

Meade County toddler qualifies for Nationals in pageantry



Photo by Claire Brown

Brooklyn Duran, age two, holds numerous state titles and awards in pageantry.

Claire Brown
Messenger Staff

If you happen to spot Brooklyn Duran out, she might seem like an ordinary toddler. She likes going to the library to play and has a disdain for nap time. Duran is not just an ordinary toddler; she is one of the many little girls who qualified for nationals in her passion for pageants.

Nationals in Duran's age division of two-year-olds kicks off on July 17th at the Cherokee Casino in South Carolina. Duran will travel six hours away to compete for the top spot amongst other young girls. As her mother, Heather Duran, says: "the competition will be fierce."

Duran's first pageant was for a charity event for the WHAS Crusades for Kids, whereas she won first place. Duran was only six months old at the time, and her mother's idea was that pageants would be a fun, new thing to try. After that first win, the family decided to stick with the hobby.

Since then, Duran has competed in at least 70 pageants and won many of them. She qualified for State twice. The first time being when she was only ten months old, and the second when she was 18 months old. The second time, she placed second, which won her the spot to compete at the Nationals.

Duran's mom says while it can be stressful, "it's a fun kind of stress." She adds that Duran has done the cutest baby contest at the Meade County Fair since she was born. Her first year, she placed third. The second year, she won first. Her mom says they plan to enter her in the Fair pageant this year as well, since it takes place right after they get back from the National competition. They hope to be riding on a wave of victory.

"We just don't know what to expect," Duran's mom says. "I mean it is the best of the best, and she is only two. They are unpredictable. She could go out there and make a scene if she is too tired." She says. She adds that the anticipation is nerve wracking, but they are excited, nonetheless. They are especially excited to visit Pigeon Forge on the way home from Nationals and stay a night there, as it will be Brooklyn's first time visiting the area.

Regarding Nationals, Duran will have to make four outfit changes each day during the two-day length of the pageant. One

of the themes for these outfits is one that represents the state of which the participant yields from. For the Durans, residents of Meade County who have many ties with the military, Fort Knox was the perfect focus for Duran's pageant outfit.

Representing Kentucky through Fort Knox, Duran plans to wear a gold dress. However, it is not as simple as just a representation of Kentucky as a State; it is also a way to mirror her family's connection to the military base. Duran's father has served 17 years in the military, during which time he has been awarded a Purple Heart. Her older sister works in Fort Knox as a lifeguard, and her mother used to work on base as well before she became a stay-at-home mom to support Duran's pageant career.

Heather Duran says she now makes pageant attire as a career and ships the outfits across the United States to little girls to wear in their own pageants. She has done it for about a year and says she has made and sold at least 30 outfits.

"I just love to see my work out in the open, represented by other girls," Duran smiles.

She goes on to say that Duran has two pageant coaches. One that they see once a month, and another that they visit once a week. Both coaches help her with her pageantry routine, such as proper walking technique, how to wave, and how to blow kisses.

"She's good at routine," Duran's mom laughs. "It actually blows me away just how much she knows, and how smart she is."

But aside from all the lavish pageant dresses and fancy walks, Brooklyn Duran is still just a fun loving two-year-old, who uses the trophies she wins as dolls.

"It's really funny actually, she lines them all up as dolls because some of them have people on them." Her mom laughs.

She adores the library, where there's toys galore for her to play with, as well as books to read. Uncle Steph's Ice Cream is her absolute favorite ice cream place, where she loves to share a banana shake with her dad. She loves picking out pumpkins from Robert's Family Farm in the fall, and her favorite part of being in pageants is the sashes and doing her "fancy walk."

We wish Duran the best of Luck at Nationals and look forward to seeing her compete in the Meade County Fair pageant this year.

Brandenburg United Methodist Church welcomes Pastor Jason Brock

Submitted by:
Brandenburg United Methodist Church

Brandenburg United Methodist Church (BUMC) welcomed their new pastor, the Rev. Jason Brock. He has been a UMC pastor for 26 years, has served rural, urban, and suburban churches in Tennessee, from small to large. In addition, he served on the Tennessee Conference UMC staff, leading missions, disaster response, and resourcing new church starts. In 2019, Jason moved to Guatemala to volunteer for five years

with ACD Guatemala, a new community ministry partnership between Guatemalans and the church in which he was serving at the time. He grew up in Manchester, TN, received a college degree in Business Education from MTSU in Murfreesboro, TN, and then received a divinity degree at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, KY.

Rev. Brock's first Sunday at Brandenburg UMC was Sunday, July 13. All are welcome to join for Sunday worship services at 9 am (contemporary) or 11 am (traditional).



PASTOR JASON BROCK

Spotlight on Bruington-Jenkins-Sturgeon Funeral Home



Photo by BJS Funeral Home

The original funeral home prior to being destroyed by the 1974 tornado.

Tammie Beasley
Messenger Staff

Bruington-Jenkins-Sturgeon (BJS) Funeral Home, located at 198 Lawrence Street in Brandenburg has been serving the community for 93 years.

David J. Sturgeon and his wife, Zella, saw a need in the Payneville community for a funeral home and ambulance service. Using a house in Payneville, a horse-drawn hearse, and a Ford ambulance, they started the business in 1932. In 1941, Mr. and Mrs. Sturgeon moved their business to Brandenburg on the lot where the funeral home is presently located. They bought the house and lot and converted the house into a funeral home with living quarters for themselves.

In 1964, Mr. Leslie Jenkins, Jr., bought the Sturgeon Funeral Home from Mr. and Mrs. Sturgeon and renamed it Jenkins-Sturgeon Funeral Home. Under Jenkins' direction, the funeral home was constantly updated and modernized.

The tornado on April 3, 1974, destroyed the original building and the funeral vehicles. Afterwards, a new, larger facility was constructed on the original site and new funeral vehicles were purchased. The modern design included three layout areas on the first floor, a spacious lounge, a large selection room, and modernized preparation room.

In the early 1970's, by the authority of the state of Kentucky, ambulance service regulations began to change, so in 1976, Jenkins decided to discontinue the ambulance service. Meade County Fiscal Court stepped in to fill the gap and that ambulance service provided by Fiscal Court continues to serve Meade County today.

After owning the funeral home for over 30 years, Jenkins retired from the funeral business. The funeral home

was purchased by John and Debra Bruington in January 2001. Both Bruingtons were born and raised in Brandenburg. Debra Hager Bruington was raised in the funeral business by her parents, Kenneth and Lois Hager of Hager Funeral Home. John Bruington worked nine years full-time and six years part-time at Hager Funeral Home, where he served his apprenticeship and was Deputy Coroner. He also worked ten years at Jenkins-Sturgeon Funeral Home. The funeral home was named Bruington-Jenkins-Sturgeon Funeral Home to honor all the owners. Their motto is "Our Family Serving Yours."

John's father, Marvin Elroy Bruington, worked for Sturgeon prior to and after his service in the Navy during WWII. Bruington was licensed as a funeral director and embalmer in 1953. He worked in the funeral industry while also working as a rural letter carrier. When the younger Bruingtons purchased the funeral home, he was on staff to help with the new family business. John's mother, Bettyruth Bruington, was a teacher in the Meade County School system.

John Bruington graduated from Murray State University in 1977 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management. He later graduated from Mid-America College of Funeral Science in 1983 where he received his Associate of Applied Science in Funeral Service. After graduating, he passed the National Boards for Funeral Service and Embalming and has been a licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer since 1985.

After Kenneth passed away, John moved into management for a funeral firm and managed several funeral homes. He also worked at Jenkins-Sturgeon Home Funeral Home for ten years and at Alexander Funeral Home in



Photo by Tammie Beasley | The Messenger

BJS Funeral Home in Brandenburg.

Irvington. He and a partner purchased Alexander Funeral Home in 2007 and in 2021, Bruington and his wife became sole owners of Alexander Funeral Home.

In addition to working at and owning funeral homes for over 40 years, Bruington was the pastor of Rosetta United Methodist Church in Rosetta, Kentucky for six and a half years. He was also the pastoral care pastor for the Brandenburg United Methodist Church from 2002 to 2012.

My adopted mother, Hazel Singleton, and her beau, Manfred Ripperdan, went to Rosetta to hear Bruington preach many times. Many of our readers will remember that Ripperdan, who was a substitute teacher and coach of several girls' softball teams, and Singleton, were an item for a few years in the 1980's until his death in 1987. She was very fond of Bruington, and it was her request that he preach her funeral service which he did in 2014.

In recent decades, BJS Funeral Home has concentrated on the refinement of funeral services and has remained in the forefront of trends to provide the latest technology and the best facilities possible to families. The advent of pre-need insurance and pre-arrangement funerals requires constant updating to offer the best value to clients.

With the advent of the Federal Trade Commission requirements in 1984, funeral services became a different way of doing business. Prior to those regulations, most funerals were priced as a unit. This included removal, embalming, use of the funeral home, conducting the service, and the rest of the services. The FTC regulations now require that every funeral home in the United States must obtain permission to embalm, itemize the charg-

es in the funeral home Statement of Goods and Services, and obtain a signature that states that the pricing is explained in a comprehensive manner.

There have been a lot of changes in the last nearly 100 years. Visitations are usually held for only one night and day compared to two to five days and there are no more all-night visitations. Caskets and vaults in today's market are much more colorful and made of better-quality materials. Burial vaults of steel and other metals are still popular along with concrete vaults with vinyl and marbelon liners and beautiful urns are available for the remains of cremation.

There are four full-time employees between the two funeral homes and several part-time employees. All the employees speak very highly of Bruington and he of them. Bruington said they are passionate about what they do to help the families in the community. They make sure they have good relationships in the community with the churches, florists, Masonic Lodge, Moose Lodge, and other organizations to provide the best possible care for the families. Their service does not stop with the funeral service. As one employee said, "Their families are our families forever."

Bruington said that he fulfilled a life-long dream when he became owner of BJS Funeral Home in 2001 and later Alexander Funeral Home and he is proud of the commitment of the funeral homes to continue serving the needs of the families in the community.

For more information, you can call (270) 422-2115, email them at bjsfhome@bbtel.com, visit their website at www.bjsfuneralhome.com or follow them on Facebook.