



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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John Verge is one of Murfreesboro's Oaklands longest-term residents

In 1974, when John Verge was in first grade, his home burned down. The family, with nowhere to go, moved into public housing in Murfreesboro. Since then, nearly 50 years ago, John has lived in public housing, and now, in the newly built Oaklands, in multifamily housing in Murfreesboro. His mother, Alberta Verge, was a single parent raising four children: O.Z, the oldest son, Dale, the baby brother, Mary, and John.

Today, at age 56, John lives alone in a one-bedroom duplex in Oaklands, a multifamily housing neighborhood in Murfreesboro. He has a small living room, a kitchen, a bedroom and a bath. John says he struggles sometimes with a nervous condition.

John has a picture of his mother on the living room wall. He points it out to visitors. Alberta, John's mother, died in 2014 at age 72, and his brother O.Z. died in 2006 at age 40. Mary and Dale married their respective partners over the years, and moved to their own homes.

John said life in public housing was "okay," but the family moved a lot. Over one 17-year span, they moved three times to different apartments on January Street. But the family lived at Oaklands for 31 years.

And, when Oaklands was torn down and rebuilt over the past several years, John moved temporarily to an apartment on Medical Center Parkway. Then, in October 2022, he moved to his new one-bedroom home.

“I like it a lot here,” he said, looking around the small duplex with a quiet smile. “I have good, nice neighbors who are good people.” The duplex is spotless. John eats at a small two-person table, given to him by a friend. He cooks for himself, and said his latest home-cooked meal was “fish, last Sunday.”

John is a busy man. He works full time at the Boys and Girls Club in Murfreesboro as custodian, dinner assistant and bus aide. “I started hanging around there in 1989,” he remembers, “and finally they gave me a job.” He has worked there since 1998.

John went to elementary school at McFadden, junior high at Central and high school at Riverdale, graduating in 1986.

“I got into trouble a lot growing up,” he says. “I’ve been through the trenches. But God turned me around, and I put away a lot of childish things.”

In addition to his full-time job, John is busy with volunteer work. “I have been a bellringer for the Salvation Army at Christmas for 37 years,” he says. John, with a rich, deep voice, was the volunteer sports announcer for all sports at the Boys and Girls Club for 26 years. That role came to a halt during COVID. Now, he is the announcer for the Murfreesboro Junior Patriots Little League at Oakland High School, just ending his fourth season there.

John is a board member of the Rutherford County Historical Society. He has been a member of Toastmasters since 2009 and has served as a club officer. He is a member of Destiny Church and serves on the church’s maintenance committee. He has handled the audio needs of the church for the past 11 years.

Weekends, John enjoys going to yard sales and thrift stores. “I have so many friends,” he says. “I talk to a lot of them on Facebook.”

John has an elaborate computer setup in a corner of his bedroom and enjoys working on his production company via computer.

“I like being real busy,” he says. “Staying busy keeps me focused. You know, when you make a mistake and you fix it, it makes you a better person. That’s what I try to do every day.”

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