

# Trivia Night

Exploring the bar trivia scene in Hardin Valley

## Soaring growth

Digging into the many new development projects in Hardin Valley

## Southern Valley Boutique

Style meets purpose

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## Bayou Bash

Event set to kick off summer

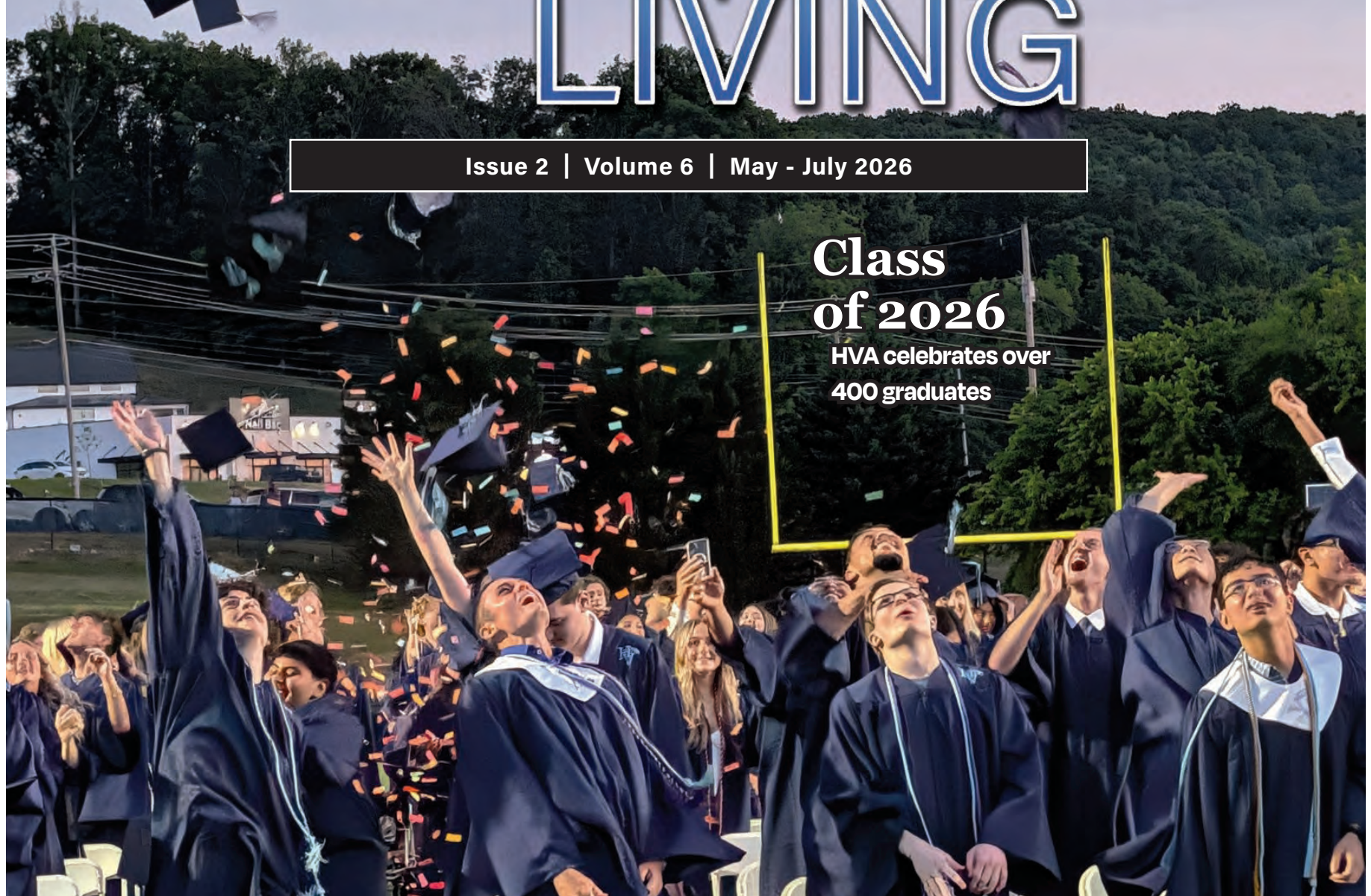


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# Hardin Valley LIVING

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**On the cover:** HVA's 2026 Commencement Ceremony

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# Soaring with new development

**Right:** This rendering shows what the 18,000-square-foot retail space known as the “Village at Hardin Valley” will look like upon completion.

This excavator is one of several along Hardin Valley Road, as the area has grown exponentially in the past several years.

Photo via Michael Graves Architecture/Jake Nichols

A large yellow excavator reached skyward on a sunny day, its powerful arm unaffected by the large trench box that dangled on chains attached near the digging bucket.

The box was being placed to protect construction workers who are installing a roundabout that will be built at the corner of Hardin Valley Road and Marietta Church Road.

This will help ease congestion and the flow of traffic in Hardin Valley, which is one of the fastest-growing communities across Knox County.

A 2020 WVLT report stated that, according to a Knox County Planning study done at the time, nearly 1,800 people have moved to Hardin Valley every year since 2014.

More recent statistics reflect this growth, as the East Ten-

See **DEVELOPMENT** on Page 6





Steel beams gleam in the sunlight during the construction of an 18,000-square-foot retail hub along Hardin Valley Road.

**Jake Nichols**

## Development

From page 5

nessee Association of Realtors recorded 620 homes sold in the Hardin Valley zip code of 37932 in 2024, per myhardinvalley.com. That is 148 more homes sold than in 2023, hence the introduction of traffic aids such as the aforementioned roundabout.

HVA teacher and wrestling coach Matt Bates has seen this effect firsthand, driving in from Oak Ridge every weekday for work.

“When I first started here in December of 2021, things were developing but not at this rate,” Bates said. “Living in Oak Ridge, I could get here in 15-ish minutes. A lot of times now, it takes 25 just to get here because there’s such a backup on Pellissippi around the Hardin Valley exit all the way to I-40.”

Does the extra time have an effect?

“I don’t really think about it — I just put podcasts on and rock all the way into work,” Bates said with a chuckle. “Some days it gets aggravating for sure, especially when people are playing on their phones, so you miss a light.”

“But being a Driver’s Ed teacher, I see a lot when we’re out in the community. There is a ton of growth, and I don’t think some people realize it’s actually happening.”

The roundabout at the corner of Hardin Valley Road and Marietta Church Road is just one checkpoint of that growth, as it is being built by Whaley Construction. It was approved by the Knox County Engineering & Public Works office in December 2025, according to a Facebook post from Knox County Commissioner and 2026 Republican mayoral candidate Larsen Jay.

Moreover, as Bates alluded, it is far from the only new addition to the area.

Right across Marietta Church Road, it is believed that a new gas station will be put where Blount Excavation equipment now resides.

Just down the way, three-level homes are popping up half a mile north-

east of Hardin Valley Academy. There are other new housing developments via Ball Homes near Hickory Creek and the Hickory View neighborhood, and Sam Franklin and Son Construction also has a prominent presence on projects in the area.

The largest addition to the Hardin Valley community is an 18,000-square-foot retail space in the Hardin Valley Road market next to Chick-fil-A. In a post by commercial real-estate firm NAI Koella RM Moore on Jan. 26, renderings by Studio Four Design showcase a Starbucks Coffee location on the far left end with a NOIRE nail bar in the unit next to it.

As of Friday, May 15, the steel framework remained visible on the space, but a full rendering of the finish product is available via Michael Graves Architecture.

“This prime location offers high visibility and easy accessibility, ideal for driving foot traffic and customer engagement,” an NAI Koella RM Moore website post read about the property. “The modern, well-maintained space boasts ample square footage, customizable layouts, and versatile amenities, presenting an ideal canvas for Retail/Street Retail tenants to bring their vision to life.”

The space includes units ranging from 1,500 to 2,400 square feet, and they are available for \$38 per square foot, according to the rendering.

There is also a new apartment complex being built. It will be called Scenic View at Hardin Valley.

Another housing development sits across from Amherst Elementary, while Brookstone Construction is working on a housing development at the top of the hill across from the shopping center that includes Hard Knox Pizza, Hotworx and Hardin Valley Pediatrics. Also, there is even more commercial real estate space available closer to Oak Ridge Highway.

“A lot of people coming in and out, and there’s been a lot of commercial growth, which is good,” Bates summarized. “But that’ll mean more traffic. It’s been a challenge, so my commute has grown, and there’s a lot of population growth too.”

~ Jake Nichols



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# Bayou Bash

Set to kick off summer in Hardin Valley

In March of 2025, Dale Akins purchased what was then known as H3 Sports Performance Center.

He had another vision for the space, which has since become the Hardin Valley Events Center.

“It has three basic components: there’s a hub building, which is the former weightlifting building, and that is being renovated and is currently closed,” Akins said. “The adjacent pavilion is 22,000 square feet, and it’s been repurposed for an all-purpose event space.”

That space has hosted farmer’s markets, Hard Knox Roller Derby practices, adult men’s hockey league events and even meetings for the Smoky Mountain Bourbon Society.

On Saturday, June 6, the pavilion will welcome an inaugural event to kick off the summer: the Smooth Sailor Bayou Bash.

The event will run from 1 p.m. past 6 p.m. that night with three different elements: kayaking, seafood and music.

But before anyone can chow down or jam out, the day begins by parking at Hardin Valley Events Center at 2620 Willow Point Way. The center is located along mile marker 12 of the 44-mile Knox Water Trail — a kayak float that runs from Halls to Powell to Karns to Hardin Valley, then on to Solway and into Melton Hill Lake — which plays perfectly into this specific event.

After people drop off their cars, the Knoxville Adventure Collective staffers will shuttle people up to Karns Sports Park, where they can be launched into Beaver Creek in kayaks.

“And then you just float back to the events center to your car,” Akins said. “It’s really fun; I’ve done it a lot. You don’t even have to paddle through it — it’s Knoxville’s lazy river. We’ve had people ages three to 90 do it, and a lot of people like to bring their dogs too.”

That aspect of the event is done as a fun way to spend time in nature, but also as a way to support the Knox County Parks and Recreation department’s mission for the water trail, which initially opened in May 2027 with just a five-mile stretch.

From there, people will float back to the events center, where an assortment of food options will be waiting.

“The Shrimp Dock is going to have a low country boil as a dinner option,” Akins said. “Then we will also have a food truck there called 9-1-Yum as the other dinner option if you don’t like seafood or can’t have it.”

After that, people can settle in with their lawn chairs and enjoy Smooth Sailor, a yacht rock band that will finish off the night.

“It’s sort of a three-event trifecta,” Akins said. “You float, you get your dinner and you enjoy some live music and go home. It’s a pretty cool day.”

He noted that the pavilion will host at least 1,000 people seated in lawn chairs, so they try to sell 600 to 800 tickets to give people some room. Since two parts of the event will be under the pavilion, it will be rain or shine.

Tickets can be purchased at [ticketsource.com/hvec](http://ticketsource.com/hvec), though there is a varying cost depending on interest and people involved.

See BAYOU BASH on Page 29

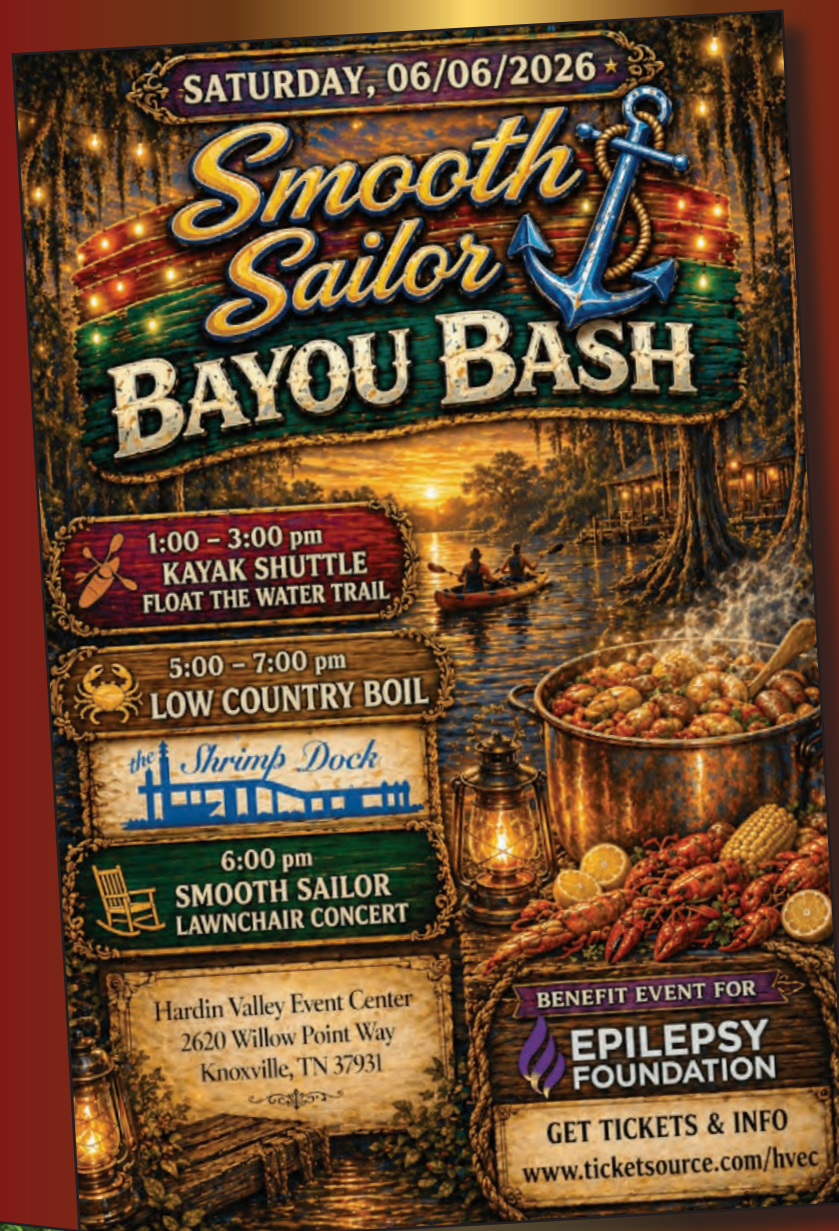


Photo courtesy of  
Visit Knoxville

On Saturday, June 6, people will be able to kayak to the Hardin Valley Events Center as part of the inaugural Smooth Sailor Bayou Bash in Hardin Valley.



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# Style *meets* Purpose

A lover of all things fashion, Abbi Lloyd opened Southern Valley Boutique in May of 2024 in the heart of Hardin Valley.

“I’ve worked in retail since the moment I could drive at the age of 16,” explained Lloyd, who’s worked for several retail businesses throughout the area, including Josie’s Boutique and Altar’d State. “It has been my absolute favorite thing—and it’s not so much picking out the clothes, it’s dressing people.”

This is because Lloyd believes that what you wear is much more than just merely fabric on your body.

“It brings me joy to just dress people and help make them the happiest version of themselves,” she said. “Whether they’re having a bad day or are just getting dressed for the day, I have such a passion for helping people find a cute outfit.”

The boutique, located at 10653 Hardin Valley Road, specializes in women’s clothing and accessories, offering everything from jewelry and Tennessee gameday wear to travel bags and devotionals. However, for Lloyd, her favorite products at the boutique are ones that help benefit others.

“We actually carry Erin Gray,” she said, emphasizing the business’s commitment to helping women overcome cancer. “The owner actually had cancer so she had the great idea of giving proceeds back to women with cancer.”

ABLE products are also available at Southern Valley Boutique. Lloyd said this company, which focuses on repurposed leather and 14-carat gold jewelry, strives to create better opportunities for women by providing high-quality jobs, living wages and safe working conditions.

“Both of those brands are my favorite because they are giving back to the community,” she said.

On top of that, Lloyd added, Southern Valley Boutique always prioritizes the comfort of its customers.

“When you walk into our store, we just want you to feel at home... We never want a customer to feel uncomfortable in here,” she said. “We also do not buy anything that would be uncomfortable on your body. So everything that we buy is super cute but also comfortable.”

For more information about Southern Valley Boutique, visit the [southernvalleyboutique.com](http://southernvalleyboutique.com).

~ Rachel Totten



# Top Chef Challenge serves up Regional Winner

The Smoky Region of East Tennessee has spoken, and after an evening of creativity, competition and incredible flavor, a winner recently was crowned.

The Lantern at Morning Pointe Hardin Valley food service director Brandon Turner took home that Top Chef Challenge crown.

Morning Pointe Senior Living hosted its Smoky Regional Round of the 2026 Top Chef Challenge at Morning Pointe of Powell Assisted Living on April 15, when three stand-out food service directors competed live in front of residents, guests and a panel of local culinary judges.

After advancing through Round 1, where residents and regional leaders cast their votes, the top three culinary leaders brought their signature dishes to the stage for Round II: Victoria Seiber, The Lantern at Morning Pointe Alzheimer's Center of Excellence, Lenoir City; Brandon Shelton, The Lantern at Morning Pointe Alzheimer's Center of Excellence, Knoxville; and Turner.

Turner took top honors for his spinach and chicken lasagna, securing him a spot in the final competition in Ooltewah, Tennessee, on May 19, when he competed for the title of Morning Pointe Senior Living Top Chef 2026. Brittany Brown, food service director at Morning Pointe at Happy Valley Assisted Living in North Georgia/Tennessee Valley, won Morning Pointe Senior Living Top Chef Champion and a \$500 grand prize for her dish, pan-seared salmon Florentine, at that May event, which took place at Morning Pointe of Chattanooga's Shallowford Assisted Living.

"It was a great show," Morning

Pointe communications specialist Clarissa Alberto said about the May 19 contest.

Shelton earned second place with his baked ziti while Seiber placed third with her honey garlic shrimp with sausage and broccoli.

"The live cook-off highlighted not only culinary skill but also the heart behind each dish," Alberto said about the April event. "Competitors were evaluated on taste, presentation, creativity, nutrition and balance, resident appeal, cost and feasibility and overall professionalism.

"This competition really brings to life the passion our dining teams pour into every meal," said Justin Leiter, director of dining operations for Morning Pointe Senior Living. "It starts with residents choosing their favorites, and then we get to showcase that talent in a way the whole community can experience."

A panel of local culinary voices served as judges for the evening, including Joseph Blauvelt, Culinary Arts Program coordinator with Pellissippi State Community College; Eric and Mande McNew, co-founders of KnoxFoodie and digital food influencers; and Camille King, owner of Camille Cooks Personal Chef Service.

"Events like the Top Chef Challenge offer a behind-the-scenes look at the thought, care and creativity that go into dining at Morning Pointe Senior Living communities each day," Alberto said.

## *About Morning Pointe Senior Living*

Founded in 1997 by healthcare entrepreneurs, Greg A. Vital and J. Franklin Farrow, Morning Pointe



Photos submitted



Senior Living operates assisted living and Alzheimer's memory care communities in five Southeastern states, including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee. The philanthropic arm of Morning Pointe Senior Living is the Morning Pointe Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that works to provide clinical scholarships and caregiver support.

For more information, visit [mornpointe.com](http://mornpointe.com).

~ Tammy Cheek

**Top:** Regional Morning Pointe Senior Living food service directors, from left, Victoria Seiber, Brandon Turner and Brandon Shelton competed for the regional title of Top Chef during the Smoky Region Top Chef Challenge, which occurred last month with Turner taking home the win. **Above:** Brandon Turner holds his first place award.

# Chews & Brews

Knoxville's bar trivia scene has taken off in recent years, with establishments throughout the area offering weekly trivia nights aimed at expanding their typical offerings and driving sales growth. In fact, according to East Tennessee-based Not Rocket Science Trivia, Knoxville has one of the most vibrant bar scenes in the Southeast, and many of these events are held right here in Hardin Valley.

~ Rachel Totten



## Orange Hat Brewing

10246 Hardin Valley Road | 865-240-3884

Orange Hat Brewing offers a robust trivia calendar, with events run by Not Rocket Science Trivia at 7 p.m. each Tuesday. Event goers are encouraged to sign up for free clues on the trivia company's website prior to the game. The local brewery also frequently hosts themed nights, focusing on topics like Tennessee football, music and movies on the last Tuesday of the month. For example, the theme on May 26 was 90s movies, while June 30's event will cover all things Marvel.



## Corner 16

1640 Bob Kirby Road  
865-801-9101

Run by Knox Trivia Guys, Corner 16's Hardin Valley location offers two weekly trivia opportunities at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and 8:30 p.m. on Fridays. Along with trivia, the restaurant also hosts Singo — the music version of bingo, where you mark off song titles instead of numbers — at 7 p.m. each Monday and Thursday. To further boost nightly traffic, Corner 16 boasts an impressive happy hour lineup as well, weeknights from 4-7 p.m.

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## Stefanos Pizza

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Hosted by Knox Trivia Guys, Stefanos Pizza offers trivia events at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays. Singo is also held each Thursday at 6:30 p.m. During these events, the Hardin Valley pizzeria often offers specials and incentives, such as \$2 off draft beers and half-priced bottles of wine.

## Xul Beer

10677 Hardin Valley Road | 865-985-0648

A popular trivia destination in the area, Xul's Hardin Valley location hosts weekly events at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, typically run by Not Rocket Science Trivia. Attendees can sign up for free clues online prior to the event and enjoy a competitive evening with prizes given to top teams. Many of these trivia nights are also themed, with questions centered around exciting topics like reality TV, Dolly Parton and Disney. On June 3, for instance, the theme will be The Golden Girls.



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Sarah Williamson's poetic achievement began with a stress-fueled email.

With a few days left until Hardin Valley Academy's 2026 Poetry Out Loud competition, Williamson was ready to withdraw because she did not yet have her poems fully memorized.

"I emailed the teacher in charge and told him I couldn't recite my poem the next day because I didn't feel ready," recalled Williamson, who participated in the event after seeing her sister Lizzy do the same. "I was totally about to back out."

That teacher, John Sides, responded that the Hawks' poetry recitation competition was in three more days, not the very next day. Williamson instantly calmed, then won the competition 72 hours later to advance to the state competition in Murfreesboro. There, on Saturday, Feb. 28, Williamson claimed first place during her debut inside the Center for the Arts in Murfreesboro.

"I was ecstatic," Williamson said. "I was so happy and surprised, jumping backstage."

On the local level, others who placed in the state were: first runner-up Beatrice Sanders from Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts; second runner-up Eriel Wilkins from Arlington High School; third runner-up Haakeem Holmes from Harding Academy of Memphis.

All four state finalists received a 2026 Poetry Out Loud Tennessee Award crafted by David Adkins of Art Wire Music in Murfreesboro. Moreover, all four finalists' schools received stipends to purchase poetry books and supplies.

Williamson's victory pushed her on to the Poetry Out Loud national finals, held Monday through Wednesday, April 27-29, at the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

But to reach that point, she needed the kind of preparation that came through her fine arts experiences at HVA.

A piano player since the age of 2 years old, she has also learned the organ and plans to take musical theater next year. Williamson also did theater in middle school, unknowingly tool-

ing herself for the poetry competitions that stood ahead.

"It was more acting-heavy than some of the musical things I've done," Williamson said of the recitation. "I had to really lock in on my facial expressions and arm gestures and all that stuff."

Williamson arrived in D.C. ready to go, armed with each poem she had selected: Khalil Gibran's "On Pain," Hart Crane's "My Grandmother's Love Letters" and "To a Great Lady in my Small House" by Mark Van Doren.

Except when she took the stage at nationals, Williamson found a far different response than the one she received at the state competition in Murfreesboro.

"A big category is accuracy," she said. "If you mess up one of the words in your poems, it will seriously dock you some points. It's a big component. But a lot of the other stuff is very, very subjective."

"At the state level, the judges told me they loved my performance because I was much less dramatic than some of the other people reciting that day. But at nationals, it was the complete opposite. A lot of the people who won had very dramatic performances, so the judging wasn't very consistent. My sister experienced that too."

Unfortunately, that difference left Williamson outside of the top nine finalists for the national competition, as Indiana's Jayda Dawn took home the national title. South Dakota's Damien Deen took second place, while Illinois was represented in third-place finisher Jaden Conley.

Dawn specifically took home a \$20,000 cash prize.

But all participants, including Williamson, received a deeper understanding and appreciation for poetry through the competition.

And next year, Williamson plans to compete again, though said she will be preparing months ahead this time.

"It was a very rewarding experience," she said. "It definitely taught me you need to try out a lot of different things and give them your full effort because you might end up succeeding in them."

~ Jake Nichols



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Photos by Dan Harralson

Pellissippi State baseball played Dyersburg State in the 2026 TCCAA Playoff Series at Ridley-Helton Baseball Field. Above, from left, are MaKai Derry (6) from Grace Christian Academy, Tobias Peterson from Farragut High School in the dugout and Carson Hoffmeister (2) from Hardin Valley Academy.

## ***Pellissippi State reloads as Hughes builds for future***

Pellissippi State played its first baseball season in program history in 2025. The Panthers play their home games at Ridley-Helton Field in Knoxville.

Many former local high school baseball players are remaining in the Knoxville area and playing for Pellissippi State. The Panthers have been represented by former student-athletes from Alcoa High School, Central High School, Christian Academy Knoxville, Farragut High School, Grace Christian Academy, Hardin Valley Academy, Karns High School, Loudon High School and Oak Ridge High School.

Shawn Hughes has served as Pellissippi State's head coach during the first two years of the program. He guided the Panthers to a 33-23 (19-10 TCCAA) record in 2025.

Pellissippi State finished its 2026 season with a 28-28 (14-16 TCAA) record and were eliminated in the TCCAA Playoff Series by Dyersburg State. Pellissippi State lost the three-game series, 2-1.

"The season is over and we are on to next year," Hughes said. "You take a couple of days and process it, figure out what you have to do different, and I am already on to next year. Recruiting wise, we are pretty much done. For the most part, just getting these new guys in classes.

"We are losing a good bit of guys, but they were all sophomores, so we knew they would not be coming back. In terms of returning starters, we may have two or three position guys and really a couple of pitchers, so it is kind of like starting over next year."

The 2026 sophomores were players who helped build the Panthers' program from the ground up and Hughes is grateful for their contributions.

"A couple of them have been with me," he said. "They were here when we were starting up, year one they kind of bought into it. I will forever be grateful to those guys because we did not really have anything to offer them other than an opportunity. It was a little bittersweet that we got to start this thing together, but they will be moving on and get to play somewhere else."

Pellissippi State's program also allows for players to develop for two or three years after high school. Former Farragut pitcher Tobias Peterson completed his first season with the Panthers in 2026. He redshirted as a freshman and will continue to develop in the program with two years of JUCO eligibility remaining.

"For a lot of kids, I do not think they reach their full potential until after high school," Hughes said. "Just getting to a place where you are allowed to develop, and his best years are ahead of him. He has worked extremely hard this year. He has changed his body, worked on the mechanics, and I expect that he is going to be part of this next year."

After two seasons since starting its program, Hughes will continue to improve and build Pellissippi State baseball.

"For me, maybe a little bit of step back on the field, but moving forward I think we are in a good place. We have committed to try and keep some of the best talent here in Knoxville with kids who are from here, and I think we have done that. I think we have 15 kids coming from the area that will be freshmen. We are in the planning phase, in terms of facilities, and what is next for us to continue to grow the program."

~ Dan Harralson



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# Huffman PAIR DOMINATE

**T**hey're top area tennis players. They're home-schooled and they're siblings.

Madison and Jaymeson Huffman also enjoyed an accomplished 2026 season where both breezed through a regular-season, going undefeated on their way to winning district and regional championships before heading south to Chattanooga for the state championships at the Champions Club.

They combined to win 33 matches in 2026 before both finished as runners-up and came home from the state's grand stage with silver medals.

Madison, a senior at Hardin Valley Academy, won her first two matches at the state championships, sweeping past Blackman's Jordan Krise (in the quarterfinals), 6-1, 6-2, and Hendersonville's Autumn Gunter (in the semifinals), 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday, May 14.

Her final match didn't go quite as well as she fell to Page's Emma Baker, 7-5, 6-1. But over the final two years playing for the Lady Hawks, she lost just two matches, both in the state finals.

Madison said that her first trip to the state championships was a driving force for the 2026 season.

"It's very motivating," she said.

Madison began playing tennis at a young age. She decided to take up the game after exploring and searching for a sport to play. She would eventually make the game her own and would later share the game with her family.

"I started playing when I was four years old," she said. "I was looking at different sports and my parents said 'What about tennis?'"

"I liked it and I shared it with my family. My grandmother plays. My uncle plays and both of my parents play."

Her brother, Jaymeson, also took up the game when he began

attending her lessons.

"I've been playing since I was two years old," he said. "I would go to her lessons and I would start hitting."

Both Madison and Jaymeson both compete in USTA tournaments and took the opportunity to play for Hardin Valley because they enjoy the game.

Like many siblings, the two often compete against each other. "We play together and we practice against each other almost every day," Jaymeson said.

Early in their sibling rivalry, Madison would win when playing her brother. But things didn't stay that way.

"When we first started playing, I would win. I would beat him," Madison said. "Then, it kind of leveled out. Now, he destroys me."

Jaymeson may have taken the upper hand in the duo's rivalry. That doesn't mean, however, that Madison is not a mentor.

"She taught me to keep playing even when you're not winning and that means something when you're the younger one," Jaymeson said.

Madison added that playing and practicing against Jaymeson has made them both better tennis players.

"Practicing against each other has made us better," she said.

Hardin Valley coach Seth Rayman said that the two have made the school's program.

"They're both great kids and they both love tennis," Rayman said. "They've been playing since they could hold a racquet."

"They're teachers on the court."

Life isn't all about tennis for the Huffmans. Away from the court, they enjoy watching movies together. Their favorite genre is cartoons.

~ Ken Lay

#### Jake Nichols

Hardin Valley freshman Jaymeson Huffman, left, and senior Madison Huffman were both top seeds for this year's district tournament. The siblings share a passion and talent for tennis, pushing one another on and off the court.

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# CLASS OF 2026

## Hardin Valley Academy celebrates over 400 graduates

More than 400 Hardin Valley Academy graduates walked across the stage during the school's Class of 2026 Commencement Ceremony, which took place in HVA's Hawk Stadium Monday evening, May 18.

Executive Principal Kirk Renegar related how students are taught how to write a story, then advised, "Own your [life's] story. Don't allow yourself to be a victim ... write your own ending."

Likewise, three senior speakers shared advice to fellow graduates:

"Your path is your own," Matthew Greenwood said in his "Plan B" speech, in which he acknowledged life doesn't always go as one wishes, so a student has to resort to a plan B.

However, "Plan B isn't a back-up plan; it's a redirection," he said. "The most successful people don't stick with what isn't working for them. Learn to embrace the Plan B."

Another speaker, Carys Price, encouraged fellow classmates to embrace the unknown.

"Live in this very moment," she said. "Look forward to what's to come. Don't be afraid of it."

And, Sophia Roberts talked about building connections with people along the way.

Two of the biggest highlights of the ceremony were the announcements of the Hawk Award winner and a U.S. Naval Academy appointee.

"The Hawk Award is the highest recognition given and voted on by the Hardin Valley Academy faculty and bestowed upon a Hardin Valley senior," Renegar said. "The award is presented to students whose performance exemplified the finest qualities of HVA.

"It is presented each year to a student who exhibits the high standards of dependability, responsibility, citizenship, cheerfulness and moral

character," the principal added.

There were five finalists — Matthew Greenwood, Minh Nguyen, Douglas King, Isaiah Springer and Richard Wilkinson. Of those, the award was presented to Springer.

Following an accident, Springer has had to overcome adversity and had to relearn "not only how to learn but also how to navigate through 2,000 students," Renegar said. "Through it all, Isaiah has faced every challenge with resilience and humility," the principal said of Springer. "Despite the obstacles he has faced, his brave ambition and determination to succeed has never wavered.

"His positivity and perseverance are inspiring," Renegar added. "And his presence has, undoubtedly, elevated those around him.

"Even in the face of adversity, he never gave up," the principal said. "His compassionate spirit shines in the way he supports and cares for others, always showing genuine kindness ... to those around him."

Regarding other class accomplishments, "this year, the senior class received over \$22 million in scholarships," assistant principal Tia Shack announced. Those included the Tennessee Promise scholarship, with which students attending a community college or technical school will receive up to \$4,500 annually for two years, and the Hope, or Tennessee Lottery, scholarship for students planning to attend an eligible Tennessee institution within 16 months of graduation.

Another honor went to William Wimer, who received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy.

"It is my pleasure today to represent the U.S. Air Force and U.S.



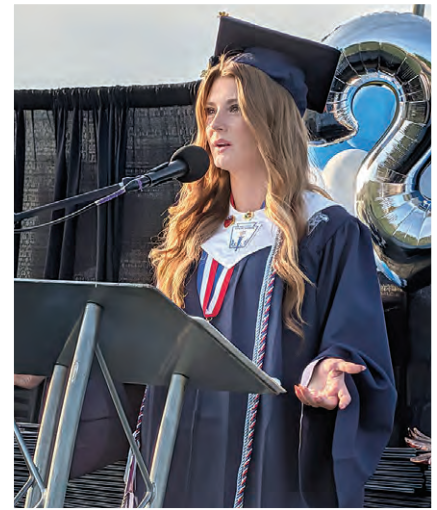
Isaiah Springer receives the Hawk Award from Executive Principal Kirk Renegar.



William Wimer



Brody Lamb



Carys Price



Matthew Greenwood



Kendall Woods, left, and Liberty Davis

Left column photos courtesy of Jeremy Wiggs Photography | [www.jeremywiggs.com](http://www.jeremywiggs.com)

Right column photos by Tammy Cheek

See GRADUATION on Page 29



*Just wanted to drop a note of thanks and appreciation to Dr Smith and staff. I went in for my cleaning and then followed up for a filling!! Melinda was great for the clean - very professional but super friendly!! Dr Smith and Nikki knocked out the filling in a gentle and timely manner- super easy!! Best dental office I have ever been too!! Many thanks!!*

*~ D Elliott*

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*~ J Cloud*



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Tammy Cheek

Tracy, far left, and John Impellizeri, left, parents of the late Scott Impellizeri presented Scott Impellizeri Memorial Scholarships to Hardin Valley Academy seniors Kayla Sousebee, Kamryn Taylor and Ryland Wilkinson during HVA's Senior Celebration Friday, May 1.

# Top honors

## Hardin Valley seniors, teacher honored for accomplishments, hard work

Hardin Valley Academy ended its 2026 year by honoring seniors and some top teachers whose exemplary performance highlighted the year during a Senior Celebration at the school Friday, May 1.

"This morning, we are gathered to celebrate the many accomplishments of the Hardin Valley Academy Class of 2026," executive principal Kirk Renegar said. "The class of 2026 has played an incredibly significant role in continuing the Hardin Valley Academy tradition.

"Some have studied hard and have achieved great academic success," he said. "Some have dedicated long hours to practicing and competing in athletic events while others have

been artists, performers or both.

"Many have worked hard to embody the school's vision and enrich the community," Renegar added. "Today, we want to showcase the accomplishments of the Class of 2026 since they arrived at HVA four years ago."

He continued to point out the seniors who performed well in various competitions: academic, athletic, extracurricular and vocational, among others. Renegar commended the students who participated in Governor's Schools, hosted by Tennessee universities, performed in theater or whose art graced the school's halls; and he commended the students who have "reached beyond yourselves

and given of your time, energy and even money to help the school and community" through community service and those who achieved industry certification.

The highest award for the school, for which the faculty chooses, is the Hawk Award, which is bestowed to a graduating senior "who exemplifies the finest qualities."

Renegar announced nominees for the award — Matthew Greenwood, Minh Nguyen, Douglas King, Isaiah Springer and Richard Wilkinson — with the winner being announced at graduation.

Also the school presented the Heart of Hardin Valley Award to Isaiah Springer.

Additionally, the school nominated teachers — Jennifer Galloway, Kaitlyn Gaskins, Malcolm Gibbs, Lisa Jacobs and Holly Wilgus — for the Teacher of the Year award. The winner was Gibbs.

Among the seniors' honors, Zainab Hasan, with a 4.821 grade-point average, was named valedictorian and Levi Jerrell, with a 4.750 GPA, was chosen salutatorian. They both plan to study chemical engineering

at the University of Tennessee.

Cole McIntosh earned the Applied Placement Capstone diploma, and Benjamin Cao, Hayden Hall and Julia Mueller were commended students in the National Merit Scholarship Program with Hasan being chosen as National Merit Scholarship finalist.

And, Zoe Cristy, Riley Goluoglu, Hall, Hasan, Jerrell, Olesia Makar, Mueller, Minh Nguyen, Sophia Roberts, Andre Torres Nieves and Sophia Winterbotham were the top 12.

Another group honored were the seniors enlisting in the military or enroll in post-secondary military education programs. They include Lily Britton, who received a Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship to attend University of Maryland in College Park; Jasmine Chason, who enlisted in the U.S. Navy; and Jarumi Tafoya Riveras, who enlisted in the U.S. Army.

Students also benefitted with scholarships from organizations and even loved ones of past students.

"Scott Impellizeri was a 2011

**See HONORS on Page 30**



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# HVA salutatorian Jerrell celebrates accomplishments

Hardin Valley Academy Class of 2026 graduate Levi Jerrell's academic accomplishments culminated in his standing as HVA's salutatorian.

Hardin Valley Academy recently announced the school's valedictorian, Zainab Hasan, and salutatorian.

Jerrell, the son of Matt and Brandy Jerrell, plans to attend University of Tennessee, where he will major in chemical engineering and minor in Chinese. His goal is to be a chemical engineer.

At HVA, "I really enjoyed high school because I was able to be a part of many different clubs and found a really close group of friends," the senior said. "My teachers and counselor were also incredibly supportive and were always there when I needed help, which helped grow my confidence and guide me to what I want to do next."

While in high school, Jerrell participated in the pole vault, hurdle and sprint on the track team, for which he is the pole vault freshman school record holder and was All-State for pole vault.

He also is president of Mu Alpha Theta, co-founder and treasurer of the Travel and Culture Club, a member of HVA's Science Bowl team, National Honor Society, Asian Student Alliance, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and, last year, the Boys Volleyball Club.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Wiggs

Levi Jerrell, HVA salutatorian, right, with superintendent Dr. Jon Rysewyk

~ Tammy Cheek

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# Kids' Corner



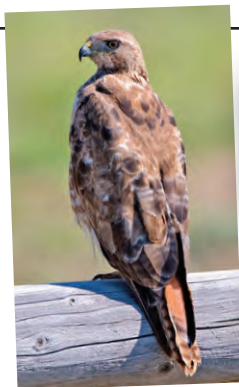
## Find the Hawk

### WINNER

The winner of the Find the Hawk contest for the February 2026 edition of Hardin Valley Living is **Emma Tisdale**

Emma received a prize box from **Chick-fil-A!** (Turkey Creek and Overlook Center locations)

Thank you to Chick-fil-A for their sponsorship of the Hawk contest, and congratulations to our winner!



## Find the Hawk

This hawk has been hidden in this issue of "Hardin Valley Living!" Search through the pages to find the hawk. When you do, fill out this form and mail or bring it to: **farragutpress, 11863 Kingston Pike, Farragut, TN 37934**

**Location of Hawk** (page number, description of hiding place):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

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If correct, you will be entered in a drawing for prizes to be held **June 30, 2026**. Winner to be announced in the next edition of Hardin Valley Living. (Ages 12 and under are eligible.)

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## Bayou Bash

From page 8

To rent kayak equipment for just one person, the cost is \$37.50 with the cost at \$75.00 for two people.

For those who already have kayaking equipment — meaning a kayak, paddle and a life jacket to wear — and merely want to hop on the shuttle for a ride to the drop-off, the cost is \$12.50.

The low country boil cost is \$22 ahead of time or \$25 the day of for a half-pound of shrimp, sausage, potatoes and corn. Also, the ticket price for the concert is \$25, and a portion of that goes toward the Epilepsy Foundation.

## Graduation

From page 20

Space Force to present the appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado,” retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Webber said. “This award is going to a sterling young man and is the equivalent of a four-year, full-ride scholarship in a college or university,” Webber said. “U.S. Air Force Academy accepts only the best of the best. This year, there were over 8,000 applicants,

People can also make direct donations to the foundation when booking if they wish.

This is not the only event that the center will be hosting this summer. At the end of May, TMG Pits will be hosting “TMG Fest,” a local barbecue cook-off, on Saturday, May 23, 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Then on Saturday, May 30, there will be a Discover Knoxville event from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

While each event brings its own flair, they weave together in an inviting space that was once something entirely different.

~ Jake Nichols

and only 420 were appointed to the academy.”

“It is not often enough that we praise our young people who choose to answer the call to serve our country,” freshman principal Jeremy Lorenz, said. “Joining the military is an immense commitment that requires bravery, sacrifice, strength, courage and mental acuity.”

Wimer is one of the five seniors who committed to serve in the military forces.

~ Tammy Cheek



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## Honors

From page 22

graduate of Hardin Valley Academy," HVA freshman principal Jeremy Lorenz said. "He was a leader, a mentor and a special friend to many people. Scott had committed his life to helping others.

"During his senior year, he re-

ceived the humanitarian award for his service as a peer tutor," the principal said. "On Aug. 7, 2011, Scott's precious, promising life was cut short by a reckless driver."

To honor the late senior's memory, his family has created the Scott Impellizeri Memorial Scholarship. This year, it went to Kayla Sosebee, Kamryn "Kami" Taylor and Ryland

Wilkinson.

Also, Jimmy Schuster and Leah Woods, the parents of the late Charlie Schuster, who lost his life in a tragic accident in January 2025, created the Charlie Schuster Memorial Scholarship.

"Charlie was the perfect son and brother and always thought of others rather than himself," Renegar said.

"A quiet, yet social young man who valued inclusion, who left a lasting impression on others ... the scholarship is awarded to someone who is dedicated to helping others and their community."

That \$1,000 scholarship went to Ryland Wilkinson.

~ Tammy Cheek

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