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# Youngsters Discover Sugar Plum Park

JUNE 17TH 2011 BY NEWS

## Youngsters Discover Sugar Plum Park

Dexter has some wonderful parks, and one of the "hidden gems" of these green spaces in the city is Sugar Plum Park. The park is located on Williams Street, between Grant and Fannetta.

Sugar Plum was donated to the city by the Morgan family in the 1960s, and is designed as a park for young people. New equipment was purchased some years ago through a grant from the state. The large play set includes two slides and all sorts of twists and turns for younger children. And the entire set is positioned on a cushioned, play-safe surface made of recycled material.

Earlier this week this  youngsters in first grade at Southwest Elementary walked the short distance to Sugar Plum park for a noontime outing.

The kids romped and played at the park, enjoying the playground equipment and the green "gum balls" that have fallen from the park's trees.

The outing was a new adventure for the kids - and a discovery of one of Dexter's "great little" parks. The youngsters are all students of Shannon Putnam and Heather Ryan. (SMT photos by Annabeth Miller)

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## Three Rivers Hosts Popular Musical

JUNE 16TH 2011 BY NEWS

### Three Rivers Hosts Popular Musical

POPLAR BLUFF, Mo. – Three Rivers College will host the Imperial Theatre Company’s production of “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” this Saturday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m.

The company’s home facilities in Pocahontas, Ark., were damaged in the April flooding of the Black River.

“The entire building was sitting in 36 inches of water,” said Andee Evers, founder of the Studio for the Arts, the non-profit that owns and operates the Imperial Theatre. “We lost everything from furniture to office records to dance studio flooring. It’s been devastating, but we’ve seen an incredible amount of support from the community and from volunteers who have donated time and labor to start repairs.”

In order for the company to continue its production run of “Joseph,” which opened in March, Three Rivers College is allowing the Imperial Theatre to use its facilities at the Tinnin Fine Arts Center free of charge. All proceeds from ticket sales will go toward the rehabilitation of the Imperial Theatre building in Pocahontas.

“We saw this as an opportunity to do the public a service,” said Dr. Wesley Payne, Vice President for Learning at Three Rivers. “We’re giving the company a great place to perform, and we’re bringing a great show to Poplar Bluff.”

“Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” is the high-energy retelling of the story of Joseph and his multi-colored coat from the book of Genensis. With music and lyrics by Tim Rice and musical theatre legend Andrew Lloyd Webber, the show continues to be popular among families and church-going audiences.

The Imperial Theatre Company has been producing its popular dinner theatre shows in Pocahontas for over 15 years. Evers calls the group a regional theatre company, stating that audiences come faithfully to see their shows from Jonesboro, Paducah, and even Memphis. Professionally-trained actors are featured in a variety of productions, and kept on staff to coach the over 200 students who participate in acting and dance classes at the Studio for the Arts.

“We’re excited to be coming back to Poplar Bluff,” said Evers. “In past years, we’ve taken different shows on the road, and we’ve performed “Grease” and “Blood Brothers” there. We can’t thank Three Rivers enough for allowing us this opportunity.” Tickets are \$12 each and will be available

at the door on the evening of the production. Dinner will not be included with this performance, which begins at 7:30 in the auditorium of the Tinnin Fine Arts Center on the Three Rivers campus in Poplar Bluff.

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## Miracle Dog: MU Vet Team Helps Joplin Victim

JUNE 16TH 2011 BY NEWS

### Miracle Dog: MU Vet Team Helps Joplin Victim

COLUMBIA, Mo. – May 22, 2011 was meant to be a day of celebration. Joplin High School teachers Steven and Debbie Leatherman had just returned home from graduation ceremonies, honoring the achievements of students they had known and nurtured for the past four years.

Tornado sirens had been sounding and a quick check of the local weather station prompted them to head to the basement with their 10-year-old cocker spaniel, Sugar. Once in the basement, they switched on the television downstairs and found themselves watching live coverage of a massive tornado barreling toward Joplin.

According to their son, Daniel, a student at the University of Missouri, their anxiety increased and they decided to seek the additional safety of a concrete-walled storm shelter within the basement. However, Sugar, sensing the increased fear of her owners, became panicky and bolted back upstairs to her own “safe area,” a spot under one of the beds.

There are few "good" stories to emerge from the rubble in Joplin, but the story about Sugar and her family is a story that warms the heart.

Sugar, a 10-year-old cocker spaniel, was brought to the University of Missouri Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital after the May 22, 2011 tornado. A spinal injury had resulted in her hind legs being paralyzed.

Before the tornado hit their home, Debbie Leatherman tried to pursue the family pet, but her husband grabbed her and pulled her back into the safety of the shelter and closed the doors above them. Less than a minute later they could hear the twister tearing their house apart.

When they emerged from the shelter, debris was all that remained of their home and Sugar was missing. Daniel drove home to Joplin from Columbia and the following morning the family began picking through the rubble of their possessions, dreading the possibility that they would find their dog's body.

Meanwhile, in neighboring Kansas, Daniel's aunt began a search of her own, combing through social network sites for some clue to Sugar's whereabouts.

And then a breakthrough. A Facebook page revealed that a dog resembling Sugar had been taken to the Joplin Humane Society. A good Samaritan had found the injured animal in a flooded storm ditch several blocks from the wreckage that was the Leathermans' house. Paralyzed, Sugar had been unable to pull herself to safety and was in danger of drowning had she not been rescued when she was.

With much of Joplin in ruins and resources stretched, the Joplin Humane Society veterinarian advised the Leathermans to seek care for their pet in another city. Daniel Leatherman called the University of Missouri Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, where veterinary neurology technologist Stephanie Gilliam advised him to bring Sugar in. The following morning, Daniel Leatherman, his car converted into a makeshift dog ambulance, drove Sugar to Columbia.

At the MU Veterinary Hospital, Sugar was immobilized and prepared for radiographs and an MRI. Fred Wininger, an assistant professor of neurology and neurosurgery in the College of Veterinary Medicine, examined the dog and noted that while she had no use of her hind legs, she retained pain sensation in her paws. He determined she had sustained a traumatic T12-13 intervertebral disc rupture.

Wininger explained: "The intervertebral disc is like a jelly donut that is soft at its core and harder on the outside. Its function is to cushion the vertebral bones around the spinal cord. With severe enough injury, the "jelly" center, also known as the nucleus pulposus, can extrude out of the shell and compress the spinal cord."

[ The rupture caused severe bruising to Sugar's spinal cord and mild subluxation, or malalignment of the bones. Time was critical, Wininger said. With pain sensation intact,

immediate surgical intervention allows more than 80 percent of dogs to regain function in their legs. Winger performed a surgical procedure known as a hemilaminectomy, which created a window in the vertebral bone allowing him to decompress the disc and hemorrhage that was pushing on the cord.

The bruising that already occurred would require time and physical therapy to heal. Two days after surgery, Gilliam, who provides rehabilitative therapy to veterinary neurology patients, began electrical stimulation on Sugar's hind limbs to help prevent muscle atrophy. Sugar received the treatment once per day for seven days. Gilliam also began underwater treadmill therapy once per day to find signs of movement in the dog's hind limbs.

On June 6, two weeks after the tornado, Sugar began to show movement in her hind legs for the first time. Gilliam and the neurology team continued the underwater treadmill therapy once per day and started additional therapeutic exercises to help Sugar strengthen her muscles.

The Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital through its Silent Partners Fund and College of Veterinary Medicine absorbed the cost of Sugar's treatment and therapy. Orscheln Farm and Home in Columbia also helped out by donating food and toys to help with Sugar's care.

A little more than a week later, on June 14, Daniel Leatherman collected the family's beloved pet to continue her recovery at home.

"We are so warmed by everything that has been done," he said. "It has given us back our family."

***Photo Above: Sugar was released from the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital on June 14, three weeks after being brought in for surgery to repair an injury to her spinal cord.***

*Information for story provided by the University of Missouri-Columbia News Bureau*

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## Let's Hear It For The Cheer Girls!

JUNE 13TH 2011 BY NEWS

### Let's Hear It For The Cheer Girls!

It's a time when dreams come true for little girls in the area, where they learn to cheer and stunt and dance just like the big kids. It was Dexter Cheer Camp!

Last week more than 110 enthusiastic young girls joined the Bearcat Varsity Cheerleaders for the summer cheer camp. This is the second year for the event, sponsored by the varsity girls as a summer project.

The Bearcat cheer clinic not only starts little girls on the path to cheerleading, but it is also a fundraiser for the cheer program. Money raised will go towards seasonal expenses, including competitions during the year.

Girls attending the three-day clinic were divided into five groups with varsity cheerleaders assigned to each group as mentors. Participants learned basic stunting and tumbling skills, along with cheer and dance.

The hit of the week was a program for parents on Friday, when parents, family and friends packed an (unfortunately) un-air conditioned DHS Auditorium. Each group

performed and showed off the moves and stunts learned during the week, all the girls decked out in their Bearcat cheer camp t-shirts.

The camp was organized by Laura Stone and Michelle Kirkley, sponsors of the varsity cheer squad at DHS.

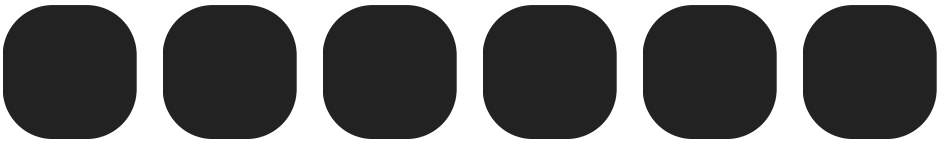
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# Pixley Finishes Career With 'Breds

JUNE 11TH 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

## Pixley Finishes Career With 'Breds

*By Andrew Cato,  
ShowMe Times Sports*

*"The Older I Get ... The Better I Was"*  
~unknown

Small town athletes bring a lot of excitement and fun to their communities during their grade school and high school careers. As a community, we watch them achieve and accomplish great things, but much like the wind, they move on to college, careers and families.

At that point, the old adage begins to ring loudly *"The Older I Get ... The Better I Was"* !! But not for DHS graduate Drew Pixley. Drew has recently completed a stellar Division 1 baseball career at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky.

Pixley, the son of Aaron and Amy Pixley, has always been the "locker room kid". From an early age, he hung out on the field with his dad during his college days at Oakland City University. Many times, members of Aaron's college team would serve as a babysitter for Drew as an infant.

One would have anticipated him to choose the college athletic road just from the heritage of his family. [images/Blog Images/show/uium](#)

Pixley's size for the catcher position was always in question, but with sheer athleticism and a heart of gold, Pixley cast away all doubters making his place on every roster.

Pixley began playing baseball at a young age, and enjoyed success at every level. As *"A Pixley"*, he has always drawn positive attention in Dexter as a good young man and an excellent athlete.

He recounts many great memories that lead to his success.

“When I was 11, my family moved to Dexter and I played on the Bootheel Buggies traveling team,” Pixley said. “We won the Show-Me Games that year. The next year we went to Cooperstown, New York, and played in the Dreams Park tournament. When I was 13, our Junior Babe Ruth team won districts and state and made it to the regional tournament in Iowa City.”

Pixley’s success on the field continued when he suited up in the red and black of Dexter High, where he had a unique opportunity: he got to play for his father.

[images/Blog Images/show/uiun](#)

“In high school, I made my first varsity start my sophomore year,” Pixley recalled. “I was named first team All-Conference sophomore through senior year.”

“If I could play for my dad everywhere I went I would; I loved playing under my dad,” Pixley continued. “He always knew how to light a fire in me that sparked a big play or a big hit, and he taught me a lot about the game.”

Pixley was quick to cite DHS head baseball coach Brian Becker as another influence on his skill.

“Let's not forget Coach Becker - my dad taught me the game, but with Coach Becker as the head coach, we posted the best record he's had as a head coach my senior year.”

[images/Blog Images/show/uiuo](#)

After his high school years, Pixley committed to play baseball for Mineral Area College. From the catcher position, Pixley's ability to nail base runners at second base with his quick pop time and *rocket* arm. His performance at MAC was again exceptional, and recruiters came looking again from the 4-year schools.

Murray State became his school of choice due to the close proximity to home, and he was able to play multiple positions, even using his speed as an outfielder.

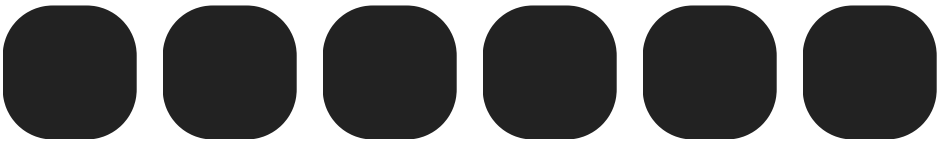
Many times we overlook the great accomplishments of our college athletes from Dexter. So many community volunteers, parents and coaches pour their lives into these young men and women during summer leagues and civic programs. It truly becomes a great reflection on the quality of our high school and civic programs when we celebrate the success of these young men and women.

Make no doubts that Drew Pixley's college career should be celebrated as one of overcoming obstacles and achieving great things. As Pixley continues on, he plans to complete his undergraduate degree and and follow his parents path by entering into secondary education - and with any luck, our community will have the pleasure of having him work with our children and grandchildren.

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