

# Blue Monarch graduates celebrate

**T-G STAFF REPORT**

On Sunday, Feb. 5, more than 150 people gathered at Blue Monarch — a long-term, residential recovery home in Coffee County — to celebrate the accomplishments of graduates, Amanda Cox and Mallory Sircy.

Blue Monarch, which began in 2003, focuses on helping women and children in domestic abuse relationships recover after the fact.

Each Blue Monarch resident described how her own personal surrender is helping to heal her children and herself from past traumas including childhood abuse, domestic violence, and/or addiction.

So, “surrender” was the theme of their graduation ceremony. According to a recent press release, “The women recognize that the hard choice to surrender can forever change their family trees by breaking destructive cycles.”

Graduates Cox and Sircy gave their personal testimonies including their plans and goals following graduation. Both described how they now have “hope for their future and for their families.”

Sircy accepted a job at a local doctor’s office and plans to pursue her certification as a medical assistant. Cox is excited about the next steps of her journey and is exploring careers where she can help others in need while providing for herself and her Jeannie Campbell, Blue Monarch’s program director, shared her thoughts on the journeys of Cox and Sircy.

“The thing about surrender is that you have to choose it. We have watched both of you choose to surrender the tremendous weight of the guilt that you carried around for a long time,” she said.

“You trusted us but most of all you learned to trust God. You chose to surrender your control and that’s sometimes one of the hardest. But, as you both have grown in your faith, surrender has become easier because you have gotten to know the one you are surrendering to.”

Before presenting the graduation certificates, Susan Binkley, Blue Monarch’s founder and president, shared that what Amanda and Mallory have accomplished, “is so much more than getting sober. In many ways it’s like arriving in baby shoes and leaving in combat boots. Their journey of self-discovery has been painful and yet exciting, scary and yet hopeful, exhausting and yet comforting.”

Binkley also said, “Both Amanda and Mallory’s journeys represent some of the most memorable experiences for me, personally, in the history of Blue Monarch.”

The nonprofit provides parenting classes and work ethic programs as well as the opportunity for women to work making “Out of the Blue” granola, a unique and popular treat that started at a restaurant Binkley had in



From left, Mallory Sircy, Susan Binkley, and Amanda Cox.

Submitted photos



Granola “with a purpose” can be purchased at New Covenant Christian Bookstore on North Main. The proceeds support Blue Monarch, a women and children’s residential recovery program in Monteagle.

Sewanee. It is now produced onsite at the Blue Monarch facility.

Both families plan to remain on-site as participants of Blue Monarch’s WINGS (Women In Newly Grounded Success) transitional program for graduates. During this next season, both Cox and Sircy will be able to gradually transition

back into the community as they begin working or pursuing education, while still benefitting from the supportive Blue Monarch staff and community.

For more information about Blue Monarch contact Kate Cataldo, operations director, at 931-924-8900 or visit [www.bluemonarch.org](http://www.bluemonarch.org).

# Governor lists ideas for state

This past week’s big event was Governor Lee’s State of the State address, which happened Monday night just after our regular floor Session. Governor Lee’s speech lasted for about an hour. It was a moving presentation on all the great things happening in our state.



Pat Marsh

Governor Lee also shared some of his ideas to improve our state. Some of the significant points of interest are

- Investing three billion dollars in our state’s roads
- \$300 million for county roads
- \$350 million increase in K12 education
- \$50 million for school safety
- Almost \$1 billion for TCAT colleges (with six new schools across the state)
- \$125 million for teacher salary raises
- 142 new state troopers will be hired
- Over \$400 million in proposed tax cuts
- Three months of no taxes on food items - around \$300 million in savings for our citizen
- Cutting approximately \$65 million in business taxes
- \$190 investment into the Department of Children’s Services
- \$350 million for our StatePark System
- \$250 million into the Rainy-Day Fund
- All while adding zero new debt

It was an exciting speech that made me proud to be a Tennessean. It’s an honor to be a small part of many of these great achievements.

The bill filing date was January 31 and there were 1,530 bills filed this year. Approximately half will be signed into law.

We had a presentation by TVA in our Business

“Civility is not a weakness; it is a strength.”

— Gov. Bill Lee

& Utilities Committee this week. TVA has about 7,000 employees (13,000 retired employees), 153 power generators, and covers most of seven states. They have control over 170,000 acres of public land and lakes while paying about \$350 million in taxes.

On Tuesday, Farm Bureau had their Bell Ringer Luncheon at the Musician Hall of Fame and there were over 600 in attendance. I sat at the table with several Bedford County agents and board members. I also got to visit with the Lincoln County and Moore County groups that attended.

The Farm Bureau does a great job of taking care of our Agricultural initiatives, opportunities, or problems, and they are a great resource for all of us in the legislature.

Wednesday was UT day on the Hill and they had a huge reception at the Sheraton Hotel. Just about everyone around the Capitol was wearing Orange. Coach Barnes came by the office building for a short visit and Coach Heupel was taking pictures with everyone who wanted one at the reception.

I usually get out of the office here at the state capitol around noon on Thursday and head back to Shelbyville. I get to spend the weekend at home before I have to return around noon on Monday for leadership meetings.

I’m honored to serve as your state representative and please call or email if I can ever help. 615-741-6824 --rep.pat.marsh@capitol.tn.gov.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### More than just tax cuts needed

Dear Editor,

In the recent David Melson Times-Gazette article titled “City Property Tax Could be Cut”; it was apparent there was massive confusion amongst numerous City Council members. The statement by Mr. Melson “Some council members appeared confused about the process for setting tax rates” is a confirmation of their bewilderment.

Police, fire, garbage, roads, recreation, power, sewer, drainage, cable TV, economic development, housing, homeless, dogs, chickens and rodents are just a few of the items in which municipal elected officials have responsibility. There are some have to one-time expenditures that are needed in the Shelbyville community – the big drainage pipe along with the pumps comes to mind. So would it be prudent to at least obtain an understanding of upcoming expenditures and revenue, before one starts pitching property tax rates – based on who knows what?

I am a member of a couple of Shelbyville related Facebook pages. Reading the participants responses – I draw one conclusion – people in Shelbyville want a lot of stuff; good schools, good roads, recreation, restaurants, shopping, high paying jobs etc. The problem is not the wanting, but the capacity and knowledge to obtain all those things that makes a community live able and desirable.

A city or community is a human creation. I have been in communities where an employer closed the doors and the town economy dissipated and never recovered. I have seen communities that have been almost completely abandoned. I have seen community infrastructure in disrepair. But I have also seen where a small town is vibrant, for no other reason than the skill of the residents and local officials. Those inhabitants understand that no one will get stuff for you. You have to get it yourself.

Shelbyville is positioned geographically between two rapidly expanding large municipalities – Nashville and Huntsville. Shelbyville will continue to grow. The question is - what do Shelbyville residents want it to look like? Each of the Shelbyville City Council members should answer that question and also their plan to implement their vision. That should be an issue in every local election; it was not in the most recent, unless you believe that just cutting taxes will somehow magically make Shelbyville the land of milk and honey.

Van Ayers  
Chair, Bedford County Democratic Party

# State soil, water agency to meet

The Tennessee Soil and Water Conservation Commission will meet Feb. 19 in Franklin.

The meeting will begin at 4 p.m. at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 820 Crescent Centre Dr. It is open to the public.

The agenda includes approval of the previous meeting’s minutes and reports from partner agencies, organizations, and ex-officio members. Commission members will also approve appointments of Tennessee’s Soil and Water Conservation District supervisors.

The Tennessee General Assembly created the commission in 1939 to assist in developing local soil conservation districts. Today the commission advises the Tennessee Department of Agriculture on matters of soil conservation and water quality improvement.

## Deputy Director Open Position

The Shelbyville Housing Authority (SHA) is currently accepting resumes for a Deputy Director to serve as Financial Controller and Assistant to the Executive Director. Under the direction of the Executive Director, the Deputy Director will administer the financial and operational activities of the agency. Resumes should include a cover letter and references. No phone calls. Only qualified resumes will be considered. Send to:

Shelbyville Housing Authority  
PO Box 560  
Shelbyville, TN  
APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2023

The SHA is subject to Section 3 hiring requirements; is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and Drug-Free Workplace. The SHA abides by the requirements of 41 CFR 90-741.5(a), which prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals on the basis of disability or protected veteran status; and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Pre-employment physical and drug screen required for new hires. Upon request, reasonable accommodations may be provided as required by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

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