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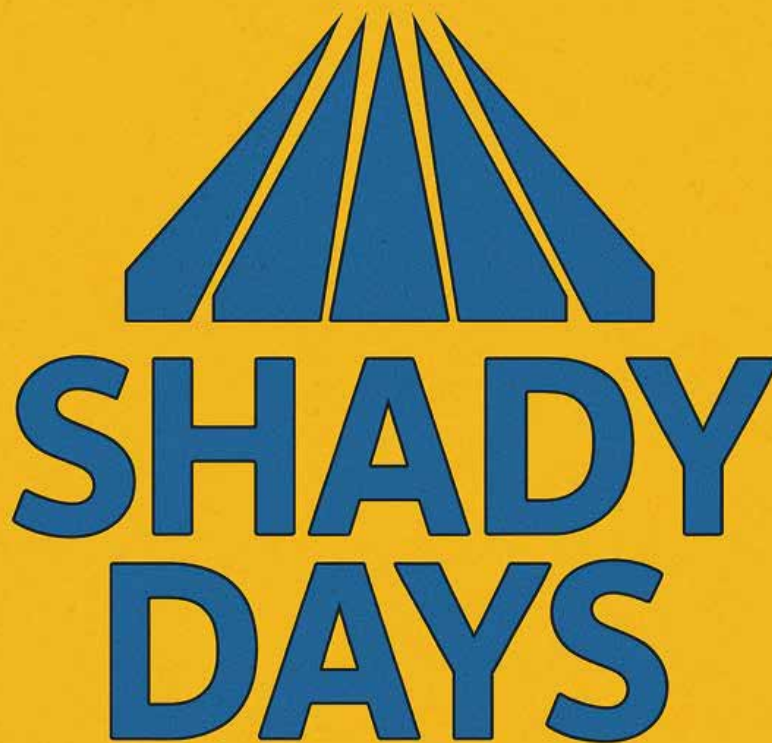
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Columbia's biggest event provides hefty scholarship awards



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DARBY BRINGS PEACE

Service dogs bring comfort and reduce anxiety for first responders



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ON THE COVER: Funds generated by Columbia's annual Mule Day have enabled the introduction of a new benefit to the community: "blue collar" scholarships. In the photo, standing: Rebecca Gilbert and Bernie Schwartz, sitting Brady Carr and Mandy Mills and granddaughter Sutton Grace Goldman. Photo by Michael Tedesco

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Brady Carr has been working with the Mule Day team to create more scholarship opportunities for residents of Maury County.
Photography by Michael Tedesco

BLUE COLLAR SCHOLARSHIPS

JASON ZASKY

“Over the last 52 years, the Maury County Bridle & Saddle Club has built and provided funding for nearly \$1 million worth of infrastructure at Maury County Park,” begins Brady Carr, chairman of the Mule Day Works Subcommittee. However, over the past couple of years, funds generated by Columbia’s annual Mule Day have enabled the introduction of a new benefit to the community: “blue collar” scholarships for recent high school graduates who plan to pursue a career in the trades.

“Candidates must have a high school diploma or GED. Also, they have to be a resident of Maury County and/or a member of the Maury County Bridle & Saddle Club,” offers Carr, explaining

the requirements for applying. They must also be pursuing some sort of technical education or vocational training. This includes training to become a lineman, welder, auto technician, or HVAC technician, not to mention a pharmacy tech or beautician. Construction trades, medical certification, administrative technology, criminal justice fields, and musical careers also fall under this umbrella.

“Current tradespeople are aging out and retiring faster than young people are entering the trades. In our county and our country, we are facing a shortage of skilled labor. And there are too many good jobs out there that are going unfilled for people to go to college, only to leave with a bunch of debt and no direction,” adds Carr.

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L to R, Harv Spann, Garrison Mills, Mandy Mills, Autumn Conley, Tyler Maxwell, and Brady Carr. Photography provided

< FROM PAGE 8

That helps explain the decision to offer the so-called Mule Day Works Scholarships, which range from \$500 to \$2,500.

"We had four young people from Maury County who received scholarships the first year," says Carr, referring to 2024. "Then in 2025, we funded 10 scholarships, with at least one student from every high school in the Maury County system receiving funding."

Among the 2024 recipients is Tyler Maxwell, who graduated from Hampshire Unit School and is currently enrolled at TCAT Hohenwald in the Electro-Mechanical Technology program.

"I'm hoping to work in a maintenance position in robotic or mechatronics systems," says Maxwell. "The scholarship really helped me out (financially), and it's also been a great opportunity for me to meet new people," he says, before noting that he's also something of a fan of Mule Day.

"In 18 years, I have only missed Mule Day twice. Some people have never seen mules up close, and it's a good way to get people outdoors and away from their phones," he says.

That said, Carr hopes the popularity and growth of Mule Day help the Mule Day Works Subcommittee fund even more scholarships in the years to come. Meanwhile, he wants interested observers to know that 2026 scholarships aren't limited to high schoolers who graduate this year.

"A graduating senior from 2024 (or 2025) can still apply,"

he adds. "We try to 'reach back' a couple years, because young people don't necessarily know what they want to do when they graduate high school. We're also pretty flexible in terms of how the money is used by the student. The funds go directly to the institution, but students are able to use the money for tools, books, and things that may not be covered by Tennessee Promise (or other scholarships)."

"I think this is an awesome opportunity that our community is giving us," adds Emma Parks, who graduated from Columbia Central High School and has been pursuing training in diagnostic medical sonography, helped along by the \$1,250 she received from the subcommittee. "My advice to others would be to apply for a scholarship, because it can lead to opportunities that you might not have had originally."

Much like the aforementioned Maxwell, Parks appreciates the importance of Mule Day and its impact on residents and visitors alike.

"I think Mule Day is a great event to bring the community together," she concludes. "It's something that a lot of people in Columbia enjoy."

TO APPLY OR TO LEARN MORE:

Mule Day Works Scholarships

muleday.com/works Deadline to apply is March 1, 2026



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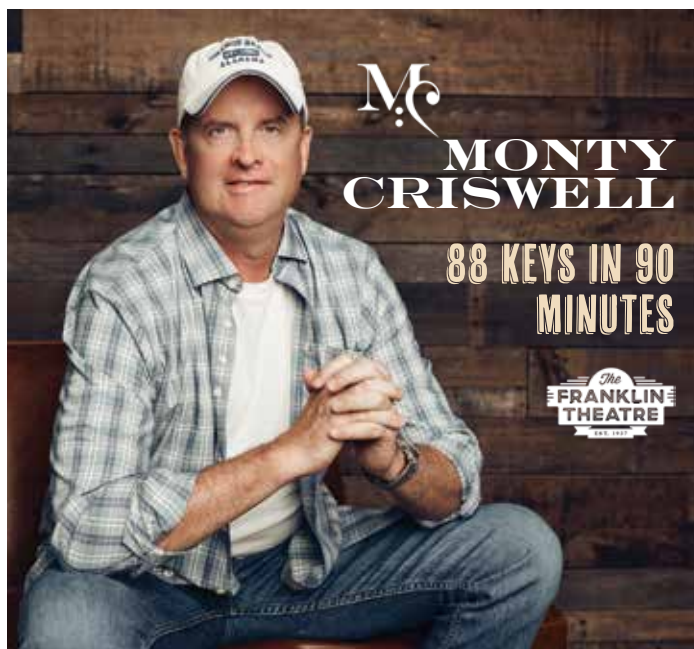
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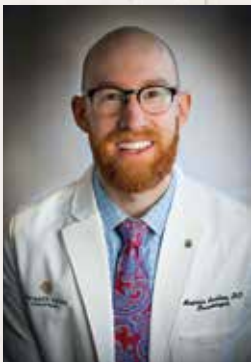
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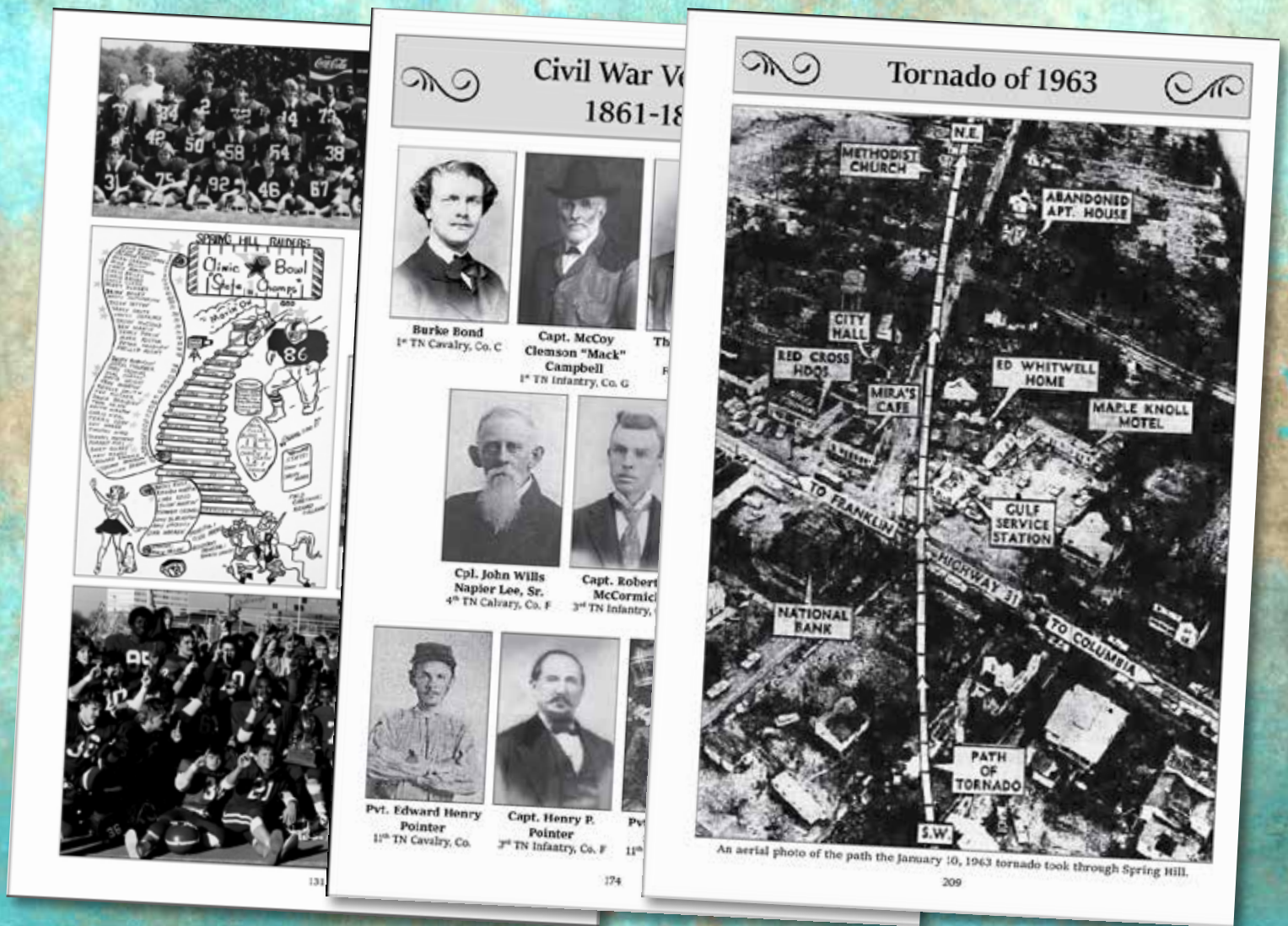
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BOOK OF HISTORY BINDS COMMUNITY

PAM WINDSOR

For the past three years, a group of dedicated volunteers has met at the Spring Hill Library to work on a book that tells the story of this community's unique and diverse history.

It's involved an extensive amount of research and fact-checking, canvassing of photos, and then writing, but "Spring Hill: A Pictorial History" is now complete. It offers a fascinating glimpse into some of the people, places, and events that put this small Tennessee town on the map.

"There are some special aspects to this book," says Dana Juriew, Library Director, "and one of them is we were big on racehorses. Racehorses were bred here, and there was a track at Haynes Haven. We had a series of famous horses: Billy Direct, Brown Hal, Star Pointer, and Haynes Peacock. And Trainer Pop Geers, there's a park for him in Columbia, he trained horses here."

In fact, during the 1800s, Tennessee was the hot spot for breeding and racing horses in the United States (ahead of Kentucky) until the Tennessee General Assembly banned gambling in 1906.

Here's another interesting fact highlighted in the book: Spring Hill was one of the first places to breed jersey cattle.

"There's also a lot in here about education a lot of people aren't aware of," notes Juriew. "In a town this size, you wouldn't have expected it to have had so many academies. There was a military academy here that was world class called Branham and Hughes."

Spring Hill has also been home to numerous individuals who have gained national prominence in their respective fields.

"Coo Coo and Sterling Marlin were racecar drivers. Coo Coo, whose real name was Clifton, was a four-time track champion at the Nashville Fairgrounds, then began competing in NASCAR in

NEXT PAGE >



The John S. and Charlie Odil Home was built property became known as "The Cow Lot." Jo store and was a member of the Maury County and also as vice president of the Spring Hill Bar they did not have children. After his death in well-known tenants, as did Millard Mitchum, S. Many of these were young singles or couples ju a large closet to store her many hats. The Victo is the reception room with a unique staircase. intact, HS



The Pointer Home, originally located on 206 Italianate features by Henry P. Folter around Spring Hill in a covered wagon from Virginia. It well known for breeding the racehorse, Star P running a mile in under two minutes. The h Kedron Road in 2005.

9

Spring Hill Mayors 1837-1985

Spring Hill est. 1809	Spivey McKissack 1837	Campbell Brown 1861
Donald Molloy 1905	William C. Brannen 1907	William Hugh 1911
Clifford A. Ragdale 1927	Elijah Hanes Ayres, Jr. 1925	B.A. Rutledge 1933
Horatio "Rache" Wheeler c. 1948	Billy V. Evans 1952	William O. "St" Stearns 1953
Ed Smith 1960	R.B. Toose 1961 & 1962	J.W. Howard 1965
Ben Pillow Andrew III 1977	Lawrence Sisk 1979	George C. Job 1980 & 1981

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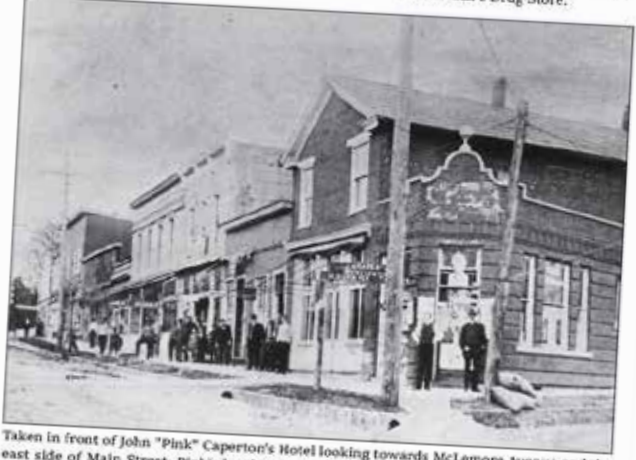
Main Street Through The Years



West side of Main Street in 1898. John Nelums was the delivery driver.



West side of Main Street in front of Alonzo McKissack's Drug Store.



Taken in front of John "Pink" Caperton's Hotel looking towards McLemore Avenue and the east side of Main Street. Pink's brother, Jasper Woods Caperton, owned the tailor shop on the corner, with the sign visible above the door. The 1915 fire damaged most of these buildings.

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Images provided

1968. His son, Sterling, won the Daytona 500 in 1994 and 1995, and retired from NASCAR in 2010."

Another local resident had success in the NFL.

"McDonald Oden, who was a Cleveland Browns running back, is in here. He was one of the people who helped us write this book."

"Spring Hill: A Pictorial History" covers the years from the Civil War to the arrival of Saturn. And it's the many different photos that make it so interesting.

"We put callouts to the public asking them to bring in photos," Juriew says, "but a lot of them were in the Spring Hill Library collection already."

"My predecessor, Helen Dark, was the local historian and genealogist, and did a book before this one called "Spring Hill: Everybody Has a Story." So, she gathered a lot of photos for that. She's featured in this book, also."

Juriew says creating the book was a labor of love for everyone involved, from Spring Hill natives to newcomers who'd become attached to this community later in life. They all shared a close bond as they worked to bring the book together.

"We formed friendships and became a family," says Juriew. "But when you have a project that goes this long and given the nature of it being historical with many of our members in their eighties, it's been a rough go because some of our members didn't get to see it published. And we're very sad about that."

Two members who worked on the book and passed away were Naomi Derryberry and Billy Kinnard.

Juriew is grateful to past and current volunteers who devoted their time and effort to make this book a reality, as well as those who worked on the earlier history book that came before it.

"I think the biggest thing for me has been standing on the shoulders of the previous librarians, and Friends of the Library, who wrote the previous book and gave us all this history," she says. "And to be able to do it as a tribute to them. I hope they would be proud of us because we had them with us throughout."

"Spring Hill: A Pictorial History" is available for purchase at the library and local businesses, including the gift shop at Rippavilla Plantation. It costs \$30, with the money raised to be used for the construction of a new library.



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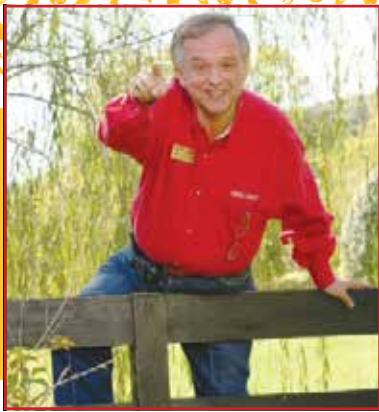


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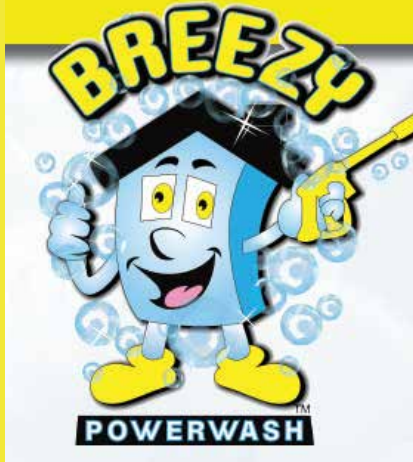
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Fire Station 3 is the home to Goldendoodle Darby. Photo provided

DARBY TO THE RESCUE

To help firefighters cope with the intense stress, trauma, and emotional toll of emergency response, Columbia Fire & Rescue has introduced a new mental health resource: a trained peer support service dog. Darby, a gentle and affectionate Goldendoodle, will be stationed at Fire Station 3 and serve as a source of comfort and emotional support for first responders as they process the daily realities of their high-stress work.

Every day, firefighters are exposed to devastating scenes—tragic accidents, loss of life, and moments of unimaginable grief. Over time, these experiences can lead to post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression. Firefighter Deja Dixon recognized the need for proactive mental health support and led the effort to bring Darby to the department.

“Darby brings a sense of calm that you can feel the moment she walks into the room,” said Dixon. “We deal with things that most people never see. Having her at the station gives us a source of peace and support during the toughest moments.”

Peer support service dogs like Darby are specially trained to provide comfort after traumatic calls, help reduce anxiety, and assist first responders in processing the emotional weight of their

job. Her presence offers day-to-day support in ways traditional tools sometimes cannot.

“Darby is more than a station companion—she’s an important part of our department’s mental wellness strategy,” said Columbia Fire Chief Chris Cummins. “She’s already made an impact, and we’re proud to have her as part of the Columbia Fire & Rescue family.”

A growing body of research supports the use of service dogs in trauma recovery. A recent National Institutes of Health-supported study found that service dogs significantly reduced PTSD symptoms and improved emotional well-being in individuals exposed to high-stress environments.

“Supporting our first responders means taking care of their mental health, too,” said City Manager Tony Massey. “Darby is a meaningful addition to that effort, and we’re proud to have her as part of the team.”

Darby will remain based at Station 3, always ready to lend a calming presence to the team that serves Columbia with courage and compassion.

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