

Gallatin County News

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Road work

Workmen drove long iron bars into the ground last Friday to stabilize a portion of Rt 16 near Glencoe. The road has been closed for over a year but will reopen by July. Photo by Kelley Warnick

Works begins to reopen Rt 16

Gallatin County Judge/executive Ken McFarland had good news for the fiscal court when it met last Thursday evening. McFarland said work had begun to repair a major dirt slide on Rt 16 that had closed the road near Glencoe for over a year. At the court's February

meeting, state highway officials who attended for another reason were harshly criticized for allowing the road to be closed for so long. "This is an outrage and someone is going to get killed because of you," Glencoe city councilman JuJu Sullivan told the of-

ficials. "School bus drivers using the Cemetery Hill detour can't see oncoming traffic when they make the turn onto U. S. 127. Our children's lives are at stake." After hearing work had begun on the on the \$3.5 million project and that the road would be re-

opened by July, Glencoe magistrate Dudley Gullion said he was "tickled to death."

In other fiscal court business:

•County Attorney Spike Wright said a new monitoring system was being used that allowed prisoners to be sentenced to house arrest instead of jail. If successful, the county will save thousands of dollars a year. Wright emphasized the county was not being soft on crime and that all violent offenders would still be kept in jail.

•Roy Neeley was given the contract to replace the roof and renovate the EMS building. His winning bid was \$25,000.

•McFarland said AOC (Administrative Office of the Courts) would pay to turn property behind Beringer Drug Center and around the sheriff's office into a parking lot. The project will cost between \$75,000 and \$90,000.

•The court approved the Eagle Scout proposal of Sam Foster to build a marquee and install a flagpole at the county park in

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Stephenson may be linked to three area homicides

Pleads not guilty to lesser charges

Charles "Stevie" Stephenson, 58, who may be linked to three area murders pleaded not guilty in a Boone County courtroom Monday. He has been charged with tampering with evidence and with trafficking in Oxycontin. He's being held in the Boone County jail in lieu of a \$50,000 cash only bond.

Stephenson comes from a large, tightly knit Northern Kentucky family. He had 14 uncles and aunts including Bill Stephenson, who was brutally murdered along with his wife, Peggy, last May. No one has been arrested for those murders and police have said little about their investigation. Bill Stephenson was well known in Gallatin County and had many close friends and relatives living here.

Police became interested in Stevie Stephenson when a female companion of his, Leigh Jennings, was found murdered in her Aurora, Ind. home

on March 29. Jennings, 67, who had lent money to Stephenson, was badly beaten and died of multiple head fractures. Police said they have a suspect in the case but have not said who that suspect is.

Police searched Stephenson's apartment shortly after Jennings' body was found and two days later he attempted to kill himself by slashing his wrists. His life was saved Monday night, April 9, when officers returned to the apartment to interview him and found him with the self-inflicted wounds. They also found 13 Oxycontin pills. Stephenson was arrested on the tampering with evidence and drug charges upon his release from the hospital and taken to jail.

Relatives of Stephenson say he lived a flamboyant lifestyle well above his means and considered himself a "ladies' man." The also say he had a temper.

In recent days, it has become clear he also has serious financial trouble and has borrowed money from people who are close to him. Monday, his court appointed public defender, Steve Florian, said his client was broke and had an income of only \$600 a month from a pension.

Stephenson had borrowed money from Jennings. He had also borrowed money from his aunt, Fay Sparks. In December, a Boone County judge ordered Stephenson to repay the \$3,750 he borrowed from Sparks but had refused to repay. Sparks had to withdraw

money from her retirement account for the loan and was accessed a \$750 tax penalty, according to a suit she filed when the loan wasn't repaid.

Stephenson was ordered to make \$500 monthly payments to his aunt until the loan was paid off. The first check bounced, as did other checks he wrote to Sparks. On March 30, a day after Jennings was killed, Stephenson gave Sparks' attorney a money order for \$1,000 to cover some of his missed payments.

In February of this year, Stephenson sold the Beaver Road real estate that was left to him by his mother, who died in a house fire in 1994. He received \$283,118 for the property and the next month he paid off a \$263,500 mortgage he had on the house and 16 acres.

Stephenson's only criminal charge came in 1992 when he was arrested for shoplifting from a grocery store. He was given diversion.

Last November, he and his wife, Arlene, divorced after nearly 40 years of marriage. They have two children, Farley and Sar-

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Charles Stephenson

Five GCHS students will be Governor's Scholars

History has been made at Gallatin County High School this year where five juniors have been accepted into the Governor's Scholar Program. Never before has there been more than one student at GCHS accepted into the prestigious program during one academic year.

Nathan Messenger, Courtney Partin, Sam Wright, and twin brothers Luke and Eli Ackermann were accepted into the program

Acceptance is based on a stringent selection process which considers ACT, PSAT, SAT test scores, grade point av-

erages and difficulty of class load; the students' extracurricular activities, volunteer service, honors or awards, leadership project, writing entry of 500 words, and two teacher recommendations from core academic subjects.

The Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program was established in 1983 to enhance Kentucky's next generation of civic and economic leaders.

The first class numbered 230 and was housed on one college campus. Today, the program has grown to over 1,000 students and is housed on three campuses at Bellarmine University in Lou-

isville, Centre College in Danville, and Murray State University in Murray. The program is free of charge and offers students a chance to know and make friends with other enthusiastic, energetic students with high intellectual capacities.

Luke and Eli Ackermann are the sons of Dr. Richard Ackermann and his wife, Shelia; Sam Wright is the son of Commonwealth Attorney Spike Wright and his wife, Barbi; Nathan Messenger is the son of Frank and Teresa Messenger; and Courtney Partin is the daughter of Chris and Rita Partin.



Cleaning up

Angela Mayer took advantage of Gallatin County Clean Up Days last week and dropped off unwanted items at the dumpster in Warsaw on Friday. Dumpsters were also open in Sparta, Glencoe and at Napoleon/Concord Precinct. Photo by Kelley Warnick

Sometimes life doesn't make sense

This and That

By Kelley Warnick
Editor

I hope the people who read this column usually find it somewhat humorous but I'm not feeling funny this week. That's because sometimes life just doesn't make sense.

Last week, I learned a delightful woman I've known for ten years was brutally murdered. Leigh Jennings was 67-years-old when someone repeatedly slammed her head into the floor of her Indiana home until she died. She looked much younger than her age and had flowing strawberry-blond hair, a ra-

diant smile and natural good looks.

I got to know Leigh because she worked at Jim Young's Barbershop in Florence where I've been getting my hair cut for 30 years. Former Gallatin County resident John Young usually cuts my hair but when he's not available, I always asked for Leigh. That's because she was good at what she did and she had an engaging personality.

Leigh loved animals, country scenes and flowers. Pictures of all those things decorated the cubicle that was her office. Her house was next door to her mother's and she thought it was a privilege to care for the woman she loved so much. She lived a healthy lifestyle and believed in a holistic type of health care that treats diseases and maladies without the use of conventional doctors and prescription drugs.

Although I only saw Leigh at the barbershop, I came to know her as a fun loving, big-hearted, woman who was glad to help anyone who needed her. I once asked her why she became a barber.

"I just like working with men more than I do women," Leigh said. "I learned long ago life is too short not to be doing what you like to do."

Leigh's murder shocked and saddened me as did the murders last May of my wife's uncle and aunt, Bill and Peggy Stephenson. Like Leigh, they were brutally murdered in their Boone County home. Bill and Peggy were both 74 years old when they died and had been married 54 years. Police have said little about the murders but the crime scene has been described as horrific.

The Stephensons also were wonderful, generous and kind people who were

loved by everyone who knew them. Bill had a quick sense of humor and would regularly take food, clothing and toys to less fortunate people in Eastern Kentucky.

They were a deeply religious couple who led prayer groups and were active in their church. They touched the lives of many and their funeral was one of the largest Northern Kentucky has ever seen with about 1,500 people paying their last respects.

No one has been arrested for any of the three murders but it now appears police believe all three were killed by the same man, in the same fashion. If suspicions are correct, that killer is someone Billy and Peggy knew very well, their nephew, Stevie Stephenson.

Like I said at the beginning, sometimes life just doesn't make sense.