



TENNESSEE  
STATE UNIVERSITY

20  16  
HOMECOMING

**“Celebrating A Legacy of Pride and Progress”**

**October 9, 2016 – October 15, 2016**



**Tennessee State  
vs.  
Eastern Kentucky**

**Saturday, October 15, Kick-off at 6 P.M.  
Nissan Stadium  
Call (615) 963-5841 for tickets.**



# Tennessee State University Homecoming 2016

**“Celebrating A Legacy of Pride and Progress”**

## **GRAND MARSHALS**



Retired, Educator and Child Development Associate  
Former TSU Cheerleader

**Burnece Walker Brunson**



Retired, Corporate Sales and Marketing Executive  
Managing Partner, Lee Properties LLC

**Damon Lee, III**

## **HONOREES**



Retired, Department Chair and Professor  
TSU College of Engineering

**Yvonne Y. "Y.Y." Clark**



Retired, Director of Bands and Associate Professor  
TSU Department of Music

**Edward L. Graves**

# TSU Alumnus' New Venture at Wild Eggs

By K. Dawn Rutledge

Some people may debate whether skipping breakfast is good or bad, but who can resist the flavor of fluffy buttermilk pancakes, cheesy omelets and skillet potatoes washed down with fresh squeezed orange juice? At least not those frequenting Nashville's newest breakfast, brunch and lunch spot – Wild Eggs.

With Charles at the helm as general manager, the Wild Eggs chain amassed quite a bit of traction in the Nashville area. Open seven days a week, the restaurant now averages \$30,000 a week in sales, and its prime location attracts many city residents as well as visitors who walk the downtown area and are discovering the restaurant for the first time. The success of Charles' Wild Eggs location has prompted the com-



Sekou Charles, general manager of Wild Eggs

Last April, Tennessee State University alumnus Sekou Charles ventured into the new opportunity helping to introduce the first Wild Eggs in the Nashville area. As general manager and partner of the restaurant, located in downtown Nashville on 333 Union Street, Charles has worked hard to help the city re-discover why breakfast shouldn't be missed.

"This is an upscale dining experience for those who want a fresh, contemporary approach to traditional breakfast, brunch and lunch," said Charles, adding that the restaurant strives to deliver optimum service and food to all guests.

pany to look at opening additional shops in Middle Tennessee, including a Bellevue location slated for 2017.

"The growth opportunities are endless here," Charles said. "Nashville has grown so much and it is certainly the place to be now. I see it as the next Atlanta, but maybe even better."

Charles, a Chicago native, made his way to the Music City to attend Tennessee State University not knowing anything about the school, but only wanting an opportunity to move outside the state of Illinois for a fresh start away from his inner-city environment. He applied and was accepted to TSU in 1992 and admits it was a dif-



Sekou Charles joins fellow TSU alumni at his downtown restaurant

ferent culture from his experience.

"Why is everybody smiling?" he recalled asking himself during his first few months on campus. "I'm from Chicago and everyone has to be on guard because you might get jacked."

Charles eventually learned to brush the chip off his shoulder, quickly making friends and becoming more social.

"I discovered that some people are actually genuine and sincere. It made my wall come down and it allowed me to open up."

In 1997, the marketing management major took his first job out of college as manager of Luby's Cafeteria, a casual dining restaurant chain, to support his twin daughters. Little did he know this job would put him on the path to a successful 18-year career in the restaurant industry.

"At the time, this was not what I came to school for because my dream was to be working at a marketing firm," he said. "But they [Luby's] were the only place that gave me a shot and I fell in love with it. Now, I realize sitting behind a desk eight hours a day just wasn't me. I still use the knowledge I learned from my marketing degree at TSU and I put

those skills to use daily. It has been rewarding to be involved with people and being part of a team."

Charles continues his ties with his alma mater volunteering and mentoring current students. He also appreciates the fact that many of his fellow alumni have been highly supportive of the Wild Eggs restaurant.

Ranetta Smith, who has been friends with Charles nearly 20 years, met him as a student at TSU. Smith, owner of Ranetta Renea's Boutique in Smyrna, Tennessee, said she frequents the restaurant often and enjoys the atmosphere and the food.

"When I first visited the restaurant I tried the chicken and waffles and it was amazing," she said, adding that the yellow submarine is also among her menu favorites. "I eat there at least four times a month. The menu items are very reasonable and the food is really good. Everybody who goes once always wants to go back. There's something for everyone. It's worth it!"

# Grand Marshal is 101-Year-Old Former Cheerleader

By Lucas Johnson II

At 101, Burnece Walker Brunson is still full of life.

"I just keep on breathing," Brunson said during a recent interview at her Nashville home.

Brunson is one of the grand marshals for Tennessee State University's 2016 Homecoming. She is a member of the affinity chapter, which is comprised of alumni cheerleaders as far back as 1934. Brunson was a member of then-Tennessee A&I College's cheerleading squad from 1934-1935.

"I was fortunate that I was able to go to A&I," she said. "It was just a wonderful place to be."

Brunson, a native of Mount Pleasant, Tennessee, moved to Chicago for a better education. There, she got



Burnece Walker Brunson

her first taste of cheerleading while in high school.

"It fulfilled my desire to stay physically active since there were not many sporting activities for girls

during those days," she said.

After high school, Brunson decided to attend TSU (A&I College) in 1933. The following year she joined the cheerleading team.

In 1936, Brunson received her teaching certificate and eventually went back to Chicago and earned a bachelor's degree from the Chicago Teacher's College, and a master's degree from the National College of Education in Evansville, Illinois. While in Chicago, she became the first female hired there to serve as a lifeguard.

Brunson would later return to Tennessee and make Nashville her home; the place where she developed unforgettable collegiate memories.

"I'm really looking forward to (this year's) homecoming," Brunson

said.

Her son, Boyce, said he's sure many people are looking forward to seeing her as well; and gleaning her wisdom.

"After you have a conversation with her, you realize she's not just 101 years old, but she has 101 years of experience that is valuable even in today's world."

Brunson has tried to spread that wisdom in one of about a dozen books she's written, including *Food for Thought: Nourishment for the Soul*, which gives tips on how to navigate life's challenges. When asked what advice she would give people today, especially youngsters, she smiled, then replied: "Do the right thing, in every way."

## - 2016 Homecoming Schedule - October 9-15

### Sunday, October 9

**3:00 P.M. Robert N. Murrell Oratorical Contest**, Floyd-Payne Campus Center, Robert N. Murrell Forum, Free and open to the public, Contact: [jmitchell@tnstate.edu](mailto:jmitchell@tnstate.edu)

**6:00 P.M. Gospel Explosion**, Kean Hall Gymnasium, Free and open to the public, Contact: [rarnold2@tnstate.edu](mailto:rarnold2@tnstate.edu)

### Monday, October 10

**11:00 A.M. Courtyard Welton Plaza**

**7:00 P.M. Showcase of Talent** - Residence Halls, Floyd-Payne Campus Center, Kean Hall Gymnasium, Contact: [ycato@tnstate.edu](mailto:ycato@tnstate.edu)

### Tuesday, October 11

**9:00 A.M. Founder's Day**, Floyd-Payne Campus Center, Kean Hall

Gymnasium

**7:00 P.M. Blue Sapphire Awards**, Walter S. Davis Humanities Building, Poag Auditorium, Contact: [rarnold2@tnstate.edu](mailto:rarnold2@tnstate.edu)

### Wednesday, October 12

**7:00 P.M. Coronation for Mr. TSU & Miss TSU**, Kean Hall Gymnasium, Contact: [dpope@tnstate.edu](mailto:dpope@tnstate.edu)

**9:00 P.M. Non-Greek Organizations Yard Show**, Amphitheater, Contact: [rarnold2@tnstate.edu](mailto:rarnold2@tnstate.edu)

### Thursday, October 13

**11:30 A.M. President's and Legacy Societies Luncheon** (by invitation only based on 2015-16 President's Society and Legacy members), Kean Hall Gymnasium, Contact: [bjackson33@tnstate.edu](mailto:bjackson33@tnstate.edu)

**1:00 P.M. Ralph Boston Golf Tournament**, Gaylord Springs Golf

Links, Cost: \$125 per person; \$500/team, Contact: [bnorthington@tnstate.edu](mailto:bnorthington@tnstate.edu)

**3:00 P.M. Mr. & Miss TSU Reception**, President's Home, Group Picture - (Rose Garden), Contact: [bmurrell@tnstate.edu](mailto:bmurrell@tnstate.edu)

**4:00 P.M. Homecoming Class Reunion Registration**, Celebrating classes: '81, '86, '91, '01, '06, & '11, Gaylord Opryland Resort, Cost: \$90 per person, <http://www.tnstate.edu/alumni/reunions>, Contact: [ssmith6@tnstate.edu](mailto:ssmith6@tnstate.edu)

**7:00 P.M. Agriculture & Home Economics Hall of Fame Reception**, Gaylord Opryland Resort, Magnolia Ballroom, Contact: [dalexander1@tnstate.edu](mailto:dalexander1@tnstate.edu)

**Homecoming Concert**, Howard C. Gentry Complex

**8:00 P.M. Alumni White Affair**,

Gaylord Opryland Resort, Ryman Exhibit Hall, Attire: All White, Cost: \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door; Cabana \$325, <http://tsualumniwhiteout2016.eventbrite.com>, Contact: [cgriggs@tnstate.edu](mailto:cgriggs@tnstate.edu)

### Friday, October 14

**8:00 A.M. Breakfast of Champions**, Farrell-Westbrook Complex ("Barn"), Cost: \$20 per person, Contact: [cgriggs@tnstate.edu](mailto:cgriggs@tnstate.edu)

**10:00 A.M. Charles Campbell Fish Fry**, President's Lawn, Cost: \$10, Contact: [beardpm83@comcast.net](mailto:beardpm83@comcast.net)

**10:30 A.M. Alumni Tiger Talk**, (Alumni sharing their road to success with the First Year Students), Walter S. Davis Humanities Building, Poag Auditorium, Open to the public, Contact: [ssmith6@tnstate.edu](mailto:ssmith6@tnstate.edu)

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# Damon Lee III Selected as Grand Marshal

By Lucas Johnson II

Damon Lee III, a 1967 graduate with a Business Administration degree, has always expressed his love for Tennessee State University, especially since his late parents, Damon and Rachel Lee, were alumni and readily supported the institution with financial support over the years.

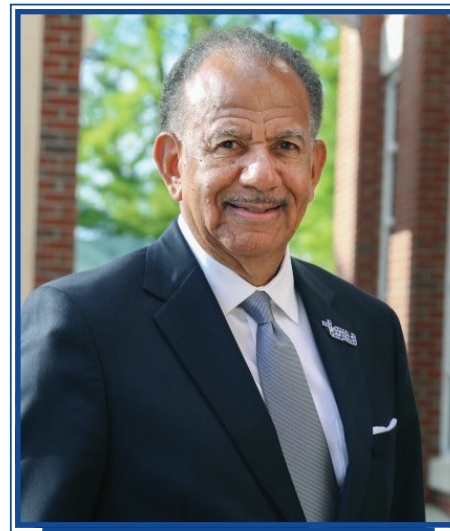
Earlier this year Lee, along with his sister, Kimberly Lee-Lamb, continued the tradition of support contributing \$250,000 in honor of their parents who attended TSU 80 years ago. The gift will benefit TSU's College of Business by providing scholarships to out-of-state juniors and seniors majoring in business. TSU officials say the

family's recent donation is among the top five given by a family in the university's history.

Lee will be recognized at the 2016 Homecoming celebration as Grand Marshal, and will be saluted for his exceptional leadership qualities and achievements, as well as his philanthropy and advocacy to the university.

"I'm flattered to be considered as one of the co-grand marshals for the event," Lee said. "I'm really humbled."

Like his parents, Damon Lee III has taken on the world of business. He said both his parents were business advocates who believed in "people having knowledge of business, regardless of his or her profession."



Damon Lee III

"The whole world revolves around business," said Lee, a retired Los

Angeles-based corporate marketing executive.

During his 43-year career, Lee spent 26 years with the IBM Corporation receiving national recognition as "Regional Branch Manager of the Year" for two years. He also received the "Division President's Award for Personnel Management." After his retirement from IBM, he joined Southern California Edison (SCE), where he worked for 17 years as a sales executive/energy advisory. Since retiring in 2013, he keeps busy as a real estate entrepreneur, securities investor, and managing partner of Lee Properties, LLC in Los Angeles.



## 2016 Scholarship Gala and Silent Auction

*"Celebrating a Legacy of Pride and Progress"*

saluting

Homecoming Grand Marshals and Honorees

Friday, October 14, 2016

Gaylord Opryland Hotel

\$150 per person     Attire: Black Tie

Silent Auction and Reception 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and Program 7:00 p.m.

Call 615-963-5481 or visit: [www.tnstate.edu/scholarshipgala](http://www.tnstate.edu/scholarshipgala)

# Clark, 'TSU Lady Engineer,' to Be Honored

By Emmanuel Freeman

Yvonne Young ("Y.Y.") Clark, a mechanical engineer, broke many barriers and shattered stereotypes to become one of the most-admired educators in her field.

During a time when female engineers (especially African-Americans) were a rare sight, Clark, a Houston native raised in Louisville, Kentucky, did not only beat the odds, but became a pioneer opening doors of possibility for many others.

In 1956, she became the first female engineer hired as an instructor at the then-Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University, earning the title of "TSU Lady Engineer." She rose through the ranks becoming an associate professor, and twice heading the Department of Mechanical Engineering for a total of 11 years.

At TSU, Clark did not only distinguish herself as an outstanding teacher in a male-dominated workplace, she became a champion for students



Yvonne Young ("Y.Y.") Clark

by ensuring that they received the appropriate help they needed to better understand the material. She frowned on professors who were quick to tell students they were wrong without explaining the error and how to correct it.

"I enjoyed helping students," said Clark, who retired from TSU in 2011 after 55 years. "Most teachers don't

understand, in my opinion, what to do for a student to learn. You can't 'brow beat' them, but you can help them by making sure they understand the subject you are trying to teach."

For her years of service and dedication to students, Clark will be an honoree during the 2016 Homecoming celebration, a recognition reserved for outstanding contributors to excellence at TSU.

When asked how she feels about being honored before thousands, Clark replied, "Anxious."

"I don't know who had the nerve to put me up there," she quipped.

Clark, 87, said her joy comes from knowing that she gave her very best to every student she came across, no matter the challenge. And there were challenges. As the only female among her colleagues, and a student population of mostly males, Clark had something to prove – that she was just as capable as her male colleagues.

In 1964, EBONY magazine gave her the name, "Tennessee State Lady

Engineer," and said Clark was "greatly valued by her colleagues and students for her feminine tidiness and attention to details, although there was some resentment.

"Some of the men resent it at first, having a woman around, but it usually wears off," the magazine quoted her as saying.

Former students fondly remember Clark's sense of discipline and the care she showed them.

"Mrs. Clark's influence and nurturing as a mechanical engineering student is one of the reasons I decided to pursue an academic career, for which I am forever grateful," said Dr. S. Keith Hargrove, a former student, who later became Clark's boss as dean of the College of Engineering.

"I only hope I can replicate her commitment in my role as dean of the College of Engineering," Hargrove added.

## Homecoming to Honor Longtime Band Director, Graves

By Emmanuel Freeman

Professor Edward L. Graves, who served Tennessee State University as band director and instructor for nearly 35 years before retiring in 2014, will be celebrated as a Homecoming Honoree this year. The special recognition is reserved for outstanding contributors to excellence at TSU.

A teacher and mentor to hundreds of students and graduates, Graves developed a band program that gained national and international acclaim for marching precision, innovation and overall musical performance.

Many of his countless former students like famed jazz musician Andre Ward, and TSU Assistant Band Director James Sexton are engaged

in different arts and entertainment disciplines across the nation and the world.

Graves ensured that the university's official marching band continued to be one of the best in the nation, emphasizing academic excellence among band members as his first priority.

"We went after the best students while recruiting and when we brought them in, we made sure they stayed on top of their school work," Graves said. "Even though most of our students loved music, many became engineers, doctors and professionals in areas other than music because of the academic exposure we gave them."

Under Graves' direction, the band



Professor Edward L. Graves

made many international trips to Japan and performed during the halftime show in the Mirage Bowl. The

Jazz Ensemble, another outgrowth of the band, traveled to Switzerland as part of the Montreaux Jazz Festival, and toured Nigeria.

In 1993 and 1997, the band performed in the inaugural parades of former President Bill Clinton. The band was also featured during numerous television halftime shows and specials, with Graves at the helm.

Before returning to his alma mater in 1979 as band director, Graves, a native of Starkville, Mississippi, was director of bands at Tuskegee Institute, director of bands and coordinator of the Music Department at Shaw University, and instructor of music at North Carolina A&T.

# Miss TSU Sees Leadership as Way to Make a Difference

By K. Dawn Rutledge

After high school, college was not on the mind of Alicia Jones. She was ready to serve her country and join the U.S. Army, but thankfully, she says, her mother put her foot down and said, “No.”

“I am so glad she said ‘no’ and pushed me in another direction,” said the reigning Miss TSU, a Memphis native. “No one in my immediate family is a college graduate.”

As the daughter of a preacher, Jones said she has always been leader-oriented and balanced in her spiritual, physical and emotional grounding. But college was a new foray into a world that was much different from her



Miss TSU, Alicia Jones

experience as a popular high school student.

“When I came to Tennessee State University, I tried out for the Sophisticated Ladies, the Tiger Gems and cheerleading, and I didn’t make any of them. It just wasn’t my time,” she said.

But now it is her time. As

the 2016-2017 Miss TSU, Jones is setting a high bar for fellow students, and spending more time being thankful for every interaction and every opportunity. She says that it is never about where you come from that determines your level of success, but what you are willing to sacrifice to get there.

Her bid for the Miss TSU title seemed to be part of her destiny. When she chose the campaign theme, “A Different TSU,” it centered on teaching, inspiring and advocating for change – things she continues to keep at the forefront of her reign.

“As Miss TSU, I want people to say that I took the time to talk to them and to make

sure that they were okay,” she said. “If you cannot touch the lowest person in leadership as well as the highest person in leadership, then you have not reached your full potential of leadership. I believe in building from the bottom.”

Jones is an Honors student majoring in mass communications and holds memberships in the prestigious Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, the National Society of Leadership and Success, the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., and the Hip’Notyze Dance Troupe, to name a few. She is co-host of the *Morning Glory* radio show on the university’s WTST-The Blaze and plans to attend graduate school to pursue a master’s

degree in business or psychology. Her ultimate goal is to build a platform as a motivational speaker, and she is well on her way with a video series she created entitled, “Inspirational Wednesdays.”

“During my sophomore year, I was out of my spiritual element. I was still doing well academically, but I was going through a depression,” she said. “I began writing down these inspirational quotes and decided to create videos around them to inspire and uplift people. It began to catch on and it’s a reflection of whatever I’m going through during that week.”

# Mr. TSU Gives Up ‘Loves’ for the Love of TSU

By K. Dawn Rutledge

Since taking up basketball at the age of five, Mr. TSU Jordan Gaither, fell in love with the game. His dedication and discipline was quickly noticed when by his 8th grade year, he was ranked the No. 2 player in the state of Georgia.

Throughout high school, the Atlanta native continued to excel in the sport, and managed to keep up with academic demands as well. He was certain that basketball was going to be part of his future, but he had no idea it would lead him to the courts of Tennessee State University.

“After a 7th grade college tour, I visited several histori-

cally black colleges and universities,” Gaither said. “I was sure I would never attend one, and TSU was not even on my radar.”

That would later change, when former TSU basketball coach, Travis Williams, who had worked with Gaither in the past, convinced him after his senior year of high school to come play for the Tigers. He played for two years before deciding to leave TSU to sign a basketball scholarship with Clayton State University in Atlanta. The opportunity would have been perfect for him offering a chance to be back at home; the ability to play basketball; and to pay full for his college education



Mr. TSU, Jordan Gaither

– but there was one problem: he loved TSU.

“With all of that, TSU was on my heart,” he said. “I realized there was so much more I could do at TSU. Even with everything being paid for and being at home and playing basketball, which I loved,

I just wanted to be back at TSU.”

He ran his campaign for Mr. TSU on the theme, “TSU Love” focused on building leaders, loving the campus, understanding the university’s history, and making the most of everyday interactions.

“I came back [to TSU] as a regular student, paying my own way,” he said. “I want people to understand my love for this school. I gave up something that I loved to do in return for nothing. Without basketball, I had to create a whole new identity. I felt I could do that here at TSU.”

And that he has. Gaither became more involved on campus becoming a member

of Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity and Generation of Educated Men (GEM). As Mr. TSU, he is committed to empowering students, encouraging faculty and supporting administration. He said he wants the student body to know that his love for TSU is unconditional.

“I ran for Mr. TSU because it sounded good,” he laughed, “but I really felt I could bring a different purpose to the role.”

After graduation in May 2017, Gaither said he wants to pursue a master’s degree in sports management.

# 2016 Homecoming and Gala Committees

## 2016 Homecoming Committee

Michelle Viera, *Chair*

Cassandra Griggs, *Co-Chair*

Grant Winrow, *Co-Chair*

Michelle Allen

Randy Arnold

Dwight Beard

Jennifer Bell

Samuel Branch

Jazmin Bowles

Courtney Buggs

Yolanda Cato

Gregory Clark

Carlton Davidson

Jessica Gabriel

Thomas Graham

Albert Hill

Jame'l Hodges

Sandra D. H. Hunt

Sharon Hurt

Thomas Jackson

Curtis Johnson

Joni McReynolds

Jacqueline Mitchell

Keith Morgan

Henry Perry

Sharon Peters

K. Dawn Rutledge

Kelli Sharpe

Frank Stevenson

Joe Stukes

Ariel Wells

Seanne Wilson

Tierra Young

## 2016 Scholarship Gala Committee

Sharon D. Peters, *Chair*

Sandra D. H. Hunt, *Co-Chair*

Grant Winrow, *Co-Chair*

Eloise Abernathy Alexis

Gwendolyn Battiste

Eunice Bell

Cynthia Brooks

Walretta Chandler

Deborah Chism

Patricia Clayton-Bailey

Benita Collins

Patricia Crook

John Cross

Jo Ann Davis-Davis

Rita Fleming

Cassandra Griggs

Chandra Harris

George Herring

Al Hill

Betsy Jackson

LaDonya Johnson

William Joslin

Tonya Kilpatrick

Anita McGaha

Joni McReynolds

Jacqueline Mitchell

Barbara Murrell

Arlene Nicholas-Phillips

Ben Northington

Bertina Reed-Hewett

K. Dawn Rutledge

Kelli Sharpe

Sonya Smith

Celeste Stein

Traci Tanner

Trudie Thompson

Harriet Vaughn-Wallace

Michelle Viera

Gwendolyn Vincent

Seanne Wilson

Rosalyn Word

De'Etra Young

## Homecoming Schedule Continued

**11:30 A.M. Student Pep Rally**, William Jasper Hale Stadium, Contact: [dpope@tnstate.edu](mailto:dpope@tnstate.edu)

**1:00 P.M. TSU National Alumni Association Hospitality Tent**, Welton Plaza, Contact: [joni.mcreynolds1@gmail.com](mailto:joni.mcreynolds1@gmail.com)

**4:00 P.M. TSU National Pan-Hellenic Step Show**, Howard C. Gentry Complex, Contact: [rarnold2@tnstate.edu](mailto:rarnold2@tnstate.edu)

**7:00 P.M. Scholarship Gala & Silent Auction**, \*Reception at 6:00 p.m., Gaylord Opryland Resort, Presidential Ballroom, Cost: \$150 per person; \$1,500 table of 10, <http://www.tnstate.edu/scholarshipgala>, Contact: [speters@tnstate.edu](mailto:speters@tnstate.edu)

**9:00 P.M. Jesse James Football Alumni Mixer**, Gaylord Opryland Resort, Governor's Ballroom A-E, Cost: \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door, Contact: [mcræje83@gmail.com](mailto:mcræje83@gmail.com)

## Saturday, October 15

**9:00 A.M. Homecoming Parade to the Campus**, 14th & Jefferson Street to 33rd & John Merritt Blvd.

**11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. Greek Letter Organizations Serenades and other Activities**, Welton Plaza

**11:00 A.M. TSU National Alumni Association Hospitality Tents**, Welton Plaza, Contact: [joni.mcreynolds1@gmail.com](mailto:joni.mcreynolds1@gmail.com)

**NOON Showcase of Bands**, William Jasper Hale Stadium, Cost: \$5 per person, Contact: [malen@tnstate.edu](mailto:malen@tnstate.edu)

**5:45 P.M. Pre-Game**  
**6:00 P.M. Kick Off (TSU vs. Eastern Kentucky)**, Nissan Stadium, Cost: \$15- \$45 per person, Contact: Ticket Office - 615.963.5841

**9:00 P.M. Homecoming Scholarship Kabaret**, Hosted by Alpha Theta Network Alumni Chapter, Gaylord Opryland Resort - Governor's Ballroom, Contact: [clm\\_1219@yahoo.com](mailto:clm_1219@yahoo.com)

