

# Melanie McLain, Keith Baker getting ready to tie the knot

Welcome to the fence for this week's chat. A lot has been going on in the neighborhood, so ease on up to the fence post and lean awhile. I think the blackberry winter finally hit us over the weekend. So be on the watch to see if a linsey-woolsey britches winter comes next. You just have to love this crazy weather around here.



Dad (my husband) and I grabbed lunch at Randall's restaurant in Church Hill after church and ran into Jack Gregg. Jack and Dad swapped war stories, and we chatted for a bit. Sitting at the table next to us was Bunny Larkins and another couple. Bunny asked if I was related to the person who wrote the Tuesday "Across the Fence" column. I let her know I was the one who writes it on Tuesday. I guess my new tortoiseshell glasses threw her off.

Bunny's granddaughter, Melanie McLain, and her fiancé, Keith Baker, are marrying May 5 at Amis Mill near the Big Creek manmade waterfall close to Rogersville. Melanie is from

Mount Carmel, and Keith is from Rogersville. They plan a honeymoon in Gatlinburg. Keith works at Precision Electronics in Kingsport. Melanie works at Holston Medical Group, also in Kingsport. Bunny is so proud of y'all.

The Valley View Community Center, off Carters Valley Road in Church Hill, fixes breakfast from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. the second and fourth Saturdays of the month. Bunny told me they have really good food. This sounds worth looking into.

Get ready for the 2012 Rotary Charity Golf Tournament, which takes place Saturday at the McDonald Hills Golf Course in Rogersville. Registration starts at 8 a.m. and costs \$150 per team. All proceeds go to fund community service projects. The shotgun

start is at 8:30 a.m., and there is lunch at the end of your round. There are two chances to make a hole-in-one and win big.

Two prize holes offer the chance to win either \$25,000 cash or a car. There are other chances to win prizes, and every golfer receives a coupon for a free \$50 gift card. The first-place team receives a \$300 cash prize, \$225 goes to the second-place team, and the third-place team receives \$150. For additional information call the clubhouse at (423) 272-1477, or if ready, sign up at the clubhouse today.

Charles Blevins and Melinda Cannon celebrate birthdays May 2. Brandy McNally, Gracie's mom, has a birthday May 3. Peggy Larkin also had a birthday April 22, along with Jody Lovin. Noonie Bennett wished Scott and Suzanne

Byerley a happy anniversary Friday.

Church Hill's Emily Presnell attended the Gate City High School prom Saturday night with her friend Logan McDavid. Tanner McDavid and Zoe Sibley also attended. Rachel Musick was sighted there too. Emily and Rachel both go to Volunteer High School. Tanner is from Yuma and lives in Gate City. Logan is from Gate City and lives in Kingsport. The Hollywood theme for the prom was a cool-looking one.

Tanner's cousin, Beth Snapp of Gray, appeared Friday on WCYB Channel News 5 at Noon to promote Bristol Rhythm and Roots Reunion 2012. She sang a quick song at the Bristol Rhythm and Roots press conference held in Bristol earlier Friday morning. Beth is an acoustic singer and songwriter. Several of her song performances are found on YouTube.

Volunteer High School girls track received their new uniforms just in time for the Tri-County Clash track meet held April 16. The Volunteers hosted the event,

which featured schools from Hawkins, Sullivan and Washington counties in Tennessee. Volunteer's Emily Armstrong placed first in the girls 200-meter dash and the long jump. Bree Cassidy took first in the 400-meter dash and the high jump. Abigail Rider placed first in the 3,200-meter run, while Allison Wilson placed first in the 100-meter hurdles.

Cherokee High School's Chezney West won the pole vault competition. Christina Maddox placed first in the shot put. Buddy Bradley won the boys 200-meter dash, and Tyler Hicks won the 400-meter dash. Keifer Wilson placed first in the pole vault. Evan McCracken placed first in both the shot put and discus throw.

Volunteer's Hayden Borghetti-Metz placed first in the boys 800-meter run, 1,600-meter run and the 3,200-meter run. Sam Barton tied for first with Sullivan East's Cliff Hawkins in the 110-meter hurdles and the 300-meter hurdles. Kirk Cradic placed first in the triple jump. Both the Volunteer Falcons and

the Cherokee Chiefs did a stand-out out job in track.

Kayla Bussell, a member since 2009 of the Lambda Alpha chapter of the Sigma Alpha Iota international music fraternity of women at East Tennessee State University, performed several opera songs in the "Opera Light" Opera workshop April 14 with soloists Tatum Spears and Seth O'Kegley. Karen Smith, an adjunct instructor of voice, directed the workshop, with Jennifer Marshall as the accompanist. Other students performing in the workshop included Kelsey Rosemary Holmes and Laura Hession Jordan. Kayla used to live in Church Hill.

The time has come to draw the chat to a close. Please remember me with any special moments, birthdays and anniversaries you wish to share. Church events and baby news items are very welcome. Don't forget to let me know about your student's graduation. And remember, wooden nickels are good for all occasions.

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## 'It was just wonderful the way people came together'

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head. Carolyn suffered a cut to her leg that required four staples.

"The Lord got us out," the soft-spoken Walter said. "We came up that hallway pushing paneling and two-by-fours out of the way. I said 'We got to get out of this place.'"

Once outside, Walter did a quick damage assessment with a small flashlight he kept on the bedroom nightstand. The tornado left behind torrential rain, and they were able to take shelter at a neighbor's house. The next day, after seeking medical attention for Carolyn's injured leg, it was time to assess the damage.

They found comfort in the fact the storm left their important papers and keepsakes relatively untouched. Walter said birth certificates, deeds, tax papers — they were all still there. One other doc-

ument that eventually made its way back to him was the registration renewal notice for his pickup truck.

"It arrived in the mail one day with a Johnson City postmark and no return address," Walter said. "Somebody between here and Johnson City picked it up and sent it back to me. They could have thrown it away, but they thought enough to send it back."

The notice's return was just one example after the storm that helped renew the couple's faith in the human spirit.

"It was just amazing," Walter said while choking back emotion. "I thought people had gotten so far gone they wouldn't help you. People from everywhere offering to help, wanting to know if they could do anything. The Red Cross, they were here every day checking on us, seeing if we needed

food, clothing. People out of Washington County were helping. I just was amazed that people would fall in and help like that. Rescue squads, cops, fire departments..."

"Churches, neighbors," Carolyn broke in, "it was just outstanding. It was just wonderful the way people came together."

They both said they have turned to their strong faith often throughout the ordeal, and it has carried them.

"The Lord only took our wants," Walter said. "I wanted that house built the way I wanted it. I wanted my cars. I wanted my garages, barns, everything. He took everything I wanted, but he gave me a way to get it back. People said if they had lost what I had they would have gone crazy. I said 'God took care of me.' I was thankful to be alive. I knew I had insurance. I knew I would get it back,

but it would just take time. I could have blown up and had a heart attack, but I still wouldn't have my house back. You do the best you can."

Both admit they had their reservations about rebuilding at the same location. Simple convenience played in the decision.

He said work began on their new house over the July 4 holiday, and they moved in Sept. 17. He was part of a crew of six on the rebuilding project. Walter decided to replace their brick home with a "stick" home with vinyl siding.

Carolyn said the recovery has been stressful at times, but the rebuilding process went quicker and smoother than she thought it would. Offering her assessment on the new digs, she said, "It's different than what we had. But I like it."

They also said they feel a bit

uncertain every time the wind gets up and will definitely take warnings more seriously. There remained one question to which

Walter figured he would never get an answer.

"I haven't found my roof yet. I still don't know where it is."

## Final addition opens at Darrell's Dream Boundless Playground

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build something for people with all types of abilities."

"Thank you everyone for doing this," Kaylee added. "Sometimes I can't get out to play, and I want to get out and do this stuff."

Darrell's Dream Boundless Playground is a unique play area that accommodates any child regardless of physical obstacles (blind, visually impaired or disabled) with learning opportunities for children of all abilities.

Planning for the playground began in 2001 by the Friends of Warriors Path State Park organization, led at that time by the late Darrell Rice, an active community volunteer who died in 2004.

Supported by a wide range of area businesses, nonprofit organizations and individual citizens, the playground opened in 2007 featuring three different play areas designed to cater to a slightly different type of play, including elevated sandboxes, swings and

slides, a landscape maze and picnic areas. CenturyLink provides free Wi-Fi throughout the playground.

Since opening, the park has seen three additions — the Lions Narnia Braille Trail (in 2009), the Anderson Tree House (in 2010) and now the amphitheater. The tree house overlooks the playground and is universally accessible, featuring a 240-foot winding walkway that can be walked or navigated by wheelchair.

"This has truly been a labor of love that has stretched out over 11 years," DeVinney said. "The community support for this complex has been tremendous, and we all hold Darrell and his dream in our hearts as both the originator of the Friends group and the concept for this playground."

More than \$4 million has been spent on the playground, including \$1 million in state grants. The cost of the amphitheater was approximately \$160,000.

## Hawkins regulatory resolution falls short

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Newton said the regulatory resolution opens a door that people in the county don't want opened.

"It comes back to county zoning, and people want their rights, and if they wanted the rights of the cities they would move into the cities," Newton said. "I feel like it's trying to cram something down people's throat that they don't want. We fought wars to have freedom, and this is taking more freedom away from us."

Newton added, "It opens up doors that we don't even understand and we cannot foresee."

Metz noted that there is a long list of things the County Commission couldn't regulate even with the powers set out in the proposed resolution. A few examples include agricultural activities, alcoholic beverages, sewer service, oil and natural gas, atomic energy, solid waste disposal, and wastewater management.

Some of the things that could have been regulated under the proposal would have been synthetic drugs. Local governments have been waiting about a year since the synthetic drug epidemic became widely known for action by the Tennessee General Assembly.

Metz said that with the proposed regulatory powers, synthetic drugs could have been banned within a month of the issue being presented to the County Commission.

"(Under the proposal) we can regular synthetic

meth, marijuana, bath salts, or any other device that comes up that we don't even know about yet," Metz said. "Methadone clinics. Suboxone clinics. Who would want that located in a neighborhood within their district? I personally wouldn't want that located right next to where my children play and where my family lives."

Metz added, "If we don't approve this we can't regulate the fireworks, and personally if we can't regulate what we've opened up we might as well just shut it down. If the county taxpayers are not going to reap any benefits, then why have it?"

Those absent from Monday's meeting were Commissioner Dustin Dean, who will abstain from voting while his recent residential district issue is being resolved, and Commissioner Stacy Vaughan, who was out of town Monday.

The Times-News contacted Vaughan after the meeting and asked which way he would have voted. Vaughan replied by saying he hopes Metz will present the regulatory resolution to the County Commission again next month.

Actually, at the end of Monday's meeting Metz requested a recount on the regulatory resolution vote, but County Attorney Jim Phillips said that was out of order.

Metz said he expects to submit the resolution for another vote next month.

## Sullivan misses deadline in budget process

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County Commission, which in fact requires departments to submit funding requests to the Budget Committee.

According to a section of the law highlighted by Street before giving the packet to Williams: "Each of the ... operating departments, institutions, offices and agencies shall file with the director of accounts and budgets on or before April 1 of each year a detailed estimate of its requirements for expenditures from the county's funds for the ensuing fiscal year, together with an estimate of any county revenues to be received by such agency, office or department."

As of Monday afternoon, the only outstanding budget request was that of the Sullivan County Election Commission, interim Accounts and Budgets Director

Gayvern Moore said. She said the Election Commission is scheduled to meet today, and its budget request is expected to be submitted to her office later this week.

Moore said budget hearings, by the County Commission's various committees, are scheduled to begin April 30. So her office does not expect to meet a section of the state law calling for submission of a "consolidated budget document," showing all departmental requests, to the Budget Committee by May 1.

Another section of state law directs the Budget Committee to present the budget to the County Commission at its regular July session or at a special session called in July.

The county's annual budget cycle begins anew on July 1.

This year's budget, which covers the county's finances for the

12-month period that began July 1, 2011, finally gained County Commission approval at the end of August last year.

Tennessee law requires the county to submit a budget to the state no later than Oct. 1 each year or risk losing state education dollars.

Sullivan County hasn't missed that deadline, but over the past several years it has again become common practice for the County Commission to go on record well before July 1 that county government will operate under a "continuing resolution" for some time. That means county departments and other agencies that operate with county funds will temporarily continue spending at the same rate as the fiscal year that is ending. Such a resolution was presented to the commission earlier this month.

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