



SPORTS

Pioneers shaky in second scrimmage 1B



LIFESTYLES

Local sixth-grader second in nation 1C

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Teen admits killing in letter to judge

Brinkley willing to accept 25 years

BY DUANE SHERRILL

In a handwritten letter sent to Judge Bart Stanley, the teen accused of gunning down a Mt. Leo man during a botched robbery attempt says he is ready to accept 25 years in prison and save the state the trouble of trying him for

murder. "I made a terrible mistake," admits Sam Brinkley, 18, in a handwritten letter reportedly sent from his jail cell asking the court to consider a no-contest plea from him. "It would stop all proceedings and loss to the state," said Brinkley, noting the state would save money by offering him a deal. "I'm at the mercy of the court."

Brinkley soberly admitted his young age is no excuse for what happened. "Young and dumb won't fix this, but I live with it every day and I am very sorry," Brinkley said, signing his name to the bottom of the handwritten document that is now part of his official case file. Brinkley faces life in prison for



BRINKLEY

killing Oswaldo Luna, 43, in January after he and friends went to the victim's trailer with plans to rob him of marijuana. Evidence, which includes statements from his five codefendants and his own confession, reveal Brinkley opened fire as soon as he stepped inside the small trailer, killing Luna who was asleep. Brinkley told officers he panicked and start-

ed shooting. Brinkley is charged with murder along with five other youths, most of whom, like Brinkley, were juveniles when the crime happened. The plan to rob Luna was hatched at Coffee County High School earlier that day. All six participants are being tried as adults. As a result of evidence that points to Brinkley as the trigger man, Brinkley filed his jailhouse motion, offering to plea to a lesser count which would put him in the 25-year range in sentencing.



Voting is Thursday

BY DUANE SHERRILL

A low turnout for early voting has election organizers hoping business will pick up when the polls open across the county this Thursday.

"Early voting was low, although we did have a decent last day and a half," said director of elections Donna Smith of the 1,665 who chose to vote early.

All 20 precincts will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday for those who did not cast early ballots. Those going to the polls should bring photo ID.

Residents can vote in the general election and will be allowed to choose either in the Republican or Democratic Primary.

There are more races on the GOP card, including the 47th District seat held by incumbent Judd Matheny, who serves Coffee and part of Warren County. There are no Democratic candidates for the position so the winner of the Republican primary will win the seat in November.

Matheny is facing Steve Lynn and Will Lockhart.

The Republican Primary also sees local candidate Michael Shane Wilcher trying to beat incumbent District 16 State Sen. Janice Bowling. The winner will see Democratic competition in November and face the winner of the Mike Winton and Alice Demetree race.

In the 43rd District, three candidates from Sparta are vying to challenge incumbent Democratic state Rep. Kevin Dunlap in November. They are Paul Sherrill, Bob Robinson and Sam Elder.

The U.S. House of Representatives race for the seat held by incumbent Dr. Scott Desjarlais is also under challenge as part of the GOP primary. Desjarlais is being challenged by Erran Persley, Fapas Faparusi, and Grant Starrett.

Zealous opening



Zaxby's employee Ryan Nokes hands a chicken tender plate to the restaurant's first customer Monday morning.

Customers swarm Zaxby's



Jaxton Smith enjoys a birthday cake milkshake Monday at Zaxby's.

BY JAMES CLARK

When Scott Roberts opened his very first Zaxby's restaurant, it was just the 17th store in the chain.

My, how times have changed.

Roberts is one of three partners who opened the Zaxby's in McMinnville on Monday as the ribbon was cut on what is the chain's 778th store.

"This is the 57th Zaxby's we've opened this year," said Zaxby's corporate representative Ginger Redwine, who was in McMinnville for the big day. "We're also opening one in Oklahoma City today. We'll be at 800 stores in the next few months."

Roberts, his daughter Brittany Stuckey, and busi-

ness partner Steven Stembidge are the three co-owners of our Zaxby's. If the crowds Monday are any indication, they have a winning formula. Customers swarmed the new restaurant eager to wrap their lips around Zaxby's famous chicken.

"We've never been to a Zaxby's and gotten anything bad," said Kent Mullican, one of several people to stand in line Monday morning for the doors to open.

Kent and his wife, Joyce, say they've eaten at both Zaxby's in Murfreesboro and also at the stores in Manchester and Cookeville.

"We usually save a piece of chicken to take home to our dog," said Joyce. "She loves it too."

Continued on 6A



Pictured is the seven-star Confederate flag requested to be flown.

Confederate flag faces opposition

BY LISA HOBBS

Warren County is considering a request to allow a Confederate flag to be placed at the courthouse. The measure could be under consideration during the Aug. 15 full Warren County Commission meeting.

Matthew Austin is asking commissioners to deny the request.

"If black people are to feel no pain for the suffering of their ancestors, no emotional attachment to the atrocious deeds of the past, if there is to be no empathy, then white Southerners have no place to take an emotional pride in their ancestors, especially those who caused and supported the suffering of black people," said Austin. "Who are we to take pride in the symbol of their pain?"

Austin presented a 20-page report of testimonies made by some students at Vanderbilt University for commissioners to consider in making their decision.

"These 20 pages are a compilation of opinions from some of the brightest students in this state and nation, students from Vanderbilt University," said Austin. "These are excerpts from our testimonies."

Elona Belonkon stated, "The Confederate flag can never again represent the South without reminding Americans of a painful and terrifying blight in our history."

Paul Kundzicz stated, "The Confederate flag is a symbol of a past that cannot be forgotten and should never be repeated ... For the sake of upholding the country's proud name, as well as proving this country is capable of learning from its mistakes, this motion must be stopped."



AUSTIN

Continued on 5A

Cox wins Humanitarian Award

BY DUANE SHERRILL

Touting his tireless work in the community, McMinnville's Noon Exchange Club honored Neal Cox with its annual Humanitarian of the Year Award.

"I don't do what I do for rewards," said Cox. "I do it to help others."

Cox was cited for his work with the Horsing Around initiative which, Cox noted, is therapeutic for both children and adults. Horsing Around holds events

every year, inviting those with special needs to participate. Some of the events are held at his farm in Viola.

"You can see eyes light up," Cox explained. "The first time they ride, they want to get off right away but that second time, they want to stay on as long as they can."

Cox was also noted for his assistance in the Special Games where people with special needs meet in an Olympic-style atmosphere to compete in athletic events.

In addition to his work with people with special needs, Cox is also hailed as one of the forces behind

the river clean up initiative that beautifies area waterways.

Said Exchange Club district president-elect Ashley Wright, "For those of you who don't know - this guy is one of those leaders in our community who has done a little bit of everything, from his day job with McMinnville Electric where he serves as assistant manager, to his work with Rotary International."

The Humanitarian Award is given each year to recognize a person who might not otherwise be cited for their work in the community.



McMinnville Noon Exchange Club member Hamilton Hobbs, left, presents the Humanitarian of the Year Award to Neal Cox.

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