



# NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

## [2026 Mr. and Miss Basketball Finalists Announced](#)

Congratulations to the 36 finalists for the 2026 Mr. and Miss Basketball Awards. These students, and the winners in each classification, will be recognized at the Tucker Theater on the campus of MTSU on Tuesday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m. The event will be open to the public.

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## [Knoxville area administrator honored for distinguished service](#)

A former Knoxville College football coach who also served as Austin-East's principal and helped bring that school a football championship, among myriad other roles.

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## [Eight to join the TSSAA Hall of Fame](#)

Two administrators, three coaches, two officials, and one contributor will be inducted on April 13 to join others in the annual gathering of those selected since the process began in 1982.

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## [Board of Control to meet on Wednesday, March 4](#)

The March 4 Board of Control meeting will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott in Mt. Juliet. The meeting begins at 9:00 a.m. The Board will examine enrollment collection options for the 2027-2029 classification period as a first reading, with final action scheduled for June. The Board will also decide on Division II Football classification methods after reviewing survey results from member schools - a topic previously tabled in January.

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## [Tennessee's Colleges of Applied Technology help keep the lights on in Tennessee, surrounding states](#)

After the Jan. 24 winter storm, trained electrical linemen helped keep communities in Tennessee and neighboring states powered through freezing temps, ice and fallen trees, thanks in part to hands-on training at Tennessee's Colleges of Applied Technology. Students from as far away as Memphis have made the nearly six-hour trek across the state to enroll in recent years in what has quickly become known as one of the best training programs in the entire Southeast region.

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## [Finding the fun of high school sports through the daily grind](#)

Fun is about the opportunity to be a part of a team, to work together with others and learn how to handle the ups and downs of life. Fun is about growing and learning and improving and gaining confidence. When that pressure from others to win and succeed overtakes the fun and enjoyment of playing sports, the grind can become larger than life and mental health is compromised.

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### Call for Submissions

We want to include your thoughts in the monthly TSSAA Newsletter! Do you have 50-500 words to share on the topic of **overwork & fatigue in sports**? We welcome submissions from principals, athletic administrators, coaches and students! Consider sharing your thoughts, essays or even poems for an upcoming issue. Please send submissions in Microsoft Word format to [mgillespie@tssaa.org](mailto:mgillespie@tssaa.org).

TSSAA continues its support of the **National SAT/ACT Prep Project** through the NFHS and eKnowledge which allows any Tennessee student to receive a 95% discount on SAT or ACT prep courses. This is a community-service, non-profit project and all student fees are reinvested to improve the program and reach more families. The project has more than 45,000 five-star reviews and has already assisted nearly 300,000 families. Learn more at <https://eknowledge.com/TSSAA>.



Sports News

General News

## 2026 Mr. and Miss Basketball Finalists Announced

Awards to be presented on Tuesday, March 10

February 12, 2026

The Mr. and Miss Basketball Awards will be presented to the top girls and boys in six classifications of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association at the Tucker Theater on the campus of MTSU on Tuesday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m. The event will be open to the public.

A statewide committee of sportswriters selected winners based on performance during the 2025-2026 regular season. Academics and character were also taken into consideration. High school head basketball coaches and members of the media nominated the finalists.

This is the 41st year that the Mr. and Miss Basketball Awards have been presented to Tennessee's best high school basketball players. American General was the sponsor of the event since the inception of the awards in 1986 until 2001. The Memphis Grizzlies were sponsors of the awards from 2002-2004. From 2005-2015 the Mr. and Miss Basketball Awards were presented at the conclusion of each respective championship game as part of the post-game trophy ceremony.

### Division II-A Miss Basketball Finalists

Haylen Ayers, University School of Jackson

Kayte Madison Bjornstad, Providence Christian Academy

Jules Ferrell, Middle Tennessee Christian School

### Division II-AA Miss Basketball Finalists

Meeyah Green, Webb School of Knoxville

Ava Jarrett, Lipscomb Academy

Ava Jones, Hutchison School

### Class 1A Miss Basketball Finalists

Laila Downs-Darden, McEwen High School

Rayanna Fisher, Greenfield High School

Zoey Nicholas, Pickett County High School

**Class 2A Miss Basketball Finalists**

Maliyah Glasper, Gatlinburg-Pittman High School  
Wylie Kee, Huntingdon High School  
Kaegan Young, Cascade High School

**Class 3A Miss Basketball Finalists**

Andrea Flores, Daniel Boone High School  
Chelby Jordan, Dyersburg High School  
Sydney Wilhite, Cumberland County High School

**Class 4A Miss Basketball Finalists**

Cecilie Brandimore, Franklin High School  
Kimora Fields, Bradley Central High School  
Natalya Hodge, Bearden High School

**Division II-A Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Lawson Lee, Battle Ground Academy  
Segond Sompa, Grace Christian Academy  
Christopher Washington, Jr., Providence Christian Academy

**Division II-AA Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Cade Murphy, Knoxville Catholic High School  
Trey Pearson, Pope Saint John Paul II Preparatory School  
Fred Smith, Jr., Briarcrest Christian School

**Class 1A Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Camden Cole, Eagleville High School  
Will McCrary, Jackson County High School  
Darion Taylor, Humboldt High School

**Class 2A Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Jayden Barton, Gatlinburg-Pittman High School  
Derrick Roberson, Chattanooga Preparatory School  
Jackson Simmons, Unicoi County High School

**Class 3A Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Ty Cobb, Upperman High School  
Nick Steen, Fulton High School  
Markylon Terry, Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School

**Class 4A Mr. Basketball Finalists**

Justin Frison, Houston High School  
DJ Okoth, Bartlett High School  
Cutter Sisk, Beech Senior High School



# DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Sports News

General News

## Knoxville area administrator honored for distinguished service

Marion Quinn has served Knoxville schools over multiple decades

February 26, 2026

Earning eight varsity letters as a two-sport collegiate athlete might sound like the path less traveled.

And it was for Marion Quinn, growing up in Tuskegee, Alabama, and then becoming a collegiate baseball and football stalwart at Kentucky State University.

However, that path might never have happened had a rule change not dramatically altered what sports Quinn could and could not participate in at Tuskegee Institute High School.

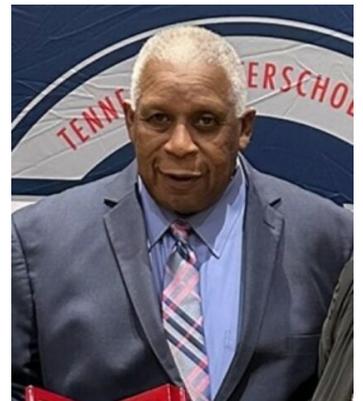
You see, the Korean War had flooded high schools with grown men who had served the United States and returned home as war veterans but not yet high school graduates.

“I was playing Babe Ruth Baseball and then my junior year, I started playing football,” said Quinn, a longtime school and athletics administrator in Knox County Public Schools. “Because back then in Alabama, we had guys playing high school football at 21, 22 years old. They were coming back from the Korean War and finishing up their high school (education). These were grown men and were too big for me to play.

“And, then, they put in a rule that you couldn’t play (high school football in Alabama) if you were over 18.”

That rule change not only dramatically altered Quinn’s immediate future, but it also helped facilitate a decades-long career in education, coaching and administration. A former Knoxville College football coach who also served as Austin-East’s principal and helped bring that school a football championship, among myriad other roles, Quinn is a 2025-26 TSSAA Distinguished Service Award winner.

“Well, when I went to college and played and from little league to high school to even college, I had coaches that I admired and that kind of mentored me,” said Quinn, a Kentucky State University Hall of Famer. “I saw what they were doing and I said, ‘Hey, I may want to do that one day.’ Training and mentoring young men or young guys to become men. I guess that’s what kind of pushed me that way because I always had coaches that pushed us.”



Marion Quinn

Quinn's likewise had a long-running role as a Knox County School Systems county-wide athletics director – an endeavor he embraced as an opportunity to be a resource for more coaches and schools, as well as also an element in Quinn's induction earlier this decade into the Tennessee Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association Hall of Fame.

"When I got the system-wide job, then I was able to help more people and even help young directors that came in, to help their coaches and show them how to help kids," Quinn said. "It was just an opportunity to help more people."

Unsurprisingly, with a playing career spanning the 1960s and '70s, as well as a professional current that's run into the 2020s, Quinn isn't short on remarkable moments.

"There's a lot of favorite memories," Quinn, specifically highlighting his work as Knox County's system-wide athletics head, said. "Winning our city championship in Babe Ruth Baseball all three years that I played, especially my first year, we were not expected to win. High school having a good year and being able to get a scholarship (to Kentucky State).

"College, I think my freshman year we won two games and then my senior year, we went to the Orange Blossom Classic, end-of-the-year bowl in the Orange Bowl against Florida A&M.

"Never will forget when I became principal at Austin-East and selecting a head coach after two years there, we won a state championship and so those are some of my fondest memories."

TSSAA proudly salutes Marion Quinn for his decades of contribution to high school athletics as an administrator in Tennessee.

AUTHOR

***John Brice***



Sports News

General News

## Eight to join the TSSAA Hall of Fame

2026 induction ceremony to be held on April 13

February 5, 2026

The 2026 TSSAA Hall of Fame inductees have been selected. Eight new members will be inducted into the TSSAA Hall of Fame at the annual luncheon at the Student Union Building on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro on Monday, April 13, 2026.

Two administrators, three coaches, two officials, and one contributor will be inducted that day to join others in the annual gathering of those selected since the process began in 1982.

Those being inducted at this year's luncheon are: **Mike Ellson**, administrator from Nashville; **Gene Menees**, administrator from Madison; **Rob Black**, coach from Knoxville; **Robert "Bobby" Broyles**, coach from Chuckey; **Eddie Courtney**, coach from Knoxville; **Ken Melton**, official from McMinnville; **Charles Watkins**, official from Nashville; and **Rick Colbert**, contributor from Brentwood.

The Hall of Fame luncheon will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, April 13. The luncheon is to not only honor the new inductees and their families, but to honor all past inductees into the TSSAA Hall of Fame. Tickets will be available online beginning on Monday, March 2 on the [TSSAA website](#). All ticket orders will be available for pick-up on the day of the luncheon and will not be mailed. There will be NO ticket sales at the door.

Additional information on the inductees is provided below. Please contact Heather Carter at [hcarte@tssaa.org](mailto:hcarte@tssaa.org) if you would like additional information on any of the inductees or if you have any questions.

**Mike Ellson** is being recognized for more than three decades of exemplary service as an athletic administrator, educator, and leader in interscholastic athletics.

Ellson earned a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Welch College in 1987 and a Master of Education in Administration and Supervision from Tennessee State University in 1994. He has achieved the highest professional distinctions in athletic administration, including Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) and Certified Master Athletic Administrator (CMAA) through the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA), while completing extensive leadership training at the state and national levels.

In 1987, during only the third year of the school's existence, Ellson founded the athletic program at Christ Presbyterian Academy, serving as the school's first Athletic Director for more than 30 years. He also served as the first boys' and girls' basketball coach in the school's history and held a combined record of 259-170.

Under his leadership, the athletic department at CPA expanded to nearly 60 athletic teams and over 70 coaches, offering a comprehensive and competitive program for both middle and high school students. He also served as Department Chairman for K–12 Physical Education and Wellness from 1992–2012, and was instrumental in developing sports medicine, concussion management, and facility growth initiatives.

Beyond the school level, Ellson has provided influential leadership statewide and nationally. He has served as President and Executive Director of the Tennessee Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (TIAAA), a National Faculty Member for the NIAAA Leadership Training Institute, and an Ex-Officio member of the TSSAA Board of Control representing TIAAA.

**Gene Menees** is being honored for his 34 years of distinguished service as an athletic administrator with the TSSAA. His career reflects an enduring commitment to student-athletes, sportsmanship, and the integrity of interscholastic athletics across the state of Tennessee.

Menees joined the TSSAA staff in 1991, serving as an Assistant Executive Director until his retirement in August of 2025. As the association's administrator for baseball and basketball, he provided leadership and oversight for state championship events, assigned officials for postseason tournaments, organized and directed officials' camps, and conducted rules interpretation meetings. He worked closely with officials, coaches, supervisors, and school administrators, earning statewide respect for his professionalism, fairness, and deep knowledge of the games.

In addition to his work with baseball and basketball, Menees oversaw the registration of all officials statewide and was responsible for the association's sportsmanship initiative, promoting ethical conduct and respect throughout interscholastic competition. His influence extended well beyond his assigned sports, as he faithfully served the membership in countless capacities and played a vital role in the daily operations of the TSSAA.

Prior to his tenure at TSSAA, Menees was a teacher and coach at Donelson Christian Academy and Davidson Academy in Nashville. A standout baseball player, he competed at Vanderbilt University and was drafted by the San Diego Padres, later spending seven years in professional baseball, including time with the Nashville Sounds after signing with the Cincinnati Reds organization. He also officiated collegiate basketball until 2018.

In 2016, Menees received the prestigious National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Citation Award, recognizing his national impact on high school athletics. His legacy is one of service, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to student-athletes, coaches, and officials.

**Rob Black's** legacy is synonymous with Fulton High School football, where his lifelong dedication spans from serving as a childhood ball boy for his father to becoming a state championship-winning head coach. A 1984 Fulton graduate and three-sport athlete, Black played football and baseball at Carson-Newman University before returning to his alma mater to begin a coaching tenure that would last over three decades.

After serving as an assistant and Offensive Coordinator for 19 years, Black was named Head Coach in 2011. Over the next 11 seasons, he compiled an outstanding record of 103-36, establishing himself as one of only sixteen coaches in Knox County history to surpass 100 career wins. His leadership defined a dynasty, guiding the Falcons to three consecutive Class 4A state championships in 2012, 2013, and 2014. This dominant era featured a 37-game winning streak and two undefeated seasons. His 2013 and 2014 squads remain the top two scoring teams in TSSAA history, with the 2013 team setting a state record of 862 points.

Beyond his head coaching accolades, Black's influence encompasses the program's entire modern history. As an offensive coordinator, he helped secure state titles in 2003, 2004, and 2006, meaning he was a pivotal part of all six of the school's state championships. His honors include being named the 2012 State Coach of the Year and induction into the Greater Knoxville Sports Hall of Fame.

Coach Black currently serves as an athletic director at Fulton High School, along with fellow TSSAA Hall of Famer Jody Wright. The football field at Fulton is named after Coach Black's father, the late Bob Black, who is a member of the 2008 Hall of Fame class.

**Robert "Bobby" Broyles** is a distinguished figure in Tennessee high school basketball, celebrated for his remarkable success and longevity as a head coach in Greene County. His career spans decades at Chuckey High School, Chuckey-Doak High School, and South Greene High School, where he compiled an impressive record of 542 wins and 350 losses leading both boys' and girls' programs.

As a boys' head coach, Broyles amassed 407 career wins against 277 losses. His leadership guided his teams to two District Tournament Championships, three District Runner-up finishes, and eleven Regional Tournament appearances. His tenure was marked by high-performance teams, with 10 of his squads securing 20 or more wins in a single season, and two achieving 30-win seasons. Notably, his 1961-62 Chuckey-Doak team set a school record with 35 wins.

Broyles also made a significant impact as a girls' head coach, recording 135 wins and 73 losses. His teams earned three District Tournament Runner-up finishes and made five Regional Tournament appearances. He later served as a long-time assistant coach, contributing to state tournament runs at South Greene and Chuckey-Doak.

When Chuckey High School closed due to consolidation, the superintendent garnered him with the task of helping transition two high schools (Doak High School and Chuckey High School) into one to become "Chuckey-Doak". He coached many of the sports when it first opened and basically established the athletic program there.

His legacy continues at the school, where his sons, Steven and Sam, serve as the principal and head boys' basketball coach, respectively.

**Eddie Courtney's** name is synonymous with Farragut High School football, where his influence has spanned nearly half a century. Serving the school for 45 years as a teacher and coach, and leading the program as head coach since 1996, Courtney has built a legacy defined by integrity, resilience, and championship excellence.

Courtney boasts an impressive career record of 204-121, ranking him fifth all-time among active Tennessee high school head coaches as of 2023. His tenure at the helm of the Admirals includes four Region Championships, twelve Quarterfinal appearances, and the crowning achievement of the 2016 Class 5A State Championship. He has coached close to 50 All-State players, 3 All-Americans, and six TSSAA Mr. Football finalists. His ability to develop talent is evident, having sent over 200 players to play collegiately, with seven reaching the NFL.

However, Courtney's impact extends far beyond the scoreboard. Known for his "BAM: Be a Man" program, he prioritizes molding young athletes into responsible men, husbands, and fathers. His personal resilience has served as a powerful lesson to his players; Courtney has battled cancer twice without wavering in his commitment to his team, inspiring the community and earning the 2006 Knoxville News-Sentinel Courage Award.

His contributions have been widely recognized, with accolades including the 2017 Pat Summitt Ignite Greatness Award and induction into the Tennessee Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2021.

Coach Courtney stepped down as the head coach of the Admirals in 2024, but he continues to serve as an assistant coach under his son, Geoff.

For nearly half a century, **Ken Melton** has been a cornerstone of integrity and professionalism within the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA). Beginning his officiating career in 1977 immediately after graduating from Lebanon High School, Melton has dedicated over 48 years to high school athletics as an official, assigner, and supervisor.

Melton's on-field resume is distinguished, spanning 25 years of active officiating that included working four state football championship games and three state basketball championship games. However, his influence grew even further as he transitioned into leadership, serving as the assigner and supervisor for the North Central Officials Association for over two decades. Melton is credited with being the first assigner in his area to implement the internet-based assigning program Arbiter Sports, a system now standard across the state.

His contributions have earned him numerous accolades, including the A.F. Bridges Sportsmanship Award (2001-2002), and the TSSAA Distinguished Service Award in 2021, which he received alongside his wife and fellow official, Michelle Melton. The two also received recognition from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Melton's induction would continue a proud family legacy; his father, the late Bill Melton, was inducted into the TSSAA Hall of Fame in 1998. Described by colleagues as the embodiment of "Class, Character, and Integrity," Melton is revered not just for his technical expertise but for his mentorship of countless officials. Mr. Melton is defined by being fair, consistent, and approachable, leaving an indelible mark on the quality of high school sports in Tennessee.

**Charles E. Watkins, Jr.**, has dedicated over half a century to the world of sports officiating, establishing himself as a pillar of integrity and excellence within the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA). A registered official in basketball, volleyball, baseball, and softball, Watkins' career began with the Metropolitan Nashville Parks department and flourished into a 50-year legacy that touched every level of the game.

Watkins officiated countless District, Regional, and Sectional tournaments, capping his high school on-court career with two TSSAA State Basketball Tournament appearances. However, his impact as a leader is perhaps his greatest contribution. Serving as a TSSAA Supervisor for the Middle Tennessee Basketball Officials Association (MTBOA) for 28 years, he revolutionized official training. He was instrumental in developing the first sanctioned TSSAA Basketball Officiating Camp at MTSU, a model that established the mandatory camp requirements now standard for state tournament selection.

His expertise transcended high school sports. Watkins spent 17 years as a Division 1 collegiate official across eight conferences, including the SEC and OVC. His resume includes NCAA Tournament assignments, NIT games, and even international exhibitions in Tokyo. He was also a charter member of the SEC Baseball Umpires Staff.

Watkins is celebrated not just for his whistle, but for his willingness to sit in the bleachers with a pen in hand, critiquing and guiding the next generation. A 1962 graduate of Cameron High School, he was inducted into the Metro Nashville Public Schools Sports Hall of Fame in 2025.

For over four decades, **Rick Colbert** has served as the legal counsel for the TSSAA. During that time, he has navigated the complexities of educational policy, labor relations, and the regulation of interscholastic athletics. A graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Law, Colbert joined the Nashville legal community in 1981 at Cornelius & Collins, where he practiced alongside his predecessor and fellow TSSAA Hall of Famer, Charles Hampton White.

Rick Colbert's legacy is defined by his unwavering defense of the TSSAA's authority to regulate and maintain competitive equity. He became the face of the association during the landmark Brentwood Academy litigation, a decade-long constitutional odyssey that reached the U.S. Supreme Court twice. In the 2001 case, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Brentwood Academy, sending the case back to the Court of Appeals; however, the 2007 unanimous victory reinforced the association's right to enforce anti-recruiting rules as a condition of voluntary membership. These influential rulings protected the educational mission of high school sports across the United States.

Colbert's counsel has ensured that the TSSAA's rules are legally sound, and that its disciplinary actions withstand judicial scrutiny. This regulatory framework is built upon several core rules designed to maintain competitive equity and prioritize academic achievement over athletic success.

Beyond the courtroom, Colbert has been a pivotal force in legislative strategy and administrative fairness. He successfully worked with state legislators to amend the Public Records Act, ensuring student-athletes' private academic and medical information remained shielded from public disclosure. Colbert continues to provide steady leadership as the TSSAA navigates modern challenges such as NIL and transfer eligibility.

Colbert's expertise has been utilized on a national level, as he has been chosen to speak at multiple legal seminars for the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). He is heavily relied upon by other state associations for his legal advice in the ever-changing world of high school athletics.

Colbert is a partner at Thompson Burton PLLC. He also represents educators across the state in his long-time role as outside counsel for the Tennessee Education Association. His practice includes representation of private business and individuals in complex litigation in state and federal courts in disputes involving employment, contracts, and property. A Fellow of the Nashville Bar Foundation with a 5.0 Peer Review rating, Rick Colbert's career represents an unparalleled commitment to the integrity, stability, and legal architecture of Tennessee high school athletics.



General News

Meeting Agendas/Minutes News

## Board of Control to meet on Wednesday, March 4

### Meeting to be held in Mt. Juliet

February 27, 2026

The March 4 Board of Control meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Mt. Juliet (1975 Providence Parkway, Mt. Juliet, TN). The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m.

The Board will examine enrollment collection options for the 2027-2029 classification period as a first reading, with final action scheduled for June. The Board will also decide on Division II Football classification methods after reviewing survey results from member schools - a topic previously tabled in January. Officials' fees recommendations for 2026-2029 will receive a second reading after preliminary approval in January, with comparisons to surrounding states and per-school impact analyses to be presented. The Howard School's appeal regarding enrollment classification and requests from Nashville Christian School to change wrestling regions will also be considered.

Additionally, the Board will elect new leadership, receive updates on the implementation of recent legislation (HB25/SB16) affecting eligibility rules, and consider co-op program requests from Fayette Academy and St. Benedict at Auburndale. The meeting will include discussions about potentially making the Division I Basketball District Tournament 3rd and 4th place game an elimination contest and review Lead Christian Academy's application for TSSAA membership for the upcoming school year.

#### Agenda and Live Meeting Information

The full agenda can be found below.

#### Documents

[Board of Control Agenda \(March 4, 2026\) \(PDF\)](#)