

THE TOMAHAWK

Wednesday, March 25, 2020 75 cents www.thetomahawk.com Vol. 146 No. 13 Mountain City, Tennessee 37683

TENNESSEE

Coronavirus continues to cause upheaval, State and County responds

By Jill Penley
 FREELANCE WRITER

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. The United States has drastically changed since the World Health Organization first reported the outbreak of novel coronavirus. On Sunday, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee signed Executive Order 17, calling for businesses across

the state to utilize “alternative business models.”
 “The COVID-19 pandemic has created both an economic and a health crisis, and our response must continue to address both aspects,” said Gov. Lee. “Our goal is to keep the public, especially vulnerable populations, safe while doing everything possible to keep Tennesseans in a financially stable position.”

Executive Order 17 prohibits social gatherings of 10 or more people and also enacts the following provisions regarding restaurants, bars, and similar food and drink establishments:
 •Establishments are to exclusively offer a drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options to support families, businesses, and the food supply chain during this emergency.

•Establishments may sell alcohol by take-out or delivery (with the purchase of food) in closed containers to those who are age 21 and up.
 Gyms and fitness/exercise centers or substantially similar facilities are to temporarily close and suspend in-person services until April 6, 2020. In the interim, these businesses are encouraged to
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Hewett says goodbye to The Tomahawk



Jill Penley
 FREELANCE WRITER

Rita Hewett, a longtime advertising manager for *The Tomahawk*, is retiring after 30 years in the business. Hewett’s last day will be March 31.
 Bill Thomas, the newspaper’s publisher, said that Hewett’s experience and expertise will be missed. “During my 30 years of being in the newspaper business, I have never experienced a more dedicated Advertising Manager,” said Thomas. “Rita Hewett has been focused, committed, and delivering results at the highest level for The Tomahawk since her first day of employment. She will be
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Tomahawk advertising manager, Rita Hewett retires after 30 years in the newspaper business. Photo by Meg Dickens

Flags spring up on Main Street



Dean Townsend, 58, with the Mountain City Public Works department, brings a little cheer to the community as he installs spring flags on the lampposts on Main Street in downtown Mountain City, TN. The town is also in the process of purchasing new seasonal banners for the lampposts on Main Street and is asking residents to support the effort by sponsoring a flag in honor or memory of a local veteran. Photo by Tamas Mondovics

Mayor Taylor explains COVID-19 in Johnson County

By Meg Dickens
 STAFF WRITER

The current strain of Novel Coronavirus (COV-19) took center stage at the Thursday, March 19, Budget Committee meeting. Attendees and board members spread out as much as space would allow. County Mayor Mike Taylor took a moment to update the community both there and in an interview after the meeting.



Taylor

Mayor Taylor stays in contact with Tennessee state officials as well as local officials. Johnson County is still COVID-19 free, but surrounding counties’ cases are climbing. Taylor encourages the public to use good common sense and follow CDC guidelines.

empty shelves in surrounding grocery stores. Other than the toilet paper shortage, sources say that there is a serious lack of produce and non-perishables. Mayor Taylor and Johnson County Sheriff Eddie Tester assure the public that supplies are available. According to Taylor’s contacts in grocery stores, supplies are still there. Fear-induced hoarding is disrupting the normal flow of business stocking, but stores are working to adjust.

One thing that has the public alarmed is the plethora of

Mayor Taylor states that government business is still happening but with limited exposure. The Johnson County Courthouse is limiting how many people can be in certain areas at a time and pushing back some cases. The Budget Committee discussed switch
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Mountain City organization gives women a voice

By Meg Dickens
 STAFF WRITER

Johnson County is a poor county financially. Locals are stepping up to make a positive change in the community, especially in the wake of COVID-19. Former Johnson County student Olivia Stelter and her organization, Women of MC, is one example.

“It’s our job as citizens to serve other people if we have the ability,” Stelter explained during an interview. “I want people to know that the organization serves as a catalyst for women and girls to reach their full potential. Everything we do is to see every girl and woman in Johnson County thrive.”

Stelter studied East Tennessee and what separates it from its surroundings while earning her Masters Degree in political science. According to her, this area is the “region of giving” that gave Tennessee the moniker the Volunteer State. Women of MC provides feminine hygiene products, general
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Women of MC founder Olivia Stelter pauses after receiving donations. During the collection at Food Lion, Women of MC collected 20 bags of clothes, 10 boxes of feminine products, and more than 100 personal hygiene products. Submitted photo.

Tennessee legislature drops student testing requirements amid coronavirus crisis

By Jill Penley
 FREELANCE REPORTER

As all Tennessee schools remain closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, state lawmakers passed legislation to waive this year’s annual state testing requirements as well as the law requiring 180 days of annual classroom instruction. Both the Tennessee House and Senate unanimously approved House Bill 2818 and companion Senate Bill 2672, providing relief for students, teachers and schools amid mass school closures in response to the crisis.

“We are very appreciative that lawmakers have voted to stop the state testing requirements this spring and have waived the required 180 days of classroom instruction,” Dr. Mischelle Simcox, Johnson County Director of Schools. “This allowed the TN Department of Education to apply for a waiver to the U.S. Department of Education in regards to testing. Hopefully, the US Department of Education will accept the waiver to stop the testing requirements.”

With Gov. Bill Lee behind
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