



THE MURRAY STATE NEWS

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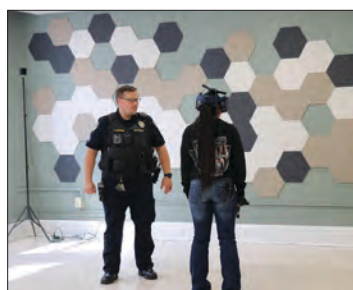
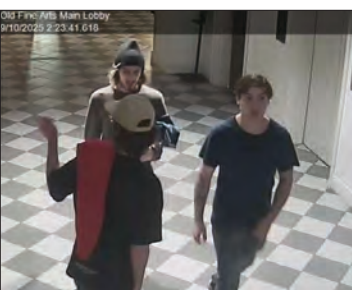
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NEWS

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Owen pressured minor, victim says

Harper Spaulding
Staff Writer
Jspaulding2@Murraystate.edu

During Wednesday's preliminary hearing, Murray State employee Dustin Owen and his legal defense challenged the charge of custodial interference and sought bond reduction in his case.

At the hearing Murray State Police Sergeant Justine Swope, who arrested Owen after the incident on Oct. 19, testified about the arrest and Owen's charges. Swope recounted much of the same information that was in Owen's arrest citation, but provided more details on his conversation with the victim after Owen's arrest.

According to Swope, the 16-year-old victim said she had felt pressured into sexual intercourse by Owen. The victim also said she had taken pills prior to being found with Owen, which prompted police to take her to the hospital. Swope did not explain what kind of pills she said she took, or if anything was found in her system at the hospital. Swope said the police are continuing to work with the victim on this case.

Owen's legal defense did not contest the rape charges during the hearing, but called for dismissing the charge of custodial interference. Custodial interference refers to the act by which one takes or keeps someone from their legal custodian. The prosecution said that by keeping the victim from her family for the night, and ignoring previous warnings by police to contact law enforcement if she made contact with him again, Owen had interfered with custodial protections.

Owen's lawyer challenged this, saying that the victim was not kept from her parents against her will and did not express feeling unable to leave Owen's home.

The defense also said because there was no communication by Owen prior to her coming to his house he can not be said to have taken or enticed her away from her legal custodian.

Calloway County District Judge Randall Hutchens, who presided over the hearing, agreed with the prosecution and decided to keep the charges of custodial interference. Hutchens also agreed to lower Owen's bail to \$10,000 after the defense said his current bail was too high for two Class D felonies.

Owen, a post-doctoral researcher for Murray State University, was arrested by Murray Police on charges of custodial interference and third-degree rape. According to the arrest citation, the arrest came after Owen admitted to having sexual intercourse with a minor at his home in Murray, following a separate incident with the same juvenile earlier this month.

A Murray State University spokesman did not comment on whether Owen's employment has been affected by the arrest. Neither on his status as a professor despite evidence, saying it was a personnel matter.

"We are aware of the situation involving a Murray State employee and are working through the institutional process," a University statement read. "As this is a personnel matter, Murray State University has no further comment at this time."

According to the police citation, Owen was arrested by Murray Police on Oct. 19 following a report of a missing juvenile being found with him at a location in Farmington, Kentucky.

The juvenile was described by police as a "habitual runaway" and someone who had a previous history with Owen.

On Oct. 1, the minor was found at Owen's home in Murray. According to the citation, Owen admitted to



Calloway County Jail

having sexual intercourse with the underage girl. The officer on the case explained to Owen that she was only 16, and told him that if she made contact with him again to contact the police.

Murray State President Ron Patterson in an interview with the *Murray State News*, said Owen is on administrative leave without pay, and he intends to be transparent on the matter.

"I promised you that (as) part of my leadership, and we're going to continue that through that vein of being honest and with integrity and leading the institution," he said.

Minister preaches, police maintains crowd

River Murt
News Editor
rmurt1@murraystate.edu

By the front doors of Curris and outside the free speech zone, preacher Nicholas Bowling spoke and led prayer before an audience on Oct. 28.

The audience spread from the doors of Curris to Howton Agricultural Engineering Building, and required Murray State police officers to maintain entry into Curris as well as passage between the north and south sides of campus.

As Bowling preached, many audience members chatted, either in agreement or criticism of him, some shook hands with one another, with several wearing Make America Great Again caps or affiliated apparel.

Notably, Colson Thomas, College Republicans member and Judicial Board justice, was present at the event. *The News* reached out to Thomas for comment on Bowling's visit and preaching, but he did not reply.

Bowling preached about subjects like masturbation, that he referred to as "sexual immorality," his own history with alcohol and sins.

On Bowling's website, he is described as someone who only knew religion and not Christ, resulting in him living in "a very hypocritical lifestyle." After leaving the military, he began college and en-

tered a fraternity where he had "all the access to all the alcohol, drugs and girls" he desired.

"I never want to go back to those things," Bowling said. "Why not just because he said, don't do them, because I have no desire for those things any longer. I don't desire to get drunk. I don't drink any alcohol. Now. Why? Why? Why would I? I have no desire. The reasons I was drinking to get drunk, and the short time pleasure that it brought to me, I have no desire because he's so much better knowing him, living for Him, the Holy Spirit we've been talking about, the Holy Spirit He lives on the inside of us."

Bowling's session for the event was supposed to run from noon-2 p.m., but Murray State allowed the event to run over for Q&A.

One of the questions a student asked Bowling was why do religious leaders, or leaders in general, "cherry pick" pieces of scripture and ignore others.

"Selfishness," Bowling answered. "They want to do their own thing, deceit taught them wrong, the Devil was tempting them--there could be a lot of reasons why people would cherry pick. Maybe they had an experience in life that was hurtful or painful that's too hard for them to bear ... so they just change the Bible's teachings and their doctrine to fit their circumstances and their experiences and what is pleasing to them."



Nicholas Bowling answers questions during Q&A

Kristopher Fister/The News

Robbers take scooters, backpacks

Suspects gained access by finding unlocked doors

River Murt
News Editor
rmurt1@murraystate.edu

Three men were arrested and charged after an investigation found they had unlawfully entered the Old Fine Arts building, Oakley Applied Science and Roy Stewart Stadium and stole items from within.

In an interview with the Murray State Police, one of the men said the three had gone around campus and found entry into buildings by “finding doors which were unlocked.”

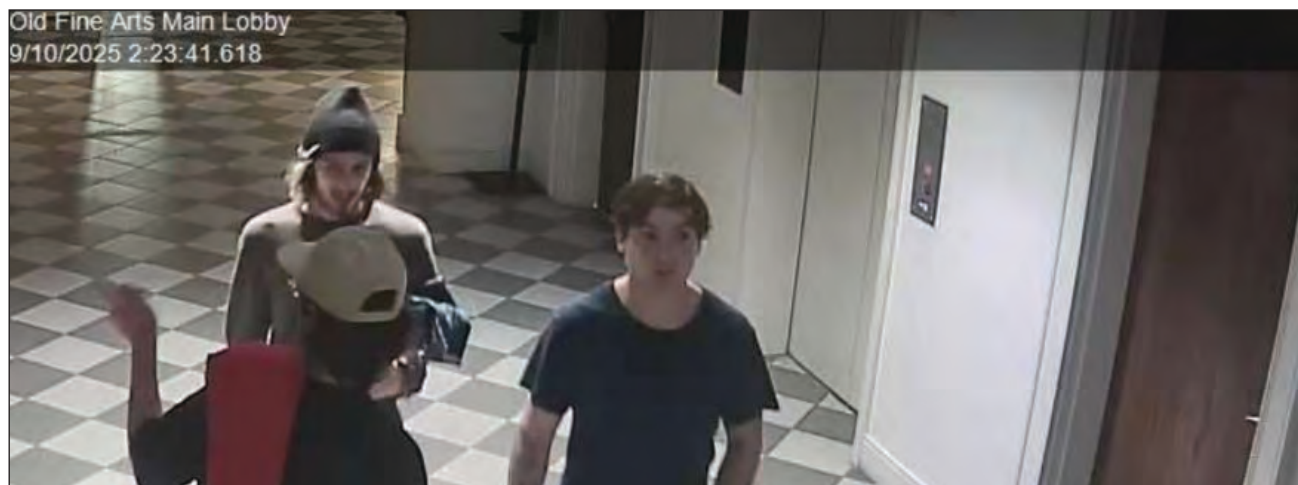
The men charged were not Murray State students. The investigation began with a reported theft of an electric scooter from Station 74, Sept. 10. According to the Kentucky Incident-Based Reporting System, the theft occurred between 4:12 and 5:32 a.m.

According to the report, the theft was picked up by footage, which depicted three white, brown-haired males. One with a tattoo on his right calf, another with a tattoo on his arm. The report stated police began looking into determining “other potential targeted areas as well as the suspects’ point of origin.”

Murray State Police found the same suspects from Station 74 found on security camera footage “in and around multiple other academic and residential buildings” around the early morning of Sept. 10.

After police found multiple items had been stolen from the first floor office of Stewart Stadium, photos were shown to staff members and resulted in the identification of one of the suspects. The suspect identified was Colton W. Smith, nicknamed “Pinky.”

According to the report, Smith said with Murray



Security camera footage of suspects

Police he met with two others, Timothy Gilbert and James Swilde III, at a skate park in Murray around midday, Sept. 9, before the thefts. After that, Smith said the three left from CEV North to a gas station, Cook Out and Taco Bell before eventually going to campus.

“It was found that three suspects had entered unlawfully into the Old Fine Arts, MSU Applied Science (North) and Roy Stewart Stadium (first floor),” the police report read. “(They) stole multiple items from inside of the buildings and at least two electric scooters from other campus locations.”

Smith’s account of events was similar, the police report continued, and confirmed stolen items taken from the stadium as well as the scooters.

According to the report, Smith said the three gained access by trying doors that were unlocked — and jumped the external gate of the stadium field then through the stadium tunnel doors that “cannot be secured properly.”

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Veterans yet to be paid, concerns rise

Government shutdown causes stress for vets

Baden Grubbs

Contributing Writer

bgrubbs@murraystate.edu

Josh Williams, coordinator of the Office of Veteran and Military Student Success for Murray State, said the DOD Tuition Assistance program has not been given budget approval, and has been paused as a result.

The government has been shut down for 29 days and since the announcement on Oct. 1, many programs requiring government assistance or funds have been cut off, with social security, medicare and medicaid, SNAP benefits and even Veteran Affairs facing threats. The military is also having to continue duties without pay during the shutdown.

"We got paid this 15th," Army Specialist Gage Dick said. "But even then I think it's disgusting that politicians are willing to sacrifice our funding but not their wages when they shut down our government, because our army schools and training activities that require government funding are still halted from the shutdown."

Williams also said the Chapter 35 Dependents Education Assistance beneficiaries have not been paid as a result of a glitch in the VA payment system and despite furloughing the call center, GI bill benefits and VA educational services are unaffected.

For perspective, based on information on the DOD's website, the DOD TA program compensated \$139,250 in tuition fees across 70 participants at Murray State during the 2023 fiscal year. At an estimated \$9,084 per person, the program covers around 22% of tuition fees for the average participant.

VA Certification Specialist Jeremy Vaughn said with



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers

this lack of financial support, combined with infrequent pay, many service members are unable to make tuition payments. As a result, they may be forced to invoke Chapter 33 of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

If activated, the bill will cover all tuition fees, housing and other academic costs for eligible members on a month-by-month basis. However, these benefits can come at the detriment of their dependents.

"This is a last resort for many people," Vaughn said. "If you use it during your time in the military, it can't be passed down to your children."

Vaughn explained that most who pursue higher education choose to forego these benefits in favor of tuition programs, so that they can be transferred to their

children instead. The chapter is single-use by nature, and cannot be switched for another plan. To pay for a brief lapse in financial assistance, many are having to decide between their own future or their children's.

Vaughn added that these factors will cause many taking classes electronically to become disenrolled. Without in-person resources, many will be forced to drop out if they are unwilling to activate Chapter 33.

Murray State University has yet to send out collection letters to those using the GI bill. It is unclear how many students have abandoned tuition assistance programs or if the University has any plans in place to assist those in the military during this time. VA services for healthcare, education and funerals remain open.

School of agriculture celebrates 100

Denys Bogushko

Contributing writer

dbogushko@murraystate.edu

The Hutson School of Agriculture celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. In its time, the school has come a long way from a few classes at a farm to a complete school with dual credit, associate, baccalaureate, master's, specialist and doctoral programs in 2025.

According to Dean Brian Parr, originally the school was founded as a department of agriculture in 1925, when Murray was a college designed to prepare teachers. The first teachers were Stanley Pullen and his wife Mable, who taught here from 1925 to 1935. They had a farm near the University, where they lived and often held classes. Eventually, it was donated to the University.

Former Dean Tony Brannon said it became a school in the year 2003 as part of campus restructuring. In 2010, it was renamed to the Hutson School of Agriculture in recognition of the gift of Cindy Hutson in memory of her late husband Dan Hutson Jr.

As part of this gift Murray State received another farm of 160 acres just north of town and a \$3 million endowment.

The school of Agriculture now consists of three departments for agricultural science, animal and equine science and pre-veterinary medicine.

Brannon said he's proud of the alumni network that's developed and advanced agriculture in the region and throughout the U.S.



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers

"Murray State agriculture has a strong foundation and I am glad to have played a small part in that during the last 50 years," he said.

"The best thing about my role is primarily dealing with people," Parr said. "I enjoy interacting with our students as much as I possibly can. We have a great faculty, and I feel like my job is to help faculty to do the things they're passionate about and then I have to interact with the entire field of agriculture in general, whether it is business or farming, and by interacting with this people on a bigger scale, I get to see what opportunities for our students when they leave and go out to turn into a work force."

Jeffrey Young, agriculture economics instructor, said his care for Murray State resonates with the school of agriculture.

"I really enjoy interacting with students inside and outside of the classroom, whether it's teaching, mentoring, student research projects or whether it's facul-

ty agribusiness club," Young said.

Dani Rubenacker, an alum, said that the School of Agriculture had a huge impact on the person she is today.

"As a student I was given countless opportunities that continue to benefit me every single day," she said. "From learning to show pigs to traveling to the capital to touring many different agricultural programs across the country, all have left a lasting impact on who I am. My classroom experiences have been just as beneficial because of our amazing professors who believe in a good education. They always find ways to meet our needs of learning as a student. I love that every single professor allows us to have hands-on learning experiences. I simply cannot say enough good things about the Hutson School of Agriculture. It has given me countless experiences, connections far and wide, some of my best friends, an amazing education and memories that will last me a lifetime."

Students learn in virtual crime lab

Shelby Bloomer

Contributing Writer

sbloomer@murraystate.edu

Murray State's criminal justice and social work department has opened a new virtual reality lab. This new addition to the department provides its students with an opportunity to practice de-escalation techniques in simulations depicting real-world situations.

The system, usually run by a Murray State police officer, allows for an immersive experience where the virtual people actually respond and engage in conversations, according to senior criminal justice student Avery Mayer.

"I have used the VR simulator twice up to this point," Mayer said. "One thing that I find extremely interesting about the simulator is the realism it portrays. Not only do you get to act as an on-duty officer, but you also speak to the suspects through the VR simulator. It is great for learning de-escalation tactics and learning how to handle difficult situations. The first simulation I participated in (involved) a homeless man, and I was able to use different dialogue to assess and handle the situation."

Mayer said the lab is one of the few ways students in the department can gain firsthand experience and practice the skills they have learned in the classroom.

The VR lab is such a crucial addition to the department," Mayer said. "Being a criminal justice major, it is very hard to experience 'hands-on' learning unless you land an internship role. Many of the things we learn about are simply impossible to be hands-on with due to the dangers/nature of the topics. The VR lab allows us to actually see situations that we learn about in our classes, and challenges us to see how we would handle those related to our field."

She says the tactics that students use when participating in the simulations include "remaining calm and thinking clearly under high stress situations," and "using calm and assertive language and giving clear commands."

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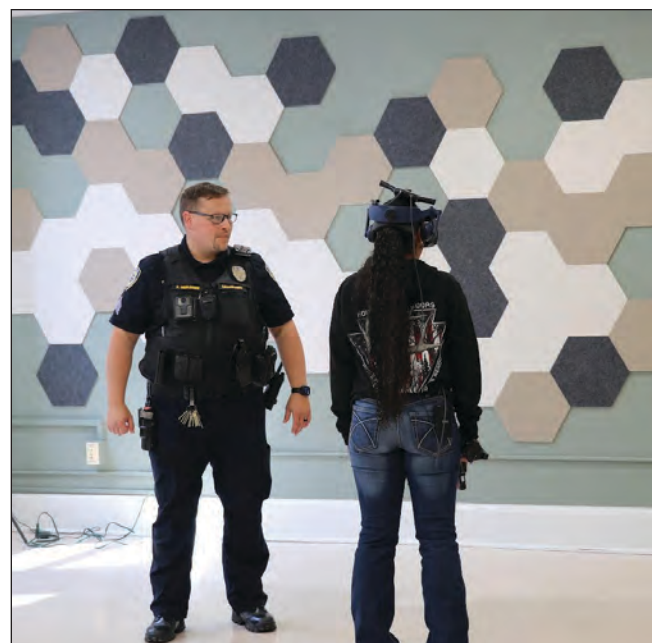


Photo provided by Katy Hancock
Sgt. Richard Melbauer teaches in the crime lab

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Patterson's first Homecoming

Murray State president discusses first Homecoming at Murray State, filling his cabinet, government shutdown effects, legislative priorities during a budget year and an update on the vet school

Zach Simmons

Editor in Chief

zsimmmons@murraystate.edu

Preparing for your first Murray State Homecoming is hard enough. Still, Murray State President Ron Patterson said he's excited about all the events scheduled and about seeing all of the returning alumni on campus.

"Really, I'm just looking forward to experiencing them all and trying to be at as many as I possibly can," Patterson said. "And meet(ing) as many as I can and welcome them back to campus, but also encourage them to tour campus and the facilities that are being erected as well."

Anyone who follows Patterson's social media platforms may have seen him sharing videos of students around campus showcasing their talents, welcoming recruits to football games or congratulating the newest student-athlete commitments. Patterson said making and sharing those types of posts helps recruit new students, but also shows the University from the president's perspective.

"It helps tell our story, right, and I think that's what's most important," Patterson said. "I think that prospective students, their families, their guardians, their parents, they want to know what makes this place special."

Patterson said he feels he has a responsibility in recruiting students and likes to think of himself as an extension of the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

Filling his cabinet

The University posted three positions on Oct. 3 to fill key positions in the upper administration. Those positions are provost/vice president of academic affairs, vice president of finance and assistant vice president of public affairs. Tim Todd, current provost, will step down from his role on Oct. 30 as will Jackie Dudley, vice president of finance. Jordan Smith, who served as assistant vice president of public affairs, left Murray State to take a similar role at Eastern Kentucky University.

Patterson said the University has entered a partnership with Greenwood Asher and Associates, a full-service search firm. Patterson said GA&A will be on campus the week of Nov. 3, meeting with University constituents to see what each group is looking for out of the people who could fill these positions.

"We know we have a job description, we know we have duties and responsibilities," Patterson said. "But what characteristics (and) intangibles are people looking for (from) these candidates that we're trying to bring on campus."

Patterson also said they're hoping to bring three or four candidates for each position to campus "to introduce to the community (and) have input."

Patterson said Wendy Cain is currently serving as the interim vice president of finance, and no interim provost has been named. He said he is working closely with Robert Pervine, Renee Fister and Ashley Ireland, who are in the provost's office, to fill the position.

Government shutdown effects

It has been roughly a month since the government shut down, and Murray State has been affected in more ways than one. Patterson mentioned the TRiO and Upward Bound programs as things that have been



Dr. Ron Patterson and Editor in Chief Zach Simmons talking after their October meeting.

Photo courtesy of Shawn Touney

impacted. He also said the University has "had to make some business decisions" in relation to looking out for students. He mentioned that TRiO's discontinuation is being associated with DEI.

"The federal funds nationally have not been discontinued, so the program has not been shut down," Patterson said. "They're questioning the purpose of those programs and the dollars being spent."

Patterson also said the shutdown will immediately impact research grant dollars, if they haven't already. He said they're working closely with Dr. Laura Bennett (Sponsored Programs) as the situation develops.

"I don't see the landscape changing in the next 20 or 30 days," Patterson said. "I could be wrong, but I think we just have to be patient as a campus and continue to lean on each other and ask questions and see where we can support and lift each other up."

MSU budget and legislative priorities

Murray State University is in a budget year, and Patterson was honest about what the University's top four priorities are for upcoming legislative sessions. Patterson said there was no preference for these, but they'd like to get all four.

"Number one is our asset pool preservation request," Patterson said. "We're asking for significant dollars there."

He continued by mentioning an "emergency vet teaching clinic," saying they were looking for almost \$48 million and that it will be a part of the west campus with the already appropriated construction.

The next thing he mentioned was a pool of funds to continue addressing deferred maintenance across campus. Lastly, he said the University is seeking approval for a College of Medical Sciences facility. For this project, Murray State will need \$60 million, and the facility would partner with the University of Louisville.

On Oct. 20, a six-question survey about "intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity in the classroom or

on campus" was sent to all students. The email said responses would be anonymous and used only in a "report summary or aggregated form." Patterson shed some more light on it.

"It's directed through to us from the General Assembly," Patterson said. "It's directly tied to H(ouse) B(ill) 4. We are required to survey our student population, faculty and staff. We then pose those six questions, and we are to take the aggregate data back to the Commonwealth and the Attorney General's office to see if we are in compliance."

Vet school update

Patterson also provided an update on where the College of Veterinary Medical Sciences is at Murray State.

"We are anticipating that we'll go before the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education in November," Patterson said.

Patterson hopes for a favorable response to the degree approval so they can begin the "request for proposal" process and start working toward construction of the building. He also said that if approval doesn't happen in November, hopefully it'll happen in January.

Closing remarks

Patterson also bragged on the coaches of the school's sports teams. He noted rifle competing at a high level to start their season, soccer's fourth straight win to clinch a Missouri Valley Conference tournament bid, the upcoming men's and women's basketball seasons and football continuing to get better with each passing week.

Patterson said he's excited with how things on the academic side of campus have been going, making sure to mention that even though he can't attend everything, he knows what's going on.

"(I'm) trying to stay clued in with everything that's going on, while trying to put our students in the best possible situations for them to thrive and be successful," Patterson said.

NPR correspondent shares outlook on state of press

Shelby Burley
Contributing Writer
sburley@murraystate.edu

The Robert H. McGaughey Lecture welcomed Don Gonyea, national political correspondent for NPR, to Lovett Auditorium at Murray State University on Wednesday, Oct. 23. During his talk, Gonyea discussed the importance of press freedom and the responsibilities that come with it.

He addressed the ongoing discussion surrounding freedom of speech as a central element of democracy and noted the challenges of maintaining open dialogue in a time influenced by social and political pressures.

"Freedom of the press isn't just a privilege — it's a responsibility," Gonyea said. "Our job is to make sure the public gets accurate, fair and complete information, even when it's difficult to do so."

Gonyea also spoke about the growing impact of misinformation, biased reporting and false content generated through artificial intelligence. Throughout his lecture, he highlighted the role of journalists in informing the public and contributing to the exchange of ideas that shape society, noting that journalism continues to serve an essential function in providing accurate information and supporting the public's right to know.

Gonyea first joined NPR in 1986, covering labor unions, the automobile industry and local issues in his home state of Michigan. Over the course of his career, he has received numerous honors, including contributing to NPR's 2000 Peabody Award. In addition to reporting, he occasionally hosts NPR news programs, contributes to other media outlets and teaches journalism. A native of Monroe, Michigan, Gonyea is an

honors graduate of Michigan State University.

Since 2010, Gonyea has served as NPR's national political correspondent, known for his in-depth, on-the-ground reporting from across the United States during election seasons. He began covering politics full-time for NPR during the 2000 presidential campaign and later served as White House correspondent throughout George W. Bush's presidency, reporting live on major events including the aftermath of Sept. 11.

The event was presented as part of the Robert H. McGaughey Fund for Excellence in Journalism and Mass Communication, established in 2020 through a bequest from the late McGaughey. The fund supports programs that promote quality journalism education at Murray State and honor McGaughey's lifelong commitment to ethical, responsible reporting.

In his remarks, Gonyea addressed the evolving role of journalists in an age of misinformation and digital noise, underscoring the press's duty to inform the public accurately and fairly. He also raised a question about the changing definition of media: "What is the media? Is it the people who own Substack? Is it everyone who has a social media handle?"

Gonyea said the definition of journalism has become less distinct in recent years. He explained that with the rise of independent online platforms and user-generated content, almost anyone can share information — or misinformation — with a wide audience. He added that this shift challenges traditional journalists to work even harder to maintain credibility and public trust.

"Young readers must apply a certain level of critical thinking and sometimes even inject their own biases to avoid propaganda," Gonyea said.

He also noted that journalists today face growing



Mya Bolton /The News

Gonyea spoke with WKMS's Daniel Hurt about his experiences in political correspondence.

distrust and hostility, often being labeled as the "enemy of the people." Despite these challenges, he said the influx of young readers and writers entering the field will be crucial in restoring faith in the press.

"We need journalists," he said. "We need people and news organizations committed to telling the truth to the people."

In an era defined by both abundant information and widespread misinformation, Gonyea spoke about the responsibility journalists have to verify facts and provide accurate reporting. He noted that even as technology and media platforms continue to evolve, the fundamental purpose of journalism remains the same: to inform the public, ask questions and report the truth.

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Speech students build skills, broaden perspectives

Gray Hawkins

Features Editor

hhawkins4@murraystate.edu

With two tournaments and a number of accolades under their belt, the Speech and Debate Union heads out this week-end for Middle Tennessee State University's SDU tournament.

Murray State's SDU traveling team has spent this semester honing their preparation and oration skills in practice twice a week. Ryan Goke, the SDU coach and an associate professor of organizational communication and leadership, said their two competitions so far — the Big Apple, a virtual tournament hosted by Queens University, and the Crimson Classic, an in-person tournament at the University of Alabama — allowed the team to see the payoff of their hard work.

"My students have put in so much work to really polish their own skills," he said. "I think they've started seeing the success of how they stack up against other powerhouse schools."

Coleton Boyd, a sophomore physics and mathematics double major, joined SDU in early September. Along with fellow novice SDU members Essabella Voss and Hailey Meshew, Boyd attended the Commonwealth Honors Academy at Murray State in 2024, where he took a class with Goke. He said he has enjoyed the experience and opportunities the SDU has given him.

"I love all my teammates, and I'm very glad to be friends with them and talk outside of debate," Boyd said. "I didn't necessarily have a real sense of community on campus before I joined (SDU)."

Goke said the Crimson Classic is a "grueling" tournament with a \$10,000 endowment for the overall winner in speech events, drawing in schools from across the nation. Novices Boyd, Meshew and Voss focused on debate events while varsity members Samuel Harless, Caleb McCurren and Samuel Miller took on speech events. McCurren took sixth place in his speech event with a dramatic interpretation piece. Meshew was awarded Top Novice in the After Dinner Speaking event. Voss and Boyd both advanced to the quarter finals in the novice debate division, with Boyd winning the final round's judges' votes in a 3-0 decision and earning fifth place in novice division speakers. Boyd said his teammates were instrumental in preparing

“That's going to help any kind of literacy you have in the media, and it's helped me be a more well-informed citizen.

-Coleton Boyd

him for a debate topic he had little background in.

"You can get (a topic) you know nothing about, and after 30 minutes of prep, you're an expert," he said. "That's going to help any kind of literacy you have in the media, and it's helped me be a more well-informed citizen. That's one thing about debate that I don't think gets talked about enough."

Murray State's SDU placed third in the overall debate sweepstakes. Goke said points are assigned every round, with winners earning three points while the other competitors earn one.

"The part that's most impressive to me is we got third, but (the) other two teams had probably around 10 to 15 students," Goke said. "If I have 15 students who lose, that's still 15 points. If I have three students who all win, that's only nine points. These students had a 63% win record between them. That's the reason they were able to rank at all."

The team's strategy going into the next tournament is to pair each varsity member with a novice for MPDA-style debate.

Boyd said it is an opportunity to improve trust and communication in the team while still focusing on self-improvement.

"I want to make sure I'm improving individually, even if that means at the next tournament, I don't do as good as I've done in the past," he said. "I'm not as concerned with taking home a trophy as much as getting better."

After returning from the MTSU tournament, the SDU's last event of the year will be the Dean's Debate on Thursday, Nov. 6, at Murray State. Goke said the event is a good showcase of the skills his team has been building and a means to make speech and debate events more accessible to the campus community with interactive features.



Photo by Jeremy McKeel

Boyd reached Novice IPDA elimination rounds in his first and second tournaments, taking second place in The Big Apple and first in the Crimson Classic.

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The News wins 7 national awards

The Murray State News won six Pinnacle Awards, including two first places, from the College Media Association during MediaFest in Washington, D.C., Oct. 15-18.

The Pinnacle Awards recognize top student media work. The contest attracted more than 3,300 entries across several enrollment divisions, with 1,165 finalists across eight categories. The News competes in Division II, a classification based on enrollment sizes (3,000 to 9,999 undergraduate students).

Winners were:

■ First place - Aly Adler, Ania Boutin and River Murt, breaking news multimedia coverage for the February 2025 power outage.

■ First place - Ania Boutin, profile story, "Climbing to Freedom" in Gateway magazine.

■ Third place - Elisha Butryn, print advertisement, MSU Recruitment ad in Gateway magazine.

■ Honorable mention - Kristopher Fister, sports photo, NCAA first round.

■ Honorable mention - MacKenzie Rogers and Kristopher Fister, newspaper spread, a design about Racer basketball in the Jan. 25, 2025 edition.

■ Honorable mention - Zackary Claggett, audio-video feature story, a story about a music business student.

The News competes in Division II, a classification based on enrollment size (3,000 to 9,999 undergraduate students. Schools in this division include Pepperdine University, Tulane University, Vanderbilt University, Southeast Missouri State University, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Southern Methodist University and Drake University.

"*The Murray State News* won three Pinnacles in 2024, and we've doubled that in 2025," said Leigh Landini Wright, adviser and associate professor of journalism at Murray State. "This shows that we continue to improve and that we can compete on a national level. These student journalists pursue excellence with every story, every photo, every video, every design."

Zach Simmons, editor-in-chief, joined *The News* staff last year as sports editor. He praised the staff for their dedication.

"I am so happy with our staff and what they've put into this organization," Simmons said. "Not just this year's staff, but last year's as well. The continued hard work ethic has carried over and I'm really happy to be around such a dedicated crew."

Wright, who began advising in fall 2023, was named an Emerging Adviser of the Year by the College Media Association. The award, which required letters of support and a nomination form, recognizes advisers with less than five years of experience in that role. Wright has taught journalism at Murray State since 2011 and previously worked in a variety of roles at *The Paducah Sun* for 16 years. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Murray State.

The News changed from a weekly printed newspaper with a website to a digital-first publication with a monthly newspaper in fall 2023. This change has allowed students to experience a digital-first news organization while still maintaining the tradition of a printed newspaper. *The News* also produces two magazines a year: Gateway, a glossy product that focuses on feature stories about western Kentucky, and Racer



Photo by Leigh Landini Wright/The News
Chief videographer Aly Adler shows off her first place award for breaking news multimedia coverage at the awards show.

Guide, a print newsmagazine that serves as an orientation guide for new students.

Founded in 1927, *The Murray State News* is an award-winning student-led publication. *The News* is among the ACP Pacemaker Top 100 news organizations and has a long tradition of excellence. To read *The News* online, go to www.murraystatenews.org.



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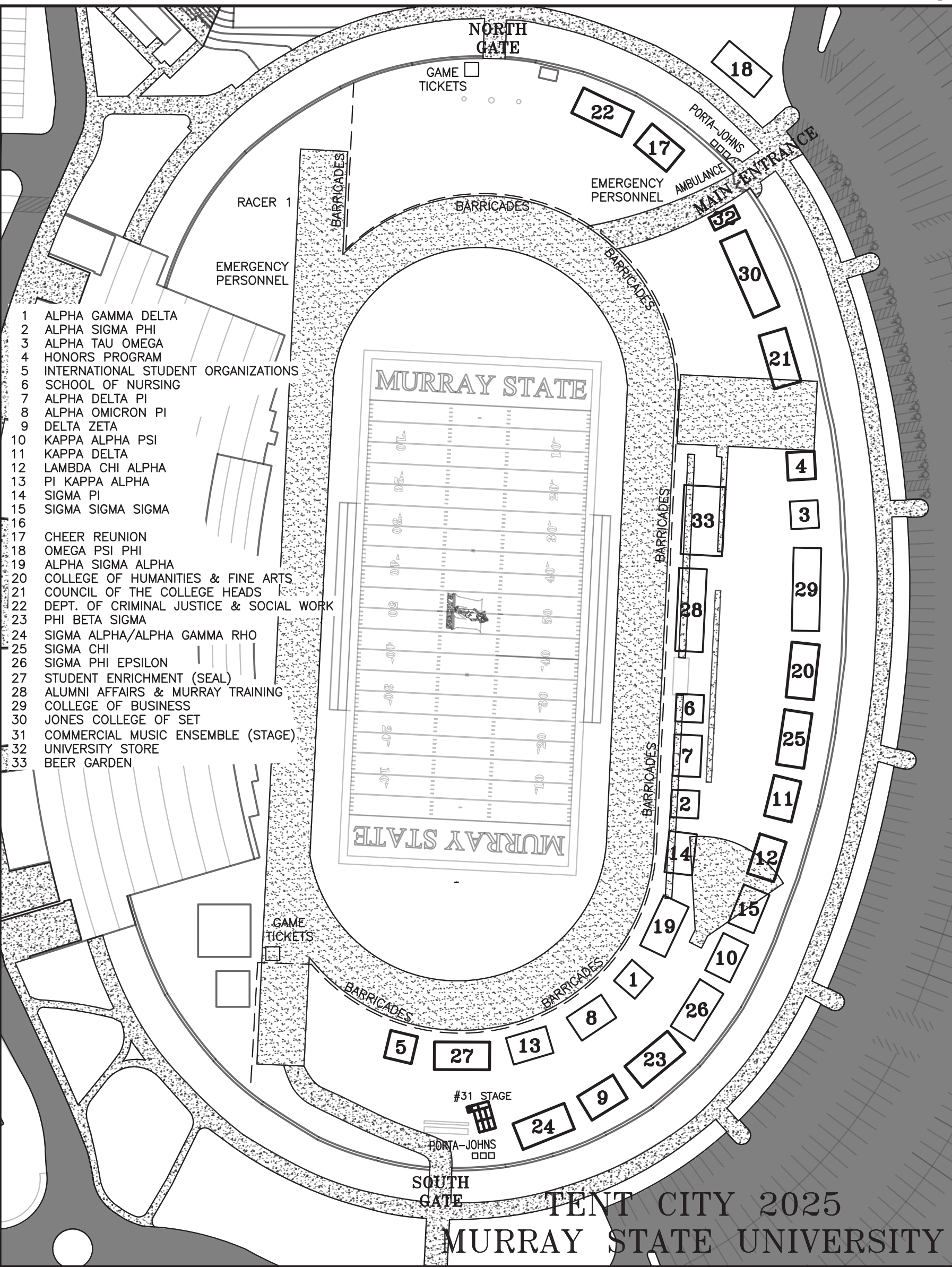


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Homecoming Schedule

Thursday

A Taste of the Arts
Lovett Auditorium
5 - 9 p.m.
\$75 per person

Friday

Racer Baseball Blue and Gold Scrimmage
Johnny Reagan Field
Noon - 8 p.m.

Fall Fanfare Concert
Lovett Auditorium
8 - 9 p.m.
\$10 per person

Saturday

Homecoming Parade
9:30 a.m. - Noon

Tent City
Roy Stewart Stadium
Noon - 4 p.m.

Murray State Football vs. SIU
Roy Stewart Stadium
4 - 6 p.m.

NPHC Homecoming Step Show
Lovett Auditorium
6 - 10 p.m.
\$13 per person





Samantha Vanhorn /The News

The Racers Helping Racers Food Pantry provides a variety of food and hygiene products to Murray State students in need of support.

Racers Helping Racers food pantry needs help

Ainsley Beatty
Chief Copy Editor
abeatty2@murraystate.edu

Racers Helping Racers is in need of donations as the number of students using the food pantry continues to rise.

Racers Helping Racers is Murray State's on-campus food pantry and is available to anyone with a valid student ID. According to the Racers Helping Racers website, the process is "no questions asked and completely confidential."

Trish Lofton, a Racers Helping Racers team member, said the pantry is seeing "exponential growth" in the number of students who access the food pantry.

"Each month, we are seeing double the amount of students over the previous year," Lofton said.

The lower amounts of available financial aid is a reason for more students utilizing the food pantry, Lofton said. With costs rising everywhere, many students may find themselves unable to purchase food and other necessities throughout the semester on top of college payments.

"Some reasons for the increase in students accessing the food pantry are lower amounts of financial (like Pell Grants) and higher costs for food," Lofton said. "Some students have to choose between eating

or paying their bills."

According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 23% of undergraduate students face food insecurity, which totals to almost 4 million students. This statistic is more than double the rate of food insecurity within households in the United States, based on a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A report from the Government Accountability Office said students who are food insecure "often (skip) meals or (eat) less due to financial constraints."

The American Psychological Association says that food insecurity negatively affects students' "academic distress, grade point average, and mental health challenges." Food pantries, especially ones on college campuses, are a vital resource for many students in a situation of food insecurity.

With more students accessing the help they need through Racers Helping Racers, Lofton said it puts a "strain on the amount of food we needed to keep the pantry stocked." Because the need for the pantry's services has increased, so has the need for donations.

To help the food pantry, the Parking Office made changes to the Pay It Forward program. The Pay It Forward program works with Racers Helping Racers and allows "students, faculty, and staff to bring in non-perishable food or hygiene items in order to waive one eligible (parking) citation per semester," according to

an email from Parking Services.

Katrina Carr, Parking Services parking manager, said the Parking Office learned of the food pantry's situation at an SGA meeting last year and altered the program to increase the amount of donations to the food pantry.

"In response, we reviewed our approved citation list for the Pay It Forward program and received approval to temporarily include the Visitor Zone citation," Carr said.

The addition of the Visitor Zone parking citations has increased the number of donations received by the Parking Office, Carr said. These donations are delivered to the food pantry on a weekly basis.

Outside of the Pay It Forward donations, Lofton said the pantry receives monetary and food donations from food drives, but there is always a need for further donations.

"We are always in need of breakfast foods like cereal, oatmeal, fruit/grain bars, granola bars, canned fruit, hygiene products, and so much more," Lofton said. "We keep a list of needed items on the food pantry page found on the MSU website."

For more information on Racers Helping Racers, including hours of operation and ways to donate, visit <https://www.murraystate.edu/campus/CurrisCenter/racershelpingracers/index.aspx>.



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Shoes up!
Go Racers!

THE PATTERSON FAMILY

Four jazz groups set to perform fall concert

Staff Report

msu.thenews@murraystate.edu

The department of music's Jazz Orchestra, Jazz Band and Blue and Gold Jazz Combo` Ensembles are taking the stage on Tuesday, Nov. 4 for their fall campus concerts.

The joint program begins at 6 p.m. in Lovett Auditorium. The opening performance, by the Gold Jazz Combo, will include classic songs like Horace Silver's "Song for My Father," Jimmy Heath's "Gingerbread Boy" and "Here, There, and Everywhere" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

The Blue Jazz Combo's following performance includes Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee," by Erroll Garner's "Misty," Wes Montgomery's "West Coast Blues," Luiz Bonfá's "Samba de Orfeo" and "Straight, No Chaser" by Thelonious Monk.

The Murray State Jazz Band will perform at 7:30 p.m. with big band classics Charlie Shavers's "Undecided," Conrad O. Johnson's "Kashmere," "This Can't Be Love" by Rodgers and Hart, Sammy Nestico's "A Warm Breeze," Larry Kerchner's "Emerald Eyes" and "I Wish" by Stevie Wonder.

The program will close out with the Murray State Jazz Orchestra's performance of Bill Potts's "Big Swing Face," Bobby Hebb's "Sunny," Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Corcovado," Stan Kenton's "My Funny Valentine," Tito Puente's "Ran Kan Kan," Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke" and "It Might as well be Spring" arranged by Don Schamber.

Todd E. Hill, a professor of music, will direct the program in this, his final of 20 years as the Director of Jazz Studies at Murray State. Hill was awarded KMEA's esteemed "Outstanding University Music Educator" in 2016. He has produced five album releases, which have been performed four times at the famed Elmhurst

College Jazz Festival and the Midwest International Band Clinic in Chicago.

The concerts are free and open to the public.

Gold Jazz Combo members: Sara Archey (trumpet), Macy Barron (trumpet), Will Sheffer (trombone), Trey Wimsatt (alto sax), Ethan Sexton (tenor sax), Christian Watkins (baritone sax), Zhou Merchant (piano), Robyn Downey (bass) and Shepherd Brown (drums).

Blue Jazz Combo members: Jeremiah Morris (trombone), Declan Bingham (tenor sax), Chris Gissendanner (tenor sax) and Cammy Pillow (baritone sax), Noah Schneider (piano), Abbie Tompkins (vibes), Sean Howell (bass) and Graham Gerard (drums).

Jazz Band members: Xander Slover (sax), Christian Watkins (baritone sax), Ethan Sexton (tenor sax), Alison Dennison (sax), Sam LeMarble (sax), Damien Merrell (trumpet), Sara Archey (trumpet), Maxx Stobaugh (trumpet), Joshua Buxton (trumpet), Lacey Stewart (trumpet), Tim Hanley (trumpet), Kannon Brown (trombone), Cooper Barnett (trombone), Benny Arvin (trombone), Judah Maddox (trombone), Frank Newton (piano), Isabella Hallstead (vibes), Jakob Winstead (guitar), Robyn Downey (bass) and Nicholas Sokolov (bass) and Bryce Blanford (drums).

Jazz Orchestra members: Nick Mehne (sax), Chris Gissendanner (tenor sax), Declan Bingham (tenor sax), Hannah Nix (sax), Cammy Pillow (baritone sax), Zack Mitchell (trumpet), Dalton Darnall (trumpet), Giselle French (trumpet), Trent Browne (trumpet), Andy Slown (trumpet), Alyssa Shrader (trumpet), Jeremiah Morris (trombone), Payne DeHaven (trombone), Bryson Barger (trombone), Will Sheffer (trombone) and Ethan Pennycuik (trombone), Abbie Tompkins (piano), Zhou Merchant (vibes), Briana Talty (bass), Addison Heppner (guitar), J.L. Cinotto (drums) and Devin Owens (Latin percussion).



Graphic by Gray Hawkins /The News

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FROM THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Tent City

12:00-4:00 p.m

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- Leaves
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- Pumpkin
- Hayride
- Pie
- Harvest
- Thanksgiving
- Autumn
- Halloween
- Fall
- Horror
- Bonfire
- Costumes
- October
- Sweater
- Vampire
- Racking
- Parade
- Spiders
- Candy
- Turkey
- Family
- Cider
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- Golden
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- Gourds
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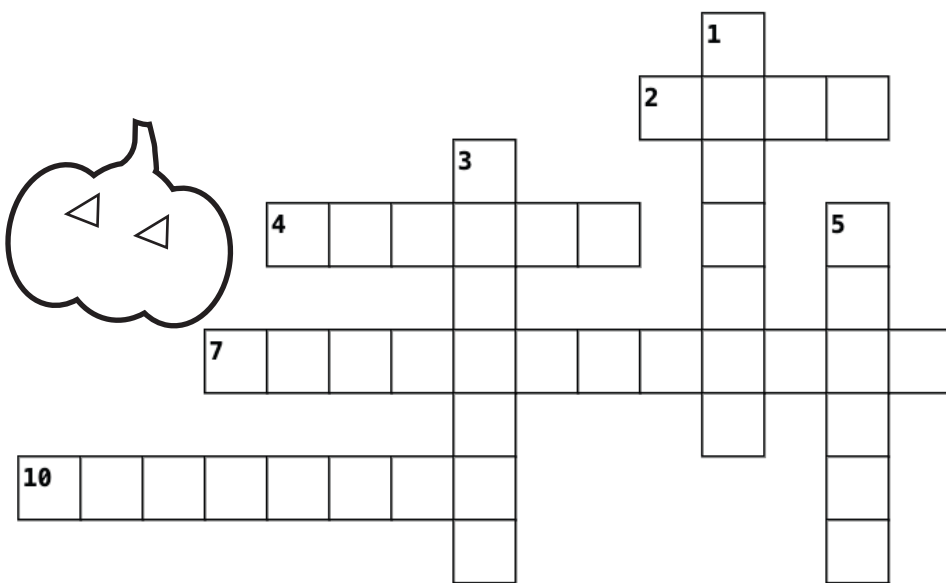
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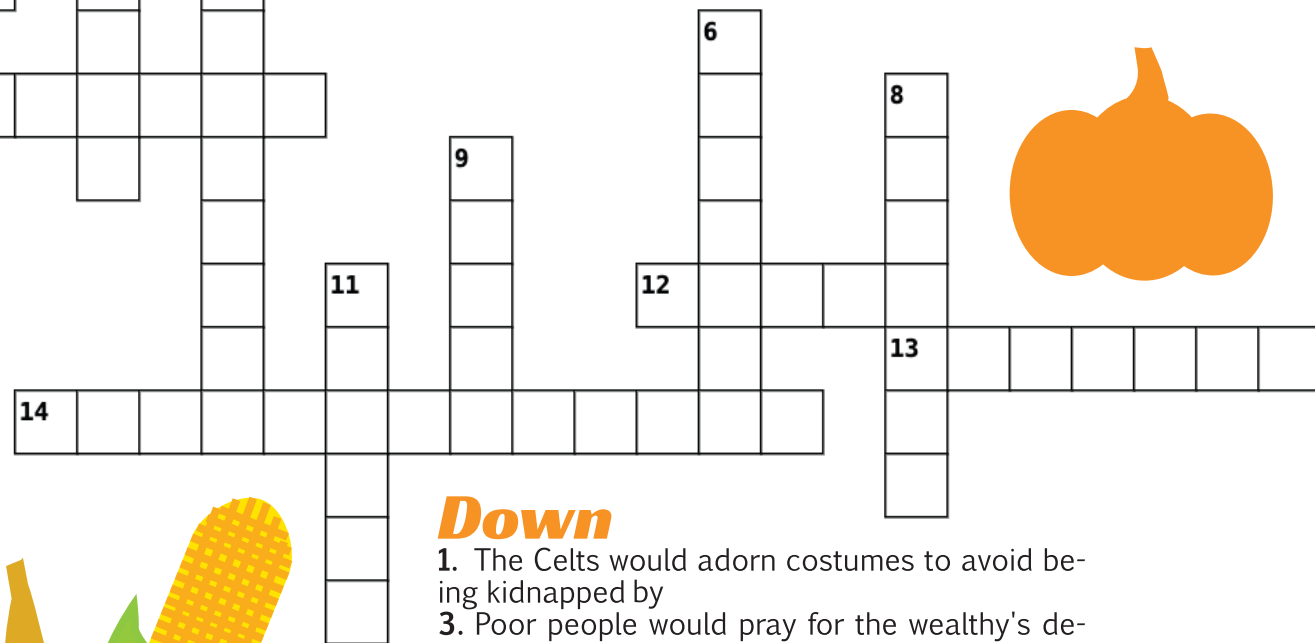
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Halloween History Crossword



Across

2. Bonfires drew these creatures around
 4. Bobbing for apples ties back to this Roman festival
 7. The middle English phrase for All Saints' Day
 10. A famous murder in which cyanide pixie sticks were given to children
 12. A Irish deity tasked with being the judge of departed souls
 13. This brand led to mass concerns surrounding Halloween candy in the 1980's
 14. A German Christmas figure, is modernly associated with Halloween



Down

1. The Celts would adorn costumes to avoid being kidnapped by
 3. Poor people would pray for the wealthy's deceased relatives in exchange for soul cakes
 5. Don a disguise and fool the spirits
 6. The Celtic festival where Halloween is rooted
 8. Attractions of fear that stem from a French wax exhibit
 9. This color of cat is associated with the Devil
 11. The name of a man who thrice cheated death and the reason they carved pumpkins



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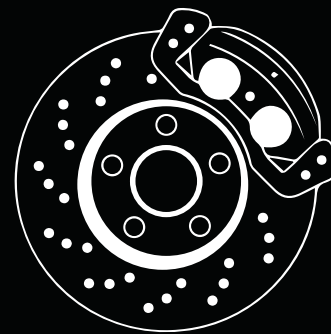
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EDITORIAL: Indiana's censorship blues

IDS censorship threatens all of America's free press

Written by *The College Heights Herald*, reprinted by *the Louisville Cardinal*, *Ball State Daily News*, *The Northerner* and *The Eastern Progress*.

On Oct. 14, administrators at Indiana University Bloomington terminated Jim Rodenbush, IU director of student media, after he refused to censor content for the Indiana Daily Student, IU's student-led news publication.

Rodenbush denied the university's demand to instruct students not to publish any news content in their homecoming special edition, a request that directly ignored precedents set by the IDS' media charter.

"This Charter reaffirms that student media operating under its provisions are declared limited public forums where final content decisions and responsibility rest with duly appointed student editors and managers," the charter, which was set by IU trustees in 1969, states.

The Herald expresses the very same ideal in its mission statement.

"All creative and editorial decisions are made by the Herald's student leadership, and all consequences of those decisions are the sole responsibility of those student leaders."

IDS leaders asked the administration to overturn its decision. The response was to cut IDS print entirely.

IDS Co-Editors-in-Chief, Mia Hilkowitz and Andrew Miller, said in an emailed statement to the Herald:

"IU decided to fire Jim Rodenbush after he did the right thing by refusing to censor our print edition. That was a deliberate scare tactic toward student jour-

nalists and faculty. The same day, the Media School decided to fully cut our physical paper, fully ensuring we couldn't print news. We're losing revenue because of that decision.

"We want to make it abundantly clear that our resistance to the Media School's directive isn't about print itself. It's about maintaining our editorial independence. If IU can irrationally justify censoring stories as a 'business decision,' what stops them from applying this thinking to the news and investigative stories that run on our website and social media? IU has no legal right to dictate what we can and cannot print in our paper. Is this the best use of our time or the university's time? We should be working toward financial stability, not censorship.

"Once again, we are asking IU to reverse course — a necessary action to prove they value our editorial independence and rights."

Student media is a cornerstone of many college campuses around the nation, but especially at IU. The IDS has 38 national Pacemaker Awards as of Oct. 18. If this censorship can happen at IU, it can happen at any student news publication.

If this decision stands, it would set a precedent that other universities can get away with such blatant censorship, and it should be alarming to all.

We, along with so many others, are calling for a reversal of this decision and transparency from IU administrators on how this decision could ever happen. What happened at Indiana is not much different than the 1988 incident at WKU when then-President Kern Alexander attempted to install faculty editors for the Herald and the Talisman.



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers

Read more on our website:



Column: Education continues to hurt

The conservative front against DEI will bleed us

Owen Hansen
Contributing Writer
ohansen1@murraystate.edu

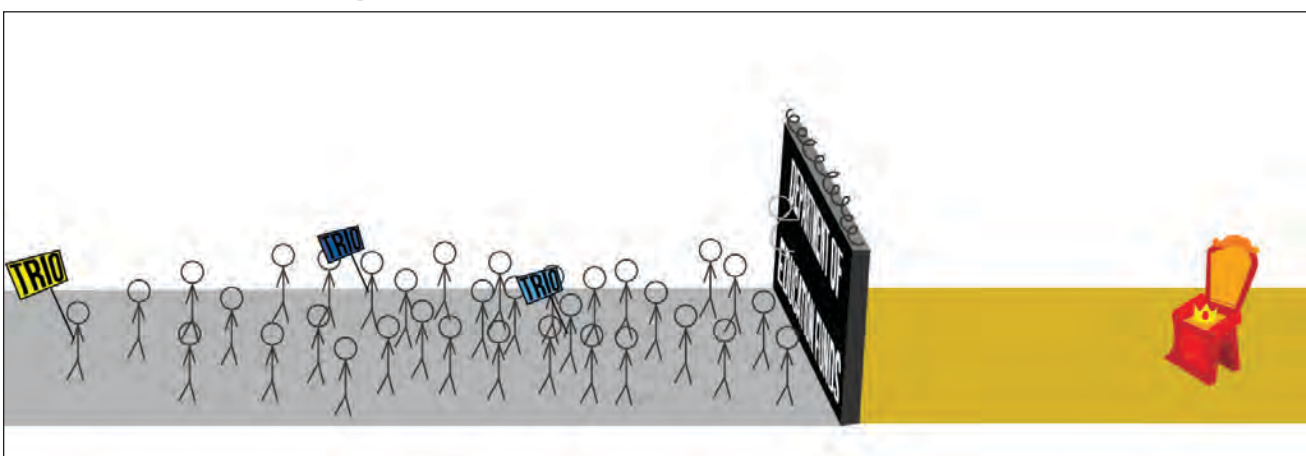
The White House seeks to eliminate funding for the TRiO program in its 2026 budget proposal in response to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies, but that's only part of the bigger picture — the Trump administration wishes to corrupt the foundational goals of academia.

The Department of Education's TRiO programs serve underprivileged individuals throughout the country, expanding access to education for first-generation students, low-income students, students with disabilities and more. Upward Bound Math and Sciences at Murray State, which assists high school students in western Kentucky and southern Illinois seeking a higher education in STEM fields, is one of potentially many TRiO programs facing cancellation.

Upward Bound Math and Sciences had its grant application denied this year, and is surviving on leftover funds from last year.

In a recent *Murray State News* article, Audrey Neal, TRiO Talent Search director, cites a line in the grant application about continuing DEI training to Upward Bound employees as the reason for the rejection. DEI training does not align with the current priorities of the Department of Education, and so that one line was enough justification to reject the grant.

TRiO is not the sole victim of anti-DEI sentiment. In June 2023, affirmative action, an effort to eliminate discrimination in college admissions and employ-



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers

ment, was effectively put to an end by the Republican majority Supreme Court in cases *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina*.

Now, college admissions are supposed to be evaluated based entirely on merit. These anti-DEI policies, promised by the Trump administration to remove all discrimination in college admissions, don't quite live up to their sales pitch.

Removing TRiO could prove to have major consequences for the accessibility of higher education to underprivileged students. Getting into college is no easy matter for the individuals that TRiO serves.

College is expensive, and low-income students

struggle to afford application fees, tuition, housing, dining and other expenses. Colleges are proven to favor legacy students, or students who have parents with degrees. This makes it harder for first-generation students to access college. Students with disabilities are often rejected from college so that universities don't have to worry about providing accommodations.

The discontinuation of TRiO would end the assistance, limiting their access to higher education.

Read more on our website:



Athletics 'Racing Towards Excellence'

Yantko talks new strategic plan, Reagan Field upgrades, fall sports teams, Homecoming and looks ahead to college hoops season

Zach Simmons

Editor in Chief

zsimmmons@murraystate.edu

A lot can happen in a six-month span. That's how long it has been since The News sat down with Murray State Director of Athletics Nico Yantko.

The Murray State women's basketball team just won their first conference championship in 15 years, the men's basketball team was entering a new era by hiring Ryan Miller to be a foundational piece in what the University hopes to be a return to form in men's basketball and the baseball team was in the middle of what became the greatest athletic achievement in school history: a trip to the Men's College World Series in Omaha.

"We've got a lot of great activation going on from a brand exposure perspective," Yantko said.

As Racer Athletics enters its fourth year as members of the Missouri Valley Conference, it seems like they've finally got a foothold and aren't looking to slow down.

"We didn't move to the Missouri Valley Conference just to be idle and to just hold a place," Yantko said. "We came here to win."

Upon taking over as director of athletics, Yantko announced the "The Race is On" strategic plan. This three-year plan was meant to help Murray State Athletics in their transition to the MVC. It was the first athletics-specific strategy plan in school history.

The plan had four objectives: advance the brand of Murray State Athletics, build a strong Murray State community and region, compete for and win championships and develop student-athletes through strategic programming that will serve them from recruitment through retirement.

Yantko said he feels that those four objectives were achieved.

"When we start looking at what we've done and accomplished with however (many) millions of dollars of facility upgrades, staffing upgrades, (and) starting to position our sport programs to compete for championships," he said. "Look at last year, (we) had seven championships on the year if you include the Super Regional championship (for baseball). That's more than our school's history that we've done in a year in athletics."

"We're just getting started and it's my job to make sure that we not only have peaks and valleys. We need to make sure we're sustaining success."

Murray State Athletics announced that "The Race is On" plan closed effective Oct. 1, and they're working on preparing its next three-year plan titled "Racing Towards Excellence," with the full plan slated to be announced in the coming months, according to a press release on GoRacers.com.

"We're not just a marketing vehicle for the University," Yantko said. "We're the gateway to the community and region."

Yantko said this new strategic plan will be focused on aspirational goals, not just as an athletic department, but for each individual sport.

"In this new reality, you get to pick and choose who you want to be," Yantko said. "With revenue share, we have a cap of \$20.5 million. Murray State is not participating at that level, but how do I look at (all of the sport programs) and say, 'Okay, where do we want to go and how do we make sure those dollars are there?' I think the big part of this is working alongside our campus and key stakeholders on this true race towards excellence and our vision for excellence."

A big part of any athletics department is fundraising, and Murray State's is no different. Last year, Murray



Athletic Director Nico Yantko and men's basketball coach Ryan Miller at Miller's introductory press conference on March 27, 2025. Murray State Athletics/David Eaton

State raised \$21.5 million. That's the largest one-year total in school history. Yantko said while fundraising is an important characteristic and skill set, they can't just look at the dollar amount. They have to look at the impact that money has and communicate that impact.

"We want to show how (the money is) being put to work. From the eight-figure renovation to the arena to the seven-figure renovations going on at baseball," Yantko said. "We view these donations as investments. I want these donors, partners and investors to see that their money's not just coming in to buy hoodies and pizza. It's going into something that's going to help us do two things: recruit and create other revenue opportunities."

On Aug. 29, Murray State Athletics announced a \$1 million donation from the estate of Jim and Sue Cash. That gift secured the naming rights for the upcoming clubhouse upgrade for Racer baseball.

Yantko discussed that upgrade, as well as other upgrades coming to Johnny Reagan Field. He mentioned significant drainage work in the outfield, new infield upgrades, a new scoreboard and a new videoboard, which Yantko said will be one of only three across MVC schools, but "it'll be one of the largest in the mid-major space."

"We're really excited (these) activations, not only from a gameday experience, but also other community activations," Yantko said. "We're going to continue to clean the berm as we really develop a longer-term plan of what the fan experience will be."

Movie nights on the new aforementioned scoreboard is one of the ideas Yantko mentioned to help drive foot traffic to campus.

Yantko also said that baseball games will continue to be free, even when the University hosts the Missouri Valley Conference baseball tournament in May. He also talked about how excited people are about hosting that event, but doesn't think people understand how big this is for the community as a whole.

"When you talk about how excited people are, I don't think they're quantifying it yet," Yantko said. "The direct and indirect impact of dollars (that) are going to flow through here (and) exposure for the University, nonetheless. You're bringing teams that are going to be staying everywhere from the lake and Paducah, down

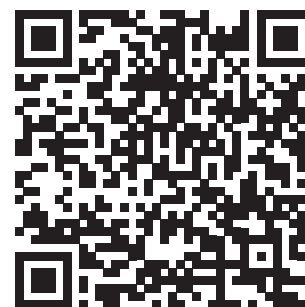
to Paris, Tennessee. This is going to impact our region with an economic hit that's going to be amazing for us."

Looking at the fall sports that are in full swing, Yantko said he has been excited about where each team is at, as well as giving praise to how the staff of each team has worked.

"If you look at our fall sports, they're all very, very young rosters," Yantko said. "I think that's what's really exciting about where we're going with these coaches. Having a plan to where they're evaluating and getting in freshmen and developing talent, or hitting the portal the right way, I really commend those coaches for what they're doing and they're doing a good job. We're in a position where we're really starting to move in the right direction with all of these programs and I think that's really fun as we continue to put our best foot forward."

As a former student-athlete at Murray State, Yantko shared his love for Homecoming and what he loves most about it.

"I can't boil it down to one thing. It's one of the most magical times of the year around here and it truly embodies everything that makes this 'the finest place we know,'" Yantko said. "Being the former starting quarterback, you reminisce a little bit, you get to see your former teammates but then beyond that now being the AD, a dad and a husband, I get to take my kids to the parade and to be able to experience that and take part in that with them, at a place that's so special to me personally, (and) is now so special to our family. There's really nothing like Homecoming and I really look forward to it."



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Basketball picked fourth in media poll

Laney Evans

Sports Editor

levans11@murraystate.edu

Just in time for the official start of the Ryan Miller era of Racer basketball, the 2025-26 Missouri Valley Conference Preseason Media Poll voted Murray State men's basketball fourth overall, and awarded senior transfer Fred King a Second Team honor.

This poll was organized by Paul Oren, the editor of TheVictoryBell.com, a website that covers Valparaiso University athletics. Oren contacted at least one sports journalist to represent each school in the conference to participate in the poll in response to the Missouri Valley Conference releasing a Preseason Watch List, compiled by each teams' coaching staff, rather than a Preseason All-Conference team, breaking previous precedent.

Among the 20 ballots that were cast, at least one journalist represented every school in the conference, and almost half of them were student journalists. Participants used an 11-1 scale to rank the teams, with 11 points given to the projected champion and one point given to the projective last place team. Players were voted on with a 10-1 scale, with 10 points being awarded to the Preseason Player of the Year and one point being assigned to the 10th-best player in the conference.

Murray State was among five schools that were chosen to take the conference championship title in March. Fourteen ballots ranked Illinois State first, while Murray State and Bradley each secured two championship team votes.

Bahama native King was recognized as the second player on the Second Team after a 15-point and 11 rebound performance against Xavier in an exhibition match. King is one of two Racers to follow head coach Ryan Miller from Creighton, where he played under two-time All-American center Ryan Kalkbrenner.

One poll voted sophomore Layne Taylor as Preseason Player of the Year and finished one vote shy of getting Second Team recognition. The Atlantic Sun Conference All-Freshman Team guard is joining the Racers after starting in 20 games at Central Arkansas, where he averaged 17.4 points per game.

The Racers have proven themselves to be a threat after topping the Xavier Musketeers 75-70 and the Northern State Wolves 112-74 in their two exhibition games.

The 101st season of Racer basketball officially begins on Monday, Nov. 3 in Omaha at the Field of 68 Opening Day Marathon against Omaha in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



Senior center Fred King watches the pregame video before the game against Northern State. Kristopher Fister/The News



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Soccer secures spot in MVC tournament

Laney Evans
Sports Editor
levans11@murraystate.edu

The women's soccer team (9-4-4) is tied for the 2nd place ranking in the Missouri Valley Conference with 15 conference points and one game left in the season. This not only marks the best ranking and the most points the Racers have earned since they joined the MVC in 2022, but also promises a chance to host their first-round MVC tournament game at Cutchin Field.

After finishing the 2024-2025 regular season in 10th place and subsequently not being eligible to play in the MVC tournament, the team is looking to add to its four-game winning streak and earn its first 10-win season since the 2019 season.

Racer nation has watched Ballwin, Missouri, native and senior Mary Hardy come alive during the latter half of the season, as she boasted five goals, two of which were game winning, and five assists. The preseason First Team All-MVC selection scored four of the goals and earned two of the assists within the last four matches.

This is the first time since 2019 that a player in the program has earned at least five goals and five assists. Hardy has played over 6,000 minutes of Racer soccer in the last four seasons, and has the most goals of anyone on this season's team. Her game-winning goal at Valparaiso was the eighth of her career, putting her as fourth in program history.

Just behind Hardy on the stats sheets is sophomore forward Breece Bass, who received the All-MVC All-Freshman honor during the 2024 season and was named to the 2025 Preseason All-MVC Honorable Mention team. The team leader in shots on goals with 23 and total shots with 59, Bass boasts four assists, four goals and two game-winning goals.

Freshman Addison Howell earned her second MVC Freshman of the Week recognition after recording her first collegiate assist. This is the team's third MVC Freshman of the Week award of the season, after Ava Wilson was honored on Monday, Oct. 20.

The Racers average 16.06 shots per match, which puts them at 41st in the nation, while the team's impenetrable defense has held opponents to just 11.4 shots per game. Working equally as hard, the offense has made at least 20 shot attempts in six games throughout the season.



Kristopher Fister/The News
Senior Tori Schrimpf, sophomore Abbey MacDonald, senior Mary Hardy and sophomore Breece Bass celebrate after Bass scored game-winning goal against Marshall.

The Racers sit one point behind MVC's No. 1 Drake (8-5-4). Murray State took the first MVC loss of the season in September to Drake, falling 1-0 despite outshooting the Bulldogs 9-7 and 19 total fouls committed by Drake.

The Bulldogs will play No. 3 Southern Illinois on Thursday, Oct. 30 to decide the final regular-season ranking.

Murray State will travel to Terre Haute, Indiana, on Thursday, Oct. 30, to play Indiana, who shares the No. 2 spot with the Racers, in search of hitting a double-digit win record for the 2025 season.



Kristopher Fister/The News
Junior defender Reagan Tate looks at the referee for a foul in during the Marshall match.

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SCORES AT A GLANCE

FOOTBALL

SEPT. 20 @ JACKSONVILLE STATE: L 45-10
OCT. 4 @ SOUTH DAKOTA UNIVERSITY: L 49-24
OCT. 11 VS. ILLINOIS STATE: L 49-32
OCT. 18 VS SOUTH DAKOTA STATE: L 35-14
OCT. 25 @ YOUNGSTOWN STATE: L 51-17

Soccer

OCT. 5 @ BELMONT UNIVERSITY: T0-0
OCT. 10 VS. SIU: W 1-0
OCT. 19 VS. EVANSVILLE: W 3-2
OCT. 23 @ UIC: W 2-1
OCT. 26 @ VALPARAISO: W 1-0

Rifle

OCT. 5 VS. UT MARTIN/ WEST VIRGINIA: 2ND OF 3
OCT. 18-19 @ UT MARTIN: W 4709-4613
OCT. 25 @ UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI: L 4716-4717
OCT. 26 @ JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY: W 4716-4661

Volleyball

SEPT. 25 @ BELMONT: L 1-3
SEPT. 26 VS. SOUTHERN ILLINOIS: L 1-3
OCT. 3 @ DRAKE: L 0-3
OCT. 4 @ NORTHERN IOWA: L 0-3
OCT. 10 VS. INDIANA STATE: L 2-3
OCT. 11 VS. ILLINOIS STATE: W 3-2
OCT. 17 @ UIC: L 2-3
OCT. 18 @ VALPARAISO: L 1-3
OCT. 24 VS. BRADLEY: L 1-3
OCT. 25 VS. EVANSVILLE: W 3-2

MEN'S BASKETBALL

OCT. 18 @ XAVIER: W 75-70
OCT. 26 VS. NORTHERN STATE: W 112-74

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EDITION AND OUR
MOST RECENT PRINT.

SPORTS CALENDAR

MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOV. 3 @ OMAHA 12:30 P.M.
NOV. 7 VS. MISSISSIPPI STATE 7 P.M.
NOV. 11 @ SMU 7 P.M.
NOV. 15 VS. NICHOLLS 4:30 P.M.
NOV. 18 VS. LITTLE ROCK 7 P.M.
NOV. 23 @ GRAND CAYMAN VS. MIDDLE
TENNESSEE 6:30 P.M.
NOV. 24 @ GRAND CAYMAN VS.
MCNEESE STATE 6:30 P.M.
NOV. 25 @ GRAND CAYMAN VS. GEORGE
WASHINGTON 6:30 P.M.

Football

NOV. 1 VS. SOUTHERN ILLINOIS 4 P.M.
NOV. 8 @ NORTHERN IOWA 1 P.M.
NOV. 15 VS. NORTH DAKOTA 11 A.M.
NOV. 22 @ INDIANA STATE NOON

Soccer

NOV. 2 - 9 MISSOURI VALLEY
CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

Cross Country

NOV. 14 NCAA SOUTHEAST REGION
CHAMPIONSHIP

NOVEMBER

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

NOV. 3 VS. TREVECCA 7 P.M.
NOV. 7 @ EVANSVILLE 5 P.M.
NOV. 11 @ SOUTH DAKOTA STATE 7 P.M.
NOV. 15 VS. SAINT LOUIS 7 P.M.
NOV. 18 @ ILLINOIS 11 A.M.
NOV. 22 VS. UAB 2 P.M.
NOV. 28 VS. GEORGE MASON @
DAYTONA 12:30 P.M.
NOV. 29 VS. BOSTON COLLEGE @
DAYTONA 10 A.M.

Rifle

NOV. 2 VS. JACKSONVILLE STATE
UNIVERSITY 9 A.M.
NOV. 8 @ OHIO STATE 9 A.M.
NOV. 9 @ UTEP 9 A.M.
NOV. 22 @ UNIVERSITY OF
KENTUCKY 9 A.M.

International athletes bring fresh perspectives

Laney Evans
Sports Editor
levans11@murraystate.edu

Free water in restaurants, big yellow school buses and unapologetic lack of table manners are only a few cultural differences that international students encounter after traveling millions of miles to spend four years pursuing higher education in the United States.

Murray State University is home to almost 400 international students, around 50 of whom are student-athletes, representing over 40 countries in the Racer athletic department.

Nationally-ranked and highly-decorated athletes are recruited from all over the globe to further their academic and athletic opportunities in Murray, Kentucky, and each individual brings a special set of skills and experiences that add to the growing diversity and culture of global appreciation at both the local and the university level.

Although western Kentucky consistently proves to be wildly different from the rest of the world in terms of infrastructure, social norms and geography, many student-athletes have found ways to make Murray feel like home, starting with the bare necessities: food.

Winslow Dining Hall is a staple for most student-athletes because of proximity to training facilities and housing as well as the ease with which they can obtain clean food options such as fruits, vegetables and lean meats. In a town with almost 30 fast food restaurants, Winslow is one of the only places in Murray where students can consistently find fresh produce, and is often the closest to a home-cooked meal that students will get while living in campus housing.

Although many international student-athletes experience homesickness and culture shock to various degrees, Elita Foti, a freshman setter on the Racer volleyball team from Limassol, Cyprus, trusts that the ups and downs of the international collegiate experience is necessary for personal growth and development.

"It's different but we are old enough to live alone and experience things without getting homesick," Foti said. "You're always going to have your family, but this is an experience you can only get for four years."

Family support was a vital part of Foti's journey to Murray State. Three months into the school year, the volleyball team and the network of international student-athletes have become a lifeline for Foti – a family at her home away from home.

Fellow volleyball freshman, Burcu Gulomur from Izmir, Turkey, shares similar sentiments about leaving home. The two committed to Murray State earlier this year after sharing the same recruiter. Prior to their Racer debuts, Foti competed in two world championships with Limassol Grammar School and Gulomur finished second in Izmir's 2024-2025 women's volleyball league.

All but three Murray State athletic teams have international students on their 2025-2026 rosters. The tennis team boasts the highest number of this demographic, with eight total student-athletes hailing from Africa, Brazil, the Czech Republic,



Graphic by MacKenzie Rogers/The News

Japan, Kazakhstan, Russia and South Africa. Track sits at a close second with runners from England, Greece, Jamaica, Kenya and Spain. England, France, Italy, and Japan are the most common countries for Murray State's athletes to be recruited from for no reason other than pure coincidence.

The rifle team is home to two Italian shooters, both of whom have earned OVC Freshman of the Year titles as well as All-American smallbore recognitions.

Nationally-ranked Carlotta Salafia returned to the rifle team for the second year after living in Italy her entire life, and is thankful for the direct coaching style of head coach Alan Lollar and the genuine connection with her team.

"The preparation that I have here is something that I really needed, and it really helps me a lot in my international and national competition," Salafia said.

The drastic differences in restaurant portion sizes, insistent ice with beverages and difference in the taste of water were shocking at first, though not necessarily offputting. Salafia chooses to combine both Italian and American tendencies and traditions into her everyday life in order to find balance in the best of both worlds.

"I will never lose my typical Italian characteristics because I am used to them and I love them," Salafia said. "I do a mixture of things because I also like the American way."

Although relocating at any stage of life comes with a multitude of challenges, setbacks and changes, traveling to another continent as a young adult with no family and friends is a beast of its own. There are many factors that could lead international students to feel uncomfortable in this small town such as culture-shock, homesickness and sheer environmental discomfort. However, it is vital to both the national and international student community to learn from each other and develop a greater understanding of cultures outside of their own. The experience of this university's student-athletes are a testament to the hometown hospitality, small-town charm and inclusive culture of Murray State University.

Rifle starts strong, ready for national return

Laney Evans
Sports Editor
levans11@murraystate.edu

After 70 years of competition, five consecutive and 19 total Ohio Valley Conference Championships and 36 appearances in the National Collegiate Athletic Association Championships, the Murray State Rifle team is 2-1 at the beginning of the 2025-2026 rigorous trek back to the national championships.

“Our goal for the start of every season is to play on the last day,” said head coach Alan Lollar.

After serving as head athletic trainer at Ole Miss, Richmond and Murray State, Lollar became the interim head coach of the Racer rifle team in 2007 and has one of the most successful careers of any coach in school history.

The 10-time OVC coach of the year has produced 12 OVC Freshmen of the Year, 23 OVC Rifle Athletes of the Year, 35 All-Americans and 138 All-OVC Selections within the last two decades. As he enters his 20th season as head coach, Lollar emphasizes consistency, gaining experience and translating good practice into game play as the means to make it to the team’s 37th national championship.

Rifle’s 71st team consists of shooters from far and wide, with competitors hailing from the East Coast, the Deep South, the Midwest and Europe. Three new faces will make their collegiate

debut this season, and also two seasoned veteran seniors will anchor the team.

Rome native Paola Paravati was named OVC Freshman of the Year during the 2022-2023 season after competing with the Italian national team for four years prior to her collegiate career. The senior has placed in the top ten in two matches this season.

Newcomer Lea Soule began her rookie season with three top-five finishes, quickly proving her vital role on the team. Joining the Racers from Texas, Soule is a 2x Junior Olympics Qualifier and a 4x Texas 4-H National Shooting Sports team member.

OVC 2025 Freshman of the Year, Air Rifle Co-Athlete of the Year and Pezzana, Italy, native Carlotta Salafia is beginning her second year as a Racer and has earned three first place individual titles and one runner-up finish in four tournaments this season. The 2025 NCAA fourth place air rifle finisher entered the range for the first time only six years ago and has grown to love the focus and discipline it takes to thrive in the sport.

“You have to be 100% in the present moment,” Salafia said. “We definitely train our mental game a lot, just as much as the physical part.”

Senior and two-time Collegiate Rifle Coaches Association’s Scholastic All-American Grace Foley was a dancer for 16 years prior to her rifle career. The flexibility and strength she built from nearly two decades of dancing translated



Photo courtesy of Charlie Williams/Murray State Athletics
Mallory Johnson and Ainsley McFarland pose at the Pat Spurgin Rifle Range.

perfectly to rifle, as she takes pride in her ability to remain present and steady in the range.

“It’s challenging,” Foley said. “It’s something that makes you want to get better every single time.”

After three months of thorough training and team bonding, the Racers have built a fluid dynamic that promotes dutiful dedication, purposeful preparation and competitive intensity.

The Racers have seven competitions remaining before the conference

championship in February and the national championship in March. The Racers took nine of the top 10 individual spots at the 2024-2025 national championship qualifier, and the team finished in the top eight at the national competition.

The Racers will host Jacksonville State at their home range, the Pat Spurgin Rifle Range, on Sunday, Nov. 2, in hopes of earning their third win of the 2025-2026 season.

Forever Blue and Gold Happy Homecoming!



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