



MYSTERY DINER

Tijuana's

Elizabethton restaurant offers much more variety than just Tex-Mex. **A5**



CLASS AA STATE TRACK

Zoe Arrington of Tenn. High takes 1st in 3,200 meter. **B1**

Johnson City Press

JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE | johnsoncitypress.com

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2023 | \$1.00

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION

County sets new tethering regulations for dogs

By ROBERT HOUK
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Washington County has adopted specific guidelines for chaining dogs outdoors in unincorporated areas of the county. County commissioners have approved tethering regulations to see that dogs are restrained humanely.

“We are really trying to address big abuses,” Commissioner Kenneth Huffine told his colleagues. He said the tethering guidelines are designed to “educate and provide guidance” to pet owners that will make “our county more humane for animals.” The resolution passed

Monday by a vote of 12-to-1, with Commissioner Marty Johnson voting “no” and two members absent. Tammy Davis, the director of Johnson City/ Washington County Animal Control, noted that the county’s guidelines are less restrictive than a Johnson City municipal

ordinance that went into effect in early 2020 that seeks to end tethering altogether. The county resolution says it “shall be unlawful to keep or harbor any dog that is restrained in a manner inconsistent” with specific guidelines that include: • A dog shall not be teth-

ered in a way that it could become “frequently entangled on the restraint or another object.” • Multiple dogs must each be tethered on separate restraints and “not secured to the same fixed point.” • A tether must allow a dog to “sit, lie down and stand comfortably without

the restraint becoming taut and allow the dog a range of movement.” • A dog “shall not be tethered by means of a choke, pinch slip halter or prong-type collar.” • The tether must be “a minimum of 10 feet long and weigh no more than 10% of the dog’s body

See **DOGS**, Page A2

JOHNSON CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bill Church named new chief of police

By KAYLA HACKNEY
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Johnson City interim Police Chief Bill Church has been tapped to assume the position permanently, City Manager Cathy Ball announced during a press conference on Tuesday. Church has served as the city police department’s interim chief since February. He has served with the Johnson City Police Department in different capacities for the last 29 years. “I want to try to make this the best department that it has ever been — not that it’s not been a good department or great department, but I have a vision, and that’s my vision,” Church said. “Whatever it takes to get there.”

Church said his first goal is to get a command staff in place that can help give input about plans for the department. “I have to get my command staff in place,” Church said. “That’s the fulfillment of the operations major, the administration major and the (Criminal Investigations Divisions) captain will be in there too.” Church’s main goals for the department include recruiting and retaining officers, working to reduce drugs and crime within the city and working with other agencies to find solutions to the city’s homelessness issue. “We have to keep in mind that homelessness itself is not a crime,” Church said.

See **POLICE**, Page A2



KAYLA HACKNEY/SIX RIVERS MEDIA

Johnson City Police Department Chief Bill Church receives his chief pin from his wife on Tuesday. Church was named the new police chief on Tuesday after serving as the department’s interim chief since February.

SULPHUR SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sulphur Springs becomes second elementary school in region to earn STEM designation

By AMBER BROPHY
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On Tuesday, Sulphur Springs Elementary School announced their recent designation by the state of Tennessee as a STEM school. This designation will allow the school to continue their work to offer problem-based learning opportunities to students and hands-on career exploration, which will help prepare them for high school and beyond. Sulphur Springs is joining George Washington Elementary School in Kingsport as one of only two STEM-designated elementary schools in upper east Tennessee. It is currently the only K-8 school in the region that has a STEM designation. This designation brings with it \$35,000 for Sulphur Springs to use to further grow their CTE offerings, as well as connections through the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network. Over the past school year, Sulphur Springs has made significant efforts to achieve this designation by unveiling the CTE Lab for grades 5-8 and the

See **STEM**, Page A2



AMBER BROPHY/SIX RIVERS MEDIA

Sulphur Springs Elementary held a schoolwide celebration on Tuesday in honor of the school’s recent designation as a STEM school. The celebration featured students and teachers competing in STEM-related challenges as well as an impromptu teacher dance party.



AMBER BROPHY/SIX RIVERS MEDIA

As part of their celebration, Sulphur Springs students competed against teachers in various STEM challenges.

GIRLS INC.



ROBERT HOUK/SIX RIVERS MEDIA

Simi Smith, 7, tries out one of the programmable robots donated by ETSU’s Center of Excellence in STEM Education to the new STEM Lab at Girls Inc.

Rotary Club donations fund new Literacy Room, STEM Lab for Girls Inc.

By ROBERT HOUK
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Officials with Girls Inc. of Johnson City/ Washington County joined with local Rotarians and educators on Tuesday to cut the ribbons to a new STEM Lab and Literacy Room at its facility on 227 Library Lane in Johnson City. Jacob Higginbotham, a Girls Inc. board member and treasurer of the 7570

Rotary District, said the area’s four Rotary clubs — Johnson City Morning, Johnson City Evening, Johnson City Noon and Elizabethton — donated a total of \$45,000 to make the Literacy Room possible. The STEM Lab was funded by \$45,000 donated by Friends of Girls Inc., the Center of Excellence in STEM Education and the Northeast Tennessee

See **LAB**, Page A2



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WEATHER A3

High Low
78 53
Mostly sunny,
34% humidity

DEATHS A6-A7

Lizabeth A. Moody
Pearl Virginia Miles Smith
Vera K. Williams Thomas
Jeffrey Steven Wolverton

JOHNSON CITY
Willis Howard Jones
Lemuel Dale Moore

JONESBOROUGH
Debra Lee Thomas Whitworth
WATAUGA
Herbert Morris Greer

INSIDE

Classifieds B3-B6
Comics B8
Fun & Games B7
Opinion A4
Tastes A5

LAB

From Page A1

STEM Innovation Hub at East Tennessee State University and the Johnson City Parks and Recreation Foundation. Nikki Hughes, the executive director of Girls Inc., said there are plans to make similar improvements to other rooms at the facility for arts and music education.



Nikki Hughes, Girls Inc. executive director, joins area Rotarians to cut the ribbon on the facility's new Literacy Room.

STEM

From Page A1

MindCave for grades K-4. Teachers at the school have also been working to promote problem-based learning and to offer hands-on career exploration opportunities to students. Sulphur Springs' principal David Little explained that having a STEM focus allows the teachers to bring hands-on learning opportunities to their classes and encourages students to make connections with real-world examples of what they are learning in class. Additionally, this approach helps students make connections between what they are learning in each of their classes in a holistic and integrated approach that prepares students for high school and beyond. Augustus Carver, a seventh grade student at Sulphur Springs, said that he has seen the school's STEM classes really help him and his classmates expand their interests and critical thinking skills, and he appreciates school administrators being open to feedback from students. He said that, through CTE classes, he has learned how to use critical thinking skills to work through problems methodically, and he enjoys spending time in the CTE Lab at the school. He added that he is looking forward to pursuing engineering, aerospace or hydraulics courses at the high school level and thanked his sixth and seventh grade math teacher Mr. Campbell for sparking that interest. Middle grade science teacher Diane O'Neal added

that having a STEM focus is important for helping students see and understand the range of career opportunities available to them. "It's been a vision for a while to really just make our students more aware of the range of career opportunities, in STEM careers in particular," said O'Neal. She added that it is important for schools to not only build career awareness but also build students' confidence in themselves and their abilities to pursue these careers. "This is why this (CTE employee shortage) became an issue a few years ago," said O'Neal. "Our students, when they got to high school, a lot of them hadn't had a lot of exposure to the jobs that are available in our area. Or they look at that, and they say, 'I cannot achieve that.' So we want them to have a change in their thought process." Through pursuing the STEM designation and maintaining this STEM and career opportunity focus, Sulphur Springs has been able to connect with community partners like ETSU, Niswonger and local community businesses that help give students a real-world application for the things they are learning in class. "(These community partners) help us to empower students to be able to be more engaged in the classroom to experience things that they otherwise would not have — and to be able to just have fun with their learning opportunities," Little said. Those partnerships have helped the school gain resources like grant funding through STEM LD, which

has helped fund projects like the STEM Lab and the MindCave, as well as professional development for teachers. "The most important thing to me is the thought that went into (the STEM program)," said Vicki Kirk, who has worked with Sulphur Springs on behalf of Niswonger and their STEM LD program. "They looked at what was available at the high school, they thought about what they wanted to accomplish, and they began to build it. They branded it — you see the brand throughout the building — and they very thoughtfully put together what they're going to have the students' experiences be." Tennessee state Rep. Rebecca Alexander visited the school to join in the celebration of Sulphur Springs' accomplishment and to encourage other schools to follow their lead. "It's such a huge, huge honor to win this, and it shows how well they are doing things at the school," she said. "It's just great when schools in East Tennessee get these designations." The STEM school designation is a five-year designation, which Little and O'Neal said the school will continue to work to maintain and earn again. "The most important thing for me is that the STEM designation empowers students to be leaders," said Little. "It truly empowers them to be leaders within their schools and within their communities ... and to see what opportunities are available to them."

Texas sues Biden administration over asylum rule, saying phone app encourages illegal immigration



Haitian migrants camp out at the Giordano Bruno plaza in Mexico City on May 18. The group was staying at a shelter in Mexico City on their way north but were forced to make camp at the park after the shelter closed.

By REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

The state of Texas is suing the Biden administration in an attempt to have a newly introduced asylum rule thrown out, saying a phone app used by migrants to set up appointments at the border to seek entry into the United States is encouraging illegal immigration. The lawsuit filed Tuesday is the latest legal salvo attacking various aspects of the administration's plan to manage migration in the aftermath of the end of a key pandemic-era immigration regulation called Title 42. In the lawsuit, Texas argues that the asylum rule encourages the use of a cellphone app — called CBP One — for migrants who don't have proper documentation to make an appointments to come to a port of entry and seek entry into the United States. Texas argues the Biden administration is essentially encouraging people to come to the U.S. even though they don't have legal basis to stay. "The Biden Administration deliber-

ately conceived of this phone app with the goal of illegally pre-approving more foreign aliens to enter the country and go where they please once they arrive," said Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in a news release. The complaint was filed in the Western District of Texas. While the lawsuit focuses on the phone app, it seeks to throw out the entire asylum rule, called the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways. The rule went into effect when Title 42 expired May 11. The rule makes it extremely difficult for migrants who travel to the southern border to get asylum if they don't first seek protection in a country they passed through before reaching the U.S. or if they don't apply online through the app. Use of the app is a core part of the administration's plans to create a more orderly system at the border where migrants set up appointments ahead of time, but when the app was rolled out in January, it was criticized for technological problems and because demand has far outstripped available spaces.

Migrants can make appointments for specific ports of entry — five of which are in Texas. Texas argues that according to federal law, people entering the country illegally — with rare exceptions — should be expelled but that the app doesn't verify whether the migrants seeking appointments would qualify for exceptions. Therefore, the state argues, the Biden administration's use of the app essentially encourages people to come to the U.S. even if they don't qualify. Texas also argues that it has to pay the financial burden of migrants coming to the U.S. through things like health care or education. The new asylum rule has also been attacked by rights groups who argue the U.S. has an obligation to offer asylum to those in desperate need. They're suing to have the rule thrown out as well. Texas is also part of another lawsuit accusing the administration of overstepping its authority by allowing as many as 360,000 people a year from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela to enter the U.S. under its humanitarian parole authority.

TENNESSEE LOTTERY

TUESDAY
Morning Drawing
Cash 3: 6-3-1; Wild Ball: 7
Cash 4: 1-5-8-5; Wild Ball: 9
Day Drawing
Cash 3: 4-9-4; Wild Ball: 8
Cash 4: 1-5-0-1; Wild Ball: 8
Night Drawing
Cash 3: 8-1-5; Wild Ball: 1
Cash 4: 3-9-2-2; Wild Ball: 2

CORRECTIONS

Some copies of Tuesday's Press included an incorrect front-page headline: "Washington County officials reject rezoning for campground." The headline should have read: "Washington County officials accept rezoning for campground." We apologize for the error.

The Johnson City Press strives for accuracy in all its reports. Readers who notice factual errors in the newspaper should call the newsroom at (423) 929-3111.

POLICE

From Page A1

"These people — they are just in a bad spot, whether it be mental health issues, alcohol abuse or just some other issue why they don't have a home to go to, and we'd like to get to find out what resources are

available to them so we can reach out to those and maybe hook them up with those resources that are so desperately needed." The Johnson City Commission recently identified developing a citywide strategy to reduce crime and drugs, as well as the development of a collaborative plan to address homelessness in the city as

top priorities for 2024. "Billy Church is a great person for that job," Johnson City Mayor Todd Fowler said. "He's a compassionate person, which is excellent to have in a police chief. So we gave them our direction, which is we need to work on homelessness, we need to stop the drug trafficking however we can do that, so

they are putting together a plan of action for that. Our job was easy: We told them what to do, and then they've got to figure out a way to do it. So we're planning on him doing a great job with that." Church said he wants people in the community to feel comfortable with JCPD officers and also cites community policing

as a priority for the department. "I stress that to my officers — compassion," Church said. "They have to have that. There (are) people in positions that you don't know what that reason is. And if you can just talk to them and get to know what that reason is, you might be able to help them with that."

DOGS

From Page A1

weight." The resolution also states that pet owners who are cited for violating any portion of the resolution "shall be subject to a civil fine in General Sessions Court of Washington County." The fine for a first offense ranges from \$25 to \$50. A repeat citation is sub-

ject to a fine that can range from \$50 to \$100 per offense. **COMMISSIONERS APPROVE RESOLUTIONS ON LAND SALE, INMATES** Commissioners have also voted to sell 14.6 acres in the Washington County Industrial Park to the company ebm-papst for an expansion of its manufacturing facility in Telford. The resolution authorizes the Washington County Industrial Development Board to sell the property

at a negotiated price of \$120,000. The commission also approved a resolution to authorize a new contract with the U.S. Marshals Service to house federal prisoners at the Washington County Detention Center at a daily rate of \$70 an inmate. Sheriff Keith Sexton said the new per diem represents a \$17 increase per inmate over the terms of the last contract, which was set nearly 15 years ago.

He said the newly negotiated contract to hold 95 federal inmates could net the county as much as an additional \$500,000 a year. **FILLING A COURTHOUSE VACANCY** The commission voted Monday night to accept the resignation of Scott Buckingham, the county's assessor of property. The Republican officeholder is stepping down on June 2. Washington County Attorney Allyson

Wilkinson has provided county commissioners with a timeline for filling the vacancy until the county's next general election in August 2024. Wilkinson has sent a memo stating they must appoint an interim assessor of property by Sept. 19. To meet that deadline, the attorney said commissioners must vote on that successor by no later than their regular monthly meeting on Aug. 28.

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