over, dishes were washed, and the floor swept (Grandmother believed that had to be done after every meal). Then we'd head to the east porch, dragging straight-back chairs from the dining room. The women watched as the men played washers in the yard, and we kids ran around playing tag, hide and seek, or Red Rover. I was small, so when my older cousins called me over, they knew I couldn't break through their chain of hands. But we didn't care—we laughed, we ran, we played. We got dirty, we got sunshine, and we used our imaginations.

No one thought about germs. We all drank from the same dipper drawn from Grandmother's well—she preferred that water over anything that came through the pipes. One thing every grandchild remembers is her “black tea,” made special by the iron in her well water. We thought it was the best tea in the world.



Her yard was huge, perfect for hiding under the house or porch. Grandmother had a black-and-white TV with a child-powered antenna. If you wanted to change the channel, one of us had to go outside, climb up on the porch, and turn it while someone inside knocked on the window to say when the picture looked good. Most of the time, the TV was for her or one of her kids. It wasn't a big group activity.

She didn't get a phone until I was a teenager—a rotary dial on a party line with a neighbor. That party line could be entertaining if you were nosy, but it was a pain if you actually needed to make a call.

My Peevyhouse grandparents had a smaller home but raised nine kids in it. When we visited, everyone gathered outside under the shade trees. The grown-ups talked, the kids climbed trees and tore through the yard, and life was simple. They never had a phone, and the house had no central heat or air, just a lot of love.

Looking back now, I realize how little they had by today's standards—outhouses, no AC, no running hot water—but I never once thought of them as poor. Their gardens fed us. Their homes sheltered us. And their love was loud and lasting.

Kids today might never know the joy of a Sunday spent with family, a dipper of well water, or hiding under the porch. Life has sped up. Visits require planning, appointments, and texts. The “good ole days” may be long gone, but they sure left their mark on me.

For now, I'll just sit back on my couch, cool air blowing, and smile at the memories—dirty feet, homemade meals, cousins, laughter, and a time when all you needed was each other.

Susie Rodgers

Obion County

Western Region

## **Short Story**

**Jean Cross**

**Bradley County  
Eastern Region**

## **Sally Mae's Adventure**

Sally Mae and her three sisters were busy pecking around in the yard eating seed and bugs and enjoying life.

Suddenly from out of the sky a chicken hawk swept down and grabbed one of the sisters. Well, let me tell you the other three took off running for their lives.

About this time a shot was fired, and the feathers flew in all directions, but it was too late for the sister. The others were so traumatized that they went into hiding.

The man and his wife searched for them, but to no avail. Finally, they decided to just let nature take its course and when they calmed down, they would come home on their own.

Well, they did return, but not a sign of Sally Mae. They looked high and low, but she was nowhere to be seen.

They needed some items from the local Ace Hardware so, they got into their jeep and headed to the store. I guess it was about six or seven miles away from their house. They purchased their items and headed to their jeep to start home. Well, the man heard a familiar sound coming from under his jeep. He lifted the hood and there was Sally Mae, sitting down there. He couldn't believe that she was under there and had hitched a ride.

She hopped out and the chase was on. She ran around and under the table of plants outside the store with the man and his wife after her. This must have been quite a sight, two people chasing a chicken outside a hardware store.

She was safely captured and carried home. I will have to say that Sally Mae struts around acting a little better than the other sisters. Maybe even a little smug after her adventure.

**JoAnne Gill  
Weakley County  
Western Region  
Creative Writing  
Sbort Story**

## GROWING UP IN A DOG TROT HOUSE

From my title I think you would like to ask, "What is a Dog Trot house?" A Dog Trot House is a historic house plan where 4 large rooms are separated by a very wide breezeway, allowing cool air to circulate around these rooms. Our house was built of Cypress logs, that over the years, had been covered with boarding, making the logs invisible. The ends of the breezeway were also covered by doors, with a wide porch across the front. During an ancestry study, I learned that my great grand parents had probably lived in that house many years ago.

We moved to the dog trot house when I was 6 years old so I could walk about a half mile to school. The school was a beautiful white building with 4 large rooms. Each teacher had 2 grades per room. My first teacher was Ms. Betty Sue Green. She was so kind to all her first and second graders, teaching us to read "Mac and Muff". There was a sand box in the room that we could play in. She never complained if we spilled sand on the floor. In warm weather we would bring our lunch to school and sit under the sprawling oak tree's roots to eat. In winter we had a lunch room in the basement of the school. The food was delicious. My favorite was vegetable beef soup with cornbread. On Halloween there would be a haunted house in that basement. Cooked spaghetti would be "brains". Upstairs we would have "fishing" where we would hold a pole over the cloak room partition and a surprise "fish" would be put on our "hook".

When in the fifth grade my little school closed and we were bused to a consolidated school. I will never forget those sweet school times in my very beautiful four room school.

Our country life in 1945 was very different from today. We had a deep well for water and an outhouse for a toilet. On a warm summer day I was often allowed to draw water from our well, fill our #3 washtub, let it warm in the sun and "go swimming". I was cautioned to avoid "messing" up the well water, making it cloudy. If that happened we would have to let the water settle before use. We did have electricity in this house. A single light bulb hung on a long cord from the ceiling of each of the four rooms. We felt blessed because we no longer needed the coal oil lamp. We cooled the rooms by opening windows in the summer and we were kept toasty warm in the winter with a Warm Morning Stove. Very often a pot of beans or soup simmered on the stove. A delightful smell when coming in from play or school. I must confess I was often chastised for "fanning" the screen door, letting a fly or mosquito into the house.

We had a battery radio that sat on a little table. I own and treasure that table today. I sat there in front of the radio playing with my paper dolls while listening to "The Lone Ranger" or "The Squeaking Door". On Saturday night we regularly listened to "The Grand Ole Opry". I remember hearing Ernest Tubbs singing, "I'm Walking the Floor Over You". The child in me wondered how someone could get under the floor. Occasionally, a radio fuse would blow out and the radio would be quiet until Daddy could go to town to buy another one. My love of music began with that radio. I still sing for church, conferences, weddings and funerals. I have had a professionally recorded CD, that I often give away, as my mini-ministry.

We worked as a family to farm. We chopped the cotton in the spring and picked the cotton in the fall. Of course I was a valued employee picking cotton in a pillowslip "cotton sack" mother has fashioned for me. (I need an LOL Emoji here). To keep me entertained while working in the field, Mother would occasionally "find" a penny candy on a cotton stalk. Of course I knew she didn't find candy, but never knew where or when she purchased it. Daddy also planted water melon here and there in the cotton middle. What a surprise while picking cotton, we would find a ripe melon that Daddy would burst open right there. We would enjoy a cool, sweet treat.

I think my love for a thunder storm developed because when it rained, we would leave the field. When at home, I would wrap myself in a quilt, sit in the porch swing and listen to the rain fall on the tin roof. I still often sit on our porch and listen to the rain to this day.

Daddy put a seat on the tongue of his cultivator so I could sit while he tilled the soil. I rode many miles on this cultivator. The smell of newly broken soil was so sweet. I remember the excitement of starting a new crop, but I also remember how sore Daddy's feet would be in the spring of the year, walking for hours over newly plowed ground. Mother would put medicine on his feet then clean socks.

Mother always had a large vegetable garden that needed weeding, gathering and preserving. That was our food supply. Many hours were spent sitting with Mother under the shade tree shelling peas or snapping green beans. One year when I was old enough for the 4-H Club, we shelled purple hulled peas and sold them for expense money for me to attend 4-H Camp. I wish I had a picture of Mother with her old bonnet on working in her garden.

We owned one family jersey cow who provided us with milk and butter. Her name was Alice. It was my chore each evening to walk along the very worn cow path to the back of the pasture to bring her up for milking. She had a shady spot by a flowing creek where she would wait for me. I must say this was such a peaceful walk as I talked to Alice, telling her about my day, as she followed me home. I can vividly remember her sweet milky smell.

My daddy would read the comic strip, "Little Orphan Annie" to me whenever we were able to have a news paper. I loved hearing about Orphan Annie and her dog Sandy, so I named my little feist puppy Sandy. Sandy was given to me by a neighbor, Mr. Burnett, when I was 2 years old. Sandy was my constant companion. He walked with me to and from school each day, always knowing when school was over. He was a gentle soul. He allowed me to dress him in my doll clothes. He also became my very first nursing patient when I received a toy stethoscope from Santa for my sixth Christmas. It was in a

doctor's kit and it really worked. I enjoyed hearing his little heart beats. Sandy lived 12 years. I remember sitting on the porch steps, knowing he was very old, telling him he was my dearest friend. When we couldn't find him one day, he has apparently gone away to die. It was several days before Daddy found his little body. A sad day for me.

I hope you have enjoyed my memories of growing up in a Historic Dog Trot house as much as I have reliving them.

joanne gill  
weakley county  
western region

# CHILDREN'S STORIES

*no illustrations*



**Amanda Johnson**

**Warren County**

**Central Region**

**Category #4 Children's Stories**

### **Priscilla Penguin's Peculiar Paintings**

In the beautiful, snowy town of Pebble Cove, there lived a young penguin named Priscilla. Priscilla loved to paint. She would spend hours everyday painting lots of different pictures. She filled her paintings full of color – red landscapes, polka-dotted icebergs, rainbow clouds, and polar bears with stripes of gold. The more color she could put on her canvas, the more joy she felt!

One day at school, her teacher, Mrs. Waddlesworth, had an announcement to share with the class.

"Alright, my little penguins. I am excited to let you know that The Pebble Cove Art Show is coming up. This show is open to our entire town, and I want to encourage each of you to create something that you can proudly enter into the competition! The winners will have their artwork placed in the Ice Floe Gallery."

The Ice Floe Gallery! Priscilla loved walking through the Ice Floe Gallery's halls, staring up at famous works of art. And now one of her paintings could hang there too! She could not wait to start working right away.

Mrs. Waddlesworth continued. "This afternoon, we will take some time to pull out our art supplies and experiment. Be ready to get creative!"

The afternoon could not come quickly enough. Math, science, reading, and lunch seemed to crawl by. Finally, it was art time!

Priscilla and her classmates began working immediately. Everyone seemed to have an idea of what they wanted to create. As usual, Priscilla was adding as much color as possible to her paper.

"Priscilla? What is that? Snow doesn't look like that." Percy stood beside her, looking at the magenta snowflakes falling on a yellow whale she had started coloring. She hesitated as her classmates heard Percy and began to crane their necks to see.

"Why is the whale yellow? And the sea is bright green?" So many questions, and Priscilla felt herself blush as she noticed that everyone else was painting landscapes with white snow and blue waters. Just like you would see outside.

"What is going on, my little penguins? Oh, this painting is very... different. Class, let's get back to our own drawings. Priscilla is just being extra creative." Mrs. Waddlesworth patted her on the head and walked away.

But Priscilla still heard the whispers from around the room and felt the stares of her classmates.

That night and for several days after, Priscilla tried hard to stick with the simple pallet of blues, grays, and whites that the other penguins had used. But no matter how hard she tried, her brush would stray and add an unexpected splash of color. A green seal, a school of star-flecked fish, a pink iceberg.

At breakfast the morning before the art show, her mom noticed Priscilla's sad face.

"What's wrong, sweet pea?"

"My paintings are wrong! I can't paint regular things with regular colors. I always end up making it too bright and peculiar. And I can't add that to the art show. It will be so unusual from everyone else."

Her mom put a flipper around Priscilla's shoulders.

"Honey, do your colorful paintings make you happy?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is what art is all about. You create what makes you feel. I think you should enter your favorite painting. No matter what anyone else is doing."

Though she felt nervous, Priscilla decided to listen to her mom. She looked around her room and found her favorite painting. Rainbow snowflakes fell like confetti on a group of neon green penguins, skating with bright purple top hats. Staring at it made her smile.

The Pebble Cove Art show was full of beautiful creations. Paintings and sculptures filled the halls of The Ice Floe Gallery. Priscilla took her time looking around and taking it all in. She found her school's entries along the back wall. Hers was the only one in bright colors. While it felt scary to be so different, she felt proud that she had entered something that made her feel happy.

While Priscilla walked around, looking at the other art, she kept hearing a strange commotion coming from the back of the room.

"So creative!"

"Look at the colors!"

"I can't help but smile when I look at it!"

Penguins had begun huddling around her class's paintings. It was so hard to see over the large group that was forming. But it looked like they were in front of her canvas!

Suddenly, a loudspeaker boomed over the room, with the voice of Mayor Magellan. He was on the stage at the front of the building.

"Ladies and gentle penguins, I would like to announce our first prize of the evening. Is a Priscilla Penguin present?"

Priscilla gulped, but raised her flipper.

"Well, please join me up here, Priscilla!" She made her way to the stage. Her stomach felt like it had shrimp swimming around inside of her, and her knees were shaky.

"Your painting, Priscilla, was so very peculiar! It has easily become a favorite for all of the judges."

"Oh, thank you, Mayor Magellan." Priscilla smiled largely, and found her mother beaming at her from the crowd.

"We would like to award you the ribbon tonight for Most Original and Joyful. We would also like to place your painting in our Ice Floe Gallery permanently. What do you say?"

Priscilla was momentarily speechless. She looked out at the crowd before her then turned back to the mayor.

"I say, yes! Thank you so much!" She accepted her ribbon from the mayor and made her way back to her mom. Percy and several of the other penguins from her class made their way over.

"Your painting is really great, Priscilla. We are sorry we laughed at you in class." They hung their heads.

"I forgive you guys."

"Would you give us painting lessons? We want to learn to be more creative, like you!"

Priscilla smiled and gladly accepted.

From then on, Pebble Cove had more color, and more joy, than ever before.

Amanda Johnson  
Warren County  
Central Region

Deborah Womack

Warren County

Central Region

Children's Stories

## Mischievous Millie

My name is Millie. I was born on a cold winter day and I had to have a little help in my first few days of life from my helping "Mom", Maddie. You see, I am a "kid". Not a human kid, but a goat kid. I lived in Maddie's house in a good warm bed on the back porch for the first few days of my life. I had a blanket to keep me warm like most babies do and I had to wear diapers like babies too! I loved my bottle and Maddie got up every 2-3 hours night and day to give me a bottle when I cried or my diaper needed changing, or just when I needed a cuddle. I felt so loved!

Soon I graduated from my nursery in Maddie's house and got to ride with Maddie in her new truck. I went to school every day with Maddie. She is in high school and goes to Future Farmers of America class, which I only know as "FFA". She does a lot of animal projects with her FFA classmates. I thought FFA meant "Friends For Animals" because they were always good to me and all the other animals. Anyway, the high school FFA nursery was great; I was fed, petted and my diapers were changed.

Some days Maddie's Mom Felicia picked me up from school while Maddie went to practice Barrel Racing with her horse Blue. One day, Felicia picked me up from school and she was running a bit late to pick up Maddie from Barrel Racing practice. As she was hurrying down the road in her car, she was stopped by a Tennessee State Trooper. I was all snug in my bed and blanket in the back seat, and the officer was asking Felicia why she was in such a hurry. She explained she was running late to pick up Maddie; I began to get impatient in the back seat because it was time for my bottle. I "bleated", the sound that kids make when they need attention. The State Trooper bent down, looked in the back seat of the car and saw me. He kind of had a surprised look on his face. He asked Felicia, "Ma'am, is that a goat in the back seat with a diaper on?" Felicia said, "Yes sir, it is". He just shook his head and told her to slow down on her speed and Felicia was happy because she did not get the speeding ticket!

As I grew older, I went places with Maddie. I got all kinds of cute clothes-outfits like blue jeans and shirts, little skirts and vests, a cowgirl outfit and a Christmas outfit. I had a Halloween outfit which I wore to the Nursing Home for Trick or Treat night. I wore all my cute outfits on those trips to visit the Nursing Home and do activities like the Christmas parade in downtown McMinnville. I walked with my leash and loved seeing all the Christmas decorations. I really liked going to the Nursing Home because all the people there would rub my head and pet me and talk about how cute I was and how sweet I was. As all kids do, I grew bigger and got stronger. I sometimes got into trouble though and soon my name became Mischievous Millie. I was not a naughty kid; I was just playful like kids are. I loved to chew on Maddie's clothing. I got sent to "time out" once because I chewed the hem of her party dress. My time out area was the barn, but I discovered that other kids were there to play with me. I wondered what they did to get time out.

One time I got into serious trouble on the weekend Maddie's Mom Felicia had all the Girl Scout Troop staying overnight because they were on the farm to earn their "Care of Animals Badge". Oh, I got all kinds of attention and petting and they fed me chips, which is one of my favorite foods! Everything went great until the Girl Scouts went to the barn and I decided



to investigate their tent that had all their snacks on a table. When I peeked into the tent, I saw chips and cookies on the table, "Yum, I said". "Lots of treats"! As I made a dash to get into the tent to grab a treat a rope got caught around my head and it scared me. I thought someone grabbed me, so I ran and when I did, I pulled the whole tent down! The table fell, the cookies were all over the ground, I was bleating because the rope was still caught on my head, and everyone was running to help me. Well, after that time I got sent to the new time out area, my own stall in the barn. And that is where I stayed for a few days. I thought it wasn't so bad. I had hay to jump on, kids and cats to play with; I could talk to Blue the horse and had all kinds of kid fun. I kind of liked it there so I made it my new home and Maddie would come to feed me twice a day and I still had my blanket, so I was good! I am a grown up now, but I still love to go to the back door of Maddie's house and beg for chips. I am not Mischievous Millie anymore. I am Momma Millie. I have 2 kids of my own, but some days we play Mischievous Millie games, like jumping, running, and peeking in Maddie's back door. We have our own stall in the barn. It is warm, snug and a place to snuggle with my kids. Life on the farm is a new adventure every day with my kids.

Deborah Wornack  
Warren County  
Central Region

**Children's Story**

**"Nobody Liked Me"**

**Bonita Dearmond**

**Lawrence County TN**

**Western region**

## **"Nobody Liked Me"**

**And I couldn't figure out why.**

**A children's story:**

**Hello, my name is Skott Skunk. My parents called me Skotty, and my grandparents had other baby names for me that are too embarrassing to mention, so you can call me just Skott.**

**My problem began on a warm spring morning in the evergreen forest. Many young animals came into the shady area to play and rest. Let me see, there were Terry Turtle, Rachel Rabbit, Kelly**

**Coyote, Fred the Frog and Scamper the Squirrel.**

**Things were going well. We all introduced ourselves to each other and decided to play follow the leader. Kelly Coyote was first in line, and I was last. We began to run faster and faster, dodging around trees and bushes. I didn't see Terry Turtle stop and tripped over him. As I fell down my tail went up in the air. All the other animals began to cry and disappeared as fast as their little legs would go. I couldn't find any of them.**

**The next day everyone came back to play. Rachel Rabbit thought that a game of hide and seek would be fun and we all agreed. Everyone hid and I was to look for them. I looked and looked behind trees, around bushes and under fallen sticks. Finally, I found Freddy Frog sitting in the sunshine by the creek. I was so excited when I saw him that I raised my tail high in the air to greet him. He jumped into the water and didn't come back. All the others stayed hidden or must have gone home.**

**I came to the evergreen forest for the next three days, but, no one else came to play with me. Oh well, I decided not to leave and sat down by the water to try and figure out what had happened to my friends. At least my own reflection in the water was a little company.**

**Grandfather skunk waddled up beside me and asked where all my friends were. I explained the best I could that they didn't like me. They always seemed to run away or**

hide from me. No one invited me to go to the new play spot with them. I didn't even know where it was.

Grandfather asked me to explain every little thing that had happened when we played together. He became very thoughtful and still. Then he began to laugh loudly. His feet tapped. His ears wagged, his nose wrinkled up. He laughed so much that his eyes began to drop water. But he never raised his tail.

Next, he called me one of those baby little skunk names. I began to wonder if things could get any worse. Water began running out of my eyes, but it wasn't because I was happy. I looked away from grandfather so he would not see that I was acting like a tiny little skunk.

He stopped laughing and asked me to come and sit beside him in the soft green grass. Grandfather said he was sorry for calling me that baby name because he knew that I had grown into a fine young skunk. Then he continued because I was a young skunk and no longer a baby, there were things I needed to know. So, he said, "Skott, when do you raise your tail?" I said, "when I am happy or want to tell someone hello. When I get excited or a little afraid. I raise it just because I want to feel the wind blow through it. Sometimes I pretend it is a great flag, and I am going to fight with an enemy."

Grandfather began to explain that when I raised my tail it gave off an awful smell. I didn't notice that odor because I was a skunk, but it hurt the other animal's noses, burned their eyes and would stick to their fur for days. I was only to raise my tail when I was very scared or in danger. I would really need to work on keeping my tail pointed down toward the ground. For the next week he helped me to remember not to raise my tail just because I wanted too. It was a very hard habit to stop doing. Grandfather reminded me to tap my feet, nod my head or smile if I were happy or wanted to say hello to someone.

He helped me think of nice things I could do for my friends when I saw them again. Things like, show Terry Turtle a secret hiding place by the creek. Give Scamper squirrel extra nuts or seed. Pick the most tender flowers for Rachel Rabbit and find a Lilly pad for Freddy the Frog. He said I could run and jump with Kelly Coyote, but, be very very careful not to raise my tail. He also told me that it might take a while to let them see that I was really trying to be a considerate friend. He said I would need to be very patient with

them. They would eventually know that I didn't mean to hurt them or spray them with stink.

In a few weeks my friends began to show up one by one. It took a little time to get them to believe that I wasn't going to raise my tail and release that awful smell. I tried to do all that grandfather had taught me. Little by little we all began to play games again. It was a lot of fun.

As fall began to get close a human came into the evergreen woods. I yelled for all my friends to hide and when they were safe, I raised my tail and gave off all the smell I had. That big human ran away coughing and crying. The little animals and their parents said I was brave for keeping everyone in the evergreen forest safe. I had made good friends by learning when and when not to lift my tail.

**Bonita Dearmond**

**Lawrence County**

**Western Region**

**Christine Hall  
Dickson County  
Western Region  
Children's Story**



# **The Curious Adventures Of Momma and Poppy**

## **Poppy and the Doctor Visit**

**"Good Morning!", said Momma when Poppy came into the kitchen on Monday morning.**

**Good Morning! Said Poppy**

**Poppy sat down at the table and Momma served up a BIG stack of pancakes!**

**Pancakes were Poppy's favorite thing for breakfast.**

**Momma noticed that Poppy seemed a little slow while she was eating her pancakes**

**"Poppy, why are you using your left paw to eat your breakfast?"**

**"Oh! Said Poppy, not wanting to really look at Momma, I'm just experimenting!"**

**Hmmm thought Momma.**

**"Don't experiment too long or you'll be late for school! Said Momma**

**Poppy finished her breakfast, brushed her teeth and got her backpack on. She gave momma a kiss and went to meet the other kids at the bus stop.**

**Momma waved goodbye. Poppy waved back, she used her left paw**

**Hmmmm thought Momma.**

**At 3 O'clock Momma met Poppy when she got off the bus.**

**"How was your day?" Momma said, while giving Poppy a hug and a kiss on top of her head.**

**"It was ok" said Poppy**



Hmmmm thought Momma

"How about a game of fetch?" (Poppy's favorite after school activity) asked Momma.

"I don't think so today Momma, can I just read my new book?"

"Of course", said Momma looking at Poppy a little strangely.

Hmmm thought Momma At dinner time Poppy sat at the table and tried again to eat her spaghetti with her left paw. "Hey Poppy, isn't it a little hard to eat spaghetti that way?" Asked momma.

"Oh" said Poppy, "I like to eat it this way"

Hmmm thought Momma

At bedtime Poppy put on her Jammies and went to brush her teeth. Momma noticed that poppy wasn't brushing with her right paw, which she always did, but with her LEFT one. Poppy wasn't doing her best job at brushing that night. It was a little awkward that way.

Hmmmm thought Momma

A hug and a kiss from Momma as she tucked Poppy into bed.

"Everything ok asked Momma? Anything you want to tell me?"

"NOPE" said Poppy

And Momma thought Hmmmmm

The next morning Poppy woke up bright and early and limped slightly into the kitchen where Momma was making breakfast.

"Muffins this Morning !"sang Momma

Oh yum said Poppy (another of Poppy's favorite breakfasts)

Poppy tried to peel the paper off the muffin with her left paw. It wasn't working out too well.

Hmmmm thought Momma

Momma helped Poppy with her muffing and knelt down beside her. "Poppy", said Momma in a soft voice, "is there something wrong?"

"Oh no", said Poppy.

"Poppy" said Momma "Yes" Said Poppy, not wanting to look at her. "Is there something wrong with your paw?" Asked Momma.

Just then Poppy began to cry. "Yes, Momma my paw is broken!" Said Poppy

Momma took Poppy onto her lap and examined her paw. Poppy cried "Ouch!" When momma touched it.

"Oh Poppy, I don't think your paw is broken, but I do think it's a good idea to let Dr. Ruffkins take a look at it," Momma said.

No, please Momma said Poppy Dr Ruffkins is scary please don't make me go! She cried.

"Poppy," said momma, "you don't even know Dr Ruffkins! She's new in town, but I've heard that she's a wonderful Doctor"

"Grab your coat and let's go see what Dr Ruffkins has to say about your paw.

Poppy got her coat and slowly walked to the van.

Momma helped Poppy buckle in and away they went.

When they arrived at the Drs office there were coloring books and crayons and lots of books to look at and even an aquarium filled with colorful fish, but Poppy was still a little scared.

When it was Poppy's turn to see the Dr. She slowly got out of her chair and followed the nurse. She got weighed and measured (it wasn't as bad as she thought it was going to be) and momma helped her up onto a tall table.

In came Dr Ruffkins, Poppy was still scared, but Dr Ruffkins didn't look THAT scary.

Dr Ruffians looked at Poppy's paw. She turned it this way and that and got out a special tool so she could get a closer look. "Ah Ha!" Said Dr Ruffkins "I think I see the problem!" Dr Ruffkins got out a different tool and pulled a splinter from Poppy's paw. "I got it" exclaimed the Dr!

Dr Ruffians put a special bandage on her paw and pronounced it all better! She helped poppy down from the tall table and reached into her pocket. She pulled out a sticker and a pink sucker and handed it to her.

"Thank you" said Poppy

On the way home Poppy licked her sucker and thought about where to put her new sticker.

When they got home, Momma snuggled Poppy on the couch and said, "Now Poppy, Dr Ruffkins wasn't too scary was she?" "No, said Poppy, "I feel better already!"

From now on Poppy, said Mom, there's no need to be scared. Next time you are hurt or don't feel well, don't be afraid to tell me"

"Yes, momma, I'm sorry' said Poppy

"Good said Momma! Now, How about a game of Fetch?"

Poppy gave Momma a big hug and they went out to play!

# **FEATURED ARTICLE / NEWS ARTICLE**

*can be club report publication  
or multi-media*

Tiffany Goldhamer

Wilson County

Central Region

5 Submitted to *Gleanings, Voice of NAWW* \* April 30, 2025

\*National Association of Wheat Weavers

The Wilson County Family and Community Education (FCE) craft club day devoted to wheat weaving was a success in bringing a new heritage craft to our members and the community. There were a small number of older members that recalled certain weaving patterns as ornaments on family Christmas trees of past generations. They were pleased to see them again and reminisce. Our younger members were fascinated by the intricate woven creations within the educational material and even the simple pieces woven by the newly trained instructors. Many members were pleased to create pieces they could submit to the county/state fair.

Wilson Co. Tennessee (TN) is located just east of Nashville along the eastern highland rim. The land is hilly with rocky outcrops and cedar glades. It is not your typical wheat growing location. It is, however, home to the Tennessee State Fair that runs concurrently with the Wilson Co. Fair each August. As part of efforts to stay true to the origins of the Wilson Co. Fair each year an agricultural commodity is chosen to serve as fair theme. After the two fairs were combined in 2021 the commodity theme expanded to statewide agriculture. For the year 2024 wheat was the focus with a fair slogan of "Harvest the fun, Sow the memories."

While wheat may be the 5<sup>th</sup> highest row crop grown in Tennessee, it is grown primarily in the western region, hours and miles away from Wilson Co. Still residents here are proud of their fair and excitedly enter their canned goods, quilts, and other crafts each year to be judged and displayed. With an entire category devoted to just the agricultural commodity many were concerned about what crafting they could do to symbolize wheat.

Crafters, such as the members of the FCE, searched for a way to connect their art with agriculture. In seeking education about wheat weaving, FCE members reached out to the National Wheat Weavers Association for advice.

Members of the FCE, a volunteer organization sponsored by the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension office, purchased wheat from a variety of locations. They then obtained instruction materials from the Illinois Association of Wheat Weavers and the California Straw Arts Guild. The county FCE vice president Trudy Papuchis even persuaded Becky Straub, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the National Association of Wheat Weavers, to host an impromptu class on Zoom in preparation for a larger educational session with local Wilson Co residents.

When it came to fair time, demonstrations related to wheat occurred daily, including the arts and crafts exhibits. Many love knots were made by fair-goers young and old. Some were carried home that night while others were carefully packed into suitcases in anticipation of the flight home. The adult crafts category devoted to the yearly

commodity was full of woven pieces, tied pieces, and marquetry. Representations of wheat were seen in stained glass, sewing, quilting, and many other artforms.

While the fair agricultural commodity will be different in 2025, the wheat is here to stay. Maintaining heritage crafts is part of the education FCE strives to share with the public so members will continue to practice their wheat weaving. In April a craft day included tied wheat crosses. Next fall we will be making tied wheat angel ornaments. Plans include marquetry classes and more in-depth weaving techniques in 2026.

Tiffany Goldhamer, Wilson County, Central Region

## FEATURED ARTICLE

Perry Riden

McMinn County

Eastern Region



## Generosity

Our hearts almost skip a beat in excitement when we see a man walking the streets of Athens, TN tightly holding on to one of "our" fleece blankets! Or hear the enthusiasm of a Police officer or Fire chief thanking us for blankets & sharing a scenario of needy situations making good use of them.

Similar blankets have been spread across three East Tennessee counties! And **one** man initiated it all!

That man, **James Woody of Woody's Lock & Key** of Cleveland, TN was looking for a worthy 'home' for a storage unit full of 3/8" thick beautiful tan fleece!

This effort was initiated by James Woody and son Jim. James explains, "Jim & I were buying storage units at auction & Jim actually bought this unit. We always worked together on moving the items we would get from the units. We tried different methods to move the material, needless to say none of these worked out."

James continued, "It was through the Quilts of Valor program that we got acquainted with the ladies in the Claxton community in McMinn County. We were fortunate to team up with these ladies, because this gave them the materials to produce the many items which would benefit countless individuals. They are the ones who did all the work and some of them made several trips down and picked up the material."

One thought James had was to donate the material to be made into quilts for the Quilts of Valor which are given to Veterans. James & Jim are both Navy vets & another son, Tim retired from the Air Force. It was a really good gesture but the quilts have to be made from 100% cotton material. The fleece did not qualify.

Marilyn Berends & Ella Parker, two of our Family Community Education (FCE) Claxton Club members connected with James & things started to happen.

Back in the day, FCE clubs were formerly known as Extension Clubs or Homemakers Clubs & even before that they were referred to as Tomato Clubs! Originally the clubs were nationally formed to help farm women across the country survive & then thrive. Today still under the University of TN umbrella, the focus remains on education & service.

Who knew what a few women as a club would do with a bunch of fleece?  
I mean a BUNCH!! Like **38 rolls** of fleece the size carpet comes in!

Four to six people have been meeting monthly on workshop days the last several years to cut & prepare the material for blankets & throws to be given away. A daunting task.

It is awesome to note that about 95% of the time it was also Marilyn Berends that machine stitched an embroidered image on the corner of **EACH** blanket. Everything from a cat to a flower or patriotic symbol.

So far, with only **one** roll of the fleece left from the **38 rolls** we received, **908 blankets** have been given away to Fire & Police Departments within our surrounding **three counties!** Besides them, some other recipients include Veterans, homeless, nursing homes, as well as many other children & families in crisis whose need was met through local ministries we helped supply.

Not only were blankets of various sizes made, the club also made capes & scarves to sell & mittens which were given to needy school children.

**All** of this because of the **GENEROSITY & THOUGHTFULNESS** of **JAMES WOODY** & his son **JIM WOODY** !

THANK YOU, for making such a difference in so many peoples' lives.

Article submitted to The Cleveland Banner

2075 N Ocoee St

Cleveland, TN, 37311

clevelandbanner.com

By Perry Riden of the Claxton FCE Club Riceville, TN 37370

January 2025

# RELIGION

A6 | THE DAILY POST-ATHENIAN | SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2025

## YOUR VOICE

### Generosity

To the Editor,

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James continued, "It was through the Quilts of Valor program that we got acquainted with the ladies in the Claxton community in McMinn County. We were fortunate to team up with these ladies, because this gave them the materials to produce

the many items which would benefit countless individuals. They are the ones who did all the work and some of them made several trips down and picked up the material."

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Perry Riden  
Claxton FCE Club, Riceville

## Woodys come to the rescue

By PERRY RIDEN  
Special to the Banner

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"We were fortunate to team up with these ladies, because this gave them the materials to produce the many items that would benefit countless individuals," he said. "They are the ones who did all the work, and some of them made several trips down and picked up the material."

One thought James had was to donate the material to be made into quilts for the Quilts of Valor, which are given to veterans.

James and Jim are both U.S. Navy vets, and another son, Tim, is retired from the U.S. Air Force.

It was a really good fortune, but the quilts have to be made from 100% cotton material. The fleece did not qualify.

Marilyn Berends and Jilla

Parker, two Family Community Education Claxton Club members, connected with James and things started to happen.

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Besides them, some other recipients include veterans, the homeless and nursing homes, as well as many other children and families in crisis whose needs were met through local ministries we helped supply.

Not only were blankets of various sizes made, but the club also made capes and scarves to sell and mittens, which were given to needy school children.

All of this because of the generosity and thoughtfulness of James Woody and his son, Jim Woody.

Thank you for making such a difference in so many people's lives.

**Cover Page for Feature Article/News Article**

**Submitted by:**

Susie Rodgers

Obion County FCE – Western Region

**Article Title:** Obion County Crystal Club: A Year of service and support  
**Category:** Feature Article/News Article



## Obion County Crystal Club: A year of service and support

The ladies of the Crystal Family and Community Club have had a meaningful and busy year. They kicked things off in January by attending a Leadership Class held in Paris. In March, the club helped provide refreshments at a celebration honoring longtime member Maurice McKinnis on her 100th birthday. Mrs. McKinnis was an active Crystal Club member until the pandemic, after which her health began to decline.

March's FCE meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by president Phillis Little. After the business portion of the meeting, guest speaker LeEllen Smith from OUTside INN shared her inspiring story. She spoke about the founding and growth of her non-profit business and how it serves the community. OUTside INN is a recovery home for women seeking a second chance in life, offering structure, support and valuable life skills. One of the most impactful aspects of the program is that mothers are allowed to have their children live with them, and parenting classes are a required part of the program.

OUTsideINN, a social enterprise, creates travel gear from upholstery fabric. Each product, from the first cut to the final stitch, is made locally in Troy. These handcrafted items are available at their Troy location or online at [outsideinworks.com](https://outsideinworks.com).

Their commitment to giving back was also evident during the 2024 Fall Festival of Foods. Partnering with Baptist Memorial Hospital-Union City's Gift Shop, OUTsideINN prepared cloth gift bags filled with bottled water, snacks, pens and other goodies for attendees.



Photos courtesy of Crystal Family and Community Education Club  
**SUPPORTS ORGANIZATION** — Crystal Family and Community Club president Phillis Little (above, right) welcomed guest speaker LeEllen Smith, founder of OUTsideINN and OUTside INN, to a recent meeting. The Crystal FCE continues its tradition of supporting local organizations. Obion County council president Teresa Vinson (below, right) presented a donation to Kayla Wilson for OUTsideINN.



# **CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM**

**Leslye Beria**

**McMinn County**

**Eastern Region**

**News Article**

**Eastern Region FCE**

**Facebook Page-**

**<https://www.facebook.com/ERFCE>**

**April 3, 2025**

2025 Spring Newsletter

From: Leslye Beria-McMinn County County President

Happy Spring from McMinn County, TN. We missed the Winter Newsletter because I sent our entry to the wrong email address, so I will include a couple highlights from Fall and Winter.

It is wonderful to know that 35 of us from the Eastern Region went to State Conference last November. We all had traveling safety, good health, and loads of fun! Our Claxton Club, of whom 8 of our 10 members, went to Paris Landing State Park, as well as, two from our Heart and Home Club, with one guest. 11 from our county attended. What a gorgeous place that we went to! We hope that many more will be able to attend from our county and region this year in November.

Our McMinn County was recognized at State Conference for a Special Project that the Claxton Club worked on throughout the year. The recognition was for *Community Service-Crocheted Blessings*. 2 of our ladies crochet all kinds of animals and dolls, toboggans, for all ages and newborns, as well as making fleece blankets. These are shared with so many people including children, of which includes the homeless, veterans, sheriff dept., and fire depts., and children's foster agencies, etc., who need a blessing in their lives. The crocheted animals were also shared with the children of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. What a blessing for them, as well as for us. Believe it or not, even the teen boys and girls loved them!

Our Heart and Home Club has been busy preparing for Spring, planting flowers for the city of Athens. They planted daffodils with the help of the Tennessee Wesleyan University Soccer Team, who dug their holes.

On March 17, our county is having a St. Patrick's Day party and is inviting everyone we know. This party is to spread the word of FCE to those who don't know about it. We are trying to find new members. It will be a wonderful party! And it was, and was very well attended.

Several of our members, in costume, read for the Keith Children's Academy during Dr. Seuss week.

Our clubs are excited about all they can do to help others this spring! We hope that you are also! Have an amazing spring!

Sincerely, Leslye Beria

Leslye Beria  
McMinn County  
Eastern Region

**Mary Alice Weber**

**Williamson County**

**Central Region**

**Category 5 Featured Article/News Article**



**williamson county**



**Source**

## Fairview FCE Continue Community Partnerships

By **Source Staff**

May 5, 2025



*Saturday, April 12, Fairview FCE presented a donation to Friends of Bowie Park for scholarships for Camp Bowie Summer Camps. We love our partnership with the Friends of Bowie Park! Representing Fairview FCE were Fran, Mae, Mary Alice and Kathy.*

*by: Mary Alice Weber*

The partnerships between the Fairview Family and Community Education (FCE) and other Fairview volunteer organizations and businesses are strong and ongoing. At the close of the Friends of Bowie Park April meeting, Treasurer Merry Keyser accepted a check on behalf of the Friends from FCE President Fran Hammond for scholarships for the Camp Bowie Summer Camps. This partnership was initiated several years ago when the Fairview Family and Community Education organization donated significant funds towards the Bowie Nature Park playground.

Recently a donation was presented to Bro. John Robbins, pastor of Westview Congregational Methodist Church, for the community food pantry. This is a cooperative effort led by Carol McClure, FCE chairperson, and Dr. Dan Sherwood, family physician at Dickson Medical Associates. FCE members create handcrafted Christmas ornaments which are displayed on a Christmas tree in Dr. Sherwood's medical office. The money collected from the ornament sales are then donated to the community food pantry at Westview Methodist Church.

There is also a long-standing partnership of FCE with the Fairview Library Branch and the Friends of the Fairview Library. The Fairview Family and Community Education (FCE) Club started the Fairview Library and has supported the local library for the past sixty-one years. Presently the FCE members sponsor semi-annual bake sales during the Friends of the Fairview Library book sale, donating the sales back to the Fairview Library.

Each one of these partnerships supports the FCE mission: "To strengthen the home and community by improving the quality of life of individuals and families through continuing education, leadership development, and community service." These donations support families and education, and benefit the Fairview community.

The Association for Family and Community Education (FCE) is an organization of volunteers who work together to build strong families and communities. Educational materials are created and utilized to strengthen the knowledge and expertise of the members. Resources are provided to develop leadership skills, enabling people to make a difference. Ultimately, FCE strives to make our homes and communities a better place in which to live!

The Fairview Family and Community Education (FCE) meets monthly at 10 a.m. on the second Friday of each month at the Fairview Recreation Center with an educational program, a short business meeting, and refreshments with a time for socializing! We welcome all visitors, male and female, youth and adults. If you want to know more about FCE, please contact Kim Cumbo, FCS agent, at 615-790-5721 at Williamson County Extension.

<https://williamsonsource.com/fairview-fce-continue-community-partnerships/>

Accessed May 7, 2025.

Mary Alice Weber  
Williamson County  
Central Region

**JoAnne Gill**  
**Weakley County**  
**Western Region**  
**Creative Writing**  
**Feature Article/News Article**  
**Two Papers**

FCE News February 2, 2024

The Family and Community Education Club recently met in the lovely home of hostess, Kathy Simmons in Dresden with 8 members present. President Mary Elizabeth Bell welcomed Betty Bequette, JoAnne Gill, Marti Herndon, Pat Potter, Jerry Seamans, Sue Stewart and McKenzie Hurst, County Agent, by reading the thought for the day, "Where there is love, there is life." -Mahatma Gandhi.

Bell gave the devotional on Psalms 8:3-4, "You O Lord, are a shield for me. My glory and the One who lifts up my head." She said it's easy for us to get down in the details of life. But, when we have the opportunity to look up to the stars on a clear night, it's easy to remember that there is so much more to your creation. She said we should be grateful to the One who hung the stars in the sky. Also she told that when reading this scripture, two songs come to her mind. "His Eye is on the Sparrow" and "He's Still Working on Me". She led the group in prayer.

The group then gave the Pledge to the Flag, read the Club Creed in unison and sung the song, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart". The roll was called with each member telling the number of items brought for donation to "Santa's Village" in Dresden.. There was 52 items in total for donation. Also, a donation for the American Cancer Society was collected from the members, in the amount of \$111.00.

Secretary, JoAnne Gill gave the secretary report for the January meeting with no corrections needed. Treasurer, Betty Bequette brought the treasurers report. No corrections needed.

President Bell told that February is Heart Month. Reading records, activity sheets are due to the office by February 1. Also, discussed was the Achievement Luncheon March 14, 2024, that will start at 10:00. However, any entry for Cultural Arts should be there by 9:00. The luncheon will be catered by Simply Southern Restaurant in Gleason. She also told that MyPlate/YourPlate donation for March will be Sauce and the roll call for March will be to tell what your dream vacation would be.

Bell told that the FCE State Conference this year will be at Paris Landing. The theme will be "FCE at Patee". It is hoped that more members will be able to attend this conference.

For the Agent's Report, McKenzie Hurst gave an interesting lesson on "Ways to Improve Heart Health", as heart disease is the No.1 cause of death worldwide and it is mostly preventable by changes of lifestyle and managing risk factors.

She gave a handout to each member, of ways to a health heart. Some ways are: (1) Eat a well balanced diet. (2) Don't sit for too long. Get up and move around frequently. (3) Brush your teeth every day and don't forget to floss. (4) If you smoke, try to quit smoking and avoid second hand smoke. (5) Snack smartly throughout the day. (5) Get plenty of sleep. (6) Recognize and reduce stress in your life.

Hurst also gave a handout that lists various exercises to improve heart health. Those include, aerobic exercise such a walking, running, swimming, cycling and biking. Also, strength training such as weight lifting and resistance bands. Stretching and work on flexibility and balance is encouraged.

Bell adjourned the meeting by reading the Closing Thought, "Love all, trust a few."-William Shakespeare.

The group enjoyed the game of Bingo with Pat Potter winning the cover card prize.

Kathy Simmons serving as hostess, served delicious Strawberry Cake, Cheese Balls, Caramel Popcorn and drink of choice while group enjoyed pleasant conversation.

Respectively submitted by JoAnne Gill



# Family and Community Education Club News

By JoAnne Gill  
Special to the Press

The Family and Community Education Club recently met in the lovely home of hostess, Kathy Simmons in Dresden with eight members present. President Mary Elizabeth Bell welcomed Betty Bequette, JoAnne Gill, Marti Herndon, Pat Potter, Jerry Seamans, Sue Stewart and County Agent McKenzie Hurst, by reading the thought for the day, "Where there is love, there is life." -Mahatma Gandhi.

Bell gave the devotional on Psalms 8:3-4, "You O Lord, are a shield for me. My glory and the One who lifts up my head." She said it's easy for us to get down in the details of life. But, when we have the opportunity to look up to the stars on a clear night, it's easy to remember that there is so much more to your creation. She said we should be grateful to the One who hung the stars in the sky. Also she told that when reading this scripture, two songs come to her mind. "His Eye is on the Sparrow" and "He's Still Working on Me". She led the group in prayer. The group then gave the Pledge to the Flag, read the Club Creed in unison and sang the song, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart". The roll was called with each member telling the number of items brought for donation to "Santa's Village" in Dresden. There was 52 items in total for donation. Also, a donation for the American Cancer Society was collected from the members, in the amount of \$111.00.

Secretary JoAnne Gill gave the secretary report for the January meeting with no corrections needed.

Treasurer Betty Bequette brought the treasurers report. No corrections needed. President Bell told that February is Heart Month. Reading records, activity sheets are due to the office by Feb. 1. Also, discussed was the Achievement Luncheon March 14, that will start at 10 a.m. However, any entry for Cultural Arts should be there by 9 a.m. The luncheon will be catered by Simply Southern Restaurant in Gleason.

She also told that MyPlate/YourPlate donation for March will be sauce and the roll call for March will be to tell what your dream vacation would be.

Bell told that the FCE State Conference this year will be at Paris Landing. The theme will be "FCE at Patee". It is hoped that more members will be able to attend this conference.

For the Agent's Report, McKenzie Hurst gave an interesting lesson on "Ways to Improve Heart Health," as heart disease is the No.1 cause of death worldwide and it is mostly preventable by changes of lifestyle and managing risk factors.

She gave a handout to each member, of ways to a health heart. Some ways are: (1) Eat a well balanced diet. (2) Don't sit for too long. Get up and move around frequently. (3) Brush your teeth every day and don't forget to floss. (4) If you smoke, try to quit smoking and avoid second

hand smoke. (5) Snack smartly throughout the day. (5) Get plenty of sleep. (6) Recognize and reduce stress in your life.

Hurst also gave a handout that lists various exercises to improve heart health. Those include, aerobic exercise such as walking, running, swimming, cycling and biking. Also, strength training such as weight lifting and resistance bands. Stretching and work on flexibility and balance is encouraged.

Bell adjourned the meeting by reading the Closing Thought, "Love all, trust a few." -William Shakespeare.

The group enjoyed the game of Bingo with Pat Potter winning the cover card prize.

Kathy Simmons serving as hostess, served delicious strawberry cake, cheese balls, caramel popcorn and drink of choice while group enjoyed pleasant conversation.

## Local News

### Weakley County Family & Communication Club News

#### JOANNE GILL

The Weakley County Family and Communication Club recently met in the lovely home of Kathy Simmons in Dresden. President Mary Elizabeth Bell welcomed Betty Bequette, JoAnne Gill, Marti Herndon, Pat Potter, Kathy Simmons, Sue Stewart and McKenzie Hurst, County Agent, and new members, Patsy Ekwegalu and Sam Turnbow, by reading the Thought for the Day, "Every day is a chance to begin again. Don't focus on the failures of yesterday, start today with positive thoughts and expectations." -Catherine Pulsifer."

Bell gave the devotion-

al using First Chronicles, 16-11. She led the group in prayer. The group recited the Pledge to the Flag and read the Club Creed in unison. The group sang the song, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart". For the "Roll Call" each member told the number of treats brought for donation to Santa's Village in Dresden and passed a Valentine gift to the person on the left.

Secretary, JoAnne Gill gave the report of the January meeting with no corrections needed. Treasurer Betty Bequette gave the treasurer's report. No corrections were needed.

President Bell told the group she had talked to Eileen Edwards, who now lives with her son, has

had her 100th birthday. She also told that February is National Heart month. Reading records and Activity Sheets are due to the office February 3. MyPlate/YourPlate donation for March is Sauces. Also, to remember the March Roll Call will be to tell, "While as a child, what your dream job would be".

Bell also asked for a discussion for ideas for the annual Achievement Luncheon. After discussion, it was decided to hold the luncheon April 24, to start at 8:30 AM in the Farm Bureau Building in Dresden. The theme of the luncheon will be, "Spring into Action with FCE". The final details will be determined at the

next meeting. Bell also told that Sue Stewart would teach basket weaving during the

July meeting. The January County Council meeting was changed to a phone meeting, due to icy roads. Sue Stewart agreed to the position of treasurer of the FCE County Council, after to the death of Jerry Seamans. Sincere condolences were expressed to her family. She is very missed by the club. Bell also read a note from Stephany Rainwater thanking the club for the generous donation to the National Heart Association in memory of her mother.

Sue Stewart brought to attention to the annual

scholarship the club gives to a student in the University of Tennessee in Martin, who is majoring in either Home Economics or Agriculture. She and Mary Elizabeth Bell will attend the award services on Mar 13.

County agent, McKenzie Hurst gave the agents report telling the group about the new FCE Cluster Meetings that will occur quarterly in our district. Those counties in the district are Weakley, Obion, Madison, Dyer and Gibson. The meeting will be like Leadership in Action. The first meeting will be hosted by the Obion County FCE Club at the Baptist Memorial Hospital Board room on Tuesday March 25. New

Salem FCE Club will host the next meeting in September. Planning will begin with the March meeting.

Bell closed the meeting by reading the Closing Thought, "Love recognized no barriers, it jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination, full of hope."-Maya Angelou

The group enjoyed the game of Bingo with Betty Bequette winning the Cover Card prize.

Kathy Simmons served delicious Cherry Cheese Cake, various chips, drink of choice and delicious cookies.

joanne gill  
weakley county  
western region

**MISCELLANEOUS**



Susie Rodgers  
Obion County  
FCE Western  
Region

Miscellaneous

## Junk Drawer or Memories

How many of us have a junk drawer somewhere in our homes? Maybe yours is in the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom—or all three. At some point, we tell ourselves we'll clean it out, expecting a quick task. But minutes turn into hours as memories take over. Because, after all, whether it's actual junk or something valuable depends on how sentimental we are.

In my home, there are two junk drawers. The kitchen drawer, though cluttered, is somewhat organized because I share the space with my husband. Open it, and you'll find what you'd expect—mysterious keys to who-knows-what, a collection of reading glasses (because post-cataract surgery, they are scattered everywhere—on the breakfast table for checking the weather, on the living room table between recliners, even in the bathroom because, let's be honest, phones have become our reading material).

Beyond the everyday clutter, the drawer holds a variety of odds and ends: different-sized batteries, hair elastics for when the granddaughters visit, air freshener refills, soft drink tabs saved for crafts, a few coins, and a stash of candy bars for sugar cravings. My husband insists on keeping it organized so he can find what he's looking for.

But our **true** junk drawer—the one overflowing with randomness—is in the bedroom. Slowly opening it reveals a collection of essentials and mysteries: TV remotes, bed-adjusting remotes, pens, scissors, note pads for late-night scribbles. Not just a few pens—many. Pencils too. Each one a memory of vacations and FCE conferences. I often wonder why they ended up here instead of the desk drawer.

This drawer also holds over-the-counter medicine for those middle-of-the-night moments when getting out of bed would wake the other. My husband's personal security system rests within arm's reach—a company trusted by many country boys, S&W. Shoelaces, emery boards, and, yes, **more** pens and pencils. Maybe this isn't just a junk drawer—it's a stash drawer.

I remember when my girls were growing up, our junk drawers were lifesavers. A last-minute pencil or pen, a rubber band for a school project, a bread tie, a paperclip, a hair barrette. The drawer always had what we needed—except a pencil sharpener, of course. My oldest, Kim, has always been OCD, often stashing things in the junk drawer just to get them out of sight. The surprises found inside were never-ending.

What happened to that childhood junk drawer filled with memories? My two precious girls grew up, left home, and created their own junk drawers, their own collections of life's little tokens. What I wouldn't give for just one day to open that drawer with them and reminisce about what we find inside.

When they were little, I kept a junk drawer in my nightstand. It held tissues for late-night nose wipes when they decided to crawl into bed with me. Chewed pencils. Broken crayons. Pages from coloring books proudly gifted to me, their faces glowing with love. Even nail polish, for those spontaneous bedtime manicure sessions. Their daddy worked third shift, so they often asked to sleep with me—and of course, they did.

Maybe junk drawers remain junk drawers because deep down, we know cleaning them is more than just decluttering. What should take no more than an hour turns into a sentimental journey—one where the real treasures aren't just objects, but the memories they carry.

And since I am extremely sentimental, maybe I'll take a couple—maybe even three—rainy days to go down memory lane in my bedroom junk drawer. After all, sometimes, the “junk” we hold onto is more valuable than we ever realized.

Susie Rodgers

Obion County FCE

Western Region

Evelyn Hilton  
Williamson County  
Central Region

Miscellaneous

## COMING HOME

When most people think of "coming home", it is usually with feelings of nostalgia. But the memory of our journey home from an Alaskan cruise is one we can laugh at now. At the time we were experiencing it, the laughs were not forthcoming.

My husband and I had just spent a most enjoyable vacation cruising the coastline of Alaska and sightseeing at numerous locations on land. Our ship had left Vancouver, British Columbia and we had returned there to begin our multiple-connecting flights home. And that's when the trouble started!

Going through Customs at Vancouver airport started out easily enough. Then they found the cans of salmon. Honestly, we were not trying to slip anything past them. The salmon was in two unopened, flat cans that we were given as souvenirs when we attended a seafood-cooking demonstration at Icy Straight Point and toured a fish cannery. The Customs agent told us we couldn't take food from Canada to the U.S., but she did go check with a supervisor who allowed us to continue carrying it in the suitcase. My husband was all in knots because of this delay, but we made it on time to board the puddle jumper (small plane) taking us to Portland, Oregon.

The flight from Portland would be taking us to Chicago – an 8-hour trip. However, we were unable to board because of a malfunction in the emergency chute of the designated plane. The airline finally sent another plane which we did board after more than an hour of delay. Before we reached the end of the runway, the plane stopped, and security came on board to remove a passenger. By this time, those knots were getting tighter on my husband. He just knew we would not make our Chicago-Nashville connection.

We were finally in the friendly skies and were able to land in Chicago with maybe 30 minutes to retrieve our luggage, then get to the gate for the final leg of our trip. O'Hare airport, with its many concourses, may be the size of a small town, but it seems larger when you are running from one concourse to another with four pieces of luggage in tow. We finally made it to our gate only to find all the passengers impatiently waiting to board. It seems the

pilot had lost HIS luggage, and we weren't going anywhere until he found it – which he eventually did.

When we got to Nashville around midnight, we believed we were finished with our troubles. But no. Somewhere between Chicago and Nashville, one piece of our luggage got lost. We had to file reports and only hope that it would be found and returned to us.

We got to our house about 1:30 a.m. While we were bringing in what luggage we got home with, we left the patio door open. And a wren who had built a nest near the door flew into the house. We tried to shoo her back out, but that aggravating bird went upstairs and into our bedroom. Thinking he was smarter than the bird, my husband got his large fishing net from the garage, shut the bedroom door and attempted to catch it. After leaving many scrape marks on the ceiling, this 200+ pound man with a good-sized fishing net was finally able to snare a bird the size of a ping-pong ball.

Bed-time didn't come soon enough for us. But alas, with all the unusual experiences of the day and his many "knots", my husband could not get to sleep. So, he went downstairs to the den and sat in his well-worn recliner. That's when he began to hear the "drip, drip, drip" of water hitting the floor upstairs. His investigation found that the icemaker in the refrigerator had a leak.

The old cliché says, "All's well that ends well". When all was said and done, we really did enjoy our trip, and we have the pictures to prove it. Hectic though our return-trip home was at the time, we were able to make all the airline connections. The missing luggage was returned to us 2 days after we got home. The repairman fixed the refrigerator. The week after our return, we enjoyed salmon patties made from fish caught and canned at Icy Straight Point, Alaska. And three baby wrens got their terror-stricken mama back!

Evelyn Hilton  
Williamson County  
Central Region

KATHY PAGE

Obion County      Western Region

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

## **Childhood Memories (Coming of Age)**

As I was sitting in my chair quietly concentrating and trying dutifully to fully dedicate myself to my morning devotional, I was suddenly stricken with a memory I could not shake. A flash back that wouldn't even pause for the Lord! Instantly I was transported back in time to the summer of 1960; the summer I turned fourteen, the summer I was all 'grown up'.

It begins in a small town (as most good stories do) where everyone knew everyone; a place where there were no secrets and kids could roam freely and ride their bikes till sunset or what some parents said, "'till the street lights come on". My cousins and grandparents mostly lived in hollering distance (is that why they call it a "holler"?!). It was a much simpler time.

The Highlight of every summer was the unwavering reliability of the public pool! The place we flocked to and the place I transitioned to a budding teenager. My brother and I would go every day that we could manage to scrape up 25 cents- yep! You read that right!! Admission was just a quarter back then....Well, if you were 12 or under, which I was not anymore. Although I was 13 (about to be 14!) I was still only charged a single quarter and I would certainly never question an adult, or a bargain! But that day it dawned on me that I was still wearing a little girl's bathing suit that fit my little girl's body! I was being charged a quarter because I looked 12 or under. I was not built like my cousin or even my friends. They all had 'big girl bathing suits'! If only I had a grown-up bathing suit!

I really, really wanted a new swim suit for my birthday, but I knew my parents couldn't afford it. However, on my birthday and much to my surprise, Mom took me to the clothing store and let me pick out my first new "grown-up" bathing suit. It was navy blue, shapely, and of course, had a built in bra, the pinnacle of adulthood. I would not look like a little girl, anymore! The problem, however, was that I didn't have anything to fill that bra, if you know what I mean. Being a person of brilliant ideas, I decided to stuff the bra with socks!! Perfect!

Once I got to the pool, strutting my stuff (no pun intended) in my brand new swim suit, I walk up to the counter to pay my usual admission, and, to my surprise, the lady says, "50 cents, please". OH!, I silently panicked....I hadn't thought of this! I searched through my change, hoping...PRAYING...that I had 50 cents!!! After, the second most stressful moment of my young life and rummaging through pennies, nickels and dimes I did indeed have exactly 50 cents! There was nothing left for a snack but it was worth it. I was really growing up. Though, I suppose there is a price to pay for, coming of age.

I saw my cousin, Rosemary, at the diving board, waving for me to hurry. She jumped, carefree, off the board, and I followed behind her. We dog-paddled to the edge just talking when suddenly a sock appeared floating beside me. Rosemary saw it first, "OH MY GOD! What's that!!! She yelled, grabbing the sock. I was mortified and speechless as another sock floats up and she grabs



it, all the while mumbling, "Good Grief" what have you done! But I didn't have to explain, I could tell from her face that she already knew.

Rosemary was a serious person and did not see this as funny; just another dumb thing her younger cousin had done. Fortunately, no one saw the socks as I discreetly wrapped them in my towel. I jumped back in the pool and we never spoke of it again. It's been 65 years, and I'm not sure I have ever fully "grown up", or if I ever want to "come of age", but it is funny how much those small things matter to you at the times in your life when they truly matter the least; the times when you have the entire world right at your fingertips....or in my case, stuffed in your brand new "grown-up" bathing suit!

Kathy Page

Obion County

Western Region

**Wanda Briddelle**

**Wilson County**

**Central Region**

**Miscellaneous**

## A Special Tennessee Lady

I want to tell you a little about a special Tennessee Lady.

She was born on April 21, 1924, and was a wife to Avery for 75 years at the time of his passing in 2019. She has four children: Mitchell, Marshall, Nancy, and Johnny. In my eyes that would indeed make her incredibly special but let us look a little deeper.

She was born in Wilson County and was the youngest of five girls. She learned to quilt from her grandmother before she started school. Now she can boast nine decades of quilting doing her own work and mentoring new generations of quilters. In 1983 she became interested in miniature quilts, and she had her miniature quilts on display at Oaklands Mansion and Morrison Public Library. She is credited with bringing the first Mystery Quilts to Tennessee which are still being made by quilting guilds.

She contributed several quilt blocks for Sequatchie County's Homecoming '86 Quilt made by Extension Homemakers. It hangs in the county courthouse. For over twenty years she chaired the University of Tennessee Extension Quilting on the Mountain Seminar. She has won many awards for her quilting, including nine blue ribbons at the Sequatchie County Fair at the age of 91.

At the age of 93 she was featured in [Issue 04: Tennessee - Quiltfolk](#). So, I would say if you were engaged in quilting you are very aware of this lady and her mastery in the folk art of quilting.

She is so much more as she was the first special education teacher in Sequatchie County. A job which she enjoyed for thirty years.

She continued her teaching while serving as a Cub Scout den mother, 4-H leader, home demonstration member (now known as FCE) and tutor.

To me she was the lady on the roof of grandma's chicken house with my mother laying out apple slices to dry. It has been my pleasure to give you a glimpse of my aunt, Minnie Lee Deakins, and some of her contributions to making the world a little prettier and better.

Wanda Briddelle

Wilson County

Central Region

## MISCELLANEOUS

Perry Riden

McMinn County

Eastern Region

## Because of Me

We had no idea what our neighbor was talking about when he said it looked like our farm in the *National Geographic* magazine September 1971 issue! He subscribed to the magazine & as he perused it he was quite sure the ariel photo showed his farm in the upper corner some two miles away from ours which appeared front & center. Between the two farms were neat parallel lines within squares showing harvested fields on flat open land.

The article entitled "That Dammed Missouri River" depicts the effects the river has on the surrounding flat prairie land & its people in this Midwest farming area as well as throughout its 2,500 milelong winding course until emptying into the Mississippi.

Their apparent focus for the picture was the tree rows surrounding the farm in a semicircle. The caption read "Buffer against blowing dust & snow, a shelterbelt of trees protects this North Dakota farmstead the year round. In winter such windbreaks save significantly on fuel costs."

Research showed by having a row of shorter trees such as caragana on the outside row, wind would sweep upward & over the taller trees & farmstead rather than through the farm yard at ground level.

Through a cost sharing program, my dad purchased the pencil sized seedlings through a branch of the US Department of Agriculture locally known as the South McLean Soil Conservation District. Their purpose was to help equip farmers with knowledge & by promoting good farming practices such as planting these young trees. They also promoted the planting of rows of trees between fields as a wind break to slow the loss of top soil.

With yearly moisture levels almost entirely dependent on the spring melting of ample amounts of snow, the hot summer days that followed with very little rain made the seedlings susceptible to sunburn & really struggling to survive among the ever-present abundant weeds that grew everywhere.

That's where I fit in! It was always my job every summer to keep the weeds out of these young rows of pine trees, fruit trees & others that surrounded the farm yard. Growing up on a farm wasn't a picnic! We each had jobs to do. And that was mine. Even from the early age of 7 or 8 years old.

Although TVs were just appearing on the scene, ours was never allowed on during daylight hours. We had work to do outside. And I didn't want to disappoint dad by not doing my part. But I sure envied my town kid friends who were free as a bird every day to play together, go swimming or do whatever else they chose.

So I KNOW for a fact & from experience that some of those trees in our farm picture in the *National Geographic* magazine more than likely would not have survived or thrived if it hadn't been for my help every summer hoeing those weeds!