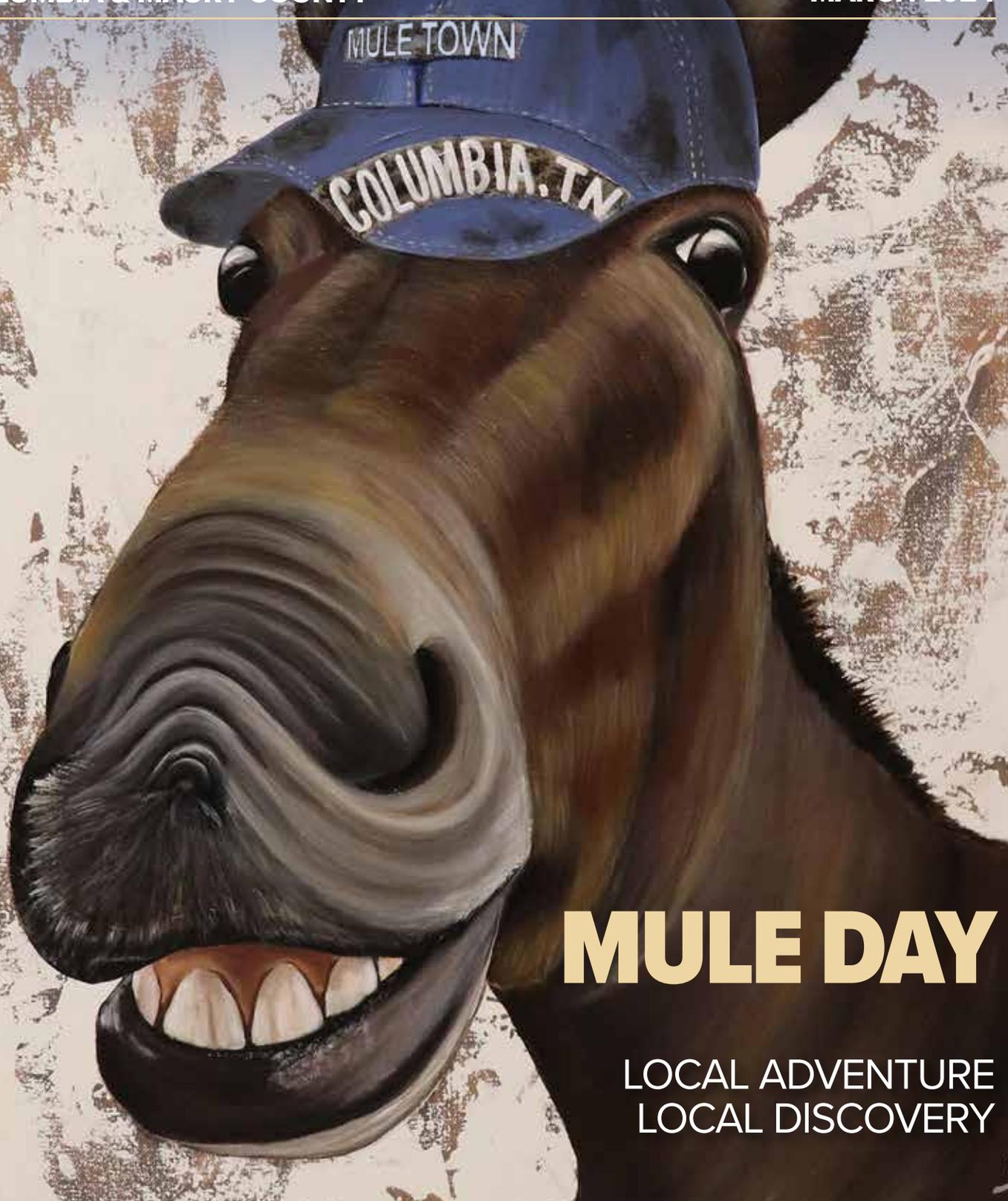


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# Inside *{local}* March '24

**8**

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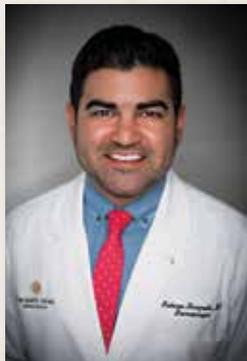
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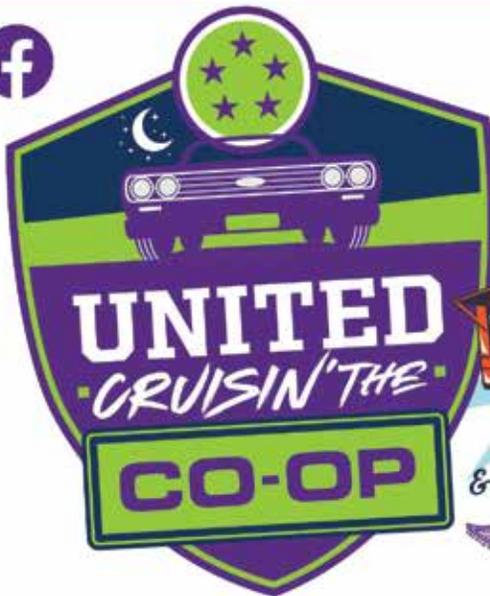
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2024

# MULE DAY



Photo courtesy Kellye Murphy, Visit Columbia

## MULE DAY 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

**PAM WINDSOR**

It attracts locals and people from all over the country, and there's nothing quite like it anywhere else. And this year's Maury County Bridle and Saddle Club Mule Day Festival promises to be bigger and better than ever.

"This year marks our 50th anniversary," says Parade Director, Mandy Mills, "and we're really excited."

The festival celebrates Columbia's heritage as the "Mule Capital of the World" and features mule shows and competitions, live music, food concessions, a parade, and so much more.

Although the actual festival starts Thursday (April 4th) and goes through Sunday (April 7th), things kick off earlier in the week

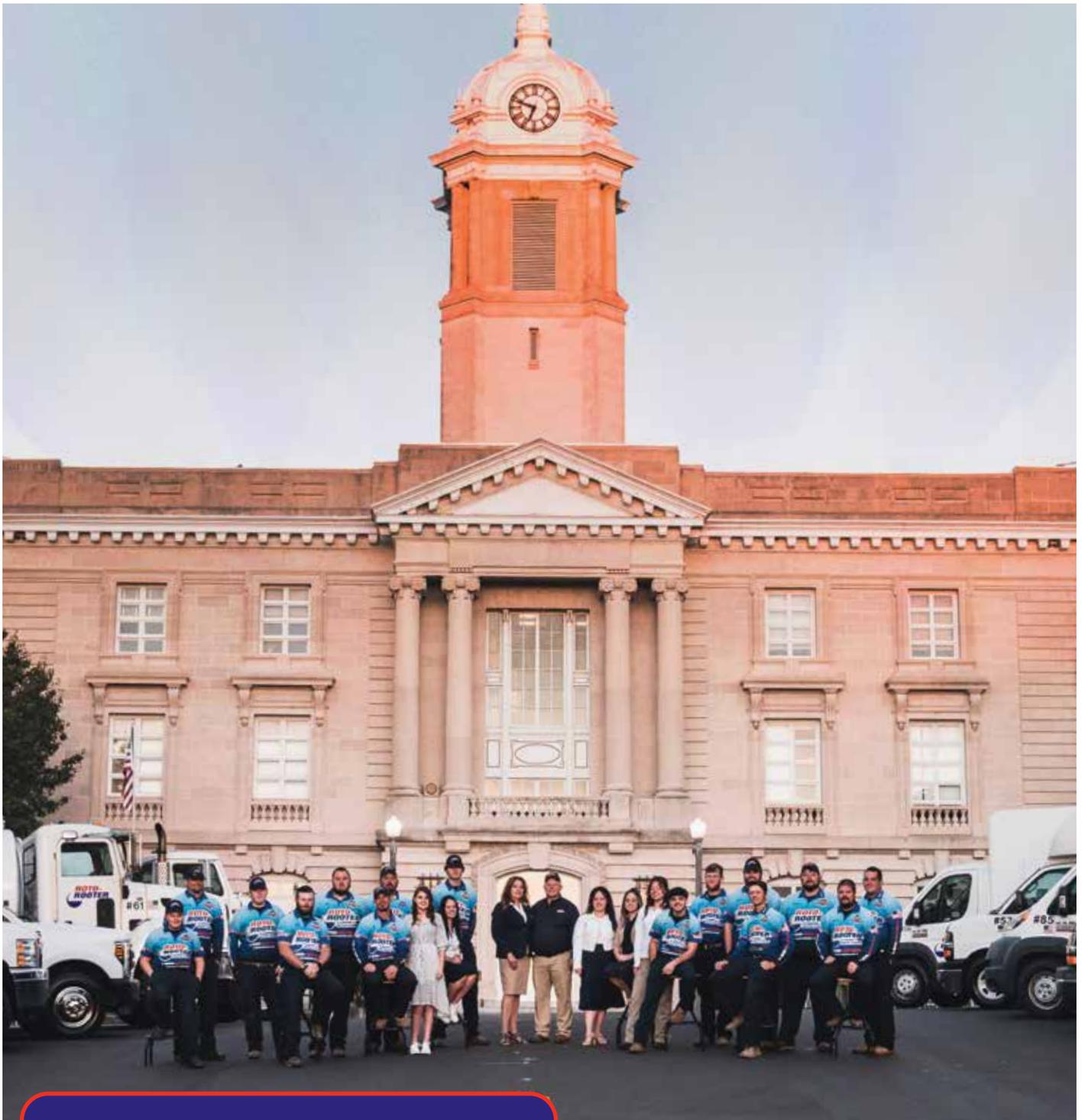
with the much-anticipated wagon train.

"We have a wagon train that starts on Monday, and people come from far and wide to be part of it," Mills says. "They ride through the rural parts of Maury County and surrounding counties and see the beautiful countryside and scenery, and then get here Wednesday and ride into Maury County Park."

Mills says riders with the wagon train send word ahead so people know when they'll arrive and can gather to watch them roll into the park."

Then, it's four days of back-to-back festival events from Thursday to Sunday. There will be food, live music, arts and crafts, and mule shows that include old-fashioned log pulling, jackpot mule

**PAGE 10 >**



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2024

# MULE DAY



*Anissa Grimes, Mule Day Queen. Photo by Robbie Mathis.*



*L to R: Shae Klamert, third runner up. Kennedy Bragg, first runner up. Anissa Grimes, Mule Day Queen. Graciee English, Second runner up. Ava Sykes, fourth runner up. Photo by Robbie Mathis.*



## < FROM PAGE 8

aces, driving mule shows, a mule pulling contest, and more.

“On Saturday, we have our mule pull, which is a huge event,” says Mills. “It draws a huge crowd. These are mules that go all over and pull blocks on sleds. You’ll be amazed at how strong they are.”

That’s also the day of the annual Mule Day Parade. It’s fitting for Mills to help with the parade planning. She grew up in Maury County and has gone downtown to watch it almost every year since she was a child.

“The only parade I ever missed was the year I had chicken pox,” she says with a laugh. “From the time I was born I’ve been to every parade, and then started coming out to the park. My husband logs with mules, so he brought mules, and we helped start a couple of events, and it’s grown from there. We’re thoroughly involved with Mule Day and very thankful to be.”

The parade, she says, is always full of creative floats and lots of surprises.

“The parade is for everybody. Even if you’re not a mule person, we have so many fun floats. Last year, we had a giant solo cup, and people actually got married in the solo cup. There have been a lot of Mule Days where people got married at the parade. It’s so much fun. And the parade gives us a chance to celebrate our businesses here in Maury County, and that’s important.”

The itinerary for each day is posted on the [muleday.com](http://muleday.com) website. Tickets to get into the park are \$10 per day for an adult, while kids under 12 are admitted for free. A four-day pass is available for \$25.00.

Mule Day Festival has something for everyone.

“People come from everywhere and, despite our differences, enjoy the time together. It’s like a big family. You won’t meet better people than mule people.”



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2024

# SCHEDULE



## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

Mid-Afternoon Wagon Train Arrives at Maury County Park

## THURSDAY, APRIL 4

10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Mule Day Craft Fair**  
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Live Music - Main Stage**  
12:00 p.m. **Old Fashioned Log Pulling Competition – Main Arena**  
1:00 p.m. **Dog Show - Old Arena**  
2:00 p.m. **Feed Time Race – Main Arena**  
4:00 p.m. **Jackpot Mule Races – Main Arena**  
4:00 p.m. **Miss Mule Day Pageant - Old Arena**  
6:00 p.m. **Mule & Donkey Sorting - Main Arena**  
7:00 p.m. **Bluegrass Music Fest – Columbia Central High School**

## FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2024

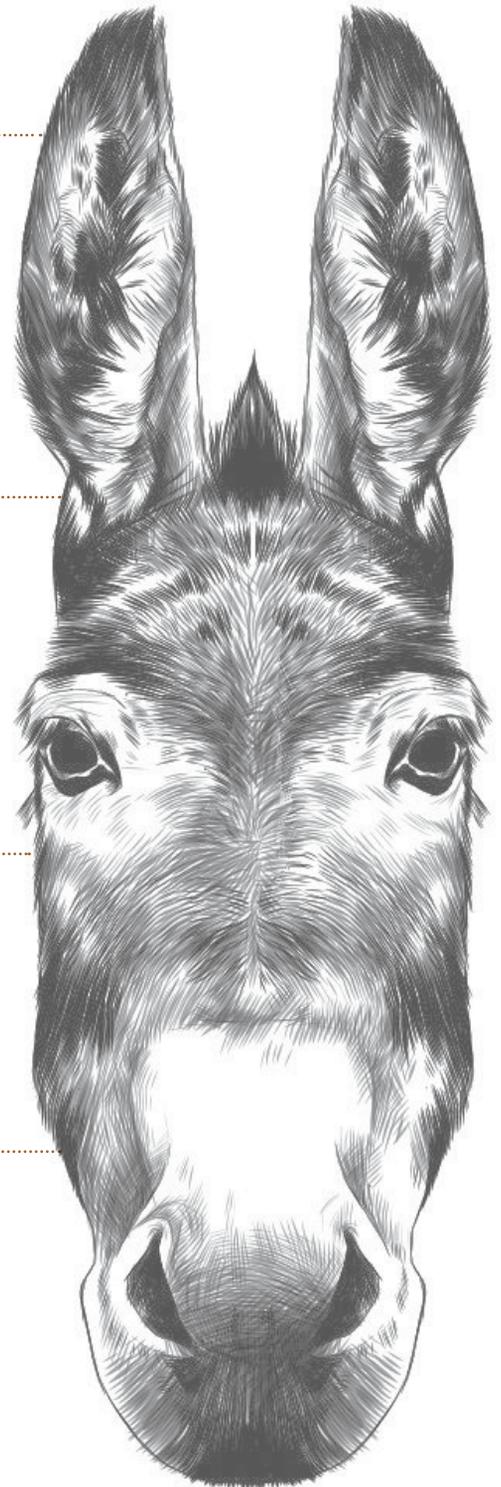
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Mule Day Craft Fair**  
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Live Music - Main Stage**  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. **Ham & White Bean Plates (Nell Wright Senior Center)**  
12:00 p.m. **Driving Mule Show – Old Arena**  
12:00 p.m. **State Auctioneer Contest, United Producers, Inc. Livestock Sale Barn**  
4:00 p.m. **Cart Barrel Races - Main Arena**  
6:00 p.m. **Gaited Mule Show – Old Arena**  
6:00 p.m. **Live Music with Tony Malugin, & Line Dancing – Ridley 4-H Center**  
7:00 p.m. **Liars' Contest Mule Tales - Columbia Central High School**

## SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2024

8:00 a.m. **Maury Regional Mule Kick 5K Race**  
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Mule Day Craft Fair**  
10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. **Live Music at Main Stage**  
11:00 a.m. **Mule Day Parade - Downtown Columbia**  
11:00 a.m. **Mule Pulling Contest - Main Arena**  
12:00 p.m. **Skillington Draft Mule Show - Old Arena**  
6:00 p.m. **Urban Cowboy, Mule Town Stompers & Line Dancing - Ridley 4-H Center**

## SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

9:00 a.m. **Worship Service - Main Stage**  
9:00 a.m. **Riding Mule Show - Old Arena**  
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. 12:00 p.m. **Gospel Singing – Main Stage**  
12:00 p.m. **Mini Mania Mule Show - Old Arena**  
12:00 p.m. **Riding Mule Show - Main Arena**



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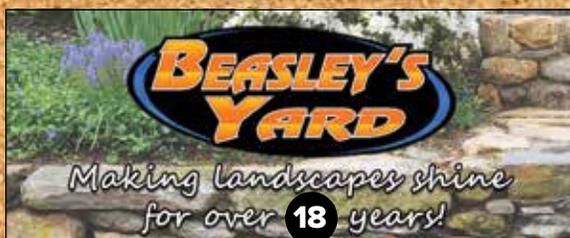
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Front Row l to r: Beverly Herrmann, Nikki Oliver. Back row l to r: Jimmy Ford, Shelby Ferguson, Mike Ford, Bo Harden Photography by Robbie Mathis.

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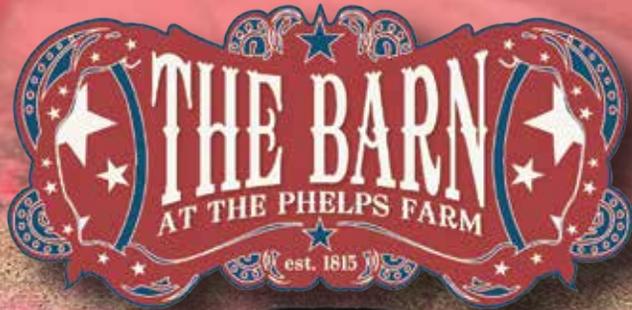
If there is one word that epitomizes Foster Insurance Agency, it's longevity.

"The business opened in 1952, and we have been at our current location for 15 years," begins owner Michael Ford, who has been working in the insurance business since 1978 and has had an ownership stake in Foster Insurance since the mid-1990s.

"We don't have much turnover here," he says, noting that office manager/agent Nikki Oliver has been working alongside him for eight years, having replaced Mary Sue Dalton, who worked at the agency for nearly five decades. "That tells you a lot about us," he adds, describing the six-person office as a "close-knit family."

In fact, one of the individuals working with Mike Ford at the agency is family — that being his son Jimmy, who focuses on commercial insurance

"We do homeowners, auto, and life insurance, but commercial insurance is our bread and butter," clarifies the elder Ford. "We write everything from helicopters to bulldozers, so there is not a whole lot left out when it comes to dealing with equipment. We also write workers comp insurance and write a couple government entities, as well as performance and surety bonds for jobs. Also, I'm a farmer, and we write (policies) for quite a few farms around here," he offers, before noting that his son has attracted a lot of aviation business, thanks in part to his experience as a pilot.



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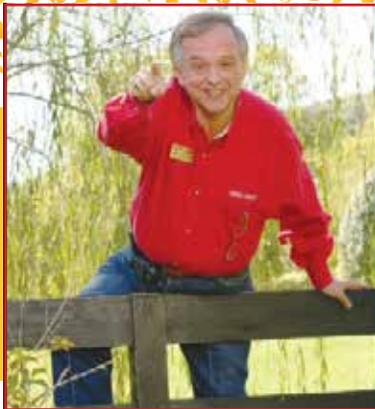
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Foster Agency owner Mike Ford. Photography by Robbie Mathis.

**< FROM PAGE 24**

Nor is the agency's business restricted to Maury County — or even Middle Tennessee.

"Our service area is the entire state of Tennessee, but we are also licensed in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, and we have business in all those states. In fact, one of our largest accounts is based in Palm Beach, and we write quite a few homeowners and condominiums in Florida," clarifies Ford, having indicated that his son will eventually take full ownership of the business.

That said, Mike Ford says he has no plans to retire, or to cut back on the work he does in the local community.

"I'm in Rotary (Club) and deliver Meals on Wheels," he says, while he and his wife and colleagues also support Special Olympics, Miracle League of Columbia and The People's Table, among other organizations.

Yet the welfare of his family — and the agency's customers — are never far from his mind.

"We're open five days a week, but Jimmy and I put our personal cell phone numbers on our business cards because we want

people to be able to get ahold of us," he explains. "You will get one of us — always. I may not answer the moment you call, but when I hear the phone ring, I am going to call you back. We take care of our customers," he insists, something he hopes to continue to do till the day he dies.

"I love the business, and I have no intention of giving it up totally, even when I don't have any ownership. I hope they will still let me come in every day," he quips.

And, as a lifelong resident of Columbia, it's hard for him to imagine living or working anywhere else.

"I love the business, and I lead a good life here, and I think all (six of us) would say the same thing. We don't have many dissatisfied customers — ever," he concludes. "If we can't do it right, we're not going to do it."

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***Sheila Butt, Maury County Mayor***



*Interesting Fact:  
President George Washington is sometimes called "The Father of the American Mule", because he favored mules over horses as working animals.*

Courthouse photo courtesy of Duck River Aerial Photography



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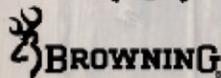
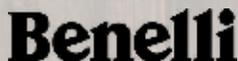
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## Pizza Casserole... *a.k.a. Spaghetti surprise*

### INGREDIENTS:

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1 JAR FAVORITE SPAGHETTI SAUCE  
1 PACKAGE PEPPERONI  
LARGE BAG OF SHREDDED MOZZARELLA CHEESE  
OLIVE OIL

### DIRECTIONS:

Cook noodles, drain, rinse and toss with olive oil.

Brown ground beef and crumble as cooking. Drain.  
Return cooked meat to pan and add sauce. Mix.

Boil SALTED water and drop pepperoni in boiling water  
for 3-5 minutes. Drain.

In a casserole dish, layer noodles, a layer of shredded  
cheese, meat sauce, pepperoni and a top with a layer of  
shredded mozzarella.

Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 45 minutes or  
until the top begins to brown and is bubbly. Casserole can  
be assembled and stored in the fridge for several days  
before baking.



*From the kitchen of* **Faye Davis**  
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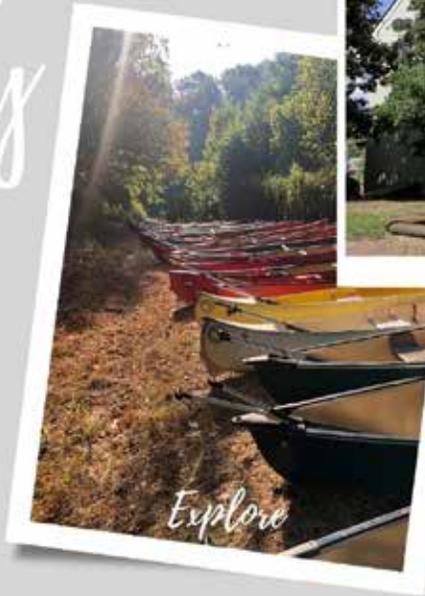
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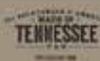
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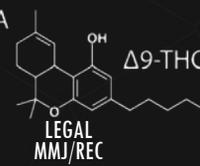
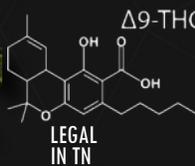
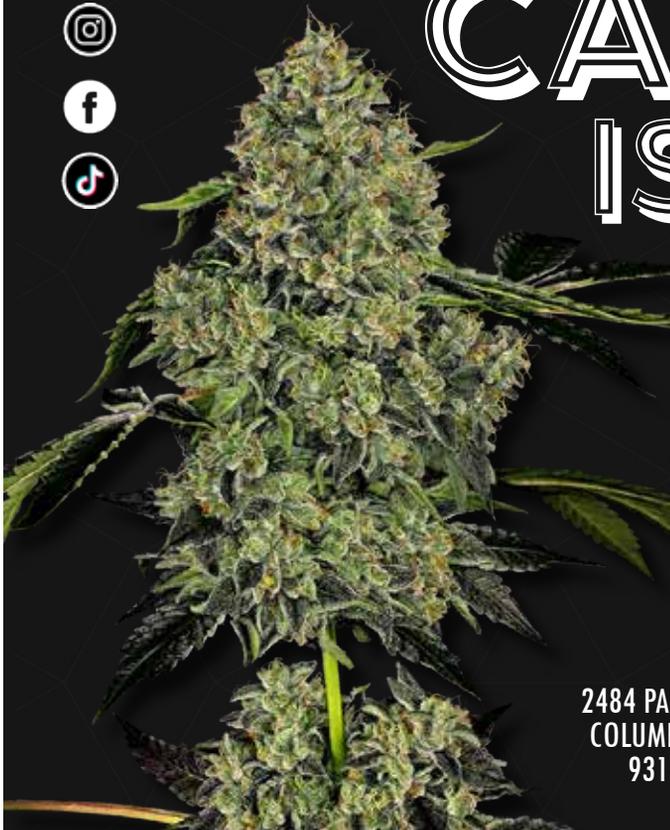


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