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COLUMBIA & MAURY COUNTY

MARCH 2025



MULE DAY APRIL 3-6

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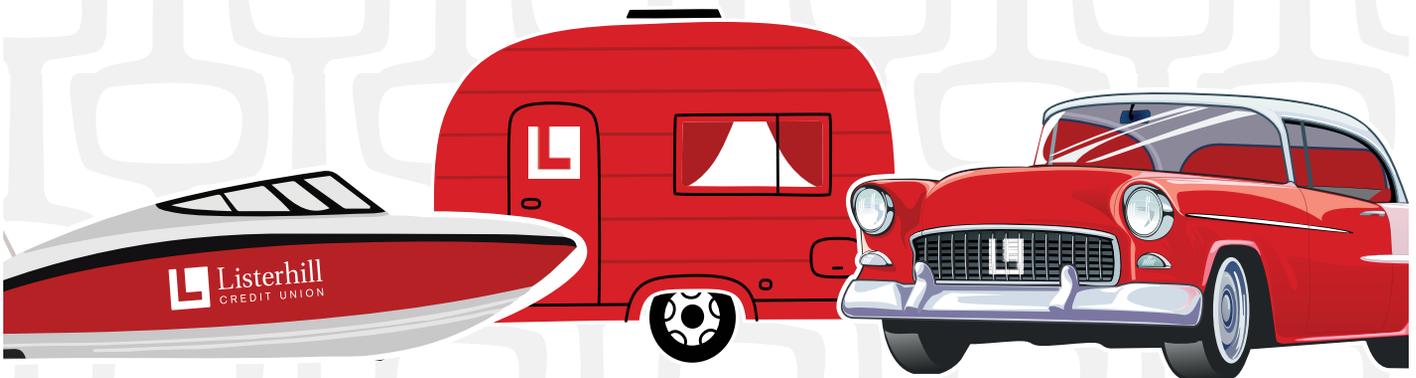
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Inside *{local}* March '25

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OUR BIG DAY

Columbia's most popular event is here and kicks off soon

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UNCOVERING LOCAL HISTORY

Teenager writes his first book honoring veterans from the area

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BUSINESS OF HELPING

A local business owner is making a positive difference in the lives of her team

LOCAL FOCUS

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS 18
SERVICE DIRECTORY 20, 21, 22, 23

Visit our website:
muletownlocal.com

ON THE COVER Mule Day returns to Maury County April 3 through April 6. The event includes activities for the entire family.

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For advertising information contact Jeff Bryant at 615-828-2542, or jbryant@wilcolocal.com

Welcome to Mule Day 2025!

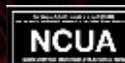


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2025

MULE DAY



MAKE PLANS NOW FOR MULE DAY

Mule Day, the largest annual event in Maury County, is scheduled for April 3-6. This celebration offers something for everyone and goes beyond just a focus on mules; it features food, arts and crafts, live music, dancing, and a parade to kick off the festivities.

This year, Mule Day is excited to welcome the Mountain Mule Ranch Packers, the heroes of Hurricane Helene.

To start the week, Maury County will welcome a wagon train that has traveled through rural communities for two days, making its way to Maury County Park. Observers can gather on Lion Parkway on Wednesday, April 2, in the mid-afternoon to welcome the wagon train as it arrives at the park.

Each day will host a variety of contests, events, and exciting activities suitable for all ages. These events will include a dog show, live music, mule clinics, a classiest and trashiest wagon show, various mule contests and shows, a liars' contest, line dancing, and much more.

Funds raised from Mule Day each year support local schools, civic organizations, and various construction and site improvements at Maury County Park. Benefits from the success of the Mule Day Festival include school programs, scouting organizations, Maury Magic Riders, bathhouses, arenas, RV hookups, and more.

2024 marks the 50th year of the annual Mule Day Celebration. To enhance and concentrate the charitable efforts of the Maury County Bridle and Saddle Club and Mule Day, they have chosen to focus on providing scholarship support for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Vocational Training for the youth of Maury County. The first class of Mule Day WORKS recipients is currently enrolled, earning certificates in welding, electrical work, office management, and medical technologies.

To plan your visit and learn more about the celebration, including detailed maps and a schedule of events, please visit muleday.com.



Photography provided

PAGE 10 >

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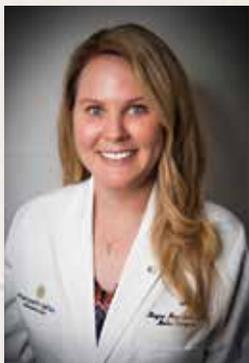
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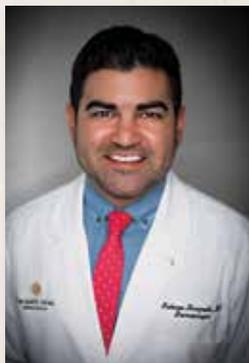
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2025

MULE DAY



< FROM PAGE 8

MULE DAY SCHEDULE 2025

MONDAY, MARCH 31st

9:00 a.m. Wagon Train Departs

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2nd

Mid-Afternoon Wagon Train Arrives at Maury County Park

THURSDAY, APRIL 3rd

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 Noon Old Fashioned Log Pulling Competition – Main Arena

1:00 p.m. Mule Day Dog Show

2:00 p.m. Feed Time Race – Main Arena

4:00 p.m. Classiest & Trashiest Wagon Show.

4:00 p.m. Little Miss Mule Day – Old Arena

5:00 p.m. Steve Edwards Fixing Mule Problems & Saddle Fitting Clinic

7:00 p.m. Bluegrass Music Fest – Columbia Central High School ..

FRIDAY, APRIL 4th

8:30 a.m. Steve Edwards Fixing Mule Problems & Saddle Fitting Clinic

9:00 a.m. Auctioneers at TN Livestock Producers Sales Barn – contest

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Mule Day Craft Fair

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Live Music – Main Stage

10:30 a.m. Riding Mule Show – Main Arena

Following Riding Mule Show Jackpot Mule Races – Main Arena

12:00 Noon Mule Driving Show – Old Arena

5:00 p.m. Gaited Mule Show – Old Arena

5:30 p.m. Cart Barrel Races – Main Arena

6:00 p.m. Live Music – Ridley 4-H Center with Tony Malugin

7:00 p.m. Liars' Contest – Columbia High School

SATURDAY, APRIL 5th, 2025

6:00 a.m. Pancake Breakfast – Memorial Bldg

8:00 a.m. Maury Regional 5K Mule Kick Race

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Mule Day Craft Fair

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Live Music – Main Stage

11:00 a.m. Mule Day Parade – Downtown

11:00 a.m. Mule Pulling – Main Arena

2:00 p.m. Skillington Draft Mule Show – Old Arena

2:00 p.m. Knife Auction – Main Stage

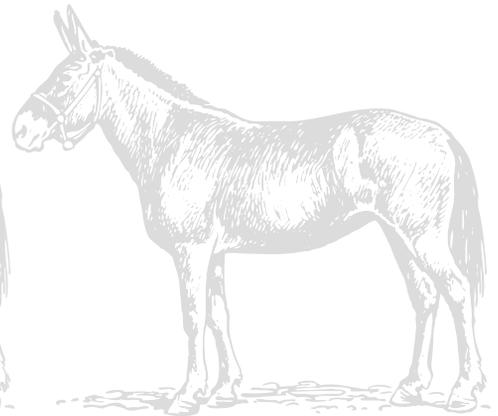
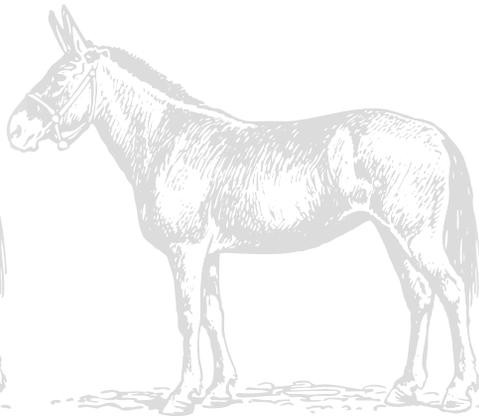
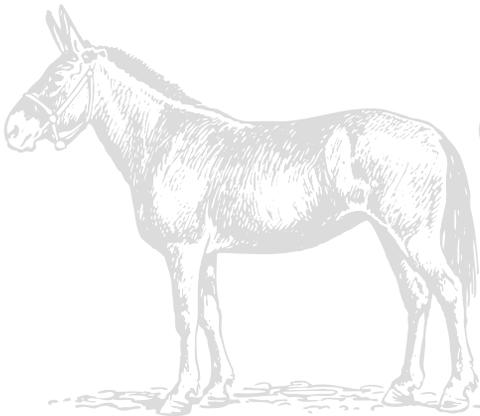
6:00 p.m. Mule Town Stompers & Urban Cowboy Line Dancing at Ridley 4-H Center

SUNDAY, APRIL 6th,

9:00 a.m. Worship Service – Main Stage

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Mule Day Craft Fair

11:00 a.m. Mini Mania Show – Old Arena



2025

MULE DAY

1982 MULE TOWN USA

By C.T. Johnson | Columbia

*Rain, sleet, snow or whatever--
The mule and its people will get together
At Columbia, good ole Mule Town U.S.A.
Where the biggest parade is coming your way!*

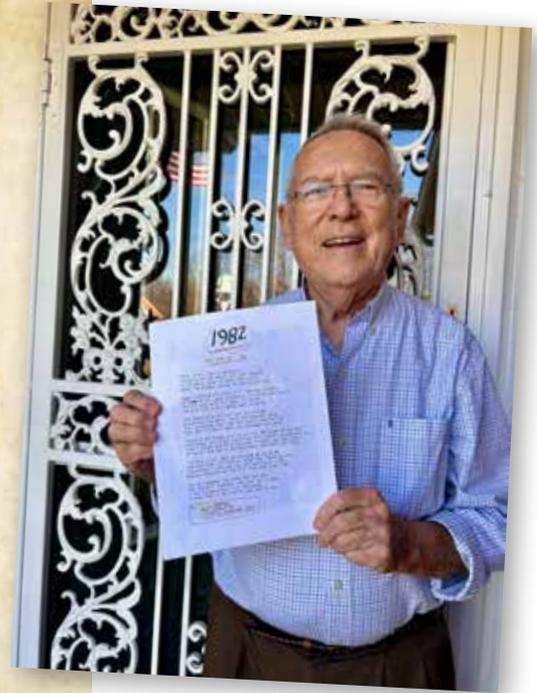
*Several thousand plus fans will line the streets,
so come on out, good neighbors, and bring your seats
The old grey mule will make its noise--
Watch it walk with a great deal of poise.*

*The famous bray will be loud and strong
Mixed with the bands' music and peoples' song
This statewide event has been puplicized before;
Each year in March, gets you enthused even more.*

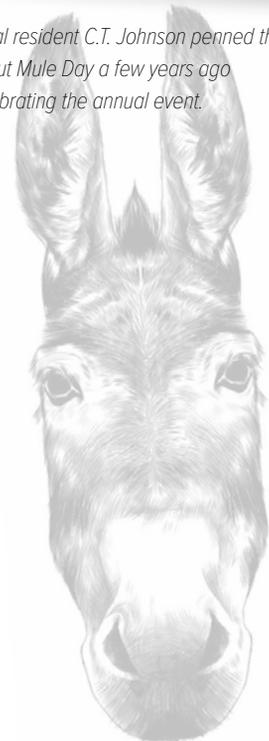
*Overalls and Cowboy outfits will be the order of the day,
Such great spirit and enthusiasm will certainly make you say
"Don't forget the first Saturday in April for the date—
Bring all the family and neighbors, and don't be late!"*

*The Mule Event gets on the road at 11:00 AM,
and continues till Sunday, after the lights go dim.
The parade i n the morning, and dancing at night,
Makes a complete day for all, that ends just right.*

*So, do remember the theme for the year,
Get yourself together, and your car in gear.
C for Columbia and T for Tennessee,
A town that is waiting for you and for me!*



Local resident C.T. Johnson penned this poem about Mule Day a few years ago celebrating the annual event.



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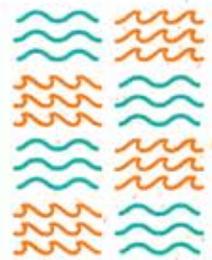
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The City of Columbia is proud to announce a partnership with Safe Haven Baby Boxes to install a life-saving Baby Box at the newly renovated Columbia Fire Station No. 01. This installation provides an anonymous, safe, and secure option for parents in crisis to surrender their newborns, ensuring that each infant receives immediate medical care and the opportunity for adoption. Designed with innovative safety features, Safe Haven Baby Boxes are installed on the exterior walls of approved infant surrender locations. Each box features a locking exterior door that automatically engages when a newborn is placed inside, and an interior door allows medical personnel to promptly retrieve the infant, ensuring immediate attention and care. This system offers both safety for the baby and peace of mind for the parents, providing a lifeline during a difficult time.

Safe Haven Baby Boxes is leading the installation of the Baby Box at Fire Station No. 01, with support from the City of Columbia. To support this life-saving initiative, Safe Haven Baby Boxes is encouraging donations from the community. Contributions can be made directly to Safe Haven Baby Boxes. For more information on how to contribute, visit secure.qgiv.com/for/donationsfortennessee.

COLUMBIA STATE INSTRUCTOR RECEIVES FELLOWS DESIGNATION



Columbia State Community College Veterinary Technology instructor Savannah "Brie" Pruitt was recently recognized as a fellow of the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators.

Ms. Pruitt is a member of the 2024 inaugural class of fellows. The designation recognizes dedication and expertise as a veterinary technician educator, active professional society involvement, and

mentorship of future technicians. Brie is one of only 50 veterinary technology educators across the U.S. and Canada to have received the fellow designation.

"I am truly honored to be recognized by my peers as an AVTE Fellow," said Pruitt, a veterinarian technology instructor. "This recognition gives support to the Veterinary Technician program as a whole reinforcing the level of commitment, professionalism and passion that is required of this field. I look forward to continuing to educate, mentor, promote and lead future groups of veterinary technicians."

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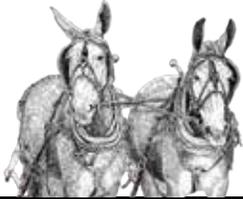


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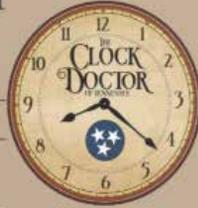
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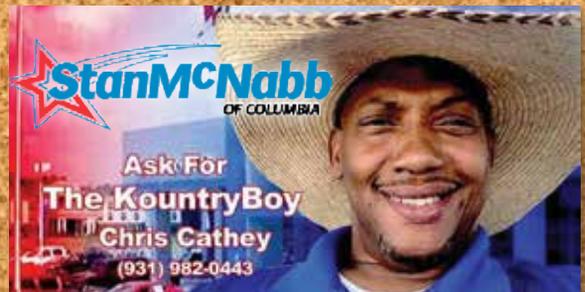
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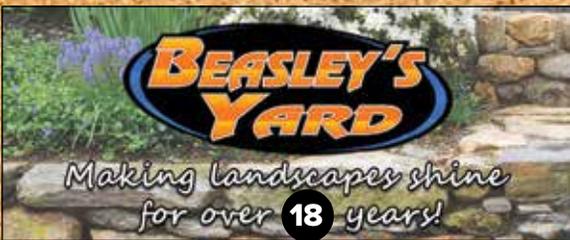
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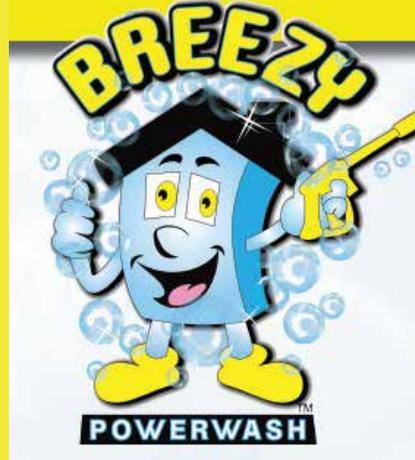
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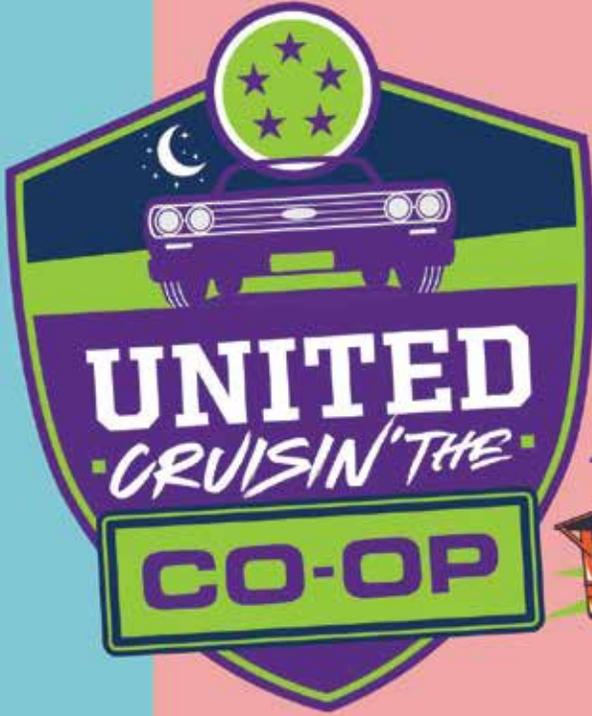
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LOCAL TEEN COMPILES BOOK FEATURING VETERANS

Fifteen-year-old Benny Jett gathered over 950 names of past and present Spring Hill veterans to be presented in his first book, *Spring Hill, Tennessee Veterans*. Since the age of 12, he has been deeply involved with the Spring Hill Public Library's history projects, which included the writing and compiling of two other Spring Hill history books. He is the first recipient of the Heart for History award (now the Naomi B. Derryberry Heart for History award) from the Spring Hill Historic Commission. Currently, he writes blogs about people of Spring Hill's history under the name

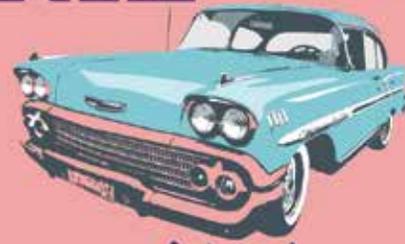
of *The Ancestor Detector*.

Spring Hill, Tennessee Veterans is 132 pages full of photos and information about Spring Hill veterans. The first printing is limited to 250 books. Each copy is numbered and signed by Benny Jett. The books are \$35 each and can be purchased by contacting the compiler through his website, theancestordetector.com, or The Ancestor Detector Facebook page.



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Thrift Love executive director Gina Russell & sales floor manager Sandie Haskins. Photography by Robbie Mathis

THRIFT LOVE

JASON ZASKY

“On our first day, we started taking donations, and it was as if we had been here 15 years. That was three-and-half years ago,” begins Gina Russell, founder of thriftLOVE, on how the local community has embraced her non-profit thrift store, which serves the special needs community via sustainable mentored employment.

“We hire people with disabilities or limited skill sets and give them a job, so they can tap into their talents and be contributors,” elaborates Russell. “We have 17 individuals on our staff that are classified as having some sort of special need. Two are full-timers, and the rest are part-time.”

Notably, thriftLOVE does more than simply offer a competitive wage, proper training, and a good working environment.

“When we bring (new workers) in, we pair them with a mentor and try them in different areas. We try to tap into where their strengths are,” adds Russell, a mother of two whose oldest son was born with Down syndrome.

She says most of their staff members are “pretty independent” and work with a supervisor nearby. Others need more hands-on coaching and directing, and those individuals have a volunteer who works alongside them during their shifts.

“We have a dozen volunteers on our staff, and we could not operate without them. They help us keep our payroll costs down,” says Russell, before indicating that the store is looking to add volunteers, who can apply online at thriftlove.org, or come by the store and fill out an application.

But it’s the special needs employees—most of whom are in their 20s or 30s—who do most of the work. That includes taking in items donated by customers, cleaning them, and getting them “freshened up” for the sales floor. Other staffers sort and hang clothes. Still others—those who love to organize—keep the sales floor organized by size and color.

“They are all great; they are all so individual,” says Russell. “I always say the ‘LOVE’ in our logo is large because that’s the

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< FROM PAGE 30

largest part of the job. It's about loving on them and making them realize they are important and part of the success of the store. We make sure they are treated well and cared for and not set up for failure."

To that end, Russell and the store's volunteers try to maintain personal relationships with the employees that go beyond work. That includes having individual conversations with them while also encouraging them to pursue outside interests, side gigs, and creative endeavors. For example, one employee makes scarves, and another makes jewelry—the store being a place where their creations can be sold.

"Another thing we do is we have regular after-hours social time with them," explains Russell. "We recently had our quarterly staff appreciation dinner. The store provided dinner, and we had a private room at Puckett's, and we just enjoyed each other without

having work in front of us."

That said, it's perhaps no surprise that thriftLOVE has extraordinarily low staff turnover—and 28 individuals with pending job applications.

"The only way to get anyone new on is through a physical expansion," says Russell.

So it's fortuitous that thriftLOVE is planning a "pretty big expansion" later this year, growing the sales floor from 3,500 square feet to 5,500 square feet, which will provide the added room to enable a better shopping experience. It will also allow the store to have more products on the sales floor. That means more household décor, not to mention more clothing, kitchen gadgets, baby toys, baby equipment, shoes, purses, accessories, jewelry, etc.

"We try to create a nice re-sale shopping environment because many thrift stores can be junky and unorganized. We try hard to give people a great place to come and shop and find great treasures at a great value," says Russell, who describes her work as an obedience to a calling.

"The Lord put it on my heart that I am meant to do this," she says, which is why she can hardly imagine living or working anywhere else, having relocated to Columbia from Memphis 15 years ago.

"I love the small-town feel," she concludes. "My family lives right off the square, and I love being able to walk downtown for events and to stores and restaurants. I love how Columbia is growing—booming, actually—and being a part of that."

For more information visit: Thriftlove.org



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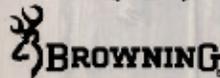
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