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KEN WALKER | P-1

Aurora Rives is 2022 Fairest of the Fair

Aurora Nicole Rives (center) was named Fairest of the Fair for the 2022 Henry County Fair Saturday night at the fairgrounds. She is the 17-year-old daughter of Vanessa Rives of Paris. She is a freshman at Murray State University. Rives participated along with other girls between the ages of 16 and 18. She and

her court will represent the fair at various events in the next few weeks and during Fair Week Aug. 20-27. Pictured are (from left) Whitley Madison Forrest, 16, daughter of Will and Tonya Forrest of Puryear, fourth maid; Kennon Rebecca Wilson, 16, daughter of Traci and Jason Wilson of Paris, second maid;

Rives; Emma Lynn Brewer, 18, daughter of Joe and Christina Brewer of Puryear, first maid and Miss Photogenic; and Bryleigh Cate Hayes, 17, daughter of Chuck and Cheri Hayes of Paris, third maid. For more photos from Saturday's pageants, see Page 7.



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DANIEL WILLIAMS | P-1

Shayna Miles (left) of The Levi Miles Foundation speaks to a crowd about the newly revealed art project behind her Friday afternoon at Eiffel Tower Park. Her husband,

David Miles, addressed the crowd briefly later and Paris-Henry County Chamber of Commerce President Justin Oliver (right) had already introduced the couple.

Art camp project is nod to diversity

BY DANIEL WILLIAMS
POST-INTELLIGENCER

Building on an already growing legacy of community enrichment, The Levi Miles Foundation revealed its latest contribution to the community Friday afternoon — a painting decorating a small building near the pickleball courts at Eiffel Tower Park.

A monument to diversity in both its design and how it was created, the project was painted with no instructions given by about 70 kids and additional volunteers.

"Diversity is a strength and we can see that in this piece," said Shayna Miles of The Levi Miles Foundation.

Diversity isn't a new concept to organization, which prides itself on making sure its camps are inclusive, even down to the snacks it offers. Miles said

the foundation offers cotton candy, which melts in your mouth and can even be eaten by kids with feeding tubes, for instance.

The painting revealed Friday began as an art project at the foundation's spring art camp. The Levi Miles Foundation hosts quarterly themed inclusive camps, and the spring camp was a partnership between the foundation and Jack Jones Flowers and Gifts with the florist hosting about 70 children.

Miles said the shop didn't use the second floor to make sure children in wheelchairs could participate. "There was one table that ran from the front door all the way back so they could all sit at the same table."

Miles designed the image for the art project on her computer and sent it to Zeb Young

at Abbott's Print Shop. He created a canvas of sorts with the design printed on it. All that was left was for children to do what they do best — be creative. And creative they were. They were supplied paint, but no instructions, so they painted what they wanted, and whatever color they chose was the right color to use. Even the volunteers got in on the act after being encouraged to leave their mark on the art project.

The finished product was framed and encased to be protected from the elements by Craig Brown of Brown Sign Co.

A few of the kids who were at the art camp attended the event Friday, including Evie Kate Darnell, Karis Stutzman and Elsie Lee, who were members of Levi Miles' daycare class at Rhea Elementary School.

Karen Wilson has kept school children fed for nearly 40 years

BY KEN WALKER
POST-INTELLIGENCER

After 36 years of making sure thousands of schoolchildren have gotten fresh, nutritious meals, Karen Wilson has made a pledge about what she plans to do in her upcoming retirement.

"I have already told my husband (David) that I am not going to be cooking three meals a day," she laughed.

Combined with her promise to herself that she's not going to be getting up at 5:20 in the morning anymore, either, Wilson is wide open about her future once she steps aside as food services director for the Henry County School System at the end of this month.

The Cottage Grove native has actually worked for the school system since 1983 — 39 years in all. She was employed in the Title I department, doing a lot of detailed paperwork, when William Atchison, then the system's assistant superintendent, began getting her help on food bids and in meeting with food sales personnel.

Atchison was planning a run for superintendent in 1986. When he won the post — which was elected by the

public at that time, though now it's an appointed position — he made Wilson the food services director, the first and only person who has had that title with the county schools.

At that time, the system included Henry County High School; Grove School, which was used as a middle school then; and the rural middle schools in Henry, Springville, Buchanan, Puryear and Cottage Grove.

Wilson works directly with the cafeteria managers at all five county schools now — HCHS, Grove, Henry, Lakewood and Harrelson.

"We've had excellent cafeteria managers and cafeteria workers over the years. They're really not appreciated as much as they should be," she said. "I've always wanted the cafeteria workers to be connected to the students, to have good relationships with them, and I think they mostly have."

One of the most stressful times during her tenure came recently, during the COVID pandemic.

"Boy, that was a major undertaking. But the staff pulled it off really well. It was a nervous time for all of us," Wilson said.

The school system continued to provide meals to the students even when there was no in-person learning going on because of COVID.

One thing that has changed through the years, Wilson said, is that it's harder for school systems to get food now. That's mainly because of well-publicized supply chain issues and rising costs because of inflation.

The county schools work closely with US Foods, which is located in Paris.

"It's good to have a company right here to work with," she said.

Other providers include SmartMouth Pizza, which provides the top-it-yourself individual pizzas served at HCHS and Grove.

Keeping up with individual students' needs has been a part of Wilson's job, too. Students who have food allergies, for example, are noted with school nurses and with the food services department and kept in the computer system so that student isn't given the incorrect food.

The cafeteria managers actually devise the menus at each school, and Wilson gives final approval to them.

MORE HEALTH CONSCIOUS

Wilson said one obvious change in her department through the years has been how people are more health-conscious about their meals now.

"We have a salad bar line at all the elementary schools. We have different milks and, at the high school, we even offered cold coffee that used milk so we could get students' consumption of milk up a bit," she said. "We only let them have a small amount of coffee, though."

Wilson and her husband have a son, Jason, and a daughter, Casey, and five grandchildren.

"I'm really planning just to chill for a few days once I'm retired," she said.

She is actually staying on the job until Aug. 31. She'll be working with Tiffany Latta, who has already been chosen as her replacement. Latta will be moving over from the human resources department.

"This has not seemed like a job to me," Wilson said. "I'm going to miss it. But when August 31 comes, I'll be able to say I've done the best I could for the students in Henry County."



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Karen Wilson (left) helps Ashley Gaut, a cafeteria worker at Henry School, prepare coffee servings Tuesday in the Henry County High School kitchen. The county school system's food service workers were getting things ready for the Henry County School System's kickoff breakfast for all teachers and administrators, which was Wednesday morning. Wilson is retiring as the county schools' food services director on Aug. 31 after 39 years working with the system.

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