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Alumni giving increases: best in five years
By Anna Lawson
news@WKUHerald.com

As of December, WKU is receiving the majority of its donations or "major gifts" from alumni. The $4.7 million raised from former students made up around 45 percent of total gifts from July to December of 2014. John Paul Blair, associate vice president of Advancement, said that this year is shaping up very well, and the first six months of this fiscal year, which is from July until June, is the highest level they have achieved in five years.

"It is over $10 million at this point," he said. "It is standard for alumni to be the largest support group for universities. They are the ones who have the most motivation to invest back because of the amount of success it has provided them."

Blair said they have also seen $8 million in new pledges, which is the best start in seven years. They also have 73 new pledges, which is the highest over the last ten years.

Blair said he is very grateful for the alumni and friends who are taking part in the growth of WKU.

"I always hope the university continues to be grateful to the alumni and friends who are investing in the future of our students by making gifts to WKU," he said. "I express appreciation for that because they are the real heroes, those who give sacrificially to support."

Blair said they have over 100,000 alumni that maintain close communication with. Blair deals specifically with "major gifts," gifts higher than $10,000.

Anything smaller is considered a "gift," he said. This fiscal year they have $6.5 million in major gifts which is from July until June, is the highest in five years, and is also a $4.7 million in endowments.

SEE ALUMNI PAGE A2

Campus pride surrounds LGBT community
By Andrew Henderson
news@WKUHerald.com

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, couples throughout campus — both straight and LGBT — will celebrate romance, chocolate and love with each other.

For Dalani Rainwater and her girlfriend Tri Sanders, they'll commemorate the day with a movie. The pair have been dating since May 2012 and live together in Bernis Lawrence Hall. They both work together at Best Buy, Bowling Green Parks and Recreation and the National Guard.

The couple celebrated consecutive birthdays with one another — Nov. 1 and Nov. 2 — and they were born in the same hospital.

"We're just like two best friends, basically," Rainwater said. Rainwater said she and Sanders went to rival high schools.

SEE LOVE PAGE A2

The WKU Foundation bought the property adjacent to the Audreybin Alumni Center by the parking garage. Kathryn Costello, vice president for Development and Alumni Relations, said the Foundation had the best means of developing the space and that it has a business model that ensures longevity. Rick Diullo, executive director of the WKU Alumni Association, said WKU initially intended for tenants to move into the property, but decided the WKU Foundation would provide more financial stability through complete ownership.

"The university decided it was more effective under the control of a private entity that has resources," he said.

Costello said the downtown development committee intended to complete Block 12, where the land is located, through a 30-year payment plan, but the WKU Foundation financed it faster. She said the WKU Foundation pays a lease and will completely own the space in six years.

Costello said the development authority will reimburse the WKU Foundation for supplying the funds. She said the board will then make a decision whether the Alumni Association or the WKU Foundation will control the property.

The land purchase would help accomplish the WKU Foundation's goals of "promoting the well-being and future development of Western Kentucky University's educational goals by managing assets and maintaining donor records for the benefit of Western Kentucky University."

"There's no conflict," Costello said. "It will just be what makes the most sense."
Alumni Association helps WKU's endowment exceed $140 million

The College Heights Herald

By Molly Kerby

For years the WKU Alumni Association has helped the university exceed its goals in attracting endowment dollars; now the Alumni Association is helping WKU break another barrier.

The Alumni Association's efforts have helped the university meet its goal of raising a 137 percent increase in the University's endowment since 2004.
Students look to address homing issues in BG

BY ANDREW HENDERSON

When Sipping through the channels of television, one often passes through the news outlets and sees glimpses of conflict. Bowling Green could include billions of people of color, heterosexual versus homosexual, and religions such as Muslims. Sometimes it can be difficult to see any sort of peaceful discussion can occur between different groups, but that doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be tried. Sabina Ross, coordinator for Demi Lawrence Hall, is trying to start these types of discussion and bring different groups together. The program will span six weeks and meet two hours each week. Ross said what those differences mean.

“I am heading Voices of Discovery: Intergroup Dialogue Program to combat homelessness and start a conversation on how homeownership will help students achieve their ideal community unites in the face of tragedy.”

BY ABBY PONDER

In times of tragedy, people have a way of rallying together to support one another. On Feb. 17, the home of a well-known Bowling Green family caught fire, and a community sprang into action to help the family.

The residents of the home, Steve and Jane Tichenor, were out of town the night of the fire. Jane Tichenor, along with their children, are Bowling Green residents who have served the community for years.

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During this time four years ago, I was preparing to graduate high school. I was packing for the move to Bowling Green and I was still pretty certain I was going to be decently straight.

The state of Kentucky still has a long road ahead. Legally, cultural, social consciousness and acceptance is imperative if this state wants to succeed. Bowling Green has the potential to join the major cities in this state and lead the charge. Thanks to programs spurred and supported by members of our university, we are on our way.

So, with Valentine’s Day coming up, I anticipate the predictable onslaught of commercialism mixed in with the usual amount of love. The Hill is lucky enough to have couples of all types. I’m lucky enough to be one of them.

This is not to say that you will never see me strolling under the kissing bridge while the sun sets on Valentine’s Day. My boyfriend and I aren’t the romantic type and we definitely aren’t fans of excessive public displays of affection. In all honesty, we may just sit on our couch and watch “Dance Moms” on Netflix. We may take our dog on a walk through campus and we may stop at the steps of Van Meter to admire the trampoline to jump into bed. Honestly, whether we are straight or gay, I could care less about the label size. I can’t begin to estimate when I was asked, those feelings didn’t show.

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null
Mount Juliet, Tennessee freshman Miriam Gaines, left, Lexington junior Jamie Harvener, middle, and Bowling Green sophomore Hannah Scott, right, rehearse for The Dance Project on Monday, Feb. 9 at Gordon Wilson Hall. The Dance Project will be Feb. 13-15 at Gordon Wilson Hall and will feature several dances.
When most WKU students see Skipper, Bob’s name, it’s usually in an email informing them about whether or not they have classes, when nasty weather threatens Bowling Green. However, the director of Media Relations Bob Skipper looks upon the Colonnades on Wednesday. Skipper is the WKU Director of Media Relations Bob Skipper looks to the girl’s progress. They believe in what we believe in because his dad was one in Jefferson County, outside of Louisville. "It’s more than fighting fire or working car wrecks,” he said.

Skipper has made many memories in his time at the Woodburn Volunteer Fire Department. Before he became chief, Skipper recalled a time where he and the previous chief were called to a trailer fire during a very violent blizzard. “There were times we couldn’t see the road,” he said.

When Skipper arrived, the trailer was completely destroyed. An infant had died inside the trailer. A man and woman suffered severe burns and both ended up dying later in the hospital. However, the couple’s female child survived. A year later, family members of the surviving child sent Skipper cards and updated the department on the girl’s progress.

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“Thanked me for being in Bowling Green, Dale Augenstein said. “When the Mariah’s facility became known in Bowling Green, Dale Augenstein said, ‘That had a big impact on me — just to see that someone took the trouble to let us know, ‘hey, you all made a difference,” he said.

David Oliver, director of Environmental Health and Safety, works with Skipper as a captain at the volunteer fire department. Two weeks ago, 25 people, Oliver said the group is diverse and that everyone contributes in some way. “There’s something for everybody to do,” he said. “There’s a position for people to play.”

Tanner Knutson, 17, a junior at South Warren High School, is a junior firefighter at the WVFD who joined last year. Knutson said he feels the age gap between him and the rest of the volunteers is “wider,” but takes the opportunity as a learning experience.

"I thought, if I'm going to be in Bowling Green, I might as well start a business,” Augenstein said.

While Augenstein started the first Steamer Seafood in Hilton Head, South Carolina in the early '90s, the opening of the Bowling Green restaurant won’t be the first time that Augenstein’s brand of seafood has been served in town. For the past three years, Augenstein has seen set itself apart. Where many chocolate confectioners choose a machine-dipping process, Cocomo opts for the more traditional hand-dipping method. This might take longer, but it results in richer chocolate shells and consequently, more flavorful desserts.

Cocomo also offers an array of traditional deli-sandwiches. Though, there is little to set it apart from what you could find at any other sandwich shop.

Cocomo is a bakery that features deli sandwiches including ‘The Godfather.’ The sandwich is loaded with beef, grilled mushrooms, onions and peppers, and is drizzled in a provolone, cheddar, horseradish sauce known as white spice. Cocomo also offers an array of traditional deli-sandwiches. Though, there is little to set it apart from what you could find at any other sandwich shop.

Of course, sandwiches aren’t the reason why people come here. It is what sits at the counter: the chocolate. In this respect, Cocomo does set itself apart. Where many chocolate confectioners choose a machine-dipping process, Cocomo opts for the more traditional hand-dipping method. This might take longer, but it results in richer chocolate shells and makes each candy unique.

Media Relations director also volunteers as a firefighter

BY TREY CRUMBIE

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"If you're needed at home, if you can't leave work without causing unnecessary risks that could jeopardize lives..."

"...that without a doubt, was the longest night of my life."
Nationally-ranked opponents await WKU softball in Florida

BY ALEXUS RICHARDSON
SPORTS@WKUHERALD.COM

After a successful weekend in Troy, Alabama that saw center pitcher Miranda Kramer throwing the program’s eighth no-hitter in history, the WKU softball team will now travel to Tallahassee, Florida, for the ACC Championships Invitational, where they will open up competition against nationally-ranked Michigan (No. 8) and host school Florida State (No. 7).

The Lady Toppers were able to close the Alabama State game with a score of 9-0 in the final day of the weekend. With 19 strikeouts, a no hitter, 12 hits against Troy and 15 hits against Alabama State, the Lady Toppers have set the tone early for the upcoming season.

"There was a lot of nerves with it being our first day out there," Kramer said. "We have a lot of underclassmen, and right now, we’re just trying to understand each other and trust our instincts.”

Kramer, a senior transfer from Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne in her first year as a Hilltopper has already brought in national attention.

On Tuesday, Kramer was announced as the Louisville Slugger NFCA National Pitcher of the Week, as well as the ESPNW National Player of the Week. She also earned Conference USA Co-Pitcher of the Week on Monday for her performance in the ACC Championships Invitational.

Kramer tallied 36 strikeouts with just four hits and three walks in 18 innings of play over the weekend. Her 19 strikeouts against Troy set the school record for individual team strikeouts in a game, while ranking most in C-USA history.

Fellow senior Larissa Franklin and Shavanna Sadler also had successful weekends. Franklin went three for four with two runs scored and Sadler had three RBIs.

Senior Prestie Crucu put up the first home run of the season and fellow senior Desti Pugh had two grand slams and a home run as well.

The team is hoping to build off of last week’s performance with focuses on base running, pitching and defense.

“Our focus has to be there because our competition is in the cream of the crop,” Head Coach Amy Taylor said after this weekend’s tournament. “Those teams are very good and I’m expecting it to be fast.”

WKU Softball will conclude its season on Saturday, Feb. 19 in Nebraska at 11 a.m. CT and Georgia Tech at 1 p.m. CT.

MEN’S BASKETBALL

While five of the last seven games are at home, the Hilltoppers must get through a tough stretch in Birmingham, Alabama that saw seven seniors go through their final day on the court.

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The Hilltoppers have brought in nationally-ranked opponents UAB (13-11, 9-2 in C-USA) and Middle Tennessee State (MTSU) on Feb. 21. With contests against UAB on Feb. 19 and MTSU on Feb. 21.

The C-USA preseason coaches’ poll has WKU coming in at No. 7 in the league’s 12-team league, as rival Middle Tennessee State was tabbed as the preseason conference champion.

"It’s hard not to look into preseason rankings when you’re not a top-five team," Kramer said. "But we feel like this team is built for a No. 7 team in the league."

The Lady Toppers have previously defeated UAB (13-11, 9-2 in C-USA) and Middle Tennessee State (13-11, 6-5 in C-USA).

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

SUN BELT REPORTS

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Lady Toppers set to defend Diddle this weekend
BY JONAH PHILLIPS

Comming off its 20th win of the season, the WKU women's basketball team looks to establish themselves as the top team in the Conference USA—something they did during their inaugural campaign last season.

WKU's 20th win of the season was reached in the second fastest amount of time in program history prior calendar date on Feb. 7. The only team to do it faster was the 1985-86 team that reached 20 wins by Feb. 4 and would go on to reach the final four of the NCAA tournament.

The Lady Toppers, unlike their male counterparts, will play five of their last seven games in Diddle Arena, where the team has gone nearly unblemished this season at 9-1.

They will welcome Marshall University into Diddle Arena on Saturday—a team they defeated 67-53 on Jan. 3.

"What we are really trying to do is fo- cus on the areas that we struggled on last time we played (Marshall)," Head Coach Michelle Clark-Heard said.

"We have to go back and address those issues. Another thing is they didn't shoot the ball as well as they normally do. They have two girls that can really shoot the three—and from deep.

"Against Rice, the Lady Toppers faced a balance in their offensive attack, beginning five players with double-digit points. Junior Charity Clark and Asia Green led the pack with 19 points each. Green was on the verge of a triple-double performance—add- ing 17 rebounds and seven assists.

The Lady Toppers will look to main- tain the pressure defense they used against Rice back from 13-down against Rice, and carry it through to their Valen- tine's Day clash with Marshall.

"The biggest thing we have been emphasizing as a staff is that we went into Rice to make sure we focus on defense first, bring the team in the conference—and out- we have to do that, we have to make sure we bring things on a consistent basis. In order to be good, you have to be able to perform every time you play," Clark-Heard said.

The Thundering Herd enters Satu- reday's game with an 11-9 conference record, while WKU enters with a 16-7 record.

"If we can do that, we have to make sure the team get's back at the front of the pack, in the conference," Clark-Heard said.

"Hopefully we can continue to win." The teams Harper is referring to in- clude the Hilltoppers, Louisville, Texas Tech, GW and Old Dominion from the top four, Old Dominion remain within striking distance at 8-3 and 7-3, respectively.

WKU has boasted a 2-1 record against the other teams in the top four of the conference. A road showdown

SEE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PAGE B3

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Hilltoppers hit the road with C-USA title in sight
BY BILLY RUTLEDGE

While March is traditionally know as a college basketball month by sports fans, it is February that pits conference foes against one another, battling for conference and national positioning.

In this final month of conference play, the Hilltoppers sit at 16-7 overall and 9-2 in the Conference USA, find- ing themselves in a three-way tie for first place in the league. They will have to find ways to win on the road, travel- ing away from Diddle Arena for five of the team's final seven games.

"So going to be interesting," Head Coach Ray Harper said, Monday on his weekly radio show. "You've got three teams tied with two losses, and then you have two teams right behind those three with three losses. You've got five teams right there bunched together, and four teams are going to get a bye, going into the conference tournament.

The Hilltoppers begin their road swing this weekend, starting with the Marshall Thundering Herd on Saturday. Check WKUHerald.com for a game preview.

SEE MEN'S BASKETBALL PAGE B3

BASEBALL

WKU baseball set to exceed expectations in inaugural C-USA season
BY JOHN REECER

Coming off a 28-28 season in its final Sun Belt Conference campaign, the WKU baseball team heads into its 2015 campaign fo- cused on the new challenges the Conference USA will offer. The Hilltoppers' schedule includes seven teams that went to the NCAA tournament last year, and a nonconference schedule in which every op- ponent won at least 23 games last season. The nonconference schedule consists of storied successful programs such as Maryland, Vanderbilt, Louisi- ville, Mississippi State, Ken- tucky, Ohio State and Coastal Carolina.

"We have to go find the bul- lets and take care of them," Head Coach Matt Myers said. "You don't get rattled these days for playing a soft sched- ule. The good thing about a hard schedule is that your mind doesn't wander and you have to focus on every game every day." As WKU wades through the uncharted waters of a new conference, its confer- ence schedule includes seven teams that were at least 30 games last year—including Rice University which is ranked in Collegiate Baseball's Top 40 NCAA Division I pre- season poll as No. 22.

Coach Myers will rely on his six returning hitters from last season to spark the offense this season. The six returning hitters were part of a WKU of- fense that ranked among the nation’s regular-season off- ensive leaders in hits (18th), doubles (7th) and slugging percentage (26th).

"It's going to be a really good..."