



THE NEWS-DEMOCRAT CREW - Last Tuesday's 2023 Readers Choice Ceremony was organized and presented by The News-Democrat staff, which included Marketer Nea Lynn, Writer Canon King, and General Manager Laurie Daniel.

Readers Choice Ceremony Recognizes Businesses And Individuals

canonKING
Writer

The Awards Ceremony for The News Democrat's 2023 Readers Choice Awards was held at the Apex Community Room last Tuesday afternoon, April 25th, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Nearly 100 locals were in attendance at the ceremony. Along with the event being enjoyed in person by those in attendance, a Facebook livestream was broadcasted for the whole community to watch and participate in.

A host of local businesses, individuals, and their friends and families were invited to join in on the festivities as they received

awards for their 'Best Of' category.

Aside from the main event, donated food and drinks were served freely to the night's guests. Donations included: Over 20 large pizzas from Lance's, chicken sliders, chicken salad, and pimento cheese sandwiches from Mama's Table, a large assorted cake tray from Memories & Marmalade, ice, cups, and drinks donated by Waverly Sonic, gallon jugs of sweet tea made by Mrs. Kim Rochelle, BBQ donated by food truck Smokin' K's, and ice cream from The Milkshakery.

After all the winners had been announced, door

See AWARDS page 2A



IN CUSTODY - After four months of being on the run, Jessica Diviney was taken into custody by Humphreys County Sheriff's Office Deputies last Friday morning, April 28th. Diviney was found to be hiding in a basement inside a residence on Hwy 13 N. She was sentenced to 16 years in prison, but had been furloughed for drug treatment before escaping the facility. Diviney had been in several different counties in an attempt to avoid capture. Heather Tucker was also charged with accessory after the fact because she had knowledge of Diviney being wanted and allowed Diviney to hide at her residence.

Waverly Flood Preparedness Mapbook Presented To LEPC

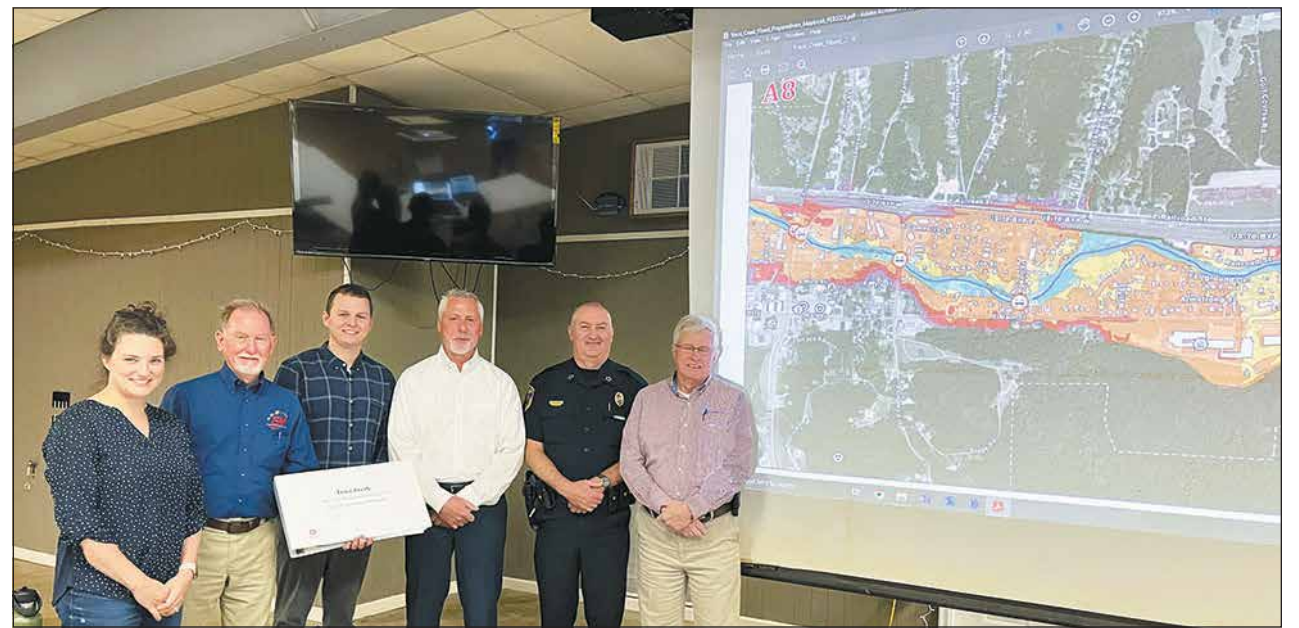
Humphreys County, TN, April 26, 2023 - Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Water Resources Section presented the Waverly Flood Preparedness Mapbook to members of the Humphreys County Local Emergency Planning Committee on Wednesday, April 26.

This mapbook was designed to provide local officials the necessary information to prepare for future flood events on the Trace Creek watershed and communicate expected impacts to citizens and other agencies. Mark Veasey, a civil engineer in the USACE's Water Resources Section,

demonstrated use of the mapbook during the meeting and provided copies to agencies both Waverly and Humphreys County.

The USACE reviewed the floods in August 2021, May 2010, and February 2019 along with other historical data in order to determine "high-water"

marks at various locations along the Trace Creek Watershed. This will allow local authorities the ability to map the expected elevation of flood waters that could affect homes, schools, churches and businesses, as well as bridges, depending on how much rain is forecast.



Pictured in front of a model of the Waverly Flood Preparedness Mapbook are (l-r) Ashley Fuentes, PM, Flood Risk Program manager; Odell Poyner, director of Humphreys County Emergency Management Agency; Mark Veasey, civil engineer, USACE's Water Resources Section, Humphreys County Executive Mike Pogreba, Waverly Chief of Public Safety Grant Gillespie, and Waverly Mayor Buddy Frazier.

St. Philip's Disaster Relief Team Travels From Minnesota To Rebuild Flood-Damaged Homes

canonKING
Writer

Twenty-two individuals with the St. Philip's Disaster Relief team from Fridley, MN traveled 830 miles with their two trailers to arrive last Sunday, April 23, for their third round of rebuilds here locally.

The organization, which is composed of various members of St. Philip's Lutheran Church, takes two, week-long trips a year with their previous trip to the area having been in the fall. This last trip made it the team's 82nd recovery mission since their first mission which took place the fall after Hurricane Katrina.

While many of the members have participated in previous trips, the group has retained four original, charter members since its founding. They have done work all across the country and have been in operation every year except for during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from their week-long missions, the organization also does a lot of "mini-missions" in and around their home base.

For readers of the previous edition, the team had continued the work that the St. Louis Sluggers Disaster Recovery Team had begun on the Fairgrounds Dr. home. Siding was finished, flooring was brought in and installed, walls and ceilings were painted, and windows were trimmed out at that property. Simultaneously, members of St. Philip's worked on another house in McEwen, as well as five other homes in the county. Many of the affected houses just needed some finishing touches, which included wall installation, sheetrocking, garage door installation, and flooring.

Trim was donated from the Inspiritus warehouse and was painted while it was raining on Thursday, with the trim being installed the following day. Team helper R.J. also worked to locate and obtain materials needed. The group remarked at how whatever it was they asked for, people would bring them.

Teams were led by coordinators Mike Anderson and Renee Johnson and

See REBUILD page 2A



PAINTING - Two female volunteers from St. Philip's Disaster Relief team diligently paint the interior of a flood-affected home.



SIDING - A duo of volunteers, one a long-time engineer and the other a lawyer, add siding to the second story of a Fairgrounds Dr. home.



SEND-OFF - Following a week of rebuilding and retouching, the St. Philip's Disaster Relief team enjoy an evening of food, drinks, and live-music at the home of Gretchen Turner before heading home the following day.

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newsdemocrat

Obituaries

Eva Catherine Curtis
James "J.P." Peter Downey
Joseph "Joe" Michael Dreaden

Mary Louise Edwards
Helen Louise Nichols
Lisa Renee Warren

Index

Obits 5A
Devotional 7A
Classifieds 2B
Public Notices.. 2-4B
Sports 7-8B



LOCAL NEWS/VIEWPOINTS



IN ATTENDANCE - The Apex Community Room was nearly at full capacity with many locals showing up to enjoy the evening's celebration.

AWARDS

From 1A

prizes were drawn and distributed at random. All of the prizes were donated by local businesses, which included, but was not limited to: a free pork butt from Rochelle's Bar-None-BBQ, a free hydration and weight loss visit to Thompson Family Wellness, a free cut and shave at Frank & Shea's Barbershop, a t-shirt and free oil change and tire rotation from Morton's, a lawn chair and cover from First Bank, a leash, nutritional dog food, and a gift card from Waverly Animal Clinic, a cup and skin sponge from Trull Family Pharmacy, two free bookings at the Community Room from Apex Bank, a swag bag from Saint Thomas Three Rivers Hospital, ten Sonic gift cards, as well as gift card donated by That One Place, a t-shirt and gift card from Smokin' K's, and a free photography session

with Janet Lynn, as well as other donations.

As each of the winners were announced, those present were personally handed each of their Readers Choice winner decals and had their pictures professionally taken by Janet Lynn Photography. Winners were given an opportunity to speak and give words of appreciation to the voters who named them for this year's awards.

The evening was truly a special one as we watched so many local businesses and their owners sitting side by side and receiving the appreciation and recognition that our county's small businesses and hard-working individuals deserve. The event was all about them and we did our best to highlight that.

To all of our winners, nominees, and voters of



DONATIONS - An array of food and drink donations, as well as door prizes, from local businesses were freely given to those in attendance.

the 2023 Readers Choice Awards, we thank you for making this year by far the biggest and best awards yet! The anticipation and excitement which surrounded the competition can all be attributed to each of you. And to the businesses and individuals who assisted in

making last week's ceremony an unforgettable one, we cannot express enough how thankful we are for your help and to have you in our community.

The full list of winners of this year's awards can be found on page 4A of this week's edition.

REBUILD

From 1A

were assisted by Mrs. Eileen Lowery, Director of Disaster Recovery Connection with the Tennessee-Western Kentucky (TWK) United Methodist Church long term recovery team, helped direct the crew and locate the people that are in need and otherwise wouldn't be able to afford help.

While there was an array of talented and hardworking individuals within the group, aside from some certified electricians, very few had professional experience in the trades. In fact, many of them are community-education based people and are either retired or semi-retired with the average age of a member being 73-years-old. Other volunteers had years of experience in fields such as law, engineering, and IT.

The group always makes sure to bring a couple of cooks with them and buys all the food for their trip, along with paying for their own hotels while traveling.

"Everyone here has been super friendly. We enjoy the small town atmosphere, and with everything being close to each other, it makes it easy to get around from house to house," said Coordinator Renee Johnson. "The First United Methodist was gracious enough to open their doors to us and we are blessed to have them. We also have to give a big thanks to our congregation, pastor, and donors to help make all this possible. We've been really blessed by all this."

When asked what keeps them motivated to continue these missions, one volunteer replied, "each other", going on to say, "To be honest, we know there's a lot of need out there. Personally, after having been on so many trips over the years, it makes you feel good that you're going out and helping somebody that's got a lot going on in their lives. We all hear stories of disaster, but getting to meet the locals and hear their personal stories helps us see it for ourselves."

Before the group left on Saturday, a ceremony of thanks was held Friday afternoon at the home of Gretchen Turner which acted as a congratulatory send-off. Speeches of thanks were given, along with excerpts of Paul's writings to the Corinthians and the christening of hands following a thoughtful prayer. Live bluegrass music was played by a band which had previously entertained the group on their last visit. Residents of the homes the team helped to rebuild were also invited and attended the social gathering.

Thank you to the St. Philip's Disaster Relief team for traveling all the way from Minnesota yet again for your third trip to our community. Appreciation for you volunteers and the work you have done here cannot be expressed enough. Know that you are always welcome back to our little slice of Tennessee.

State Budget, Governor's 'Agenda' Passed By Tennessee Legislators

Proposal for School Resource Officer funding approved

On Friday, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee marked the close of the 2023 legislative session, which includes the successful passage of his \$56.2 billion budget and full legislative agenda as outlined during his State of the State address in February.

"To prepare Tennessee for continued growth and prosperity, we've made strategic investments to cut taxes, strengthen our workforce, ensure educational opportunity and modernize transportation infrastructure across our state," said Lee. "I commend the General Assembly for its partnership to pass conservative measures and maintain Tennessee's reputation for strong fiscal stewardship."

Lee's agenda included the landmark Transportation Modernization Act, historic legislation that will create a new transportation strategy and invest \$3.3 billion to accommodate Tennessee's record growth, address traffic congestion and meet transportation needs across rural and urban communities without raising taxes or taking on debt.

The roster of budget and legislative priorities also dedicated \$250 million to Tennessee's Rainy Day Fund, bringing totals to an historic \$2.05 billion, and included significant investments in tax relief, K-12 education, Tennessee's skilled workforce and conservation. Notably, Lee led a comprehensive school safety proposal to enhance physical security in public and non-public schools across Tennessee. Highlights from Lee's agenda include the following:

Transportation & Infrastructure Modernization

- \$3 billion to the Transportation Modernization Fund to alleviate urban congestion and fund rural road projects across the state, which includes \$750 million allocated to each of Tennessee's four TDOT regions
- \$300 million to expand the State Aid Program for local road projects, allocating 15 times more funding toward local communities than they receive each year for transportation projects
- Ensures that Tennessee

has the resources necessary to meet current and future transportation needs by engaging in Public-Private Partnerships (P3s), Alternative Delivery Models and Electric/Hybrid vehicle fee parity

Economic Opportunity & Tax Relief

- More than \$400 million in tax cuts for Tennessee families and businesses through the Tennessee Works Tax Act, one of the largest tax relief measures in Tennessee history
- \$273 million for a one-time, three-month sales tax holiday on grocery items, providing tax relief for Tennessee families
- More than \$150 million in annual small business tax relief, including raising the exemption threshold for the business tax, exempting the first \$50,000 of net income from excise tax and protecting the first \$500,000 in property investment from the franchise tax
- \$64 million to simplify tax administration and conform with the federal bonus depreciation provisions of 2017 Tax Cuts & Jobs Act, allowing businesses to more quickly recover costs and further incentivize investment in Tennessee production
- Provides foundation for supporting Tennessee's continued economic growth, aligning Tennessee with more than 30 states by adopting "single sales factor" apportionment for franchise and excise tax

Skilled Workforce

- Nearly \$1 billion to complete the TCAT Master Plan to improve 16 existing TCATs, replace seven outdated facilities and build six brand new TCATs at strategic locations across Tennessee

Enhanced School Safety Measures

- \$30 million for more than 100 Homeland Security agents across all 95 counties to serve Tennesseans and students in both public and non-public schools
- \$140 million for one full-time, armed School Resource Officer (SRO) for every public school
- \$40 million for public

Strong & Healthy Families

- \$330 million in shared savings under our first-in-the-nation TennCare Medicaid waiver will help provide for the health of mothers and infants in our most vulnerable communities, providing care at no additional burden to Tennessee taxpayers that will:
 - Cover the cost of diapers during the first two years of a baby's life for mothers on TennCare, becoming the

- school security upgrades
- \$14 million for private school security upgrades
- \$8 million for additional School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons across the state
- Enacts a multi-tiered accountability plan to ensure exterior doors are locked while students are present
- Requires that private security guards receive active shooter training prior to being posted at schools
- Requires every school district to establish threat assessment teams to ensure students are connected to support services and behavioral health professionals when appropriate
- Requires every public and private school to develop annual safety plans, including a newly required incident command drill for school leaders and law enforcement

Great Schools

- \$350 million in additional funding to local education agencies through Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA)
 - Combined with \$750 million in the base budget, new recurring state funding for the education formula totals more than \$1 billion
 - Includes \$125 million for teacher pay raises
 - Increases the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 by 2026, making Tennessee a top-10 state for teacher pay in the nation, and protects teachers and taxpayers by ensuring school districts no longer collect union dues
- Includes funding to extend summer learning camps and expand the eligibility age to Kindergarten through 9th grade

Protecting Tennessee Children

- Improves the state's foster care and adoption process to make foster care, adoption and surrender more child-centered and user-friendly by providing more supports for expecting mothers and foster/adoptive families
- \$5.7 million in supplemental 2022-23 funding to increase provider placements for children in state custody
- \$33 million to increase bed capacity in the Department of Children's Services (DCS) provider network, reducing the time children and youth spend in offices and children's homes
- \$15.9 million to align DCS case manager salary with market salary regionally and in the private sector
- Modernizes the process for storing and recording adoption records within DCS

Safe Neighborhoods

- Adds 100 Highway Patrol Troopers and related support staff and 25 Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Forensic Services staff
- \$30 million addition to the TN Law Enforcement Hiring, Training and Recruitment Program (Year 2)
- \$50 million expansion of the Violent Crime Intervention Fund

first state in the nation to support parents in this way

- Expand TennCare to underserved parents, supporting an extra 8,100 parents each year

- Establish continuous coverage for children, ensuring no lapse in coverage for children for at least a year, which will help an estimated 10,000 children remain enrolled

- Make permanent Tennessee's postpartum coverage benefit, ensuring a full year of TennCare coverage to support approximately 3,000 new mothers every year

- Adjust TennCare's income threshold for pregnant women to 250% of the federal poverty level to cover an additional 2,400 new mothers in need every year

· \$20 million for Crisis Pregnancy Provider Support Grants to support crisis pregnancy nonprofits, improving access to healthcare and information for expecting mothers

· \$10.25 million for TN Fosters Hope grant funding to elevate high quality care for children and families impacted by foster care and adoption, allowing providers to expand services to foster and adoptive families

· \$29 million to expand programming for children with complex or special needs that face challenges being placed in a traditional foster

or adoptive home by further developing the provider network and providing respite and long-term care

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Asset Management

- \$1.7 billion to address capital improvements and maintenance, including Tennessee State Parks and TCATs
- Ensures more than \$2.6 billion of recurring revenue is allocated to one-time expenditures, allowing the return of these resources for review and budgeting next fiscal year.



DRUG TAKE BACK DAY - The Humphreys County Sheriff's Office along with other members of the Humphreys County Drug Alliance, participated in National Drug Take Back Day, last week. Several citizens came out with their unused drugs and turned them in to make for a good turnout.

LOCAL NEWS/VIEWPOINTS

Special Called Meeting Held For School Board Budget Approval

canon**KING**
Writer

A special called meeting was held for the Humphreys County School Board last Thursday afternoon, April 27th, for budget approval.

The meeting was required to take place so that the budget could be presented to County Executive Mike Pogreba's office by the following Monday. All items which made up the total budget were approved together prior to the conclusion of the meeting.

Basic Education Program (BEP) funding has gone away for the upcoming fiscal year and was replaced by TISA funding.

The first item on the list was the school nutrition budget, which was funded based on estimates from this year. After that reading, Director of Humphreys County Schools Richard Rye mentioned that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic school lunch was free, and now that the schools are charging again has been "tough". He went on to say that he wishes "it would stay free" and that there have been rumors about it, but nothing is certain as of yet.

The board is also looking at a 12% increase for both certified and non-certified employees, which will help the district be competitive in its pay for county teachers. Director Rye noted that the increase would take the district from one of the least paid to one of the best paid.

Board members were then given a chance to re-

view the nutrition budget, as well as the raises for school employees.

The next item reviewed was regarding federal money, including ESSER funds. The funds do not have to be approved through the county since no county funds are involved. The rest of the federal budget was Title 1 monies. Estimates were based on this year's allocation with ESSER funding being what was left after the budget's approval. Funds included were for instructional coaches and social and emotional learning liaisons with final carry-over amounts being waited on.

That budget item was then looked over.

An extra item was presented for five capital projects which included: FEMA loan 1 & 2, the McEwen High project, McEwen play gym, and \$20M from State legislative funds for the permanent school. Building construction costs were estimated and are not the final figures. Funds from property taxes were estimated as the same as last year since the board has not been given updated figures as of the time of the meeting. Other local taxes were estimated as well.

The changes between BEP and TISA were then gone over. In total, there is a \$3,000,000 increase with TISA which allows extra funding for schools. These figures were based on TISA's March estimates.

Transport and maintenance line items were said to have been cut by 10% last year, with the board now

putting back the percentage they cut and increasing it 20% due to price inflation for parts, gas, and janitorial supplies.

Director Rye then added that they are still receiving "career ladder" money. Although funds have dwindled, it still adds extra funding.

Leap grant program 46590 estimates were based on last year's funding.

46591 School Coordinated Health was left blank being that is paid for out of TISA funding.

Line item 46790 included \$397,000 which was funded through surplus of what CTE Principal Mrs. Lori Dell estimated to have left over next year to spend. That line was said to need an increase for next year with projects probably not being done in time. Those funds are planned to be handled in amendments.

The Safe Schools - SRO grant went away, with the board still unsure right now what will happen with it. The Tennessee Department of Education and Safety have both stated that they don't want it. Director Rye stated that they would have to approach the Sheriff's Office about it.

Line item 47230 - Disaster Relief FEMA included a 95% reimbursement for FEMA loans. Funds will go back to the county, with loans expected to be operating like this at least for a few years.

The following page included a 20% increase in school costs. This included items and funding for 152

teachers total, some of those being part-time, 22 educational assistants, coaches, mowing for football and baseball fields, as well as other items.

For other salaries and wages, an increase was seen to add ISS aids and additional instructors for elementary behavior problems. \$60,000 was added for tutoring. Pay for certified substitute teachers was increased to \$100 and non-certified subs increased to \$75.

It was then noted that the State informed the board that faculty needs to be changed out of Other Contracted Services.

An increase of 20% was seen for digital subscriptions used. Textbooks have also increased drastically in pricing which requires more funding. Fee waivers are up 20% to help out each of the schools.

For the alternative school, funding for supplies were increased for things such as TI calculators and other school equipment.

Special Ed saw a 12% increase with funding included for a speech pathologist instructor and 15 educational assistants.

Student facilities also increased with a 20% increase in structure supplies and materials.

COVID expenditures have now gone away. What is left is a grant for social and emotional learning liaison with the community foundation paying for those jobs next year.

Right now a 12% increase for the nurses budget was

added. It was noted that even after the currently relocated WES and WJHS students leave, a lot of students will still be left at McEwen schools. Director Rye stated that he is working out a plan with Ms. Wallace in McEwen due to excess students, and went on to say that they would be looking to add an additional nurse in next year's budget. BEP funding only pays for one nurse countywide, which leaves the rest of the nurses to be funded through county expenditures. Right now their pay is at \$17.23/hourly for first year nurses, with pay increasing by the year. Nurses weren't originally on salary schedules and normally see their salary rise by seven cents per year. It was then stated that something might need to be done to retain good nurses and that an adjustment for pay may have to be adjusted for next year.

Travel saw a 20% increase, as well as Other Supplies and Materials. An increase in salary was added for the school health supervisor with \$7,000 added for supplies needed.

The current budget for SROs is \$170,000 which could all change based on safety money. The total is what the schools have been paying for three officers. It was noted that funding for additional officers may have to be done through the amendments or by working out a deal with the Sheriff.

For evaluated testing, the PRE-ACT test was added to help students be better prepared for college testing.

Curriculum supervisors, librarians, library books, and media were also increased.

\$2,000 was added for professional development to each school.

Education technology increased 10% for other salaries and wages. The funding includes all consultants and cost for the internet. Funds were moved around based on what Mrs. Michelle Dickerson highlighted as priority. It was noted that costs for internet connectivity have increased drastically.

Board members will be receiving \$50/month more than their current pay.

Audit services and legal fees have also increased.

It was noted also that the superintendent supplement was going away.

A 20% cut was made on communications, postage, and due membership last year, which is now being added back.

A cut was made on Other Salaries and Wages to let go of a FEMA contract consultant since Director Rye and the board handle all of FEMA's contracts personally.

Funding totals for insurance was based on an estimate by Andy Porch.

A cut of 20% had been made on maintenance repair services last year which is now being added back. Additional funding and cuts were presented and gone over.

Following each of the readings, the board took a vote and unanimously approved the budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Unleashing Potential: Law Of Empowerment And The Art Of Leadership

daniel**RICHARDSON**
CEO, Magic Valley
Publishing


This week, we continue our journey through John Maxwell's "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership," focusing on the Law of Empowerment. As a former US Marine and current business leader, I've seen firsthand the transformative impact of empowering others to achieve their full potential. Let's explore how the Law of Empowerment shapes effective leadership and drives team

success. The Law of Empowerment emphasizes the importance of leaders entrusting their team members with the autonomy, responsibility, and authority necessary for personal growth and collective success. According to Maxwell, secure leaders empower others, recognizing that their own success is directly tied to the growth and achievements of those they lead. By nurturing an environment of empowerment, leaders can inspire innovation, creativity, and extraordinary per-

formance. Here are three key strategies for fostering empowerment within your team: **Develop trust and confidence:** Empowerment begins with trust. Leaders must have faith in their team members' abilities and demonstrate this confidence by delegating responsibility and providing opportunities for growth. As your team members feel trusted and valued, they are more likely to take initiative, embrace challenges, and develop their skills. **Provide resources and**

support: To truly empower your team, you must equip them with the tools, resources, and support they need to excel. This includes providing ongoing training, mentorship, and access to relevant information. A well-supported team is better positioned to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. **Encourage risk-taking and celebrate success:** An empowering leader promotes a culture of experimentation and innovation, where team members feel safe to take risks and

learn from failures. By celebrating successes and acknowledging the effort behind them, you reinforce a sense of accomplishment and foster a desire to strive for excellence. The Law of Empowerment is a critical component of effective leadership. By trusting, supporting, and empowering your team, you unleash their full potential and pave the way for collective success. I encourage you to reflect on the role empowerment plays in your own leadership journey and to explore



ways you can cultivate this transformative principle within your team. Join me next week as we delve deeper into John Maxwell's "21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership" and discover more invaluable insights that can help shape your leadership style and drive success.

TDEC Announces \$232M In Water Infrastructure Investments

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) today announced 102 grants totaling \$232,709,981 from the state's American Rescue Plan (ARP) fund, part of which TDEC is administering in the form of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure grants. Since August, TDEC has awarded and announced \$634,404,544 in grant funds through ARP programming. Of the 102 grants announced today, 17 are collaborative grants and 85 are non-collaborative grants. Collaborative grants involve multiple entities (cities, counties, or water utilities) partnering on projects to work toward a shared purpose. The awards announced today include funding for 132 individual drinking water, wastewater, and/or stormwater infrastructure projects. Tennessee received \$3.725

billion from the ARP, and the state's Financial Stimulus Accountability Group dedicated \$1.35 billion of those funds to TDEC to support water projects in communities throughout Tennessee. Of the \$1.35 billion, approximately \$1 billion was designated for non-competitive formula-based grants offered to counties and eligible cities to address critical systems needs. Those include developing Asset Management Plans, addressing significant non-compliance, updating aging infrastructure, mitigating water loss for drinking water systems, and reducing inflow and infiltration for wastewater systems. The grants announced today are part of the \$1 billion non-competitive grant program. The remaining funds (\$269 million) will go to state-initiated projects and competitive grants. "These grants will ad-

dress important water infrastructure needs for local communities across Tennessee," Gov. Bill Lee said. "We look forward to the improvements these projects will bring, and we commend the communities who have gone through the application process." "More than ever, infrastructure is critically important to our local communities," said Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge. "This money will allow cities and towns to address deficiencies and make improvements that will pay dividends not just in the present but in the years to come as well. I greatly appreciate the work of the governor and my colleagues on the Fiscal Accountability Group for their work in making sure these funds were spent appropriately and efficiently." "We continue experiencing considerable growth across the state, and many of our

communities require additional resources to address their evolving needs," said Speaker of the House Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville. "These grants will play a major role in ensuring cities and towns have access to infrastructure solutions that will enable them to continue thriving so Tennessee remains a preferred destination for both businesses and families." "We are grateful to the local applicants, and we anticipate excellent results from these grants," said TDEC Commissioner David Salyers. "This shows that Tennessee recognizes the need for improved water infrastructure, and we are grateful for the leadership of Governor Lee and the General Assembly in seeing that communities get this assistance." Local grants have been awarded to: City of Waverly - \$1,325,000

The City of Waverly, in collaboration with Humphreys County, will use ARP funds to address water loss and replace the existing water tank in the County. The project includes the replacement of the aging tank with a 325,000-gallon steel ground storage tank. City of McEwen - \$1,273,527 The City of McEwen will use ARP funds to address critical needs, including developing an Asset Management Plan. McEwen will address excessive inflow and infiltration through the rehabilitation of their sewer system including manhole repair and pipelines rehabilitation and replacement. TDEC focuses these grants on the following goals: - Protect and promote human health and safety and improve the quality of water by supporting water systems in non-compliance to work toward compliance with water quality require-

ments; - Improve the technical, managerial, and financial capabilities of small, disadvantaged, or underserved water infrastructure systems; and - Address critical water infrastructure needs across the state. Cities and counties throughout the state were eligible to apply for these grants. Details of previous grant announcements at the State's website: tn.gov, and additional grant announcements are expected. TDEC's strategy for deployment of ARP funds is described in the Water Infrastructure Investment Plan. This plan was developed by TDEC based on input from leaders and experts from agencies internal and external to the state government. All funds from the ARP must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024 and expended by Dec. 31, 2026.

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DANIEL RICHARDSON
Publisher

LAURIE DANIEL
General Manager, Circulation,
Editorial & Production Manager

CANON KING
Editorial & Production
Assistant

NEA LYNN
Advertising & Sales

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