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Mustang News

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First of its kind

Mustang's Basecamp aims for project-based, child-led learning

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Public education and blended programs didn't fit one Mustang mother's son's needs. The answer — a hybrid school of her own.

Brenna Reaves, mother of five, has been homeschooling for the last five years.

She has lived in Mustang with her family for seven years. The Oklahoma City native's 9-year-old twin son has a neuromuscular disease and is the reason Reaves homeschools.

"That very first day (of opening the school) — it's going to mean so much to my family because we have created an inclusive, quality educational environment for our son, who in this world, faces so many 'Nos,'" Reaves said.

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Mustang mother Brenna Reaves' heart belongs to her twins Jack and Lily Reaves. Jack was diagnosed with a neuromuscular disease, making public education and blending learning programs very challenging. Reaves, who has been homeschooling her children the last five years, is opening her own hybrid school in Mustang to help students, like Jack, who need a different learning environment. Photo / Provided

Residents concerned about city's infrastructure

Editor's note: This story more closely examines the development of a new subdivision by Taber Homes near Morgan Road. The rezoning of the 80 acres for Taber was approved amid much residential concern during the Feb. 1 Mustang City Council meeting.

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Throughout the last several years, more residents have been coming to the Mustang City Council with their concerns about the city's infrastructure.

A handful of rezoning applications in the last couple years for more residential developments in the city has many homeowners worried that the council has yet to address traffic and flooding hazards.

The council has denied several rezoning applications because of their concerns.

After listening to more than 10 residents voice concerns during a public hearing Feb. 1, the Mustang City Council approved 6-1 to rezone 80 acres west of Morgan Road from agricultural to residential.

Ward 5 Travis McKenzie motioned to table the item, it failed because of no second and then he voted no. While he said change is inevitable, McKenzie said most of what Mustang has is houses.

Mayor Brian Grider disagreed, mentioning several commercial developments were recently finishing up with more on the way.

Ward 6 Nathan Sholund said not everyone will be pleased, but he was most concerned with flooding in the area.

Residents shared flooding, traffic and overall growth concerns with the council for nearly two

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'If I didn't drink, we wouldn't be here' Life sentence given in DUI case that killed MHS alumna

Editor's note: This story provides a more in-depth look into the sentencing hearing of Malcolm Penney, who will serve life in prison for killing Mustang High School alumna Marissa Murrow in a head-on collision that occurred in 2020. The prosecution and defense illuminated the need for harsher consequences for DUI throughout the hearing.

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Although Malcolm Penney, 41, of Oklahoma City expressed remorse for killing Mustang High School alumna

Marissa Murrow, a closer look into his criminal history indicated seven driving under the influence offenses.

Penney was sentenced to life Feb. 1 in Canadian County District Court for killing Murrow in a head-on collision.

"For many, I suspect, it would not be justice for you to pay a price less than the price Marissa has paid for your criminal behavior," Judge Paul Hesse said.

The judge also sentenced Penney to serve 10 years in the Department of Corrections for leaving the scene of the fatality crash. The years will run consecutively with his life sentence for second-degree murder. Penney will also pay

a \$100 court fee.

Several witnesses, including Penney, spoke during the sentencing hearing Feb. 1, bringing to light more of what happened the night Murrow died and events that led up to it.

The state first called an Oklahoma Highway Patrol trooper, who was the head of the investigation the night of the collision. The trooper gave an overview of the wrong way crash on the John Kilpatrick Turnpike.

A Michelob Ultra was located inside Penney's vehicle by the trooper.

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Together We Center's Woven Boutique opens doors



By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Loving on people — that's what local nonprofit Woven Boutique is all about.

Woven Director London Lockhart already saw the impact of the Together We Center's boutique in the lives of customers and in her own during the official opening Jan. 31. The Arkansas native helped a 17-year-old girl, who was abandoned by her parents, pick out clothes for her first job.

The girl's landlord had brought her to Woven to purchase clothes for her.

"I was like, 'I can shut the store down,'" Lockhart said. "This is for you today. You are worthy of being on this Earth. You are worthy of having a job. I found purpose in being able to use the gifts God

gave me again."

Before moving to Oklahoma two years ago, Lockhart was a licensed therapist in Arkansas. After having her baby, Lockhart decided she wanted to stay at home.

Trinity Baptist Church senior pastor Brian Mills was a former college pastor at Lockhart's church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, so when she and her family moved near Yukon, it was an easy choice determining where they would find their next church home.

Throughout her journey in the Sooner State as a mother, Lockhart said she was looking for purpose. She knew she did not want to transfer her license, as the pandemic further complicated the process.

Lockhart later filed with the state to open her own

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Mustang, Oklahoma



USPS No. 595-120
1 Section

DUI

From page 1A

The crash occurred Oct. 3, 2020, and Penney was driving under the influence with a blood alcohol content more than double the state's legal limit. At the scene of the crash, Penney denied giving a blood sample. A search warrant was issued for it.

Later at the jail, Penney was interviewed by another trooper who inquired about any previous DUI offenses, to which Penney answered he did not have any recent.

Penney had more than a handful of DUI offenses in four different states prior to the crash.

While also in jail, Penney called his wife Amanda, saying there was a detour sign near the turnpike.

The court listened to the phone call recording. Penney is heard also saying he was trying to do everything right, as to not get caught drinking and driving.

Troopers confirmed through dash cam footage, aerial drone photos and canvassing the area that there were no detour signs near the turnpike's ramp.

The defense called its first witness in Amanda Penney after the trooper's testimony. Amanda and Penney have two children together, of whom have taken their father being in jail hard, she said.

Their son bottles up his emotions, while their daughter is bullied at school, Amanda said. The situation has also taken a toll on Amanda, as she has depression and more.

Defense attorney Daniel Hensch asked Amanda if she had ever lost a child. She lost her baby when she was seven months pregnant.

Amanda also noted Penney's struggles with alcohol throughout her testimony, saying it started when the two began to have marital issues. He got his first DUI nearly 12 years ago in Texas.

Penney began drug court around 2017, Amanda said, adding that he was making progress. He was sober for about two years, she said.

The two were in Oklahoma Oct. 2, 2020 for a wedding. Penney did not want to go to the wedding, as the

temptation of the open bar would be too great, Amanda said.

The groomsmen had brought alcohol to the wedding, in addition to the open bar, she testified. When she saw Penney drinking for the first time throughout the wedding, Amanda said she felt dreadful. Penney would later take Amanda's car keys without her knowledge and leave the wedding. She noted he is night blind. Amanda found out about the wreck the next day.

During cross examination, the prosecution confirmed with Amanda that Penney was drinking before, during and after the wedding, an approximately 10-hour day. An overview of Penney's criminal history was discussed.

Penney received probation for his Texas and Oklahoma DUIs and his public intoxication offense.

He was ordered to complete substance abuse treatment in Oklahoma.

Penney was later arrested on DUI in Kansas but was given probation by wearing an ankle monitor. Shortly after, he was arrested again for criminal damage and trespassing.

Penney was placed in a drug court program in Louisiana after getting another DUI. Throughout the program, Penney had weekly court, counseling meetings and more.

"He was currently in that program when he killed Marissa Murrow," Assistant District Attorney Austin Murrey said.

Amanda said Penney did not seek any substance abuse treatment on his own. Cellular reception was receivable at the wedding venue, Amanda said, confirming to the ADA Penney could have hailed a car through a ride-share app.

Penney was the last to take the stand. He told Hensch he did not trust himself around alcohol but wanted to be with Amanda and their children at the wedding.

Penney was about two months away from graduating drug court when he took his first sip of alcohol Oct. 2, 2020. He said he enjoyed being

sober — bettering himself in his career and being a father.

Penney was looking forward to telling people about sobriety after graduating drug court, he said. He then brought a half pint of vodka to the wedding.

"I hate me when I'm drinking," Penney told Hensch.

Immediately after crashing into Murrow, Penney said a witness told him she was OK, so he began to walk away. Penney was located by Oklahoma City police a mile away from the scene.

He said he was not trying to leave the scene. Penney also said he never imagined something like Murrow dying would have happened.

"I hate the fact that she paid for it," Penney said. "I wish it could have been me instead."

He said he wishes he could turn back time.

"If I didn't drink that day, we wouldn't be here," Penney said.

Penney first pleaded not guilty to both charges in May 2021. His jury trial was slated for Sept. 13, 2021; however, he changed his pleas Nov. 23, 2021 to guilty to second-degree murder and nolo contendere to leaving the scene of a fatality accident.

He said he changed his pleas because he is guilty and takes responsibility for his actions. Penney said he is an alcoholic.

He told Hensch his family has suffered from him being in jail.

"I'm so sorry," Penney told the Murrow family. "I wish I could have made better decisions for y'all. I failed everybody in this courtroom. I failed everybody in Louisiana who was good to me."

While he said he does not deserve mercy, Penney hoped for it.

During cross examination, Murrey hammered down on Penney telling the courtroom if he had an interlock system on his vehicle, it would have helped circumstances. Penney said he could have asked for a ride via an app.

"On Oct. 2, 2020, you didn't just fail to live up to the drug court requirements, you set out to fail,"

Murrey said.

Penney is familiar with Victim Impact Panels, as he has listened to at least four. During the panels, people with substance abuse listen to family members' and friends' stories of losing their loved ones to drunk drivers.

"You knew since 2011 exactly what could happen," Murrey confirmed with Penney.

Penney said had he received more than five days of jail time, it would have made a difference.

Murrey told Penney he did not understand what he meant when he told the courtroom he could not have imagined something like this would happen after listening to four impact panels. Penney said he never thought it would affect him so closely with a fatal crash.

"You were warned many times," Murrey said.

In the state's closing argument, Murrey said it is no wonder Murrow died, as Penney brought his own liquor to the wedding and continued to drink for 10 hours. The prosecutor inquired if the court should give Penney an eighth chance.

Murrey asked Penney be sentenced to life for the murder of Murrow and 10 years for leaving the collision scene and that the years run consecutive.

In the defense's closing argument, Hensch said he would like the court to recognize that the case, while tragic, is not the worst for second-degree murder. He argued that substance abuse does not allow a person to rationally think.

Hensch told the judge that eight years suspended in DOC would be a long enough time for Penney to serve for second-degree murder.

"No one in America over the age of 14 is unaware that when you drink and drive, people die," Murrey said. "(Penney) went through it seven times."

The ADA asked the judge how many times DUI defendants should undergo probation and intervention before a life sentence is served.

City

From page 1A

hours regarding the 209 Homes by Taber that will be constructed in the new development, which will be in close proximity to three other subdivisions. There will be a minimum of 1,800 square feet required to build for the 7,200-square-foot lots and 2,200 square feet for the 14,000-square-foot lots.

The developer's engineer said they have thought out drainage issues with the property, as they will ensure water goes to retention ponds or flows into the flood plain. When the development begins, the engineer said they will go above and beyond to complete their own flooding study of the area, as well.

The Mustang Planning Commission recommended

approval 4-2 at its January meeting. This was the third time the developer had applied for rezoning and the commission and council said it was the most well-thought-out plan by far and addressed previous concerns.

With the exception of the south end of the property, the zoning matches the surrounding areas of single-family development.

Many residents said they did not want Mustang to cram as many houses in an area as possible and wanted the council to pause on expanding residential growth until water and traffic issues were addressed. A traffic analysis has yet to be initiated for the area.

Morgan Road is a two-lane

road, and construction will enter the property from it. Residents were concerned about 200-400 more people driving on it because of the new development.

One resident noted that it was 20 years in the making to widen Sara Road.

A crash gate for emergency services entry will be installed near Bittercreek on the property, as well, which was a major change residents called for before.

The developer will also try to keep as many trees on the acreage as possible. Within the subdivision there will be a pool, basketball court and playground.

"Every day we pause and wait, 30 feet more of 59th (Street) Oklahoma City is going to put more houses,

houses, houses," Vice Mayor Michael Ray said. "Those kids will be going to our Mustang schools."

He added many families come to the area to enroll their students in Mustang Public Schools and when people live in Mustang city limits, their property tax benefits the school district. Property taxes is one of school districts' major funding sources.

Another resident also mentioned comments made by Ward 4 James Waugh when he was on the commission, saying the people who lived east on Morgan Road were going to lose property value if the development was approved. Waugh said the council and commission have the foresight of where

Mustang needs to go, adding the applicant came to them with a responsible plan.

With the 209 new homes, a \$1 million increase in sales tax for the city is expected, the engineer said.

Grider said growth is difficult and reminded attendees that with more residential area, more revenue will be generated for the school district and more commercial development will come to the city. One resident had shared if all open land is residentially developed, there would be no room for commercial.

Grider also said the city is currently working on several traffic projects, including the widening of Sara Road and 89th Street.

Basecamp

From page 1A

When her son was in prekindergarten in public school, he would continually get pneumonia. The family was in-and-out of the hospital.

When he reached kindergarten, Reaves quit her job of being a labor nurse for 17 years to take on the responsibility of homeschooling. As her children are approaching junior high, they have been asking to go to public school with other students.

Since her son will not be able to complete a five-day school week, the family began looking into blended programs throughout the Oklahoma City area. Blended programs allow students to learn at home three days a week and go to school two days a week.

Some schools in Edmond and in north and south Oklahoma City offer these programs. However, the private schools Reaves applied to did not accept her son.

"So, we're starting our own," Reaves said.

She understood why the schools did not accept him, as they have the right to turn down a student who they feel like they cannot serve. However, she said it still stung.

"My why is my twins," Reaves said. "They will be getting the best parts of homeschooling and private school for free because it's our school."

The family will have their own hybrid school on their two-acre property on the east side of Mustang. Basecamp Hybrid School will be inside the Reaves' renovated barn, which will be a modern one-room schoolhouse.

The barn will have an outside classroom space, complete with a gazebo, tables on a deck and raised garden beds, where students can learn how to grow their own food. There will also be chickens that will be hatched from incubators.

"I want it to feel like a community where they're excited and inspired to learn," Reaves said.

Anyone who would like to donate to the barn's renovations can visit the Reaves' GoFundMe: "Help Us Launch Basecamp Hybrid School."

Since establishing Basecamp, Reaves said she is now faced with ensuring she can serve all the



The above rendering is of Basecamp Hybrid School, a collaborative homeschool model, which has two days of instruction time with certified teachers and other students. Basecamp, which was established by a local homeschool mother, is located on the east side of Mustang. Image / Provided

students who apply with knowledge and experience.

Basecamp is an education model designed to collaborate with the homeschooling community.

She hopes Basecamp opens doors to other students when public education is not a fit for them.

"I think this is going to be a disruption in the educational norm — a good one," Reaves said.

The school is for third- through eighth graders.

There are two certified teachers — one who will oversee third and fourth graders and the other will have fifth- through eighth graders. They have come from public schools in the Oklahoma City area.

There will be a max of 16 students in each class.

"We feel like small class sizes allow for individualized education," Reaves said. "You can really meet the student where they're at."

Science, social studies and passion projects will be taught at Basecamp. Passion projects allow students to find and develop their interests, Reaves said.

If a student is interested in one day owning their own pet store, Basecamp will spend time on their interest every eight weeks.

The instructors will connect the student with someone who owns a pet store in the community and set-up times to meet with them in-

person or via Zoom.

"We want them to take their passion, make a project and then at the end of the eight weeks, we will have a Basecamp Exhibition Night, where family and friends can see what all the children have done," Reaves said.

The passion projects envelope what Basecamp stands for, which is child-led learning, she added. When students are interested in concepts and projects, education is more likely to stick with them, Reaves said.

"We do not teach to a test," she said.

While the instructors teach Oklahoma's education standards, students will be graded on a rubric system to ensure they understood each concept.

"If someone can actually teach you something, then you know they know the content well," Reaves said.

She also said it is important for the students to communicate well with one another, as they must do this eventually in the workforce.

"Why not get these kids started doing it now?" Reaves said.

Many tech, private and STEM-based schools implement passion projects.

One of Basecamp's goals is to have an inclusive environment where students can learn about different perspectives and cultures, Reaves added. Students also do not have to

have a statement of faith to attend the school.

Basecamp will implement virtues, like kindness, throughout its instruction and will nominate students who exhibited the virtue well to showcase what being a good human looks like, Reaves said.

She also wants the certified teachers to find their education spark again, as many have been overwhelmed in public schools with what they are required to do.

"This also helps the homeschooling mother who is teaching multiple children and multiple subjects," Reaves said. "We are taking two of those subjects off your plate, momma."

Reaves received guidance from three hybrid schools in Edmond as she began walking through her plan with Basecamp.

"I think micro schools popping up are just the way of the future," she said.

It is \$300 monthly to attend Basecamp. The cost covers instruction from certified teachers, supplies and the barn's utilities.

Reaves is also in the process of interviewing more instructors to provide enhanced courses, like art and piano.

"I want them to have extracurricular options, as well," she said.

The enhanced courses would be a separate price determined by the instructor aside from Basecamp's tuition.

Basecamp will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. two days a week. Caregivers must drop-off their students.

Basecamp is enrolling for fall 2022. While Reaves said families will not be turned away, she would like to have all applications submitted by Aug. 1.

Basecamp will begin the day after Labor Day. Families can apply at basecamphybridschool.net.

There are 10 students who have already enrolled, with the number growing. The third and fourth grade class is filling up quickly.

Reaves is expecting to host several summer camps for families to see what Basecamp will be like before school starts, as well.