



THE MURRAY STATE
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CORRECTION

Due to a reporter's error, a story in the Sept. 18 print edition contained incorrect information about accessibility at Pogue Library. The access door at Pogue Library via Lowry is not locked during business hours and no one has to ring a bell to come through it, said Jeff McLaughlin, Special Collections and Exhibits Director for the University Libraries.

FIRST AMENDMENT EDITION

On the cover and in this print edition, we examine issues and challenges surrounding the First Amendment, primarily free speech.

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Vaccines available for upcoming season

Ethan Allen
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As the change in seasons approaches, so does the cold and its illnesses like the flu and even COVID-19.

Despite the recent controversy and politically increasing circumstances from the Department of Health and Health Services, those in the Murray-Calloway County area can still receive vaccinations.

According to *The New York Times*, RFK Jr's federal vaccine committee unanimously voted to limit COVID-19 vaccines, recommending that adults 65 and older only receive shots after discussing the benefits and risks with a health care provider.

Kennedy also rescinded endorsements for some flu vaccines in July. *The New York Times* writes it was because the affected vaccines contained a preservative feared to cause autism and would not be recommended by federal guidelines.

The panel said anyone ages six months to 64 years could receive the COVID-19 vaccine if they consulted with a provider.

Where to receive them

In Murray-Calloway County, you can receive a COVID-19 and flu vaccine from the following pharmacies.

CVS on 100 N. 12th St.

Walmart pharmacy on 809 N. 12th St.

Walgreens on 1205 Main St.

Kroger Pharmacy on 808 N. 12th St.

To receive the vaccination, individuals can go to the respective pharmacy's website and schedule an appointment. But only individuals aged 65+ or individuals between six months and 64 with certain health conditions/risk factors are eligible.

According to CVS Pharmacy, health conditions/risk factors that qualify the individual for the COVID-19 vaccination include but are not limited to diabetes, pregnancy, cancer, heart disease, chronic liver disease, kidney disease, substance use disorders, if the individual is a past or current smoker, etc.

For more information about COVID-19 and flu vaccinations, please visit the following links.

Centers for Disease Control.

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<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/vaccinations.html>

Department of Health and Human Services

<https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/index.html>

<https://www.hhs.gov/risk-less-do-more/for-health-care-providers/patient-handout-what-you-should-know-about-flu-covid-19-and-rsv-vaccines/index.html>

News Editor River Murt contributed to this story



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SGA president says free speech will prevail

River Murt

News Editor

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The First Amendment has been called into question after people have lost their jobs and talk show host Jimmy Kimmel was momentarily suspended from broadcast for speaking about Charlie Kirk's death.

Now, there is fear for free speech in the United States.

As reported by NPR, much of the comments people have made publicly were celebrating Kirk's death and acting as critics. But the *Associated Press* reports the suspension from ABC came from Kimmel's criticism of not Kirk — but of the killer and former MAGA supporter, Tyler Robinson, and the MAGA reaction following after.

"Kimmel's suspension came after an angry reaction to comments he made in monologues early last week," AP wrote. "A relentless Trump critic in his comedy, Kimmel suggested that many Trump supporters were trying to capitalize on Kirk's death and were 'desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them.'"

Since then, there has been dissent in the Republican party, namely from Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

"Ted Cruz has accused the head of America's broadcast regulator of acting like 'a mafioso' in the suspension of late-night host Jimmy Kimmel — the sharpest attack yet from a conservative Republican on the controversy," BBC wrote. "He said Federal Communications Commission chairman Brendan Carr's threat to ABC over their comedian's monologue about slain conservative influencer Charlie Kirk was 'dangerous as hell.'"

The topic of censorship has come up as well in light of the controversies.

"U.S. Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., posted on X that he planned to 'use Congressional authority and every influence with big tech platforms to mandate immediate ban for life of every post or commenter that belittled the assassination,' in a marked departure from the Republican Party's stance in the past several years which has equated content moderation with censorship," NPR wrote.

Since these events, questions have been raised for how this will affect the free speech and activism of Murray State University.

Ali Khatib, Student Government Association president, said free speech at Murray State will be protected and that it is his role to ensure students' voices are heard and respected. He said activism on campus will not be hindered and no group will be disenfranchised, and this has become part of his "All gas, no brakes" campaign slogan.

"That means maintaining an environment where people feel empowered to speak their minds, while also ensuring that our campus remains inclusive and safe for all students," Khatib said.

It's his priority.

"Any activism will not be hindered by the current political climate," Khatib said. "I believe the best way to uphold the First Amendment here at Murray State is through encouraging open forums, protecting the right of peaceful assembly and working closely with upper administration so that our policies reflect the needs and perspectives of the students."



SGA President-elect Ali Khatib speaks at a rally last spring.

Kristopher Fister/The News

Khatib also said he plans on turning these words into action when he represents the students at the Board of Regents.

Ray Horton, an associate professor of English and United Campus Workers member, received an email from the UCW-Southeast Executive Board.

The email describes an "ongoing assault to defund and destroy higher education in the United States and to threaten the livelihoods of all campus workers."

"The reasons given for these threats have changed over time, but these attacks remain consistently anti-worker," the UCW-Southeast Executive Board wrote. "University and college campus workers have the right to a private life outside of their jobs. That private life includes the right to share openly on social media, to talk freely at Zoom meetings, to conduct research and produce scholarship appropriate to their disciplines, and to discuss politics with their coworkers and in their communities. When speaking on matters of public concern in their capacity as private citizens, all campus workers at colleges and universities across the country must be able to speak freely, without fear of retaliation from higher education administrators, state legislators, or other politicians."

Horton said the situation at has to be handled with care and on a case by case basis. He said he's seen, on one hand, professors saying horrific things, then faculty are getting fired for urging concern for school shootings.

"Or simply reposting Charlie Kirk's own words — to their own Facebook pages," Horton said. "While I abhor all political violence and believe many of these insensitive posts exhibit poor judgment and bad taste, I also think it's important to recognize that one of the legacies of Kirk's own organization, Turning Point USA, has been to specifically target college professors deemed ideologically 'dangerous' or insufficiently patriotic, and we are definitely seeing the fruits of that project in the effort to dig through faculty members'

private social media pages for any potentially objectionable content. One of TPUSA's most durable legacies is its 'Professor Watchlist,' which is sort of like 'Rate My Professor' but for reporting faculty thought-crime. Professors listed on that website often report doxxing and targeted harassment."

There have also been death threats as a result of the site, NBC reports.

"All that is to say that the widespread rash of firings happening all over the country in the aftermath of Charlie Kirk's murder suggests that this tragedy is being exploited in the interest of a targeted campaign to discredit higher education and reinforce this idea that college is some kind of Weather Underground base camp," Horton said. "So while there may be — in fact, I feel pretty confident that there are — several clear cases where universities were completely justified in disciplining the faculty members who were fired or put on leave, particularly if their statements explicitly incited or celebrated political violence and especially if such statements occurred in the classroom, none of that changes the fact that universities must abide by their existing protocol for due process, including investigations, hearings and opportunities for appeal."

The American Association of University Professors released an advisory Horton said is meant to be a guidance "for a climate in which 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict the consequences of our online speech.'"

The advisory is written with "great alarm" to college and university leaders of their "fundamental duty to protect academic freedom and the absolute necessity to ensure that the freedom to discuss topics of public import without constraint is not curtailed under political pressure."

The advisory also reminds that faculty are entitled to due process in the form of hearings held under long-standing principles before they may be subject to discipline.

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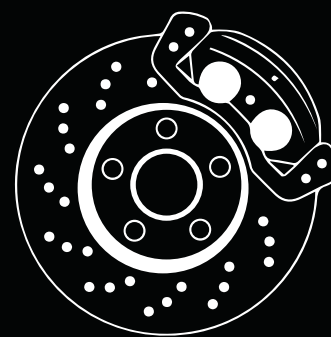
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Free speech for Palestine still threatened

Shelby Bloomer
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As the Western world recognizes the Palestinian state, students and faculty reflect on the value of freedom of speech during times of political duress.

Repercussions have been seen for protesting in favor of Palestine, as seen by the almost 900 arrests made in the United Kingdom against demonstrators in support of Palestine in early September. The concern for freedom of speech has only amplified in light of Charlie Kirk's murder, where several Americans have lost their jobs due to comments made about Kirk.

Jocelyn Stark, president of the College Democrats at Murray State, said while the organization has not seen repercussions for statements they have made in support of Palestine, other than online messages or comments from the community, she recognizes that student organizations have certain protections that University employees may not benefit from. She says many faculty and staff may fear push back from the University, "especially more recently with Kentucky universities seeing professors being fired over speech."

"Having the safety to talk about conflicts in general without fearing repercussions, as a student or club member, is extremely valuable and something we see as necessary on campus. With this conflict being a genocide supported by our own government, it's even more important for our voices, even when in opposition, to be heard," Stark said. "As a club, we encourage everyone on campus to become informed and involved in politics; part of that is becoming an advocate for issues we see that cause inequality without fear of having to conform our message because of retribution."

Some faculty members, like Ihsan Alkhatib, have continued to express their opinions without fear of re-

percussions. Alkhatib, an associate professor of political science and sociology, has been vocal on social media and in interviews with other media outlets about his support of Palestine.

"In a democracy, freedom of speech is the most important right," Alkhatib said. It's in the First Amendment for a reason. Advocating for ending genocide and (promoting) peace and justice in historical Palestine should not be a controversial issue."

Alkhatib describes the conflict as being apartheid or ethnic cleansing of Arab Palestinians by the Israel prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Today, the U.S. is giving unlimited support to Netanyahu, and this support enables his government to commit all kinds of atrocities and war crimes in the West Bank and a genocide in Gaza. And that has been on TV for almost two years!" Alkhatib said. "The world moved to recognize Palestine as a state as a response to Israel opting for genocide/Apartheid/ethnic cleansing. The world wants two states."

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a long-running dispute, spanning several decades where tensions between Arab Palestinians and Jewish Israelis have amounted to major casualties. Much of the violence has been experienced in the Gaza Strip of Palestine, with the death toll surpassing 66,000, according to the *Associated Press*.

Israel, being its own state, exercises a considerable level of control over Gaza and wishes to exert full control over the Palestinian territories, says a press release from the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. However, several western countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Canada and Malta have moved to formally recognize Palestine as its own state, joining a long list of countries and increasing pressure to end the nearly 80-year conflict.

"The recent recognition of Palestinian statehood is



By MacKenzie Rogers/The News

an amazing sign of progress, but ultimately still too slow," Stark said. "The United States has still refused to condemn the ongoing genocide, opting to continue to fund Israel and support racist language that villainizes citizens. We support a free Palestine and a United States that doesn't continue to fund injustices across the world. As Israel and the US has pointed out many times, the ultimate goal of this genocide is complete control over Gaza and their willingness to displace Palestinians in the process. The war crimes that have been committed and continue to be committed at the assistance of our government are horrific."

Alkhatib and the College Democrats are only a small part of the immense support for Palestine seen in the United States, with the topic being widely discussed on social media.

"The world is changing on the Palestine issue. France, Canada, and other Western countries have recognized Palestine as a state," Alkhatib said. "The US is also changing. Most young Americans sympathize with the Palestinians. The Gaza genocide has changed the world."

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Students take research projects to regional conference

Annabelle Massa

Contributing Writer

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Research can be focused on more than math and science. Popular culture, video games and table-top roleplaying games are the focus for two Murray State students.

The Popular Culture and American Culture Association in the South (PCAS/ACAS) are hosting a conference where students and professionals can present research on a variety of topics including movies and other forms of media. PCAS has been hosting yearly conferences since 1971, and ACAS joined them to create a yearly joint conference in 1977. The conference publishes two journals, *Studies in Popular Culture* and *Studies in American Culture*.

Samantha Sextonson, a senior creative writing major, is attending this year to present on the novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" by Philip Dick, the inspiration behind the movie "Blade Runner." Her presentation also explores ethical connections to *The Sims*, a video game franchise that started in 2000.

"The idea sort of emerged when we were talking about morality in gaming and whether or not these simulated lives deserve the respect that we put on human lives. Just because they can't feel emotion doesn't mean they aren't trying to," Sextonson said.

Saralyn Clark, a senior English literature major, is presenting about how women are portrayed and represented in canon, or officially licensed, *Dungeons and Dragons* games.

"It's focused on how women can participate in these games that have mostly centered the male experience instead of an equal experience," Clark said. "For example, how they are sexualized, and how they are represented as demonic or evil, like succubi or hags."

Sextonson's and Clark's ideas both emerged from their Literature in Video Games class: Sextonson's when she read "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" in class, and Clark's when doing an analysis of *Dragon*



Gray Hawkins /The News

Saralyn Clark, left, and Samantha Sextonson, right, took Literature in Video Games in the 2025 spring semester.

Magazine issues from 1980, one of the official D&D magazines at the time. Andrew Black, an English professor, taught the class and suggested Sextonson and Clark participate in the conference.

"It's really interesting to see them thinking about these things where you might think, 'Oh, these are just games,' but they're thinking about them in a really scholarly and serious way," Black said. "We didn't really even talk about either of these topics in class. I've learned almost everything about these topics from these students, which has been really fun."

Black said Sextonson and Clark are presenting their projects with the goal of being published in a journal for humanities or English. Sextonson and Clark said these projects, expanded on outside of class, related to their respective majors.

"It's more of a fun thing," Sextonson said. "I want to work in creative writing, so studying this novel

— specifically a sci-fi novel — was really helpful to see how characters that aren't perceived as equal are portrayed when this was written versus now as a writer."

Clark said some of the literary critiques she's learned about through her major have been useful within her presentation.

"My project focuses really heavily on the narrative and how the audience perceives the narrative," Clark said. "I use a lot of literary criticism in my analysis. Even though it's not a book, there's still a lot of literary techniques to it."

Sextonson and Clark will be joined by Black and Emma Franklin, a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in English pedagogy, who will be presenting a work of her own at the conference.

The 2025 PCAS/ACAS Conference is on Oct. 9-11, in Huntsville, Alabama. More information about the conference can be found at pcasacasconference.org.



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MacKenzie Rogers/The News

Regional feminists form youth outreach discussion group

Gray Hawkins
Lifestyle Editor
ghawkins4@murraystate.edu

In a time and place where expressions of personal opinion are taken as an invitation for discourse, safe and regulated discussion outlets are becoming increasingly necessary. For young progressive-leaning and community-oriented thinkers in the region, the Young Feminist Meetup provides such an outlet.

The Young Feminist Meetup is a discussion group affiliated with West KY NOW, the regional chapter of the National Organization for Women. The group's second meeting was held on Saturday, Sept. 20, at Sweetdots in Murray. The meeting primarily consisted of unguided, open conversation among the group, but Young Feminist organizers Sam Sexton and Reagan Peery began the meeting with a handout of get-to-know-you conversation starter questions.

The first question asked what feminism meant to each person. Sexton said feminism is about a desire for belonging in an environment where you don't feel wanted.

"That's what it means to me, truly and honestly, especially in today's age," she said. "It's hard to have an opinion in a place where it's not wanted or asked for. Trying to fight and get that is tooth and nail, but it's needed nowadays."

Peery said for her, feminism is about a sense of community.

"It's about being able to sit with that community and appreciate that there are other people ... who are like-minded and share the same moral values as you," she said. "There's a lot of negativity, and it's really easy to get lost in that."

Sexton and Peery said Young Feminists Meetup is a result of West KY NOW's desire to reach a younger demographic that is relatively absent in the organization.

"We really like hearing perspectives from all generations," Peery said. "I think it's so important for everybody to be able to express their own opinions no

matter the opinion. It tends to be, nowadays, that one side tends to be a little more silenced than the other in Kentucky."

Christine Lindner, chapter president of West KY NOW, said the Young Feminist Meetups are part of her organization's continued efforts to build a multi-generational community in western Kentucky where people feel safe to express their thoughts and be their authentic selves.

"The Young Feminist Meetup was one of Sam and Reagan's first ideas as a way to create an opportunity for other feminist under 35 to gather together, share stories and build community," Lindner said. "It is hard to be a young adult, especially when you feel isolated due to your beliefs and identity, so finding community outside of work and school is an important way to develop a healthy support system."

Sexton said there is not a set date for the next Young Feminist Meetup, but they intend to have monthly meetings and branch out into regional communities including Benton, Murray, Paducah and Mayfield.

"Since (Young Feminist Meetups) are freshly new, the budget's kind of small," she said. "We're working with what we've got ... I feel (Sweetdots) was very nice. It's very close to (Murray State's) campus, which makes it easily accessible."

Peery said she wants to find more meeting locations that are free and pose minimal risk of members encountering conflict and ridicule in the community.

"We'd love to do more stuff on campus, but it's hard to know what we can and can't do there," she said. "If we're providing a space, we want to make sure it's safe."

West KY Now holds chapter meetings on the first Thursday of each month. Upcoming programming includes the "October Rotluck" seasonal cookout and a donation collection for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The "October Rotluck" is 4:30 - 6 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 19, at the Murray State Doran Arboretum's Large Pavilion. Donations of specific items including underwear, sports bras, packaged snacks and more will go to Merryman House Domestic Crisis Center. Items

can be dropped off at West KY chapter and committee meetings, Young Feminist Meetups, the "October Rotluck" event, Wit's End Records and Future Grounds Coffee.

West KY NOW works to address issues of reproductive rights and justice, economic justice, violence against women, racial justice, LGBTQ rights and Constitutional equality from the local to national level. Lindner said these efforts include providing non-partisan access to voter education resources, community support and rights advocacy for topics of regional concern.

"We believe that working to build a safe, equitable and just community in our town and region will improve the lives of all that live here," Lindner said.

For West KY NOW and Young Feminist Meetup events and programming updates, visit westkynow.org and their Facebook and Instagram pages @westkynow.

Graphic provided by Christine Lindner

West KY NOW specifies the Merryman House's needed donations.

SGA PRESIDENT ALI KHATIB

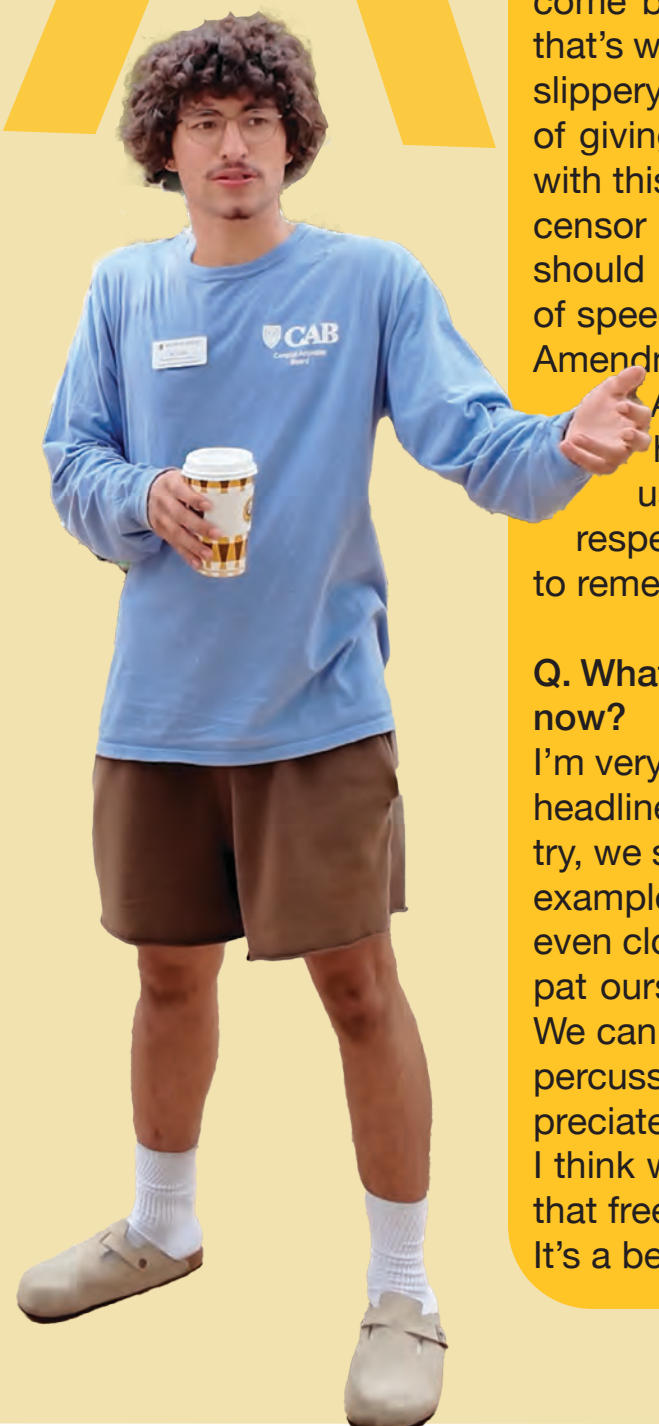
Q. What does freedom of speech mean to you?

Really just expressing the ideas you have. I think when it comes to freedom of speech, it's an interesting issue to have in today's society because not a lot of people understand what freedom of speech actually is. I think for me, freedom of speech is complicated, but we have to understand in society that if we try to censor somebody else, regardless if we don't agree with them or if it's offensive, in turn that allows for them to maybe come back in the future and try to censor us. I think that's why when we look at censorship today, it's a very slippery slope. When you censor somebody, that's kind of giving them permission to say, 'Okay, I don't agree with this thing, and I think it's bad, so I think we should censor it.' But there are some terrible things that we should censor—but I think when it comes to freedom of speech today, we need to be very careful. (The First Amendment) is one of the fundamentals of our country.

A lot of people need to respect it, and we also have to respect other people too. We shouldn't use (the First Amendment) as an excuse to not respect others, and that's something we can't forget to remember.

Q. What are your thoughts on freedom of speech right now?

I'm very optimistic. I think, although you see stuff in the headlines talking about restricting speech, as a country, we still value freedom of speech. If we look at other examples, we look at Third World countries, they're not even close to our level. I think we should still be able to pat ourselves on the back for the level we can speak. We can criticize our government without facing any repercussions for the most part. We really need to appreciate that. We do have some things to work on, but I think we need to embrace the balance and recognize that freedom of speech is integral to our society today. It's a beautiful thing.



TURNINGPOINTUSA MEMBER HANNAH SAAL

Q. What does freedom of speech mean to you?

It's important that everybody has the ability to express what they think. That's the beautiful thing about America. You don't have to agree with everybody. We've had some amazing conversations with people who don't agree with us. But at the end of the day, we're all humans and it's just important to love each other and realize we are all allowed to have our own thoughts.

Q. What are your thoughts on freedom of speech right now?

Freedom of speech is incredibly important for anybody, of course. There are obviously limits on it from hate speech and things that pose a threat to people and stuff. There was a news article that Google admitted to imposing on free speech during the year, when Biden was in the office—they admitted that the Biden administration suppressed free speech for topics like COVID-19 on YouTube and they took suspended accounts even though it wasn't in violation of YouTube's regulations.



WKMS STUDENT REPORTER AUTUMN CRAWFORD

Q. What does freedom of speech mean to you?

I think freedom of speech is mostly just the idea that the government won't react to you in a negative way for saying something against them. But I don't think it's freedom of speech without consequence — I think that people around you will maybe ostracize you for things that you say, and I don't think that's necessarily always wrong. But it's just that the government won't prosecute you or you won't face legal challenges for just saying something against (the government) or your general opinion.

Q. What are your thoughts on freedom of speech right now?

I think it's complicated because I think that the people who tend to say that freedom of speech is being attacked are people who are saying 'I don't like what you're saying, and that bothers me. It makes me feel like my opinions aren't valued.' That's not freedom of speech either, so I think that people are not very open anymore. Even in my classes, people don't like to say their opinions on things and there are unspoken topics you don't talk about. But I do think overall we're doing pretty good with not prosecuting people just for words. I don't feel too bad (about the state of the First Amendment), I think we can recover from where we're at.



Column: Can we really protect the First Amendment?

MacKenzie Rogers

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Within the last two weeks, America has seen a devastating shift in the political landscape following the shooting of Charlie Kirk, a conservative political activist. The aftermath unlocked fears in the hearts of many as thousands witnessed the fundamental pillars of our nation begin to waver. Jimmy Kimmel gets pulled from stations and university professors fired left and right. The modern beginning of the end of our First Amendment rights.

The history of these rights is simple enough. The Bill of Rights, which harbors the first 10 amendments of the United States Constitution, was ratified in America on Dec. 15, 1791. It is this document that has established some of the most foundational rights that U.S. citizens have, each one standing as evidence that the founders of our country wanted to ensure its people had rights secured in place.

It is the First Amendment that journalists have to thank for the freedom of speech and the press, two of the five freedoms established within the amendment. Fifty-five words that have set the precedent of rights that have built America into what it is today, securing freedoms we cling to for hope.

The first freedom mentioned in the First Amendment is the freedom of religion. The freedom of religion allows people the freedom to teach, practice, worship and observe any religion of their choosing, and not to profess or practice one at all. The government is required to respect one's religious beliefs, or lack thereof, according to the amendment. Because of this, separation of the church and state exists, as the Constitution acknowledges that not every person follows the same religion, and prevents the United States from declaring Christianity its national religion. Despite this, it is not uncommon to see political figures use their faith as justification for their stances or opinions on matters.

This particular freedom is known for its modern infringements, with the common battleground centered around public schools. In the Supreme Court case *McCormick v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203, 231 (1948), this is further distinguished: "In no activity of the State is it more vital to keep out divisive forces than in its schools, to avoid confusing, not to say fusing, what the Constitution sought to keep strictly apart."

Fun fact: You have a constitutional right not to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. The "for God" part was added in 1954 and is frequently cited as the reason many do not feel comfortable reciting the pledge.

Next comes the freedom of speech, or the freedom not to speak at all. Plenty of Supreme Court cases that have further established the extent of free speech protections. You can engage in symbolic speech, but no inciting imminent lawless action. The U.S. is currently in a "speech war," according to *The New Yorker*, referring to

recent moves taken by the current Presidential administration on its censorship of notable media organizations, like the Associated Press and *The New York Times*.

The freedom of speech is the most frequently seen of the five freedoms to be questioned or threatened due to every citizen in America having access to foundations that opportune them the chance to have their every thought.

All this said, you have the freedom to speak, kindly or otherwise, but even the right to free speech has its limitations.

- Incitement, provoking unlawful behavior;
- Obscenity, as defined by the legal definition, which is based on the Miller Test;
- Child Pornography: the distribution and creation of child pornography is in a category of unprotected speech;
- Defamation: false statements that cause harm to someone's reputation, including libel and slander. These cases, when brought to court, are hard to prove due to strict legal criteria;
- True Threats: statements that communicate a serious intent to commit an act of unlawful violence;
- Fighting Words: You cannot provoke someone into immediate acts of violence;
- False Commercial Speech: false or misleading advertisements

Unless what you are saying could be twisted into the restrictions above, there shouldn't be any legal retribution, but recent cases have shown that even the legal protections are bendable.

There is a reason that the First Amendment separates the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. Freedom of the press extends beyond what one says, preventing the government from censoring media organizations. This, too, however, has its restraints, restricting media organizations from releasing classified information and state secrets, and subject to punishment for libel and violations of copyright, privacy or judicial orders.

Freedom of the press is often cited as a necessary mechanism for a healthy democracy, with journalists assuming the roles of guards, providing information that discloses to the general public of changes occurring in the world. Without the press, there would be no one to fact-check or question decisions made, discuss laws and bills, or cover live-briefings for the world to see.

As a journalist, the freedom of the press and speech are the two most important freedoms. It is because of the First Amendment that I even have the opportunity to write this column, to have my thoughts on the First Amendment and the disaster that is brewing in D.C.

Without other journalists to report on the affairs, to comment on the problems, we would be blind to the truth hidden behind the curtains. There is a reason the Pentagon wants to censor media outlets from releasing information.

When those investigations stir up some tension and questions, and people wish to vocalize their unease, the right to assemble comes into play. The right to assemble allows people to gather peacefully to express and defend their views and opinions. The moment these assemblies become violent, the protection cast by the right vanishes.

On campus, this is seen in the free-speech zone, but people can assemble almost anywhere with a few exceptions. The government can impose a few restrictions that can impact the time and place one can assemble, the content-neutral time, place and manner restrictions (TPM). Placing noise limits and restricting assemblies on government property are a few of the restrictions under the TPM.

If you want to wave a flag and shout against the tyranny, go ahead! Utilize the voice the Founding Fathers fought to offer us.

The final right inside the First Amendment is the right to petition. Did your right to assemble not do enough? The right to petition allows citizens to complain to the government to "redress grievances" without the fear of punishment. This right lets people write to lawmakers, sign petitions or lobby for change. Petitions are often one of the first legal steps taken to get government recognition of interest in changes. Where the press writes about the grievances, it is the right to petition that sets some change into motion, putting the protection of minority rights in the hands of the people.

The power of petitions is that they only get stronger with more support and visibility, which loops back to the freedom's sibling amendment sharer. You need each pillar of the First Amendment for the structure to stand.

You can think all you want about journalists and the stories we write, about the people who storm the streets with vibrant signs shouting for change. The First Amendment has offered us all a chance to make a stand, to put ourselves in a position to change things. But even if you aren't thinking about petitioning a house bill or critiquing the presidential administration, you could be texting or posting something to Instagram.

Just know, the First Amendment is the reason you can.

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Local Halloween attraction opens doors to horror fans

Shelby Burley
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As the crisp fall air settles over Kentucky, horror enthusiasts and college students are flocking to a regional Halloween attraction in Melber, Kentucky, for a Halloween experience like no other.

Talon Falls Scream Park is located at 2932 State Route 849 West, and is open on select dates in October and November. Hours of operation run from 6:30 to 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Sundays. The park has become a favorite destination for those seeking thrills, chills and spooky fun, giving plenty of opportunity for visitors to experience the frights.

Talon Falls, a 30-40 minute walk-through, features themed areas "House of Blood," "Wasteland," "Undertaker," "Dead Man's Island" and "Wicked Grove," with new additions including "Poison Ivy's Greenhouse" and the "Ice Cream Factory in 3D."

"Blood Creek Haunted Hayride" takes visitors through scenes like a sawmill, meat factory and mutant-infested cavern, while "Dead End" challenges guests to navigate a maze full of surprises.

The park also includes escape rooms, games, food vendors and a gift shop, making for a full evening of entertainment.

Students and locals who have visited Talon Falls said they have been enjoying the experience.

Chyenne Allen, a sophomore animal health/veterinary technology major, said she "absolutely enjoyed" the experience and plans to return next year.

Vance Voyles, a Murray resident, said Talon Falls was a "fantastic place with super friendly staff."

Halloween has roots in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people believed the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred. Bonfires and costumes were used to ward off spirits, traditions that have evolved over centuries into the Halloween we know today.

Talon Falls Scream Park carries on that tradition in a modern, interactive way, offering visitors a chance to celebrate the spooky season with friends and family.

Whether you're seeking scares, fun or a full night of Halloween festivities, Talon Falls Scream Park delivers an unforgettable experience that keeps guests coming back year after year.



Graphic provided by Michelle Ferren

Talon Falls Screampark staff shares promotional material for their featured attractions.

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The Robert H. McGaughey Lecture on Press Freedom and Responsibility

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Don Gonyea: NPR National Political Correspondent

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Racers to open conference with road trip

Parker Lally
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With a record of 0-4, the Racers open conference play on Saturday, Oct. 4, on the road against South Dakota. Week five was Murray State's bye week, which head coach Jody Wright expressed has been an opportunity to challenge the players.

"We basically started back during the bye week, tried to do a lot of fundamentals and challenged the guys to show us what can you show us to help us," Wright said at the press conference held on Monday, Sept. 29. "So we got a lot of reps with the young guys, just, who can block, who can tackle, who can do something with the ball in their hand and who can keep people from doing something with the ball in their hand."

The South Dakota Coyotes defeated the Racers 59-0 at the Roy Stewart Stadium on Oct. 5, 2024. In this game, the Coyotes didn't allow the Racers to score, and on the other hand, they scored eight touchdowns and a field goal.

"Last year I thought they dominated us as bad as I've ever been dominated in a football game in all three phases," Wright said. "So, we've got a great challenge."

South Dakota went on to win their first-ever Missouri Valley Conference Football championship title last season, and finished with a record of 11-3. This season, the Coyotes have a record of 2-3 heading into the conference match up with Murray State.

The Murray State Racers have averaged 18.0 points per game in the four games they have played. South Dakota

has averaged 19.8 points in their five games played.

For the Racers, graduate student quarterback Jim Ogle is leading the team in passing yards, with 748, and senior running back Jawuan Northington leads in rushing yards with 200. Northington is also leading in touchdowns this season, with three rushing touchdowns scored. Redshirt sophomore wide receiver Darius Cannon leads the team in receiving yards with 219 yards on 30 receptions. Ogle, Northington and Cannon are all healthy and will be playing in Saturday's game against South Dakota.

Northington is a player that Wright and the entire football program relies on, and Wright spoke on the type of player he is in Monday's press conference.

"Jawuan, I can't say enough about him, as a person," Wright said. "(He) comes to work everyday (with) a great attitude. He's a guy that ever since I was hired from day one he's kind of been the standard bell cow, I would say, for work ethic, attitude."

Although the upperclassmen have shown their skill and determination this season, Wright sang his praises for the Racer freshman.

"Of course you've got freshman just showing up, a lot of guys that are in our two deep are true freshman," Wright said. "I can't say enough about these young men. They come to work every day fighting, they're proud to put on the Murray State uniform."

Redshirt freshman linebacker Conlee Crossno has been a key part of the Racers defense this season. Crossno scored the first and only touchdown in Murray State's last game against Jacksonville State. Along with this impressive



Kristopher Fister/The News

Graduate student kicker Jack Tannehill completes an extra point attempt.

touchdown, Crossno has one sack and eight tackles in the Racers four games played.

"A guy who was literally a scout team quarterback this time last year is now our starting linebacker," Wright said about Crossno. "Just a gutsy guy that gives you everything he's got every play. He'll cover a kick, play out (in) space, to blitz, whatever you ask him to do, he's going to do it wide open."

In the post game press conference on Sept. 6, Crossno talked about how he does whatever he needs to do for the team.

"There's a lot of popping on that field," Crossno said. "I try to bring myself into every situation I can."

Wright expressed lots of gratitude for his team's moral strength and drive to succeed, but he also explained how at some point the physical determination to win has to match the emotional drive.

"We've got to get some wins," Wright said. "I tell them all week there's a reason there's a scoreboard at the other end of the field and they keep points and we got to find a way to have more points when that last horn sounds than the other team. I tell them every week, nobody's gonna feel sorry for us in this conference, nobody's gonna care how young we are, nobody's gonna care (about) the injuries we have, it's a black and blue conference and they're looking to black and blue you every week."

Racers soccer mid-season update

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The Murray State soccer team awarded head coach Matt Lodge his 65th career win, the most in any tenure in school history against SEMO on Sept. 11, and now sits at 5-4-3 overall and 0-1-2 in league play.

The Racers are ranked No. 7 in the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) and have six more game opportunities to climb up in the ranks before the conference tournament from Nov. 2-9.

Junior defender Megan Wilson earned the first MVC Defensive Player of the Year award of the season after netting the second and final goal in the season opener against Troy, which gave the Racers a 2-0 win to start their 2025 campaign.

The Racers took an early season 1-0 win against Tennessee Tech, which started the year as the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) favorites but have since dropped in the rankings. However, the glory was short lived, as the Racers fell to Xavier 0-8 the following game. The Big East Conference's No. 2 team set the pace with two quick scores in the first 10 minutes, while Murray State was unable to get a shot off until the second half. The Racers had possession of the ball for only 32% of the game's entirety, and their efforts resulted in the largest loss and most goals allowed in the program's history.

The Racers played six straight games without completing a first-half shot until sophomore Lia Manuel scored her first collegiate goal against Marshall (W 3-2) on Aug. 31. The team set a season-high of 29 shots against former OVC rival Austin Peay on Sept. 7, and

sophomore Isa De Santos Gomez earned her first career shutout with two saves.

After gaining footing during non-conference play, the Racers opened conference play with back-to-back ties and ended their six-match unbeaten streak with a 0-1 loss to MVC No. 1 ranked Drake, despite outshooting them 9-7 on Sept. 28. The Bulldogs committed 19 fouls and were issued three yellow cards, in comparison to the Racers' seven fouls.

Five-time MVC Goalkeeper of the Year, junior Griselda Revolorio, now has 161 career saves, which is the sixth most in program history. She earned a season-high seven saves against UNI on Sept. 25, and, most recently, earned three saves against Drake.

Junior forward Breece Bass now leads the team in points (11), shots (48), goals (4) and shots on goal (19). She is on the road to becoming the first Racer to earn at least five goals and five assists in a season since Miyah Watford in 2019. Bass matched another one of Watford's records after shooting eight shots against SEMO on Sept. 11, where the team outshot the Redhawks 29-6 and marked a season-high 15 shots on goal.

Both senior Mary Hardy and Wilson have taken 21 shots, five and nine on goal respectively, and they have both earned three assists.

Throughout the season, the Racers have outshot their opponents in five straight games and taken 20 shots in four straight matches for the first time since 2019. The team has taken a total of 194 shots, bagging 15 and averaging 16.2 shots per game and 1.25 goals per game.

The Racers continue conference play and seek their first win against Belmont since 2020 at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 5, in Nashville.



Kristopher Fister/The News
Seniors Sydney Etter and Mary Hardy celebrate after 3-2 win against Marshall on Aug. 31.



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FOOTBALL

AUG. 30 @ EAST TENNESSEE STATE: L 45-17
SEPT. 6 VS SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA: L 45-24
SEPT. 13 @ GEORGIA STATE: L 37-21

GOLF

SEPT. 8-9 WOMEN @ TOTAL ATHLETE
COLLEGIATE:
4TH OF 9
SEPT. 15-16 WOMEN @ THE VELVET
CLASSIC:
4TH OF 14
SEPT. 8-9 MEN @ MARSHALL
INVITATIONAL:
2ND OF 15
SEPT. 15-16 MEN @ GROVER PAGE CLASSIC:
4TH OF 14

SOCCER

AUG. 28 @ XAVIER: L 8-0
AUG. 31 VS MARSHALL: W 3-2
SEPT. 4 @ UT MARTIN: W 2-1
SEPT. 7 @ AUSTIN PEAY: T 0-0
SEPT. 11 VS SEMO: W 4-0
SEPT. 18 @ ILLINOIS STATE: T 1-1
SEPT. 25 VS UNI: T 1-1
SEPT. 28 VS DRAKE: L 0-1

VOLLEYBALL

AUG. 29 VS AUSTIN PEAY: W 3-1
AUG. 29 VS TN TECH: L 3-0
AUG. 30 VS XAVIER: L 3-1
SEPT. 5 VS WESTERN ILLINOIS: W 3-2
SEPT. 5 VS SAINT LOUIS: L 3-0
SEPT. 6 VS AUSTIN PEAY: L 3-2
SEPT. 12 VS WEBER STATE: L 3-0
SEPT. 12 VS IOWA: L 3-0
SEPT. 13 VS SEMO: L 3-0

CROSS COUNTRY

MEN @ SEMO:
5TH OF 8
WOMEN @ SEMO:
2ND OF 10

SPORTS CALENDAR

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

October

Soccer

Oct. 5 @ Belmont 6 p.m.
Oct. 10 vs SIU 3 p.m.
Oct. 19 vs Evansville 2 p.m.
Oct. 23 @ UIC 6 p.m.
Oct. 26 @ Valparaiso 1 p.m.
Oct. 30 @ Indiana State 1 p.m.

Volleyball

Oct. 3 @ Drake 6 p.m.
Oct. 4 @ UNI 1 p.m.
Oct. 10 vs Indiana State 6 p.m.
Oct. 11 vs Illinois State 1 p.m.
Oct. 17 vs UIC 6 p.m.
Oct. 18 @ Valparaiso 5 p.m.
Oct. 24 vs Bradley 6 p.m.
Oct. 25 vs Evansville 5 p.m.
Oct. 31 @ Illinois State 6 p.m.

Rifle

Oct. 5 vs UT Martin /
West Virginia 9 a.m.
Oct. 18-19 @ UT Martin 9 a.m.
Oct. 25 @ University of Mississippi
9 a.m.
Oct. 26 @ Jacksonville State 9 a.m.

Women's Golf

Oct. 13-14 @ Jonesboro
Oct. 19 @ Clarksville
Oct. 31 @ Huntsville

Men's Golf

Oct. 6-7 @ Jonesboro
Oct. 13-14 @ Acworth
Oct. 26-28 @ Powells

Football

Oct. 4 @ South Dakota 2 p.m.
Oct. 11 vs Illinois State 6 p.m.
Oct. 18 vs SDSU 6 p.m.
Oct. 25 @ Youngstown 1 p.m.

Cross Country

Oct. 4 @ Louisville
Oct. 17 @ Angel Mounds
Oct. 31 @ Evansville

Racers welcome melting pot of players

Laney Evans
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Throughout 100 years of collegiate competition, the Murray State men's basketball team has made 18 NCAA tournament appearances, won 28 regular season conference championships and earned 18 conference tournament championships. The Racers have produced recent NBA draft selections Isaiah Canaan, Cameron Payne and Ja Morant and are now entering their fourth season in the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) with a largely new coaching staff and team.

With the No. 1 transfer class in the MVC according to 247Sports, three preseason victories in the Bahamas and a 92% season ticket renewal rate going into the 2025 season – the highest Murray State has seen since 2022 – Racer Nation is anticipating a season for the ages.

Though many of the team's players and staff are new to western Kentucky, many are no stranger to the collegiate court. Murray State's 18th head coach Ryan Miller spent the last four seasons with the Creighton Bluejays as an assistant and associate head coach, and is bringing many familiar faces to the program with him.

Former Bluejay seniors Fred King and Mason Miller have traded their royal blue for navy and gold after three seasons with the Bluejays and coach Miller as an assistant coach. They shared sentiments in their first practice press conference that despite having a team made up of players from across the country, the disciplined environment coach Miller has promoted good team chemistry and goal-oriented like-mindedness.

"Obviously with a coaching change it's a different philosophy and different things that accompany that, and we're making sure everyone

from the players to the staff knows what the standard is here," said coach Miller during the first practice press conference on Sept. 22. "It's a championship level effort every time we step onto the court whether it's practice or games."

The Racers took an early start to the season in the Bahamas over the summer, sweeping their opponents 3-0. Bahamas native King posted two double-doubles and fellow Mason Miller earned 12 points and seven rebounds. Seven Racers reached double-figures in the second game and Lachlan Crate from New Zealand hit all seven of his field goal attempts in the first.

Bardstown, Kentucky, native JJ Traynor joins the Racers after one season with DePaul and four with the Louisville Cardinals. Traynor played in 32 games last season, 10 of which were starts, and earned career highs of 21 points, 21 blocks, 11 rebounds. As a Cardinal, he appeared in all 32 games of his junior year, started 16 of them and shot 50% from the three-point line.

Among the underclassmen are Murray State's men's basketball program's first French players freshmen Mathis Courbon and Roman Domon, who both played on France's U18 national team. Chicago native and three-time Grind Session league all-star Tristan Ford will join the Racers alongside two-time Daily Memphian All-Metro team selection Dillon Butler out of Memphis to complete the freshman class.

Transfer sophomores Layne Taylor and KJ Tenner played a combined 50 games at Central Arkansas and West Virginia, and 2023's No. 3 ranked prep player Brock Vice joins the Racers from Creighton's 2023-24 sweet 16 team and North Texas. Fellow transfer portal players Ben Shtolzberg and Javon Jackson join from UC Santa Barbara and UIC, while juniors Dylan Anderson and Brayden Shorter join from Boise State and Washburn respectively. These four



Photo courtesy of Creighton Athletics
Head Coach Ryan Miller leads the Racers after four seasons as a Creighton assistant coach.

players rep a combined 557 collegiate games, bringing much needed experience to the team.

Former Creighton player and graduate assistant, Jahenns Manigat, joins the Racer coaching staff as the Director of Player Personnel. After securing an MVC regular season championship and two MVC tournament titles while being a captain for the Bluejays from 2010-14, he played 10 seasons of professional basketball in Austria, his home country, Canada, Cyprus, Kosovo, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The Bluejay's 2014 Most Inspirational Award winner made his return to the team as a graduate assistant for coach Miller, who was an assistant coach, during the 2024-25 season.

After spending the last 12 years with Seton Hall's men's basketball team, Jason Nehring is the new Strength and Conditioning Coach.

He has worked with UK's men's and women's basketball teams and Penn State's athletic department for seven years each and spent four seasons with the Minnesota Vikings NFL team. Bringing six years of coaching experience at Memphis, South Carolina State, and Alabama State, Mardracus Wade joins the Racers fresh off a SWAC tournament title with Alabama State.

The Racers kick start their competition with two exhibition matches, the first at Xavier on Saturday, Oct. 18, and the second against Northern State on Sunday, Oct. 26. Their season officially begins on Monday, Nov. 3, against Omaha in Sioux Falls at the Field of 68 Opening Day Marathon, and their home opener against Mississippi Valley is set to start at 7 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 7 at the CFSB Center.

Seven new players, same mindset

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Fresh off of the 2025 Missouri Valley Conference championship and subsequent trip to the NCAA March Madness tournament, the Murray State women's basketball team kicked off the season with their first practice on Monday, Sept. 29.

Despite boasting a promising recruitment class, a familiar and seasoned coaching staff, and a lengthy legacy, the team is determined to not get too comfortable with their perceived advantage, and to maintain momentum from game one to March Madness.

"Champions don't just accept where they are, they grind to get back to the moment and that's something that we're going to work on," said head coach Rechelle Turner in the first practice press conference. "New team, same mindset."

Throughout the press conference, Turner reminisced on the 2024-25 team's chemistry and said she believes the goals of the 2025-26 team will be achieved through relationship building and team chemistry.

"That was a difference maker for us last year. One through 15, nobody cared who got the credit," said Turner. "Everybody just worked and did their job every single day and that's something I hope this team brings from last year."

The Racers' lone senior guard Briley Pena, who has played in 91 games under Turner's wing, returns to the team with high energy and a mission to take everything game by game. Junior

guard Haven Ford, who averaged 14.9 points per game last season and started in all 33 games, will be returning to the court alongside Pena for the third year in a row. Now that the team has established itself as a force to be reckoned with in the conference, they are determined to capitalize on the opportunity rather than remain stagnant.

"There's still a lot more that we can work towards and fight for. I feel like we still just started," Ford said. "Us winning the championship took years and a lot of commitment and dedication but there's still more left for us."

Among the rest of the returners are junior guard and 2024-25 season starter Halli Poock, who was top-five last season in the MVC in points per game and assists per game, and Sophomore guards Jada Cook and Braxcynn Baker, who each saw playing time in 32 games last season.

During National Signing Day on Nov. 18, 2024, the team added three freshman players to the 2024-25 signing class. Hailing from London, Kentucky, guard Brooke Nichelson joins the Racers after leading North Laurel High School to back-to-back KNSAA 13th region championships and averaging 18 points, 9.8 rebounds and 47% from the three-point line.

Three-time Indiana All-State honoree and 2023 Indiana 3-A state champion Gabby Spink brings size and strength to the Racers, as well as elite passing skills. Jackson, Tennessee, native and two-time TSSAA all-state honoree Jaidynn Askins guided her team through a 34-0 trip to the TSSAA state championship in 2023.

"We hope the ability to impact the game on both ends of the floor will be



Kristopher Fister/The News

Racers celebrate after winning the 2025 Missouri Valley Conference Tournament.

a consistent hallmark of this class," Turner said to Racer Athletics.

The team also welcomes Ohio Valley Conference Freshman of the Year, Sharnecce Currie-Jelks, who averaged 15.2 points and 6.9 rebounds per game in her first year of collegiate play at UT Martin. Shooting 54% from the field, Currie-Jelks left the Skyhawks as a top-5 player in scoring, rebounding and blocked shots. Fellow transfer Ellery Minch joins the Racers after playing 21 games with DePaul and scoring a career-high nine points.

In September, the team announced that the program's all-time leading scorer and rebounder Katelyn Young would be rejoining the program as an assistant coach. This has added a new level of trust in the coaching staff that

Turner feels has already prompted improvements in the post players.

"It was so much fun playing with her and now playing for her, and her helping us and teaching us will help us a lot," said Pena.

As practices become daily and the season inches closer, the Racers are determined to reset and remain focused on the tasks ahead.

"I think our mindset now is not getting complacent," said Ford. "It's so easy, just coming off of a championship [to say] we did it, you know? So now we have to be ready to grind and try to do it again."

The Racers will begin their journey back to the MVC tournament on Monday, Nov. 3, at their non-conference home opener against Trevecca at the CFSB Center.



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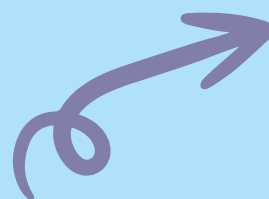
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