



Friday, December 16, 2022

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Young Lila Grace Smith rides a horse with the assistance of two volunteers during a recent Rodeo Camp organized by The Levi Miles Foundation. Children from ages 2 to 18 participated in the camp in Murray. For more photos from the camp, see Page 12.

FROM SHAYNA MILES

# Inclusion put into action at kids Rodeo Camp

The Levi Miles Foundation held a kids Rodeo Camp on Saturday at the Murray State Exposition Center in Murray, with children of various ages from 2-18 participating in the inclusive event.

In just more than a week, the entire camp was sold out. Activities included stick horse barrel racing, painting a horse, riding horses and/or ponies, learning how to rope and riding a mechanical bull. All the children and volunteers had a smile on their face, according to

Shayna Miles, president of the foundation.

Volunteers were not just local ones from Henry County, but were from Carroll, Weakley, Obion, Lake and Calloway counties, as the foundation seeks diverse volunteers as well as diverse participants.

Children were all provided opportunities that were made accessible by a Foundation that provides consistent seasonal camps.

"The kids and adults had a ball. I saw calmness in children on horses that I

had never seen before. Being a part of this wonderful program is a true blessing. I am thankful for the opportunity to help," said volunteer Amy Rose.

Shayna Miles and her husband, David Miles, the vice president/treasurer, reported that a handful of the children have been to every single camp in the year 2022. They explained that this consistency resembles the services they offer through their Foundation. This camp was the last kids camp of 2022 and the Mileses have

already started planning for the seasonal kids camps in 2023. They will release that information in the new year and the best way to stay up to date with that information is by following the Foundation's Facebook and Instagram accounts.

The Foundation also has its own website which provides information about its recent activities and future events. By visiting the website, users can sign up for their monthly newsletters.

The excitement and joy that surrounded the Rodeo Camp

created an environment where love was felt by all, said Shayna Miles.

"This is a camp that our Levi would have thoroughly enjoyed. So, we keep that in mind when planning kids camps with every aspect from the moment kids walk into the door to when they leave. The positive feedback that we have received is phenomenal and brings tears to my eyes. Levi would be so proud of an event like this," she said.

David Miles added that "not only did the campers have a great time but the lives and

mindsets of the volunteers were changed as well. Several volunteers told me that this was the highlight of their week and that they can't wait to volunteer at the next camp."

The couple said they were thankful for the expertise that was present at the camp and the learning that occurred from expert ropers, bull riders, bull fighters, barrel racers, horse trainers, etc. The time and planning that goes into events like this is a challenge, but one that The Levi Miles Foundation is not afraid to take on, they said.



Angela Binkley (right), a first-grade teacher at Rhea Elementary School, is congratulated Wednesday on the school's first-grade classes receiving a total of \$5,000 as the megagrant recipients this year from the Plus Endowment organization. Plus Endowment representatives are (from left) Kim Foster, Heather Stone and Stacy Hayes.

## First-graders get \$5,000 Plus grant

A greenhouse is in the future for Rhea Elementary School.

The local Plus organization, formerly known as Plus Endowment, presented \$5,000

Wednesday to the school's first-grade class collectively.

As the excited group of first-grade students heard the announcement in the school's lobby, Plus representative Stacy Hayes said Angela Binkley, one of the first-grade teachers at Rhea, had actually prepared the application, but the entire first grade will benefit.

Binkley said the money is going to go toward having a greenhouse for the first-graders at the school.

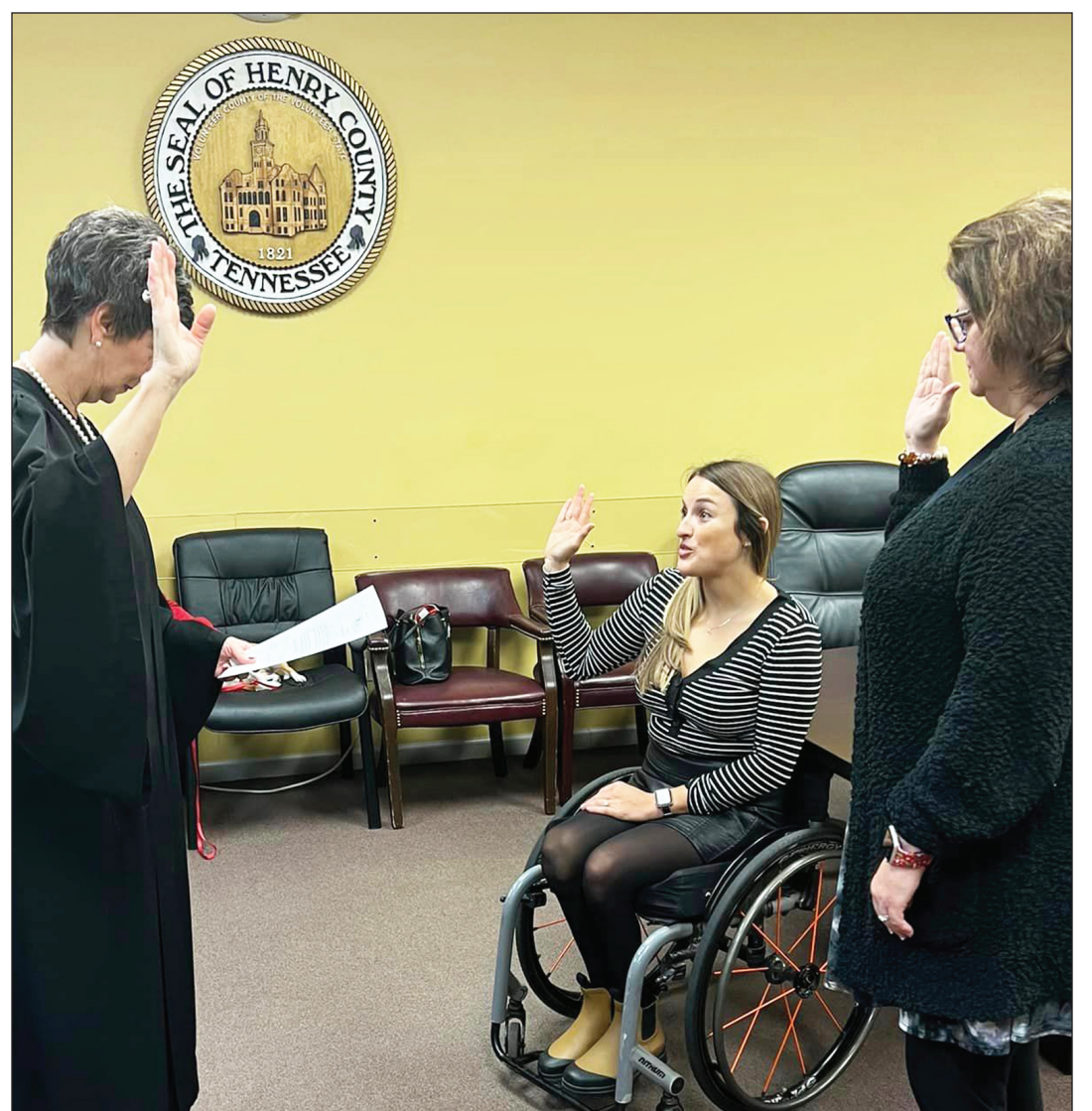
The \$5,000 grant is officially a mega-grant, which the organization has picked winners for the last few years. The mega-grant winner was not announced during the presentation ceremony for other Plus awards in late October, but Wednesday's event by

three Plus officials — Hayes, Heather Stone and Kim Foster — was planned as a surprise for the recipients.

"You might want to think about making it a surprise presentation every year," said Rhea Principal Chris Hudgins, referring to the excitement level among the students and teachers Wednesday.

The Plus Endowment organization was created about 30 years ago by former Henry County Schools Supt. William Atchison. It has always been designed as a way of providing funding for teachers who have creative ideas for projects with their classes.

In addition to the mega-grant, Plus awarded more than 80 other grants this year for a total of almost \$55,000.



## CASA has two new advocates

Henry County Juvenile Judge Vicki Snyder (left) swears in Robin Walker (center) as a new advocate with the Henry County CASA program, as Missy Hamilton (right) waits to be sworn in. CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. The county began its CASA program in 2019. Since then, the county has served nearly 50 children. The advocates work toward adoption

for some children, reunification with their families, or to establish legal guardianship. The program has between 15-20 of these volunteer advocates who work with children, mostly those who have been victims of abuse and/or neglect. The cases often involve determination of where the child will be placed. For more information on the program, call 731-363-7940.

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