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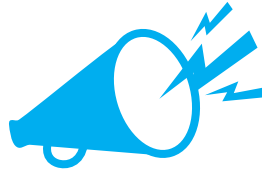
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mtsu

SIDELINES



November 30, 2015

Vol. 90 | No. 3

SACRED RITUAL IN NEPAL

MTSU STUDENT
RECOUNTS
ADVENTURE

BY ELIZABETH ENCK |
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Smoke from incense and burning trash floats through beams of morning sunlight as shopkeepers say prayers to the gods, splash water on doorsteps in a morning ritual and metal gates up and down the street rattle as they are slammed open.

This is Katmandu, capital of the mountainous country of Nepal.

Nepal is one of the last forbidden kingdoms on earth, a place only recently broken from a god-king ruled monarchy. It is also the sacred birthplace of Buddha, and the only official Hindu state in the world.

Thousands of colorful shrines carved in trees, built in rocks, or snugly placed in walls line the narrow cobblestone streets where wor-

shippers weave through heavy traffic to kneel by flickering candles, make offerings and throw bright red powder on their foreheads. This is called making "Tika."

I chose Nepal for my study abroad because I am fascinated by the impact the two ancient world religions have on the people and surrounding culture.

Buddhists and Hindus worship in harmony side by side, sharing the same sacred temples, and even some of the same deities. Worshipers come from all over the world to make pilgrimage to the many ancient sacred sites I learned about in a comparative religions class.

For \$5 I hired a rickshaw to take me across town. A skinny, sweating boy painstakingly

dragged me and the rickety carriage up hills and through pothole ridden alleys, bike creaking, silk tassels swinging, and bell clanging.

The pollution in Katmandu is stifling, and work like that is hard. Morning brings the hacking and coughing of thousands desperate to clear their lungs. Cloth pollution masks can be bought on any corner.

We are headed to the UNESCO World Heritage site Pashupatinath, which is one of the most important Hindu Temples in the world. It is a temple to The Lord Shiva: God of destruction and rejuvenation. Hindus from all over the world make pilgrimage to this site.

Continued on page 4



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Cover story photos provided by Elizabeth Enck.
Pahsupatinath: Hindu Holy Men, followers of the God Shiva.
Katmandu, Nepal.
Woman (left) is Elizabeth Enck.

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Note from the Editor

We're almost done.

The temperature is falling like the deadened
leaves from the trees, and we're all hoping our
GPAs aren't taking a similar tumble.

We've worked hard.

From first-time freshman learning their way
around to strung-out seniors anxiously awaiting
graduation day, we all have one thing in common:
we made it this far.

It's the home stretch.

We here at Sidelines have thoroughly enjoyed the
work we've done this past year. It's experiences
like these that shape the paths leading to our fu-
tures.

Thanks for walking with us. See you at the finish
line.



Meagan White
Editor in Chief

It is also the cremation grounds for the Nepalese people.

When we arrive I can see the cremation platforms lining the sacred Bagmati River in descending order according to caste. It's the dry season and the river is at a trickle.

Crowds of people gather to watch a person pass from this life into the next. Sacred cows, heads adorned in red powder, wander the grounds while packs of wild dogs scavenge for human bones. Children wade through the river, sifting for coins and jewelry sent with bodies into the next life.

This elaborately carved temple is also a place of sacrifice. Goats and water buffalo are regularly offered to the gods. At one time humans were also sacrificed, but the last human sacrifice was in the 1300's. Hindu families were eager to please the gods by sacrificing their strongest male child in exchange for good fortune.

Hindus believe in balance. Pashupatinath (pronounced pash-u-pot-in-ath) is not only about death, it represents the full cycle of life. The other side of the river is lined with fertility pagodas, each housing a linga, or phallic symbol of Shiva. Most young families come here to pray for fertility.

The famed Hindu Holy men called "Sadhus," skin covered in ash with handprints of bright red pigment, some wearing only a coconut shell, others brightly colored robes, sit outside the pagodas. They are smoking the marijuana that grows in the streets. Smiles are wide and they are pleased to bestow blessings on any who wish them.

The sights and sounds in Katmandu are amazing and relentless. But after a week and a half my lungs beg for mercy, so I head to my assignment high in the Himalayas near Mt. Everest and the Tibetan Plateau.

Nepal is a long narrow country bordered by China to the north and India to the south. The Newars are the indigenous people who have inhabited the area since pre-historic times. But, the country was born when 450 kingdoms of varying ethnicities, mostly Mongoloid (Mongolia) and Kas (Kashmir), were united in 1769.

A tiny plane skips like a rock on the currents of massive clouds, shaking its way through giant stone peaks where it will land, hopefully, on a miniscule runway balanced on the edge of a Himalayan mountain.

This is the only entrance to Mt. Everest, or the 'Khumbu' region of Nepal. All who dare to face the highest mountain on earth must also face one of the most dangerous airports in the world.

Every year Mt. Everest draws thousands of adventurers, mountaineers, volunteers, pilgrims and tourists from all over the globe. Reasons for visiting differ greatly, but all are driven by an intrigue in this mysterious, treacherous, and sacred region called "The Roof of the World".

I am here to teach English to monks in an ancient monastery, in exchange for a chance to study Buddhism first hand.

It's an independent study abroad program I designed with the help of the Religious Studies Department head Dr. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, and the study abroad office. I obtained financial support through the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program. The process was time-consuming, but well worth the effort.

Amidst the clouds at 9,380 feet, and wrapped in a heavy mist, Lukla is stunning. As we step off the plane still trembling, the thin crisp air awakens our senses. Once on solid ground, the sheer vastness of the place hits you. The sky is full of massive mountains that dwarf everything, stoic and looming in the fog. Nestled in the crevices of these giants are cozy little Sherpa towns reminiscent of times gone by.

They say the gods live here in the rolling fog of the mountains. To get to my lodgings I make the four-hour trek over jagged stones slick with dew from mountain fog. From there I will hike five hours a day, to get to and from the monastery.

Despite treacherous terrain and leaps in elevation, I've reached the monastery through the pouring rain. Steam rises off my milk tea and I huddle by the wood fire in the kitchen, surrounded by young monks in maroon robes and sandals.

These are my students and my teachers. They are curious and kind, each one eager for the honor of pouring my tea. The cook has gone for the day, and a 10-year-old monk named Tashi busily prepares the food. Several small monks crowd around a giant iron pot, stirring potatoes as the strong scent of spices wafts through the kitchen.

This small monastery atop a giant mountain is



Outside Pashupatinath a stand sells pigment, flowers and other offerings used to prepare bodies for cremation.

over 900 years old, and is very important within the Sherpa community.

Originally from Tibet, the Sherpa people migrated to this region of Nepal over 500 years ago. Sherpas are the famous high altitude porters who guide mountaineers to the top of Mt. Everest. They are capable of carrying huge, heavy loads on their backs, supported by a single strap which rests on the top of their head. It's not uncommon to see one man collect a refrigerator or iron stove that's been flown into Lukla, and carry it on his back, into the mountain towns that are several days away.

The monks are busy preparing for Dumji, the biggest festival of the year. In preparation, Puja, or prayer, is being held all day long and I have been invited to attend this worship which is normally exclusive.

What an incredible experience to sit among these Holy Beings in their best form, chanting mantras that have existed for thousands of years. Every hit of the gong and drums shakes the thin air to vibration, and the rays of sunlight seem to beam brighter as they make their way through the old dusty windows, the lingering smoke of incense, and the steam of the ever-present milk tea. Even an outsider stifled by ignorance could feel the sacred abundance of life and ritual here.

This is why I traveled halfway across the world.

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Mayday's Mantra:

'LOVE THE PEOPLE, LOVE THE BEER'



Mayday Brewery owner Robert Lee Nelson | Photo by Meagan White

By Rhiannon Gilbert | Lifestyles Editor

In the far end of an old warehouse on Old Salem Road resides an artsy chaos of fresh suds and live music. Opening the door to Mayday Brewery reveals to you a wacky black-and-white painted path that leads you past art-smattered walls and large windows looking into the enormous brewery where the magic happens. You follow on into the tasting room where the customers gather to drink craft beer and enjoy Mayday's artistic vibe.

The man behind the madness is owner Robert Lee Nelson, but the people of Murfreesboro just call him Ozzy.

"The name Mayday comes from my dad," Ozzy said, his long, steel gray curls framing his round Osbourne-esque glasses. "He's an electrician and whenever something goes wrong it's a mayday. We have a lot of maydays around here."

Mayday is the parent of six unique beers with names like Boro Blonde, Evil Octopus and Angry Redhead. The atmosphere of Mayday is just as quirky and creative as the names of the beer, and that's what keeps people coming back.

"I started brewing in about 1993. Didn't care anything about opening a brewery or knowing what that was all about, [but] I want to be my own boss," Ozzy explained. "I talked to a few other breweries around and decided this was what I wanted to do. So it's everything now."

Tours of the brewery are offered every Saturday. One lucky tourist gets to sit in the "Twitter chariot," a wingback chair on a pallet with wheels on it. Ozzy gives his phone to the reigning tweeter and lets them control the brewery's social media for the duration of the tour.

"I need somebody to tweet, and I don't have time for it right now," Ozzy said while laughing. "And it's a good way to have different people. And I can use that chair."

Mayday also hosts a wide variety of music events that feature local bands of almost all genres.

"On Friday night we have acoustic music in here: singer-songwriter stuff, bluegrass, Americana. On Saturday night we either have live bands in the brewery or outside. So we have three music venues here," Ozzy said. "Slide bands, rock 'n' roll, blues, reggae, funk. We have some jive music [and] soul."

"No R&B yet," Ozzy added. "I don't know any

R&B bands, but if some approached me I'd definitely check them out."

Art is a large part of Mayday's attraction, as well. They were featured in the Boro Art Crawl in October, and they host their own Folk and Art Festival each year in the summer. The brewery and the tasting room are decked out in artwork from local artists, all of which is available for purchase.

"You can buy any of the art on these walls and we give all the money to the artists, so it's basically just a gallery," Ozzy said. "If it's worth hanging [and] you want to sell it, bring it in. We have space."

Mayday's community involvement doesn't stop at the arts, though. The brewery is always giving to charity functions around the community, like the walk for Alzheimer's, events for sick children and hospice organizations.

Ozzy says he is also starting to work with a few MTSU professors who want to use the brewing process as a learning opportunity for their students.

"We're doing more and more stuff with the university with biology classes and food-type classes taking tours in the next few weeks," he said.

As good as it is to brew beer for a living and be his own boss, Ozzy says it's the people who make it worth it.

"I've met so many awesome people for the past three years," Ozzy said, his eyes widening in sincerity behind his glasses. "So many cool people that I never would have met otherwise, whether they were running a charity or whether they're in a band or they're just a customer. All walks of life come in here."

Mayday Brewery continually proves that the business is about more than making money or impressive drinks. As Ozzy's sign-off on Mayday's website so simply states: "Love the people, love the beer."

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To contact Lifestyles editor Rhiannon Gilbert email lifestyles@mtsusidelines.com.

Creative Connections:



Photos submitted by Lori Kissinger

A young man with severe autism can barely speak in conversation, yet he takes the stage confidently to sing along with Josh Turner at the Grand Ole Opry. A dance group comprised of students with Down syndrome performs at an MTSU football game. Mentally disabled students teach their peers with no handicaps how to shape and paint handcrafted pottery.

"Even though some of these young people may not appear to you to have skills, when you give them something to do in the arts, many times they excel and they become the leader," said Lori Kissinger, Executive Director of Very Special Arts Tennessee and professor of organizational communication at MTSU.

Very Special Arts (VSA) Tennessee is part of an international affiliation funded by the Department of Education that works with young people of all disabilities to help them have fun and grow intellectually through artistic engagement.

"The arts create a level playing ground in a lot of ways," Kissinger said. "[For] most of us, and I don't care if we have a disability or not, adding an artistic aspect helps us learn more."

Because of Kissinger's connection with MTSU, the college plays a large role in many of VSA's activities. Movement Connection, the dance group for students with Down syndrome, is directed by MTSU alum Danielle Clement and performs at the college's sporting events. Organizational communication majors also volunteer for VSA and intern for Kissinger to gain experience and help make these programs possible.

One young woman in particular has made contributions that are being appreciated around the world.

"When I started my internship, I thought I was just going to be doing phone calls and emails, maybe doing a little local stuff," said 21-year-old intern Hannah Holladay, a shy smile lighting up her friendly face. "In the meantime, it was VSA's 40th Anniversary."

VSA celebrated this anniversary last summer and honored its founder, Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, with an international project: a quilt made up of original art squares submitted by the 89 VSA affiliates across the U.S. and around the globe. VSA Tennessee wound up leading the charge with Holladay making most of the international connections.

"Most of these affiliates are small shops ... so to meet deadlines and get something done that is not typically on their radar, it's tough," Kissinger explained, expressing a problem often faced by non-profit organizations.

Holladay, however, with her quiet demeanor, set about the daunting project with a determination and charm that overcame language barriers and gained her some prestigious admirers.

"[France], for a long time, would only respond to Hannah," Kissinger amusingly remembered. "Then, when we had our event in Washington D.C., several of the embassies came that represented the countries we worked with. But in the case of France, they sent someone. Someone came from France to the U.S. Capitol, and he wanted to meet Hannah."

After it was presented to Ambassador Smith, the quilt was placed in the Art and Embassy program, where it will travel to embassies around the world forever as a testimony to the artistic works of VSA and the dedication that MTSU has to the program.

"Because MTSU is so involved with so many things VSA does, a lot of things happen in Middle Tennessee," Kissinger said. "The international portion really is more recent and it happened mostly because of this 40th anniversary, but we liked it so well and created such good partners in other countries that we didn't want to stop it."

MTSU reaches the world in a very special way

By Rhiannon Gilbert | Lifestyles Editor

MTSU has recently been involved in projects that tie local and international affiliates together. For instance, Holladay headed an exchange project where she taught "saori," a form of Japanese weaving, to a class of local VSA students.

"I got into contact with some people from Antioch high school, and I worked with their group of students there with disabilities," Holladay said. "I had never done anything like that before, so I was super nervous, but it went really well. They all made friendship bracelets (and) we were able to send a few to Japan."

MTSU's recording industry also gave VSA's Young Soloist group the honor of recording a session to send to Ireland and be broadcast on the radio there. Ireland responded with a session of its own.

"It gave them a whole new audience that they wouldn't have had otherwise," Kissinger said.

No matter how much Kissinger and Holladay work to teach disabled students, they agree that one of the best parts about VSA is what the students give them in return.

"I do a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff, so it's always hard to get people involved," Holladay said. "But then when you go to events and you see how much fun the students have and the things that they're able to create, and they're so proud ... that's what it's all about to me."

To learn more about VSA Tennessee or discover how you can get involved, visit their website at vsatn.org.

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THE GRADES ARE IN:

How MTSU Professors Test on RateMyProfessors

BY DAVID TAYLOR | STAFF WRITER

RateMyProfessors.com helps countless students across the nation decide which teacher they should or shouldn't take for a course based on ratings given by their fellow students.

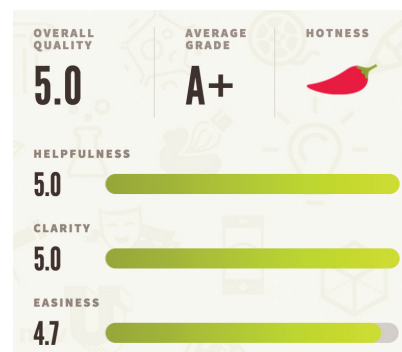
Rate My Professors uses a rating system from one to five for professors across 3 different categories: helpfulness, clarity and easiness. These categories are then averaged for a total score. Students can also tag their professors with brief descriptions for those who don't care to read a full review. And students can even rate their professors' hotness with a chili pepper.

According to the site, ratemyprofessors.com features more than 15 million ratings across 8,000 schools and 1.8 million professors. For MTSU, it lists 1,301 professors. Of course, it's not a foolproof system. For example, the second highest rated professor at MTSU, Loren Mulraine, now teaches at Belmont University. Additionally, certain professors who do teach at MTSU don't have any ratings at all.

Still, ratemyprofessors.com is a valuable resource for any student. Where students once had to talk to each other directly to learn about a professor, they can now find multiple opinions online. Though not every rating will be scrupulous or even fair, the site does provide a generally accurate reference for students looking to avoid a nightmare professor or to find a really great one.

After speaking with four of the top five highest rated (and current) professors at MTSU, it's clear they have earned their ratings—each of them scored a full five points. They all love teaching and care deeply about their students' progress. Here is what they had to say:

1. Dr. L'Oreal STEPHENS



L'Oreal Stephens, who only began teaching at MTSU in the Fall of 2010, strives to "encourage open discussion and application of material instead of strictly lecturing." When asked what sets her apart from her colleagues, she said, "Perhaps it is my goofball sense of humor, quirky fashion style or that I speak three languages: English, Southern and sarcasm."

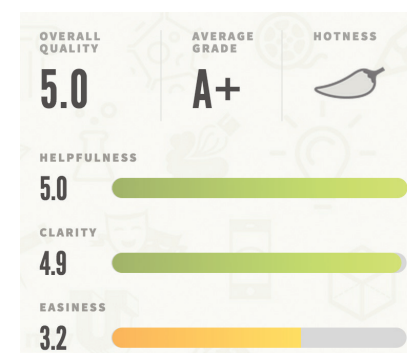
Stephens said she enjoys meeting and interacting with the diverse group of students she has every semester. But the

greatest joy of teaching for her is when a student tells her that she has helped them find their voice.

Though she is a figure of knowledge, Stephens stresses that she is also a figure of learning. She said that she learns from her students each semester

and is continuing her own education. At the end of this semester, she will have completed the requirements for a Graduate Certificate in Women's & Gender Studies. Stephens teaches Fundamentals of Communication, Conflict and Organizations, and Intro to Women's and Gender Studies.

2. Anton Eff



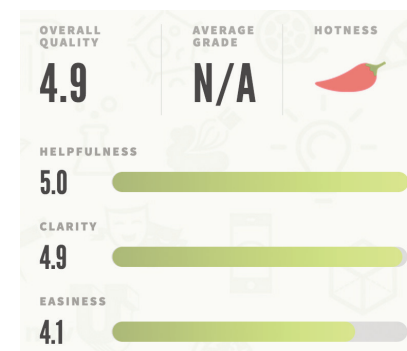
Anton Eff has been teaching at MTSU since 1990. He considers himself lucky to teach a subject that is inherently interesting: economics. Eff said the greatest part of teaching for him is working with intelligent people. When asked about how he felt being rated one of the top five professors at MTSU, Eff was very modest.

"While I very much appreciate the nice things people have said about me online, the truth is that the same could have been said about most of my colleagues

in economics," he said. I teach in a really great department, with colleagues who are doing important research and who care about teaching."

Eff currently teaches Econometrics, Urban & Regional Economics, History of Economic Thought and Principles of Macroeconomics.

3. Candie MOONSHOWER



Candie Moonshower has been an instructor at MTSU since 2009. She's also a published author and formerly a freelance journalist. She said she has the same approach to teaching as she does with parenting: very few but very strict rules.

As a teacher, she does her best to keep her students from falling behind. She said she remembers how terrible of a procrastinator she was in college and does her best to prevent her students

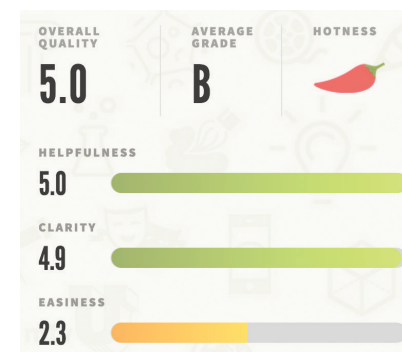
from being the same way with a step-by-step process in assignments.

Miz Moon, as she refers to herself, said she was shocked, honored and humbled to have been rated the third best professor at MTSU. Most of all, she hopes it reflects that the students realize she is there to support them.

"I have had students come to my office for far more things than just help with a paper," she said. "I've had students come who were hungry. I fed them my lunch or send them to the foodbank. Students who had grave personal issues that were interfering with their studies. Or girlfriend or boyfriend troubles. Or something that's happening on campus. Or roommate issues ... I've heard that a lot. I'm glad they felt that they could come and talk to me about those sort of things."

Miz Moon teaches Intro to University Writing, Expository Writing, Research and Argumentative Writing and The Experience of Literature.

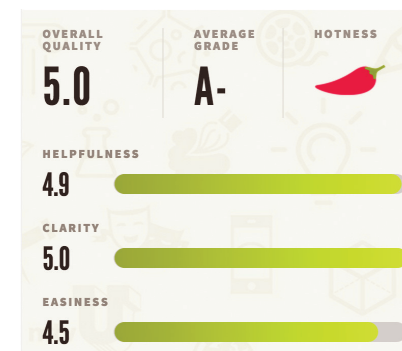
4. Dr. Mark E. JOBE



Unfortunately, Dr. Mark E. Jobe, the fourth highest rated professor, could not be reached in time for an interview.

However, the attitude he exhibited during correspondence was polite and humble.

5. Lori KISSINGER



Lori Kissinger has been teaching at MTSU since Fall of 2000. She said she does her best to push learning beyond the classroom by trying to get students involved on campus and in the community.

"I want the students to know that learning is not contained in a room, and that what we do learn in the classroom has practical application outside of that room," Kissinger said.

Kissinger said her favorite part of teaching is helping students discover their potential. She said it is important to her that students know she cares for the progress they make as individuals despite having so many students.

"As I told them (students), my class is like the song 'Hotel California'; you can join any time you like, but you can never leave," she said. "What I mean by that is once they sign up for a class, I have signed on for life with them to help open doors, be a reference and provide any guidance that I can from that moment forward."

Kissinger also said that, aside from being with her husband and son, MTSU is her favorite place to be.

She loves the "variety of intelligent students" and the commitment of her fellow professors to bettering students education.

"I wish more people understood what a wealth of knowledge and talent is on this campus. I find it a blessing every day to walk on campus and you will rarely find me in a bad mood once I get out of my car and head for the classroom."

Kissinger teaches Fundamentals of Communication and Organizational Communication in Communities.

Graphics by Ratemyprofessors.com

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SGA SENATOR BRINGS SOLAR TRASH COMPACTORS TO CAMPUS

By Aja Wilson | Staff Writer
Photo by Austin Lewis



Brandon Lewis, MTSU senior and member of Students for Environmental Action, has implemented and successfully created a plan for installing two solar-powered trash compactors on campus. Lewis became involved in Students for Environmental Action during the fall of 2013.

"I have always been environmentally conscious, so I ran into them at the student organization fair," he said.

Lewis said he got the idea while researching green technologies that other colleges have implemented. Additionally, he was inspired when he discovered the city of Philadelphia successfully rid itself of traditional trash.

"I felt that these compactors are far more aesthetic and more efficient than your traditional trash can be," Lewis said.

To use the compactors, students open up the sliding door on the bin and put anything they want inside. Once the compactor reaches a specific capacity, the trash is compacted. "This is completely by solar power, so this does not take any energy out of our grid. It only takes energy from the sun," Lewis said.

The solar-powered compactors allow the bins to hold five to six times more trash than the usual trash can. Lewis also said the compactor makes pick-up time more efficient and shows the actual volume of trash that goes into the landfill.

Lewis initially pushed the idea to the Students for Environmental Action group. The group works close with the SGA's Sustainable Campus Fund, which funds green activities such as the compactors, the water refilling stations and the solar panels on campus.

The idea for funding, cost and analysis for the compactors was put into motion last fall, and the bins were ordered in January 2015. Due to delays caused by construction and weather, the bins were not installed until July. One of the bins is positioned on the west side of the Student Union Building, and the other is placed on the south side of the Keathley University Center.

Both bins combined cost \$6,100, with an additional \$200 software installation fee, which came out of the Sustainable Campus Fund.

"If the solar-powered compactors were not funded, the same funds would have went to something else green," he said. "It's not taking away from student organizations or improvements on campus or anything like that."

Students for Environmental Action is MTSU's environmental activist group who participates in many campus-related events such as every home football game and tailgate, where numerous club members recycle items left behind. For the past two years, club members have passed out personal recycling bins to several dorms on campus so students can recycle in their rooms instead of taking their recyclables all the way to the recycling facility on the far north side of campus. The group is also involved in several campaigns and trips to conferences and organizations to voice MTSU's environmental awareness.

Lewis's future plan for making the campus green includes installation of more water refilling stations. One refilling station has already been placed next to the computer lab in the Business and Aerospace building. The second refilling station will be installed next to Blue Raider Grill, and the third is to be installed on the third floor of the College of Education building.

"The organization does the best that we can to make the campus greener," Lewis said. "The greatest sign of appreciation of people who are environmentally conscious is to come out and share their love for the environment."

Lewis also plans to submit more proposals to have water refilling stations installed in buildings where they are compatible for students by the time he graduates.

"Do not be fearful of trying to make change," he added.

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Retired Lt. Gen. Keith Huber speaks during an opening ceremony for the Veterans and Military Family Center at MTSU on Thursday, Nov. 5. Family Center at MTSU on Thursday, Nov. 5. (MTSU Sidelines/Bennie Hunt)

MTSU OPENS LARGEST STUDENT VETERANS FACILITY IN THE STATE

By Amanda Freuler | Staff Writer

Middle Tennessee State University officially opened the new Veterans and Military Family Center on Thursday morning, making it the largest student-veteran facility in the state.

The newest edition to campus is located on the first floor of the Keathley University Center, spans an area of 2,600 square feet, and will serve about 1,000 veteran students and their families that currently attend MTSU.

"Today represents, in very real and tangible ways, how we at MTSU will help our veterans and their families successfully transition from military service to college, and from college to a career," said MTSU President Sidney McPhee during the opening ceremony.

Some of the services and amenities that the center offers are enrollment and occupational assistance, financial aid, specialized counseling, study areas, and a space for camaraderie, explained Dr. Hilary Miller, Director of the Veterans and Military Family Center.

Lt. General Keith Huber joined MTSU last year as the Senior Advisor for Veterans and Leadership Initiatives. Not long after arriving on campus he conducted a 60 day assessment

to get to know MTSU's veterans and their needs.

"The veterans needed a specifically identified space, and the space needed to be centered around a functionality," Huber said. "Every activity that a military member needs to be successful and to feel encouraged, the Veterans and Military Family Center will do."

Colonel Many-Bears Grinder, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, was a guest speaker during the center's opening ceremony.

"We heard from the student veterans nationwide that the number one thing that an institution can do to better support their veterans was to have a student center," Grinder said.

The Veterans and Military Family Center sets an example for other post-secondary schools in Tennessee and helps MTSU get one step closer to its Drive to 55 goal, said John Morgan, Chancellor of the Tennessee Board of Regents.

"If we are to achieve this goal, it will require us to be successful with adult students in a way that we have never been successful with adult students before. Veterans and their families are a key component of that future success," said Morgan.

Dr. Russ Deaton, Executive Director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, presented the Veterans Education Support Transition Designation and Recognition award to President McPhee and MTSU as part of the ceremonies.

"This distinction signifies that MTSU supports a sophisticated and highly effective suite of programs and services designed to help veterans and their families pursue their educational aspirations," Deaton said.

Gov. Bill Haslam sent a video message congratulating MTSU on its commitment to helping all students, including veterans, reach their higher education goals.

"Today's dedication of the Veterans and Military Family Center is a remarkable expression by MTSU's leadership of the importance of serving those who wear the uniforms of our country," Haslam said.

Among the guest speakers who attended the ceremony was country music legend Charlie Daniels.

For more campus news, follow us at www.mtsusidelines.com, on Facebook at MTSU Sidelines and on Twitter at @MTSUSidelines. To contact News Editor Sarah Grace Taylor, email newseditor@mtsusidelines.com.

THE SWIPE LEFT GENERATION-TI[🔥]N

By Bennie Hunt | Staff Writer

LET'S FACE IT:

our generation is obsessed with the concept of "instant gratification."

Cellphones have become like another limb attached to our bodies. Full seasons of television shows are now immediately available instead of waiting an entire week for a new episode to come out. And as far as looking up directions, ordering food or searching for the definition of "lassitude," don't worry: "There's an app for that." (In case you were wondering, lassitude is defined as "a state of physical or mental weariness.")

Not only has instant gratification engulfed our social lives, it has also taken over our personal lives. Relationships in the modern era have become something of a punch line. Marriage has become like Chinese food: delicious and hot when it first arrives, but thrown away once it becomes old and moldy.

Social media has done nothing to help; in fact, it has exacerbated the problem. One culprit in particular has made commitment out to be inconsequential and tedious: Tinder.

Tinder has only become popular within the past year and a half. Created by Sean Rad and Justin Mateen, the pair developed the app so Mateen could start meeting people. That was fall of 2012. Since then, Tinder's popularity has exploded with one billion matches established, 800 million left or right swipes and 300 million marriage proposals made since March, 2014.

Tinder has become what dating websites like "OK Cupid" and "Match.com" were to our parents. But there is one major difference between the older version of online dating and this new, more hip form of matchmaking. You've got it: instant gratification.

I will shamefully admit that I had a Tinder account for about a weekend. Like everyone else who has downloaded the app, I swiped peoples' profiles left or right, made several matches and interacted with a few interesting, mostly pleasant guys.

I soon found out that, underneath the shiny, glittering exterior of a potential relationship, there lay an ugly and egocentric center. I was stood up—twice—in the same week. As I sat alone in Starbucks, miserably contemplating my lack of a personal life, I found myself wondering how anyone could be so rude and uncouth as to make plans with someone, only to effortlessly leave them hanging.

But in the midst of wallowing in self-pity, I realized I had acted just as superficially as the two dates that had left me stranded with my cup of coffee and my damaged self-esteem. I had done something that every adult throughout my life in some shape or form warned me not to do: I had "judged a book by its cover." I had based my opinion of a person on a few pictures and a 150-word biography instead of their personality, character and morals. Why should I demand that someone treat me with respect when I failed to return the favor?

Unfortunately, my experience is just one of millions. In modern culture, relationships have become trivial. The number of men and women who commit themselves exclusively to one another is steadily declining. Instead of forming true and long-lasting relationships for which it was originally created, Tinder is instead used for hook-ups and booty calls. Modern "relationships" have shorter shelf lives than the milk that stands in my refrigerator.

So when did these changes come about? What happened to the days when a relationship was something that people worked for? When did courting become something only found in a Jane Austen novel? How has the number of people one sleeps with become a scorecard with the winner receiving praise and admiration? Why is monogamy ridiculed?

Facebook is strewn with the lamentations of women who have failed to find a "good guy," and the puzzlement of men who wonder why girls always fall for the "bad boy." In an age when hook ups have become the social norm and having a "friend with benefits" is encouraged, it's no wonder why relationships fail before they have a chance to begin. Tinder has become a reflection of the value our generation holds in our relationships. "Instant gratification" has become our "instant desperation."

"WHY SHOULD I DEMAND THAT SOMEONE TREAT ME WITH RESPECT WHEN I FAILED TO RETURN THE FAVOR?"

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RECRUITING IS A NUMBERS GAME

BY CONNOR ULREY | INTERIM SPORTS EDITOR



#38 T.T. BARBER | SENIOR LINEBACKER (MTSU SIDELINES/AUSTIN LEWIS)

ENTERING his 10th year at the helm, Middle Tennessee Head Football Coach Rick Stockstill has had the penultimate in ups and downs as the program has grown. In his tenure, heading into the final two weeks of the season, Stockstill sits at just 6260, posting just four plus .500 seasons as head coach. To his credit, Stockstill came into a program that hadn't posted a winning season in the four years prior to his hiring. During his first season as head coach, the Blue Raiders finished 76, but it went 61 in conference and took on Central Michigan in the first bowl game in school history.

The loss in 2006 was tough, but it brought hope to Middle Tennessee that Stockstill would guide

the program to bigger and better things. After two straight 57 seasons, the Blue Raiders went 103 in 2009 and won its first bowl game in school history, a 42-32 win over future CUSA foe Southern Miss.

Though to this point Stockstill has guided the Blue Raider football program to new highs like bowl wins, the program has also experienced seasons to forget. Just a year removed from two back-to-back bowl appearances, the Blue Raiders finished 210 in 2011, but Stockstill was rewarded with a new contract after the season. Stockstill responded quickly, with a signing class in 2011 that featured Blue Raiders making big impacts heading into their senior seasons in 2015. Most notable in the 2011 class were safety Kevin Byard and linebacker Jared Singletary, both who would become staples in the Middle Tennessee defense.

Led by quarterback Logan Kilgore, the 2012 Blue Raiders finished 84, but it went without a bowl bid, leaving for more to be desired in 2013. The following season, behind Kilgore, Stockstill's team finished 85 and earned its fourth bowl bid in school history. In 2014, the torch for quarterback was passed to sophomore Austin Grammer, a promising recruit out of Tuscaloosa, who added a new dynamic to the Blue Raider offense. After starting 53, a bowl bid seemed to be a lock for Stockstill and Middle Tennessee, but a 13 finish, including a last second loss to the University of Texas at El Paso to end the regular season, left fans doubtful of the head coach.

Recruiting wise, it would seem that Stockstill has grown the base for recruits since taking the job. Contrary to popular belief, Stockstill's recruiting classes over the past 10 years have been along the same lines, but Bowman mentions the difference in each. In his first season as head coach, Stockstill brought in just 14 recruits, but he expanded in 2007 by signing 24 recruits. Of the signings, all were twostar recruits, leaving something desired from a fan base hopeful for future success.

In what was his biggest signing year, the 2008

season was and still is the top class, rating wise, in the Stockstill era. That year, Stockstill brought in 25 recruits, including the only fourstar recruit in his tenure, six threestar recruits and 19 twostars.

The following three seasons, Stockstill signed 20 threestar recruits, a sign of good things to come for the program. Leading into this season, however, the program has only signed 17 additional threestar recruits.

Taking into account the level of football, it's something that could be understood, but it's also something that anyone could claim. Every coach who comes into a new situation wants to change the "culture" of the program and build it to a new level. "MT does a pretty good job of establishing pipelines with many schools and their footprint along the southeast is pretty well established at this point," Bowman said. "The big signings or lack thereof, is more of a product of the competition they are facing in recruiting."

It's not an easy task by any means, but it starts at the ground level. The pipeline is the most important factor in recruiting. Where do the players come from? Where does a program dig deepest when searching for recruits?

For Middle Tennessee, it's Georgia, surprisingly. Why the lack of recruits from the home state? The 2015 recruiting class had just four signings from Tennessee, a small number compared to the nine from Georgia.

Is it the lack of talent in the midstate? Hard to believe when players like Jalen Hurd sign with Tennessee. So is it that the scouts aren't searching around Tennessee as much, or is it the factor that looms largest over the university, lack of appeal?

Crowds don't come, and that could be a factor that turns players away from the program. In ten years here, Stockstill and staff haven't signed more than six recruits from Tennessee.

It's something that's expected, but what's not as noticeable is the fact that the pipeline runs straight

Continued on page 16



#2 AUSTIN GRAMMER | JUNIOR QUARTERBACK (MTSU SIDELINES/GREGORY FRENCH)

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through the southeast. Ranging from Georgia to Tennessee to Florida, the signings the program brings in consist of 90 percent or more from the region. For example, the 2015 class consisted of 23 signings, and just one recruit came from a state outside the southeast, Arizona.

It's understandable based on the scope of the recruiting range and the size of the recruiting classes, but one would think that Middle Tennessee's move from the SunBelt to Conference USA would have an impact. In three years in CUSA, however, the recruiting classes have been carbon copies of years past. Is it the style isn't changing, or is it that the school is regarded as midmajor and always will be?

"I think this is a common misconception right now as well ... The move to CUSA has absolutely aided MT in recruiting higher caliber players," Bowman said. "Whereas before they were signing a lot of borderline FBS prospects, when you look at the recruiting classes since the switch was made, MT is signing guys with multiple other FBS offers who are deemed legitimate prospects. This might not reflect in stars and rankings, but MT is absolutely signing better players now than before."

These are questions that even the most knowledgeable of Blue Raider fans are beginning to ask. Is change in the air? What will it take to get to that next level? At what point does the fan base grow

from a windependent base, to a nomatterwhat fan base? Is change coming?

Bowman discussed the first level of recruiting visits and the impact hosting recruits has on the decisions that they make.

"I think it absolutely has an effect," Bowman said. "MT does a fantastic job of hosting recruits and making lasting impressions. I've never interviewed a kid who did not come away impressed with the presentation laid out by the coaching staff and players who do the hosting during official visits." Bowman said no matter how good a visit is or how well the program prepares, the atmosphere is another vital part of the selection process. When it comes to higher level prospects, he said, the low turnout plays a factor in their decision.

"When a kid comes in on an official visit and the stadium is half empty, that has such a negative connotation and it can be very hard to overcome," Bowman said. "Kids want to play in front of big crowds and play for a program steeped in tradition. They want to feed off of the energy that a buzzing stadium provides."

Bowman said that all the blame doesn't go onto the fanbase and that the team on the field needs to provide a reason for the people to come to the games. Winning creates the buzz, the gameday atmosphere and it sometimes makes or breaks a program.

"MT hasn't really given the casual fan a reason to get invested with the program given the mixed results on the field ... winning solves everything," Bowman said. "Winning breeds culture. If you're not winning big games or consistently competing for league titles, you're not going to make any strides with the casual fans of the Middle Tennessee area."

Bowman went on to discuss what Middle Tennessee can do in the short term to really make a name for themselves and how they can implement that.

"There's plenty of blame to go around when it comes to MT's athletic department, but for MT to truly take the next step and better themselves on the recruiting trail, there are two areas that clearly need to be addressed," Bowman said.

"The first is an improvement with facilities. MT has done locker room renovations and weight room renovations, but an indoor practice facility would go a long way in showing a prospect that Middle Tennessee is a program on the rise and will stop at nothing to give their players the best of the best."

Whether or not change is coming, it's easy to see that in some areas it's wanted. After posting two straight wins as of Nov. 14, the Blue Raiders sit at 55 and are just one win from bowl eligibility. It's something that this team needs and the fans need.

For more Blue Raider sports, follow us at www.mtsusidelines.com, on Facebook at MTSU Sidelines and on Twitter at @Sidelines_Sport. To contact Interim Sports Editor Connor Ulrey email sports@mtsusidelines.com.



#20 KEVIN BYARD | SENIOR SAFETY (MTSU SIDELINES/GREGORY FRENCH)

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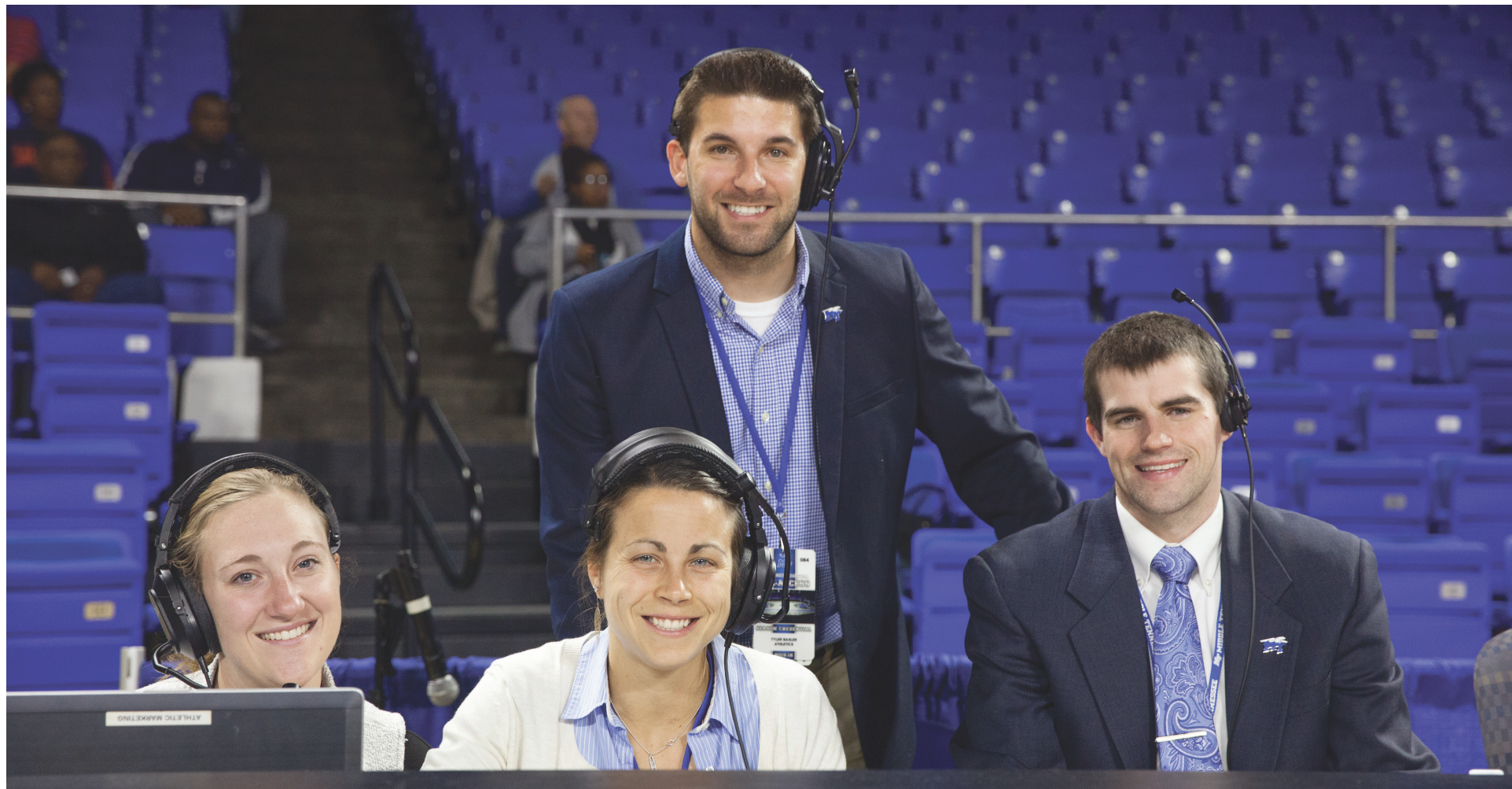
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PUTTING FANS IN SEATS:

more than just the game

BY CONNOR ULREY | INTERIM SPORTS EDITOR



From Blue Raider Marketing, the promotions department of MT Athletics (left to right): Michelle Pontiff, Danielle Mayeaux, Tyler Basler, Mitch Gosney.
Photo by Austin Lewis

What drives fans to the stands on a football Saturday? Is it the team on the field or the name of the program? Although it's often overlooked, there's something to be said about how hard the marketing and promotions teams work to create the game day atmosphere.

The SEC is the go-to conference to look to when thinking about atmosphere with programs like Auburn, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, etc. Just take a look at Bryant-Denny Stadium on a Saturday afternoon when the Crimson Tide play.

The Marketing and Promotions team at Middle Tennessee experienced a season of change this summer, with new staff members making their entrances in the latter stages of the offseason. Tyler Basler was the only one left standing from past marketing, and he was pivotal for new bringing head Danielle Mayeaux to help bring about new culture at Middle Tennessee.

"The plan was to come in and kind of just see what the students are like here," said Mayeaux, assistant AD of marketing, in an interview with Sidelines. "To see what the community is like here, and also learn from Tyler, like what's been done in the past."

I covered the MTSU-Alabama game back in September, and the atmosphere was something that even I couldn't have expected. There were 98,000 fans in attendance at game not even against an SEC opponent, but for a game against non-conference opponent Middle Tennessee. Winning brings success, and the Tide exhibits that better than any other team.

"We cannot sit here and compare ourselves to

an Alabama because that's not us," Mayeaux said. "That is the thing, no matter what ideas you see around us, you have to make it fit to who you are."

So what does Mayeaux and the rest of the promotions staff do to drive fans to stands at sporting events here in Murfreesboro?

"We have to prioritize a lot. We have you know, we have 16 different sports, and they all have to get love," Mayeaux said. "It really is about preparation and laying things out. Promo items and giveaways are good, but the point is to drive traffic and make people talk. Marketing is about creating an experience ... making the game fun no matter if you're winning or losing."

The biggest driver for students to attend events lately are the giveaways, and it's something the promotions team recognize as a necessity. But Mayeaux looks forward to a future where the "bait" isn't as vital to fill the stands.

"We don't just want people to look at athletic events as free stuff. You should look at it as, 'hey I want to come and support my school, and have some sense of pride in what it is,'" Mayeaux said. "If we were what, 9-0 right now, we'd have a lot of prideful people, so our goal is to constantly make people feel like we're undefeated."

So look at Middle Tennessee and the success the program has had, albeit not insane amounts, over the past ten years. Four bowl appearances since 2006 and six top two finishes in conference. The program has brought in players who have been huge for a program outgrowing itself every day. It's undervalued, but the ability to take a program and make a leap to tougher competition is huge, and Middle Tennessee's move to C-USA is not something to casually glance at.

The conference boasts four programs with over 10 bowl appearances, with Southern Miss leading

the way with 22. Not only do C-USA programs earn bowls, but those appearances regularly provide great games. Marshall last season went 13-1, running through C-USA (minus a loss at Western Kentucky in the last week of the regular season), including a bowl win over Northern Illinois. The win put the conference, if not already, on national watch lists.

When you factor in the success that not only Middle Tennessee has had, but the conference in general, where's the support? Floyd Stadium averaged over 18,313 in attendance through four home games in 2014. The most in attendance last season was 24,911 at the Western Kentucky "Blackout" game, the team's most bitter rivalry and an easy travel game for the Hilltopper fans as well.

It's the same story this year, but even less fans filled the stadium. The average attendance sits at 17,644 over four home games. Another game where away fans were expected to travel was the Homecoming game. 25,411 were in attendance for the showdown with in-state foe Vanderbilt.

It's been stated before that the lack of attendance is baffling. Former Blue Raider head coach James Donnelly spoke to Sidelines this year about the lack of real support for the school. It's easy to say that some of these games weren't exactly barnburners, but even with wins over Charlotte, a 73-14 onslaught, it's still exciting local football.

Mayeaux spoke about the first season of athletics here, her first chance to see what Middle Tennessee is really like.

"The second year is always the best year, because now we know," Mayeaux said. "Now we know to do this and not to do that."

Continued on next page

Mayeaux and Basler discussed how far in advance the marketing team prepares, and how much goes into finding the sweet spot for promotions.

"We'll have it all set in May or April," Basler said. "We can go ahead and let students know before they leave for summer break, 'hey this is what you've got for six dates in the fall, go ahead and make your plans now,' as well as hitting customs and all incoming freshman coming in June and July."

The biggest thing for promotions is being on campus and being around the atmosphere to really grasp what students think of the program.

"For us being on campus and being present is super important and super vital because the students bring energy, and the energy is what a crowd thrives on," Mayeaux said. "it's all full circle."

Mayeaux also discussed the preparation that went into preparing their basketball fan night schedule, and they began planning. The team came together early in the summer and sat down with the entire schedule for the two basketball seasons. Mayeaux said the key was to plan based around the nights that were big drivers, as well as around events going on during the time, like Star Wars night.

"We met with basketball in June. So the planning, that's the craziest part because you start to plan so far in advance and then you get closer and closer, and right now it feels like we're scrambling, but we've been talking about this forever," Mayeaux said. "So it really is fun. You have to deal with what's at hand, like if we're not having a winning season, marketing's got to work that much harder to draw people in."

The slate includes nights like "Battle of the Blues," when ornaments will be given out, and Student Appreciation Day, when free food will be given to students. The measures taken run throughout both regular seasons at home and will provide a myriad of free entertainment to go with basketball.

"With basketball, we need a little bit more time with it, but it's planning things around what is going on," Mayeaux said. "We're really trying to now make things come to life with what's going on in the real world."

Time will tell if the strategies Mayeaux and the rest of the promotions staff have implemented will pan out, but it has to be lauded the team works hard and cares about the future of Middle Tennessee Athletics.

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