

Opinion

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State fair a snapshot of Tennessee life



Your Turn
Jeff Aiken
Guest columnist

This time of year, my thoughts always turn toward fairs.

There are so many county and regional fairs across Tennessee, and they all have two basic characteristics I love: really great food and a showcase of the best agriculture has to offer.

Our very own Tennessee State Fair has a tradition of entertainment, agricultural pride, educational experiences and family memories more than 150 years in the making, honoring and highlighting what makes Tennessee a great place to live.

Each year when I attend the Tennessee State Fair, the same childlike excitement fills me that I used to get as a kid when we loaded up our livestock and headed to the fair to show our prize animals. The fair provides so much more



The Tennessee State Fair continues through Sunday. SHELLEY MAYS/THE TENNESSEAN

than just a good time to enjoy the exhibits and see the top quality crops or the blue ribbon pie, it offers a hands-on real-life display of how we live our lives across the state.

Among the annual highlights I look forward to with anticipation are the auctioning of the grand champion country ham, watching the hordes of youth showcasing months of dedicated feeding, care and grooming of their live-

stock, 4-H and Future Farmers of America students demonstrating skills in livestock judging and public speaking, seeing the abundance of artistic and creative craft and culinary skills made by Tennesseans, and hearing the music that is such a part of Nashville resounding throughout the fairgrounds.

Our elected officials even get in the spirit by competing in a milking contest with local Nashville news media celeb-

rities for the title of who has the most pull at the fair.

But what gives me goosebumps, even after all these years, is seeing Tennessee farmers publicly showing the crops, livestock and fiber they produce and openly sharing how they do it for all fairgoers to see.

There is nothing better than heading out with the family to see all there is to see at the fair, and I urge you to start a new tradition or continue the tradition in your family of attending the Tennessee State Fair at least once during Sept. 6-15 to enjoy the sights, sounds, smells and most of all to relish in the best Tennessee has to offer. While you are there, make sure to join a tour of the FFA Barn or just walk on your own through the barns and talk to the farmers to learn something new about their animals or crops they have brought to share with you.

You will love it.

Jeff Aiken is president of the Tennessee Farm Bureau.

Women can take control of financial future



Your Turn
Jana Lisle Parham
Guest columnist

Too often, women do not have control over their family's financial resources.

More than 56% of women still defer to a spouse on investments, financial planning and long-term financial decisions, according to the Own Your Worth report conducted by UBS. This can lead to negative consequences for women and their families, but that doesn't have to be the case.

After a career working and financial planning for families, my best advice to women is simple: own your worth.

There is no doubt that society has a long way to go before women truly have an equal footing with men when it comes to finances and planning, even though progress has been made in the last 50 years. Until 1974, women often needed a male co-signer to apply for a credit card. Until 1981, women did not own equal rights to marital property.

Today, women on average make 81 cents for every dollar men make, and the ratio is even worse for black and Hispanic women, at 61 and 53 cents respectively, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

What does it mean to own your worth?

You should get to know where you stand financially, and what you want for your and your family's future. Take some time to add up your assets and liabilities, like loans, credit and other debts, and then sit down with your partner if you have one and discuss full financial transparency. You can start these conversations by asking yourselves questions. What do you want to accomplish in life? Who are the people who matter most to you? And what do you want your legacy to be?

Your answers to these questions will help you think about wealth along three key dimensions: liquidity, or how to prepare for short-term expenses; longevity, for longer-term needs like retirement; and legacy, for needs that go beyond

your own.

Our second step is one that is made so much easier because of the work you have already done in the first step, and it's all about "Finding Your Voice." Starting financial conversations with a partner is almost never easy and can be considered taboo for a lot of couples, but it is important.

For example, men and women come into relationships with different attitudes toward spending and saving, but there is such a tremendous benefit to having open, honest communication about money with a trusted confidante and a financial adviser. Your financial future should and can be in your hands, but this doesn't happen without clear lines of communication.

Finally, you have the opportunity to "Set an Example." Women and men tend to repeat the gender roles that they see growing up, which is how gender roles and stereotypes become ingrained in the public consciousness. Take a moment, think and write down the name of an inspirational woman in your life who pushed you to be great, who inspired you to be savvy and in command of

owning your wealth, or showed you that you can achieve whatever you want in your life. And remember that you CAN BE and ARE that person to another little girl or boy.

Let's change the way we think about financial responsibility

If we all join together and take part in these actions, we can begin to change the way that women and men in our society view the responsibility of financial planning. Our predecessors worked tirelessly to give us the right to be a part of our financial future, and we will not let their progress stop with us.

Challenging the gender roles that have been ingrained in our minds is a task that we should all be a part of, and we must be the ones to begin to change the statistics. It might be uncomfortable, and you might feel as though you don't know where to start; but we have to educate ourselves and step up to Own Our Worth.

Jana Lisle Parham has worked in wealth management for UBS for more than 23 years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The magic of reading

I was the librarian at St. Edward School from 1995-2005.

The article regarding the removal of the Harry Potter series from the library was upsetting for a couple of reasons. First, that books beloved by students over the last 20 years would be removed without consulting either the librarian on staff or the principal, and second that the excuse of "sprucing up and improving circulation" would be given.

The fact is that the collection has been meticulously maintained over the years by me, and the two highly qualified, certified librarians who succeeded me. The collection does exactly what Ms. Hammel states as the goal of the school library: "...promote engaging, quality literature and an enjoyment of reading in hopes of building student's skills and knowledge."

As far as magic and spells, seeing children go from reluctant to enthusiastic readers and begin asking for more

books "like Harry Potter" is the kind of magic every school librarian hopes for.

Maureen Schlacter, Brentwood 37027

Money diversion hurts military families

While so many in Tennessee ignore this president's lies, destructive rhetoric and crazy behavior (changing an official weather map with a sharpie?), surely this is something that all Tennesseans should agree with.

Taking money that has been appropriated by Congress to go to military construction and use it to build a wall is wrong. Fort Campbell middle school students have been attending a severely overcrowded school for years. They were promised for three years the money to build it and finally got it. Trump is taking all of that money away from them.

That is just one example. A child care center on another base that has mold also had their money to replace it taken

away. Trump constantly brags about how much he does for the military. That apparently is no longer true.

Call or write your senators and representatives today.

Gwen Warren, Lewisburg 37091

Protect God's creation

Tennessee is full of God's majestic creatures. In fact, we have protected habitat for over 90 threatened or endangered species.

Unfortunately, these species are now threatened by actions in Washington, D.C. to undermine the Endangered Species Act. As a Christian, I am deeply troubled by any efforts to harm God's creation and weaken protections for our most imperiled plants and animals.

In Genesis 1:26 we read that God put humans on earth to steward and "have dominion" over "the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every thing that moves on the ground."

It is evident that many of our elected officials are failing to live up to this important calling, and I am asking Tennessee's leaders in Washington to protect God's creation - including at-risk animals and their homes.

The regulatory changes recently finalized by the Trump Administration represent the most pressing threat. First, the changes allow for economic analyses to infect decisions about which species are worthy of protection. The second change removes automatic protections for "threatened" species. The ESA was designed to prevent extinction and endangerment, and removing protections for threatened species will make it harder to do just that. These changes strike at the very heart of the ESA.

My message is simple: As a Christian, I urge our leaders in Washington to protect God's most at-risk creatures by defending the ESA from these reckless attacks.

Matthew Groves, Nashville 37212

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