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ON THE COVER:

This month we feature things to do in the area this summer, and we highlight SOAR Adventure Tower located on Carothers Parkway in Franklin. Our staff captured this photo as the folks begin to enjoy the local landmark.

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Battle of Franklin Trust Summer History Camp

SUMMER ACTIVITIES ABOUND IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY

School will be out soon and that means parents will be looking for fun things for kids to do. Fortunately, there are lots of summer camps in the Franklin area. So many in fact, it won't be difficult finding something to suit just about every interest. Here are several places worth checking out.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION has camps for kids ranging in age from toddlers to teenagers. Just grab a brochure or take a look at their website.

To start, there's the Summer Fun Day Camp which is a Monday through Friday camp that lasts for nine weeks from May 28th to July 26th. It's an all-day camp from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm and is offered at the Nolensville Recreation Complex and Walnut Grove Elementary Schools.

Then, there are specialty camps for sports, dance, cheerleading, making movies, designing video games, space, robotics,

jump rope, yoga, art, and much, much more.

Depending on their age group, kids can sign up for three different Rising Stars Musical Theatre Camps.

And for those with an interest in theater, but not planning on going to camp, they can try out for two summer productions. Auditions for Disney's Aladdin Jr. will be held May 11th at the Franklin Recreation Complex.

Throughout the summer WCPR will also offer "Boredom Buster Field Trips" where kids can sign up to go on one-day trips to fun places like the Nashville Zoo, Beech Bend Park, Nashville Shores, just to name a few.

To find out more about the camps and activities available through Williamson County Parks and Rec visit: <https://www.wcparksandrec.com/>

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THE TUTORING CENTER in Berry Farms also has a great summer if activity planned.

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Students in grades 5 through 12 will have the opportunity to design in digital electronics, create in AutoCAD, and program in C++. Each camp will explore the concepts of three subjects most widely used in the engineering field today. Digital Electronics focuses on how computers work and what is used in today's technology. AutoCAD is the world's most widely used software package to design everything from the largest skyscrapers, as seen in Dubai or Shanghai, to the most breathtaking exotic cars made by Ferrari and Lamborghini. C++ is the base language used to create the operating systems we use every day, whether it be Mac or Windows. If you have ever wondered how today's technology works, come join your preferred camp 5 days a week for 2 hours a day. For more information contact The Tutoring Center at 615-721-8844, or visit their website www.tutoringcenter.com

BATTLE GROUND ACADEMY also has a number of camps in the works this summer, in fact more than 100 of them. They're available for kids ages four and older. A partial list includes camps for coding, building robots, baking, painting, working with clay, sewing, music, acting, and a wide range sports. BGA camps run from June 3rd to July 26th, and are all directed by a BGA coach, faculty member, or camp professional. Both full-day and half day camps are available. Register soon as classes fill up early. For more information visit: <https://www.bgacamps.com/>

THE BATTLE OF FRANKLIN TRUST offers a Summer History Camp that gives kids, ages 8 to 12, a close up look at American history with a Tennessee perspective. From June 18 - 20, the focus will be on "Life in the 1800s. Campers will do an archaeological dig, learn about the Underground Railroad, visit the Old Jail, and take part in a number of other activities from gardening to making butter.

Then, from July 16 -18, things center on "Life During the Civil War." Kids will visit the Williamson County Archives, get a marching and drill demonstration, learn about Civil War medicine and medical practices, and even get a chance to perform mock surgery.

In both June and July, they'll also visit the Carter House and Canton Plantation. To learn more visit <https://boft.org/>



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CLIMBING ABOVE FRANKLIN

ADVENTURE PARK OFFERS FUN FOR ALL AGES

BY PAM WINDSOR

Soar Adventure Tower in Franklin has become a popular spot for anyone who wants to challenge themselves, get out and get active, or just have fun.

“It’s an aerial adventure park and basically just a giant playground for both kids and adults,” explains owner Kevin Vanderkolk.

He opened it nearly four years ago with a specific goal in mind. As a very involved father of five, he wanted to create a place where people of all ages could come together and have a good time.

“I was looking for a family-friendly type of business, and I came across this

model of a tower, and it just looked super-engaging for families. So, I went over to Germany and met with the manufacturer and climbed on a couple of towers over there and thought, I’ve got to do this.”

He came back, found the property in Franklin, and had it built. The tower has four levels and more than 110 climbing elements. It might look a little intimidating to first-time visitors, but Vanderkolk says it accommodates a wide range of abilities.

“The beauty of this tower is there’s no set path; there are no obstacles or elements that you have to do. So, there are options for the younger kid who is working on getting over his fear of heights and wants to stay 5 feet off the ground, to

somebody who is really adventurous and wants to push their limits and go extreme, to everything in-between.”

Safety is important, and each guest gets a thorough overview of how everything works before climbing. “We put them in their harness, we tighten everything up, we teach them how the safety equipment works, and then we put them through a little demonstration to make sure they can operate the carabiners. (Carabiners are the metal connectors used in rock and mountain climbing.) Then, once they’re ready to climb we clip them to the cable on the bottom of the tower, so they’re attached to the tower the entire time.”

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Staff Photography

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Vanderkolk says he spent a lot of time researching the different types of carabiners and other equipment to create the safest system available.

“There’s no opportunity for kids to take off both carabiners or make a mistake or mentally mess up,” he says. “It’s 100 percent safe and lets parents feel comfortable.”

While Soar Adventure draws a lot of families with children, it also attracts a lot of adults, too. Vanderkolk comes from a sports background and still finds things that challenge him on the tower. He spent several years working as a professional mascot before retiring from the Milwaukee Bucks.

“I used to do zip lining, rappelling, stunts, and all this crazy, fun stuff,” he recalls. “It was a whole other world, and it was so much fun, so, to walk away from

that, I knew I had to do something else that would be fun.”

He’s found it.

There have been some new additions recently. Soar Tower now offers Twilight Climbing in the evenings at a discounted rate. And last year a Mini Golf course was built on the property. Whether guests come simply for the golfing or choose to golf while friends and family climb, they certainly have a unique view.

“The tower makes for a really entertaining backdrop,” says Vanderkolk. “While you’re playing you can watch people climb.”

Once school is out for the summer, Day Camp begins at Soar Adventure Tower. It continues every day until school starts in the fall, and kids can come for any number of days with no set commitment.

“It’s a day camp where parents can drop off their kids at 8:30 or 9 in the morn-

ing, we have a full schedule of activities, and then they pick them up at 2 pm.”

One specific day of the week will also be set aside to allow kids to ‘bring a friend’ with an additional charge.

Vanderkolk says one of the best parts of running Soar Adventure Tower has been seeing the positive response from people who live in the area. It gets its share of tourists, but for the most part it’s the people living locally who come daily, have birthday parties here, take part in team building activities, and so much more.

“It’s the residents in Franklin, Brentwood, Nashville, and Spring Hill, all the local communities that are really coming on a daily basis. And that’s awesome.”

Soar Adventure Tower is located at 3794 Carothers Parkway, Franklin, TN 37067. For more information visit soaradventure.com/

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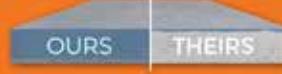
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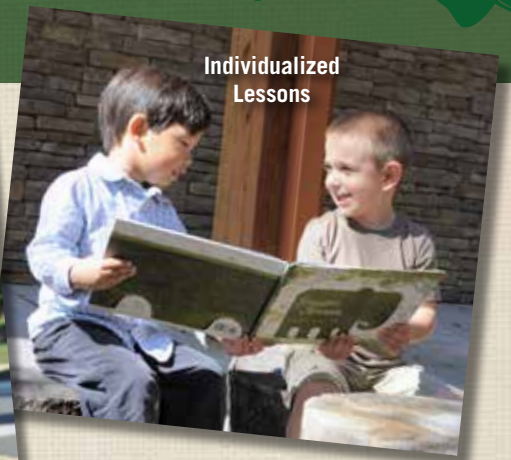
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Photography by Pam Windsor

TRANSFORMING THE HENPECK MARKET

FORMER RESTAURANT TO BECOME PREMIER PRESCHOOL

BY PAM WINDSOR

It may not be evident from the outside, but a lot is going on inside the former Henpeck Village Market on Lewisburg Pike. It's in the midst of a significant transformation, and this fall will become the home of Ivybrook Academy, a new half-day preschool.

Dawn Varnedoe, who bought the property with her husband, Howard, first came up with the idea of opening a preschool, then began searching the Franklin area for just the right spot.

"When we were looking for a location, this was available, and it was just one of those things," Dawn says. "We've all eaten here before, everyone knows exactly

where Henpeck Market is, and if you look at it on the outside and don't think 'restaurant,' it looks like a preschool."

It fit their plans perfectly.

"It's big enough to have classes, it has a wonderful backyard for a playground, and it just works."

As an added bonus, the small-tower looking section on the upper level of the building offers a great little space for a "Discovery Room" where kids can read, paint, do crafts, and take part in other activities.

"So," she says, "we fell in love with the thought of putting a preschool in the old Henpeck Market."

The Varnedoes have raised five children in Williamson County and through

the years developed a passion for kids and education. Now that their kids are older, graduating high school and heading off to college, Dawn says they wanted to use their passion to create a place to help foster a love of learning for others.

"We actually home-schooled our kids all the way through," she explains. "And I loved seeing that kind of light bulb moment when they 'get it.' It was exciting to see them exposed to new things and watch them enjoy something and want to learn more about it."

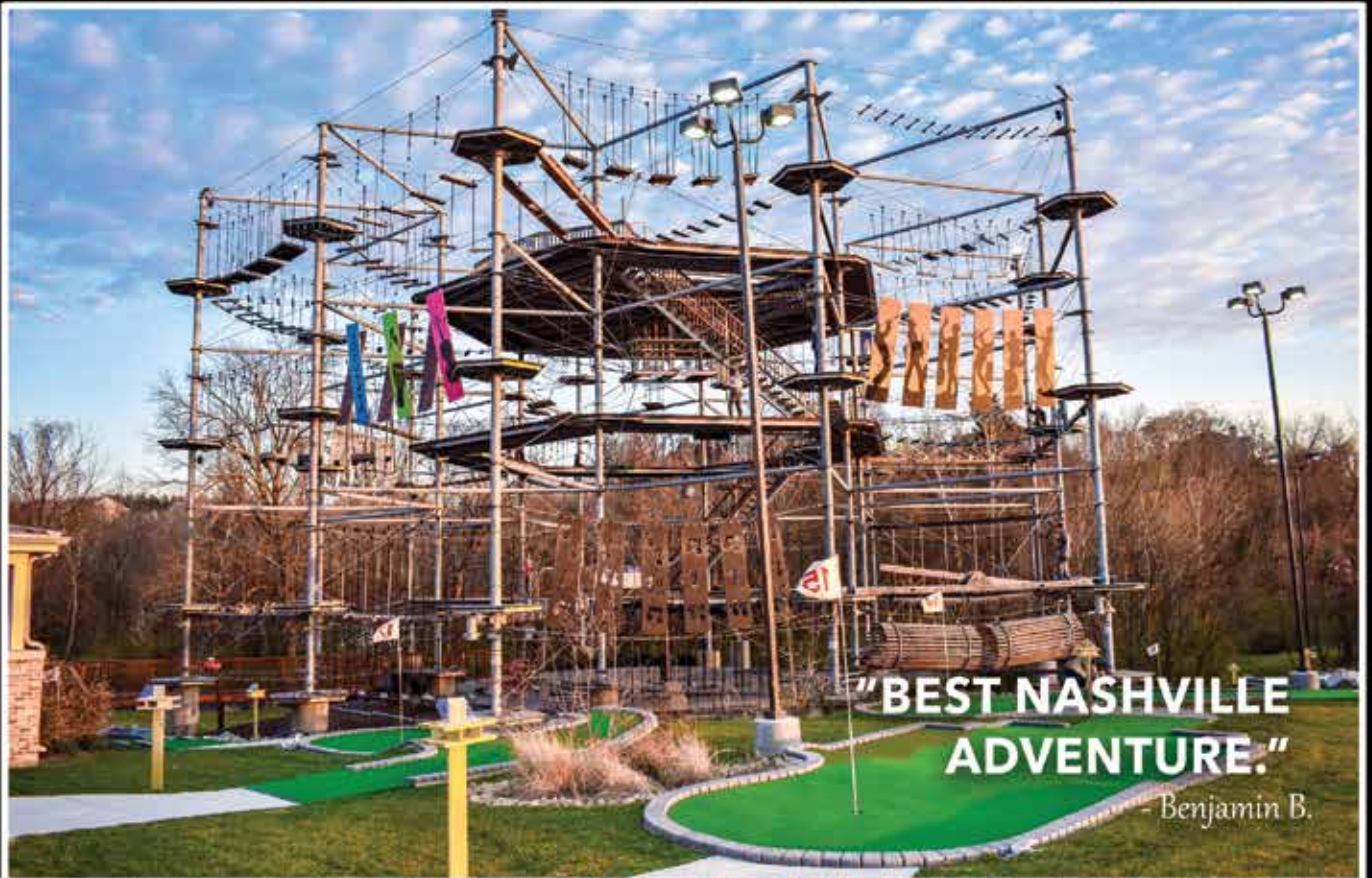
She adds that the preschool years, between the ages of two and four, are pivotal.

"We all know instinctively that pre-

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Dawn and Howard Varnedoe will open Ivybrook Academy this fall in the former Henpeck Market building.. Photography by Pam Windsor

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schoolers are learning so fast, but the more I discover about the research being done on those ages, it's phenomenal the things they are taking in. There's so much that happens in those early years. Two and three-year-olds wake up excited about learning and exploring, so let's harness and kindle that, and set them up for a lifetime of learning."

Ivybrook Academy is a half-day pre-school program that began in Charlotte, North Carolina 12 years ago. Since then, other locations have opened in both North and South Carolina, and will soon open in other parts of the country. This will be the first one in Tennessee. Ivybrook is a Montessori & Reggio Emilia inspired pre-school where children learn through a hands-on, self-directed approach.

"The thing that makes our curriculum unique is that it uses different philosophies and blends them all together," Dawn says. "It's a very child-initiated curriculum. For example, it's not just a teacher saying, 'This is the letter A,' It's more like, 'This is the letter A, let's take a look at this and hear how it sounds. Let's try to write it.'"

She says the approach is similar for other subjects, too.

"In math, this is the number 10. Now, how many pegs does it take to make the number 10? Let's touch it; let's feel it; let's be involved."

The Varnadoes visited Ivybrook Academy in Charlotte to get a look at the program in action before finalizing their decision. Dawn says they were impressed.

"Everything was purposeful, very peaceful, and fun. It wasn't overstimulated; it was very inviting, so we wanted to

take what they're doing and bring it here."

Even though Ivybrook in Franklin won't open until the fall, things are moving along quickly. An administrator has been hired and Dawn is already hearing from teachers interested in applying. Some have experience working with this type of curriculum in other parts of the country and are interested in being part of it here.

"This is going to be a place where kids can grow, learn to get along with their peers, and learn to be successful in their environment," says Dawn. "It's a privilege to be able to gear that love of learning for the next generation."

Enrollment is already underway. *For more information call Dawn Varnedoe at (615) 933-6888 or email her at Dawn@ivybrookacademy.com*



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Photography submitted

BY JASON ZASKY

"I have been involved with the Franklin Rodeo in some form or fashion since I was eight or nine years old," begins Bill Fitzgerald, who has served as executive director of the Rodeo for the past decade and been part of the event for most of the past fifty years. So, there's arguably no one better suited to speak about the Franklin Rodeo's evolution from a local affair to an internationally-recognized competition and one of the largest rodeos east of the Mississippi.

"It started out as a one-day event and evolved over the years to two and then three days, transitioning from local contestants to professional contestants," continues Fitzgerald. "The Franklin Rodeo now attracts close to 400 professional

cowboys and cowgirls from around the country, not to mention 18,000 spectators, who represent approximately thirty different states and upwards of a dozen foreign countries."

But this year's Franklin Rodeo—to be held May 16-18 at the Williamson County Ag Expo Center on Long Lane—promises to be bigger and better than ever. Ticket holders can expect seven Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) events each night—that is, Bareback Riding, Steer Wrestling, Team Roping, Saddle Bronc Riding, Tie Down Roping, Barrel Racing, and Bull Riding—plus two events (Mutton Bustin' and Calf Scramble) that enable kids to participate.

As usual, big-name cowboys are expected to be in attendance, with eight-time world champion tie-down roper Joe Bea-

ver and world champion bareback rider Tim O'Connell representative examples of the kind of talent that has competed in recent years. Never mind the locally-grown talent, namely, Luke and Houston Herbert, professional bareback riders who grew up in Williamson County.

But what really puts the event over the top is the added entertainment, says Fitzgerald, noting that this year's edition will feature professional rodeo clown/barrel man Trent McFarland, as well as fan favorite Whiplash the Cowboy Monkey—a Capuchin monkey who rides a border collie and herds sheep, much to the delight of rodeo audiences.

New fan-friendly innovations have also contributed to the event's growth. In 2018, the organizers added a VIP area, which

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Photography submitted

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Fitzgerald describes as “luxury box rodeo,” featuring ground level seating for a hundred VIPs, with a package of benefits that also includes dinner, beverages, and VIP parking.

Meanwhile, this year will mark the debut of the Franklin Rodeo Fan Club, which, among other things, will allow members to take behind-the-scenes tours with Adam Hammond of News Channel 5 and enjoy other perks, including a dedicated entrance at the main gate, a goodie bag, merchandise discount, and free popcorn.

Fan Club members and their families also have the opportunity to ride on the Rodeo float in the Rodeo Parade, which will take place on Saturday, May 11 at noon in downtown Franklin. The main event will also be preceded by the Franklin Rodeo Experience on Thursday, May 15, a “down-in-the-dirt kick-off party” that will feature pony rides, a mechanical bull, line dancing, and food trucks, among other attractions.

As always, though, the Rodeo will be a fundraiser for the Franklin Noon Rotary Club, with all of the profits going back into the community—including the hundreds of thousands of dollars that was distributed across several dozen local organizations in 2018. The fundraising aspect is just one reason why volunteers remain critical to the event’s success, with approximately 300 volunteers needed each evening to ensure ticket holders’ needs are met.

“The Franklin Noon Rotary Club is about 150 people strong,” says Fitzgerald, who adds that “many of the other volunteers are provided by Enterprise Rent-A-Car, while members of the culinary [arts] program at Franklin High School help with concessions and the food preparation areas.”

For his part, Fitzgerald says it’s especially satisfying for him to stand in the arena and watch the assembled crowds enjoying the rodeo and other entertainment, especially on the last night of the event.

“My favorite memories are from those

Saturday nights when there are 6,000 people screaming and hollering and having fun and watching what we’ve worked hard on for an entire year,” he says, which makes it all that much easier for Fitzgerald and his team to wake up the following Monday morning and start the process all over again.

“We have one of the most fun and family-friendly events in the county,” he concludes, a combination which no doubt helps to explain why it’s also one of the longest running events in Williamson County—and one that figures to thrive for many years to come.

FRANKLIN RODEO

Tickets are \$20 if purchased in advance (online) and \$22 at the gate. Tickets for kids twelve and under are \$10, or \$12 if purchased at the box office.

FRANKLIN PARADE

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Where: Downtown Franklin
Entries accepted through 8:30 am on the day of the parade.

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THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION'S 2ND ANNUAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT



The Heritage Foundation's 2nd Annual Cornhole Tournament, produced by Next Gen and Leiper's Fork Distillery will be held on May 18, 2019 at the distillery.

Sponsored by Frost Brown Todd Attorneys, the cornhole tournament serves as a family-friendly community event and an opportunity for the Heritage Foundation's Next Gen members to network with other community members, ages 21-40.

From 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. a two-tier bracket cornhole tournament will take place on the grounds of Leiper's Fork Distillery. In addition to the tournament, there will be live music, a kid's area, food trucks,

tours of Leiper's Fork Distillery and whiskey tastings. True to the Heritage Foundation's mission, guests who go on the tour will learn about the historic cabin on the distillery property, built by James Daniel from Yellow Creek (VanLeer) in Tennessee circa 1820-1825, which currently houses the distillery gift shop, tasting room and offices.

The winning team of the tournament will receive a \$250 cash prize. Registration is open now until May 11, 2019. Two-person teams can register for \$50.



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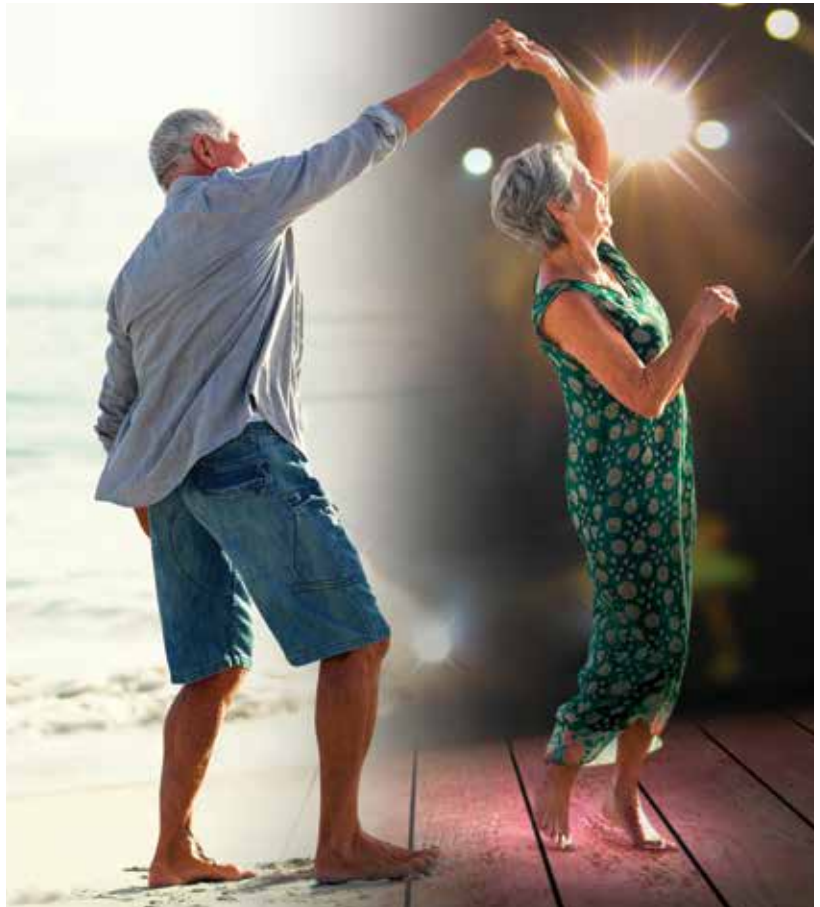


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{local} CALENDAR



PIECES OF HOPE MAY 11TH, 6:00PM FACTORY AT FRANKLIN 230 FRANKLIN RD. FRANKLIN

Autism Tennessee's annual raffle prize is a Winner's Choice trip! For just \$20/ticket the winner will choose between?

- ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISE
- LAKE TAHOE SKI GETAWAY
- MONTEREY GOLF EXPERIENCE

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM JIM WARREN PARK 705 BOYD MILL AVE., FRANKLIN,

Trucks, equipment, and vehicles of all shapes and sizes will gather at Jim Warren Park where children of all ages, with parent supervision, will be welcome to touch, climb-on, and explore these amazing pieces of equipment. Music, inflatables and fun will also be available at this free family event. Food will also be available for purchase.

Fire trucks, police cars, tractors, back hoes, tow trucks, and more! Don't miss out of this great event.

MOVIES IN THE PARK MAY 31, 8:00 PM

Bring a chair or pack a blanket and come to Pinkerton Park (405 Murfreesboro Rd.) for an evening movie! This free summer movie series will begin at 8PM or at sunset. Concessions items will be available for purchase. Check our Facebook page (City of Franklin, TN) for updates. We hope to see you under the stars!

RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET PINKERTON PARK | 8PM



BERRY FARMS FARMERS MARKET KICKS OFF MAY 14

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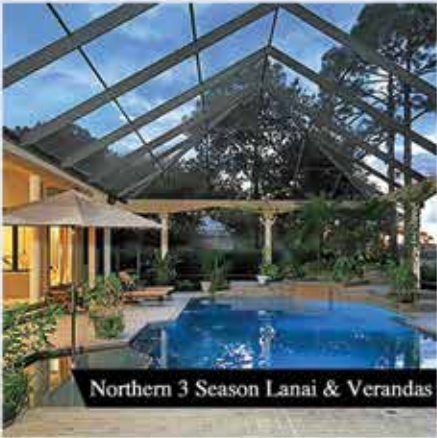
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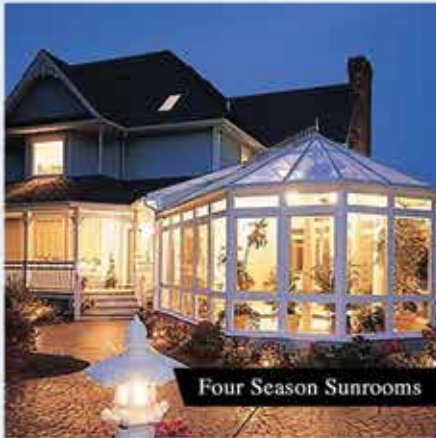


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