Martin prepares to open 33rd annual Santa’s Village

Christmas is coming soon and that means Santa’s Village is, too.

The purpose of the event is to provide an inside winter wonderland, which will also help meet the needs of the less fortunate in the area, organizers said.

The legacy of Santa’s Village can be measured in the amount of food and toys that have been collected through its 32 years. Those donations, totaling $1,242,042, have been distributed to area residents who need them.

Santa’s Village will mark its 33rd anniversary by continuing that tradition and also continuing to provide four days of family holiday entertainment. To date, 340,303 people have attended Santa’s Village.

The event is scheduled for Dec. 7-8 from 6-9 p.m., Dec. 9 from 11 a.m.-9 p.m. and Dec. 10 from 1-5 p.m. at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex on the University of Tennessee at Martin campus.

Admission to the event is free and donations for $5 worth of nonperishable food and/or toys will be greatly appreciated.

Santa will make his annual appearance during the event, which hosted more than 17,000 visitors in 2016.

Village visitors will also be able to walk through thousands of lights in the winter wonderland, meet animals at the Hooker Farms petting zoo, view the MTD model train and ride Pope’s amusement rides for no extra charge. The event (See Page 5, Col. 4)

(Continued from Page 1)

Martin... will also feature live entertainment and Clifford the Big Red Dog will stop by from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Dec. 9, presented by WLIT-TV.

Co-sponsors for the event include the City of Martin, UT Martin, Casey’s General Store, Zaxby’s, Simmons Bank, MTD Products and Savant Learning Systems.

“Santa’s Village is a wonderful, family-oriented holiday event and we encourage people to come out and visit. We give special thanks to the sponsors and volunteers who contribute time and money,” said Kim Kirby, Martin Parks and Recreation Department program director.

For more information, contact Martin Parks & Recreation at (731) 587-6784.

ACT prep course in Jackson

High school students interested in preparing for the ACT are encouraged to register for a one-day ACT prep course offered from 8 a.m.-noon today, through the UT Martin Jackson Center, located at 3031 Highway 45 Bypass.

This one-day workshop will include tips on how students can improve their performance and boost their scores to increase their chances of top-college acceptance.

The registration fee is $45 per person.

For more information or to register, contact the UT Martin Office of Educational Outreach at 731-881-7104, or visit the course website at utm.edu/education/nondegree/courses/children/actprep.php.
UTM honors the memory of Trey Lindsey

From Staff Reports
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

“Trey” Lindsey Scholarship Endowment was established following his death in July 2016 and will be used to support the academic pursuits of eligible juniors and seniors studying wildlife biology at the university. South Side High School graduates will be given preference during the scholarship selection process. Now, the Phillip Trey Lindsey Classroom will add to his legacy.

Dr. Keith Carver, UT Martin chancellor, opened the dedication event and reminded those attending that colleges and universities are really about people. “We’re here today because of relationships,” Carver said. “We’re here today because of people, and we’re here today to really talk about what Trey meant to UT Martin and what we think UT Martin meant to Trey.”

Among faculty members who knew Trey best was Dr. Eric Pelren, professor of wildlife biology. He recalled when Trey first visited his office and, unlike other students who tend to be shy and introverted, Trey arrived with a smile on his face. “They say we’ve got a lifetime to do all the good we can in the world,” Pelren said. “And I don’t know much, but I know this – in Trey’s couple of dozen years, he did more good in the world than most people do the better part of a century that they’re given. And I know Trey’s legacy is going to live on.”

Trey’s brother, Will, a 2017 UT Martin graduate, spoke for the family before the plaque’s unveiling. He described Trey as “a good friend, a great brother, and he’d help anybody he could.” “We hope that having this room dedicated in Trey’s name will carry on his legacy of who he was as a person, a student, a friend of many,” Will said. “And to our family, it means that he will not be forgotten, and it (the classroom) will honor the life that he lived.”

Attending the dedication of the Phillip Trey Lindsey Classroom on Oct. 7 at UT Martin were (from left) Dr. Keith Carver, university chancellor; Andrea Lindsey, wife of Will Lindsey; Will Lindsey; sister, Taylor Lindsey; Quanah Allen, Trey’s girlfriend; and parents, Lisa and John Lindsey. UTM MEDIA RELATIONS
UTM students finish well in competition

From Staff Reports
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MARTIN - Students from the University of Tennessee at Martin claimed both second and third-place honors during the local branch of the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest hosted at UT Martin in November.

Matthew Austin, of Jackson; Meredith Brown, of Trezevant; and Cody Robertson, of Cornersville; took second place among the teams participating in the UT Martin site competition. Fellow Skyhawks Devon Gaston, of Big Sandy; Paul Gosser, of Centerville; and Zachary Vanlacker, of Bath Springs, took third place in the local competition. Other UT Martin competitors included Tannor Franks, of Savannah, Amie Newman, of Franklin; and Joshua Williams, of Dyersburg.

"We are incredibly proud of our students' performance this year," said Dr. Joshua Guerin, associate professor and interim chair of the UT Martin Department of Computer Science. "Our students worked hard over the course of several months preparing for the competition, and their efforts show. We are also excited to host so many great teams from so many institutions this year."

Fourteen teams from Austin Peay State University, Harding University, Murray State University, Rhodes College, UT Martin and the University of Memphis gathered to compete in the five-hour competition simultaneously with more than 100 other teams at host sites across the country. This is the second year that UT Martin has acted as one of eight mid-central region host sites for the competition.

The UT Martin competition teams were coached by Drs. Joshua Guerin, Kathleen Ericson, Qing Wang and Xiangdong An of the Department of Computer Science. The UT Martin Department of Computer Science is housed in the College of Engineering and Natural Sciences and is fully accredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET.

For more information on the department or the competitive programming teams at UT Martin, contact Guerin at jguerin@utm.edu.
MARTIN, TN – Students at the University of Tennessee at Martin voted against allowing classmates to carry guns on campus.

A campus-wide referendum vote was held Tuesday. One questions students answered was whether they agree with this statement: "Students with a legal Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus."

Nearly 55 percent said they disagree. About 45 percent said they agree.

The vote was held by the school’s Student Government Association.

The university and its SGA do not have the authority to allow concealed carry. That is up to state lawmakers.

According to the SGA’s Facebook page, the association had been considering legislation that would say UT Martin students are in favor of allowing students to conceal carry on campus. The referendum was held to allow students to speak for themselves on the matter.

Students were also asked whether they feel safe on campus, and a large majority — about 89 percent — said they do. Additionally, they were asked if they agreed that they would feel safer if their classmates were allowed to concealed carry. About 58.7 percent said they disagreed.

You can see the full results for yourself in the document below.
Student Government Association - UT Martin
Referendum Vote: Campus Concealed Carry for Students
December 5th, 2017

Referendum Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Total Voters: 1413</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel safe on campus?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Online Votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>147</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Online Votes</th>
<th>Paper Votes</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Students with a legal Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus?</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>45.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>54.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Online Votes</th>
<th>Paper Votes</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would feel safer if students were allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus?</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>41.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>58.74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Santa’s Village opens Thursday night

Santa’s Village will celebrate its 33rd year on this week. The holiday fantasyland, which provides the sights, sounds and fun of Christmas and benefits the less fortunate, is staged each year at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex at the University of Tennessee at Martin. It is slated for 6-9 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday; and 1-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is a suggested donation of $5 worth of nonperishable foods and/or toys.

Co-sponsors for the event are the City of Martin and UT Martin. Additional sponsors of the event include Casey’s General Store, Zaxby’s, Simmons Bank, MTD Products and Savant Learning Systems.

For more information, contact Martin Parks and Recreation Department at 731-587-6784.
University of Tennessee at Martin Service Awards

15 YEARS — The following local residents were honored Nov. 7 for 15 years of service to the University of Tennessee at Martin: (front row, l-r) Lucia Florido, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Janet Bonar, Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources; Patty Flowers, Office of Curriculum and Assessment; Stacy Freed, Department of Communications; Denise Connell, Department of Behavioral Sciences; Amanda Broussard, Office of Interdisciplinary Studies; Jenny Canary, Office of Campus Recreation; (back row) Dr. Stan Dunagan, Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources; Dr. Chris Baxter, Department of Accounting, Finance, Economics and Political Science; Dr. Ray Witmer, Department of Engineering; Dr. Randal Garza, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Kenny Rogers, custodial services; Sally Brannen, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Dr. Chris Brown, Department of History and Philosophy; and Dr. Greg Nail, Department of Engineering. Not pictured are Dr. Charles Bradshaw, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Tommy Martin, Information Technology Services; Jason Simpson, Office of Intercollegiate Athletics — football; and Chad Worley, Department of Public Safety. All honorees are Martin residents except Bonar and Rogers, of Dresden; Connell, of Gleason; Broussard and Nail, of Sharon; Dunagan, of Paris; Brannen, of Mayfield, Kentucky; Brown, of Jackson; and Martin, of McKenzie.
10 YEARS — (front row, l-r) Dr. Chara Van Horn, Department of Communications; Suezane Speight, Gil Parker Chair of Excellence in the Agricultural Sciences; Trena Davidson, Office of Housing; Dr. Tracy Rutledge, Department of Communications; Landy Fuqua, UT Martin REED Center; Kathy Wright, Information Technology Services; Jolene Cunningham, Office of Graduate Studies; (back row) Xavier Andrews, custodial services, Ripley Center; Nelson Davis, Office of Intercolliegate Athletics - trainer; Douglas Haulie, Office of Housing; Stephen Johns, building services; Mark Shepherd, custodial services; and Dr. Malcolm Koch, Center for International Education. Not pictured are Tara Beaucharm, Department of Public Safety; Sarah Davis, Office of Intercolliegate Athletics - softball; Lisa Fagan, Student Health and Counseling Services; Dr. John Glass, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Kyoko Hammon, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Dr. Brandon Kilburn, Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems; Dr. Curtis Kunkel, Department of Mathematics and Statistics; Alissa Parrish, Department of Nursing; Dr. Matthew Pritchett, Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Donald Shaw, Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Timothy Smith, Department of History and Philosophy; Selmer Center; and Angela Watson, bursar’s office. All honorees are Martin residents except Davidson, of Troy; Wright, of Union City; Andrews, of Ripley; Shepherd, of Humboldt; Beaucharm, of Sharon; Glass, of Mayfield, Kentucky; Kilburn, of Bradford; Parrish, of Paris; and Smith, of Adamsville.
Jerry Reese, a native of Lake County who played high school football at Lake County and the University of Tennessee Martin, has been relieved of his duties as the general manager of the New York Giants.

Head coach Ben McAdoo was also released by the Giants, who are 2-10.

Giants defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo will be the interim head coach, while Kevin Adams will be the Giants' interim general manager, Giants co-owner John Mara confirmed in a news conference.

A search for Reese's full time replacement will begin immediately.

(PICTURE: Jerry Reese)

David Thomas, Twitter: @DavidThomasWVNS
https://www.facebook.com/NewsTalk1015/
Holiday concerts set at UTM

The University of Tennessee at Martin Department of Music will continue its fall concert season with holiday performances by the UTM Small Jazz Group and the UT Martin Tuba Euphonium Studio.

The UTM Small Jazz Group will play from 3-5 p.m. Friday at the Martin Coffeehouse, located at 407 South Lindell St. in Martin.

The fourth annual Martin Tuba Christmas will be held at 3:30 p.m. Saturday in the Fulton Theatre, located inside UT Martin’s Fine Arts Building. The performance is free and open to the public. Those wishing to participate by playing in the concert should plan on registering and rehearsing at the UT Martin Fine Arts Building starting at 12:30 p.m.

The cost to perform is $10 and music will be available for purchase for those without the book.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Department of Music at (731) 881-7402.

DECADE OF SERVICE — Several local residents were recently honored for 10 years of service to the University of Tennessee at Martin. They included (from left, front) Dr. Chara Van Horn of Martin, Department of Communications; Suezane Speight of Martin, Gil Parker Chair of Excellence and Tennessee Governor’s School for the Agricultural Sciences; Trena Davidson of Troy, Office of Housing; Dr. Tracy Rutledge of Martin, Department of Communications; Landy Fuqua of Martin, UT Martin REED Center; Kathy Wright of Union City, Information Technology Services; Jolene Cunningham of Martin, Office of Graduate Studies; (back) Xavier Andrews of Ripley, custodial services; Ripley Center; Nelson Davis of Martin, Office of Intercollegiate Athletics, trainer; Douglas Hauhe of Martin, Office of Housing; Stephen Johns of Martin, building services; Mark Shepherd of Humboldt, custodial services; and Dr. Malcolm Koch of Martin, Center for International Education. Not pictured are Tara Beauchamp of Sharon, Department of Public Safety; Sarah Daws of Martin, Office of Intercollegiate Athletics, softball; Lisa Fagan of Martin, Student Health and Counseling Services; Dr. John Glass of Mayfield, Ky., Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Kyoko Hammond of Martin, Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages; Dr. Brandon Kilburn of Bradford, Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems; Dr. Curtis Kunkel of Martin, Department of Mathematics and Statistics; Alissa Parrish of Paris, Department of Nursing; Dr. Matthew Pritchett of Martin, Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Donald Shaw of Martin, Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Timothy Smith of Adamsville, Department of History and Philosophy, Selmer Center; and Angela Watson of Martin, bursar’s office.
FIVE-YEAR HONOREES — University of Tennessee at Martin employees who have attained five years of service were honored recently by UT Martin Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver during the Clerical and Support Staff Coffee, an appreciation event for university employees. Among those recognized were (from left, front row) Jewell Franklin of Martin, international studies; Kiara Castleman of Greenfield, bursar’s office; Kim Barnett-Sled of Dresden, family and consumer sciences; Emily Sparks of Union City, admissions; Dr. Carver; (middle row) Kimberly Olive-Milligan of Martin, campus recreation; John’Na Webster of Greenfield, student health and counseling; Norma Coalter of Martin, university relations; Amy Davidson of Greenfield, nursing; Daphne McDaniel of Greenfield, business services; (back row) Andy Wilson of Martin, university advancement; Dr. Kelli Deere of Lexington, Parsons Center; Brooke Dodd of Martin, educational outreach; Vicki Hardrick of Dresden, custodial services; Kristina Pitz of Martin, pre-health science program; and Michael Brent of Martin, custodial services.

UTM music groups to perform this weekend

The University of Tennessee at Martin Department of Music will continue its fall concert season with holiday performances by the UTM Small Jazz Group and the UT Martin Tuba Euphonium Studio.

The UTM Small Jazz Group will play from 3-5 p.m., Dec. 8, at the Martin Coffeehouse located at 407 South Lindell Street in Martin.

The fourth annual Martin Tuba Christmas will be held at 3:30 p.m., Dec. 9, in the Fulton Theatre, located inside UT Martin’s Fine Arts Building. The performance is free and open to the public. Those wishing to participate by playing in the concert should plan on registering and rehearsing at the UT Martin Fine Arts Building starting at 12:30 p.m. The cost to perform is $10, and music will be available for purchase for those without the book.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Department of Music at 731-881-7402.
A CONCERT FOR KENNY — Members of the UTM orchestra performed Dec. 5 for patients at the Spire Cane Creek Rehabilitation Hospital in Martin. Front and center for the concert was Kenny Robinson, WLJ'T engineering manager, who is recovering from a vehicle accident that occurred in November. Robinson is one of the orchestra’s original members and was treated to this special performance by eight of the 20 orchestra members. A GoFundMe account has been created to help Robinson with medical bills and expenses associated with the accident and his recovery period. Those interested in contributing to this effort can visit gofundme.com and search for “Kenny and Teena Robinson.” Pictured are (from left) Michelle Feiser; Martin; Carla Field, Martin; Bethany Ostenson, Martin; Dr. Richard Robinson, Martin; Kenny Robinson, Sharon; Dr. Angela Ammerman, Martin; Lee Moses, Union City; Shannon Boggess, Hendersonville, Tenn.; and Micah Barnes, Martin.

Orchestra performs for injured station employee

Several members of the University of Tennessee at Martin orchestra, conducted by Dr. Angela Ammerman, assistant professor of music, performed Tuesday at Spire Cane Creek Rehabilitation Hospital in Martin for facility patients, including Kenny Robinson, WLJ'T-DT engineering manager.

Robinson, of Sharon, is recovering from injuries sustained Nov. 4 in a four-vehicle accident in Fulton that caused the death of Robinson’s wife, Teena.

“Kenny Robinson was one of the original members of the UTM orchestra and is one of the most passionate and determined musicians you might meet. When the members of the orchestra heard about his accident, everyone immediately wanted to know how they could help,” said Ammerman. “Kenny was thoroughly disappointed that he couldn’t be in the concert, and so we decided if we couldn’t get Kenny to our concert, we would bring the concert to him. We are hoping that by performing for him, we can provide support and motivation during this trying time.”

Robinson has been part of the WLJ'T-DT family since 1997 and also performs as part of the UT Martin House Band.

“I wanted to thank everyone who has done so much since the tragic accident. Losing my amazing wife, Teena, is by far the hardest part. I will miss her forever. . . . I really appreciate the prayers and support of friends and family,” he wrote in a Facebook post Nov. 29.

A GoFundMe account has been created to help him with medical bills and expenses associated with the accident and his recovery period. Those interested in contributing to this effort can visit gofundme.com and search for “Kenny and Teena Robinson.”

For more information, contact Dr. Richard Robinson, UT Martin associate professor of communications, at 731-881-7555, or email rrobin@utm.edu.
Students from the University of Tennessee at Martin claimed both second and third place honors during competition in the local branch of the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest. The event was hosted at UTM in November.

The team of Devon Gaston, of Big Sandy; Paul Gosser, of Centerville; and Zachary Vanlacker, of Bath Springs, took third place among the teams participating in the UTM site competition. The team of fellow Skyhawks Matthew Austin, of Jackson; Meredith Brown, of Trezevant; and Cody Robertson, of Cornersville; took second place.

"We are incredibly proud of our students' performance this year," said Dr. Joshua Guerin, interim chair of the UTM Dept. of Computer Science. "Our students worked hard over the course of several months preparing for the competition, and their efforts show. We also were excited to host so many great teams from 14 institutions this year."

Along with those from UTM, teams from Austin Peay, Harding, Murray State, Rhodes College, and the University of Memphis gathered to compete in the five-hour competition simultaneously with more than 100 other teams at host sites across the country. This is the second year that UTM has acted as one of eight mid-central region host sites for the competition.

The UTM teams were coached by Drs. Joshua Guerin, Kathleen Ericson, Qing Wang and Xiangdong An of the Dept. of Computer Science, which is fully accredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET. For more information on the department or the programming teams at UTM, contact Guerin at jguerin@utm.edu.

MARTIN, Tenn. — Students at a University of Tennessee at Martin are taking a stance against a controversial resolution allowing students to carry weapons on campus. Several students we spoke with said the Student Government Association did not listen to what the student body wanted.

"I think it is most important for the Student Government Association to go with the will of the students... it is important for us to listen to our constituents," said SGA Vice President Breydon Horton.

Majors and the other Senators who oppose the bill are now asking the UT Martin Administration to intervene and reform the SGA.

We reached out to SGA President Long for a comment he said the vote on the resolution is not set in stone. To take affect it would have to be approved by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Haslam.
"I have the upmost respect for those who support or oppose the resolution," said Long. "I am taking into consideration what the student body wants and will make a decision in the next two weeks."

We feel that the will of the people, the will of the students at this school were violated," said SGA Attorney General Devin Majors. Students and several SGA Senators staged at sit-in at the SGA office after they passed a concealed carry resolution, Thursday night.

It would allow students to lawfully carry concealed weapons on campus. Although it received a majority of 'yes' votes from SGA Senators, 250 students who voted in the referendum on Tuesday did not show the same support.

In the referendum vote: 89 percent agreed that students feel safe on campus, 54 percent disagreed students with a Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus and 58 percent disagreed they would feel safer if students were allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus.

"Every student at this University is a member of SGA and we are supposed to have some kind of representation and when our representation is going against what we want and we told them how we felt in the referendum and they still vote however they please that makes us all upset about it," said Majors.

After much debate, the resolution was passed 17-10. Now several SGA Senators and many students are opposing the vote and want SGA President Jordan Long to veto it.

"If the student body had spoken and said they wanted to pass this bill I would've taken that defeat myself and personally done things that I felt needed to do for my own self," said UTM student Alex Williams.

(https://images.wbbjtv.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Screen-Shot-2017-12-08-at-10.13.13-PM.png) They said they feel the senators who voted for it were pushing their own personal agenda and have been sitting outside Long's office all afternoon.
MARTIN, TN - Should students with a concealed carry permit be able to carry a firearm on campus? That's a question students at the University of Tennessee at Martin have been asking themselves for weeks.

In a referendum Tuesday, 54% of students polled think no. 1,413 students voted.

Despite the result, UT Martin's Student Government Association still voted in favor of a concealed carry gun bill 17-10 on Thursday.

The bill now goes onto the SGA president for his signature or veto. Regardless, this isn't an official change in university or state policy. Students will not be allowed to conceal firearms without approval by the Tennessee legislature.

There is another misconception is surrounding the permit. In Tennessee, it's actually called a hand gun permit. To qualify (https://www.tn.gov/safety/article/hgqualifications), a student would have to be at least 21 years old or 18 and be honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces or on active duty status.
A co-sponsor of the bill, Alex Joyner, believes the referendum doesn't completely represent all of his constituents. In UTM student government, student representatives or senators are elected by college. The system is similar to U.S. Senators, which are obviously elected by their state. Because the referendum was a popular vote and not broken down by majors, he still believes the opinion of the majority of his peers in business and global affairs is pro-gun.

Doug Marshall voted no in the referendum. "I think that the margins are still pretty close but I think it’s definitive enough to say that enough people don’t want it," Marshall said. He believes adding guns won’t subtract the bigger problem.

SGA representative Esmeralda Mejorado tells me she saw no reason vote against the student body. Whether they voted for or against, she says she would have voted with them; however, she doesn’t see a need for a student concealed carry policy, adding “there is no immediate danger on this campus. Maybe there will be a time for guns to be on this campus, it's just not today.”

Right now in Tennessee, full-time university employees can already carry concealed firearms on campus. They have to have a hand gun permit and register with campus safety. Right now, of the more 800 employees, 25 are on the list of gun carriers. In July (http://www.wpsdlocal6.com/2016/07/01/employee-guns-on-campus-now-a-reality-in-tennessee/) 2016, that number was 6.

Jordan Long, UTM’s SGA president tells me he is weighing his options on what to do next. He has 14 days to sign or veto the legislation. He says he’s responding to numerous e-mails and setting the record straight on various misconceptions, including whether this will go into effect immediately. He takes issue with the phrasing of the questions. To Long, if details like mandatory background checks were included in the questionnaire, more students would have voted in support of the measure.
MARTIN, Tenn.-It is an annual holiday event that brings out thousands of people every year for a good cause.

Folks from across the area came out to the 33rd annual Santa’s Village at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex on the campus of UT Martin.

Village visitors were able to walk through a winter wonderland, meet animals at a petting zoo, view a model train and see live entertainment. Patrons were encouraged to bring donations of nonperishable food and toys to benefit the less fortunate in the local area.

“And in the past 32 years, that we’ve had it, we’ve reached around $1.2 million in donations that have come through the village, said Kim Kirby, program director with the Martin Parks and Recreation Dept.

Last year, they had more than 17,000 visitors and are hoping for more this year. Santa’s Village will be open from now until Sunday, December 10.
The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association passed a controversial concealed carry resolution Thursday night in a 17 to 10 vote of the Student Senate.

Titled "A Resolution to Allow Students to Lawfully Carry Concealed Weapons at the University of Tennessee at Martin," the resolution was at the center of campus controversy last month that involved a threatening letter to its supporters written anonymously by a UT Martin faculty member.

On November 3, The Tennessee Star reported that "Officials at the University of Tennessee at Martin confirmed ... on Friday that a faculty member has been placed on leave for writing a threatening letter to the student sponsors of a controversial Student Government Association resolution that would allow students to have constitutional concealed carry privileges on campus, pending the passage of enabling state legislation.”

Later that same day, "The chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Martin issued a statement late Friday identifying Dr. Charles Bradshaw, associate professor of English, as the author of an anonymous letter that contained threats of violence against the student sponsors of a Student Government Association resolution to allow students concealed carry privileges on campus," The Star reported.

Four days later, on November 7, "In an exclusive interview with The Tennessee Star, Tommy A. Thomas, District Attorney General for Tennessee’s 27th Judicial District, explained his decision not to prosecute University of Tennessee at Martin associate professor of English Charles Bradshaw over a letter he wrote anonymously that contained threats to students promoting a resolution to allow students to concealed carry on campus.”

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, the UT Martin Student Government Association held a campus wide referendum vote on "Campus Concealed Carry for Students." Conducted almost entirely online, UT Martin students were asked three questions, one of which was the following:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Students with a legal Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus?

Fifty-five percent of the students who participated in the referendum (776 out of 1,413) disagreed with that statement, while 45 percent (637 out of 1,413) agreed with that statement.

You can see the responses to all three questions posed in the referendum here.

Despite the results of the advisory referendum showing a majority of UT Martins oppose the campus constitutional carry proposal, the Student Senate resoundingly passed the resolution two days later.
"I am very proud of the UT Martin Student Government Association for passing S.R. 1708," Alex Joyner, a member of the Student Senate and co-sponsor of the resolution, told The Star.

"Passing this resolution shows that our senators are forward thinking, as this is not a question of if, but when, campus carry is passed in the state legislature, or even at the national level," Joyner continued, adding:

"You may ask, how can you pass legislation that is to the contrary of the opinion of the referendum? The argument of the referendum is simple. If the referendum had been broken down by college, we would have known exactly how to vote. Since this was not the case, we could only go by the opinions of our constituents, via direct interaction. This being said, the senators who voted in favor of this legislation voted based on their constituent requests.

"No matter the outcome of Tuesday's referendum, I still maintain that constitutional rights aren't up for debate," Joyner concluded.

The passage of the campus concealed carry permit resolution by the Student Senate has no effect of law, since Tennessee law currently does not allow campus concealed carry for student permit holders, and the UT Martin State Senate has no impact on Tennessee law.

The resolution's passage may not be merely symbolic, however.

Members of the Tennessee General Assembly may take up a similar legislative proposal in the session that begins in January, and the desires of the UT Martin State Senate, as expressed in Thursday's resolution could influence whether or not the state legislature decides to consider the proposal.

UT Martin students to stage another sit-in after controversial concealed-carry vote

December 10, 2017 by WBBJ 7 Eyewitness News Staff
(http://www.wbbjtv.com/

MARTIN, Tenn. — University of Tennessee at Martin students and Student Government Association members will hold another sit-in at the SGA office Tuesday regarding a controversial resolution.

The students are protesting a vote made this past Thursday. SGA passed a concealed carry resolution that would allow students to lawfully carry concealed weapons on campus.

Although it received a majority of "yes" votes from SGA Senators, 250 students who voted in the referendum Dec. 5 did not show the same support.
In the referendum vote, 89 percent agreed that students feel safe on campus, 54 percent disagreed students with a Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus and 58 percent disagreed they would feel safer if students were allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus.

One student gave us video Friday of someone erasing what people who opposed the vote wrote on a board.

SGA President Jordan Long said the vote on the resolution is not set in stone. To take effect it would have to be approved by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam.

UT Martin Student Government Sit-In

Posted on December 12, 2017 by Joseph Anderson in Local News

Demonstrators are upset at UTM after Student Government Association President Jordan Long signed a bill that could allow legally licensed gun permit holders to carry guns on campus.

Political Science Major Hunter Johnston says he showed up to voice his opinion against the bill.

Demonstrators at the SGA office voiced outrage when the bill was signed.

Senator Alex Joyner was met with opposition while saying he and the other senators in support of the bill listened to the voices of their constituents.

SGA President Jordan Long was handling questions from demonstrators and couldn’t be reached for comments.

The Bill will now be sent to Chancellor Keith Carver for approval or denial.

University Relations Director Bud Grimes says Chancellor Carver has an obligation to decline the bill and must follow state law.
An Associated Press political and legal affairs reporter will deliver the Fall commencement address at UT-Martin on Saturday.

Meg Kinnard Hardee, who is also the only grandchild of the late 8th District Congressman Ed Jones, will speak to graduates at the 11:00 services at the Elam Center.

Ms. Hardee grew up in Memphis, but spent much of her childhood at her grandparents farm in Yorkville.

She is now in her 12th year with the Associated Press and was named the “AP Staffer of the Year” in 2008.

Ms. Hardee and her husband Geoffrey, are co-authors of an upcoming biography called “Grassroots Politickin: The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones”.

They also recently established an endowment scholarship for UT-Martin students seeking to become journalists, and joined with former Congressman John Tanner and his wife Betty Ann, to preserve the legacy of the 8th Congressional District with a gift to the Paul Meek Library.

Meg Kinnard Hardee

Henderson selected as equity and diversity officer at UTM

Joe Henderson, of Martin, has been named the University of Tennessee at Martin’s equity and diversity officer/Title IX coordinator, effective Jan. 2, 2018.

Henderson came to UT Martin in 2009 as the student conduct coordinator. He previously served as the public safety officer and accreditation manager for East Tennessee State University, support services manager for the City of Greenville Police Department, and as a sergeant with the Dallas Police Department. Henderson holds a bachelor’s degree from East Texas State University and has served as the interim equity and diversity officer at UT Martin since August 2015.

For information on the UT Martin Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX, contact Henderson at 731-881-3505.
UTM students protest student senate decision on concealed carry

By JENSON GREENBURG
Press Reporter

S.R. 1708, a concealed carry resolution at the University of Tennessee at Martin, passed the student senate 17-10 last week, causing an outcry from several students after the student referendum showed a majority of voters were against it.

S.R. 1708 is a UTM Student Government Association resolution that would allow students to have constitutional concealed carry privileges on campus with the passage of enabling state legislation.

The resolution was originally proposed as S.R. 1704 in November before being revamped to S.R. 1708. Both versions can be accessed at https://orgsync.com/871/files/1291613.

A student-wide referendum was held on Dec. 5 to gauge student opinion on the matter. Two UTM students, Devin Majors and Doug Marshall, gathered signatures in the school’s university center to support the referendum. They gathered over 300 signatures, well over the 250 needed to hold a referendum.

“I just want students to be able to decide instead of senators,” Majors said.

A total of 1,413 students, a 20-percent turnout, voted in the referendum. They answered three yes/no questions, including “I feel safe on campus,” “Students with a legal Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus” and “I would feel safer if students were allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus.”

From the tallied votes, 89.53 percent of students said they feel safe on campus. However, 54.92 percent said students should not be allowed to carry on campus and 58.47 percent said they would not feel safer if students carried.

Despite the vote, SGA ultimately voted to pass the resolution during its Thursday meeting.

Many students who participated in the referendum took to social media Friday morning to express their concern.

“The voting student body said they did not agree with this,” wrote UTM student Katlyn Austin. “Yet, you still decided to pass this bill... You said that you ‘stand for the student body’ but tonight you proved the exact opposite.”

The UT Martin Student Government Association Facebook page had dropped to a rating of 1.8 "stars" on Facebook by Friday afternoon.

Some voting members, however, defended their actions, saying that it was in the best interest of their constituents.

“The senators who voted in favor of this legislation voted based on their constituents requests,” wrote SGA senator Alex Joyner. “As a senator I am elected by the students of our college to represent them.”

“The senate believed it was not only best for the university but what their constituents wanted,” SGA President Jordan Long said of the vote.

Long said two students pushed for the referendum, and he felt that the questions were phrased to encourage a “no” vote. He also said the senate operates in the same way most legislative bodies in the United States work: “The best thing is not necessarily what a majority wants.”

If Long decides to sign the resolution, it will be presented to Chancellor Keith Carver simply as an informative document. No one on campus has the authority to approve concealed carry; that is up to state legislators.

Long said he intended to take “some time” to decide whether to sign or veto the resolution, but he expected to make his decision by the end of the week.

Meanwhile a student sit-in was announced for this afternoon.

Students, whether for or against the decision, are welcome to contact SGA President Jordan Long at sgal@utm.edu.
UT Martin SGA president signs controversial concealed carry resolution

December 12, 2017 by Jackson Jones

MARTIN, Tenn. — University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association President Jordan Long has passed a resolution to allow students to carry weapons on campus.

SGA President Jordan Long signs the concealed carry resolution.

Students staged a second sit-in at the SGA office because they feel they didn’t listen to what the student body wanted.

Although it received a majority of “yes” votes from SGA senators, students who voted in the referendum on Tuesday did not show the same support. More than 1,400 students voiced their opinion in the referendum.

In the referendum vote, 89 percent agreed that students feel safe on campus, 54 percent disagreed students with a Tennessee concealed carry permit should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus, and 58 percent disagreed they would feel safer if students were allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus.

On Dec. 7, the resolution was passed 17-10. Now, the resolution will go to UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver for approval.

"The hundreds of emails that I have gotten, I’ve almost responded to all of them — some for, some against — in a respectful manner, even when the ones that I’ve gotten aren’t at all," said SGA President Long describing the process of making his decision.

"It is a constitutional right of people to be able to exercise that right if they so choose," Long said.
Henderson named Title IX officer

Joe Henderson of Martin has been named the University of Tennessee at Martin's equity and diversity officer/Title IX coordinator, effective Jan. 2.

"Joe brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the office and the UT Martin campus, and I look forward to working with him in the future," said Dr. Keith Carver, university chancellor.

Henderson came to UT Martin in 2009 as the student conduct coordinator. He previously served as the public safety officer and accreditation manager for East Tennessee State University, support services manager for the City of Greenville Police Department, and as a sergeant with the Dallas Police Department.

Henderson holds a bachelor's degree from East Texas State University and has served as the interim equity and diversity officer at UT Martin since August 2015.

"I hope to provide the university community, especially the students, with more programming and a better understanding of Title IX and what they can expect from the university if they are ever involved in a Title IX investigation. I also want to work to increase the number of diverse faculty members on our campus," said Henderson.

For information on the UT Martin Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX, contact Henderson at 731-881-3505.

WINTER WONDERLAND — Santa's Village, a Christmas event co-sponsored by the University of Tennessee at Martin and the City of Martin, is a dazzling display of lights and toys and music that delights visitors young and older. The event, which provides food and toys for the needy, was held last weekend.

Photo by Randy Cavin
Students voiced displeasure with Long's decision to pass the resolution.

Many students who attended Long's announcement were hoping he would veto the resolution while those who supported and put it together are happy to see their hard work pay off.

"The vote was really something each senator I think has their own justification for, and mine was that I really was really able to contact people within my college and yield their support," said SGA Senator Jade Bleskei who supported the resolution.

Those who opposed the resolution are now wanting the administration to reform the SGA.

"The actual resolution itself that passed is absolutely OK and OK for the senators to have done," said Bud Grimes with Office of University Relations. "It's also OK for those who have come out as a result of what happened with the vote and voiced their opinions."

To take effect, it would have to be approved by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam.
MARTIN, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association has debated the issue of concealed carry of firearms on campus. A group of SGA senators introduced a resolution supporting this issue, which moved through the proper channels of being reviewed by the student senate.

Another group of students filed a petition calling for a student referendum vote on the issue. That vote was held Dec. 5, and more than 1,400 students voiced their opinion. Nearly 55 percent of the students disagreed with concealed carry for students on campus, and nearly 90 percent of the students indicated that they feel safe on the UT Martin campus.

The resolution on campus carry was brought to a vote at the Dec. 7 senate meeting and passed by a measure of 17-10. The referendum vote and the legislation are independent actions.

On Dec. 12, the SGA president signed the legislation, which now goes to UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver for consideration.

The following is a response from Dr. Carver related to these events:

"I will not sign the non-binding UT Martin Student Government Association resolution supporting students on our campus to carry concealed weapons."
"My response is not to challenge the actions of the SGA. Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on any public college campus. We, as a university, will abide by the law. In addition, I personally do not believe that having more guns on our campus is in line with our focus on safety and student success.

"In the recent referendum, during which more than 20 percent of our students voted, the majority felt that our campus today is safe and is opposed to having concealed guns being carried on campus. A majority of our SGA decided to move ahead with a resolution in support of concealed carry.

"Through recent events, I am hopeful that our students and campus community have a better understanding of the democratic process that is the foundation of our nation. We have seen it in practice: the right to express an opinion in a referendum, the right of those in elected office to choose a different course of action, and the right for those in opposition to speak out. I encourage all members of the university community to respect the rights and opinions of others in regard to this conversation. This is democracy in action and on display."

The Messenger, Union City, Tennessee, Wednesday, December 13, 2017

**UT Martin continues to rank high**

The University of Tennessee at Martin recently received three new rankings for affordability and course selection. BestValueSchools.com ranks UT Martin 28th in the nation on its list of "the 100 most affordable universities in America for 2018"; OnlineColleges.com ranks the university fifth among Tennessee schools; and AffordableColleges.com ranks UT Martin's online business program 22nd nationally.

BestValueSchools.com considered traditional academic institutions with more than 4,000 students enrolled and created its ranking based on the net price of a degree. Nearly 600 schools were included in the original list, and the top 100 most affordable universities were determined based on expense information from the National Center for Education Statistics.

UT Martin is the top-ranked Tennessee institution on this list, making it the most affordable Tennessee school in the nation, according to this particular website.

OnlineColleges.com ranked 54 higher-education institutions in Tennessee based on a variety of factors, including affordability, student services and the availability of online programs. UT Martin was ranked fifth in this list, just behind East Tennessee State University in fourth place and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in third.

AffordableColleges.com evaluated 50 universities in the nation based on the affordability of online bachelor's degree programs in business management. At No. 22, UT Martin is one of the top-two Tennessee institutions included, trailing behind the University of Memphis at No. 9.

UT Martin is a four-year university offering 17 undergraduate and five graduate degree programs with more than 100 academic areas of study.
AP journalist to speak at UTM commencement

Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard, will address graduates Saturday during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s fall commencement ceremony.

Commencement will begin at 11 a.m. in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

Mrs. Hardee lives in South Carolina, but grew up in Memphis, and spent much of her childhood at her grandparents’ Yorkville farm. She is a dedicated UT Martin supporter and the only grandchild of the late 8th District Congressman Ed Jones.

She holds a bachelor of science degree in foreign service in international politics/international security studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and has completed internships with The Washington Post and the United States House of Representatives Committee for Government Reform.

She is now in her 12th year with AP and was named AP Staffer of the Year in 2008. She covered every major candidate during the 2016 presidential race and traveled with the Bernie Sanders and Marco Rubio campaigns.

She and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography “Grassroots Politickin’: The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones” and recently established an endowed scholarship for UT Martin students seeking to become journalists. The Hardees have also supported UT Martin’s Ed and Llew Jones Legacy Fund and joined with former Congressman John Tanner and his wife, Betty Ann, to preserve the legacy of the 8th Congressional District with a gift to the Paul Meek Library Special Collections.

UT Martin’s fall commencement ceremony includes students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall semesters. It is not a ticketed event.

A live webcast will be made available for the convenience of those unable to attend in person.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at (731) 881-7615.

Equity and diversity officer selected for local university

Joe Henderson of Martin has been named the University of Tennessee at Martin’s equity and diversity officer/Title IX coordinator, effective Jan. 2, 2018.

“Joe brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the office and the UT Martin campus, and I look forward to working with him in the future,” said Dr. Keith Carver, university chancellor.

Henderson came to UT Martin in 2009 as the student conduct coordinator.

He previously served as the public safety officer and accreditation manager for East Tennessee State University, support services manager for the City of Greenville Police Department and as a sergeant with the Dallas Police Department.

Henderson holds a bachelor’s degree from East Texas State University and has served as the interim equity and diversity officer at UT Martin since August 2015.

“I hope to provide the university community, especially the students, with more programming and a better understanding of Title IX and what they can expect from the university if they are ever involved in a Title IX investigation. I also want to work to increase the number of diverse faculty members on our campus,” Henderson said.

For information on the UT Martin Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX, contact Henderson at (731) 881-3505.
Martin, Tenn. - The University of Tennessee at Martin will celebrate fall commencement beginning at 11 a.m., Dec. 16, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press who bylines as Meg Kinnard, will address the graduating class.

UT Martin’s fall commencement ceremony includes students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall semesters. It is not a ticketed event. A live webcast will be made available at ovcdigitalnetwork.com/watch/?Live=5966&type=Live for the convenience of those unable to attend in person.
Scores of youngsters waited in long lines at this year's Santa's Village, so they could tell Old Saint Nick what they want for Christmas. Santa was assisted by his elves (left to right): Mary Anna Chester, Maddie Morrison and Jullian Brigance.

The 33rd annual Santa's Village, held December 7-10 at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex on the University of Tennessee at Martin campus. The Christmas and nativity scenes were enjoyed by all.
Santa's Village Enjoys Record-Breaking Turnout

DAVID FISHER
News Writer

The 33rd annual Santa’s Village, held December 7-10 at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex on the University of Tennessee at Martin campus, attracted a record-breaking number of visitors from across the region, including those from neighboring Tennessee counties and even other states.

According to Kim Kirby with the Martin Parks & Recreation Department, there were 19,098 visitors to Santa’s Village this year, topping the previous record of 18,106 set in 2015. The largest single day attendance was on Saturday, which recorded 9,983 visitors.

The sights and sounds of Christmas filled the air during this year’s Santa’s Village. It featured: an impressive line-up of live entertainment, amusement rides, enchanted forest filled with sparkling lights and animated holiday displays, a petting zoo containing both exotic and barnyard-type animals, MTD’s model train display with realistic town and country scenery, concessions offering assorted holiday treats, arts & craft booths, and a visit with Old Saint Nick himself. Although admission to the winter wonderland is free, donations of $5 worth of non-perishable food and/or toys were accepted on behalf of those less fortunate this holiday season. Kirby states a total of 19,000 cans of food were collected and 23 bags (55-gallon-size) of toys, valued at approximately $7,000, were donated. All of the food and toys go to We Care Ministries to be distributed to the needy.

Associated Press Journalist To Speak At UTM Commencement

MARTIN, Tenn. – Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard, will address graduates Dec. 16 during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s fall commencement ceremony. Commencement will begin at 11 a.m. in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

Hardee lives in South Carolina, but grew up in Memphis, and spent much of her childhood at her grandparents’ Yorkville farm. She is a dedicated UT Martin supporter and the only grandchild of the late 8th-District Congressman Ed Jones. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service in International Politics/International Security Studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and has completed internships with The Washington Post and the United States House of Representatives Committee for Government Reform.

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For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 881-7615.
Tempers flare during sit-in at UTM

Brandon Shields
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MARTIN - What was planned as a peaceful protest turned into a volatile discussion between two groups with different views met in front of the Student Government Association offices on the campus of UT Martin Tuesday afternoon.

"I planned on this being a silent sit-in, but it turned into more," said Devin Majors, a student at UTM who helped organize the protest.

The issue at hand was the decision by the SGA Senate to vote to pass Resolution 1708, which approved of concealed carry for weapons on UTM's campus.

The issue was first brought up in October but tabled for a referendum of the student population a week earlier on Dec. 5. Fifty-five percent of 1,431 students - about 20 percent of the total enrollment at UTM - voted against concealed carry.

Two days later on Dec. 7, the senate voted 17-10 to pass the bill.

"We failed the university on Thursday," said former senate speaker John Hayes, who recused himself from the vote because he's the president of the Democratic student group on campus and was ultimately removed from his position due to a vote of no-confidence by the senate.

Alex Joyner sponsored the original bill for the resolution in October, and Jade Sbelski sponsored last week's bill that was a revised version of the earlier one.

The pair faced a crowd of about 50 people visibly upset with the decision of the senate.

"The bill proposed students who are 21 years old and pass a series of exams be allowed to carry concealed weapons on campus," Joyner said.

Joyner was questioned about alleged social media posts and released texts with racist overtones.

"I'm not a racist. I think every student should be allowed the opportunity to protect themselves if they choose to and pass the requirements," Joyner told people questioning him.

David Barber, a history professor at UTM, was vocal in his disagreement with the vote.

"These people passed a decision they were told not to pass, and it's not right," Barber said.

"The administration needs to step in
UT Martin students demand answers from Student Government Association senate member Alex Joyner on Dec. 1 during a sit-in in front of the Student Government Association offices at UT Martin.

and tell the SGA that this isn't right and they need to make changes to how things are done,” Majors said in an interview prior to the demonstration.

UTM Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver said the school’s administration will let the process play out among the students as long as everyone remains civil.

“Student government offers students opportunities for involvement in the democratic process,” Carver said in a statement. “This is a difficult issue, and strong opinions exist on both sides.

“Our administration supports letting the process work, which provides valuable experience for students to become more engaged citizens.”

Tennessee state law prohibits concealed carry on every college campus in the state.

SGA president Jordan Long said he’s confident that law will change at some point in the future as he signed the document to pass the bill in front of the protesters.

“It’s against the law, so any decision we make as students won’t change it,” Hayes said about the situation. “But the way this was done – the way this senate went against its constituents – it’s not right.”

Reach Brandon Shields at bjshields@jacksonsun.com or at 731-425-9751.

UTM ranked nationally among top 30 schools

UT Martin recently received three new rankings for affordability and course selection. BestValueSchools.com ranks UT Martin 28 in the nation on its list of “the 100 most affordable universities in America for 2018,” OnlineColleges.com ranks the university fifth among Tennessee schools, and AffordableColleges.com ranks UT Martin's online business program 22 in nationally.

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Brandon Shields  
Jackson Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MARTIN – A group of students at UT Martin had a loud confrontation Tuesday with members of the Student Government Association Senate, including president Jordan Long, over the issue of concealed carry.

The confrontation was the culmination of months of debate among senators and students that escalated in recent days with a student referendum on Dec. 5 and a Senate vote on Dec. 7.

The referendum had participation of about 20 percent of the student population – 1,431 votes – with 55 percent against conceal and carry for students. Two days later, the Senate voted 17-10 to approve the resolution to allow concealed carry.

That’s where a lot of the angst among the students began to materialize.

Here are eight things to know about the dispute.

According to John Hayes, a former Senate speaker who recused himself from the original vote and was removed from his position as speaker, Rep. Andy Holt (R-District 76) helped begin this movement for concealed carry. Holt has been an outspoken opponent of gun control, and his presence at SGA Senate meetings has been confirmed by multiple people.

The original resolution, 1704, was discussed in October but tabled for a referendum to get opinion from the student population before anything was officially voted on. That referendum occurred Dec. 5.

Just like in federal, state and local governments, the SGA Senate at UT Martin is under no obligation to vote according to the desires of its constituents. Just as it is with higher-profile government organizations, officials who go against their constituents’ desires but not against policy are not actually breaking any rules.

The argument of the senators in voting for concealed carry is even, though 55 percent of the referendum was against the resolution, it still wasn’t a majority of the student population. “Yes, it was 55 percent, but only 20 percent voted, so it wasn’t the majority of the student population,” Alex Joyner told students Tuesday.

The sit-in transformed to a loud confrontation after SGA President Jordan Long officially signed the resolution to be approved by UT Martin Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver.

The conflict between the groups escalated to other arguments, including accusations and questions of racism after the photo of the alleged text conversation between Holt and Joyner had references to Confederate flags and a "Klan hat." Holt hasn’t responded to requests to confirm or deny being a part of that conversation. Joyner didn’t confirm it either when pressed on Tuesday.

The administration is keeping itself out of the actual conflict between the Senate and the opposing students. Carver released a statement Wednesday, saying: “I will not sign the non-binding UT Martin Student Government Association resolution supporting students on our campus to carry concealed weapons. My response is not to challenge the actions of the SGA. Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on any public college campus. We, as a university, will abide by the law. In addition, I personally do not believe that having more guns on our campus is in line with our focus on safety and student success. In the recent referendum, during which more than 20 percent of our students voted, the majority felt that our campus today is safe and is opposed to having concealed guns being carried on campus. A majority of our SGA decided to move ahead with a resolution in support of concealed carry. Through recent events, I am hopeful that our students and campus community have a better understanding of the democratic process that is the foundation of our nation.”

No matter what the SGA Senate voted to do, state law still supersedes anything passed by anyone on campus. While the Tennessee General Assembly voted in 2016 to allow faculty and staff to have concealed firearms on campus, students are not allowed to carry on any public campus in the state. Until that law is changed, any vote by the SGA Senate — even if the administration decided to sign off on it — is nullified. Although Long did say he hopes that law changes in the near future in the General Assembly.
The president of the University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association said their resolution to support conceal carry on campus is a message to state officials to take up the issue.

Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on public college campuses. The SGA signed the resolution despite the majority of the student body not supporting it according to a referendum. SGA president Jordan Long said the referendum does not bind their vote.

“It [the resolution] is a recommendation to the state legislature that this is something students feel strongly about,” Long said. “And so they’re using this to say that there are hundreds of students on at least one campus in the state that feels as if they have a right to this.”

Long said there have been protests over the issue, including a sit-in last week and a protest Tuesday that he said was hostile and had “yelling, screaming and cursing.” He said though there have been calls to reform the SGA, they will continue to function as normal.

UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver said he will not sign the resolution but supports the right to express opinion. Carver said having more guns on UT Martin’s campus would not be in line with the university’s focus on safety and student success. He called discourse and dissent over the measure “democracy on display.” The chancellor encourages all members of the university community to respect the rights and opinions of others.

A professor was reprimanded for a letter he wrote satirizing the resolution.
AP journalist to speak at UTM commencement

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Meg Kinnard Hardee

UTM scores high in nat’l rankings

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AffordableColleges.com evaluated 50 universities in the nation based on the affordability of online bachelor’s degree programs in business management. At number 22, UT Martin is one of the top-two Tennessee institutions included, trailing behind the University of Memphis at number nine.
Keith Carver responds to concealed-carry controversy

The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association has debated the issue of concealed carry of firearms on campus. A group of SGA senators introduced a resolution supporting this issue, which moved through the proper channels of being reviewed by the student senate.

Another group of students filed a petition calling for a student referendum vote on the issue. That vote was held Dec. 5, and more than 1,400 students voiced their opinion.

Nearly 55 percent of the students disagreed with concealed carry for students on campus, and nearly 90 percent of the students indicated that they feel safe on the UT Martin campus.

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On Dec. 12, the SGA president signed the legislation, which then went to UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver for consideration.

Dr. Carver released a statement on these events on Wednesday:

"I will not sign the non-binding UT Martin Student Government Association resolution supporting students on our campus to carry concealed weapons.

"My response is not to challenge the actions of the SGA. Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on any public college campus. We, as a university, will abide by the law. In addition, I personally do not believe that having more guns on our campus is in line with our focus on safety and student success.

"In the recent referendum, during which more than 20 percent of our students voted, the majority felt that our campus today is safe and is opposed to having concealed guns being carried on campus. A majority of our SGA decided to move ahead with a resolution in support of concealed carry.

"Through recent events, I am hopeful that our students and campus community have a better understanding of the democratic process that is the foundation of our nation. We have seen it in practice: the right to express an opinion in a referendum, the right of those in elected office to choose a different course of action, and the right for those in opposition to speak out.

"I encourage all members of the university community to respect the rights and opinions of others in regard to this conversation. This is democracy in action and on display."

COMPLETE INSTITUTE — Dr. Keith Carver, University of Tennessee at Martin chancellor, recognized students who have successfully completed the university's Ned Ray McWherter Institute program. The students were honored Nov. 30 during the NRMI's closing reception at Cary Lawn in Dresden, the home of the late Tennessee Governor Ned Ray McWherter now owned by Bobby and Melinda Goode. Each will graduate Dec. 16 during the university's fall commencement exercises. Standing next to Carver is Kaylee Schmittou, a health and human performance major from Hohenwald; seated are Savannah Ducker (left) an engineering major from Memphis, and Cassie Cain, an agriculture major and pre-med student from Dowelltown. The three-year NRMI program selects second-year students from different disciplines and helps them connect with mentors both within and outside of the university; increase their awareness of domestic and international culture, and engage in business and public-service activities.
AP reporter Meg Hardee to be commencement speaker Saturday

Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard, will address graduates Saturday during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s fall commencement ceremony. Commencement will begin at 11 a.m. in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

Hardee lives in South Carolina, but grew up in Memphis, and spent much of her childhood at her grandparents’ Yorkville farm. She is a dedicated UT Martin supporter and the only grandchild of the late Eighth-District Congressman Ed Jones. She holds a bachelor of science in foreign service in International Politics/International Security Studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and has completed internships with The Washington Post and the United States House of Representatives Committee for Government Reform.

She is now in her 12th year with AP and was named AP Staffer of the Year in 2008. Hardee covered every major candidate during the 2016 presidential race and traveled with the Bernie Sanders and Marco Rubio campaigns.

She and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography “Grassroots Politickin’: The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones” and recently established an endowed scholarship for UT Martin students seeking to become journalists. The Hardees have also supported UT Martin’s Ed and Llew Jones Legacy Fund and joined with former Congressman John Tanner and his wife, Betty Ann, to preserve the legacy of the Eighth Congressional District with a gift to the Paul Meek Library Special Collections.

The University of Tennessee at Martin will celebrate fall commencement beginning at 11 a.m., Dec. 16, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press who bylines as Meg Kinnard, will address the graduating class.

UT Martin’s fall commencement ceremony includes students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall semesters. It is not a ticketed event. A live webcast will be made available at ovc-digitalnetwork.com/watch/?Live=5966&type=Live for the convenience of those unable to attend in person.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.

A live webcast will be made available at ovc-digitalnetwork.com/watch/?Live=5966&type=Live for the convenience of those unable to attend in person.
Henderson selected as UTM’s new diversity and equity officer

From Staff Reports
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MARTIN — Joe Henderson, of Martin, has been named the University of Tennessee at Martin’s equity and diversity officer/Title IX coordinator, effective Jan. 2, 2018.

“Joe brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the office and the UT Martin campus, and I look forward to working with him in the future,” said Dr. Keith Carver, university chancellor.

Henderson came to UT Martin in 2009 as the student conduct coordinator. He previously served as the public safety officer and accreditation manager for East Tennessee State University, support services manager for the City of Greenville Police Department, and as a sergeant with the Dallas Police Department. Henderson holds a bachelor’s degree from East Texas State University and has served as the interim equity and diversity officer at UT Martin since August 2015.

“I hope to provide the university community, especially the students, with more programming and a better understanding of Title IX and what they can expect from the university if they are ever involved in a Title IX investigation. I also want to work to increase the number of diverse faculty members on our campus,” said Henderson.

For information on the UT Martin Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX, contact Henderson at 731-881-3505.

WestStar program opens 2018 session with retreat

MARTIN — The University of Tennessee at Martin’s WestStar Leadership Program welcomed its 2018 class with an opening retreat.

Class participants will join about 800 program alumni as members of the state’s largest and oldest leadership network.

Eight program sessions will take class members across the region to discuss topics of economic importance to the area. Those sessions include:

- Jan. 4-5: “Agriculture and Transportation” in Weakley and Obion counties.
- March 6-7: “Public Policy Issues: What is Happening in Tennessee?” in Davidson County.
- June 7-8: “Taking Your Community Strengths and Making Them an Asset” in McNairy and Hardin counties.

Dr. Keith Carver, UT Martin chancellor and a 2009 WestStar graduate, will welcome the incoming cohort during the first session.

A graduation ceremony will be held June 21 in Jackson to celebrate the accomplishments of the 2018 class.

For more information on the WestStar Leadership Program, contact coordinator Virginia Grimes at (731) 881-7298.
Martin, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee at Martin's Jackson Center is relocating to the Jackson State Community College main campus following almost a year of negotiations. The move to Jackson State's Ned R. McWherter Center will begin today, Dec. 18, and will be completed in time for the start of spring semester classes Jan. 11.
The UT Martin Jackson Center is currently located at 3031 Highway 45 Bypass, its home since October 2011. The university has offered classes in Jackson since 1992, and the upcoming move is the center's second relocation to Jackson State. The center first moved to the Jackson State campus in January 2008 before eventually relocating in 2011 to its present site. The current move returns the center to a campus setting and is another step in the growing partnership between the university and the Tennessee Board of Regents institution, which is observing its 50th anniversary.

"This partnership is a win-win for both institutions and a win for our students as well," said Dr. Allana Hamilton, Jackson State president. "It provides JSCC graduates the flexibility they need to balance education, employment and family. Through this partnership, it is possible for a student to begin and graduate at Jackson State Community College and then enroll at UT Martin to complete a baccalaureate degree without leaving the Jackson State campus."

The most recent data show that Jackson State transfer students enjoy a high rate of success when they transfer to complete a bachelor's degree at UT Martin. Overall transfer four-year graduation rates are 6.1 percent below UT Martin's institutional average, but Jackson State four-year graduation rates are 10.9 percent above UTM institutional rates. UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver said this speaks to the benefit of a Jackson State associate degree to baccalaureate completion.

The schools joined forces earlier this year to support transfer students financially when UT Martin and Jackson State established a partnership in August as a result of the university's Elam Transfer Promise. Approximately half of Jackson State students plan to transfer to a four-year college or university. Because the UT Martin Jackson Center will offer at its new location only upper-division classes that do not duplicate any Jackson State class offerings, the agreement emphasizes the importance of JSCC students receiving their associate degree before transferring to UT Martin. The institutions will cooperate to provide a variety of non-degree, continuing education, and high school dual enrollment courses and programs.

The UT Martin Jackson Center is managed by the university's Office of Educational Outreach. Dr. Brian Donavant is the educational outreach executive director, and Kayce Beam is the Jackson Center director. More about the new UT Martin Jackson Center location and its academic and non-degree programs is available at utm.edu/departments/Jackson or by calling the center at 731-425-9277. Information about the Elam Transfer Promise scholarships is available at utm.edu or by calling the UT Martin Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships at 731-881-7040.
UTM moving Jackson campus to Jackson State

Brandon Shields
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

Jackson State Community College president, Dr. Allana Hamilton, and UT Martin chancellor, Dr. Keith Carver, began serving in their respective positions about a week apart earlier this year.

They soon began looking at ways their institutions can partner, including developing a partnership within the Tennessee Promise scholarship program to streamline the process for graduates to transfer from JSCC to UTM to continue their education.

That partnership will become even more solidified in 2018 when UTM moves its Jackson campus to Jackson State.

"It makes a lot of sense for us," Carver said about the decision. "Jackson State and Dyersburg State are two schools that we get the most transfers from, so to make it even easier for students already on campus in Jackson to take classes with us is a pretty easy decision for us."

Trevecca Nazarene was the most recent school to house classes and faculty at its campuses present on our campus throughout the years, including UTM at one point, and Memphis," Hamilton said. "So, we're glad to have UTM return and be part of what we're doing here at Jackson State."

UTM's Jackson campus is currently at a stand-alone facility on the U.S. 45 Bypass in North Jackson. Carver said the lease agreement with that building is coming up for renewal, so making this move is a timely decision for the school.

This move means it's possible for students wishing to earn their bachelor's degree in certain majors to get their first two years in at Jackson State, and finish their final two years at UTM - all without leaving the city of Jackson.

"We have a lot of students on our campus that are non-traditional or have family responsibilities of their own, that moving to Martin or elsewhere for a semester or two at a time, or commuting back and forth every day, just isn't practical for them," Hamilton said. "This way, this partnership between us and UTM makes earning their degree that much more feasible for them, and that's what we need to be doing as institutions of higher learning."

"We want to prepare as many of the people in Jackson and surrounding areas of West Tennessee for whatever field they want to go into, and UTM has that same goal. We're working together to make that happen right here in Jackson."

Major programs offered by UTM include: agriculture, business administration, criminal justice, education, social work, interdisciplinary studies, history, political science, psychology and the RN to BSN program in nursing.

"We're really excited about this because of the opportunities that will open up for potential students in Jackson," Carver said. "Hopefully, this will have a big impact on West Tennessee soon because of those opportunities."
The UTM Jackson Center is relocating to Jackson State’s main campus starting today and will be ready for classes by the beginning of the Spring Semester.

UTM Chancellor Keith Carver says the move will make it easier for students to continue their education after earning their Associate Degrees.

Jackson State students enjoy a high rate of success when they transfer to complete a bachelor’s degree at UT Martin.

Chancellor Carver says this partnership will impact the overall educational level of West Tennessee, leading to better employment and economic opportunities.

Martin, Tenn. – Kimmie Larios, currently of Paris, dropped out of high school at the age of 15 and within a few years was raising four children in inner-city Chicago, Illinois. On Dec. 16, she graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin with bachelor’s degrees in both international studies and sociology with a four-week international travel-study under her belt.
“After my divorce in 1999, I realized it was time for a fresh start. I relocated to Tennessee to escape from the increasing crime and gang activity into a more rural environment with the hope that my children would have a better upbringing,” said Larios. “(However,) I was the one who began to cultivate a greater appreciation for life and develop a curiosity about other cultures.”

After a mission trip experience to Mexico, Larios decided to earn her GED and continue her education. She enrolled at UT Martin largely because the university’s location allowed her to attend classes while maintaining two part-time jobs and raising her children. However, she found UT Martin to be the perfect place to find a new path.

“I am so glad I made the decision to attend UT Martin because I feel that I received a high-quality education, and I truly appreciate the opportunity I had to develop working relationships with fellow classmates, professors and faculty,” she said.

In addition to her dual degrees, Larios also completed a four-week language immersion experience to study Spanish in Toledo, Spain, this past summer. She was one of approximately 1,200 American undergraduate students to receive a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs this year. She is also the first UT Martin student to receive this award to study Spanish, specifically.

She spent her time enrolled in courses at La Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha and returned to UT Martin with six travel-study credit hours and six Spanish language credit hours, giving her the academic experience she needed to complete her degree requirements in international studies.

“This experience changed my entire outlook on life and helped (me) see that I had self-imposed limitations in regards to my career. I now realize that I really can go anywhere and do so much more with my degree than I ever thought I could,” she said. “I am currently seeking employment with several non-profit and non-governmental agencies overseas.”
Larios has raised four children as a single mother, with one teenage son still at home, and was her father’s primary caretaker until his death earlier this year. However, she has not let adversity rule her life and is the first member of her family to receive a college degree.

“These obstacles have made my academic journey more challenging at times, but they also inspired me to work harder to reach my goals,” she said. “I consider myself to be an extremely motivated and enthusiastic person, especially when it comes to learning about other societies, religions and cultures around the globe. I am always looking for opportunities where I can get involved in new and exciting experiences, not only to expand my overall knowledge and understanding, but for personal growth as well....

“I would strongly urge my fellow classmates to take advantage of international travel studies, not only for the enriching experience, but also because it could very well lead you on an otherwise unknown path into your future,” she said.

Larios hopes her journey is an example not only to her own children, but to other students who may follow in her footsteps.
Crice named coordinator of Pathways program

Pathways Tennessee, a statewide program intended to help Tennesseans prepare for successful careers, recently established an office on the main campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin and named Justin Crice of Martin regional coordinator. This office, known as Pathways Northwest, is housed under the UT Martin College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences and supervised by Cindy West, college dean.

"We are thrilled to work with Justin because (Pathways Tennessee) has the ability to connect industry and education in our local communities by helping students develop the flexible future skills that are essential in an ever-changing workforce," said West.

The Tennessee Department of Education contacted UT Martin and asked the university to serve as the intermediary organization for the Northwest Tennessee Pathways office. Crice hopes to help strengthen the region through connections with local governments, businesses, industry leaders and school systems.

Crice holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Murray State University and a master’s degree in public administration from Western Kentucky University. In his new role as regional coordinator, he will work as an intermediary between industries and educators to ensure Northwest Tennessee’s students have access to the education and training necessary for a seamless transition into the workforce.

Pathways Northwest will host an initial meeting with regional stakeholders at 8 a.m. on Jan. 12 in Room 206 of UT Martin’s Boling University Center to provide an overview of the initiative.

For more information or if you would like to attend this meeting, contact Crice at 731-881-7220 or email jcrice@utm.edu.
UTM to move Jackson Center to JSGCC campus

The University of Tennessee at Martin's Jackson Center is relocating to the Jackson State Community College main campus following almost a year of negotiations. The move to Jackson State's Ned R. McWherter Center began Monday, and will be completed in time for the start of spring semester classes on Jan. 11.

The UT Martin Jackson Center is currently located at 3031 Highway 45 Bypass, its home since October 2011. The university has offered classes in Jackson since 1992, and the upcoming move is the center's second relocation to Jackson State. The center first moved to the Jackson State campus in January 2008 before eventually relocating in 2011 to its present site. The current move returns the center to a campus setting and is another step in the growing partnership between the university and the Tennessee Board of Regents institution, which is observing its 50th anniversary.

"This partnership is a win-win for both institutions and a win for our students as well," said Dr. Allana Hamilton, Jackson State president. "It provides JSGCC graduates the flexibility they need to balance education, employment and family. Through this partnership it is possible for a student to begin and graduate at Jackson State Community College and then enroll at UT Martin to complete a baccalaureate degree without leaving the Jackson State campus."

The most recent data show that Jackson State transfer students enjoy a high rate of success when they transfer to complete a bachelor's degree at UT Martin. Overall transfer four-year graduation rates are 6.1 percent below UT Martin's institutional average, but Jackson State four-year graduation rates are 10.9 percent above UTM institutional rates. UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver said this speaks to the benefit of a Jackson State associate degree before transferring to UT Martin. The institutions will cooperate to provide a variety of non-degree, continuing education, and high school dual enrollment courses and programs.

For UT Martin, the move will initially prioritize bachelor's degree programs in agriculture, business administration, criminal justice, education, social work, interdisciplinary studies, history, political science, psychology and the RN to BSN in nursing. The university's Military Science and Leadership Program, of which ROTC is a part, already includes Jackson State, as well as Bethel University in McKenzie, Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, and Lane College and Union University in Jackson.

The UT Martin Jackson Center is managed by the university's Office of Educational Outreach. Dr. Brian Donavant is the educational outreach executive director, and Kayce Beam is the Jackson Center director.

More about the new UT Martin Jackson Center location and its academic and non-degree programs is available at utm.edu/departments/Jackson or by calling the center at 731-425-9277. Information about the Elam Transfer Promise scholarships is available at utm.edu or by calling the UT Martin Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships at 731-881-7040.
NEW LOCATION — Jackson State Community College’s Ned R. McWherter Center will be the new home for the UT Martin Jackson Center. (Photo courtesy of Jackson State.)
Crossing a stage is nothing new for Natalie King, who competed for the Miss Tennessee Scholarship Pageant crown in 2016. The former Miss UT Martin and Paducah, Ky., native crossed another important stage Saturday as she received her bachelor’s degree in communications from the University of Tennessee at Martin. King was among 361 graduates who participated in the fall commencement ceremony at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center and listened as Meg Kimnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, bylines as Meg Kimnard, presented the commencement address.

Hardee is a Georgetown University graduate who holds a bachelor of science degree in foreign service in international politics/ international security studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service. She is in her 12th year with The Associated Press. The ceremony included students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall. More than 530 students were eligible to receive degrees.

King, a 23-year-old transfer student, brought three years of college credit in fall 2015 to UT Martin but headed in a new direction as a communications major with a minor in music. Besides her pageant success, she is known as a member of the WUTM 90.3 “The Hawk” sports broadcasting team, a role she has enjoyed with the award-winning college radio station for the past year and a half. Although she has a college degree in hand, her work at WUTM will continue briefly as she remains on the play-by-play team for both UT Martin and Westview High School basketball.

King moves to an even larger stage in mid-January when she works a Skyhawk basketball doubleheader one day and leaves the next for Orlando and a five-month internship at Walt Disney World. She intends to leave her career options open following the internship. “I plan to work in the media in some aspect. I have not decided if I want to do radio or television yet,” she said. “I have a passion for both of those fields, so I’m going to apply for jobs in both areas and we’ll see what opportunities open up.”

University Chancellor Keith Carver welcomed the capacity Elam Center audience that included graduating students from 55 Tennessee counties, 15 states and the countries of China, Kenya and Saudi Arabia. The commencement stage party included University of Tennessee Board of Trustees members Crawford Gallimore of Martin, and Julia Wells of Jackson; UT President Joe DiPietro; and Mitch Pollard, president of the UT Martin Alumni Council.

Following special music presented by UTM Percussion students, Carver introduced Hardee, who grew up in Memphis, now lives in South Carolina and is the only grandchild of the late 8th-District Congressman Ed Jones, who attended UT Junior College, predecessor to UT Martin, and continued his education at UT Knoxville. Among his accomplishments, he was appointed the youngest Tennessee commissioner of agriculture under Gov. Gordon Browning and is probably best known for his service from 1969-89 as a U.S. representative. A replica of the lawmaker’s office is maintained in the university’s Paul Meek Library, which also houses his legislative papers. Hardee and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography “Grassroots Politickin’: The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones.”

Hardee, whose famous grandfather preceded her in 1984 as the university’s commencement speaker, credited a cow for her existence and revealed an early goal to become a spy. She traced her West Tennessee roots back to her great-great grandfather, who brought some of the first Jersey cows to West Tennessee. In later years, showing dairy cows earned her grandfather enough money to attend college - a necessary step in his pursuit of her grandmother, Llew. Hardee also told the audience that she originally intended to become a Central Intelligence Agency operative until a Washington Post internship changed her career path.

“Journalism has taught me so much about people, American politics and our world,” she said. Her advice to any journalism majors present: “Question everything, leave your opinion at home, and always, always be objective.” She offered similar guidance to news consumers, adding: “Don’t just consume news that solidifies what you already believe. Instead, take in all views, be true to yourself, but always keep your mind and your heart open.

“The only thing worse than actually being wrong is not knowing are.”
She closed by telling the graduates something they likely did not expect to hear: "This day really isn't about you," explaining that, the day was instead, about leaving a legacy and making a positive difference on the world. She reminded them that earning a college degree brings with it great responsibility.

"Don't ever think that you don't matter or that your impact is too small," Hardee said, before reminding the audience that her life's accomplishments all started with a simple cow. Among her words of advice, Hardee explained the importance of compromise: "Our republic was founded on compromise. Unless we find that spirit again, it will not survive.

"We've come to a place where the middle ground is beginning to disappear," she said. "Take off your blinders, open your eyes and ears - and listen."

Dr. Joe DiPietro, University of Tennessee president since 2011, congratulated the graduates following Hardee's address, urging graduates to savor the moment. "You may see this occasion as an exciting end to one remarkable chapter in your life," he said. "It's also an open door to your role as a lifelong learner, an advocate of UT and the value of higher education."

DiPietro later conferred the degrees and was followed by Mitch Pollard, who congratulated the new graduates on behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council.

‘The only thing worse than actually being wrong is not knowing when you are.’

Meg Kinnard Hardee

MEG KINNARD HARDEE ADDRESSES UT MARTIN GRADUATES
December 20, 2017

MORRISTOWN – Several Grainger County students were among 336 individuals who graduated Walters State Community College during its 53rd commencement ceremony, held Friday, Dec. 15.

Bean Station graduates include: Chelsea Noelle Harris, associate of applied science, business – culinary arts and technical certificate; Amber Nicole Glover, associate of applied science, business – management; Tyler H. Lynch, laude, associate of applied science, engineering technology – manufacturing and technical certificate, engineering technology – operations management and quality; Rita Kay Rice, cum laude, associate of applied science, nursing; Morgan Willis, laude, associate of applied science, nursing; and Caitlyn Emily Atkins, technical certificate, pharmacy technician.

Blaine graduates include: Mitch Edward Collins, cum laude, associate of applied science, engineering technology – drafting and design; Cameron Dale Williams, associate of arts, history; and Daniel Alexander Blakenship, associate of science, computer science.

Rutledge graduates include: Kara Rachelle Hodge, associate of applied science, nursing; Matthew Joshua Parsons, laude, associate of science, accounting; Spencer Starr, laude, associate of science, general studies; Haven Warren, laude, associate of science, general studies; Adam Scott Davis, cum laude, associate of science, nutrition and food science; and Lelsie Faviola, technical certificate, pharmacy tech.

Washburn graduates include: Rachael Hope Tolliver, associate of applied science, nursing; and Hunter Logan Simmons, laude, associate of science, agriculture.

Two Grainger County students received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during commencement ceremonies held Dec. 16 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Meggan Christian Houser and Timothy Lynn Stalans, both of Rutledge, received undergraduate degrees during the ceremony.
New state program establishes office, names coordinator

Pathways Tennessee — a statewide program intended to help Tennesseans prepare for successful careers — recently established an office on the main campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin and named Justin Crice of Martin as regional coordinator.

This office, known as Pathways Northwest, is housed under the UT Martin College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences and supervised by Cindy West, college dean.

"We are thrilled to work with Justin because (Pathways Tennessee) has the ability to connect industry and education in our local communities by helping students develop the flexible future skills that are essential in an ever-changing workforce," Ms. West said.

The Tennessee Department of Education contacted UT Martin and asked the university to serve as the intermediary organization for the Northwest Tennessee Pathways office. Crice hopes to help strengthen the region through connections with local governments, businesses, industry leaders and school systems.

Crice holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Murray (Ky.) State University and a master’s degree in public administration from Western Kentucky University.

In his new role as regional coordinator, he will work as an intermediary between industries and educators to ensure northwest Tennessee’s students have access to the education and training necessary for a seamless transition into the workforce.

Pathways Northwest will host an initial meeting with regional stakeholders at 8 a.m. Jan. 12, 2018, in room 206 of UT Martin’s Boling University Center to provide an overview of the initiative, discuss regional workforce data and talk about partnership opportunities.

For more information or to make plans to attend the initial meeting, contact Crice at (731) 881-7220 or email him at jcrice@utm.edu.

At the college level

Several Obion County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement Saturday in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center (see related story at left).

Among those receiving undergraduate degrees were:
- Hornbeak — Jessica Danielle LaMastus and Gary Eugene Swingle Jr.
- Obion — Amber Lynn Cunningham and Natalie Taylor McCulloch.
- South Fulton — Ginna E. Bennett, Brie Arliana Cobb, Christina Kay Cook, John Patrick Fowler, Liberty Cheyenne Harris and Zack S. Vaughn.
- Troy — Andrea Danielle Austin, Ricky Clay Dotson, Leah DeeLain Hutchison, Nicholas Keith Wilson and Jackson Bearr Yeager.

Those earning graduate degrees included:
- Union City — Ashley Nicole Marshall.

Mary Emily Entrek in of Troy was named to the fall Dean’s List at Berry College near Rome, Ga.

The college’s Dean’s List honors students who posted an academic average of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale while carrying a class load of at least 12 hours during the semester.
Crossing a stage is nothing new for Natalie King, who competed for the Miss Tennessee Scholarship Pageant crown in 2016.

The former Miss UT Martin and Paducah, Ky., native crossed another important stage Saturday as she received her bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Tennessee at Martin.

She was among 361 graduates who participated in the fall commencement ceremony at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center and listened to Meg Kinnard Hardee — a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard — presented the commencement address.

Mrs. Hardee is a Georgetown University graduate who holds a bachelor of science degree in foreign service in international politics/international security studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service.

She is in her 12th year with The Associated Press.

University Chancellor Keith Carver welcomed the capacity Elam Center audience that included graduating students from 55 Tennessee counties, 15 states and the countries of China, Kenya and Saudi Arabia. The commencement stage party included University of Tennessee Board of Trustees members Crawford Gallimore of Martin and Julia Wells of Jackson; UT President Joe DiPietro; and Mitch Pollard, president of the UT Martin Alumni Council.

Following special music presented by UTM Percussion students, Carver introduced Mrs. Hardee, who grew up in Memphis, now lives in South Carolina and is the only grandchild of the late 8th District Congressman Ed Jones, who attended UT Junior College, predecessor to UT Martin, and continued his education at UT Knoxville.

Among his accomplishments, he was appointed the youngest Tennessee commissioner of agriculture under Gov. Gordon Browning and is probably best known for his service from 1969-89 as a U.S. representative. A replica of the lawmaker's office is maintained in the university's Paul Meek Library, which also houses his legislative papers.

Mrs. Hardee and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography “Grassroots Politician: The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones.”

Mrs. Hardee, whose famous grandfather preceded her in 1984 as the university's commencement speaker, credited a cow for her existence and revealed an early goal to become a spy. She traced her West Tennessee roots back to her great-grandfather, who brought some of the first Jersey cows to West Tennessee. In later years, showing dairy cows earned her grandfather enough money to attend college — a necessary step in his pursuit of her grandmother, Llew.

Mrs. Hardee also told the audience that she originally intended to become a CIA agent until a Washington Post internship changed her career path.

“Journalism has taught me so much about people, American politics and our world,” she said.

Her advice to any journalism majors present: “Question everything, leave your opinion at home and always, always be objective.” She offered similar guidance to news consumers, adding: “Don’t just consume news that solidifies what you already believe. Instead, take in all views, be true to yourself, but always keep your mind and your heart open.”

“The only thing worse than actually being wrong is not knowing when you are,” she said.

She closed by telling the graduates something they likely did not expect to hear: “This day really isn’t about you,” explaining that the day was, instead, about leaving a legacy and making a positive difference on the world.

She reminded them that earning a college degree brings with it great responsibility.

“Don’t ever think that you don’t matter or that your impact is too small,” Mrs. Hardee said, before reminding the audience that her life’s accomplishments all started with a simple cow.

Among her words of advice, Mrs. Hardee explained the importance of compromise: “Our republic was founded on compromise. Unless we find that spirit again, it will not survive.”

“We’ve come to a place where the middle ground is beginning to disappear,” she said. “Take off your blinkers, open your eyes and ears — and listen.”

DiPietro, University of Tennessee president since 2011, congratulated the graduates following her address, urging graduates to savor the moment.

“You may see this occasion as an exciting end to one remarkable chapter in your life,” he said. “It’s also an open door to your role as a lifelong learner, an advocate of UT and the value of higher education."

DiPietro later conferred the degrees and was followed by Mitch Pollard, who congratulated the graduates on behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council.
Degrees earned by SF students

Several Obion County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Dec. 16 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Ginna E. Bennett, Brie Arliana Cobb, Christina Kay Cook, John Patrick Fowler, Liberty Cheyenne Harris, and Zack S. Vaughn, all of South Fulton, received undergraduate degrees.

Several from county among graduates at UT-Martin

Several Lauderdale County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Dec. 16 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.


Erica S. Snipes of Ripley also received a graduate degree from UT-Martin.
The sights and sounds of Christmas filled the air during this year's Santa's Village. There were 19,098 visitors to Santa's Village this year topping the previous record of 18,106 set in 2015, according to Kim Kirby with the Martin Parks & Recreation Dept.

A little girl is captivated by the brightly lit Christmas displays at this year's Santa's Village.
The village featured an impressive line-up of live entertainment, amusement rides, enchanted forest, a petting zoo, and pictured above a nativity scene.
Scores of youngsters waited in long lines to visit with Santa at this year's Santa's Village, so they could tell him what they want for Christmas. A couple of children, Ethan Toon (left) and Vincent Webber (right), visit with Santa and his elves (left to right): Mary Anna Chester, Jullian Brigance and Maddie Morrison.
Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard, presented the commencement address at the University of Tennessee Fall Commencement held Saturday at the who participated in the fall commencement ceremony at the Kathleem and Tom Elam Center on the campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Hardee is a Georgetown University graduate who holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Foreign Service in International Politics/International Security Studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service.

She is in her 12th year with The Associated Press. The ceremony included students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall. More than 530 students were eligible to receive degrees with 361 participating in the graduation ceremony.

University Chancellor Keith Carver welcomed the capacity Elam Center audience that included graduating students from 55 Tennessee counties, 15 states and the countries of China, Kenya and Saudi Arabia. The commencement stage party included University of Tennessee Board of Trustees members Crawford Gallimore, of Martin, and Julia Wells, of Jackson; UT President Joe DiPietro; and Mitch Pollard, president of the UT Martin Alumni Council.

Following special music presented by UTM Percussion students, Carver introduced Hardee, who grew up in Memphis, now lives in South Carolina and is the only grandchild of the late 8th-District Congressman Ed Jones, who attended UT Junior College, predecessor to UT Martin, and continued his education at UT Knoxville. Among his accomplishments, he was appointed the youngest Tennessee commissioner of agriculture under Gov. Gordon Browning and is probably best known for his service from 1969-89 as a U.S. representative. A replica of the lawmaker's office is maintained in the university’s Paul Meek Library, which also houses his legislative papers. Hardee and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography “Grassroots Politickin'; The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones.”

Hardee, whose famous grandfather preceded her in 1984 as the university’s commencement speaker, credited a cow for her existence and revealed an early goal to become a spy. She traced her West Tennessee roots back to her great-great grandfather, who brought some of the first Jersey cows to West Tennessee. In later years, showing dairy cows earned her grandfather enough money to attend college - a necessary step in his pursuit of her grandmother, Llew. Hardee also told the audience that she originally intended to become a CIA agent until a Washington Post internship changed her career path.

“Journalism has taught me so much about people, American politics and our world,” she said. Her advice to any journalism majors present: “Question everything, leave your opinion at home, and always, always be objective.” She offered similar guidance to news consumers, adding: “Don’t just consume news that solidifies what you already believe. Instead, take in all views, be true to yourself, but always keep your mind and your heart open.

“The only thing worse than actually being wrong is not knowing when you are.”

She closed by telling the graduates something they likely did not expect to hear: “This day really isn’t about you,” explaining that, the day was instead, about leaving a legacy and making a positive difference on the world. She reminded them that earning a college degree brings with it great responsibility. “Don’t ever think that you don’t matter or that your impact is too small,” Hardee said, before reminding the audience that her life’s accomplishments all started with a simple cow. Among her words of advice, Hardee explained the importance of compromise: “Our republic was founded on compromise. Unless we find that spirit again, it will not survive.”

“We’ve come to a place where the middle ground is beginning to disappear,” she said. “Take off your blinders, open your eyes and ears - and listen.”

Dr. Joe DiPietro, University of Tennessee president since 2011, congratulated the graduates following Hardee’s address, urging graduates to savor the moment. “You may see this occasion as an exciting end to one remarkable chapter in your life,” he said. “It’s also an open door to your role as a lifelong learner, an advocate of UT and the value of higher education.”

DiPietro later conferred the degrees and was followed by Mitch Pollard, who congratulated the new graduates on behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council.
Meg Kinnard Hardee, presented the commencement address at the University of Tennessee Fall Commencement ceremony at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Several Benton County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Saturday, Dec. 16, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UTM campus.

Students from Camden who completed their undergraduate degrees this fall at UTM include: Tiffani Bell, Joshua W.R. Coleman, Desiree' L. Douglas, Lisa-Marie T. Harris, Brittany M. Hassell, Stephen R. White III, Anna L. Tramel, Shane A. Webb, and Janathan R. Williams. Congratulations to these graduates on their accomplishments!
Locals have their own grown-up Christmas lists

By LINDA THURSTON
Press Editor

Today the Press publishes letters to Santa, gathered from children throughout the county.

Children’s wishes are usually simple. They wish for toys, or pets, or special clothes like football jerseys of famous athletes.

Adult wishes at Christmas time are often deeper, or at least more expensive, so the Press decided to interview a few adults, as well.

“I’m not a child but my heart still can dream,” Linda Thompson wrote in a song first popularized by Natalie Cole, “My Grown Up Christmas List.”

“I pray for the rising tide of compassion and mercy and civility,” said George Pasley, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church. He said he is getting married Dec. 31, which is his personal Christmas wish come true.

“Health for my family, peace for the country,” was School Director Randy Frazier’s wish.

Keith Carver, chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Martin, is hoping for “a campus full of happy and educated students.”

Cindy McAdams, mayor of Greenfield, said she wanted to “make sure the less fortunate have a merry Christmas. My mother and daddy taught us to help others.”

Dresden Mayor Jeff Washburn says he hopes to secure more employment for the citizens of his town and increase business and industry activities.

General Sessions Judge Tommy Moore wished “for his family, health and happiness, and for my wife, peace beyond the bustle of Christmas.

“I hope for health, peace and happiness for everyone in the county.”

Monroe Ary, mayor of Sharon, said he wanted “world peace and joy.”

Roberta Peacock, director of C.E. Weldon Public Library, had only one wish: A new library. Tomorrow.

County Mayor Jake Byun num said he hoped for “continued peace and prosperity for all of Weakley County.”

Santa Claus wished for Christmas mints.

“May you find peace from the Prince of Peace and the eternal hope offered to us from the Heavenly Father, the God who reigns,” said Dr. Don McCulley, pastor of Dresden First Baptist Church.
Martin resident to compete for National Rodeo title

Summer Weldon, 19-year-old daughter of Cameron and Beth Weldon of Martin, will be competing for the prestigious title of Miss Rodeo USA January 16-21 in Oklahoma City, Ok. The pageant is held in conjunction with the International Finals Rodeo.

Weldon, along with other young ladies from across the United States, will compete in the week-long competition to earn the honor of representing the International Professional Rodeo Association as their official spokesperson across the United States and Canada in 2018.

She is a sophomore at the University of Tennessee at Martin, majoring in cell and molecular biology and competed on the UTM Rodeo Team. She is currently Miss Morgan County Sheriff's Rodeo and travels to and from Morgan County, Alabama on most weekends to represent the Morgan County Sheriff's Department at various rodeos, benefits, and functions.

“I am a little nervous about being one of the younger competitors at the pageant, as the age limit is twenty-six, but I will turn twenty during the pageant and hope that my experience in the rodeo queen industry will help me,” Weldon states.

Weldon’s family will be hosting a send-off party at their residence in Martin on Dec. 30 at 2 p.m. All friends, family, and supporters are encouraged to attend.

To follow Weldon’s journey to the Miss Rodeo USA competition, follow her on Facebook by liking the Morgan County Sheriff’s Rodeo Queen page.

She is the granddaughter of Raymond and Juanita Easterwood of Troy and Janie and the late Cary Weldon of Martin.

WestStar Class To Visit County

The 2018 class of the University of Tennessee at Martin’s WestStar Leadership program will meet March 22nd and 23rd in Lauderdale County to discuss “Education: Creating Partnerships for Economic Development”. The program welcomed the class with an opening retreat December 12th.

Sessions will allow participants to discuss topics of economic importance.

UTM GRADS

Lauderdale County residents, who received undergraduate degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement, held December 16th, included James Larry Crews, Hayley Lauren Gillion, Cameron Christian Moore, Geoffrey Dylan Pahl, and Katelyn Michelle Sego, of Halls; Robert Cornelius Lacy and Anduestra Geormea Williams, of Hennings; and LaKeisha N. Barbee, Antissia Kiara Harris, Brian Garrett Kelley, Samantha D. Lackey, Rachel Elizabeth-Jeanne Medford, Sonam S. Patel, Diane Simmons, Forrest Anthony Smith, Caitlin Sprayberry, Ashton Marie Tatum, and Jocelyn Kaneshia Thompson.

Erica S. Snipes, of Ripley, received a graduate degree.
Gov. Bill Haslam is considering reducing the number University of Tennessee Board of Trustees members and trimming the number of finalists presented for top leadership positions in the UT system, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally has confirmed.

Haslam spokeswoman Jennifer Donnals declined to address specifics Friday but said “the governor is having conversations about ways to help the UT Board of Trustees operate more efficiently and effectively.”

McNally said Friday part of the governor’s proposals would involve reducing the size of the UT Board of Trustees and changing the search process for UT chancellors or system presidents.

The governor is set to announce his legislative and policy initiatives in January.

The board has 26 members, including the governor, who serves as chairman and a voting member. Seventeen members selected from Tennessee’s congressional districts serve on the board, as well, along with two student members, two faculty members and three department commissioners who can cast votes.

The governor might believe the board is “a little bit unmanageable at that size, so they’re gonna try to reduce it down,” McNally says. “How they do it, I haven’t heard. But that’s one of his initiatives.”

State Sen. Becky Duncan Massey, a UT-Knoxville graduate, also confirmed the governor is considering proposing changes in the board’s structure, possibly by reducing the number of members or even instituting advisory boards at UT’s five campuses.

Massey, a Knoxville Republican, attended a lunch meeting Friday with the governor and McNally where the matter was discussed. She said the proposal stems, in part, from the FOCUS Act in which boards of trustees were set up this year at Tennessee’s state colleges such as MTSU and TSU.

“Having a small board is more efficient, because there’s been ... a number of times that because that (UT) board’s so big I don’t think they’re really doing as well as some of us would maybe hope they would at times,” Massey says. “You don’t want them to micromanage, but sometimes you’d like them to be a little more active.”

Massey was active in reviving the Lady Vols moniker for women’s sports at UT-Knoxville and says the board wasn’t as responsive enough during that process.

Haslam is doing “due diligence” and talking with board members and staff to put together ideas as well as the process for making changes, Massey said.

But he’ll have to move quickly because the Legislature is set to convene Jan. 9, and he’ll make his State of the State address Jan. 22.
In regard to the search for UT chancellors or presidents, McNally says the governor is considering proposing the board would announce one person for a hearing instead of three candidates for the post.

"I think that's gonna have a very difficult time in the Legislature, particularly in an election year," says the lieutenant governor, who graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy in 1969.

The General Assembly's 99 House members will be up for re-election in 2018, as will a portion of the 33-member Senate.

State Rep. Craig Fitzhugh, a Democratic gubernatorial candidate who earned his bachelor's and law degrees at the University of Tennessee, says both moves would be bad, adding he is "quite surprised" by the potential for reducing the size of the UT Board of Trustees.

"It's a land-grant university," Fitzhugh says. "Right now, we have a situation where the membership is spread out through the congressional districts in the state, ensuring that we have broad representation.

"It's also by political parties, which I think is very important. No matter who's in power, so to speak, it gives a good balance."

Fitzhugh, a banker and attorney from rural Ripley in West Tennessee, was a candidate for the UT presidency when the Board of Trustees selected Joe DiPietro for the leadership post in 2011. DiPietro also serves on the board as an ex-officio, voting member.

"I thought it was an outstanding process to go through to find a president," Fitzhugh says. "I think it is a state university that uses public funds, that uses funds from students and their parents, and I think it's very important that we need to be clear and transparent and as fully open as we can."

The university's reputation is such that candidates ought to take pride in applying for the job, Fitzhugh says, noting he opposed previous legislation making the search more private and limiting the final public nominations to only three people.

"I think it's another good ol' boy-type network that we don't need to bring back," he says.

UT's recent football coaching search, which brought negative national publicity to the school, is the most-recent example of why searches should be as open as possible, Fitzhugh says, adding football coaches' salaries are considerably higher than the university president's pay.

"We had a situation where that was kept secret, and once it got out it just blew up," he says.

Former UT Athletics Director John Currie was prepared to hire Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano for the coaching position when students, fans and legislators took to social media tear to protest the apparent hire, in part because of Schiano's connection to the Penn State program and court testimony allegations that he saw disgraced former coach Jerry Sandusky have inappropriate contact with a boy in the locker room years ago. Schiano has denied the accusations.
Several head coaches with name recognition nationwide rejected UT in the following days before UT Chancellor Beverly Davenport fired Currie and replaced him with former football coach Phil Fulmer. Within days, Fulmer hired Jeremy Pruitt, the defensive coordinator at Alabama.

Gov. Haslam has said several times he didn’t want to get involved in the coaching search but was glad to see the university settle on Pruitt and put the matter behind it.

The governor’s brother, Jimmy Haslam, owner of the Cleveland Browns, said after the search he had nothing to do with the process. The Haslams’ father played football for the Vols in the 1950s, Jimmy Haslam acknowledged being a “huge” supporter of the university, along with his entire family, but had no connection to the search.

Schiano had been a candidate for the Browns coaching job in 2014.

The UT Board of Trustees also includes Mike Krause, ex officio and non-voting member as executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Education Commissioner Candice McQueen and Agriculture Commissioner Jai Templeton.

The UT system has an enrollment of more than 49,000 students at UT-Knoxville, UT-Martin, UT-Chattanooga, the UT Health Science Center in Memphis and the UT Space Institute near Tullahoma.

Sam Stockard is a Nashville-based reporter covering the Legislature for the Nashville Ledger, Memphis Daily News, Knoxville Ledger and Hamilton County can be reached at sstockard44@gmail.com.
AP reporter urges UTM grads to question, listen, find common ground

From Staff Reports
Jackson Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

MARTIN - Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press, who bylines as Meg Kinnard, presented the commencement address at UT Martin's fall graduation ceremony last week.

Hardee is a Georgetown University graduate who holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Foreign Service in International Politics/International Security Studies from the Walsh School of Foreign Service. She is in her 12th year with The Associated Press. The ceremony included students who completed degrees during both the summer and fall. More than 530 students were eligible to receive degrees.

University Chancellor Keith Carver welcomed the capacity Elam Center audience that included graduating students from 55 Tennessee counties, 15 states and the countries of China, Kenya and Saudi Arabia. The commencement stage party included University of Tennessee Board of Trustees members Crawford Gallimore, of Martin, and Julia Wells, of Jackson; UT President Joe DiPietro; and Mitch Pollard, president of the UT Martin Alumni Council.

Following special music presented by UTM Percussion students, Carver introduced Hardee, who grew up in Memphis, now lives in South Carolina and is the only grandchild of the late 8th-District Congressman Ed Jones, who attended UT Junior College, predecessor to UT Martin, and continued his education at UT Knoxville. Among his accomplishments, he was appointed the youngest Tennessee commissioner of agriculture under Gov. Gordon Brown- ing and is probably best known for his service from 1969-89 as a U.S. representative.

A replica of the lawmaker's office is maintained in the university's Paul Meek Library, which also houses his legislative papers. Hardee and her husband, Geoffrey, are co-authors of the upcoming biography "Grassroots Politickin': The Life and Legacy of Ed Jones."

Hardee, whose famous grandfather preceded her in 1984 as the university's commencement speaker, credited a cow for her existence and revealed an early goal to become a spy. She traced her West Tennessee roots back to her great-great-grandfather, who brought some of the first Jersey cows to West Tennessee. In later years, showing dairy cows earned her grandfather enough money to attend college - a necessary step in his pursuit of her grandmother, Llew.

Hardee also told the audience that she originally intended to become a CIA agent until a Washington Post internship changed her career path.

"Journalism has taught me so much about people, American politics and our world," she said. Her advice to any journalism majors present: "Question everything, leave your opinion at home, and always, always be objective." She offered similar guidance to news consumers, adding: "Don't just consume news that solidifies what you already believe. Instead, take in all views, be true to yourself, but always keep your mind and your heart open.

"The only thing worse than actually being wrong is not knowing when you are."

She closed by telling the graduates something they likely did not expect to hear: "This day really isn't about you," explaining that the day was instead, about leaving a legacy and making a positive difference on the world. She reminded them that earning a college degree brings with it great responsibility.

"Don't ever think that you don't matter or that your impact is too small," Hardee said, before reminding the audience that her life's accomplishments all started with a simple cow. Among her words of advice, Hardee explained the importance of compromise: "Our republic was founded on compromise. Unless we find that spirit again, it will not survive."

"We've come to a place where the middle ground is beginning to disappear," she said. "Take off your blinders, open your eyes and ears - and listen."

Dr. Joe DiPietro, University of Tennessee president since 2011, congratulated the graduates following Hardee's address, urging graduates to savor the moment. "You may see this occasion as an exciting end to one remarkable chapter in your life," he said. "It's also an open door to your role as a lifelong learner, an advocate of UT and the value of higher education."

DiPietro later conferred the degrees and was followed by Mitch Pollard, who congratulated the new graduates on behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council.
Several Wayne County Residents Receive Degrees from UT Martin

Dec 26, 2017

Several Wayne County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held December 16, 2017, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were: Kyle Scott Jones, Andrew L. Bevis, Micah A. Pyle of Waynesboro.

The student receiving a graduate degree was Allen P. Farmer of Collinwood.
Martin resident competes for national rodeo title

Summer Weldon, 19-year-old daughter of Cameron and Beth Weldon of Martin, will be competing for the title of Miss Rodeo USA Jan. 16-21, 2018, in Oklahoma City, Okla.

The pageant is held in conjunction with the International Finals Rodeo.

Miss Weldon, along with other young ladies from across the United States, will compete in the week-long competition to earn the honor of representing the International Professional Rodeo Association as its official spokesman across the United States and Canada in 2018. The pageant is more than a beauty pageant, Miss Weldon said, adding the contestants are judged not only on appearance, but also on public speaking skills, horsemanship ability, personality and rodeo knowledge.

Miss Weldon has been preparing for this competition since the age of 11, when she competed in, and won her first rodeo queen title. Since then, she has held 14 rodeo queen titles in five states.

As a sophomore at the University of Tennessee at Martin majoring in cell and molecular biology and competing on the UTM Rodeo Team, Miss Weldon has had quite a busy year. Her current title of Miss Morgan County Sheriff's Rodeo has kept her busy traveling to and from Morgan County, Ala., on most weekends to represent the Morgan County Sheriff's Department at various rodeos, benefits and functions.

Being a rodeo queen has opened numerous opportunities for Miss Weldon. In 2016 she served as the on-the-scene reporter for RFD-TV at the National Junior High Finals Rodeo, an opportunity that presented itself through the avenues opened as Tennessee High School Rodeo queen.

"I am a little nervous about being one of the younger competitors at the pageant, as the age limit is 26, but I will turn 20 during the pageant and hope that my experience in the rodeo queen industry will help me," Miss Weldon said.

Miss Weldon's family will be hosting a send-off party at their residence in Martin on Saturday at 2 p.m. All friends, family and supporters are encouraged to attend to show Miss Weldon support and see some of the wardrobe that has been custom-designed for this competition.

To follow Miss Weldon's journey to the Miss Rodeo USA competition, follow her on Facebook by liking the Morgan County Sheriff's Rodeo Queen page.

Miss Weldon is the granddaughter of Raymond and Juanita Easterwood of Troy and Janie Weldon and the late Cary Weldon of Martin.
MARTIN — Several Carroll County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Dec. 16, 2017, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

- Bruceon — Meegan Alexandria Chapman, Brandon Scott Morrison, Alex S. Schuck;
- Hollow Rock — Frankie R. Ward;
- Huntingdon — Travon E. Boyd, Collin Michael Pratt;
- McKenzie — Tyler Andrew Boggs, Austin Chapman, Gaye Lynn Coleman, Kendra E. Cook, Joana Nicole Curtis, Desiree Freidam, Johnnie Petering II, Lacey Lanette Lane, Danielle Nicole Mason, Katelyn Danielle Ridley;
- McMinnville — Jana C. Vostal;
- Trezevant — Tierra Nicole Williams;
- Westport — Hannah Kathryn Wood.

The students receiving graduate degrees were:

- Cedar Grove — Loren C. Stanford;
- McKenzie — Kelsey Christopher Schweitzer;
- Yuma — Bethanie Wood Burton.

The students receiving degrees were:

- Bradford — Katherine L. Cardwell, Allie Elizabeth Cunningham, Alexandria Marie Harris, Adam Michael Kail;
- Dyer — Faith Lois Abbott, Logan Elijah Bates, Brennan Chase Cooper, Tyler Ashton Laster, Danielle Eyon Rickman;
- Gibson — Sere Catherine Jackson;
- Humboldt — Clint Austin Brown, Jonathan Henry Hefley, Gary Martinez, Mary Beth Powell, William T. Wright;
- Medina — Mason T. Boyd, Casey A. Dunavan, Holly Elizabeth Graves, Kyndal K. Hayes Selena A. Newbill, Joseph M. Pedigo, Sara Jane Ragin;
- Rutherford — Shelby Nichole Dotson, Joshua R. Mathis;
- Trenton — Micajah Aaron Barnes, Candie L. Doss, Maria Brooke Gonzalez, Robert Aaron Lowery, Dustin L. Murdock, Drew Davis Schroeder, Ethan Taylor Temple, Deonza W. Turner;

The students receiving graduate degrees were:

- Dyer — Teresa Lindsey Maxwell, Amy J. Mistic;
- Humboldt — Cassie Miller;
- Trenton — Gauri Kamlesh Patel.
UTM Chancellor Carver issues statement on campus Concealed Carry vote

The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association has debated the issue of concealed carry of firearms on campus. A group of SGA senators introduced a resolution supporting this issue, which moved through the proper channels of being reviewed by the student senate.

Another group of students filed a petition calling for a student referendum vote on the issue. That vote was held Dec. 5, and more than 1,400 students voiced their opinion. Nearly 55 percent of the students disagreed with concealed carry for students on campus, and nearly 90 percent of the students indicated that they feel safe on the UT Martin campus.

The resolution on campus carry was brought to a vote at the Dec. 7 senate meeting and passed by a measure of 17-10. The referendum vote and the legislation are independent actions.

On Dec. 12, the SGA president signed the legislation, which now goes to UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver for consideration.

The following is a response from Dr. Carver related to these events:

"I will not sign the non-binding UT Martin Student Government Association resolution supporting students on our campus to carry concealed weapons.

"My response is not to challenge the actions of the SGA. Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on any public college campus. We, as a university, will abide by the law. In addition, I personally do not believe that having more guns on our campus is in line with our focus on safety and student success.

"In the recent referendum, during which more than 20 percent of our students voted, the majority felt that our campus today is safe and is opposed to having concealed guns being carried on campus. A majority of our SGA decided to move ahead with a resolution in support of concealed carry.

"Through recent events, I am hopeful that our students and campus community have a better understanding of the democratic process that is the foundation of our nation. We have seen it in practice: the right to express an opinion in a referendum, the right of those in elected office to choose a different course of action, and the right for those in opposition to speak out. I encourage all members of the university community to respect the rights and opinions of others in regard to this conversation. This is democracy in action and on display."

If you have any questions, please contact the UTM Office of Alumni Relations at (731) 881-7610 or alumni@utm.edu.
Jackson State Community College welcomes UTM's Jackson Center

The University of Tennessee at Martin’s Jackson Center is relocating to the Jackson State Community College main campus following almost a year of negotiations.

The move to Jackson State’s Ned R. McWherter Center began Dec. 18 and will be completed in time for the start of spring semester classes Jan. 11, 2018.

The UT Martin Jackson Center is currently located at 3031 Highway 45 Bypass, its home since October 2011. The university has offered classes in Jackson since 1992, and the upcoming move is the center’s second relocation to Jackson State.

The center first moved to the Jackson State campus in January 2008 before eventually relocating in 2011 to its present site. The current move returns the center to a campus setting and is another step in the growing partnership between the university and the Tennessee Board of Regents institution, which is observing its 50th anniversary.

“This partnership is a win-win for both institutions and a win for our students as well,” said Dr. Allana Hamilton, Jackson State president. “It provides JSCC graduates the flexibility they need to balance education, employment and family. Through this partnership, it is possible for a student to begin and graduate at Jackson State Community College and then enroll at UT Martin to complete a baccalaureate degree without leaving the Jackson State campus.”

The most recent data show that Jackson State transfer students enjoy a high rate of success when they transfer to complete a bachelor’s degree at UT Martin. Overall transfer four-year graduation rates are 61 percent below UT Martin’s institutional average, but Jackson State four-year graduation rates are 10.8 percent above UT Martin institutional rates.

UT Martin Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver said this speaks to the benefit of a Jackson State associate degree to baccalaureate completion.

“The joint goal is to improve the long-term educational experience for students in West Tennessee,” Carver said. “Working together with Jackson State, we can improve transfer pathways and four-year graduation success of students entering Jackson State and completing their four-year degrees at UT Martin. This partnership will also impact the overall educational level of West Tennessee, leading to better employment and economic opportunities.”

The schools joined forces earlier this year to support transfer students financially when UT Martin and Jackson State established a partnership in August as a result of the university’s Elam Transfer Promise. Carver joined Dr. Flora Tydings, Tennessee Board of Regents chancellor, and Mike Krause, Tennessee Higher Education Commission executive director, in agreeing to the transfer promise.

The agreement provides scholarships that benefit Tennessee Promise students who pursue a four-year degree at UT Martin. The university became the first four-year public institution in Tennessee to formalize an extension of the Tennessee Promise scholarship program.

About half of Jackson State students plan to transfer to a four-year college or university. Because the UT Martin Jackson Center will offer at its new location only upper-division classes that do not duplicate any Jackson State class offerings, the agreement emphasizes the importance of JSCC students receiving their associate degree before transferring to UT Martin. The institutions will cooperate to provide a variety of non-degree, continuing education, and high school dual enrollment courses and programs.

For UT Martin, the move will initially prioritize bachelor’s degree programs in agriculture, business administration, criminal justice, education, social work, interdisciplinary studies, history, political science, psychology and the RN to BSN in nursing.

The university’s Military Science and Leadership Program, of which ROTC is a part, already includes Jackson State, as well as Bethel University in McKenzie, Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson and both Lane College and Union University in Jackson.

The UT Martin Jackson Center is managed by the university’s Office of Educational Outreach. Dr. Brian Donavan is the educational outreach executive director and Kayce Beam is the Jackson Center director.
 Locals Receive Degrees From UTM

Several Weakley County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Dec. 16, 2017, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

Dresden – Katelin Dawn Brown, Jeffrey Tysen Goodlow, Gaylon Daniel Harris, Jennifer Lynn Lamb, Amy Michelle McAlpin, Kailee A. Pritchett, Lawrence Edward Sims, Marcus William Vancelve, Crystal Gail Winning,

Gleason – Ryan Marshall Bomar, Regina Louise Lowry,

William John Mansfield;

Greenfield – Andrew Walker Lannom, Jessica Dawn Morris, Sofia Oliva, Daniel Wayne Rickets, Lauren Elizabeth Rush, Makala Christine Sitzes, Brody Stanford;


Palmersville – Lauren S. Smethwick;

Sharon – Taylor Nicole Alderson, Emily Brook Allen.

The students receiving graduate degrees were:

Gleason – Katelyn E. Morris;

Greenfield – Natalie Lyn Medling;

Martin Austin Lane Kendall, Debra N. Lawrence, Matthew Dalton Smith.

Two local residents receive UTM degrees

Two Hickman County residents, Joshua Skyler Allen and Audrey Mashae Jenkins, both of Clinton, were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held Dec. 16 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus in Martin, Tenn.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

*Oakland-Brittney Nickole Morrow
*Rossville-Keira T. Gant
*Somerville-Dylan Thomas Skelton

Local Residents Receive Degrees From UT Martin

Several Fayette County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during Fall Commencement held Dec. 16, 2017, in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin Campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

*Oakland-Brittney Nickole Morrow
*Rossville-Keira T. Gant
*Somerville-Dylan Thomas Skelton
Local residents receive degrees from UT Martin

Several Gibson County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during fall commencement held December 16 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:
• Trenton: Micajah Aaron Barnes, Candie L. Doss, Maria Brooke Gonzalez, Robert Aaron Lowery, Dustin L. Murdock, Drew Davis Schroeder, Ethan Taylor Temple, Deonza W. Turner;
• Bradford: Katherine L. Cardwell, Allie Elizabeth Cunningham, Alexandria Marie Harris, Adam Michael Kail;
• Dyer: Faith Lois Abbott, Logan Elijah Bates, Brennan Chase Cooper, Tyler Ashton Laster, Danielle Evon Rickman;
• Rutherford: Shelby Nichole Dotson, Joshua R. Mathis;
• Yorkville: Jessica McKenzie Jetton;
• Gibson: Sere Catherine-Jackson;
• Humboldt: Clint Austin Brown, Jonathan Henry Hefley, Gary Martinez, Mary Beth Powell, William T. Wright;
• Medina: Mason T. Boyd, Casey A. Dunavan, Holly Elizabeth Graves, Kylan K. Hayes, Selena A. Newbill, Joseph M. Pedigo, Sara Jane Ragain;

The students receiving graduate degrees were:
• Trenton: Gauri Kamlesh Patel;
• Dyer: Teresa Lindsey Maxwell, Amy J. Mistic;
• Humboldt: Cassie Miller.

LOCAL RESIDENT GRADUATES FROM UTM:
Garrett Goodlett, of Dyersburg, graduated Dec. 16 from the University of Tennessee at Martin with a degree in health and human performance. More than 500 students from the summer and fall 2017 semesters were eligible to receive degrees during commencement exercises. Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press who bylines as Meg Kinnard, served as commencement speaker.
The University of Tennessee at Martin Student Government Association has debated the issue of concealed carry of firearms on campus. A group of SGA senators introduced a resolution supporting this issue, which moved through the proper channels of being reviewed by the student senate. Another group of students filed a petition calling for a student referendum vote on the issue. According to the school's website, that vote was held December 5, and more than 1,400 students voiced their opinion. Nearly 55 percent of the students disagreed with concealed carry for students on campus, and nearly 90 percent of the students indicated that they feel safe on the UT Martin campus.

The resolution on campus carry was brought to a vote at the December 7 senate meeting and passed by a measure of 17-10. The referendum vote and the legislation are independent actions. On December 12, the SGA president signed the legislation, which went before UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver for consideration. Carver responded, "I will not sign the non-binding UT Martin Student Government Association resolution supporting students on our campus to carry concealed weapons. "My response is not to challenge the actions of the SGA. Tennessee law does not permit students to carry guns on any public college campus. We, as a university, will abide by the law."

"In addition," Carver addressed, "I personally do not believe that having more guns on our campus is in line with our focus on safety and student success. In the recent referendum, during which more than 20 percent of our students voted, the majority felt that our campus today is safe and is opposed to having concealed guns being carried on campus. A majority of our SGA decided to move ahead with a resolution in support of concealed carry. Through recent events, I am hopeful that our students and campus community have a better understanding of the democratic process that is the foundation of our nation. We have seen it in practice, the right to express an opinion in a referendum, the right of those in elected office to choose a different course of action, and the right for those in opposition to speak out."

Carver finished with, "I encourage all members of the university community to respect the rights and opinions of others in regard to this conversation. This is democracy in action and on display."
By RACHEL MELTON
Special to the Press

As a member of the University Scholars Program at UT Martin, I was tasked with choosing a two-year research project for study. A graphic design major, I chose to focus on an arts oriented project. I’ve lived within a few minutes of Martin for my entire life, and I combined my interests in photography, the arts, and in the town itself for a project titled Established 1873: An Illustrated History of Martin, TN. It is mentored by Sarah Haig, Associate Professor of Graphic Design and Jason Stout, Associate Professor of Art at the University.

The intention of the project is to highlight a variety of historic locations and businesses and renew them in a contemporary style. Through a research based process, I create graphic design illustrations and posters that are based largely on original documentary photographs and objects. This foundation of original photography allows the pieces to retain an element of historical relevance while being something completely new.

The Varsity Theatre opened on Aug. 8, 1949, and was owned by the Ruffin Amusement Company, which was established in 1927. The theatre was outfitted with internal air conditioning in a state-of-the-art facility. It was broadly advertised as the “Best Theatre in the South” with 1,000 seating capacity. The construction of the theatre was contracted by Edd Hughes of Dickson, who had a reputation for theatre building and supervision throughout the South. Multiple articles in the Weakly County Press covered elaborate details on the theatre, from the curtain style, to the projection system, the carpeting and the seating arrangement and cushions. Prior to the opening show was a radio program titled “Varsity Party,” aired from the Union City Radio Station, WENK. Following the program was the feature attraction, “It’s a Great Feeling,” filmed in technicolor and starring Jack Carson, Dennis Morgan and Doris Day. According to the front page of the Press on Friday, Aug. 26, the Varsity Theatre was filled to capacity on its opening night. A photograph shows crowds filling the sidewalk for over a block from Lindell Street to the front door of the theatre.

The theatre ceased operations in 1987, reopening as a church in the mid-1990s, and then was sold in 2004 to its current owner, Brian Smith of The Sideline. The building has gone through years of restoration and now operates as a physical therapy clinic and 24-hour fitness center.

The Varsity Theatre was on the list of illustrations that I knew I wanted to include in the project. Given its size, construction, style and history, it has a prominent place in Martin’s history. I began the piece after driving past the theatre at night and determining that the marquee, lights and sign would be best represented as a night or twilight style illustration. I took a photograph, processing the image with multiple exposures for maximum value range, and developing an image of the theatre as it currently stands. This, along with original photographs of the theatre while in operation, provided me with a base from which to create the illustration.

The result is a detailed illustration that shows the lightbulbs, marquee, sign and the building itself brightly lit at night, much like the original photograph. While the marquee currently has no text, it will likely come to include the title of the opening picture. The image itself is meant to maintain an attention to the detail of the original building while marking its place as a major Martin landmark.

"Est. 1973: An Illustrated History of Martin, TN" will continue to be in progress throughout the remainder of the year and into early 2018. More information or photographs regarding specific historic Martin businesses locations are welcome. For inquiries or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at racbmelt@ututm.edu.
GRAND OPENING — Crowds line the sidewalks in downtown Martin when the Varsity Theatre opened on August 8, 1949. With state-of-the-art airconditioning, it was widely advertised as the ‘Best Theatre in the South.’ Melton’s project highlights a variety of historic locations and businesses in Martin.

REELING IN THE YEARS — This future poster of the Varsity Theatre in Martin is part of Rachel Melton’s project: Established 1873: An Illustrated History of Martin, TN.
UTM GRADUATE — Tyler Sams (center), of Martin, graduated Dec. 16 from the University of Tennessee at Martin, with a degree in agriculture. With him are (from left) Ryan Sams, Elizabeth Francisco, Angela Sams and Mike Sams. More than 500 students from the summer and fall 2017 semesters were eligible to receive degrees during commencement exercises. Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press who bylines as Meg Kinnard, served as commencement speaker.

LOCAL RESIDENT GRADUATES — Chase Thweatt (center), of Martin, graduated Dec. 16 from the University of Tennessee at Martin, with a degree in business administration with majors in accounting and finance. Attending the ceremony were his sister Chelsea Thweatt and mother Kathy Thweatt.

EARS DEGREE — Makenzie Vincent (center), of Martin, graduated Dec. 16 from the University of Tennessee at Martin, with a degree in family and consumer sciences. On hand for the occasion were her parents Jill Moss and Chris Vincent.

McALPIN GRADUATES — Amy McAlpin, of Dresden, graduated Dec. 16 from the University of Tennessee at Martin with a degree in education. More than 500 students from the summer and fall 2017 semesters were eligible to receive degrees during commencement exercises. Meg Kinnard Hardee, a political and legal affairs reporter with The Associated Press who bylines as Meg Kinnard, served as commencement speaker.