

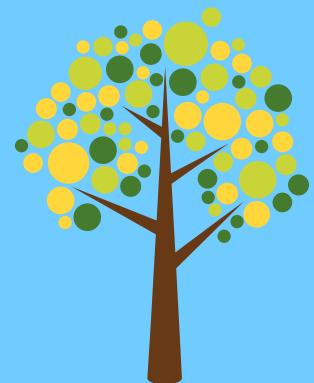
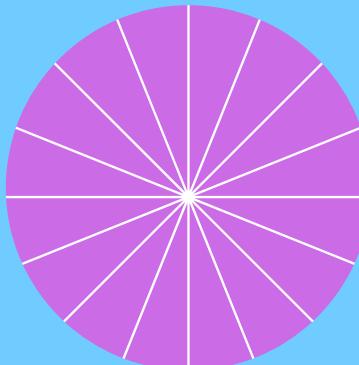
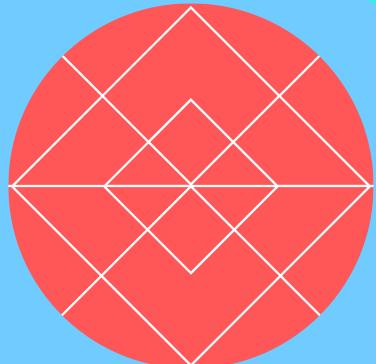
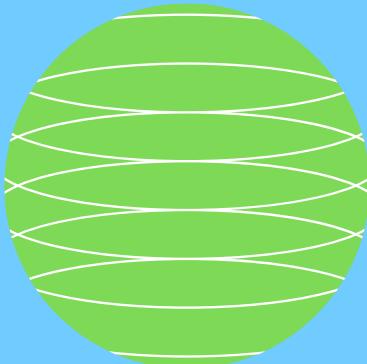
2025

VOLUME 1

ENGAGE

A COMMUNITY ZINE

Engagement at Middle Tennessee State University



Edited by

Chelsea Barranger Vasquez and A. Miller
MT Open Press

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adapted from Canva and public domain

DOI: 10.56638/mtopb00525

Contract Office
Creative and Visual Services
Office of the University Counsel

<https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/mtop>



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



This book centers on a theme of engagement that encourages explorations of our connections to the histories, landscapes, and people on campus and in our wider communities.

For the last century, zines have been a key form of self-expression. This unique literary format provides the opportunity to combine words, materials, and images in one place to convey complex ideas and feelings. The intertwining between the format and expression in zines gives way to a display of engagement that perfectly captures the connections within Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and makes the format perfect for a publication co-sponsored by Engage and the MTSU Walker Library.

The compilation of zines in this book centers on a theme of engagement that encourages explorations of our connections to the histories, landscapes, and people on campus and in our wider communities. Written by employees and students, the book captures various perspectives of engagement across the MTSU community. The contributing

authors explore micro engagement themes of healthy living tips, engagement in the classroom, engagement in the community, thoughts on how to be successful, local histories, engagement through service or volunteer work, and engagement with favorite spots on campus. Each author has done so in a unique way.

As you explore these zines, you will see authors drawing on their personal experiences on and off campus, and through fictional stories and artistic expressions—all through the lens of engagement. Each work is accompanied by a short explanation written by the author, providing a closer view into the meaning of their zine. The compilation is organized into six sections by the micro-engagement themes and prompts. By doing so, we hope to showcase the complexity behind a theme, where, at first glance, it seems simple; one author looking to

healthy living tips may engage in that theme in a completely different way than another author, and both viewpoints ring true. We hope that this compilation—a community zine—sparks your own exploration of engagement, and we encourage you to share the zine, and to reflect on the connections between the histories, landscapes, and people on campus and in our wider communities—just a few ways to engage with those around you.

Thank you to our authors for your submissions. This book would not be possible without your engagement in this project. And thank you to our readers for engaging with this book. We hope that you enjoy it as much as we did.

Chelsea Barranger Vasquez
CO-EDITOR
Graduate student in Public History

Reflections on Engagement in the Classroom



IN THIS SECTION

THREE POEMS

TWO ESSAYS

ONE SHORT STORY

I Went to Class...

poem

02

by **Meredith Anne Higgs**

Employee, University Studies

Learn. Serve. Lead. Engage.

I went to class to learn math. I was surprised to learn so much more. I learned strategies for success in math, in other classes, and in life.

I went to class to learn about teams. I was surprised to learn so much more. I learned to serve others as a team leader and how teams work in real-life.

I went to class to learn about leadership. I was surprised to learn so much more. I learned not just about leadership; I learned how I can be a leader.

I went to class to learn a subject. I was surprised to be engaged. I learned how to be engaged.

Learn. Serve. Lead. Engage.

MTEngage.

Author Description

This short poem summarizes the joy and surprise of finding learning, service, leadership, and engagement in MTEngage classes at MTSU.



Oh Stats, Why are you so Mean?

poem

02

by Megan Hardin

Employee, University Studies



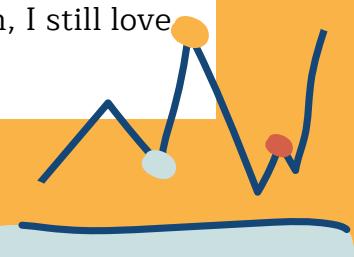
You are pulled in the direction of highs and lows, despite being centered when normal.

Oh stats, why are you so mean? You take on a different face, bar or mu, but do not change in value.

Oh stats, why are you so mean? The more we add the more you change, the better predictor you become.

Oh stats, why are you so mean? Ever changing, multi-faced, and non-resistant, no matter.

Oh stats, no matter how mean, I still love you mode.



Author Description

A poem reflecting the struggles that a student can experience in math 1530 course. The poem reassures students that their feeling and frustrations are real; however, if they persevere, their success and appreciation for the content will grow.

THIS IS NOT A SAFETY PLACE

essay

02

by Raquel Barbalat

Student, M.S. in Communication and Media

Personal dedication: To all the international students who, like me, carry courage in their backpacks, choosing to face the unknown in the name of growth, learning, and the hope of becoming everything they were meant to be.



I came with a backpack full of dreams and a brain wired in another language. The campus was beautiful, people smiled, but nothing felt safe. Even simple things: introducing myself, ordering food, asking a question, turned into performances. I rehearsed. I laughed too late. I doubted every word.



I thought I was ready for this “great opportunity.” But no one tells you how heavy it feels to translate your own thoughts. How strange it is to sit in a group when your voice doesn’t match your mind. In class, I built entire arguments in my head but froze when I tried to speak. The words never came fast enough.

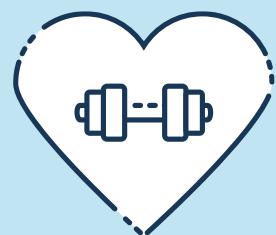
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Life here moves quickly: deadlines, clubs, presentations, the pressure to “make the most” of it all. My intelligence felt stuck behind accent, hesitation, overthinking. Anxiety showed up before every project, every room where I didn’t know the rules.

And still, I stayed. I showed up. I tried. I wrote when I couldn’t speak. On the page, my thoughts were bold and clear. And strangers offered kindness: classmates waiting for me to find the word, professors who saw through the silence, friends who asked, “Are you okay?”

So no, this is not a safety place. Not yet. But maybe it’s not supposed to be. Maybe growth begins where comfort ends.

This is not a safety place.
But it’s becoming a strong one.



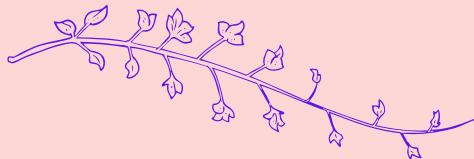
Author Description

I wrote This Is Not a Safety Place at the beginning of my second semester (Spring 2025) as an international student, while I was still learning how to adapt to a new culture, language, and campus life. I am submitting it now because it closely connects to the Engage Week theme: engagement built through courage, vulnerability, and persistence. I believe this piece can inspire other students who are facing the same phase of adaptation, reminding them that even in moments of doubt and fear, their courage will be worth it in the end.

Letters I Never Sent

by Raquel Barbalat

Student, M.S. in Communication and Media



To the street where I learned to ride a bike.
I never told you how brave I felt that day.
You watched me fall and try again,
And now I fall in different ways.

To my childhood room
I never said goodbye.
I packed my bags like it was just a trip,
But something in me stayed behind.

To the friend I used to see every morning,
Waiting for the bus
We laughed like we knew what we were doing.
We didn't. But it was fun pretending.

To my mother
We'll see each other less now,
But there's a reason for that.
I'm learning to stand on my own,
And you taught me how.

poem

02



To my dog that waited by the gate
I still look for you in every wagging tail.
You thought you owned the whole street,
And honestly, maybe you did.

To myself, before I left
You were afraid, and that's okay.
I'm still writing your story
Page by page, place by place.

And maybe these letters were never meant to be sent.
Maybe they were just meant to be written.
So I could grow between the lines,
And finally call it mine.



Author Description

A reflective prose piece written as a series of unsent letters to places, people, and memories left behind. Through simple but heartfelt words, it explores themes of growth, independence, and belonging, capturing the bittersweet experience of leaving home and starting anew. The piece connects with the Engage Week theme by showing how personal history and community ties continue to shape us, even as we learn to stand on our own and build new connections.

SURVIVING THE MARRIAGE

by Deliah Reed
Employee, Business Office

This is a fictional story, any familiarity to real people or places is coincidental.



It has been five years since Donavan Mason and I were married. Each day has been better. Yes, we have had our ups and downs. But through it all, it has been worth it. Who would have thought that after meeting in a math class at Parker M. Reed College of Adult Learning Institute, that I, Jaqueline Banks, would be married to the funniest person that I had ever met? I mean, to Donnie, as he was better known, every night there was a party. Even in class, he would always do something to make things less boring. I suppose that his excitement is what led to our friendship.

On the first night of class, I arrived at class early and took a seat. For whatever reason, which I still do not know, he came in and sat right behind me. I did not think much of it at the time. All I knew was that math and I were not the best of friends, and I needed to pass this class if I wanted to earn my degree. Not too many 27-year-olds go back to college, so I thought. But when I found this school, I felt good about my decision. I knew it would be hard working as an account clerk during the day and attending school at night. My boss, Debra Black, has always encouraged me to go to school and earn a degree. She told me that I could have better-paying jobs with a degree. So, after a couple of years of watching my coworkers move on to better and higher-paying jobs, I started looking into higher education.

My high school grades were average. I knew that studying took a lot of extra effort. I am more of a social butterfly than a bookworm. At least that is how I was in high school.

As I began meeting with the staff at Parker M. Reed College of Adult Learning Institute, I felt increasingly comfortable and at ease with my decision. I met students older and younger than I was at the time. So, I should fit in just fine.

Donnie had been in the military, but due to a training injury, he received an honorable discharge after serving for ten years. He was just getting back to town. His parents had lived in Cooperstown, Illinois, all their lives. This past year, they decided to retire in Florida. They wanted to keep their home because of all the wonderful memories it held. Plus, it would give them a chance to come and visit whenever they liked. So, when Donnie came back to the little town of Cooperstown, he decided to stay at a place that he knew best—home. He knew right away that he wanted to take classes, having joined the military immediately after high school. In the military, the Navy oversaw assisting personnel with their payroll, insurance, and benefits. He often helped people when they got out of the Navy to ensure that their benefits and other information were processed correctly. Donnie found that his military job had become difficult after his injury. Since things took a bit longer for him, it often frustrated him. He enjoyed the process of helping others sign up for their benefits. But eventually, the circumstances beyond his control became too much.

Donnie had been through a lot before we met. He would often tell the class stories that we never knew if they were real or some that he had made up. Nonetheless, he kept the night class fun and alive. No one felt stupid or even left behind if Donavan Mason was in class.

I guess, in hindsight, his laughter and attention to others is what caught my attention.

As we introduced ourselves that first night of class, Donnie received a standing ovation for his military service. I, too, stood up and thanked him. As I looked behind me, I saw a tear in his eyes. It wasn't that noticeable to others, but since I was right in front of him, I saw it.



After class, I jokingly asked him if he was okay. And his remark to me was no. I said, "Yeah, right." He said seriously, "I am not okay. I do not have your number. I looked at him and smiled. I picked up my books and walked out of class. Throughout the entire semester, Donnie was the model student. He had an answer for the teacher. Some were correct answers, and many were wrong. It did not bother him. He wanted to learn.

One night, when the teacher gave a surprise quiz, I began to panic because test-taking was not my favorite thing to do. Donnie put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You got this, okay." I took a deep breath and then exhaled. I scored 96 on my quiz. Of course, since Donnie had given me extra confidence, he suggested that I treat him to pizza. So, we decided to eat pizza and hang out after class one night. Eventually, that one night led to three to four nights a week. We even hung out on the weekends. I went to church on Sundays, and Donnie would come over for dinner afterwards. We became such great friends that we never noticed the bond forming between us. In fact, the semester passed so quickly that when it was time to register for additional classes, we found ourselves taking some of the same ones.

Many people thought we were dating, and some even thought we were married. In fact, we were just best friends. I have never felt so close to someone like that in a long time. You see, the last time that I was close to a man was when I was married to Jackson Reynolds. Jackson was my high school sweetheart. He and I dated throughout high school, and we got married right after graduation. Jackson had dreams of becoming an agent for actors and singers. He wanted to travel. I was content to be at home and attend church. One night, after three years of marriage, he came to me saying that he was leaving me for another woman. He had been seeing Tabitha Morrison for a few months, and they were in love. In fact, she was pregnant with his child. They wanted to be together and move to New York. That night, I cried for hours. I have never felt so hurt in my life before. I knew that Jackson and I had drifted apart, but I just thought it was a passing thing and that we would come back together. I noticed that he started staying late at the clubs where he performed nightly. I never would have thought that he was cheating on me because I trusted him. I never asked questions or had a reason to snoop. I trusted him at his word. How could I have been so stupid?

After the divorce, which seemed to take forever, Jackson took everything he could get and then some. I ended up with the house and a savings account of \$1,000. I found myself attending church more often. It was then that I found myself and my purpose. I listened to Pastor Gates give a sermon one day entitled "Stuck in a Dry Place". It reminded me of my life. He reminded his congregation that sometimes in life, we go through difficult times. It does not matter where we are in life; God is always there. It is at that moment that I stopped feeling sorry for myself and decided to move forward. I went home from service and started searching for the scriptures for myself. I was a week away from turning 22, and I had always depended on someone. It was time to depend on myself. I have always worked as a grocery clerk at the local general store, but the next day, I began applying for jobs that allowed me to do more. I began exploring potential careers and businesses that would enable me to achieve success. After weeks of applying for jobs and attending numerous interviews, I was hired by an accounting firm as an assistant clerk to the administrative assistant. The firm was growing rapidly, and the assistant needed help. It was a temporary job that turned into a full-time position with a raise and benefits. I have been there for 5 years already.



It was a year after being hired that Mrs. Black joined the company, and I was reassigned to be her administrative assistant. The four years I have worked with Mrs. Black have been great. She takes the time to show me things and includes me in some decision-making and idea meetings. She has encouraged me every step of the way. Some women are intimidated by other women who are bosses, but my relationship with Mrs. Black is not like that at all. She is not only for women moving ahead, but also for anyone who desires to move ahead. She starts the workday with a personal prayer. She then gathers everyone for a morning meeting, an inspirational and encouraging verse for the office. The concept goes well with my soul since I am a strong believer. She started a scholarship fund for people who wanted to earn a degree.

I am one year away from my degree, and Donnie has asked me out on a date. I laughed at first, but I saw how serious he was, so I said yes. He told me that he would pick me up on Sunday at 9:00 am. Although he knew that I went to church on Sundays, I figured that missing one Sunday would be okay. When he picked me up, I was wearing a navy-blue skirt with a white, ruffled blouse. He said that I looked pretty, and this was the first compliment I had received from a man in a while. This was going to be a great date.

Donnie pulled up to Greater Pleasant View Community Church. I asked him what we were doing there. He took my hand and led me inside. We went in through the back door which led to their fellowship hall. We had breakfast with the members. As they were talking, they told me stories of Donnie and how he was raised in the church all his life. He recently came back to the church and has been active. When I asked him if this is why he only came over at dinner time, he said yes. Then my question was "why didn't you ever tell me" "He said that you never asked me about church and my beliefs."

That morning, I saw Donnie not as the dear friend that I had known him to be but as a man who could become more to me. Throughout our marriage, Jackson never wanted to attend church. So, talking about the goodness of God was not something I could do often. Donnie sang in the choir, so I couldn't sit beside him, but that was okay. I felt love amongst the people of God. The Pastor stood to introduce the speaker of the hour, and lo and behold, it was Donnie. Donnie had accepted his call to the ministry, and this was his initial sermon. He wanted me to be there to hear him speak. It was at that moment when he began to pray that I saw Donnie in a different light again. I saw a man after God's own heart. He was not the free-spirited student that I had met the first night of class. Nor was he the best friend whom I have grown to know over the years. He was the man of my dreams. He was the man I could see spending the rest of my life with, you know, until death do us part. From that day forward, for the next six months, he and I became more inseparable than ever. We dated and became even closer. We visited each other's churches and those of others. It felt so good praising God with a man who understood why I praised Him. It felt so good to grow closer to someone instead of drifting apart.

At our office Christmas dinner, Mrs. Black announced that the office had promoted her to Vice President. As my jaw dropped because I was losing my mentor, she announced me as her replacement. She was confident in my work and assured the company that I would be a great replacement. As I began to cry with tears of joy, I looked to my left, where Donnie was standing beside me, and he gave me the biggest hug. Mrs. Black knew that Donnie could sing, so she asked him to sing solo for the holidays. As he was singing "Oh Holy Night," my eyes were filling up because it was my favorite song. Just as he got to the end of the song, Donnie knelt on one knee and asked me to be his wife. He had planned to propose later that night, but the moment and the atmosphere were right. Of course, I said yes.



Donnie and I were married in the spring with a small wedding. We are still going to church together. I decided to join his church, where he has been ordained as a minister in the gospel.

The first year of our marriage was smooth because we had been friends for a long time and trusted one another. As I finished up my degree, he supported me every step of the way. He was in the first row when I graduated. Donnie decided to finish his degree online because he was opening his own business. He is a human resource trainer and continues to work with veterans as well. I love our life together because we help people, and this makes us both very happy.

We have been married for a year, and being in love with Donnie has been great. We live our lives the way that God intended for married couples to live. We take time to teach others how to dream and succeed. Tonight, I am cooking a special meal to tell Donnie that I am pregnant with twins. We never discussed children, but we trust God, so I am excited.

As the twins were born, a boy and a girl whom we named Fred and Freda, we became clearly happier. At the age of 2, Fred was hit by a car while running into the street after a ball. My back was turned for a second. Fred was in the hospital for two months. It was the longest two months of my life.

At first, Donnie and I were on the same page. We were at the hospital every day together. But things started to take a turn when Fred slipped into a coma. I wanted to pray, but Donnie felt it was unnecessary. I could tell that he was losing faith. I could tell that he had some resentment in his heart that he had not expressed. So, I asked him if he was okay. I asked him what was wrong. It was then that I did not understand my husband. He blamed me for the accident. He blamed me for not being there for Fred. He blamed me for this whole situation. I knew that Donnie really didn't mean it; it was just some steam he was blowing off. But the words did hurt. I stood there and took all that he had to give because I had already thought the same thing.

As he walked away, I dried my tears and began to pray. I prayed for Fred, Donnie, and our marriage. I knew that God would not leave me during a time like this. As I was sitting in the hall, looking through the glass at Fred, God reminded me of the sermon "Stuck in a Dry Place". I felt stuck. I could not help Fred or Donnie. The only thing that I could do was pray.

I walked down the hall to the chapel and began to pray. As I was praying, Donnie walked in and grabbed my hand. He began apologizing for the hurtful things that he had said to me. He asked me to forgive him. I told him that I understood and that I forgave him. We began to pray and commit to our foundation of marriage and family. Just as we were embracing one another, the nurse came in and said that something was going on with Fred. We jumped up and ran to his room. Fred was awake and playing with a stuffed animal. He was the happiest kid that I have ever seen. Fred was so happy to see us. He just laughed and laughed. After three days, the hospital allowed us to take Fred home. We were reunited as a family.

Donnie was so happy to have his family back together. He started the next week, building a fence around the property so that no balls would ever roll into the street again. Next week, the twins will start preschool, and Donnie and I are the happiest people in the world.

As I look back on my life, I know that having God in our lives is what enabled us to survive our marriage, both in the good times and the bad. Being married to Jackson showed me that a man who doesn't love God first cannot love me the way that I need to be loved. I am glad that God is important to me and Donnie; our lives would not be the same. I don't think that our love would be as strong otherwise. Here's to surviving our marriage, God's way.

Author Description

This is a fictional short story set on a college campus, where adults meet for the first time. It tells of their love story that led them to get married. As we ponder our college careers and lives, how many couples meet, get married, and start a family while earning a degree? The author created the story in 2018 and revised it in 2025.

ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH WRITING IN THE AGE OF AI

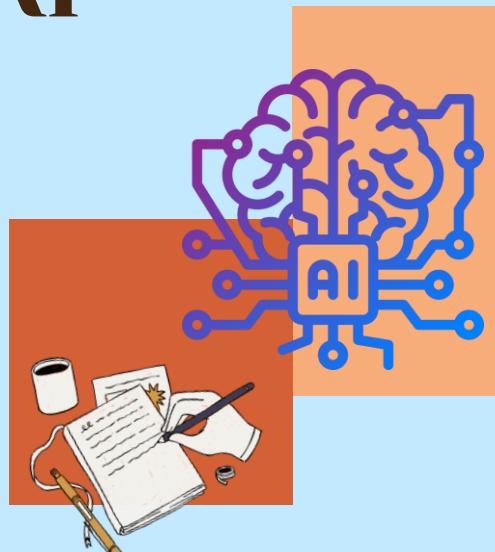
by James Hamby

Employee, University Writing Center

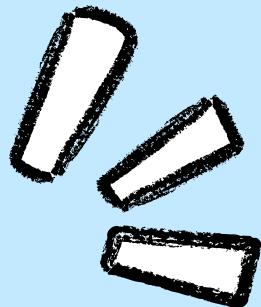
Early this morning I was visiting a first-year composition course to tell students about our university's writing center.

After my presentation, I asked if there were any questions, and I got the usual queries about operating hours and when the creative writing group meets. After answering these, the instructor teed me up with a question to let me expound further on the virtues of the writing center: "Why go to the writing center instead of using ChatGPT?"

Obviously, as a writing center director and English instructor, I've thought a lot about this the past few years. Reading and writing are the foundation of education, but how do we engage students in these essential activities when AI can do so many tasks for them? I told the students that while composition courses and writing centers may seemingly focus on getting words on paper to produce a finished product, really their purpose is to teach you how to think. Through writing, students take ideas from the outside world, synthesize them with their own thoughts, and then express their opinions, observations, and stories to their audience. They must consider the right words to use, the best structure to express their ideas, the most effective tone, and how all of these elements meet their audiences' expectations.



Assignments like literacy narratives aren't given because the world needs one more story about when someone participated in a summer reading program through the library as a child, but rather because the process of writing these narratives challenges students to think about the importance of communication, about who they are, about how they fit into society, and numerous other concepts that are so important for students to think about as they begin their journeys through higher education.



I followed this up with the analogy that using AI to write papers is like creating a robot to go to the gym for you and then saying, "I worked out." Sure, the robot used the exercise machines, but just making the weights go up and down was never the point. The purpose of working out is to use your own muscles so that they can grow and become stronger. I concluded by telling the class the same thing I tell tutors during orientation, that writing centers operate under the same idea found in the old saying of "give a person a fish and they eat for a day, teach them to fish and they eat for a lifetime." AI gives students a brief, shallow experience totally devoid of any long-term benefits, while students who write their own papers gain intellectual abilities that will last the rest of their lives.

Author Description

In this work, I reflect on my experiences in the classroom and in the writing center, and I talk about how to convince students to engage with their own education through writing.

Local History and Favorite Places



IN THIS SECTION

ONE COLLAGE ZINE

ONE POEM

MTSU Buildings Named for Women- 1964

by Sandra Campbell

Employee, Procurement Services

collage
zine

03



Campus Map 1964



★ Schardt and Reynolds are wings off Monohan Hall
Hall and McHenry are wings off Lyon Hall

Dedication of 8 Buildings on Sunday, April 26, 1964



Standing (left to right): B.B. Gracy, Jr., President Q.E. Cope, Gov. Frank Clement, Commissioner J. Howard Warf, T.B. Woodmore.

Seated (left to right): Miss Mary Hall, Mrs. Bonnie McHenry, Mrs. W.B. Judd, Miss Tommie Reynolds, Miss Elizabeth Schardt, Miss E. Mai Saunders.

Eight Middle Tennessee State College buildings were dedicated Sunday afternoon, with Governor Frank G. Clement making the dedicatory address. J. Howard Warf, commissioner of education presented the building to the college with the acceptance being made by Dr. Quill E. Cope. The persons honored were B. B. Gracy, Jr., Miss Mary Hall, Mrs. Bonnie McHenry, W. B. Judd, Miss Tommie Reynolds, Miss Elizabeth Schardt, Miss E. Mai Saunders and T. B. Woodmore.



5 of the 8 buildings
were named for
women of MTSC

- ★ E. Mai Saunders
- ★ Elizabeth Schardt
- ★ Tommie Reynolds
- ★ Mary Hall
- ★ Bonnie McHenry

Miss E. Mai Saunders



Professor of Music from 1911 until 1955 (44 years!)

She organized the 1st chorus and 1st orchestra at MTSC and introduced music education to Tennessee.



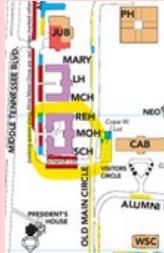
Saunders Fine Arts Library (1959)



629 Normal Way Dr.



Miss Elizabeth Schardt Miss Tommie Reynolds



Elizabeth Burke Schardt

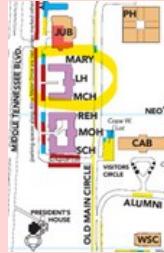


Schardt Hall
(1954/1959 & 1960)
312 Alma Mater Drive



She taught foreign languages from 1918 until 1962. (44 years!)

Miss Mary Hall Miss Bonnie McHenry



Miss Tommie Reynolds



Reynolds Hall
(1954/1959 & 1960)
312 Alma Mater Drive



She taught mathematics and physical education from 1911 until 1957. (46 years!)

Miss Mary Hall



Mary Hall
(1927/1961 & 1962)

414 Alma Mater Drive



First teacher at
Campus School
(opened in 1929)

Dean of Women, c.a. 1940.

Education Department,
faculty member, 1950-
1961. (32 years of service!)

Mrs. Bonnie McHenry



Mrs. BONNIE McHENRY
Secretary to President

Secretary to the
first four presidents

Began at age 19 in 1911
Retired at age 43 on
December 1, 1964

McHenry Hall
(1927/1961 & 1962)

414 Alma Mater Drive



University presidents:
Robert L. Jones (1911-1922),
Pritchett A. Lyon (1922-1938),
Quinten M. Smith (1938-1951),
Quill E. Cope (1958-1968)



Resources

Campus Map, 1964:

Middle Tennessee State University, Bulletin of the Middle Tennessee State College, Volume XXXVI, No. 2: (Murfreesboro, TN: State Board of Education, 1963), Page 1.

Campus Map, 2025: <https://www.mtsu.edu/maps/campusmap/>

Image: Dedication of building

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/724/rec/3>

Image: E. Mai Saunders

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/764/rec/4>

Image: Elizabeth Schardt

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/663/rec/4>

Image: Tommie Reynolds

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/759/rec/1>

Image: Mary Hall

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/651/rec/5>

Image: Bonnie McHenry

<https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1/id/1877/rec/2>

Newspaper Article:

MTSC Praised by Governor, The Daily News-Journal, April 27, 1964, pg. 1. (data source: Ancestry.com). Accessed March 1, 2024. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-daily-news-journal-mtsceight-build/142468894/>

Notes:

Photographer for images of current buildings: Sandra Campbell, 2025.

Research and images were inspired from the MTSU Memory digital collection, curated to commemorate the university's centennial in 2011, which was a collaborative project between the Albert Gore Research Center and the James E. Walker Library at Middle Tennessee State University. Visit the collection at <https://cdm15838.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/mtsu1>

Author Description

The zine highlights how our campus buildings themselves serve as some of the most visible historical markers, reflecting the people and stories that shaped the university. While plaques and signs provide details in passing, the buildings we enter and walk past every day are enduring reminders of our institutional history. In researching this project, I found it especially meaningful to uncover why certain buildings were named and how those choices reflect both recognition and memory at MTSU.

TRUE BLOOMS

by Emiliya Mailyan

Student, Ph.D. candidate in English



**When in August,
the semester begins—
Crepe-myrtle petals
follow in the wind.
From Jones Hall to Peck,
the breezy days are set.**

**Then in October,
the warm amber leaves
glow by golden hour.
Out from Old Main
and on to Faulkinberry—
they light the way.**



Author Description

This poem was written in response to the two photos (taken by me) that appear next to each stanza. On the left, the first photo of the Crepe-myrtle trees that line the outer wall of Jones Hall (between Todd) was taken in August 2025. Then, the second photo to the right is of those same trees, but it was taken in October 2025. The walkway in the area between is a path I take often, going to and from Peck Hall. It's also one of my favorite spots to sit and relax—taking in the change of seasons and reflecting on time gone by in between classes and studying. I completed my undergrad degrees at MTSU, so being back for grad school and returning to spots like this one always bring up many memories—of rushing to class, getting caught in the rain, running into a friend, or simply watching the sky shift from light to dark on the way back home.

How to be Successful and More Engaged in the Community



IN THIS SECTION

ONE PUZZLE

THREE COLLAGES / COLLAGE ZINES

ONE POEM

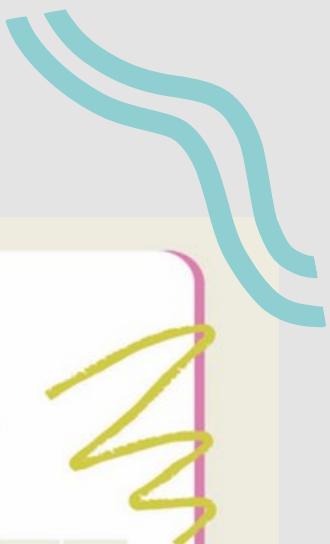
TWO SHORT STORIES

SUCCESS IS WAITING

by Megan Hardin
Employee, University Studies

puzzle

04



Find the words below in the grid.

P	S	O	C	I	A	L	I	Z	E	H	O
R	D	E	N	G	A	G	E	I	L	F	R
I	H	O	M	E	W	O	R	K	F	A	G
O	T	S	S	T	A	M	N	I	S	C	A
R	Y	L	A	L	S	L	C	I	T	L	N
I	D	E	X	F	A	E	A	T	U	P	I
T	Y	E	J	L	H	O	R	U	D	A	Z
I	D	S	E	O	P	P	G	N	G	C	E
Z	U	L	U	K	R	O	W	T	M	H	H
E	T	R	Y	C	D	W	S	L	E	E	P
X	S	S	A	L	C	O	T	O	G	S	R



PRIORITIZE
ORGANIZE
OFFICE HOURS
HOMEWORK

SLEEP
EAT
SOCIALIZE
GO TO CLASS

SET GOALS
STUDY
ENGAGE
LAUGH



Author Description

The word search gives a list of twelve strategies to help students succeed in college



HOW TO BRAVE THE UNKNOWN



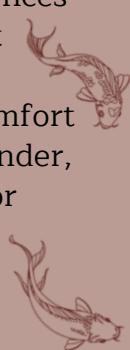
by Tomeka Jackson

Employee, James E. Walker Library

**At some point in
life, we've all had
to brave the
unknown.**

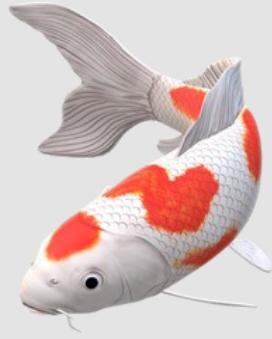
This unknown could be moving to a new city, starting a new job, attending a new school, trying a new hobby, or mustering the courage to enter a new social setting.

These new experiences can be daunting at first, as you step outside of your comfort zone. You may wonder, How will this go, or What will be the outcome?



You may feel like you're the only one who has ever faced these challenges, but I'm here to tell you, you are not alone. And you can brave the unknown.

So, how exactly do you brave the unknown, you may ask? There are so many strategies, tactics, and techniques already out there on this topic. That may be true, but the question still remains: how do you actually do it? Well, **first**, decide to go for it! even if you are nervous. You'll never know what's possible unless you try.



Second, be determined in the face of discouragement. Maybe something didn't go well, maybe you didn't pass that first test for the semester. It's okay to feel disappointed, but don't let it deter you.

Third, once you've recovered from discouragement, reset your mind and continue forward. A disappointment is just a moment in time, but not forever. Remember why you chose to brave this unknown, and think of all the wonderful possibilities that could unfold because of it.



Fourth, because you chose to brave the unknown, you can bring a fresh perspective that no one else has thought of. Your choice can inspire others to be brave. Maybe you took a dance class for the first time and came up with a new step that others want to try; that's the power of stepping into the unknown.



Finally, well, for this zine at least. You'll look back and be thankful you braved that unknown challenge. Whether it worked out or not, the importance of trying something new or taking the path less traveled builds character and strengthens your ability to be brave when things are uncertain or unfamiliar. Your future self may thank you for taking that leap of faith and forging your own path.

Author Description

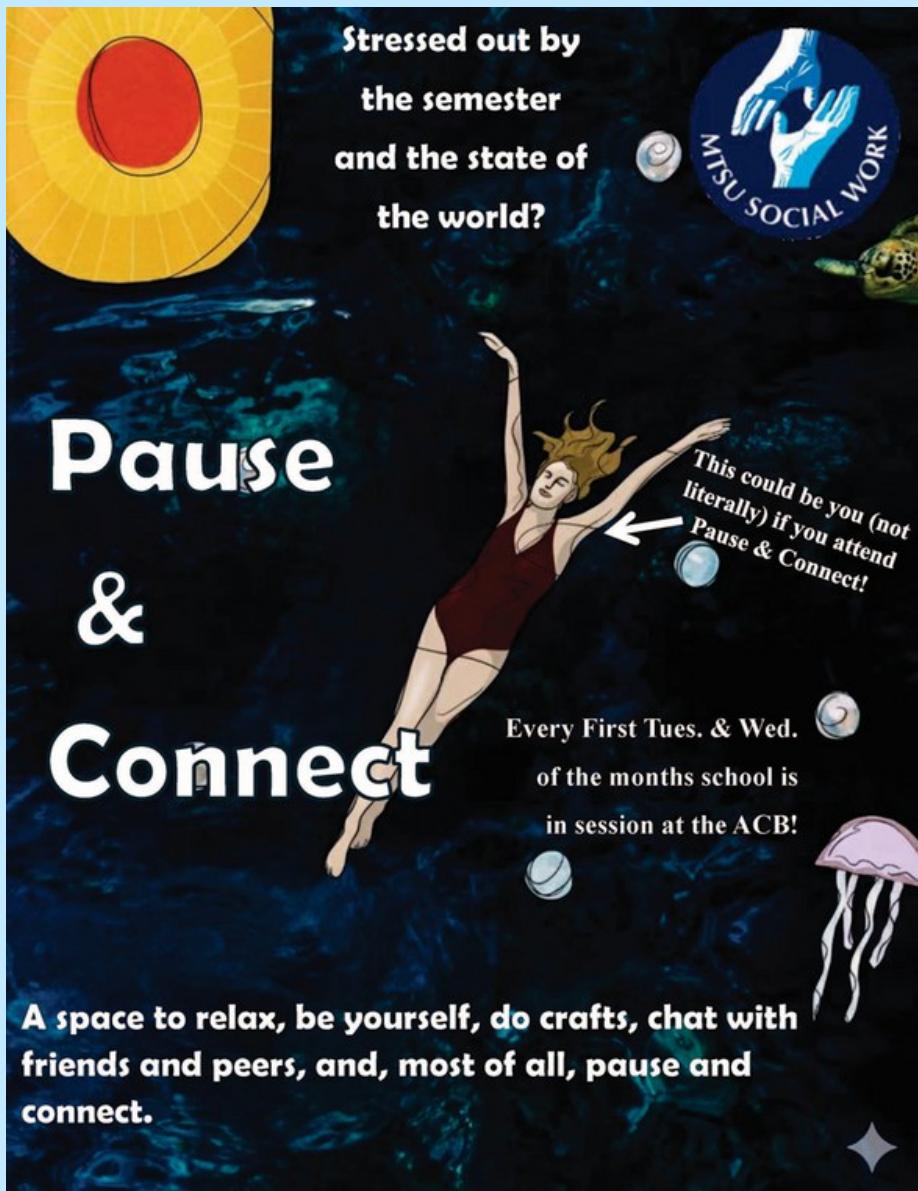
This contribution offers guidance on facing life's challenges with grace and courage. While the approach may seem simple, it is intentionally so, drawing from my own experiences and those of people close to me. My hope is that this zine will inspire and support anyone who feels hesitant to try new things or is uncertain about the outcomes of stepping into the unknown.

PAUSE AND CONNECT

collage
+ event

04

by **Caleb M. Smith**, student, Master of Social Work candidate
Claire Keith, practicing social worker and MSW program graduate
Jessica Teter, employee, Department of Social Work



Author Description

Pause and Connect is the culmination of months of work done by students in the Department of Social Work at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). Due to the stress of the semester and the complicated external world, social work students Claire Keith, Felicity Lindberg, and Caleb Smith created Pause and Connect, a student engagement event to give MTSU students a space to unwind, relax, and engage in tactile activities while interacting with student peers and faculty alike. This zine contribution is an advertisement of that event.

Through the Night

by Don Srisuriyo

Employee, College of Liberal Arts

Will there be anyone here to confide
in? Guide me through paths, in all directions,
that lead nowhere, empty interactions.
Bitterness changes to feeling resigned.
Anyone who has been where I have been?
Lonely thoughts inside, burning with passion,
What is left to do? Quiet reflection.
Who I was looking for, always within.
Through resolve, I became a guiding light.
For no one should walk alone in their life.
Let new dawn break. Transform a fearful night
into joyful day. To do what is right,
create and restore hope because, in spite
of it all, everyone can shine so bright.

Author Description

The poem is about finding confidence and courage within oneself in self-reflection to overcome a certain type of self-loneliness and isolation. It highlights transforming a negative experience where one is in need of guidance and mentorship into a positive one through acknowledging that others need a mentor and could be in a similar situation. Therefore, one should step up to assist others to break the cycle rather than live with a view that no one will come to help you or others despite having the power, regardless of how much, to do so.

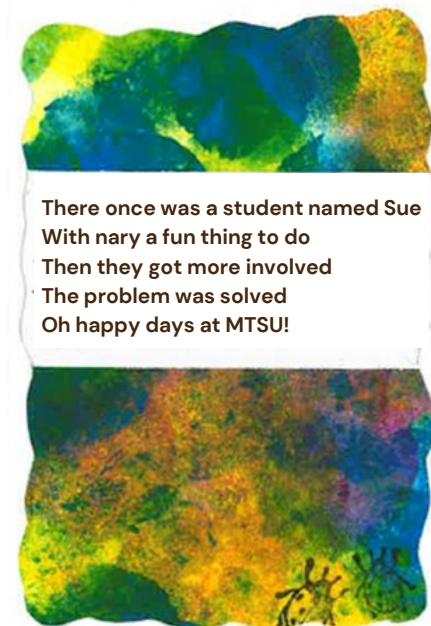
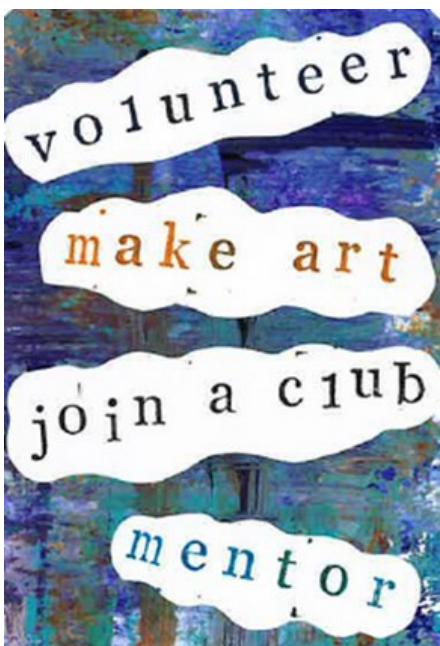
A Snack-Sized Zine for Plugging In

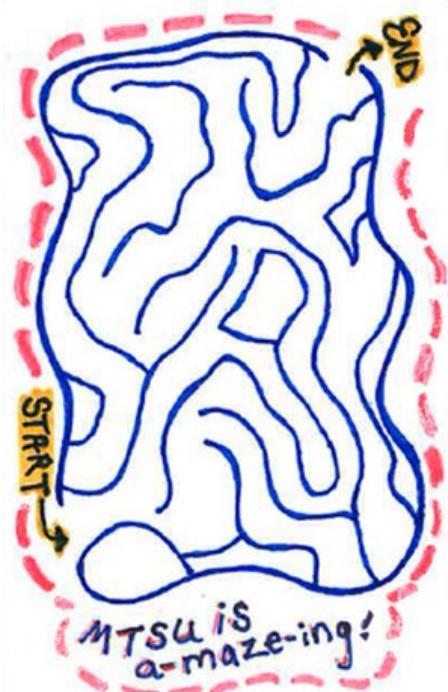
collage zine

04

by Jennifer Dix

Employee, College of Liberal Arts





Author Description

Engagement is the key to getting the most out of the college experience and life beyond campus. This original mini zine is a colorful reminder that shares ways for MTSU students and employees to become more involved on campus and in our community. Readers will find games, artwork, and a very mediocre (but fun!) limerick on the engagement theme and MTSU.

A Foreboding

by Cynthia Ayers

Employee, Department of Human Sciences



The day was gloomy. It was a rainy, stormy afternoon, but we were still looking forward to attending the county fair to show our beef heifers. We, being our family of four, were busy getting ready to load the livestock trailer. Caring for and showing animals is hard work.

Just a little background about show animals. First, you select them based on their conformation. Conformation is the desirable and undesirable skeletal and muscular structures of an animal. It covers all the important areas of an animal's structure, from the legs, the spine (or top-line) and the hind quarters to the neck and head. It is important because you want the momma cow to be able to carry her calf for the full term. It's interesting to me that a cow's pregnancy lasts 9 months just like a woman.

Second, after you select the heifer (a female cow before she has had her first calf), you begin to train her. She needs to be able to be led just like a lead line on a dog. To do this, it takes months of preparation. She must get used to having a halter on, standing still, and not struggling against it. Then you must break her to lead with the halter. This is hard work and sometimes requires three or more people. One must pull on the halter and the other two get behind and push. Remember this animal weighs 350-500 lbs. Depending on the time of year you “break” her to lead, it can be very hot work. No matter the time, it is always hard work.

Once she is used to the halter, standing still and walking when you ask her to, then she gets to learn another “trick” she must get used to taking showers. Yes, that’s right, she gets a shower every day and we use a giant hair dryer to blow her off. They, being the heifer, actually looks forward to this. We can “style” her hair by doing this.

Then, a couple of weeks before the show date, she gets her hair done (clipped). This is called “fitting”, and it is done to enhance her conformation. By “styling” her hair, she can be made to look like she has bigger legs or a more feminine shoulder, etc. Our family never really got the knack for “fitting”, but we tried and enjoyed it. It got us together without any “screens” and we laughed, talked and genuinely just savored the time together, at least Mom and Dad did.



Now back to getting the equipment together. The animals, in this instance, three heifers, were in their stalls in the barn waiting for us to gather all our show equipment. The equipment includes feed and water buckets, rope halters and show halters, the big “hair dryer”, “hair spray”, and paint for nails (hooves). You get the picture, a lot of stuff to load. We haven’t even started to talk about the feed and hay for the “ladies”. I tell folks showing a calf is kinda like your sister or you are attending the prom. They (calves) get their hair done, including a trip to the hairdresser for a trim, washing, and blow drying, then styling. They also get their nails done but, in this case, it is their hooves painted. The only difference is we do not have to buy them a prom dress.

So, we were loading all this equipment into the trailer for transport to the fair because you do not want to do it ahead of time in case it gets messed up. The hair can get messed up riding in the trailer and the wind blowing through it, because they are standing close to one another, they can pee or poop on their neighbor, in other words, there is a variety of things that can happen. So we wait until we arrive at the fair.

Once we had all this equipment loaded on the trailer, we then put halters on the calves, loaded them and tied them. We tie them to keep them from lying down and possibly becoming hurt if we were to go over a bump or hit a pothole too hard. The rain was not letting up; in fact, it was coming down harder than when we started, perhaps a foreshadowing of events to come. Finally, we were ready to go. We all loaded ourselves into the truck and headed out. We were excited, nervous, and looking forward to the evening when suddenly things went wrong.

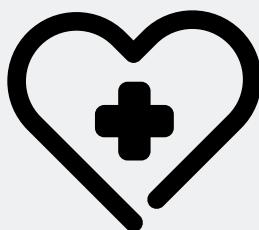


We were only a few miles from the farm when we noticed a couple of cars honking their horns and waving at us, so we stopped. Oh, how I wish we had stopped sooner. The trailer's back door had come open, and all three of our heifers were injured. One of them was very severely injured. Because we had built up a relationship with our veterinarian, he answered immediately and headed out to our location promptly. In the meantime, because we were not that far from home, I called my mom, because you are never too old to need your mom. She came right away and took the boys with her because I knew this was not going to end well. The boys were only in 4th and 5th grade and it was a rough year for them. They had witnessed many funerals at the start of the year. A grandfather, two uncles, and two distant cousins. I made the decision not to let them see their injured cows.

While waiting for the veterinarian's arrival, I sat down next to the most severely injured heifer, spoke to her in a calm voice and tried my best to keep her still and quiet. Once the veterinarian arrived, he confirmed my suspicions about one of the heifers, she was very badly injured and would need to be euthanized to keep her from suffering any longer. I cradled her head and cried as he injected the drugs to end her suffering.

We then turned our attention to the two remaining heifers. Their injuries were not life-threatening, and we were able to load them back into the trailer. One of the neighbors arrived with a tractor and front-end loader and we moved the now deceased heifer to the side of the road, covered her up and thanked all involved. Oh yea, did I forget to mention this all happened literally in the middle of a two-lane road. I removed her halter and used it from then on out as extra protection against the trailer door opening. I like to think of it as an honor to the lost heifer.

The two heifers we were able to save had to be “doctored” for several months following the accident. My mom helped with this because farming and raising livestock is a family affair and it gets in your blood. Caring for animals, sometimes losing them, taking care of the land and loving the people involved are all part of farm life. For many of us, we would not have it any other way. We genuinely love our lifestyle, no matter the challenges it brings.



Author Description

This short story deals with losses that often occur in life and on a farm. It is about facing death and instead of being paralyzed by it, highlighting the courage required to continue living. The character moves forward with resolve, showing strength in the face of inevitable loss. This contrast between dread and bravery emphasizes the triumph of the human spirit over fear, reinforcing the idea that success in facing death lies not in avoiding it, but in meeting it with dignity and purpose.

Sharing Our Special Place

by Cynthia Ayers

Employee, Department of Human Sciences



Many years ago, I read a book called “All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” by Richard Fulghum. Mr. Fulghum said these things among others: “Share everything, play fair, don’t hit people, put things back where you found them, clean up your own mess, don’t take things that aren’t yours, say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody, wash your hands before you eat, flush, warm cookies and cold milk are good for you”. I want to share my story about sharing. It is about sharing our special place.

My husband and I share three farms – his family's farm, which is two farms, separated by a few miles of road and my family farm. Well, his family farm has a very special river that runs through it – the Duck River. This river is the most biodiverse river in North America and in 2010 was listed in an article “Life in One Cubic Meter” by National Geographic magazine. To say it is an amazing river, does not do it justice.

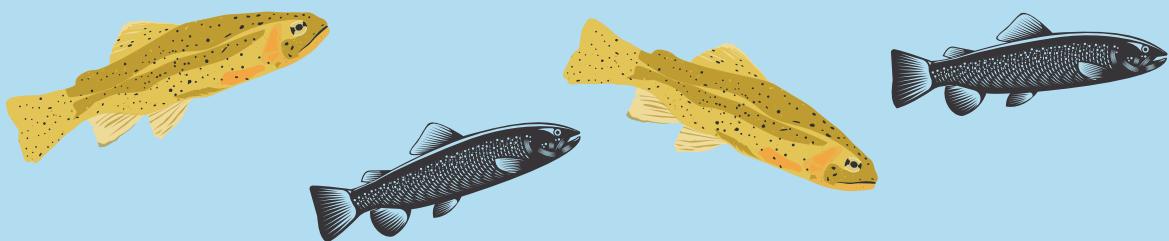
A decent stretch of the river runs through one of our three farms. When our children were younger, we camped on the banks of the river. We fenced a small field directly beside the water and would spend weekends in our tent and in the water. The flow of the river has changed over time but back then the water flowed pretty fast, and we would put life vests on the boys, one parent would stand at the start where the water started flowing fast, and the other parent would “catch” them standing in the water as they floated toward us. After the “catch” they would walk in the calmer part of the river back to the other parent and do it all again, over and over until everyone was worn out.



Sometimes, we would lay on the flat rocks in the middle of the river, put our snorkel masks and snorkels on, put our heads down in the water, and watch what floated by. We would do this for a long time. We didn't fish but we would look for craw dabs and see who could find the biggest one. I hope you can tell this was and is a 'special place' for us. It holds lots of precious memories for all of us. I think it is a 'special place' for the boys (young men/our children). I remember the oldest one writing about it when he was in 5th grade. His story started out something like “the sun was reflecting off the rippling water and the shads (super small fish) were biting my toes as they dangle in the water”. I remember thinking then and even now how descriptive that was and truly reflected what we sometimes did.

Let me give you a little information about ownership of land along a river. It is simple - the water belongs to everyone; however, the land beneath the river belongs to the owners on either side. For us, we own land on both sides of the Duck River; therefore, the land under the river belongs to us. The Duck River has become a very popular place for kayakers and canoeists and unfortunately, some of them do not care about what they learned in kindergarten about cleaning up their own mess, putting things back where you found them or taking things that are not theirs.

A couple of summers ago, one of our close adult friends lost his parents very close together. They died within just a few months of each. Years before this his wife had given him fly fishing lessons and he enjoyed the 'alone' time on the water. We were visiting with them, and he brought out a map of the Duck River. He began to repeat what others had told him regarding trespassing on the property owners with land along the Duck. He kept pointing at a specific piece of land along the river and we casually told him we owned that. His wife caught on, but he did not. He kept talking about what a great place it would be to fly fish because trout are released just upstream from it. My husband told him again who owned that stretch along the river, but he still did not catch on. Finally, his wife spoke up and said Daniel, Sam owns the land. He stopped, looked at us and grinned. We met them at our 'special place' later and told him how to get to the field, where our property line was and even gave him a key to the gate because we keep it locked.



He would take his fishing equipment to the ‘special place’. I am guessing this equipment included: a fly rod, a fly-fishing reel, fly line, fly fishing leader and tippet, weights, strike indicators, fly fishing flies, a good tackle box, a fly-fishing vest, wading boots and waders. I think he even bought new waders because his old ones had a leak. Oh yea, let’s not forget the fishing license. Yes, even though it is our land underneath the river, a license is still required. The only time you would not need one is when fishing in your own private pond. I do not think he caught very many fish; however, I do know he caught peace and tranquility there. He soaked up the sunshine, had alone time with God and enjoyed the biodiversity of the river just as much as much as we did.

Although he often told us how much he appreciated the chance to visit this place and fish, I think it was a spiritual re-awakening for him and we were happy to share our ‘special place’ with him.

So perhaps Mr. Fulghum was correct, all I needed to know I did learn in kindergarten – to share.



Works Cited

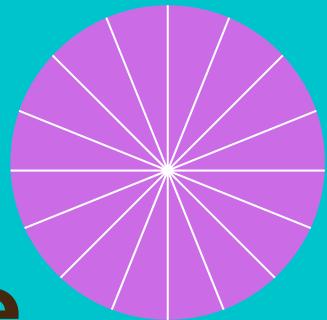
Fulghum, R. (1988). All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten: Uncommon Thoughts on Common Things. Villard Books.

Wilson, Edward O. (2010, February). Life in one cubic foot. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/life-ecosystems-one-cubic-foot>

Author Description

Sharing shows you’re a good friend because it means you’re thinking about others, not just yourself. Whether you’re sharing snacks, secrets, or your “special place,” it shows you care and want to make someone else feel included or supported. It helps build trust and makes your friendship stronger, because you’re showing that the other person matters to you. Friends who share are usually more connected and have more fun together, too!

Engagement through Service



IN THIS SECTION

THREE ESSAYS

MAKING HISTORY TOGETHER: GERMANTOWN AS A LIVING ARCHIVE

by Valeria Eadler

Student, Ph.D. candidate in Public History

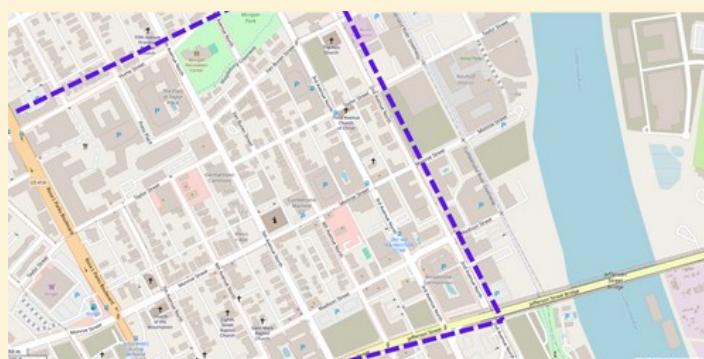


Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A

Source: OpenStreetMap

I didn't arrive in Germantown with answers. I arrived with questions, a portable scanner, and a promise to listen. What began as dissertation research at MTSU quickly became a partnership with neighbors who have spent decades shaping—and saving—their community. Engagement, I've learned, is not a single event. It's the slow work of showing up, earning trust, and returning what you borrow.

In living rooms and church basements, people handed me the raw materials of local memory: petitions, protest flyers, meeting minutes, snapshots labeled in pencil. I scanned each item and gave the files back the same day whenever possible. We checked names, dates, and spellings together. Someone would lean over a photo and say, "That sign was painted the night before," or "Move that caption—she organized the whole thing." Those small corrections are where community authorship lives.



Outline of Germantown.
Source: OpenStreetMap

Germantown's story is full of determined creativity. When residents learned in 1990 that an auto emissions testing site was slated for a residential block, they built a coalition—calling officials, writing letters, talking to reporters, and staging a “car caravan” to show what gridlock would look like on their streets. Years later, they mobilized again around a proposed grocery project, insisting that development should serve the neighborhood, not overwhelm it. These efforts weren’t just “wins.” They were lessons in how ordinary people teach a city to value place.

Beyond scanning, I run an Oral History Project: I record interviews, transcribe them in TheirStory, and build a digital exhibit in Omeka where photos, documents, and voices sit side-by-side. Every file returns to its source family with proper credit. We review spellings, dates, and preferred names together, and I revise when asked. Engagement, for me, is that loop of recording, describing, sharing back, and co-authoring context.

This work also moves through exhibits and walking tours. With community guidance, I turn boxes of materials into pop-ups and labels written in plain language, with clear permissions and accurate credits. When I present this history, I try to make the process visible: who scanned, who corrected, who donated, who remembered. Engagement is transparency—it invites people to see themselves in the record and to edit the next draft.

If you ask me what we’re building, I’d say a living archive made by the people it represents. We keep with consent, context, and care—not to freeze the past, but to hand future neighbors the tools (and the courage) to shape what comes next.

Image Source

Map from [OpenStreetMap](#), licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license](#) (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Author Description

This essay documents my work with Nashville’s Germantown neighbors to build a living archive of community action and place. It weaves oral histories, scanned documents, and resident review to show how people shaped their own streets and how MTSU-supported tools (TheirStory for interviews, Omeka for a digital exhibit) help preserve and share those stories. The piece aligns with Engage Week’s theme by treating history as a collaborative practice grounded in consent, context, and care.

THE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER: BEYOND GRAMMAR

by Miles Wine

Student, B.S. in English and Public Writing and Rhetoric



When they greet me at the University Writing Center, students may think that they're only bringing me their writing, but they're really bringing themselves. Even in a session focused on chemistry research or a branding campaign, I learn their understanding of, feelings towards, and personalized voice within writing. Through every brainstorming, drafting, and revising stage, a writer connects with their internal voice to form external communications. When they bring these ideas to me, I uncover their strengths and weaknesses at once, working with these vulnerabilities to collaborate on how they can best maneuver through an assignment or personal project.



I've worked with countless first-year students new to college-level writing, some eager and some reluctant to learn. From those appointments, I've seen how high schools fail and succeed in preparing their students for life beyond, how early literacy experiences shape and project future attitudes towards writing, and how freedom and personalization excite and/or overwhelm writers. I've learned that teachers often, by just taking the extra step of walking students through an issue they struggle with, can incentivize and inspire learners to continue trying beyond failure.

Non-traditional students educate me on the pitfalls of starting/returning to college later in life. Parents illustrate the exhaustive balance of caring for children while earning a degree, embodying the perseverance and unconditional love that carry them forward. Others exist as a beacon of hope, pushing past obstacles as overwhelming as decades of wrongful imprisonment to gain an education. Many of our older clients are hesitant to ask for help—embarrassed or fearful of judgement—so it has always been a pleasure to meet them with welcoming warmth. I've learned that being a tutor is more than just imparting writing techniques or offering revision suggestions; it's lending a thoughtful ear to those who often feel drowned out by the chaos of college life.



Every one of my shifts brings me new stories representing journeys of all kinds. I've had the honor to learn some of the most intimate details and traumas from people's lives. My role as a tutor encompasses more than explaining grammar rules; oftentimes, the most important lesson I can pass on is one of confidence and kindness. I am one of many forces these writers encounter that can either reinforce or subvert the expectations they have coming in. It is my duty to ensure they leave the writing center with more autonomy and morale that can motivate them to keep writing and seeking help.

While not everyone will leave with a newfound love for journaling or writing in general, I hope that they realize the community they have available to them. The University Writing Center exists as a resource not just for writing, but also for healing. We continue to demonstrate how mentorship should involve friendship that builds trust. Our community strives to maintain a safe space for writers of all kinds to find support in the forms of active listening, compassionate teaching, and supportive encouragement.

Author Description

This piece is a reflective essay conveying the engagement I've experienced throughout my time as a Peer Mentor and Tutor at Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center, as well as how engagement serves us as an organization within the larger community of MTSU. I feel that it is easy to assume the UWC as a purely editorial service focused on prescriptive rules of grammar, and I find it important to challenge these conjectures in order to continue our mission of creating better writers rather than better writings. With my reflection, I hope to effectively give thanks to those that have visited us and encourage those who haven't to reconsider.

PAUSE AND CONNECT: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TO COMBAT CONTESTED TIMES

by **Caleb M. Smith**, student, Master of Social Work candidate

Felicity Lindberg, student, Bachelor of Social Work

Jessica Teter, employee, Department of Social Work

Recognizing the tumultuous and hectic social and political climate, students in the Department of Social Work created the engagement event Pause & Connect. The Pause & Connect events were designed to be a wellness-focused space for students to unwind, engage in low-pressure activities, and connect with peers in a supportive setting. This program was initiated by social work students Claire Keith, Felicity Lindberg, and Caleb Smith with support from the Department of Social Work, and under the guidance of faculty members Professor Scott Coble and Professor Tim King. Taking place twice a month from February to April 2025, the events welcomed all MTSU students. In its first semester, Pause & Connect engaged 65 students.



At each event, the student organizers engaged attendees in creative, tactile activities, accompanied by calming music and a welcoming environment. Each month had a different theme, with the first month focusing on rock painting, the second on constructing collages, and the third on Women's History Month bingo. An anonymous survey was distributed at each event to gather student feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive. All attendees in each of the three months reported that they found the event useful, with unanimous positive feedback. Attendees also overwhelmingly indicated they were either "Very Likely" or "Likely" to return to future events.

These results, paired with social workers' ethical duty to serve, led the Department of Social Work to formalize Pause & Connect in their Social Work Practice II class, a course focusing on social work with groups. Starting in the Fall 2025 semester, Practice II students will, as part of their coursework, form groups and run a Pause & Connect event of their own. These events will take place on October 7th and 8th, and November 4th and 5th, in the Academic Classroom Building.

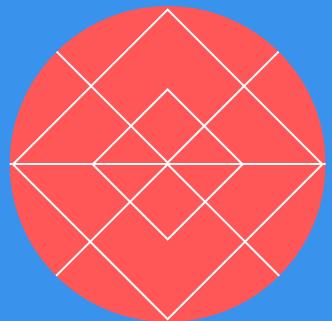


This rock garden was created by students at a fall 2025 Pause and Connect event sponsored by the Department of Social Work. P. Used with permission from photographer, Claire Keith

Author Description

Pause and Connect: Intentional Student Engagement to Combat Contested Times is the culmination of months of work done by students in the Department of Social Work at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). Due to the stress of the semester and the complicated external world, social work students Claire Keith, Felicity Lindberg, and Caleb Smith created Pause and Connect, a student engagement event to give MTSU students a space to unwind, relax, and engage in tactile activities while interacting with student peers and faculty alike. A core model of social work is the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM). In the GIM, engagement is the first step to a successful therapeutic intervention. In this, it is the hope of these students and the Social Work Department that Pause and Connect is the first step toward true change on our campus.

Healthy Living Tips



IN THIS SECTION

TWO COLLAGES / COLLAGE ZINES

VARIOUS PUZZLES + COLORING

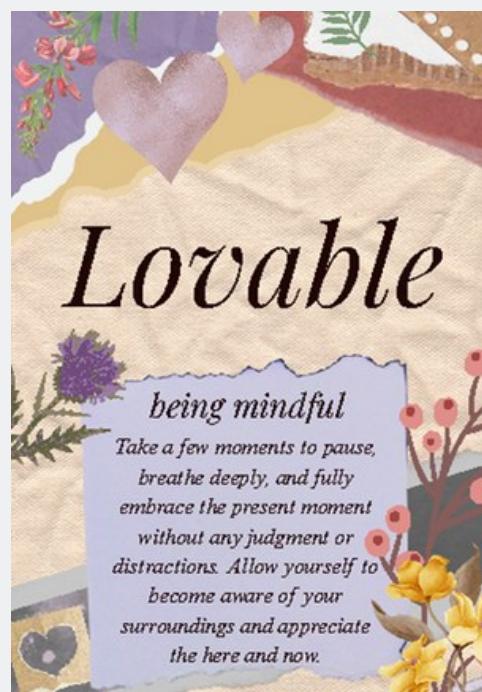
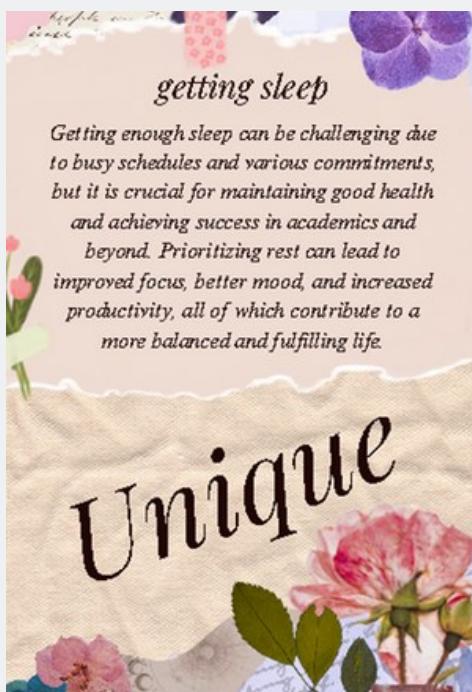
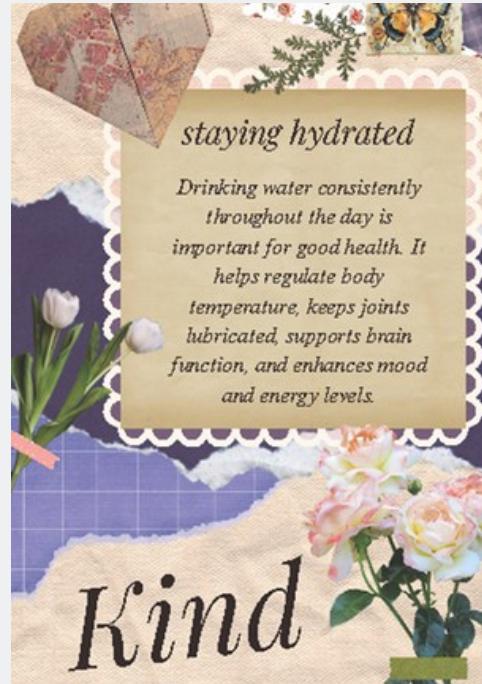
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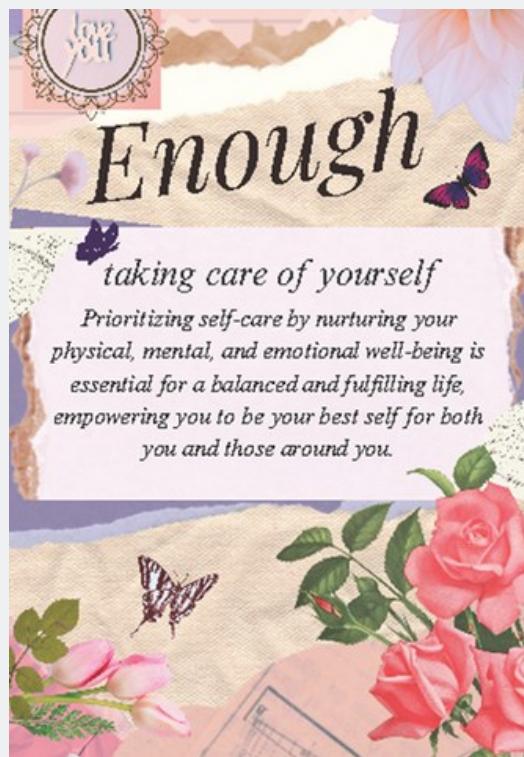
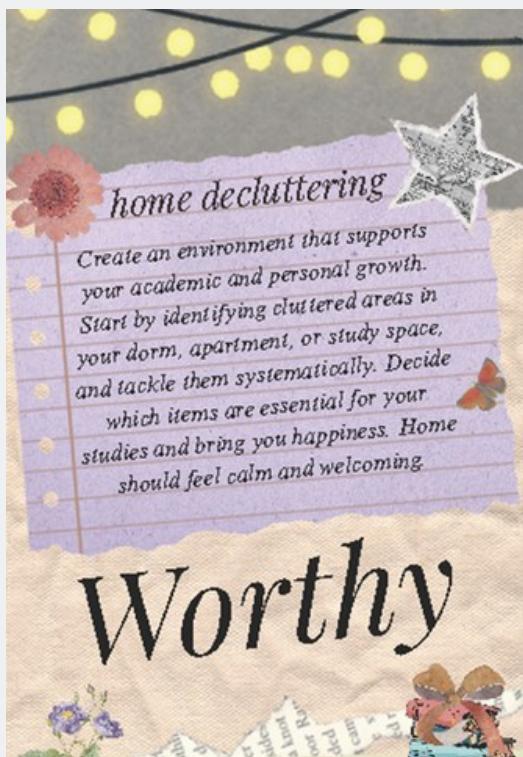
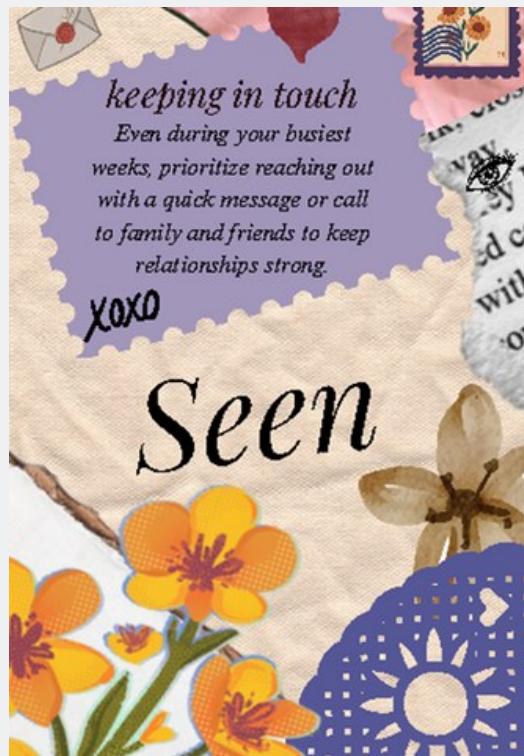
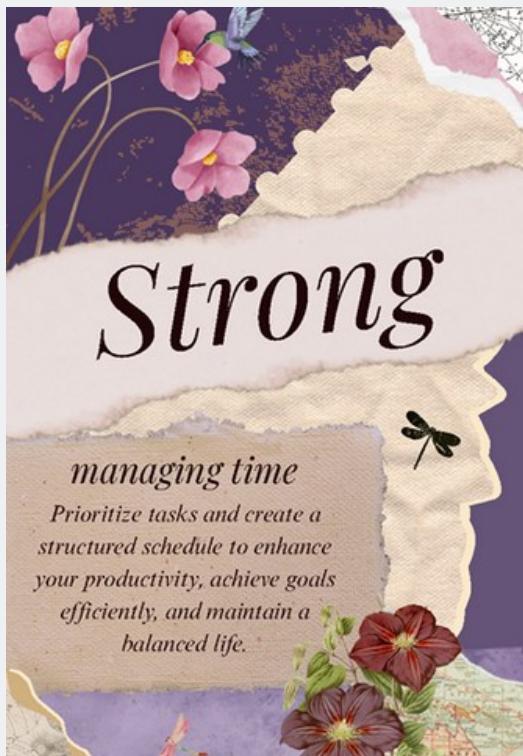
by Laura Loggins

Employee and student, Integrated Studies major

collage
zine

06





Author Description

"You are" emphasizes the importance of health and being yourself as a student. It reminds you to care for your mental and physical well-being and that you are recognized, seen, and worthy.

Overnight

Oats



It's not the prettiest breakfast, but it's delicious and nutritious!

My friends and I would share mix-in ideas, turning our simple breakfasts into something communal and creative. You can adapt the below recipe endlessly, with fruit, nut butter, spices, or anything else your heart desires.



Directions

- Add all ingredients to a jar or bowl and stir to combine.
- Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight.
- Add toppings like fresh berries, sliced apples, nut butter, cinnamon, or anything you like, either the night before or just before serving.

Author Description

As an undergraduate student, I found joy in preparing simple, nourishing meals that gave me a sense of independence and helped me connect with others on my floor. Some of my most meaningful college memories began with these shared moments of figuring out how to make the most of living on our own for the first time.

collage

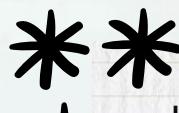
06

by Shelly Salo Martinez

Employee, James E. Walker Library

Food was one of the first ways I learned to take care of myself when I was living on my own for the first time in college. The dining halls were fine (sometimes), but I loved being able to make something for myself even in my tiny dorm room with only a mini fridge and a bowl.

The thing I liked most about overnight oats was the promise I was making to future self to eat at least one healthy meal the next day. This was my go-to breakfast as a busy student running to 8 AM classes, and I hope you enjoy it, too.



Ingredients

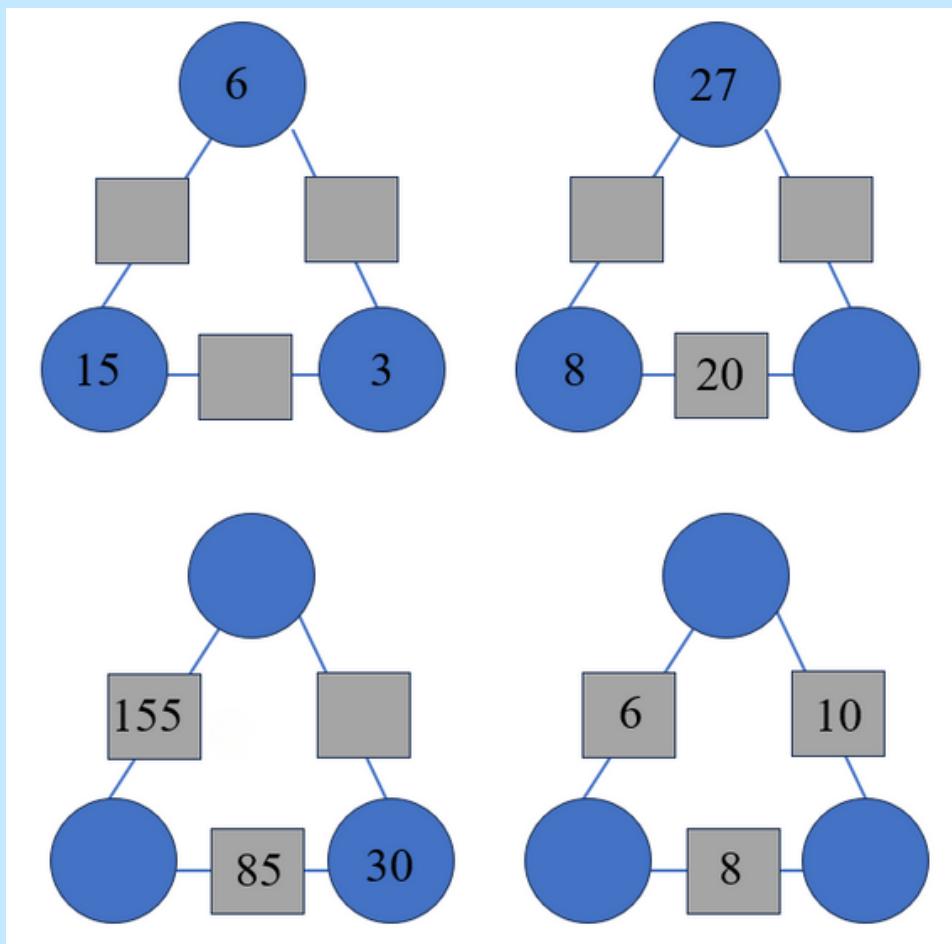
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk of choice
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (optional)
- 1 tbsp sweetener of choice

Activities to Help Unwind and Relax

curated by MT Open Press

Numbers Puzzle

The numbers in the squares are the sum of the numbers in the circles. Can you find the missing numbers? Answers in the back of the book.



Sudoku

Want some more number games? Try Sudoku! Use numbers 1 to 9 to complete the Sudoku puzzle. Only use each number once in each row, column, and grid. Answers in the back of the book.

A

5				2		7		
4		2			9			6
		9		8	1		4	2
		5		7			3	
2	6		4			9	8	
	4			6	5		7	
	3	1	5					7
7				3	2		6	
	2				7	8	5	

B

		3		5			4	
4	1			8	3			2
	7		4			3	9	
6			8			2		
	5	2		9	1	4		7
		1		3			6	
	3			4			7	
1				6	7			3
5	6		3			9		4

Square Hunt

Tired of numbers? Grab a friend and try to draw some squares! Who will win?!

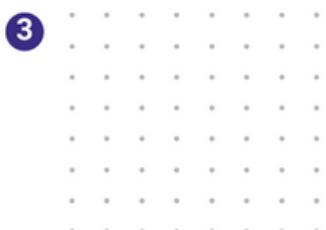
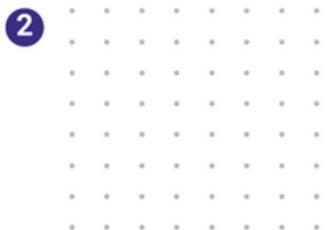


SQUARE HUNT

How to play:

This is a two-player game that requires paper and pencil.

- 1 Players take turns drawing a line between two dots on the paper. The line must connect two dots directly; diagonal lines are not allowed.
- 2 If a player draws a line that completes a square by connecting four dots, they write their initial in the square.
- 3 The game continues with players taking turns to draw lines.
- 4 When all possible lines have been drawn and no more squares can be completed, the game ends.
- 5 The player with the most squares at the end of the game wins.



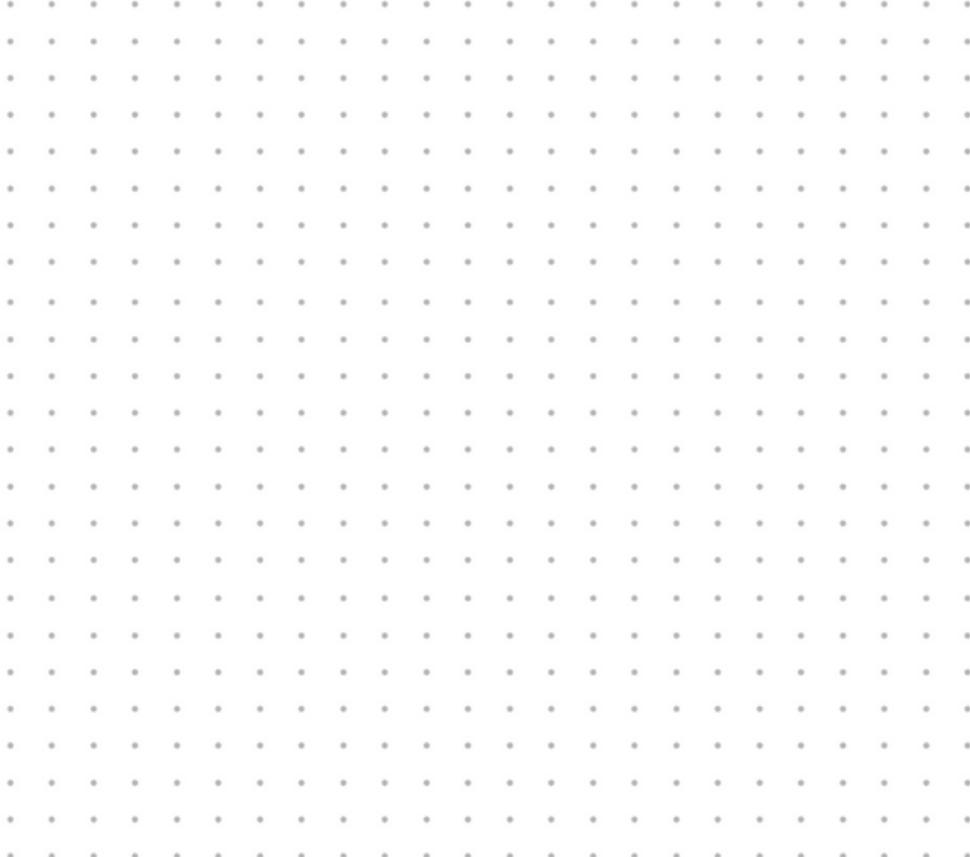
5



6



7



Coloring Book: Lightning

Grab some colored pencils, markers, or crayons. Color in the book or copy/scan and print the page to color and display your artwork!

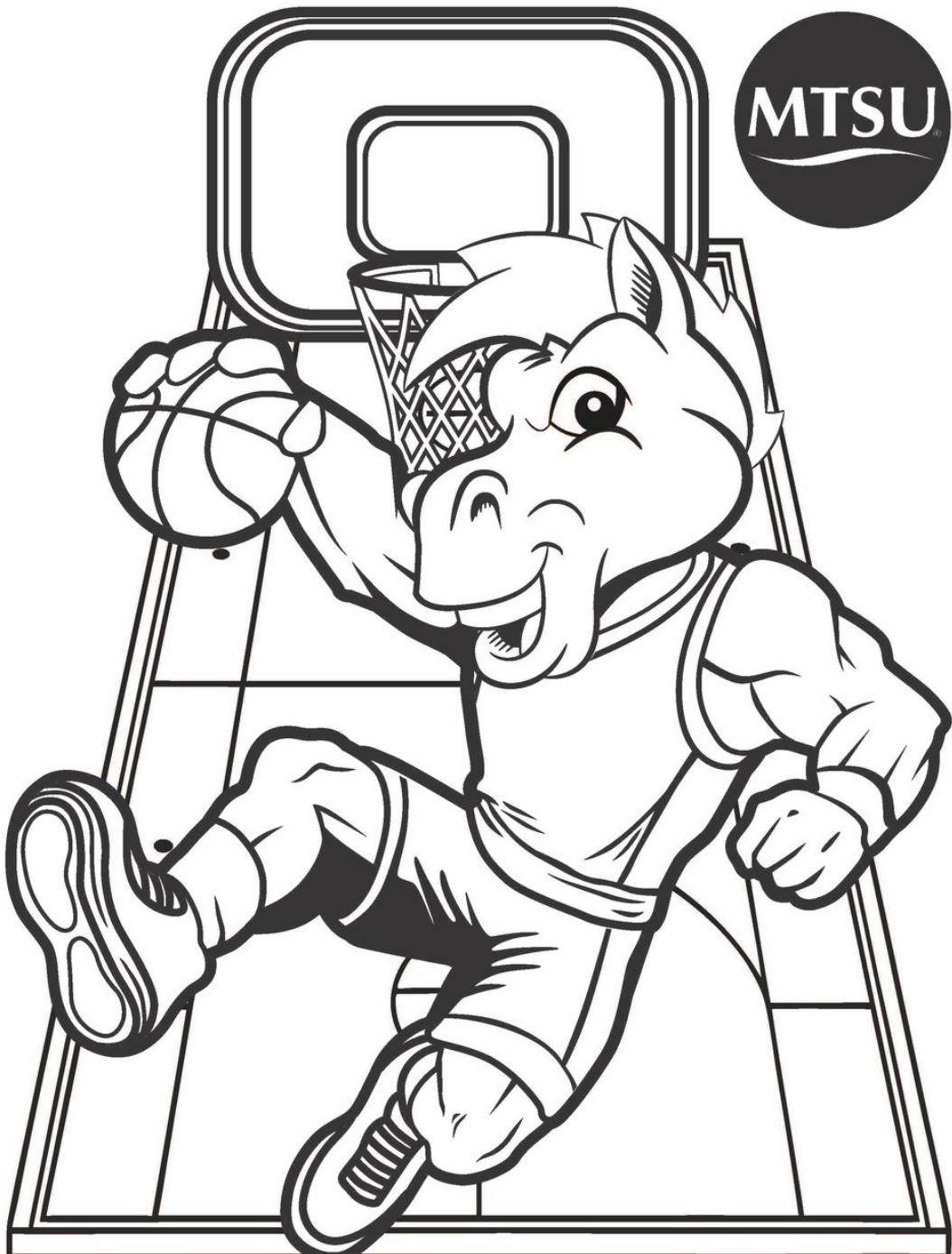


Image courtesy of MTSU Creative and Visual Services



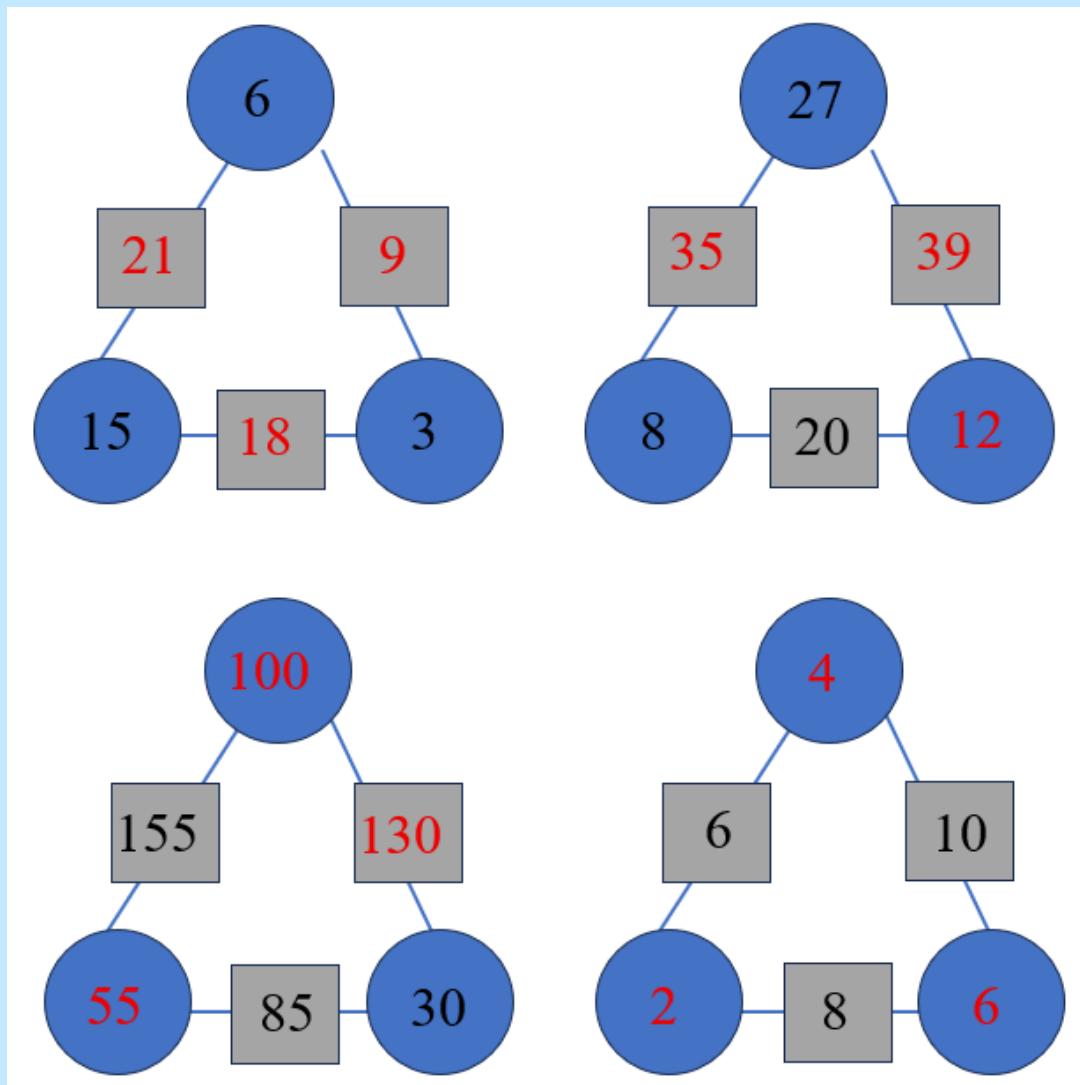
Image courtesy of MTSU Creative and Visual Services

Answer Key

(solve the puzzles first)

These are the answers to the Number Puzzle and Sudoku in the last section titled “Activities to Help Unwind and Relax.”

Numbers Puzzle (answer key)



Sudoku (answer key)

A

5	1	3	6	2	4	7	9	8
4	8	2	7	5	9	3	1	6
6	7	9	3	8	1	5	4	2
1	9	5	2	7	8	6	3	4
2	6	7	4	1	3	9	8	5
3	4	8	9	6	5	2	7	1
8	3	1	5	9	6	4	2	7
7	5	4	8	3	2	1	6	9
9	2	6	1	4	7	8	5	3

B

9	2	3	7	5	6	1	4	8
4	1	6	9	8	3	7	5	2
8	7	5	4	1	2	3	9	6
6	4	9	8	7	5	2	3	1
3	5	2	6	9	1	4	8	7
7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
2	3	9	1	4	9	6	7	5
1	9	4	5	6	7	8	2	3
5	6	7	3	2	8	9	1	4

About the Authors and Editors

Alphabetical by last name

Raquel Barbalat is an international graduate student from Brazil studying Communication and Media at Middle Tennessee State University. She is passionate about writing, storytelling, and exploring the intersections of culture, language, and personal growth. At MTSU, she serves as an editor for *Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression* in the Honors College. Her work often reflects her experiences as an international student, touching on themes of belonging, resilience, and discovery.

Sandra Campbell works in the Procurement Office at Middle Tennessee State University, where she supports campus operations with careful attention to policy and process. She holds a Graduate Certificate in Archival Studies and combines her professional expertise with her passion for history. Sandra regularly provides engaging History Minutes for MTSU Administrative Professionals, connecting colleagues with the university's past. Beyond campus, she serves as a community archivist and leads history initiatives in Rutherford County and beyond, preserving local heritage and encouraging public engagement with the past.

Jennifer Dix enjoys exploring multiple artistic mediums from her home studio, including collage, watercolor, acrylic painting, and fabric arts. A native of West Tennessee, she now resides in Murfreesboro with her husband and daughter. Jenn is a lifelong learner with a deep appreciation for the arts, creativity, and education. She is an Executive Assistant in the College of Liberal Arts and is pursuing her Master of Arts in Liberal Arts at MTSU.

Valeria Eadler is a Ph.D. candidate in Public History at Middle Tennessee State University. Her work centers on Nashville's Germantown, where she partners with residents to document grassroots preservation through oral histories, scanned archives, and community-reviewed captions. She leads the Germantown Oral History Project and publishes a public, Omeka-based digital exhibit. Valeria also creates pop-up exhibits and walking tours; past projects include curating the Tennessee Department of Health Centennial exhibit. She believes in consent, context, and care as the ethics of engagement.

James Hamby is the Director of the Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center at Middle Tennessee State University.

Meredith Anne (MA) Higgs, Professor of University Studies, has taught at MTSU since 1997. She has taught MTEngage classes for many years and is a strong supporter of integrating real-life experiences and examples into her classes.

Tomeka Jackson is the new Linked Data Librarian in Walker Library's Collection Development and Management department. Before joining MTSU, she was a Library Resident at Clemson University in South Carolina. Tomeka is passionate about professional growth, uplifting workplace morale, and exploring the creative arts. She enjoys collaborating with others and is always open to new opportunities to engage with and contribute to the broader university community.

Claire Keith is a social worker practicing at Youth Villages in Nashville. In May 2025, Claire completed her Master of Social Work at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), having received her bachelor's degree in psychology from MTSU in 2022. Claire's professional interests are play therapy, EMDR, and religious psychosis. Claire also loves to craft and adores her cat.

Felicity Lindberg is a senior in the Bachelor of Social Work program at Middle Tennessee State University. Alongside her classes, she works as a Registered Behavior Technician supporting children with behavioral challenges. She plans to continue her education in graduate school and pursue a career in clinical social work, with a focus on substance use treatment and advocating for accessible mental health resources in rural communities.

Laura Loggins is a dedicated student and staff member at MTSU, working in the College of Education. She is passionate about health and wellness, and has transformed her life by understanding how self-care directly contributes to overall health. Laura knows the challenges of balancing work, school, and personal life. She wrote this Zine to remind her fellow students that they are seen and valued. It also serves as a heartfelt guide, encouraging them to take care of themselves (mind, body, and soul) through academia and beyond.

Emiliya Mailyan is a student and graduate assistant in the English Ph.D. program at MTSU. She currently serves as the General Education English Program Assistant. Mailyan previously worked as the assistant editor and graphic designer for *Off Center: Creative Writing Magazine*. She loves writing poetry and incorporating multimodal elements into her creative work.

Shelly Salo Martinez is the Student Engagement Librarian at Middle Tennessee State University. She earned her Master of Science in Information Studies from The University of Texas at Austin and her Master of Public Affairs from Indiana University Bloomington. Her research interests include reflective teaching practices and disabilities in libraries. In her free time, Shelly enjoys baking, crochet, and playing board games.

A. Miller is a professor, press director, and book designer at Middle Tennessee State University and specializes in user experience research, UX/HCI, inclusive design, and accessibility.

Deliah Reed is a woman of many interests. She has always had a heart for short stories of romance, encouragement, and positive outcomes. This is her first story written to share with others. When she is not writing she enjoys visiting family and friends. She also enjoys crocheting and just being outdoors.

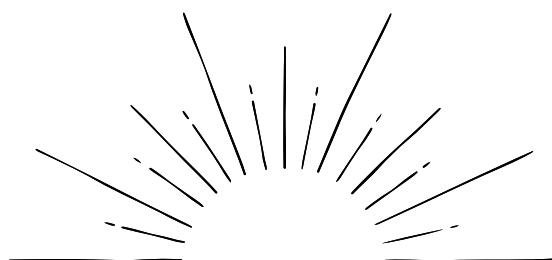
Caleb M. Smith, BSW, is an MSW candidate and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Social Work at Middle Tennessee State University. His research focuses on bereavement, grief, and social, economic, and racial justice, with aspirations to pursue a Ph.D. and advance equity within the social work profession.

Don Srisuriyo is the Student Engagement Coordinator for the College of Liberal Arts at Middle Tennessee State University. He holds a Master of Education in Administration and Supervision-Higher Education, a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Language-Spanish, and a Bachelor of Science in Biology-Organismal Biology and Ecology from MTSU. Through volunteering as a TN Achieves mentor for graduating high school students using TN Promise, he became involved in mentorship and uses his mentorship experience to guide student peer mentors and mentees in the Liberal Arts Mentoring Program.

Jessica Teter, LCSW, is a dedicated social work educator and BSW Practicum Coordinator at Middle Tennessee State University. With a passion for student development, she fosters meaningful community partnerships and guides students in building practical skills for the field. Her work emphasizes ethical practice, advocacy, and equity, preparing future social workers to serve individuals, families, and communities with compassion and professionalism.

Chelsea Barranger Vasquez is a Public History master's student at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) researching the ways in which Tennessee women utilized craft to navigate social bounds in the first half of the twentieth century through community building, educational pursuits, and financial contributions. Chelsea holds a Bachelor of Science in Art History from Middle Tennessee State University. She is currently a Graduate Research Assistant in the James E. Walker Library's Digital Scholarship Initiatives at MTSU and a tutor at the Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center. She interned at the Frist Art Museum in 2024 and Rutherford County Archives in 2025.

Miles Wine is a junior double-majoring in English and Public Writing and Rhetoric. He is additionally employed as a Peer Mentor at the Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center, where he works with students and faculty to brainstorm, draft, revise, and polish writings of all different genres. His research focuses on drawing from his experiences as a transman raised in the rural south, giving voice to marginalized communities, and studying inter- and intra-communal discourses. Miles has published work with MTSU's *Scientia et Humanitas* and *Off Center Creative Magazine*, ranging from formal literary analyses to creative poetry and prose.



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