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NEWS BRIEF



Sarah Townsend is with her Murray State acceptance letter. (Photo courtesy of Frankie Brown)

Sotomayor set for sentencing after guilty plea

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After over a year since the death of senior pre-veterinary major Sarah Townsend, Dexter, Kentucky native Julius Sotomayor is set for sentencing today after pleading guilty to murdering Townsend and two additional charges.

Townsend's body was found in a ditch in the Cherry Corner area with multiple gun wounds on March 26, 2021. Sotomayor was arrested the following day.

Along with murder being a class A felony, Sotomayor was charged with tampering with evidence and vehicle theft, both class D felonies. Sotomayor's cash bond was set at \$1 million.

During the investigation, Kentucky State Police Detective Trevor Pervine said Sotomayor admitted to shooting Townsend multiple times. However in his initial court appearance in May 2021, Sotomayor pled not guilty to the charges against him.

Following Townsend's death, the Pre-vet Club planted a tree in the Murray State Arboretum honoring the memory of Townsend. Townsend was also recognized in a vigil mourning the acts of violence against women during the spring of 2021.

Following his not guilty plea, Sotomayor made multiple reappearances in the Calloway County Circuit Court. *The Murray Ledger and Times* reported, Sotomayor made a guilty plea in July 2022.

Sotomayor will appear in Calloway County Circuit Court at around 1:30 p.m. Stay tuned into *The News* for updates regarding Sotomayor's sentencing.



Mary Huffman/The News

Announced at the Board of Regents meeting, Murray State has had a 2.3% enrollment increase in comparison to the fall 2021 semester.

Enrollment rises despite national trends

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Murray State reported a 2.7% increase in enrollment while undergraduate enrollment has decreased nationally by 6.6% from 2019 to 2021, according to insidehighered.com.

President Bob Jackson said the University's focus on the recruitment, retention and graduation of students is what sets Murray State apart from other universities.

"Despite enrollment headwinds nationally, I am greatly appreciative of our staff, faculty, students, alumni and all others who are actively involved with supporting this vitally important work of our University as we continue to see enrollment growth," Jackson said.

As part of this effort, the University recently announced new regional tuition rates for 15 states to provide more students with lower

tuition prices. These states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. The University also enhanced its academic achievement scholarships to emphasize GPA for freshmen students enrolling in fall 2023.

The University will continue to emphasize GPA on the application and admissions process, offering a test-optional admission for qualifying students. This means incoming freshmen will not have to submit ACT or SAT scores.

The University will continue to implement new programs in addition to the 148 current academic programs, in order to meet the needs of the students and the region.

Don Roberson, vice president of Student Affairs, said caring faculty, staff and alumni set the University apart from its competitors.

"We have a very integrated system of all these folks working together, so we meet regularly and plan," Robertson said. "We have active alumni that help us recruit [students] and faculty and staff who are also involved in recruitment and retention, so it really is a total University effort."

Enrollment for underrepresented minority students also increased by 5.6% since 2021. Robertson said diversity is needed to ensure students have a rich college experience.

"All types of diversity just make for a better learning environment: ethnic, age, political," Robertson said. "You want to have this community of scholars, and the best way to do that is to have an institution that reflects the makeup of the world."

see ENROLLMENT, page 2

Event lineup set for Family Weekend

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Family Weekend will return to normal for the first year since 2019, as COVID-19 restrictions have eased. The events start on Friday, Sept. 23 and ends on Sunday, Sept. 25.

Peggy Whaley, the director of the Center for Student Engagement and Success, said they will follow the guidelines that the University has on the Racer Safe and Healthy webpage, but there is no restriction on activities for Family Weekend. While masks are not required, those who want to wear masks are encouraged to do so.

Whaley said one of the highlights for Family Weekend this year is the lunch, which take place on the lawn between Alexander Hall and the Engineering and Physics Building on Saturday, Sept. 24 at 11:30 a.m.

The lunch will feature a bounce house, lawn games, an ice cream truck and more. Racer One will also make an appearance.



Photo courtesy of murraystateuniv on Instagram

A full schedule of Family Weekend events can be found at murraystate.edu/familyweekend.

Whaley said Fall Fanfare is back this year, which is a scholarship fundraising concert featuring performances from various student ensembles. Another highlight is the Racer Walk where families can walk with the football team from the Curris Center to Roy Stewart Stadium.

The football game against Eastern Illinois is also a big component Whaley said. At halftime,

they will recognize the Outstanding Parent and Family Members and the winner of this year's Outstanding Parent/Family Member.

"Those are some of the key things we're excited about that families enjoy as well," Whaley said.

see FAMILY WEEKEND, page 2



Mary Huffman/The News

Campus tours can be scheduled at murraystate.edu/recruitment.

ENROLLMENT, from page 1

Jackson said it's important for prospective students to visit campus to see what the University has to offer.

“We can talk about Murray State all day, but we feel a student needs to be here and experience it first hand in order to truly understand our campus...”

— Shawn Smees, director of the Office of Recruitment

“It is very important for Murray State to be visible in front of prospective students and their families, whether it is making visits to area schools and events through our Road Scholars program, or

hosting students and their families on campus for a tour and visit,” Jackson said. “That personal touch is key, so we can work directly with students and their families to answer their questions regarding financial aid, scholarships, academic programs, the admissions process and share what makes the Murray State experience a special one.”

Director of the Office of Recruitment Shawn Smees said his office works to connect with prospective students. “The one-on-one conversations and extensive follow-ups help the students in their college search process,” Smees said.

The Office of Recruitment has increased the number of daily campus tours, including Saturday visits.

Smees said he is also seeing success in virtual visits, but

has plans to bring more opportunities to students.

This fall, the office will be expanding Scholarship Showcase Nights to an additional 30 locations.

The Scholarship Showcase nights are designed to allow students the opportunity to meet with recruitment and admissions staff to answer questions about scholarships and the application process.

The faculty interactions and student-led tours are what continue to set the University apart from other institutions, Smees said.

“We can talk about Murray State all day, but we feel a student needs to be here and experience it first hand in order to truly understand our campus and to realize they can be successful here, like so many of us,” Smees said.

FAMILY WEEKEND, from page 1

Whaley said around 600 families registered to attend Family Weekend. Nine hundred people have signed up for the lunch, and around 1,000 people bought tickets for the football game.

“[It’s] a chance for everybody to get back together to enjoy some good food, enjoy the activities on campus, cheer on the football team and see Racer One on the track...”

— Peggy Whaley, director of Student Engagement and Success

Beyond what Murray State has to offer, Whaley said they encourage families to explore Murray and the surrounding area by visiting Land Between the Lakes or the Arboretum.

The planning for Family Weekend started in April when the planning committee evaluated last year's schedule to see what worked well, what did not and if any changes were necessary. That is when they decided to bring back Fall Fanfare.

Whaley said they are excited to have Family Weekend back to normal, as Family Weekend is all about interaction and a chance for them to welcome families to campus.

“[It’s] a chance for everybody to get back together to enjoy some good food, enjoy the activities on campus, cheer on the football team and see Racer One on the track. Everybody is very excited about it,” Whaley said.

While registration is closed, football tickets can still be purchased by calling the Ticket Office at 270-809-3000. Fall Fanfare tickets can be purchased at the door.

For more information about Family Weekend and the schedule of events, please visit murraystate.edu/familyweekend.



QR code courtesy of www.murraystate.edu/familyweekend

Scan the QR Code to go to Yapp, for the Family Weekend schedule.

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Family Weekend

Friday, Sept. 23

Alumni Exhibition

(8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) Clara M. Eagle Gallery

The exhibit displays the work of Murray State Art and Design graduates honoring the Centennial.

Racer Volleyball vs. SIU

(6 p.m.) Racer Arena

The Lady Racers will be facing off against the Southern Illinois University Salukis.

Mr. MSU Pageant

(7 p.m.) Curris Center Ballroom

Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority is hosting the Mr. MSU Pageant. Tickets are \$10.

Athletics Movie Night

(7:30 p.m.) Roy Stewart Stadium

Racer Athletics will host a showing of “Remember the Titans.”

Saturday, Sept. 24

Racer 5k

(7:15 a.m.) Wellness Center

Register at Racer5k.com.

Residential College Receptions

(9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.) Residential Colleges

Breakfast will be provided for families and they get to see where their students live.

Fall on the Farm

(10 a.m. - 3 p.m.) Pullen Farm

Concessions, pumpkins and t-shirts for sale to goers with a \$5 entry fee per person.

Hall of Champions Tour

(10 a.m. - 2 p.m.) CFSB Center

Families walk through the Hall of Champions and learn more about Murray State's athletic history.

Family Lunch

(11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.) Great Lawn

Along with lunch, families will be able to pick up football tickets, play games and much more.

Fall Fanfare

(12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.) Lovett Auditorium

Featuring performances by various student ensembles, Fanfare is a scholarship fundraising concert. Tickets are sold at the door.

Alumni Association Tailgate

(1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.) Sid Easley Alumni Center

Refreshments and appetizers are offered to family prior to kickoff. Tickets are on sale through the Family Weekend registration system.

Racer Football vs. EIU

(4:30 p.m.) Roy Stewart Stadium

The Racers are playing against the Eastern Illinois University Panthers.

Cinema International

(7:30 p.m.) Curris Center Theater

Cinema International is hosting a showing of “Network.”

Racer Volleyball vs. Missouri State

(7:30 p.m.) Racer Arena

The Lady Racers will be facing off against the Missouri State University Bears.

Full schedule at:

<https://www.murraystate.edu/familyweekend>

Sawayama takes listeners to Hell in new album

Dionte Berry

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After becoming a well-known name in the music scene with her critically acclaimed 2020 album “SAWAYAMA,” Rina Sawayama is back with a country twang to her pop sound in her sophomore album “Hold the Girl.”

The Japanese British musician gained traction with her self-released compilation album “Rina” in 2017. After its debut, Sawayama was signed to the record label Dirty Hit. “SAWAYAMA” made waves through the pop community for its genre-blending sound, where she highlighted her culture as well as critiqued the current economic climate. In an interview with Apple Music, Sawayama said the album was doing better than she ever could have imagined. During all the excitement, though, she said the pandemic had left her emotionally drained and mentally unwell.

“Hold the Girl” is Sawayama responding to her emotions during those times of physical and emotional isolation.

The 13-track album begins with “Minor Feelings,” where Sawayama addresses “minor” things that can immensely hurt people, such as microaggressions.

Sawayama talks about feeling out of place, and the song does a great job of opening the album with a softer sound and a calm guitar strum, cluing listeners in to what the rest of the album will sound like.

The second track, “Hold The Girl,” takes a left turn from “Minor Feelings.” The track begins with a slow, vocally isolated intro that explodes into an early 2000s jivy pop sound and then into a country sound.

Sawayama does a great job blending pop and country, while also letting them stand separately and giving each element its moment to shine. Sawayama talks about reassuring and comforting her younger self, a testament to what she will grow up to face.

“This Hell” was Sawayama’s lead single where listeners

were made aware of the western twang she was channeling.

Sawayama draws parallels between reality and hell. Despite her hellish reality, Sawayama is OK because she has a lover that makes this hell manageable.

“Catch Me In The Air” is about Sawayama finding her wings, shedding her fears and overcoming her obstacles.

“Forgiveness” has an intro that feels reminiscent of a Mazzy Star sound with the acoustic guitar and echoing tambourine. Sawayama sings about the complexity of forgiveness when the actions of the person she wants to forgive are still hurting her.

“Your Age” is peak country for Sawayama with a banjo intro that combines with a pop beat. Sawayama reflects on someone who messed with her life and wonders why they did what they did now that she has grown up to be their age.

I enjoy the vocoded portions of cloudy conversation because it really captures a bottled up rage. I also enjoy the rock outro, but I wish it packed more anger and became more explosive.

“Imaging” goes down a techno-pop route, and similar to “Your Age,” the vocoded sound makes a return, but her words are clear. Sawayama is trying to figure out why she feels bad but she can’t come to a conclusion.

“Frankenstein” keeps us closer to the pop spectrum and has a bit of a spooky zigzagging synth which fits the title.

Sawayama compares herself to Frankenstein, as she opens herself up to someone and shows them her errors, wanting them to help put her back together. I love the end where the beat becomes more glitchy and punchy.

“Hurricanes” brings back a very early 2000s country pop sound which is refreshing to listen to. Sawayama sings about chasing a hurricane, an allegory about chasing a person. She wants to know that someone is there with her, even if their presence is an inconvenience.

“Send My Love To John” is the most ballad-esque



“Hold the Girl” was released on sept. 16.

Album cover courtesy of Sawayama’s Instagram

track, backed by Acoustic guitar and Sawayama’s vocals.

In her interview with Apple Music, Sawayama said this song is based off of an unnamed friend she had in college. Her friend struggled with their parents not being supportive of their queerness.

Sawayama recalls a phone call she had with their mother, where the mother said, “OK, I’ll speak with you soon, and send my love to John.” John was the name of her friend’s boyfriend, and Sawayama calls it a “breakthrough” in terms of acceptance.

Sawayama takes on an unusual perspective by singing about latent acceptance from the stance of the mother. Being queer myself, I think this was a beautiful perspective to take on.

“Phantom” is also acoustic focused. Sawayama describes being left by someone and desiring their presence again, but she’s only left with a ghost.

“To Be Alive” ends the album on a bubbly pop note. Sawayama describes overcoming her feelings during isolation and coming back to a sense of emotional normalcy, not forcing introspection.

Fueled by an early 2000s pop and country sound, “Hold the Girl” makes for a strong return from Sawayama. All of the tracks on the album show a great range of pop, country, alternative and rock.

One of my only gripes with “Hold the Girl” is that it lacks the edge that “SAWAYAMA” had, one of the elements that really attracted me to Sawayama. Some of the most memorable Sawayama tracks, such as “XS” and “STFU,” are known for their rage and anger, and I wish I could see some more of those potent and raw feelings on “Hold the Girl.”

But since this album was meant to be therapeutic, I can understand why the rage wasn’t as present.

Also in comparison to “SAWAYAMA,” I don’t feel there’s as many infectious standouts: all the songs are good, but many of them don’t grip me as much.

Overall, Sawayama shows listeners the different avenues pop music can take, and for that, “Hold the Girl” deserves an eight out of 10.

For me, Sawayama is one of the most interesting and authentic pop stars of our time, and I look forward to what she has in store for the music world.

Mental Health Highlight

Active Minds works toward getting students involved

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The Murray State chapter of Active Minds is planning to revitalize the club and encourage people to join learn more about mental health while having fun.

Active Minds is a non-profit student organization that provides activities to help students find ways to destress and learn more about mental health.

Senior Japanese and pre-med major Olivia Yaste, president of the chapter, is working toward reviving membership.

“Active Minds existed prior to the pandemic, but the chapter had sort of died out because a lot of members, and then the officers, graduated,” Yaste said. “A friend of mine heard about the club and decided to try to start back up.”

Yaste said Active Minds members think that, as a result of COVID-19, a light has been shined on the importance of mental health.

To spread awareness about mental health on campus, Active



Graphic courtest of Olivia Yaste

For more information about Active Minds their Instagram is [msu.activeminds](https://www.instagram.com/msu.activeminds).

Minds hosts “destress parties” and special activities around the holidays.

“We do a lot of board game nights or yoga nights, just stuff that’s really good for relaxation,” Yaste said. “Then we also try to talk about, you know, just big topics and mental health because I feel like there’s a lot of misinformation out there.”

During her time in high school, Yaste said she recalled hearing a lot of mental health misinformation, which pushed her to join Active Minds.

“It seems like there’s so much information, so people know about mental health, but they don’t know what’s true and what’s not,” Yaste said. “There’s

a lot of fluffy stuff like, ‘Oh, you know, if you’re stressed, just go take a hot bath and have some self care,’ but a lot of times you need something more than that, something more substantial.”

Active Minds holds monthly team meetings to plan activities to engage and inform the campus community.

Regarding upcoming activities, Active Minds is planning an event for early October to recognize World Mental Health Day, along with a national Active Minds Spirit Week focusing on education, awareness, advocacy, connection and community.

“International Mental Health Day is on Oct. 10, so we are looking forward to planning something big for it,” Yaste said. “Spirit Week is a five-day long event where each day focuses on a different element of mental health.”

For anyone interested in learning more about Active Minds or getting involved, visit their Instagram at [msu.activeminds](https://www.instagram.com/msu.activeminds) or Facebook at Murray State Active Minds, or email them at msu.activeminds@murraystate.edu.

Our View:

Stop treating same-sex marriage as a political issue

On June 24 of this year, *Roe v. Wade* was overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States, meaning the right to privacy when it comes to an abortion is now up to the states. Although this landmark case has been the only one overturned in this term so far, Justice Clarence Thomas made a statement implying the Court should next review several other landmark cases.

Justice Thomas suggested in the majority opinion of the Court that they should reconsider the decisions made in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, *Lawrence v. Texas* and *Obergefell v. Hodge*. These rulings currently protect the right to buy and use contraceptives without government restriction, the right to a same-sex relationship and the right to same-sex marriage, respectively.

Obergefell v. Hodge was just one of the cases recommended for review by Justice Thomas but was found most striking by United States citizens. The mention of this case after the overturning of an already important landmark case would be completely life-changing for so many.

Facing the potential impending threat to same-sex marriage, Democrats and some Republicans are now working on a new bill called the Respect for Marriage Act regarding same-sex marriage rights. This bill is incredibly important when it comes to marriage equality because it would codify same-sex marriage into law and ensure the 2015 ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodge* remains intact.

The most important aspect about this bill would be the recognition of same-sex marriage on the federal level even with the potential overturning of *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Federal recognition of same-sex marriage rights is not only important, but it is crucial in making sure an entire group of Americans won't be discriminated against for their choice to get married.

Something many people pointed out when analyzing the cases suggested by Justice Thomas was that he left out *Loving v. Virgin-*



Wesley Hammer/The News

ia, the case overturning the ban on interracial marriage. While there was a great deal of speculation about why this would be left off, many people came to the same conclusion: Justice Thomas is picking and choosing what is most convenient for his personal life.

Loving v. Virginia certainly counts as a landmark case on the same level as *Obergefell v. Hodge*, but Justice Thomas left it out of the list of decisions he believes should be reviewed. He conveniently failed to mention it because he reaps the benefits from it as a Black man married to a white woman.

Especially with a more right-leaning Supreme Court, it will now be much harder to ensure the protection of equal rights on a federal level. Although this shouldn't be the case because of the Separation of Church and State, as well as freedom of religion laid out in the Constitution, it still is.

This is especially ironic because the Supreme Court cited the Constitution as the reasoning for overturning *Roe v. Wade*,

but they conveniently leave it out when it doesn't benefit them. According to a Gallup poll, 70% of Americans are in support of gay marriage, so the Court isn't even representing the majority of us.

The Supreme Court has a duty to represent the majority of American interests, but it is becoming increasingly more obvious they are attempting to follow their own self interest and personal beliefs.

Nine people overturning such precedence in America is very alarming considering they are allowed to do it with no repercussions. Same-sex marriage is not a political issue; it is a human rights issue, and keeping it from people denies them the right that other people have. By denying the rights of one group, the gap of inequality will widen and generate greater divides in our country.

At *The News*, we believe that Americans should have much more say in the decisions made for us. Rather than sitting back and being forced to watch decisions made that go against what

we believe, we should not feel powerless.

As Americans, we have to consider everyone affected by this bill and what the overturning of *Obergefell v. Hodge* would mean for our country and its people. We need to rally behind the Democrats and Republicans attempting to pass the bill in order to get it passed.

We can reach out to state senators such as Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul in KY, Todd Young and Mike Braun in Indiana, Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth in Illinois, and Marsha Blackburn and Lamar Alexander in Tennessee. Communication can be the first step in encouraging senators in our home states to offer support for the bill.

No one in America deserves to have their rights infringed upon by a body of nine people, and supporting this bill would benefit everyone. We have to put ourselves in the shoes of someone seeking same-sex marriage and understand how it would feel to be told it was illegal to get married.

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Sophomore linebacker Cody Goatley (#32) records five total tackles in the Racers' loss to Ball State University on Saturday, Sept. 17.

Photo courtesy of Dave Winder/Racer Athletics

Football takes third loss vs. Ball State

Fourth string freshman quarterback makes first collegiate start

Jakob Milani

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Murray State's football team fell to a 0-3 record to start the year, following a 31-0 loss to the Ball State University Cardinals on Saturday, Sept. 17.

The Racers were down to their third quarterback of the season, as freshman quarterback Isaac McNamee got the start against the Cardinals with sophomore quarterback DJ Williams and freshman quarterback Lucas Maue out with injuries.

Senior wide receiver DeQuan Dallas spoke about how it's been playing with three different quarterbacks this season. He said it's been a challenge, but the team keeps pushing forward.

"Mentally, it's been tough on us," Dallas said. "But we have to get used to it. It's always next man up. We go through it in practice week after week. Like Coach Hood says, you gotta keep your head up no matter what happens. If one man goes down, the next one gotta step up."

Ball State took an early 7-0 lead in the first quarter with a 13-yard pass from junior quarterback John Paddock to freshman tight end Brady Hunt.

Murray State's defense held strong through the end of the quarter, as the Cardinals were stuck with just the one touchdown heading into quarter two.

The Cardinals extended their lead to 14 points in the second quarter as Paddock found freshman tight end Tanner

“ Like Coach Hood says, you gotta keep your head up no matter what happens. If one man goes down, the next one gotta step up. ”

— Senior wide receiver DeQuan Dallas on freshman quarterback Isaac McNamee

Koziol for the 18-yard touchdown pass.

McNamee's career at Murray State was off to a decent start. He completed four passes in the first half, as the Racers ran the ball more often. However, he entered halftime with an interception against him.

Head Coach Dean Hood spoke about McNamee's play in the game and how the offense played around him. He said for his first start as a "true freshman," McNamee played well.

"I thought he looked good," Hood said. "I told him after the game that it's not bad for his first game, but he didn't want to take the compliment. He said 'No, I gotta do a lot better.' It's good. That's the kind of kid he is."

As both teams headed to the locker rooms for halftime, the Cardinals led the Racers 14-0.

The Cardinals continued to add to the score in the third quarter with another passing touchdown, this time to senior wide receiver Jayshon Jackson. Another field goal later in the quarter had the Cardinals up 24-0.

To start the final quarter, sophomore running back Carson Steele took a one-yard handoff for the Cardinals' last touchdown of the game. Without any other scores in the game, Ball State defeated the Racers 31-0.

McNamee finished the game with seven completed passes on 22 attempts, totalling 57 passing yards and two interceptions. Senior wide receiver LaMarte Brooks threw one pass in the first quarter for 11 yards.

Freshman running back Jawaun Northington rushed 17 times for 71 yards. Dallas caught two passes for 27 yards.

Paddock completed 27 of his 44 passes for 277 yards and three touchdowns. The Racers' defense was able to grab one interception off Paddock.

Steele rushed 25 times for 141 yards and a touchdown. Jackson and Koziol each caught six passes, with Jackson picking up 64 yards and Koziol picking up 59.

Hood gave credit to the defense after the game as Murray State recorded the first sack against Ball State so far this season. He said despite the loss, there were positives coming out of the defense in the game.

"Those guys played very hard all the way up to the end," Hood said. "I thought we got some good pressure on [Paddock] and some good, clean hits. I'm proud of how they played... doesn't negate the loss, but they played well."

The Racers will look to move past their 0-3 start as they host their first conference opponent of 2022. Eastern Illinois will travel to Murray State for Family Weekend on Saturday, Sept. 24. Kickoff is set for 4 p.m.

Football hosts EIU for Family Weekend

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After the 31-0 loss to Ball State University, Murray State turns to its conference schedule and its annual Family Weekend game.

The Racers start their conference schedule hosting the Eastern Illinois Panthers, currently sitting at 0-3 on the season.

Murray State's biggest question heading into conference play is its starting quarterback as the previous two starters are out with injuries. In

their game against Ball State, the Racers started freshman quarterback Isaac McNamee, a "true freshman", or first year freshman rather than a redshirt, from Pikeville, Kentucky.

McNamee completed seven of his 22 passes in his first career start, throwing two interceptions in the process. While fans may question if he is ready for the start, Head Coach Dean Hood said after the Ball



Freshman running back Jawaun Northington rushed for 71 yards on Saturday, Sept. 17.

State game, he wouldn't have McNamee out there if he wasn't ready.

"I think he's ahead of where most freshmen playing in their game are," Hood said. "That's the reason we went with him. I think going through training camp and getting reps and the three game week preparations, we think that he's ready. If it was too much for him, we would not have played him."

Outside of quarterback play, the Racers have been running what they call "wild horse" offense—their personal take on the wildcat offense. This style has senior wide receiver LaMarte Brooks line up at quarterback and take off with the ball.

While the wildcat has become more of an option for the Racers with their first two quarterbacks going down, the "wild horse" offense is a viable option

for attempting to throw the defense off.

The Panthers' starting quarterback sophomore Jonah O'Brien has been up and down this season. Overall, he has completed 69.8% of his passes on the season, throwing six touchdowns in the process. However, he has also thrown six interceptions.

With the Racers' defense essentially carrying the team, it's possible that Murray State can hold its own against a struggling Panthers defense.

Overall, it seems the team is just happy to be home. Senior wide receiver DeQuan Dallas said after the Ball State loss, the team is excited to go out and play in front of their fans.

"It's gonna be a treat," Dallas said. "A new start, a new quarter. We start conference play. We're still trying to figure ourselves out going into this next game, but we're gonna come out and make a statement and set an example for these teams."

Kickoff for the Family Weekend game against the Panthers is set for 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 24.



Junior middle blocker Darci Metzger recorded 16 kills against both teams in the Samford invite on Saturday, Sept. 17, and Sunday, Sept. 18.

Photo courtesy of Racer Athletics

Volleyball winless at Samford Invite

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The Murray State volleyball team lost two games after facing off against the Clemson University Tigers on Saturday, Sept. 17 and the Samford University Bulldogs on Sunday, Sept. 18 at the Samford Invite.

Despite the losses, freshman outside hitter Federica Nuccio was awarded the MVC Freshman of the Week award for her contributions in the invite. Nuccio finished with 32 kills, 23 digs and six aces over the weekend.

This is the first award a Murray State volleyball player has received since the conference switch.

Game One

The Racers got out to an early 2-1 lead in the first set, but Clemson rallied to put itself up 6-2. The Racers trailed throughout the rest of the first set and eventually lost 25-17.

Murray State led 17-15 in the second set and looked to tie the match up at one set apiece. A rally started by a kill from Nuccio helped the Racers extend the lead. Senior

outside hitter Alysha Smith followed with a kill to continue the rally.

Nuccio then earned a service ace, and junior outside hitter Jayla Holcombe finished the rally with a kill. This rally put the Racers up 21-15 and led them to win the second set 25-18.

Clemson took a demanding 10-3 lead in the third set and did not let off the gas. Clemson won the set 25-13.

The Racers were down 22-19 in the fourth set and were nearing defeat, however, a rally initiated by Nuccio helped the team climb back. A kill by Smith, a service ace from Nuccio and a kill by graduate middle blocker Elisa Dozio put the Racers back on top 23-22.

Clemson tied things up 23 apiece, but Holcombe earned another kill and junior middle blocker Darci Metzger ended the set with a kill as well, giving the Racers a 25-23 win.

The Tigers started the fifth set on fire up 5-1, but the Racers rallied. Holcombe earned back-to-back kills, and the Tigers committed three attack errors, putting the Racers up 6-5.

Clemson got another lead and were up 13-9 later in the set. A rally started by a service error led to

Holcombe killing the ball three times in a row, tying things up at 13 apiece. The Tigers responded by earning two kills, giving them the win in the fifth and final set 15-13.

Holcombe finished the match with 16 kills and two blocks. Nuccio totaled 16 kills, three aces, three blocks and 12 digs. Metzger ended up with 12 kills and three blocks. Sophomore setter Bailey DeMier had 50 assists.

Game Two

The Racers jumped in front of Samford early in the first set, as they were up 5-1. Samford was eventually able to even the score at 13 apiece. The Racers fought to keep the lead, but a flurry of points came right when Samford needed them.

The Racers were up 18-16 before the Bulldogs executed an eight-point rally, putting them ahead 24-18. Samford took the first set 25-19.

The Racers and Bulldogs were tied up at four points apiece before Murray State went on a five-point run in the second set. The Bulldogs committed two attack errors, and Dozio earned herself a kill. After Dozio's kill, two more errors

followed to cap off the five-point run.

Murray State fought off a four-point Samford run late in the set, winning the second set 25-23.

The Racers were down 24-20 in the third set before Nuccio earned a kill that led to an attack error and another kill by Nuccio. Despite the late push, the Racers dropped the third set of the match, losing 25-23.

The fourth set went back and forth, as there were six lead changes. Although Murray State was ahead for the majority of the match, a late Samford push led to a win in the fourth and final set of the match 25-22.

Nuccio finished the match with 16 kills, three aces and 11 digs. Holcombe totaled 17 kills and three blocks. DeMier ended up with 39 assists, three blocks, nine digs and an ace.

Holcombe finished the weekend with 33 assists and five blocks. DeMier finished with 89 assists and two aces.

The pair of losses put Murray State at 4-6 on the season.

The Racers start MVC play by hosting five games in a row. The first game of the home stretch is against Southern Illinois University at 6 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 23 in Racer Arena.

Shann Riley/The News

MURRAY STATE ATHLETICS SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 22 - 27

- **SEPT. 22** Soccer vs. Belmont @ Murray, KY 3 p.m.
- **SEPT. 23** Tennis vs. Central Arkansas @ Conway, AR ALL DAY
Volleyball vs. Southern Illinois @ Murray, KY 6 p.m.
- **SEPT. 24** Tennis vs. Central Arkansas @ Conway, AR ALL DAY
Football vs. Eastern Illinois @ Murray, KY 4 p.m.
Volleyball vs. Missouri State @ Murray, KY 7:30 p.m.
- **SEPT. 25** Soccer vs. Evansville @ Evansville, IN 1 p.m.
- **SEPT. 26** Men's Golf vs. SIUE @ Madison, IL ALL DAY
Women's Golf vs. Austin Peay @ Clarksville, TN ALL DAY
- **SEPT. 27** Men's Golf vs. SIUE @ Madison, IL ALL DAY
Women's Golf vs. Austin Peay @ Clarksville, TN ALL DAY
Volleyball vs. Belmont @ Murray, KY 6 p.m.

For more information
visit GoRacers.com





Photo Courtesy of Murray State Creative Writing Program and Reading Series Facebook

Kentucky Poet Laureate Crystal Wilkinson spoke in the Curris Center Ballroom on Thursday, Sept. 15, about her poetry collection, influences and her upcoming kitchen memoir.

Reading series welcomes Kentucky Poet Laureate

Ava Chuppe
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The creative writing program hosted Kentucky Poet Laureate Crystal Wilkinson in the Curris Center Ballroom on Sept. 15 as part of its Reading Series.

At the event, Wilkinson read poems from her collection “Perfect Black” and passages from her novel “The Birds of Opulence.” She discussed finding her voice as a Black Appalachian woman in the writing world, citing feminist writers Audre Lorde and Kentucky’s Gloria Jean Watkins (better known by the pseudonym “bell hooks”) as her inspirations.

Senior literature major Keziah Sanders said she immediately felt as if Wilkinson knew her personally.

“She is dynamic, raw, passionate and bold,” Sanders said. “Through her writings, I, a Black girl from the deep South, was granted visibility. Because of her own voice, I, too, feel as if I can sing.”

Wilkinson is the award-winning author of the poetry collection “Perfect Black” and the novels “The Birds of Opulence,” “Water Street” and “Blackberries, Blackberries.” She is the recipient of a 2022 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Poetry, a 2021 O. Henry Prize, a 2020 USA Artists Fellowship and a 2016 Ernest J. Gaines Prize for Literary Excellence.

Wilkinson’s short stories, poems and essays have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Kenyon Review*, *Oxford American* and other publications. Her culinary memoir, “Praise Song for the Kitchen Ghosts,” will be published August 2023. She currently works as an associate professor in the creative writing master’s program at the University of Kentucky.

This is the first time Wilkinson has visited campus since before the pandemic, when she received the 2018 Clinton and Mary Opal Moore Appalachian Writer’s Residency.

Senior professional writing major Hannah DuBois said she put the

reading on her calendar as soon as she discovered it.

“I knew this was my chance to thank her for being the one to get me to Murray State,” DuBois said. “She was the one who encouraged me to apply for the Governor’s School for the Arts...it meant that I had a scholarship that allowed me to attend in-state and afford college.”

Wilkinson gave helpful critiques and encouragement in the creative writing classes she attended at Berea College, DuBois said.

“Because she was such a good writer, we all trusted that her opinion was the highest regard,” DuBois said. “Getting a chance to see her after all these years was just so impactful to me, and I’m really grateful for her mentorship.”

The event was made possible by the Department of English and Philosophy, the College of Humanities and Fine Arts’ dean’s office and the Office of Multicultural Initiatives.

The Reading Series brings visiting authors to campus for free public readings and class visits throughout the year. Its guest speakers have included Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winners, Guggenheim Fellows and more.

On Oct. 8 and 9, the Kentucky State Poetry Society will hold its annual conference with both in-person and virtual workshops and readings. In-person events will be held at Western Kentucky University. Crystal Wilkinson will serve as the keynote speaker of the conference.

For more information about the Kentucky State Poetry Society event, visit wkystatepoetrysociety.org/events/conference/.

Anyone interested in future Reading Series events can follow the creative writing program on Facebook or Instagram @murraystatecreativewriting for updates.

Women’s Center begins leadership lunch series

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The Women’s Leadership Lunch Series is back for the second year in a row, ready to encourage and empower the undergraduate women of Murray State.

Abigail Cox, director of the Women’s Center, said this program offers students an intimate conversation in a smaller group setting.

“I think that we’ve had just so many different conversations and students,” Cox said. “We have some students that come to every single one of them, and every single time they get something different out of it.”

A combined effort between the Women’s Center and the Office of Alumni Relations, the two have worked to continue ensuring students leave the lunches feeling empowered. Seeing these interactions happen is inspiring, said Carrie McGinnis, director of Alumni Relations.

“Anytime you can be around super amazing women in a community and [share] experiences, to me, is valuable for all involved.” McGinnis said. “I get excited to hear them impart their wisdom on these groups of, you know, really engaged and excited young women.”

The Women’s Leadership Lunches


take place monthly. The events are free and have a capped limit of 10 students per event. Cox said this cap is in place because engagement is better with smaller groups.

“We want to make sure that when these alumnae either give up themselves via Zoom electronically or take time to come to campus and be in the room that they’ve got a great and willing audience to hear what they have to share.” McGinnis said. “So not only do we want it to be a terrific experience for the students but for the alumnae as well.”

With 80,000 alumni worldwide, McGinnis said she works hard to select alumnae with great personalities and empowering stories to share their wisdom and experiences. McGinnis said these women are ones that even she looks up to.


“I knew they would have good insight into advice for students on how they can capitalize on their time while they’re here at Murray State,” McGinnis said. “I mean, actually finding them is the easy part because they are so excited to do it.”

The series strives to prepare students with much-needed skills for success and leadership in both university life and beyond. Some of the other topics discussed include





MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY
Women’s Center

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP LUNCH SERIES



Support Provided by:

Alyson Van Hooser, ‘10

Tuesday, September 20th at 11:30 am
Tennessee Room, 3rd Floor Curris Center
Registration is Required
FREE Lunch is Provided

Alyson Van Hooser graduated from Murray State University in 2010 with a degree in Business Administration. Since, she has served two terms on the Murray State University Alumni Association Board of Governors.

Van Hooser, a first-generation student at Murray State, author, and leadership trainer, brings a unique perspective on leadership, helping professionals across the country authentically connect with their diverse team and unlock unprecedented success.

College degree in 3.5 years. Management experience with a big-box retailer. A bank manager, insurance advisor, and elected city council member...all by the age of 30! (And wife and mother of four!) Alyson has a lot to share with aspiring leaders!

Photo Courtesy of @msu.womenscenter on Instagram
Alumna Alyson Van Hooser kicked off the Women’s Leadership Lunch series on Sept. 20.

communication skills, relationship building and self-confidence.

The first lunch of the series has already reached its capped limit, taking place on Tuesday, Sept. 20, with alumna speaker Alyson Van Hooser, a 2010 Murray State graduate. The next two lunches are set to take place on Oct. 21 at 12:30 pm

and Nov. 18 at 11:30 am.

The Leadership Lunches will take place on the third floor of the Curris Center.

Anyone interested in attending one of the lunches can RSVP through the Women’s Center monthly newsletter or visit murraystate.edu/womenscenter.



Mary Huffman/TheNews

Assistant Professor of agronomy Megan Taylor is conducting multiple research projects studying plant fertility, nutrition, and pollination alongside students at the Murray State Arboretum.

Arboretum hosts agronomy student research

Farmers inspire student project

Erinn Finley

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In order to gain hands-on experience caring for crops and answering research questions, Murray State's agronomy students are conducting multiple research projects at the Arboretum.

Megan Taylor, assistant professor of agronomy, works on these projects with her students to help them answer questions they have and to teach them how to solve problems they may encounter in their careers.

Presently, Taylor leads a research project on pollinators.

"The pollinator project is looking at the timing, as well as the color and the shape of the flower, and how different types of pollinators are attracted to those at different times of day," Taylor said.

Taylor said this research is helpful because if they can understand more about pollinators and their habits, then they can apply that research to things like harvest timing. This also helps with the production of harvesting crops without affecting quality.

"So one part of it is the pollination part, where we're just purely looking at the flowers in terms of the diversity of pollinators, when they're active and then color and flower shape," Taylor said.

The pollinator study was conducted using mostly zinnia flowers of varying shapes, sizes and colors. Taylor said this was so they could more easily tell

which colors and shape mattered to different pollinators. Taylor said they planted other plants of varying popularities among pollinators like grasses to create some separation in the flower types in order to expand the study.

For this pollinator study, students had to collect data, which involved a lot of observational work. They would have to count the number of pollinator visits within a set time period. That time period could range from 30 seconds to two minutes. They would also have to count flowers and run calculations based on the data.

Another project studied the effects of different levels of phosphorus and nitrogen on the fertility of certain flowers.

"We also are doing some work with cut flower production and doing different rates of phosphorus and nitrogen, so just a fertility study—very easy, very straightforward," Taylor said.

Taylor said the group is also trying to relate the pollinator project to production agriculture and connect it with another research project on corn and soybeans.

This project studying the nutrition of corn and soybeans takes place in the greenhouse. This project focuses on testing nutrient levels in plants and shows Taylor and her students how much of these nutrients are absorbed into the plant.

"We're doing something called sap testing and sap testing is where you look at the total metabolized macro and micronutrients for the corn and soybean plants," Taylor said.

The testing consists of taking samples right after laying down a full layer application of boron and manganese.

Taylor and her students are

working on this project in conjunction with the Waters Agricultural Lab, based in Owensboro, Kentucky.

Taylor said they are also doing studies with adjuvant trials for some of the students. Another topic Taylor and her students are studying is the efficacy of apple cider vinegar in reversing drought stress in plants.

In her field, Taylor said she is looking to study a couple of main areas. One area of study is how and why the crop works. The other is geared toward helping farmers and producers and focuses on how to amplify or accelerate certain processes in the crop.

Because of this, Taylor said a lot of the research projects are driven by questions asked by farmers. She said student questions often inspire research projects.

"Actually, the pollinator project was inspired by a student's question in class about [if we would] utilize waterways or filter strips as pollinator habitats," Taylor said. "And I thought, 'That's a really interesting idea. I am intrigued.'"

Taylor said the initial question eventually changed into research about the possibilities of getting certain pollinators in certain timeframes of a crop's life cycle and intentionally planting to help with that goal. She said they also were looking into whether or not a producer could get some money back in the way of cut flowers after planting pollinator habitats.

Taylor planted many of the plants for these projects back in May so that they were mature enough for students to collect data from them this fall. She tends them over the summer and conducts personal research

studies before the students come back in the fall.

Taylor said the drought study has been happening since March 2021. There have been multiple iterations of a couple of the other research projects as well. As for some of the smaller projects, Taylor said she will keep conducting those for as long as students are interested and engaged with the questions.

For other studies, they collected information about the plants' heights and weights and did Soil Plant Analysis Development readings, which measures the amount of chlorophyll and relates it back to the nitrogen levels in the plants.

Taylor also mentioned her appreciation for the farm managers and assistant farm managers, who work on Murray State farms and help her with her research projects.

"If I need something or if something breaks they always help me," Taylor said. "It's been awesome. They also help us with weekend watering, things like that, which, you know, really we couldn't do those things without them being present."

Taylor also extended an invitation to interested students, who might like to research with her lab.

"If students have an interest and they want to be involved in agronomic research or research that falls in the vein or close to plant science agronomy, we're always looking to help people answer questions," Taylor said. "We'd love to have them come by and work with the Crop Talk Lab and get involved."

To follow Taylor's research with her students, follow her Instagram or Twitter at @CropTalkMegan.

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