



the Chanticleer

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT-PUBLISHED NEWSPAPER SINCE 1934

WEATHER: Mostly Sunny, High 78, Low 52

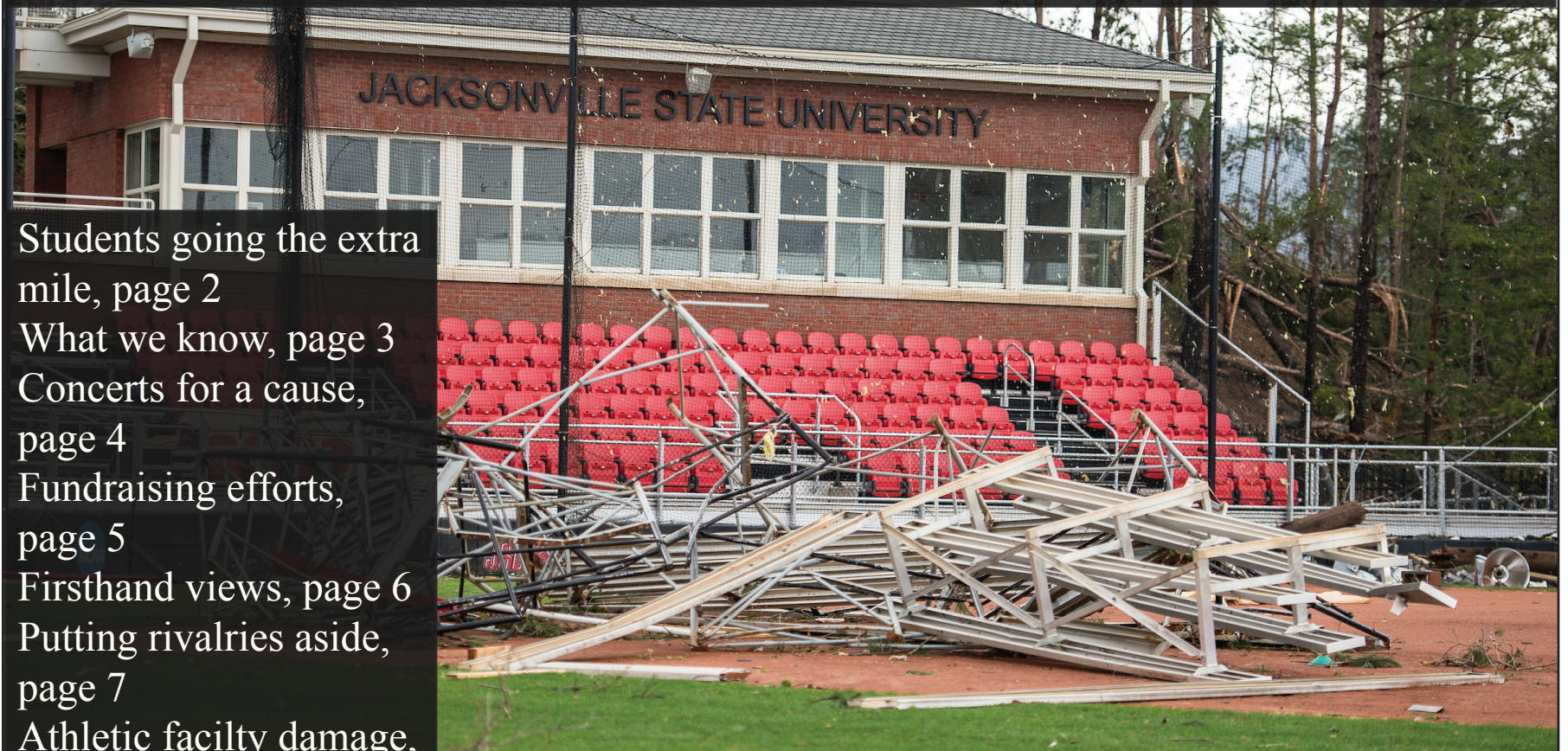
Thursday, April 12, 2018



by kindness, storms and service



On Monday, March 19, 2018, Jacksonville was struck by an EF-3 tornado that ravaged parts of town and JSU's campus. There were no deaths. This week's edition of The Chanticleer highlights stories of service and survival as the community comes together rebuild.



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Photos by Matt Reynolds/JSU

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GOING THE EXTRA MILE

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, Associate Editor Chris Allen Brown caught up with students leading the volunteer efforts.



Chris Allen Brown/The Chanticleer

Savanna Parsons stands in her garage, which she has set up as a donation and distribution center with the help of her sorority, Alpha Xi Delta. Members from across the state donated clothing and personal items to the cause.

Parsons for the people

Waitressing and Greek Life help student give back

Chris Allen Brown
Associate Editor

Whether it's picking up a chainsaw to cut trees or bringing people food at a restaurant, everyone has different ways of helping the city of Jacksonville and the surrounding communities following the devastating tornado last week.

For Savanna Parsons, she is just doing what she's good at and that's talking to people and making connections.

Parsons, an Alexandria High graduate, has been a waitress at Heroes: An American Grille on Highway 21 for the last eight months while also juggling multiple other jobs and being a student at Jacksonville State University.

Less than 48 hours after her friends and sister, Olivia, were displaced because of the EF3 tornado which struck JSU's campus, Parsons took to social media to announce her way of helping:

"(I'm) Donating all of my tips made at work

(Wednesday, March 21) through Sunday (March 25) to my people in need! I work at Heroes in Jacksonville! Stop by for a drink, food, or just to donate."

But the helpfulness doesn't stop there.

Parsons is also a member of JSU's Alpha Xi Delta chapter.

Last summer, she went to a conference and made connections to many other chapters around the country. When those chapters heard about last week's events, they immediately reached out and started donating clothes and other necessities.

"At first, I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it or not because I didn't want people to think I was wanting it to all be about me," Parsons said during a brief break Sunday evening before an expected party of 30 people arrived. "I'm really just trying to help people. Like, there's a girl in my education department who has nothing now and is about to graduation and I really just wanted to do something."

Prior to her shift Sunday, Parsons said she has

earned over \$1,300 in tips after working Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. She went on to say she's planning to share it with anyone who needs help.

"I really want to give it to anyone who has been affected," Parsons said. "We have a guy here at work and I plan to give him some because he found out his apartment is pretty bad. There's another girl who lost her entire house but doesn't go to JSU, so a lot of people aren't talking about those areas that need help, too."

Parsons said she's able to do this, because she's budgeted her money months before and is months ahead on her monthly rent payment. A combination of "probably the highest paying night of the year so far" on St. Patrick's Day just a week ago and not going on spring break also helped her out.

"I believe we are a really small community and everyone knows everyone," Parsons said. "Since we are a small school, it's easy to find out how to help and what people need, so that's what it's all about ... helping one another."

Golden-hearted families

Leas and Strains return to help Jacksonville

Chris Allen Brown
Associate Editor

Justin Lea, Courtney Strain and Leah Strain all were born and grew up hours away from Jacksonville. But major life milestones over the years have made Jacksonville State home for the trio.

For Courtney, it was meeting current fiancé Dalton Screws, who was a teammate of Lea under Bill Clark and John Grass, on top of countless basketball games played inside Pete Mathews Coliseum. For Leah, it was the friendships and memories created, joining the nursing program and, like her older sister, the time spent on the now ruined hardwood of Pete Mathews Coliseum. For Justin, JSU gave him an opportunity to continue playing the sport — football — he loves; a sport he hopes will continue giving in the future with a professional opportunity.

So, it's easy to understand why they took the initiative to come and lend a hand ... more specifically 100 hands.

Courtney, now a science teacher and coach at Handley High School, and her dad, Larry, brought 41 student-athletes from Roanoke, a city an hour and 18 minutes from JSU's campus, to assist Lea and his

brother, Jay, cutting and clearing trees from the yard of Jamie "Red" Etheredge, who has been a strong supporter of JSU student programs, and the area surrounding the Alumni house.

"I just know Red does a lot for JSU athletes ... He's one of the biggest supporters we have," said Lea. "My hometown was hit in 2011 and we saw a lot of people come from out of town to help us, so I just wanted to find a way to come out and help."

"I give credit to my parents and grandparents and those who raised me when I think about the man I am today and to think about yourself last and if someone needs help, go help them."

For Larry, who is the head coach at Handley, it was a no-brainer to bring some of his athletes to Jacksonville and help.

"There is no better team-building exercise than helping others," Larry said. "It was actually about 10:30 Wednesday night when I decided we needed to do it. We got to school yesterday and the first people I called were my principal and superintendent and they were more than supportive about the idea. The kids knew nothing about it yesterday, so when I asked this morning, all their hands went up."

"I knew it was the right thing to do. As a team, we need to learn to help other people when they need help."

On the morning of March 22, both Courtney and Leah reached out to get in touch with JSU athletic director Greg Seitz, who pointed Larry in another direction before he was able to connect the EMA and get the OK to help.

According to Larry, his initial intentions were to help clean up JSU's softball field, tennis courts and the rest of the spring sports venues. However, with the school's campus closed to all non-essentially personnel until April 2, the near 50-person clean-up crew spend most of Friday morning in Red's backyard moving parts of trees.

"It was a great two-in-one scenario," Courtney said. "You're helping a community that's very near our families but also bonding as a team. I told someone this earlier, but these kids need to realize life isn't always about them and their wants and their needs. They may not realize it right now, but one day they're going to look back and realize you're supposed to do things for other people because one day you may be in the same situation."



Chris Allen Brown/The Chanticleer

Students from Handley High School, along with Justin and Jay Lea and Courtney, Leah and Larry Strain assisted former JSU Board of Trustees member Jamie "Red" Etheredge in clearing debris from his home after the March 19 tornadoes.

WHAT WE KNOW

The Chanticleer staff have compiled a list of dates, contacts and facts we've learned regarding the end of the Spring semester. We do not claim that this list is all-inclusive, as new information is becoming available each day. As of Wednesday, April 11 this information has been determined to be accurate.

- Thursday, April 12 is the last day to choose an option for finishing the semester: Option 1—take your grade as is; Option 2—take an incomplete in the class; Option 3—finish the class.
- Students who choose Option 1 must still complete an in-class assignment the last week of class (April 23-30) to show that they are “engaged in the semester” for its entirety. This assignment may differ from class to class but will not affect the student’s grade and is necessary for accrediting organizations outside the university, such as the Alabama State Department of Education.
- Students receiving VA benefits or assistance MAY NOT be eligible to take Option 1. Please contact Veteran Services at (256) 782-8838 or veterans@jsu.edu with questions. The Veteran Services Office is located in the Daugette Hall Basement.
- Some other students may not be eligible to take Option 1 because of Financial Aid requirements. Please contact the Financial Aid Office at (256) 782-5006 or in Room 107 Bibb Graves to inquire about your Financial Aid standing.
- Students are discouraged from taking an incomplete in a class if possible, as this may affect their financial aid status. For example, if a student is taking 14 hours of class, and he or she takes an incomplete in one 3-hour class, this would drop him or her to only 11 completed hours. If the student is on a scholarship that requires him or her to complete a minimum of 12 hours each semester, his or her scholarship could be revoked, and he or she would have to formally appeal the decision.
- Students who do choose to take one or more incompletes should complete the class before the end of the summer session in July.
- Students enrolled in Honors classes (such as ART 203; EH 103, 104, 219; HY 103, 203; MU 236; UH 101, 201, 202, 399; EC 225, 226; BY 105, 107; CS 202; MS 111; PSY 202, 498, etc.) MAY take Option 1 if approved by their professor. These students WILL receive Honors credit toward graduation for the class. Contact the Honors Program at (256) 782-5696 or email cmooney1@jsu.edu, jwhitmore@jsu.edu or ljowens@jsu.edu with further questions. The Honors Program staff are now located in Martin Hall Room 107 and in Club Martin.
- Students taking Honors by Contract classes must choose Option 3 (finish the class) and complete all course requirements as determined by their professor AND Honors by Contract requirements in order to receive Honors credit toward graduation. Contact the Honors Program at (256) 782-5696 or email cmooney1@jsu.edu, jwhitmore@jsu.edu or ljowens@jsu.edu with further questions. The Honors Program staff are now located in Martin Hall Room 107 and in Club Martin.
- If a student is taking an Honors by Contract class and the professor has agreed to alter the original Honors by Contract assignment, this change needs to be communicated to the Honors Program via the professor so the Program can approve the change.
- Mrs. Denise Davis, secretary of Criminal Justice, has been moved to Fort McClellan as of this printing. She can be reached at ddavis@jsu.edu or (256) 782-5335. All other Criminal Justice and Sociology faculty are in Brewer Hall. As of this printing, they do not have phone or Internet access.
- Dr. Robert Felgar and Mrs. Susan Hurst, department head and secretary of English, are now located in Martin Hall. Students can email them at bfelgar@jsu.edu or hurst@jsu.edu.
- As of this printing, Stone Center does not have Internet or Wi-Fi capabilities. Many professors are relocating to buildings with Wi-Fi access in order to answer emails. Responses may be delayed.
- The School of Health Professions and Wellness have been relocated to portable classrooms on the Wallace Hall property. Students can contact Dean Christie Shelton at cshelton@jsu.edu.
- The School of Human Services and Social Sciences has been relocated to Bibb Graves Hall Room 203. Call 256-782-5333 for assistance.
- The School of Business and Industry, formerly located in Merrill Hall, has been relocated to the old Kitty Stone Elementary school on Francis Street. Professors have offices and phone lines and should be able to communicate with students.
- Career Services, formerly located in Merrill Hall has been moved to Ramona Wood Hall, Suite A. Students can call (256) 782-5482 for assistance.
- The International Program has moved to the Daugette Hall basement. Call (256) 782-5696 for assistance.
- The Spring 2018 graduation ceremony is scheduled for Friday, May 4 at 10 a.m. in the football stadium. There will be one ceremony. Graduates will sit with their school, but can sit in any order they choose within the school. Graduates should meet at Stephenson Hall at 9 a.m. in order to receive their name cards and Honors cords.
- A distribution center is set up in the parking lot of Meehan Hall. Students may visit this trailer from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to receive basic goods and items.
- Students who have been affected by the tornado and are in need of financial assistance may fill out a form at <http://www.jsu.edu/jsustrong/student-emergency-fund.html>.



Matt Reynolds/JSU

Students and volunteers came together in the days following the March 19 tornado to help clean up debris from campus.

Concerts for a cause

Benefit concerts big and small bring in donations

Katie Cline
Editor-in-Chief

“Take me back to Jacksonville / Drive me up Mountain Street / Lead me into old Paul Snow / And show me to my seat” are a few of the lyrics from Riley Green’s song “Bury Me in Dixie,” a tribute to his home state of Alabama and his hometown of Jacksonville.

The country singer, 29, who signed a contract with Big Machine Label Group out of Nashville in February, was born and raised in Jacksonville and played as a walk-on quarterback for the Gamecocks from 2008-2010 before leaving school to pursue music. His fond memories of the Jacksonville led him to perform a benefit concert at the Iron City music venue on Friday, March 30, less than two weeks after an EF-3 tornado struck the town.

“I was in Nashville when the tornado came in, and it was a pretty nerve-wracking time,” Green said during an interview with AL.com. “I got back to town [on March 22], and pictures didn’t really do it justice. Not being in town, not able to get out there with a chainsaw, clearing roads ... As a singer-songwriter, I started to think about what I could do.”

What he could do was a concert. For Green, whose house in town was not damaged, the need to help was personal, because, as he told AL.com, he knew

people who were not as lucky as he was.

“Several folks I went to high school with lost their houses,” Green, who graduated from Jacksonville High School in 2007, said. “It’s amazing that no one was killed. I had friends driving tractors down (state highway) 21, to go help out.”

Green and special guests, singer-songwriters Kyle Coulahan and Adam Hood, raised \$50,000 for tornado relief efforts and presented a check to JSU representatives that evening.

“It’s going to be years and years until the city looks like it used to,” Green said. “This is just a small drop in the bucket of what it’s going to take to bring the city back. I just know that if we sell this place out, it’s going to help.”

Back in Jacksonville, local bands put together their own benefit concerts. Because storm damage was concentrated on the north side of town, shows could still be held at regular locations, like Brother’s and Pelhams bars.

The same night as the Riley Green concert, Birmingham-based band Valet Only joined with bands Peach Avenue and Bible Belt for a concert at Brother’s bar.

JSU junior Andrew Panik organized the concert. Panik is a member of Valet Only with fellow student Austin Snow



photo by Marty Boyles

Riley Green signs a check for \$50,000 to be donated to the JSU Foundation.

and their friend, Reese Massey. Panik, Snow and Massey make up three-fifths of Bible Belt, along with another JSU student, John Mark Jones, and Timothy Wardlow.

Panik also organized a second show in Gadsden on March 3. Tips were collect-

ed at the show, and, in total, \$385 was raised.

“The shows on Friday and Saturday night were actually already planned about a month prior,” Panik explained. “The three bands are comprised of some of my favorite people, all local-ishmu-

sicians. After what happened we all, almost without saying, agreed to donate any money we made to the relief fund, [and] the guys at Brothers were cool enough to give any money made at the door to the relief, too.”

With students back on campus and class-

es begun again, there is one more concert coming to town. Gadsden’s southern rock band The Tuckahoe Travelers will perform with singer-songwriter Aaron Hudgins on April 13 at Pelhams. All proceeds will benefit the ongoing relief efforts.



Don Naman/Iron City

Jacksonville native and up-and-coming country star Riley Green (right) presents JSU President Dr. John Beehler (left) with a check for \$50,000 for tornado relief. Green, who recently signed with, put on a benefit concert in Iron City on Friday, March 30 to raise money for his hometown.



Grace Cockrell/JSU

SGA President Ranger Rumrill holds a check from Red Threads Apparel for \$35,000 in front of Merrill Hall.

Red Threads spreads Gamecock spirit with T-shirt sale

Katie Cline
Editor-in-Chief

Red Threads Apparel presented JSU with a check for \$35,000 on April 5. In the memo line, they wrote “students.”

For owner and JSU alumnae Amado Ortiz, that’s what it was all about: the students.

“There were other organizations doing good things [after the tornado],” Ortiz said. “The Methodist and Baptist Churches had both been doing fantastic jobs getting the community things they needed, but we wanted to put some focus back on the students. When the students are in town, we feel it as a business, the restaurants feel it as a business. They’re a big part of the population, and we wanted to help them.”

After the March 19 tornado, Red Threads, whose storefront is located on the Jacksonville Public Square, started a t-shirt campaign to raise money for those students who may have lost school supplies, books or apartments in the storm.

The shirts read “Gamecock Strong,” a nod to a popular hashtag that surfaced on social media in the hours after the tornado. The “o” in “strong” is the university’s Gamecock. Underneath the image is “Rebuild Jacksonville.”

The shirts were designed by Red Threads’ lead graphic designer, Anna Lee Weathers. Weathers, like all of Red Threads’ employees, is a JSU student or graduate. She graduated from JSU in 2007 with a degree in graphic design.

Red Threads’ campaign lasted from March 21 to April 1—just under two weeks—but the short campaign covered a big distance. Ortiz confirmed that “Gamecock Strong” shirts were shipped to 46 states. Only Maine, Delaware, Connecticut and Rhode Island didn’t “go red.”

“We had sent some shirts to Hawaii before, especially after the band went and performed there, but what was interesting to us were the states that aren’t as populated: Wyoming, South Dakota, New Mexico and some of the others,” Ortiz said. “That’s what shocked us. I think one guy from Fargo, North Dakota is just a big North Dakota State fan, and he just saw the post where we tagged them, and he bought the shirt.”

But, more than money, Ortiz wanted to reach out to other alumni and let them know about the disaster, particularly in the early days.

“We just wanted to keep the momentum up and bring awareness to other alumni in the other areas,” Ortiz said. “Maybe they didn’t want to



Red Threads Apparel/Facebook

Josh Robinson, Assistant Dean of Students for Fraternity and Sorority Life; Sebastian Mendez, Lead Interactive Designer for JSU Interactive and Sydney Jones, Social Media Specialist with JSU Office of Public Relations model Red Threads’ “Gamecock Strong” shirt.

buy a shirt, but maybe they chose another avenue to help, whether they bought a different shirt or went to the Riley Green concert or whatever they wanted to do.”

Even some customers who ordered a shirt won’t be picking it up.

“We had some people leave us a note on their order asking us to donate the shirt to a displaced student,” Ortiz explained. “They were just looking to donate and maybe already had all the shirts they wanted and wanted to help a student.”

As of this week, Ortiz said that about 95 percent of the shirts have been shipped and received. SGA President Ranger Rumrill wore his at Monday’s Welcome Back event. Some shirts are still available in-store to purchase, and Ortiz said Red Threads plans to make another smaller donation after the shirts have been sold.

As to the original \$35,000 donation, JSU has already begun putting it to use. On Tuesday, the JSU Dean of Students Office posted a form that

students can fill out if they need financial assistance. Students merely fill out the form requesting aid, and a committee determines their need and allocates funds.

“I think it’s important for student retention,” Ortiz said. “If the students feel like they weren’t helped, then they may choose to transfer or to finish online. They want to feel like the university cares.”

Ortiz and his wife, Allison, run Red Threads Apparel and its parent company, O Brand Marketing. Both graduated from JSU in 2007 where they studied communications.

Ortiz hopes the donation will help students who really need it and make this difficult time a little easier.

“I know Red Threads is going to get a lot of credit,” Ortiz said, “but the real recognition goes to everyone who bought a shirt. A \$20 shirt is only a \$20 shirt, but if a lot of people buy a \$20 shirt, that’s a big impact.”

Red Threads Apparel
16 Public Square Ste.8 Jacksonville, AL 36265
www.redthreadsapparel.com
cocky@redthreadsapparel.com



FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCES

Listen to the sirens, hymns and cries while help is on the way

Chris Allen Brown
Associate Editor

If you listen, you can hear it.

You can hear the ear-piercing alarm from an apartment building missing most of its exterior; the sounds of chainsaws slicing up fallen trees blocking the roads; the sirens from emergency vehicles racing through a dampened city.

But if you listen closer, you can hear the cries for help from the students who just had their world rocked by a tornado moments prior. A tornado that wasn't supposed to hit Jacksonville State University. A tornado that wasn't supposed to hit ... home.

If you asked any of those displaced 18-22-year-old students why they chose to come to JSU, the unanimous response would be, "because it felt like home."

It felt like home because they are surrounded by friends — some young, some older — they consider family. Just look at the Instagram posts. The football team. The basketball teams. The softball team. The baseball team. Sororities and

Fraternities. Those who work together and those who only see each other during study sessions.

"It was never the buildings, the trees or the stadiums that made Jacksonville home," said former JSU punter and Australian native Hamish Macinnes on social media Tuesday afternoon. "It was the incredible people that made it so special. No wind can blow that away."

Everyone intertwines to form a bond that shares one thing in common: We are all Jacksonville State Gamecocks and we are all hurting right now.

If you listen, you can hear the sound of a 1929 gospel song echo through the halls of a weathered Mason Hall. Or ringing through an emptied Burgess-Snow Field at JSU Stadium.

The Marching Southerners singing "I'll Fly Away" has been a staple of Jacksonville State since the downed trees along Highway 204 were planted. The hymn gives hope; it gives meaning; it gives inspiration to those who listen.

"I'll fly away, O Glory,
I'll fly away. (In the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye
I'll fly away."

"In the wake of all these storms and seeing the damage done to our treasured university, I think all of us Gamecocks are singing 'I'll Fly Away' in our hearts," tweeted JSU graduate Caden Crosby deep into Monday night. "We are JSU."

Fellow Gamecock graduate Collin Barnwell took it a step further and posted the lyrics on his social media.

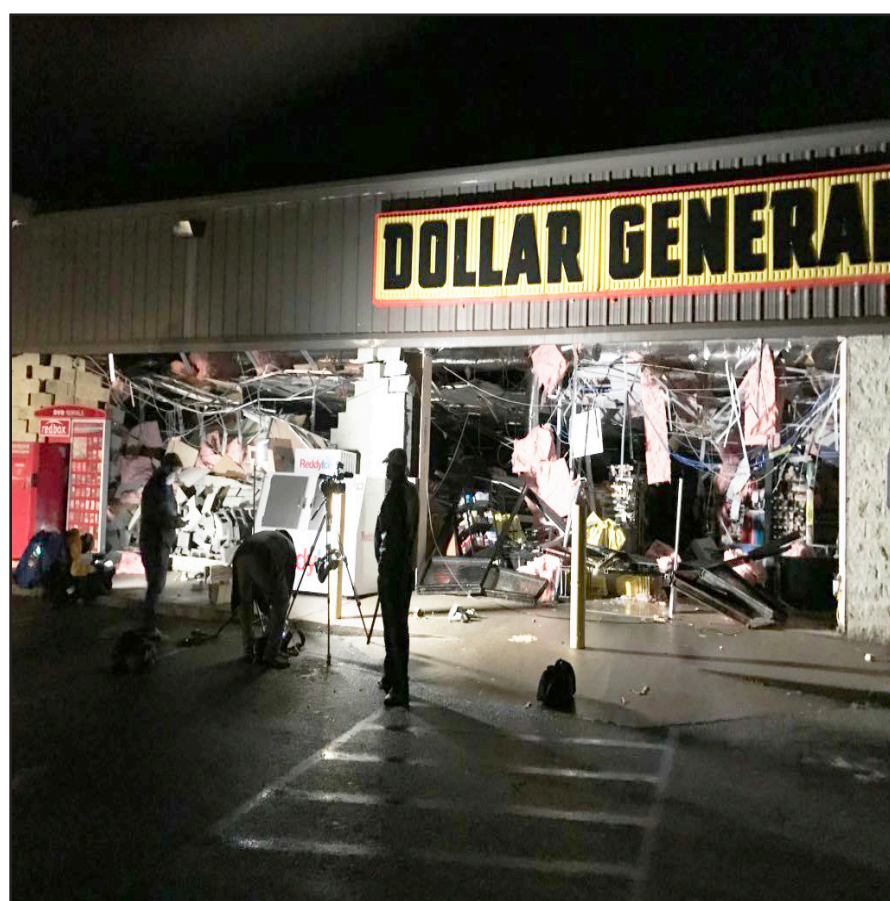
When all feels lost. When all seems clueless. When all hurts.

Continue to listen. Because help is on the way.

As sure as roofs will be placed back on Logan and Patterson Hall and as sure as Pete Mathews Coliseum will be repaired, you aren't alone. A simple tweet asking for someone to check on a pet; a Facebook message asking a friend for a place to stay or a Snapchat post reaffirms that belief.

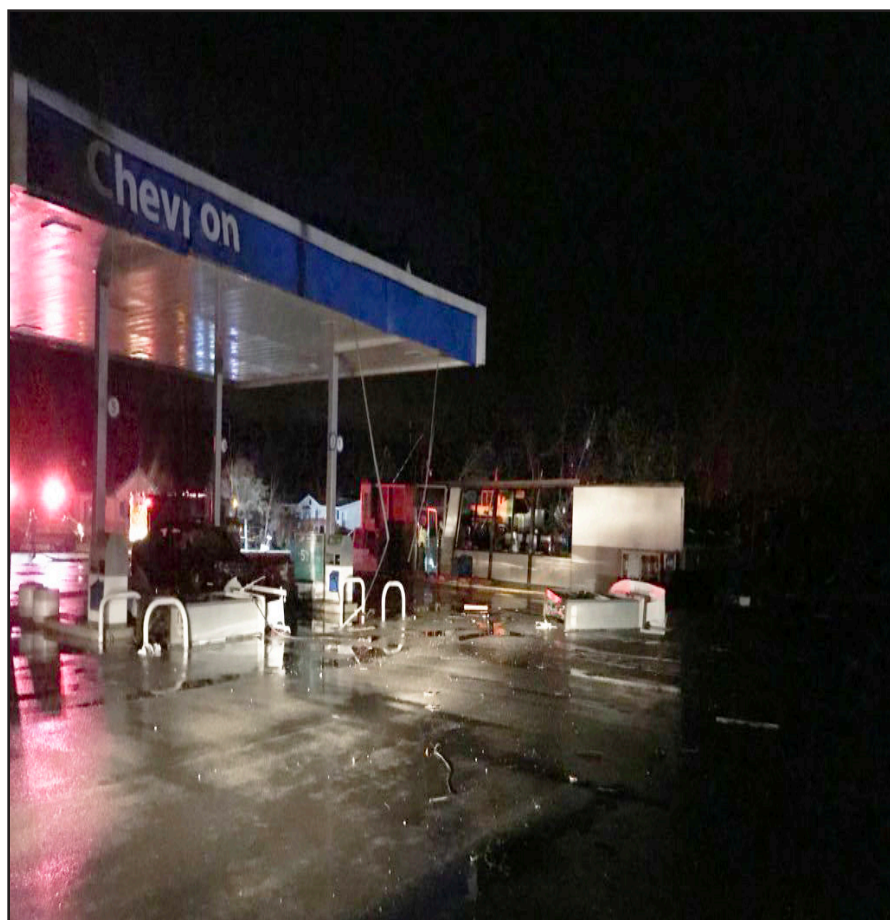
That's what makes Jacksonville State home. No one is ever alone, especially in a time of such need.

"Go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good."



ABOVE: Media outlets position their cameras in front of the damaged Dollar General on Hwy 204 across from the Pete Mathews Coliseum on March 19. The storefront has since been demolished and all salvageable products were donated to Jacksonville tornado relief efforts.

BELOW: Walls are the only thing left standing of the Chevron gas station and StarMart convenience store on Hwy 204 across from Rudy Abbott Field and the construction site of the new baseball stadium. (photos by Chris Allen Brown/The Chanticleer)



When the chainsaws stop

Katie Cline
Editor-in-Chief

Without the chainsaws roaring, the electrical trucks blocking the road and the safety vest-clad volunteers traipsing up the streets, Ninth Avenue almost looks like home again.

Almost. If you drive down the avenue, you'll find yourself enwalled on either side by piles of debris: tree branches and trunks, roofing, scraps of metal and the like. Then you'll notice most of the houses have white or blue roofs, and you'll re-

member that they're wrapped in plastic tarps. Finally, you'll look up at the hillside and see houses you never knew existed and bare patches of mountain where trees used to be.

And you remember that it's still home—just not the home you grew up in.

For three weeks, Jacksonville looked like a war zone: police and volunteers from every part of the state, the Salvation Army and Samaritan's Purse stationed in church parking lots, organizations handing out bottled

water and hot meals to people who had nothing — some of whom still have nothing. It was like a Red Cross commercial that you didn't sign up to be in.

And, the truth is, we can say "#JSU-strong" all day, but the people affected by this storm — the students, professors, and staff who lost everything, the community members who lost homes and precious belongings — are not going to be strong every day. Losing everything hurts. It's stressful. You don't know where to start

because everything needs to be done at once, and one company is telling you that it will cost tens of thousands of dollars to fix your house, and that's money you don't have, but your insurance company won't get back to you, and your kids have to go back to school, and the university needs you to come back to work, and you still can't find your wedding album from 37 years ago, and you're afraid it's ruined.

So now we're "back" to work and school, but not really

because departments are scattered across town and in different cities, and we're being told new information every day, and nothing makes sense because we can't get a straight answer from anyone, and we're trying to find a rental house and move what's left of our home of 23 years and get ready for graduation and make time for friends we may never see again — and it's hard.

And it's okay to be mad about it.

I'm mad about it. I'm mad about everything: that the tor-

nado hit *my* house, that I can't just worry about my family and my cats and my dogs without being pestered and told that I can't take my grades, that I can't choose which of my two majors I sit with at graduation, that just being in the house I grew up in makes my lungs hurt because there's so much mold.

I'm mad that the chainsaws stopped.

Because I thought when the chainsaws stopped, we'd be back to normal.

But the truth is, we're not. We won't be for a long time.

Setting rivalries aside

Tornado response shows what makes college sports special

Daniel Mayes
Sports Editor

Jacksonville State and Troy have been bitter rivals on fields and courts since the two universities used to “Battle for the Ol’ School Bell” beginning back in 1924. There hasn’t been much love lost between the two schools in the near century of gutting games and semi-playful insults that have been exchanged.

Yet last week before the Gamecocks played the Trojans at Choccolocco Park, the athletics department at the school formerly known as Troy State donated \$1,100 for tornado relief efforts.

Troy’s donations haven’t been all of the generosity shown to the Gamecocks in their time of need.

UAB collected water and supplies to send back to Jacksonville after the JSU softball team took on the Blazers on March 28.

Many of the softball team’s opponents since the storms have given the players goodie bags after their games.

Samford’s athletic department made a delivery of food and supply dona-



JSU Sportswire

Members of the Troy and JSU baseball teams pose together after the Trojans donated over \$100 toward Jacksonville tornado relief.

tions to Jacksonville on Tuesday.

Droves of students from several universities in the surrounding area have made the trek to Jacksonville to help with cleanup.

This. This is what makes college athletics special.

Rivalries set aside. “Sports hate” forgotten (for at least a little while).

Any thought of animosity on the field is pushed out in times of need.

Jacksonville State and other universities like it play against and interact with other schools in their conference and vicinity so often that a strong bond forms between the fans and athletes and administrators of each school.

When things are going

good, these bonds manifest bitter rivalries on the field.

When tragedy strikes, these rivalries are revealed to be friendly, healthy competition between members of a family.

College athletics is a family.

JSU is a wounded member of that family right now, and all of its

brother and sister universities join together in helping nurse them back to their feet much more quickly than they can do on their own.

The NCAA might as well change to the NCAF. It’s the National Collegiate Athletic Family.

And when JSU does get back on their feet, you best believe they’ll still want to Whup Troy.

Leadership helps guide JSU student-athletes to give back

Chris Allen Brown
Associate Editor

Don’t be alarmed if you see a 7-foot male wielding a chainsaw around Jacksonville, it’s just Norbertas Giga. If you spend more time looking around, you might even see several Jacksonville State volleyball players attempting to roll a fallen tree trunk to a more convenient spot.

Before asking why you may see these sights, maybe the first question should (jokingly) be towards JSU strength and conditioning coach Gavin Hallford and if helping move trees counts as their workout for the day.

The reason that should be the first question is simple — because asking why JSU student-athletes are helping is pointless.

Why? Just continue to look around.

There’s JSU head

football coach John Grass with a chainsaw. JSU softball assistant coaches Mark Wisner and Julie Boland working on a patch of land. JSU head volleyball coach Terry Gamble, his son Kyle

and daughter-in-law Reagan were all helping. JSU associate athletic director for media relations Josh Underwood is there, too.

Are you beginning to see the picture here?

The reason there are so many JSU student-athletes helping around campus is because the desire to help starts at the top; it starts with those with great influence.

There’s a reason Malcolm Drum-

wright and Mohamed Abuarisha came straight home from last week’s College Basketball Invitational semifinal game and immediately went to work. There’s a reason Jamie McGuire, Cadi Oliver, Stephanie Lewis and Sallie Beth Burch dropped what they were doing elsewhere around the state to come back home to help.

Because it’s what they were taught to do. Helping those in need has become a staple of what Jacksonville State University is all about.

For years now, the communities surrounding Jacksonville State have traveled to support these student-athletes during sporting events, so it should come as no surprise that these same players ... humans ... are working around the city to help give back, to help rebuild

but most importantly to help show they care.

Think back to JSU softball’s annual Fan Day. Head coach Jana McGinnis rarely does much talking at the event, but when she does, there’s always a ringing statement that’s forever imprinted on minds:

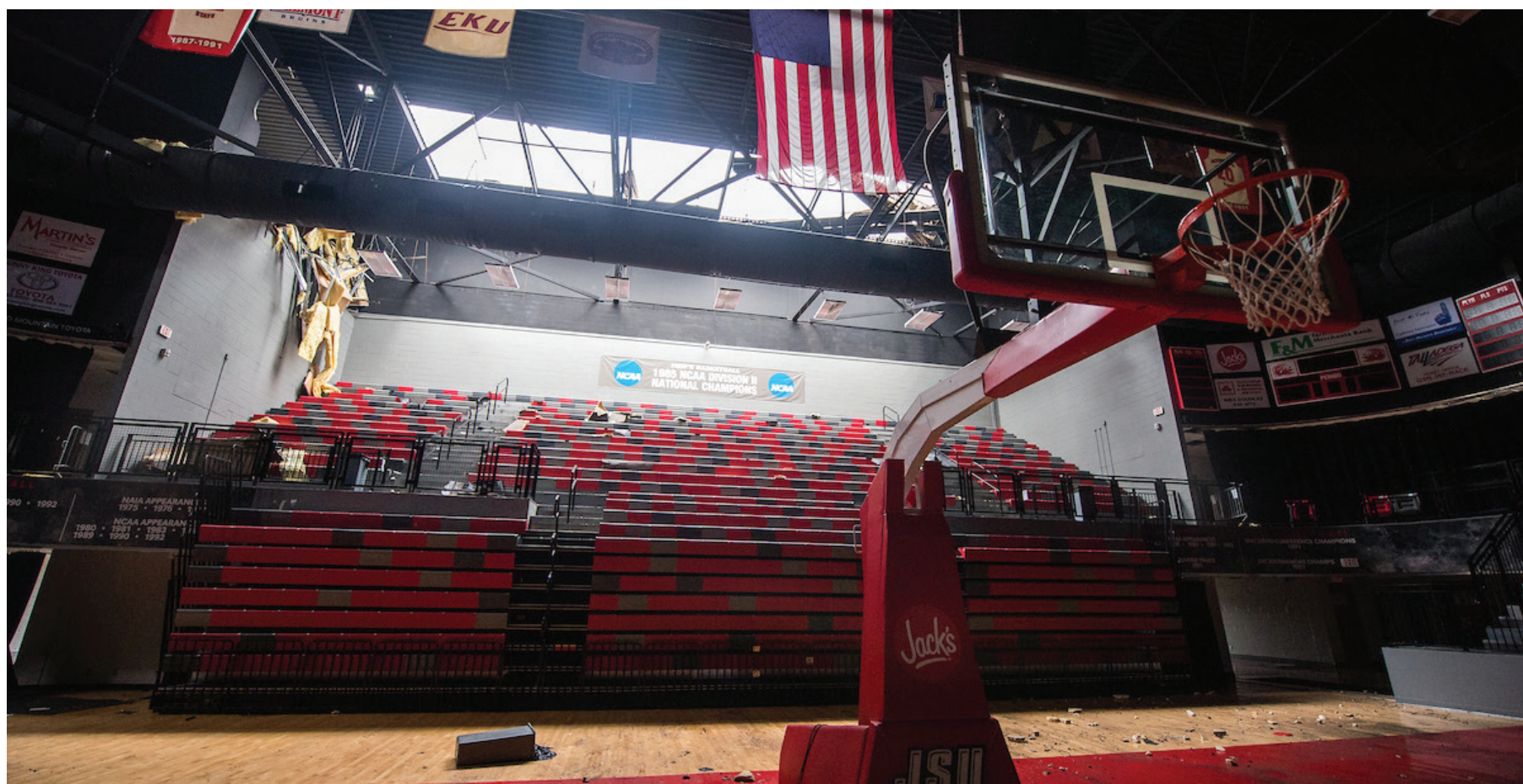
“I hope you (the fans) will consider us as your favorite team because this is home and we are always here for you.”

It may take several months — maybe a year even — before the restorations on Pete Mathews Coliseum, University Field and Rudy Abbott Field are completed, so when the football players are lined up to kick off the 2018 season, just remember to be sure to be at Burgess-Snow Field at JSU Stadium to cheer on those guys who came to help when you needed it most.



@NorbertasGiga/Twitter

JSU Basketball’s Norbertas Giga pitches in with relief efforts despite just finishing his college career.



Top: Pete Mathews Coliseum sustained major roof damage during the March 19 tornadoes in Jacksonville. **Above Left:** Damage at the rear entrance to Pete Mathews. **Above Right:** A fallen light pole lies in the outfield at University Field. **Below:** University Field saw major damage during the storms. Photos by Matt Reynolds/ JSU

‘We will rebuild our home’

JSU athletics facilities sustain storm damage

Daniel Mayes
Sports Editor

“While the road to recovery may seem long, the people of Jacksonville will rebuild our home,” JSU Athletics Director Greg Seitz said in a statement.

The devastation of the March 19 tornadoes in Jacksonville was felt by the entire community as well as the university, as hundreds of buildings

were damaged, including some of the Jacksonville State Athletics facilities.

Pete Mathews Coliseum, the home for JSU basketball and volleyball since its opening in 1974, received the worst of the damage.

The coliseum’s roof was damaged and even left completely bare in some spots, causing extensive flooding of the floors as water and debris found its way in.

The hardwood flooring of the court has already been completely removed and repair work has begun on the roof.

JSU softball’s University field also was majorly affected, as several light poles fell across fences and onto the playing surface, parts of the metal bleachers were left mangled and sitting in the infield, and debris littered the entire field.

The damage to Univer-

sity Field left the softball program without a home for the rest of the season, but, after the Gamecocks returned from their nine-game road trip that began just after the storms, Oxford’s Choccolocco Park has played host to JSU’s home games and will continue to do so for the rest of the 2018 season.

The JSU Soccer Field and the tennis courts had downed fences and scattered debris.

The remaining athletics facilities all escaped damage other than a few close calls with downed trees in the vicinity.

JSU’s two current major construction projects, the renovations at Rudy Abbott Field and the new campus recreation and wellness center, received minimal damage.

Repairs have begun on all affected areas, and full recovery is expected.

