

THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE



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Five HCS graduates honored as distinguished alumni

BY GREG THOMPSON
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Four of the five honorees chosen as Hardin County Schools Distinguished Alumni for 2026 were present Thursday for a luncheon at the Hardin County Schools Early College and Career Center to recognize them and their achievements.

“These five individuals are leaving an indelible mark on their careers, their family, their community and their circle of influence,” said John Wright, community and public relations director for HCS.

Sara Jo Ritchie Best, Joi Craig, Aaron Dale, Detective William Smallwood and Dr. Jesse Vance were the five HCS Distinguished Alumni being honored this year.

Each honoree thanked their parents, specific teachers and school administrators for inspiration and guidance, and also the Board of Education.

SARAH JO (RITCHIE) BEST

Best, a 1993 graduate of Central Hardin High School, has served as the public health director at the Lincoln Trail District Health Department since 2013.

As he introduced her, Wright said Best has influenced public health policy and practice at the local, state and national levels.

“I’m very proud of the fact that I’m a Hardin Countian, and I feel a deep connection to this area,” said Best, who chose to return to Hardin County after graduating college to raise a family and begin her career in health-



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

A 1991 graduate of North Hardin High School and current music teacher at G.C. Burkhead Elementary, Aaron Dale was one of five selected as a 2026 HCS Distinguished Alumni.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

LMPD Detective William Smallwood was one of five in the Class of 2026 Hardin County Schools Distinguished Alumni. Smallwood speaks to those gathered during a Thursday luncheon.

care. James Catholic School. Best expressed a fondness for several teachers in both middle and high school who

made classes and learning fun, offered sound advice and taught hard but valuable lessons.

“We all have the ability to positively impact the lives of those we encounter, regardless of the field we choose,” Best said.

JOI CRAIG

Craig, a 2015 graduate of North Hardin High School, has dedicated her career to empowering students, developing future leaders and creating opportunities that extend beyond the classroom as she serves as the director of student life at Simmons College.

“Honestly, I believe anyone who was part of my life through my Hardin County

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ECTC professor attends AI Summit in Silicon Valley

BY THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Elizabethtown Community and Technical College Computer and Information Technology Professor Kevin Parrett visited the forefront of artificial intelligence development last week.

As a member of the curated audience that was invitation-only or application-approved, Parrett said the Imagination in Action Silicon Valley AI Summit provided him with an opportunity to bring a unique perspective back to ECTC and its students.

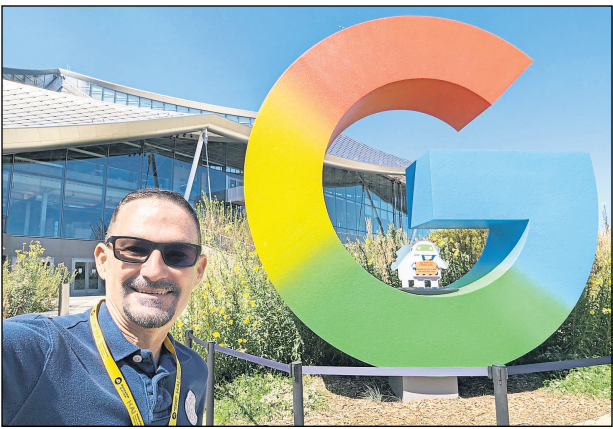
“I applied for it on a whim, and I forgot about it because

I never thought I’d be invited,” Parrett said in a news release. “I was very proud to be among the educators selected to attend and to represent ECTC.”

The summit combined executive discussions, startup pitches, frontier research and live technology demonstrations, giving attendees direct access to people actively developing and studying the technology, according to the release.

The conference, held Sept. 14–15 inside Google’s Bay View campus in Mountain View, California, in

SEE **ECTC/PAGE A8**



Submitted

ECTC Computer and Information Technology Professor Kevin Parrett attended the Imagination in Action Silicon Valley AI Summit recently, providing him with an opportunity to bring a unique perspective back to the college and its students.

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Courtesy of Donna Spagenberger

Bricks surrounding a flagpole in Optimist Park in Vine Grove can be purchased and inscribed for anyone interested in leaving a lasting legacy. Vine Grove Councilwoman Donna Spagenberger said the bricks are part of an area for everyone to enjoy and remember.

Bricks build a lasting legacy in Vine Grove's Optimist Park

BY KODEE BRINEGAR
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

A new opportunity will allow locals to leave their mark on Optimist Park in Vine Grove in the form of bricks.

What started as a conversation with Councilwoman Kathy Sisco led to the creation of a memorial area known as the Legacy Pathway or Legacy Walk, inside Optimist Park, according to Councilwoman Donna Spagenberger.

“We just thought it would be a nice thing for the people who have lived there forever or new people coming in to say, ‘Hey, that’s my name, I love Vine Grove,’” Spagenberger said. “The more we were talking to people, the more excited people were getting.”

Mayor Pam Ogden said she is ecstatic about the idea.

“The Legacy Pathway is a beautiful addition to Optimist Park, a special place to honor loved ones and create lasting memories in our community,” Ogden said.

For the pathway, Spagenberger said 100 4x8 and 100 8x8 bricks were placed to create a walking path to the

flagpole at Optimist Park.

“There’s a walkway leading up to it that’s going to have inscribed bricks, and then there’s a circle that goes around the flagpole,” Spagenberger said, adding that there are benches on either side for people to sit. “It’s just going to be a nice place for people to walk up to and sit down and take a rest and see the names of so many people that love Vine Grove.”

Fellow Vine Grove City Councilwoman Mary Dunn posted about the project on Facebook, commending Sisco and Spagenberger for following through on their vision.

“This is what loving your town means. This is what loving Vine Grove means. This is what Improving Vine Grove means,” Dunn said in her post. “They had a vision, did the research and found the incredibly talented contractor that brought it to life.”

The first batch of inscribed bricks was laid the week of Sept. 12. Roughly 20 bricks have been purchased so far, according to Spagenberger.

Spagenberger said that the

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Hardin Fiscal Court proposes moratorium on data centers

BY GREG THOMPSON
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Magistrates of Hardin Fiscal Court heard a first reading Tuesday of an ordinance imposing a temporary moratorium on rezoning and conditional use permits relating to data centers.

The county’s planning commission would first review and recommend rezoning and conditional use permit applications.

“The Hardin County Development Guidance Sys-

tem Zoning Ordinance 269-1009 ... does not currently regulate data centers,” Judge-Executive Keith Taul said, as he began reading the ordinance, “and whereas the planning commission is in the process of gathering information and has not yet held hearings in order to make a recommendation to Hardin County Fiscal Court on the appropriate regulations of data centers in the Hardin County Development

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OBITUARIES

Carolyn ‘Granny’ Harper, 78
Harold Edward LeVay, 89
Ruth ‘Jeanne’ Nehls, 84
James Robert ‘Bob’ Potter, 87

SINCE YOU ASKED

Results of The News-Enterprise online poll as of 5 p.m. Thursday.
When traveling, do you prefer to stay in hotels or Airbnbs?
Hotels: 78.7% • Airbnbs: 21.3%

TODAY’S QUESTION: Do you oppose the development of data centers?

NEWS

Motion granted to revoke inmate’s phone, texting privileges
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