

Runs in the family

Three generations make winning team in sheep shows

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
 FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — It's plain to see that 10-year-old Kylie Blevins is following in her family's footsteps.

The fourth grade student at Abingdon Elementary is a member of the Washington County 4-H, the same organization her mother Hayley Blevins participated in as a youth.

And success in the show ring is another similarity for the mother-and-daughter team.

Just like her mother, Kylie is turning judges' heads when it comes to showing market lambs and commercial ewe lambs on state and national levels, allowing her to meet people with similar interests throughout the country.

Kylie recently was awarded second place in the State Fair of Virginia Youth Scholarship Program, receiving \$1,620, which will be escrowed for college.

She is among 15 youth who placed for their exhibitions of beef, cattle, sheep, meat goats and swine in the 2020 state fair held in Doswell, Virginia, earlier this month.

A total of \$23,000 in scholarships was given to the winning youth who participated this year. The fair has awarded 1,500 scholarships since 2013 and has given more than \$570,000 in support of education for kids and teenagers who participate.

Because of COVID restrictions, a modified youth livestock show was held in place of the traditional 4-H and FFA youth livestock programs.

Participants were judged on their performances in the show ring, as well as leadership, community service activities and written essays.

As a first-time fair exhibitor, Kylie earned one of her biggest accomplishments at the State Fair of Virginia in 2019 when she exhibited the Grand Champion Market Lamb and won Junior Showmanship.

In October 2020, Kylie was awarded Premier Exhibitor in the Junior Sheep Show at the State Fair of Virginia, another huge accomplishment for her.

"Kylie is amazing," said Crystal Peek, Washington County Extension Agent, 4-H. "She's so young to have so many accolades under her belt, which shows tremendous ambition. Kylie is smart, hard-working and so kind to others."

Kylie's advice to other students is to "always keep trying, and never give up."

A lot of hard work is the secret to success, said her mother.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Kylie Blevins, 10, grooms the lambs for show day. Ten-year-old Kylie Blevins holds a belt buckle she won in October 2020 as the Premier Exhibitor in the Junior Sheep Show at the State Fair of Virginia. Hayley Blevins (right) shows daughter Kylie Blevins how to prepare sheep for the show ring several years ago. Each generation of the Blevins family helps raise the sheep for competitive 4-H shows.



The Blevins family has been raising and showing lambs for decades. "It's a family sport," said Kylie's grandmother, Natalie Blevins.

"Each of us has a specialty, and together we make it work."

Natalie said she is the dietician in the family. She helps Kylie put together their feed rations and develops exercise plans for the lambs.

Hayley was so successful at competitions and showmanship with her lambs that she paid for a lot of her college tuition with scholarship money. Now, the mother helps her daughter prepare lambs for shows.

"We call my husband, Ed, the driver and the loader," laughed the grandmother. "He also has a good eye for selecting lambs to purchase for the farm. He's a master at picking out really good stock."

Kylie and her family work with the lambs every day in order to achieve good results at the shows.

"We exercise the lambs at intervals once they get enough fat coverage," said Hayley. "They're almost like body builders."

Kylie is at the barn bright and early at 7 most mornings to help her family feed the lambs, just before she has to leave for school.

"I look forward to coming home to work my nine lambs," said the youth, who confessed

she thinks about them during her school day. "Each of my lambs has a unique personality. They like to learn."

In the evenings, the family comes back together to feed and exercise the lambs to ensure the sheep are getting the proper exercise.

Every little task is important for the show sheep.

"We rinse the legs of the lambs, which promotes hair growth," said the mother. "You want to have as much hair growth on the legs as possible when show time comes around."

The grandmother said she is delighted Kylie enjoys showing sheep as much as the family has throughout the years. "I think it helps young people to develop character and integrity."

Kylie believes showing sheep has helped her gain more patience and confidence.

When Kylie is not working with her livestock and other 4-H projects, she enjoys playing Upward Bound Basketball and going to the gym. She is hopeful that basketball will resume this fall after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

She's also a member of the Wythe County Livestock Club, where she is actively involved in livestock judging and livestock skill-a-thons.

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My daughter is the best birthday present I could ever ask for

I gave up birthdays 20 years ago today.

It wasn't some avoidance issue thing about getting old. I kind of consider each age that I reach is a crowning achievement that I've lasted this long, despite still eating fried eggs, corn chips and the occasional ice cream cone.

You see, I simply had to step aside in 2001 when I got the greatest birthday gift of all: My beloved daughter was born on my birthday 20 years ago today.

That means March 21 is her birthday, not just mine.

In the hospital, however, we thought Abigail was never going to arrive.

When she did, after hours and hours of labor, she couldn't breathe. She was rushed to the intensive care unit.

Our family held hands and prayed for two hours until the doctor finally came out and told us some news.

"Is she going to live?" I bravely asked.

The doctor replied, "yes," and sort of acted like it was obvious that she was going to make it.

Even so, our baby spent five days in the intensive care unit at

the old Johnston Memorial Hospital of Abingdon Virginia.

Coming home, I learned all about diapers, burping, Barney the Dinosaur and My Little Pony.

By age 3, Abigail had become my tag-along buddy. She went with me on trips and interviews.

The two of us took off on our first cross-Virginia trip on June 18, 2004, and stopped at sites along the Blue Ridge Parkway before finally reaching my parents' house in Virginia Beach close to midnight.

My daddy was worried. But it was all fine with me and Abby.

In the next few years, Abigail tagged along as we traveled across

the mountains of Maryland and West Virginia and down to Alabama and Georgia. We explored the South, traveling to towns called Helen, Blue Ridge and Mentone.

The little girl who could not breathe for the first couple of hours and had to be rescued in the hospital turned out to be a very lovely singer. She took her talents on the road with the Abingdon High School chorus. And she marched in the school band, serving five years as a trombone player for the Abingdon High School Falcons.

She graduated high school with honors and moved on to college. She is still getting A's.

Both being the sign of Aries, we

have rammed heads every once in a while. But there's a kindred spirit between us.

When she was little, Abigail said we were "twins" for being born on the same day.

I have seen my birthday girl experience great highs and joys. Unfortunately, she's also endured pain and heartache, especially when losing two good friends to young deaths during her senior year.

But she's strong.

Sweet and strong.

My daughter is fun and witty. And she's blessed with common sense.

She is also the best birthday present I could ever ask for.

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Joe Tennis

Tennis Anyone?

ADOPTABLE PETS

Animal Shelter of Sullivan County | 423-279-2741 | animal.shelter@sullivancountytn.gov | 380 Massengill Rd, Blountville, TN, 37617



Bella, senior female, small black terrier mix



Maggie, adult female, black and white Lab mix



Stinker, adult female, gray pit bull terrier Mix



Baby, adult male, gray and white



Chip, male kitten, gray and white



Ghost, male kitten, gray-striped tabby



Harper, female kitten, tan and gray with white



Mia, female adult, dark gray and white



Persephone, young female, tan and gray tabby



Porsche, female kitten, black and gray tabby



Shelby, female kitten, gray and white tabby



Tiger, young male, gray-striped tabby



Wednesday, female kitten, black



Willow, male kitten, black and white

The Bridge Home Animal Shelter
 2061 Highway 75
 Blountville, TN 37617
 bridgehomerescue@gmail.com
 423-239-5237



Gucci, loving, 8-year-old male, white and black pointer mix



Jesse, 3-month-old male, white/tan Chihuahua mix



Leo, young male, tan pit bull terrier mix



Miss Molly, 2-year-old female, white/tan pit bull terrier mix



Music, 3-year-old female, black and white pointer mix



Rider, 4-year-old male, black/white Lab mix



Roxy, 2-year-old female, black Rottweiler mix



Sam, 2-year-old male, black/white hound mix



Shiloh, 7-year-old male, tri-color tree walker coonhound (has been socialized, not a hunting dog)



Addy, 1-year-old female, black



Allie, 1-year-old female, calico (see at Petsmart)



Ariel, 5-month-old female, calico



Artoo, 1-year-old male, all black



Bentley, 1-year-old male, all black



Greyson, 4-year-old male bobtail, black and white



Hadley, 1-year-old female, gray/blue mostly



Joy, young female, brown tabby



Kali, female kitten, black/white tuxedo



Lita, black/white tuxedo, 4-year-old female



Liv, 4-year-old female, black/white



Max, young male, black, sweetie



Miss Kitty, 2-year-old female, dilute calico



Mittens, 13-year-old male, black/white tuxedo



Salem, 2-year-old female, all black



Selina, 1-year-old female, gray tiger-striped tabby



White Socks, young male, gray/white tabby

The smell of the dump surrounds you

I started hearing about Bristol's funkiness long before I got a good whiff. And then? Well, to paraphrase Lynyrd Skynyrd, "Ooh, that smell/The smell of the dump surrounds you." The old landfill in Bristol, Virginia has been a smelly mess



Joe Tennis
Tennis Anyone?

this year. But I had not quite caught the right intake to completely comprehend what it smelled like — until Tuesday afternoon. "It's terrible," one friend had told me. "Just awful," said another. Two weeks earlier, I thought I had smelled it. "Cow manure?" I asked my old buddy Dave. "Farmer," Dave said. "This is a chemical smell." As Dave had guessed, when

I smelled cow manure, I had smelled the work of an eager farmer. But, on Tuesday afternoon, I discovered the dump. I was seeing my daughter off as she headed to church for a musical rehearsal. What a sweet mission, and what foul air for it. Outside, it smelled like we were standing inside a giant trash can. The odor traveled through the frigid December air like a nasty

refrigerator that had not been cleaned out for 18 years. Dave could smell it in Tennessee; I smelled it in Virginia. You could say that smell joined both Bristols like the giant "A Good Place to Live" sign that arches above State Street, welcoming visitors to our dynamic downtown district. Once upon a time, more than a century ago, that sign said, "PUSH! That's Bristol." Push? Yeah. From what I've read,

that word noted the Twin City's growth and seemingly referenced how a woman should push to deliver a baby. But lights would burn out on that sign. And that word "PUSH!" would sometime say, "--SH! That's Bristol." Worse yet, the comical way those lights would burn out and say, "PU--! That's Bristol" would, well, certainly fit what's in the air today.

FALL FOLK ARTS FESTIVAL

Fair Exchange

History comes alive at Exchange Place festival

BY MARSHALL ADESMAN
EXCHANGE PLACE

Exchange Place Living History Farm will usher in autumn when it hosts the 49th edition of its Fall Folk Arts Festival. After last year's event was canceled due to COVID-19, this harvest season celebration will be held on Saturday, Sept. 25, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 26, from noon until 5 p.m. Admission is \$5, with those under the age of 12 admitted free.

With major support from the Hamlett-Dobson Funeral Homes, all proceeds go towards the care of the farm's animals and the continued restoration and preservation of the site, located at 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport, Tennessee. And this year, because the virus remains a presence in the region, all CDC protocols will be followed, including keeping the historic buildings closed. Visitors are strongly urged to wear masks and maintain a safe distance from others.

Artists from around the region will gather to demonstrate 19th-century crafts, as well as to sell a wide array of traditional folk arts and hand-crafted arts of today. Plants for fall planting will also be available, as well as dried flowers, seasonal crafts, local honey, goat milk cheeses, salsas and hot sauces, and stone ground cornmeal, grits and more.

In addition, several acclaimed heritage artists will be on the grounds during the weekend. George McCollum, a longtime member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild, will be making his widely celebrated miniature white oak baskets (on Saturday only). Master crafter Heather Ashworth, of the Arrowmont School of the Arts in Gatlinburg, will be offering two traditional broom-making workshops on Sunday, at noon and again at



CONTRIBUTED REPORT

After being canceled last year due to COVID-19, the Fall Folk Arts Festival returns to the Exchange Place on Saturday and Sunday, with live demonstrations of 19th-century crafts..

2:30 p.m. Students will bind two whisk hand brooms using broom corn and colorful cord. The cost of this unique workshop is \$65 and includes all materials. Registration is required by Sunday, Sept. 19, at heather4trees@gmail.com. (It must be noted that the classes will only be held if at least five people enroll.)

A highlight of the festival will be an extensive display of historic clocks and watches curated by master clock mechanic Rod Groenewold and members of the Watauga Chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. Rod has been fascinated by clocks and watches for more than 40 years, and now he and the other members of the group will display and sell part of their collections of historic timepieces. The group is also inviting festival

visitors to bring in clocks and watches for free appraisals. A silent auction will offer three antique clocks from Rod's collection to the highest bidders. One is an eight-day keywind clock that dates to 1919, one is a cast-iron mantle clock made in 1890, and the third is an Ansonia Clock Co. "Antler" clock, made around 1905. These clocks will be on display and can be bid on at their booth, with the proceeds benefiting Exchange Place.

History is always alive throughout the farm. While the log kitchen will be closed as it undergoes a restoration, the Eden's Ridge Hearth Cookery Society, and the energetic Junior Apprentices, will prepare some of the foods the Preston family would have eaten in the mid-19th century, using the bread oven and an outdoor

fire (weather permitting). They will also be demonstrating gourd crafting in the yard of the restored Cook's Cabin. The blacksmith's shop will be open, demonstrating the various tasks that made the "smithy" such a valuable person in antebellum America. Behind the blacksmith's shop, sorghum will, once again, be milled and cooked (only on Saturday, please note). Mules will do the milling in the morning (they will not be available for rides or for petting), and the cooking process will be done throughout the afternoon. Our resident fiber artists — better known as the Overmountain Weavers' Guild — will demonstrate the intricacies of spinning and weaving on the Roseland porch and in the Burow Museum. Boy Scout Troop 387 will be demonstrating rope-making, and they plan to sell whatever ropes they create, with all proceeds being donated to Exchange Place.

Activities for the youngsters are always prominent during these Exchange Place fetes, and children of all ages will not only get to play the kinds of games that the Preston family would have played, but they will be encouraged to try their hands at some of the "chores" that were expected of young people on an antebellum farm, such as creating toys and grinding corn.

The traditional Fall Scarecrow Challenge will not be held this year. There will, however, be an area set aside where visitors can add to the creation of the Exchange Place scarecrows, and learn their long and interesting history. However, other popular Festival traditions remain, including being able to meet and greet all of the heritage breed of animals that live on the farmstead all year long, and listening to the wide selection of regional

Make your own broom at workshop

BY MARSHALL ADESMAN
EXCHANGE PLACE

KINGSPOST, Tenn. — These years have already been dubbed the Digital Age, where computers, electronics and artificial intelligence are turning so much of what we knew into relics of the past. You can now, for instance, get a robot to vacuum your floors. Our telephones look, and act, like nothing that Alexander Graham Bell would remotely recognize. Newspapers, especially in smaller communities, are losing readers to computers or "personal assistants." Automobile manufacturers are promising us that in the not-too-distant future, we can tell our cars where we want to go and then relax and let the vehicle do all the work.

But some "oldies but goodies" continue to defy modern upgrades and remain useful in their classic form. The broom is one of those.

Yes, the broom. Odds are you've got at least one in your house. Even the youngsters of Gen Z (probably) know what it is. An efficient instrument for cleaning, its basic design has been unchanged since ... well, we don't really know when the broom made its first appearance, but it has simply always been a part of our lives.

And on Sunday, Sept. 26, master crafter Heather Ashworth will teach two classes in broom-making as part of Exchange Place's Fall Folk Arts Festival.

Ashworth is a tradesman and longtime woodworker who became interested in branching out and making

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See BROOM, Page D4

Remembering Tim Cable

Cable's country was full of people, full of life

Years ago, television reporter Tim Cable and I took off looking for the real "Dukes" of Hazard, Kentucky.

We did not find Bo and Luke, the main Duke characters of TV's "The Dukes of Hazzard."

But we did find Joe and Fred Duke, a couple of real-life brothers who lived in Hazard, along with some real nice folks who capped our visit by naming us "dukes" of Hazard — with a short ceremony and a frame-worthy certificate.

We were honored.

But Tim was concerned.

There was an old guy there — a tourism director — and Tim had a suspicion that guy was going to soon be sick and lose his life.

Turns out, he did.

And now Tim has lost his.

Tim Cable died a week ago after contracting COVID-19 before he was able to get a vaccine — something his wife told WJHL-TV that he regretted as he lay in a hospital for about a month.

COVID-19 ain't no joke. It's not a government conspiracy. And it's apparently not going away.

It's a nasty, friend-stealing plague that's sucking the life out of normalcy. And why anybody has not gotten a FREE vaccine yet — when they could — doesn't make a lick of sense to me.

I'm not a medical person. Heck, I never even got through a biology course.

But I figure catching the coronavirus is gonna do a lot more harm than whatever side effects (if any) are inside a vaccine.

I survived COVID-19. I've also been vaccinated. Yet I'm still mildly concerned some variant might sneak past — and kill me, just like the virus killed Tim Cable.

In case you forgot, Tim was a legend on television and radio across the Tri-Cities since the 1980s. He also wrote a column for about four years in the Bristol Herald Courier until 2012.

We traveled together for about 10 years, going to five states and bringing back reports that had us doing silly stuff like racing a boat on tiny Plum Creek at Frog Level, Virginia, in Tazewell County.

We made friends at Pilgrims Knob; looked for pilgrims at Pilgrims Knob; and discovered the real Mayberry on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

We also had running jokes about the folks we met, using odd words like "lexicon," "stagnated" and "escarpment."

I appeared dozens of times on Tim's "Cable Country" TV segments on WJHL. I showed up about a half-dozen times on his morning radio show on WJCW-AM in Gray, Tennessee.

Over the past year, we lost track of each other sometime after the pandemic plagued the earth.

I had not seen him in a couple of years. And it had been nearly a decade since we had routinely traveled together for



EARL NEIKIRK

Joe Tennis (left) and Tim Cable, circa 15 years ago, on one of many trips throughout the region for TV segments and newspaper columns.

stories — going from Natural Bridge, Virginia, to Cades Cove, Tennessee.

Everywhere we went, we had a running joke. And I don't know how it got started. But I would ask whoever we met, wherever we were, the quite random, "Do you know how far it is from here to Mount Airy?"

With that, every time, Tim would form a grin beneath his trademark mustache.

Sometimes, he would burst out laughing — yet try to hide it — as interview subjects would seriously try to calculate miles, thinking that distance might be some fact that we really needed to know.

Our last trips together combined the

newspaper with WJCW — an unofficial pairing that we hoped would become a permanent partnership.

We took off to see Christmas tree farmers at Whitetop, Wayne Henderson's guitar shop and the Dip Dog at Marion, Virginia.

By then, in 2016-2017, our reunions — while getting good stories — seemed more like nostalgic journeys, often recalling our glory days of traveling together along The Crooked Road in 2007.

There was no such thing as COVID-19 in those days. And when we lost track of each other last year, the pandemic had only just begun.

Tim had a mission behind what he did. He used to say that we were doing the traveling for the people who couldn't get out.

So we brought back travel stories for "Cable Country" and this newspaper.

Tim also liked to promote his Christian faith and always encouraged me to do the same, especially any time I could feature a church or profile a Christian rock musician.

I'm also sure he aspired to live a long life — not to be cut down at age 60, while still in command of his beloved morning radio show on WJCW.

And I'm sure he would want me to tell you: Get a vaccine.

Be kind. Be forgiving. Love one another. Smile. Joke. Laugh. And have fun.

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