

COMING UP ROSES



SARAH WADE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

An arrangement of roses is a classic Valentine's Day favorite at Enchanted Florist in Bristol, Tennessee.

IN THE RED

Most area florists say pandemic not slowing Valentine's sales

BY SARAH WADE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — As an ashen sky dumped more rain on the region, all the color in Bristol seemed to have fled indoors, into the shops of florists fulfilling Valentine's Day orders.

Janice Chafin slid sprigs of bright purple statice between long-stemmed orange and yellow roses in her workroom at Enchanted Florist. Even the leaves in the arrangement popped, after she sprayed them with a



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See video of the florists featured in this story at HeraldCourier.com.

can of Green Glo plant polish. "We've had a lot of requests for brighter colors this year," Chafin said.

This year, the shop's Valentine's Day sales have been "about average," despite the upheavals of the pandemic, she said.

Several other local florists said the same, and they're not alone: The National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics' annual Valentine's Day survey found that 35% of U.S. adults plan to buy flowers for loved ones on Valentine's Day. Only candy and greeting cards ranked higher.

The survey did find a \$32 drop in the average amount of money people plan to spend on Valentine's Day gifts and celebrations, from a record \$196.31 in 2020 to \$164.76 this year. But its authors said the 2021 estimate is still the "second highest in the survey's history."

And the pandemic could even give florists and gift shops an edge this year: Only 24% of survey respondents said they plan to celebrate Valentine's Day by dining out — a 10% drop compared to last year.

"People are stuck at home, so they send flowers more, I think," said David Pickle, co-owner of



SARAH WADE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Wanpen Walker, owner of Pen's Floral in Bristol, Virginia, works on floral arrangements for Valentine's Day.

Misty's Florist on Volunteer Parkway, standing by a display window chocked with white floral arrangements and heart-shaped balloons. "Honestly, [Valentine's Day sales have] been about normal," he said.

It might not look that way in his quiet store. Pickle, like Chafin, said that walk-in orders have

dipped this season, while phone and internet orders have spiked.

What flowers did people seem to be going for this year?

"For Valentine's Day? Roses, roses, roses," Pickle said.

He ordered 4,000 this year,

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FLOWER POWER

250 million: Estimated number of roses produced for Valentine's Day, according to the Society of American Florists

BUY ME LOVE

Fast facts about how U.S. adults plan to celebrate Valentine's Day today from the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics' annual Valentine's Day survey*:

\$21.8 billion: Amount U.S. adults are expected to spend for gifts and celebrations

Percentage of adults planning to:

- » Celebrate Valentine's Day in general: 52%
- » Celebrate it at home: 41%
- » Celebrate it with an evening out: 24%

\$164.76: Average amount consumers plan to spend this Valentine's Day (about \$32 less than 2020)

- » Average amount for men: \$231
- » Average amount for women: \$101

Percentage of U.S. adults planning to buy:

- » Candy: 54%
- » Greeting cards: 44%
- » Flowers: 36%
- » Evening out: 24%
- » Gift card: 21%
- » Clothing: 20%
- » Jewelry: 18%
- » Other: 12%

*The survey of adult U.S. consumers, conducted Jan. 4-12, had 7,882 respondents and has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.1 percentage points.



SARAH WADE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Bouquets of candy and stuffed animals can be alternatives to the floral arrangements available at Misty's Florist in Bristol, Tennessee.

Discerning fact from opinion

I do not like to write about politics. In fact, I practically hate it. "Hate" is a strong word, and one which I rarely use, but I would not be far wrong to use the word here. The main reason



Ben Talley

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being that I know I am bound to hurt the feelings of some of my friends. I cherish all my friends; my Republican friends, my Democrat friends, and my "neither one" friends, all with equal value.

And as my closest friends know, I publicly favor neither major American political party over the other. I am one of those beings who is apparently becoming a bit rarer in America these days, as I remain politically unaffiliated. If someone were to throw me up in the air I'd likely fall back to Earth and hit the line that divides the two parties directly in the middle.

(As for the political "middle," I wish more would join me here. It's a much nicer place here. Toward the middle. Not on the fringes of either party. But toward the middle. Where we can get good things done together. The only place where things ever get done well.)

As for Republican party values, I strongly admire their ideals of a smaller federal government and individual responsibility.

As for Democratic party values, I am equally keen about their causes of equal rights and social justice for all.

Most of my friends are Republican, as is most of my family. The times in my life I have voted for either a Republican or a Democratic candidate are about equal. I admire the many good qualities of both parties. Yet I also try not to shy away from writing articles that seek to steer us back toward reality, should we ever (collectively, as a society) sway too far from the time-honored values of either great American political party.

I do not write this column as an "opinion" column. I am devoted to doing a lot of research before I type what I've found to be strong facts which stand on their own, as opposed to strong opinions (which do not).

Many people, even the so-called highly educated, sometimes have trouble differentiating between a fact and an opinion. (Yes, I include myself.)

If a friend tells me that most of my personal friends are Republicans, that qualifies as a fact. However, if the same friend tells me that the modern Republican party is not as good as it used to be, then that qualifies as an opinion (no matter how much he may regard it as a fact).

Differentiating between fact and opinion nearly always comes down to one of my favorite words.

Education.

Most everyone supports strong public schools in America. Not so much to teach kids the three R's, but to teach them how to think. Rationally. Scientifically. How to weed out the fiction from the truth. How not to be deceived by our own strong emotions and/or popular hoaxes. The teaching of such a way of thinking is inherently crucial to maintaining our republic.

Thomas Jefferson predicted that our nation would always get the leaders we deserve, in relation to our ability to educate ourselves. When we learn to properly weigh the words of others (both written and spoken) on the unbiased scales of the scientific method; looking at all alternate possibilities, weighing all the evidence (whether we really want to see it or not), and being slow to ultimately deem an idea or a theory as "fact", then we stay true to such a method.

In America, one can always hope.

As for myself, I hope to return next week to writing mostly local special interest stories related to education. Those are the types of articles I enjoy writing most. By far. And I feel that is what the readers of this column (whom I also consider to be friends) probably like best.

As a lifelong educator, however, my purpose is not to always "just write what people want to read", but to write what might lead people to "think" a bit more

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REEDY CREEK ROAD



PHOTOS BY DALENA ADAMS AND ROBERT SORRELL | BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABOVE AND BELOW RIGHT: Rodeo in the Valley brought competitive and interactive events back to Washington County on Saturday. Other events in the series are planned throughout the summer.

RODEO

IS BACK IN TOWN

Rodeo in the Valley returns equestrian activity to Washington County

BY ROBERT SORRELL
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — For the first time in more than a decade, hundreds gathered at the Anderson Farm in Washington County for an action-packed rodeo.

Owner Mike Anderson said a rodeo was last held at his farm off Reedy Creek Road back in 2007. Rodeos had been held often, gathering spectators and competitors from around the region.

After the COVID-19 pandemic left area residents indoors in 2020 and early 2021, rodeo organizer Brad Nelms said it was time to return to the farm.

On Friday, about 2,000 people visited the farm to watch a wild night of rodeo fun. Another couple thousand people returned Saturday. Gates opened at 5:30 p.m. and a patriotic opening ceremony began at 7:30.

Cowboys and cowgirls rallied around the arena carrying the red, white and blue American flag. The announcer, contrasting the event from other sports events, said rodeo competitors and participants stand for the flag. He asked veterans in attendance to stand, as well as nurses, doctors and emergency personnel who have worked hard during the pandemic.

The opening ceremony concluded with a flyover by a helicopter carrying a large American flag.

Anderson said he was told by many spectators who had never been to a rodeo that they would return. He said they were particularly pleased with the patriotic opening ceremony.

Anderson and Nelms said they had no issues with the event, which had been postponed due to a controversy surrounding its permit. Washington County



ONLINE

See more photos from Saturday's Rodeo in the Valley event at [HeraldCourier.com](https://www.heraldcourier.com).

leaders previously kept the event from taking place at the Reedy Creek farm.

Nelms, 42, a rodeo producer known around the country, had been turned down for the permit at two meetings prior to his first scheduled weekend events in May. Subsequently, Nelms made a last-minute change and decided to hold the first rodeo in the series at the Russell County Fairgrounds — instead of the proposed site in Washington County. The Board of Supervisors voted unani-

mously to allow the rodeo to take place during an early June meeting.

On Saturday night, competitors participated in calf roping, barrel racing, steer wrestling and bull riding, which Anderson said was the most popular event. Top performing participants may go on to perform in Oklahoma.

About 100 people from around the country participated in the event, Nelms said. He expects many to return for future events this summer.

A ranch rodeo, different from this weekend's event, is scheduled on July 10 at the farm. Another rodeo is planned the weekend of June 23-24.

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Teach your child to 'do' good, not 'be' good

“Be good!” It's a phrase that's oft heard emanating from the mouths of many a well-intentioned teacher and parent alike. However, I always



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preferred to encourage children to “do” good in the world, as opposed to “being” good. “Do” is an action verb. It connotes with “getting things done.” When

I think back on my life, it's not hard to discover what strongly molded such a philosophy within me.

If my mother was proud of someone (and I mean really-super-especially proud), her eyes twinkled. And she winked.

Helen Talley taught a ladies' Sunday school class and children's church for over half a century.

Take that previous sentence and chew on it for a moment before moving on.

Now travel with me back in time to when I was a young man of 20 summers. I had given up a full golf scholarship at ETSU to transfer to a Baptist college and study to become a preacher.

It was a bright and sunny June afternoon when my mother entered my drapery-darkened, lamp-lit bedroom to find me reading my Bible. I had read my Bible completely through from beginning to end several times that year already. And I was heaven-bent (or hell-bent, as you may choose) to keep reading the New Testament again and again until I had it completely memorized. Yep, all of it. Memorized.

Mom stood in the doorway quietly for a moment. I fully expected her to proudly say something to me about my “being good.”

But she didn't.

In fact, she got angry. Very angry. Maybe about as angry as I ever saw her.

“Ben, quit layin' around in that bed and get out there in the world and do some good!”

Shell-shocked by her unexpected barrage of words, I could barely speak. “But, Mom, I thought you'd be proud of me.”

Mom replied, “Anybody can quote some Bible verses and think they're bein' good. But not many really live it. Quit tryin' so hard to 'be' good, Ben. Nobody can really be good, anyway. It's why we all need grace. (She paused for a moment.) I'm not sure it matters that much if you never open a Bible again. But it matters a whole lot if you go out in the world and live it. You have a lot of love in your heart for people, but it's all chained up in tryin' to be religious. Now lay down that Bible and get to livin' life and actually doin' somethin' for people.”

I was rendered speechless. My tongue wanted to move, to at least say something, but it couldn't.

I very much struggled with what Mom said that day. The next 10 years or so my life took on many a different twist and turn and path. Some of my closest friends and family may even say a much “darker” path. Indeed, many are the deeds I did that I cannot proudly write about in a family newspaper. Perhaps that's why Mom later referred to me as her Prodigal Son.

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Briefly

Two Bristol officers honored by Optimist Club

BRISTOL, Tenn. — The Optimist Club of Bristol honored two local police officers on Thursday.

Greg Hogston with the Bristol Virginia Police Department and Michael Carlson with the Bristol Tennessee Police Department

were named officers of the year. They were honored during the annual Respect for Law program.

After a few words explaining why the two individuals were selected for the award by both departments' chiefs, they then received a plaque to mark the momentous occasion, according to the club.

Missing Carter County child found in Virginia

ELIZABETHTON, Tenn. — A missing child from Carter County, Tennessee, has been safely located in Washington County, Virginia.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation had issued an endan-

gered child alert for 1-year-old Caelum Heaton on behalf of the Carter County Sheriff's Office. The child had last been seen on June 10.

On Saturday, the TBI said Heaton was found in Washington County. The TBI released no additional details about the case.

From staff reports

LET THE LEAF-PEEPING BEGIN

Here comes

COLOR



PHOTOS BY DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABOVE and BELOW: Leaves around the area have begun to change colors with the peak expected to be between Oct. 11-28 in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, according to the Farmer's Almanac.

Peak leaf color in the region expected during third week of October

BY ROBERT SORRELL
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

The return of cooler weather, pumpkins on every porch and apple butter churning means just one thing: colorful autumn leaves are on the horizon.

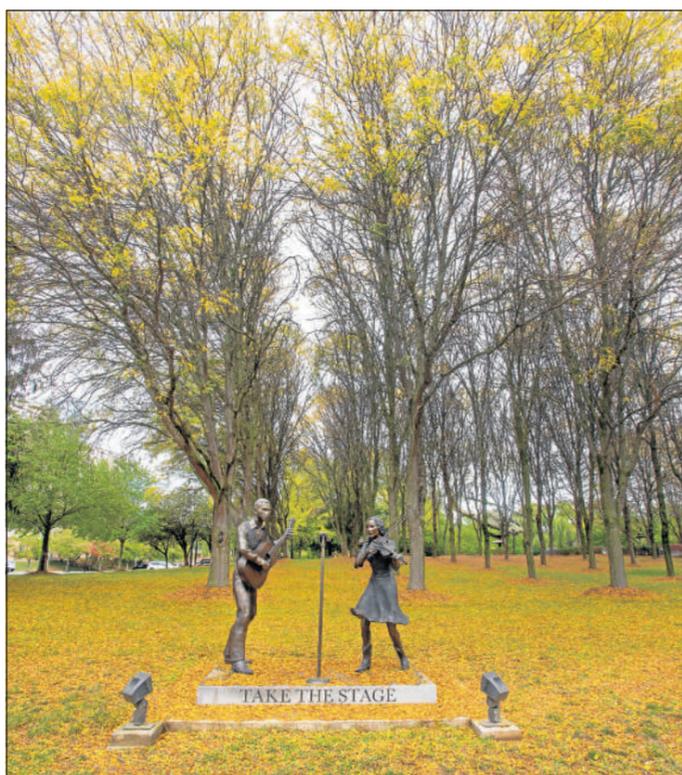
The fall foliage colors in North-east Tennessee and Southwest Virginia may peak by the third week of October this year — about a week ahead of normal, according to Virginia Tech tree physiology expert John Seiler.

“I’m seeing some signs of things being a little early this year,” Seiler said in a written statement.

This past week, Seiler said he visited the mountains of western Virginia to take a peek at the leaves.

“I just came back from the national forest and oaks are not turning yet, maples are showing a bit and hickories just a bit as well,” Seiler said.

The professor, an expert on fall foliage in the Appalachian Mountains, said the region will peak earlier this year, in part because of the lack of long term rain this year. Before recent rain, the region was



drying out a bit, he explained. “Decent amounts of precipitation keep the leaves from dropping too soon,” he said. “And because those vivid reds form in

the fall, rain improves the outlook they’ll be bright and colorful.” Leaves are typically bright green in the summer months due to the production of chlorophyll.

As the days get shorter in the fall, Seiler explains, the leaves begin to change hue to their natural reds, yellows and oranges.

The Appalachian region typically never has a poor or average year of fall colors.

“It’s either good, better or best,” Seiler said.

The diverse range of trees in the region keeps the colors bold and vivid, such as the oaks, maples and hickories that Seiler looks for. If one tree is hurt by hot weather in the summer, he said other trees will likely not suffer.

“Our mountains offer constantly changing elevations and aspects, which lead to a higher biodiversity, which leads to a greater mixture of fall color,” he said.

Leaves are expected to be at their peak between Oct. 11 and Oct. 28, according to Seiler, as well as the Farmers Almanac. So plan trips accordingly, especially when the sun is out because the colors look a lot better when there’s sunshine, he said.

The Virginia Department of Forestry reported this week that the highest elevations of Southwest

Words at funerals

If you are fully vaccinated, my friends, and are physically able, please consider attending the funeral services of any friend



Ben Talley

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or family member in person.

In my life, I have never regretted attending a funeral service for a friend or family member.

Yes, it is easy for any of us to find every excuse in the world for not going to a funeral.

But we don’t go for ourselves. We go for others. And we often go with words to say (even if we are sometimes at a loss to find them once we arrive).

I have been asked to speak at many a funeral service over the years. I always make certain my words are both positive and uplifting.

But as is often the case with many things in life, we can sometimes learn how to do our best by watching the worst. Several years back, I attended a funeral service after the tragic death of a young friend. The presiding pastor spoke the following words; “We know that no suicide can make it to heaven.” However false his point may have been, this man continued to hammer it home, again and again, deriding the deceased at virtually every word.

So I got up and walked out. And I motioned for the family to follow me. Which they did.

Was I rude? Maybe. But not nearly as rude (or nearly as wrong) as this pastor, who obviously thought God had died and put him in charge of deciding the fate of all souls.

I have spoken at the funeral services of several of my own family members, including my own parents. Those were heartbreaking times, of course. Oh, but what an honor to speak words of comfort to the rest of the family.

A funeral is neither the time nor the place to speak ill of the dead. But it is a most opportune and wonderful time and place to celebrate their life.

I have spoken at the burials of homeless friends where no one came but me. Literally. No one. I whispered words that no one heard but me. Yet I spoke as positively, and in as uplifting a way, as if the whole world were there listening.

I once spoke at the funeral service of a friend who many others might refer to as a “lady of the night.” Yes, she was a friend of mine. After I spoke, someone approached me with a facetious smirk and wondered aloud to me whether this lady would “actually ever get into heaven.”

Now I’m basically an easygoing soul, but my Irish temper has been known to flash out toward downright arrogance and injustice; especially when they’re paired together at funerals. So I replied, “I’m bettin’ she’s way more likely to get in than you.”

Over many years of attending countless funerals, I have now come to the opinion that one often reveals one’s true inner self by what words one says at such a time about the recently deceased.

I have also spoken at the final laying to rest of several beloved pets. Surely our pets deserve a few honorable and loving words, as well. I’ve been known to shed more than a few tears at such times, too. There’s something cosmically enriching about loving animals that aren’t human.

So when I go through that funeral line, what words do I say to the bereaved? Well, after