

Boone County voters tell their stories

Tuesday, November 6, 2012 | 9:49 a.m. CST; updated 6:43 a.m. CST, Wednesday, November 7, 2012



"I Voted" stickers are scattered on the registration table at the Reynolds Alumni Center polling place at MU. The polls opened at 6 a.m. Tuesday. | Stuart Palley

Voters in Boone County head to the polls to cast their votes on Election Day. Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

BY MISSOURIAN STAFF

Southern Boone County Senior Center, Ashland

On Tuesday morning, Amanda and Dan Ferrerio were at a polling booth in Ashland with their two young children.

"I'm here to get Obama out of office," Amanda Ferreiro said.

"He's here to keep him in office," she said, referring to her husband.

Dan is a registered Democrat; Amanda is a registered Republican.

"We're gonna cancel each other out," she said, laughing.

The Ashland residents met at a Starbucks in California. Dan, 34, works as a real estate abstractor. Amanda, 30, works as a nurse.

Amanda said her primary concern is the economy.

"Same here," said Dan, though for a different reason. He said he disagreed with Romney's policy of outsourcing jobs to China.

The couple said they often have political arguments around the house.

"I've gotten roses from him," Amanda said.

— *Nuria Mathog*

Linda Turner's goal Tuesday wasn't just to cast her vote. She also wanted to help her son learn about the election process. Turner, 49, and her son Benjamin, 10, headed out to the Southern Boone County Senior Center in Ashland to witness democracy in action before getting breakfast together.

"He's studying this in school right now," Turner said. "I thought it would great to bring him out and see how the process works."

— *Jennifer Liu*

Memorial Union, Columbia

Election judge Kate Waltman greeted students at Memorial Union on Tuesday as they waited to vote. Waltman has been an election judge for eight years.

"It's an exciting process — democracy in action," she said.

This year, she said, not as many people were coming in to vote.

"There's been a steady stream but not like the crowds four years ago," she said. "Four years ago was the biggest we've ever seen."

Waltman, 50, first volunteered to be an election judge because they needed people to help with the new computerized voting system.

"I enjoy it. You get a lot of people excited about the voting process," Waltman said. "It's good to see."

— *Chelsea Bengier*

Hampton Inn and Suites, Columbia

This is the second year Steve Pappas has served as an election judge. He said he goes wherever he's needed on Election Day.

"I believe that if you don't vote you don't have a right to complain, and I make a lot of noise so I had to take it to a higher level," Pappas said of his decision to become an election judge.

Pappas, 44, works at a wastewater treatment plant in Columbia and is pursuing a master's of business administration at Columbia College.

As a second-year judge, he needed only three hours of refresher courses about the process. First-time election judges go through 12 to 16 hours of training.

Today is a long day for election judges. He got to the Hampton Inn and Suites at 4 a.m. and assumes he will be there until 8 or 9 p.m. as long as things don't get crazy. Polls close in Columbia at 7 p.m.

— *Lexie Cartee*

Woodcrest Chapel, Columbia

Wearing a National Rifle Association hat and camouflage shirt, Jerry Drummond, 69, did little to camouflage his position on gun rights when he voted at Woodcrest Chapel on Tuesday.

Drummond doesn't actually hunt, however. He said his wife bought the shirt, and he doesn't agree with the National Rifle Association on every issue.

"I look 'em all over, and if I agree with NRA then I vote for 'em," Drummond said. "If not, I don't."

He was born and raised in Missouri, but spent about 40 years in California, working for Boeing part of the time.

A few years ago, he came back to Columbia after retiring because "the wife liked it here" and now he works to stay up to date on local issues.

He is proud of his ability to vote by issues, not by party.

"I've never voted a straight ticket," he said.

— *Justice Gilpin-Green*

2:30 p.m.

Parkade Elementary School, Columbia

A cold, misty rain hung in the air outside Parkade Elementary School on election morning. Between 8 and 9:30 a.m., a steady stream of voters braved the elements to cast their ballots.

For Tahliya Richardson, 18, concerns about paying for a college education weighed heavily on her mind as she voted for the first time. Tahliya, a high school senior, wore a yellow T-shirt with the words "MAC Scholar" on it. Richardson is one of 500 Minority Achievement Committee Scholars, a group of students from Columbia Public Schools who learn about college readiness through the district's partnership with MU.

"College is really important," Richardson said. "Who is going to help me get through high school and college and pursue a career?"

Tahliya's mother, Tanisha Richardson, 36, shares her daughter's concern.

Richardson is a front desk supervisor at La Quinta Inn & Suites in Columbia.

"Education is high on my priority list," she said. "I have three children who I want to get to college."

— *Elizabeth Scheltens*

12:05 p.m.

Armory Sports and Recreation Center, Columbia

Andy Craver, 33, and Maya Tarter, 32, walked out of their polling station just as they had walked in together. The married couple has voted together in the past three presidential elections.

They met in the Peace Corps in 2004, where they filled out their absentee ballots in the same room. They have voted together ever since.

Tarter, a social worker, said voting is a part of being a community, but this election has been unexciting, with a lot of name calling.

"You have to put up with all the political ads and everything during the campaign season," Craver said. "So you might as well vote."

Both Tarter and Craver voted in favor of Proposition B. Missouri has the lowest cigarette tax in the country, so an increase still would allow the industry to be competitive, Tarter said.

Neither Tarter nor Craver voted for Rep. Todd Akin or Gov. Mitt Romney.

"As a woman, (Akin's) comments were offensive," Tarter said.

"Really," Craver said with a laugh, "it comes down to voting against people who grossed you out the most."

— *Nassim Benchaabane*

11:52 a.m.

Dripping Spring Christian Church, Columbia

Roger Sublett didn't know when he graduated from Harrisburg High School in 1969 that the woodworking he learned there would pay off.

"College was not an option for us back then," Sublett said.

He worked 18 years in the coal mines of Boone County and wouldn't have left if the mines had stayed open. Sublett now works as a welder at Boone Quarries and puts his shop skills to work every day. But some of his co-workers don't know how to read a tape measure, he said.

Sublett thinks Harrisburg High School no longer teaches the same trades he's relied on to support his family.

"It's probably not all their fault, though. The state has probably dictated some of that," Sublett said.

The 60-year-old farmer came to the polls today to vote for "freedom and rights." These concepts are even more important to Sublett than the economy.

"The government gets bigger, the EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) gets stronger," he said.

"You have a need for environmental protections, but (EPA) should be a kinder, gentler agency. I'd like for somebody to pull their teeth a little so they don't have so much bite."

Sublett said he has punched many a Democratic ballot in his day. "But it's not the party of Truman anymore."

He started to notice his own politics change when the coal mines closed. The 1992 election of Bill Clinton — "who I despise," Sublett said — was the first time he didn't vote for a Democratic presidential candidate.

This year, Sublett voted all Republican, "mainly because of Obama," he said. "I want to turn some things around."

Sublett said he thinks concern about the economy will bring in more Republican votes.

"I believe Romney will win," he said.

— *Hilary Niles*

11:45 a.m.

Memorial Baptist Church, Columbia

Kat Seal and Monica Everett, both students at MU, showed their support for President Barack Obama by wearing "Sluts for Obama 2012" buttons when they went to vote at Memorial Baptist Church.

Seal and Everett explained the importance of health care issues for women in this election.

"I feel like some of my rights are at stake, and I think rights are sexy," Seal said. "And it's important to support politicians who support those rights."

Sluts for Obama 2012 is a nationwide group that raises awareness about "slut-shaming," which is using the derogatory term "slut" to shame women about their sexual choices, use of birth control or their style of dress.

Seal and Everett bought the "Sluts for Obama 2012" buttons through a fundraiser for True North women's shelter.

Everett explained that the cause is to showcase women who can make their own sexual choices as well as choices about their bodies.

[According to the Sluts for Obama 2012 Facebook page](#), the group is "pro-reproductive health, and pro-Obama."

— *Alexis Hitt*

11:32 a.m.

Hampton Inn and Suites, Columbia

Ron Coleman, 62, managing partner at Stadium Grill, has had voters' vehicles in and out of his parking lot all morning. Coleman said this is the first time voting has taken place at Hampton Inn and Suites, right next door.

"I'm not worried about parking; it won't affect the lunch rush," Coleman said. "Any exposure you can get helps, and it helps the community for one more voting place for people to get in quickly."

Coleman said there's been a great turnout. He voted this morning.

"I voted at 6:15 this morning and was No. 64," he said.

He said the presidential and U.S. Senate races were important because it is a tight race and every vote counts. The cigarette tax was also important to Coleman.

"It's a deterrent for the kids to buy the cigarettes, and we need the tax revenue to help education," he said.

— *Lexie Cartee*

11:31 a.m.

Shepard Boulevard Elementary School, Columbia

Guy Jones, 76, has been voting since 1954.

This time around, he wasn't alone. Jones brought his 21-year-old grandson, Sam Jones, who was voting for his first time. The two walked to the Shepard Boulevard Elementary School polling place from Guy Jones' house, down the street from the school.

Sam Jones, an MU senior originally from Iowa, called his grandfather a few days ago to ask him if they could go to the polls together.

"It's an honor to bring him to his first election," Guy Jones said.

Sam Jones said he's been reading about each candidate but has an open mind.

"I know the views of my family members," he said. "But I made sure I made my own decision."

Sam Jones has been anxiously awaiting his first election.

"It's part of the American process. Everyone can have their say, and every vote counts," he said. "I'm excited to finally be a part of the process now."

— *Taylor Weatherby*

11:12 a.m

Smithton Middle School, Columbia

Superstorm Sandy swept through the East Coast last week, affecting the lives of millions of people, public transportation and countless homes. But the hurricane affected one more thing — Mary Holmes' vote, which she cast early Tuesday morning at Smithton Middle School.

Holmes, 80, said her sister lives in New York and was one of the many affected by the hurricane. Her sister was impressed with how Obama pushed to get the subway up and running again in New York City.

"He was very commanding and very quick to help them," she said. "That really impressed me."

Holmes noted that she also cast her vote for Obama because he kept the auto industry alive. She said the president has "some very good ideas."

A former nurse, Holmes said she also voted yes on Proposition B.

"I was a nurse for years, and I know the devastation that smoking has on the health," she said.

— *Allison Prang*

11:10 a.m.

First Christian Church, Centralia

Jim McCubbin, 75, served four years in the Navy. He was leaving the service when Dwight Eisenhower was president.

McCubbin liked Eisenhower, and he's seen many presidential candidates over the years.

"I've voted all my life," McCubbin said.

He also liked presidents Harry S Truman, George W. Bush and Jimmy Carter.

"I liked Jimmy Carter. A lot of people didn't, but I did," McCubbin said. "He was a Christian."

McCubbin said elections have changed a lot over the years. "Some good, some not so good," he said. But the actual process of voting has gotten easier, McCubbin said.

— *Trevor McDonald*

10:57 a.m.

Mill Creek Elementary School, Columbia

Felix Ngassi, 50, a research associate at MU, voted in a U.S. election for the first time on Tuesday.

Ngassi emigrated from Congo-Brazzaville, located in Central Africa, eight years ago but wasn't a U.S. citizen until last year.

"It's a new country and a new experience. I've just been waiting for that moment to be a citizen and do my part," Ngassi said.

Although Ngassi said he voted before in Congo-Brazzaville, he noticed some differences.

"It's almost the same, but here it is more organized," Ngassi said. "It's fast and you don't feel the pressure of anyone behind you or pushing you to make your choice."

Overall, Ngassi said his voting experience was "great." He said he believes it is important to participate and be heard.

— *Julie Dimas*

10:46 a.m.

Oak Towers senior living center, Columbia

Most of the candidates Kay Johnson voted for were from the Libertarian Party because she's sick of Democrats and Republicans. However, she still voted for Obama.

Twirling her keys while standing in the cold outside the Oak Towers senior living center, Johnson explained her voting strategy.

"I'm making sure people who want to make us barefoot and preggers don't get elected," Johnson said.

"Also, I didn't vote for anyone who gave me a robo-call. I received so many robo-calls."

Another priority for Johnson was voting against state Rep. Mary Still, D-Columbia, who is running for the state Senate. Johnson doesn't like the bills Still has sponsored to impose restrictions on the payday loans industry.

Johnson called Still wealthy. "When was the last time she had to worry about getting her utility disconnected?"

Johnson stopped by Oak Towers on her way to her job at the Shoppes at Stadium, where she works in customer service at Storage Mart.

"My dog gave me the stink-eye because I woke up earlier than usual," Johnson said.

After work, Johnson plans to return home to watch a recording of "The Dr. Phil Show."

"Hopefully I won't hear anything about the election but the count," Johnson said. "I think the election started too early and went on way too long."

— *Richard Webner*

10:41 a.m.

Woodcrest Chapel, Columbia

Sara Snodderly, 34, is no stranger to politics.

A marketing manager, she works closely with the Capitol in Jefferson City and considers herself well-versed on the issues. A mother of three girls, ages 9, 6, and 18 months, Snodderly considers being informed a necessity.

"I think it's a little hard because things can be swayed one way," Snodderly said, holding the hand of her youngest, Lanie. Lanie came with her mother to Woodcrest Chapel in Columbia to watch the voting process and flip through her children's book when she got bored.

"Usually, I have one of them with me," Snodderly said of her daughters. "I think it's very important. They have a mini vote at school, too."

In the end, Snodderly said the most important lesson that her children can learn is informed voting.

"I try to teach them to fact find, not to just listen to commercials," Snodderly said. "Pick the candidate. Not the party."

— *Justice Gilpin-Green*

10:30 a.m.

Grace Bible Church, Columbia

Amanda Brinkley, 33, wore a red T-shirt with "Putting Kids First" in big, white letters and held a clipboard in one gloved hand.

She woke up at 5:15 a.m. to get to the polling place by 6 a.m.

Brinkley is a graduate student at MU in the social work program. Her professor Candace Iveson worked on the Proposition 1 Putting Kids First initiative, so Brinkley volunteered to inform people of the issue before they voted.

"(Kids) are not getting the services they need," she said.

She said when a replacement volunteer arrived, she was going to pick up her 12-year-old daughter, Jaiden,

on her way to vote. Jaiden wanted to accompany Brinkley to the polls like she did four years ago.

Jaiden's teachers at Lange Middle School told students to accompany their parents to the polls if they could, Brinkley said. In the weeks running up to Election Day, Jaiden watched the presidential debates on TV and asked Brinkley questions about taxes.

At school, Jaiden is a member of the Builders Club, a branch of Kiwanis International.

"She's already my little social worker," Brinkley said.

— *Sky Chadde*

10:20 a.m.

Open Heart Baptist Church, Columbia

Manning her small wooden TV tray outside Open Heart Baptist Church, Carrie Holohan wore a leather coat, Dr. Martens boots and gloves to combat the chilly weather. Her can of Dr Pepper sat on the ground next to her chair. Holohan has the essentials to get through the day.

"I'm working to collect exit polls," Holohan said. "I've been here since a quarter to six this morning — freezing!"

Holohan works for Edison Research. They are providing exit polling information to ABC, AP, CBS, CNN, Fox News and NBC News. Her job is to stop every fifth person leaving the polls for a random sample and record the results of the survey. She also will call her employer to give the results three times today.

Although the parking lot is full and other cars are parked on the surrounding lawn, Holohan sat quietly alone.

"Seemingly, there's a lot more people voting than the last election," Holohan said. "Most people won't even stop, but those that do are nice to chat with, and that makes it fun."

— *Dani Vanderboegh*

10:15 a.m.

Southern Boone County Senior Center, Ashland

For most voters at the Southern Boone County Senior Center, Jennifer Lee was the last person they saw before heading off to work or school.

"I'm the sticker lady today," she said, as she handed out "I voted" stickers and wished people a pleasant day.

Lee, 38, is a department associate at Boone Hospital Center and was ready by 4:30 a.m. to volunteer as a

poll judge at the Ashland Community Center.

"I probably should have gone to bed earlier, but I didn't," she said. "So we'll see how it goes."

She has been a resident of Ashland since the '80s, when her father became a pastor at Living Faith Church. She has volunteered as an election judge for the past three general elections.

"It's the only time I can see people I haven't seen in years," she said. "I just like being out visiting the community I live in."

Although she might have been the last person voters saw before leaving the polling place, she hopes they will return for future elections.

"It's important to vote because if you don't vote, you can't complain," she said. "You have to be part of the process to make a change."

— *Jennifer Liu*

10:10 a.m.

Oak Towers senior living center, Columbia

While voters walked briskly past him into the entrance of the Oak Towers senior living center, where he lives, Robert Smith pulled a torn, rolled-up cigarette from a box of Pall Malls and lit it with a metal lighter.

"We gotta wait until all the white folks vote, then we can vote," Smith said, earning the laughter of his fellow smokers.

After explaining that he was being sarcastic, Smith said the voters didn't bother him.

"I think it's good for the people," he said. "The only thing that would be annoying would be if the elevator broke down again."

Smith has lived in Oak Towers for almost 10 years. Wearing a leather cap and a puffy black jacket, he stood on the sidewalk in gray socks. He had trimmed his facial hair into a goatee, but there were outgrowths of stubble on other parts of his face.

"After you get to be 71 years old, it doesn't matter which way it goes," Smith said. "All politicians are big liars, and the biggest liar gets to be president." He said he planned to vote later in the day.

Gene Thurman, who has lived in Oak Towers for two years, wasn't smoking. Instead, he leaned on a cane and listened to Smith. He said he lived on the 10th floor, then laughed and pointed at the building, which is only eight stories tall.

Around Thurman's neck hung a lanyard with a whistle at the end. The whistle was given to him by "an old lady" in case he gets lost, Thurman said, while Smith laughed. On Thurman's breast pocket was an "I voted" sticker.

Despite being a lifelong Republican, Thurman voted for Obama.

"The Democrats and Republicans are both jerks," Thurman said. "But he deserves four more years."

Thurman said he didn't like the way the Romney campaign had attacked Obama.

"I don't think you ought to talk about the president that way," he said. "You ought to be more respectful to the president, but they don't do that no more." Smith nodded.

"The big problem is the jobs going overseas," Thurman said, turning to Smith. "When you and I came up, there were always jobs."

Thurman tapped his black shoes with his cane.

"These are diabetic shoes," he said. "I paid \$26 for these. Medicare pays \$260 for them from China."

— *Richard Webner*

10:01 a.m.

St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Columbia

Ali Saheli, 50, moved to the United States from Iran in 1978 when he was 17. He's been a Columbia resident since 1979. He cast his vote Tuesday morning at St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Saheli, who is now a programmer analyst at MU, said his family left during the revolution in Iran to escape the "hard religious lines" that affected politics. Now a U.S. citizen, the 2012 U.S. election races are very important to him.

"Ever since George Bush's presidency, a lot of issues that I ran away from are surfacing here," he said.

Saheli hopes the government helps others and stays away from mixing religious and political views. "I hope the people that hold the Constitution close to their chest will extend the same rights to others and not become narrow-minded," he said.

"The direction our country takes affects greatly the other 7 billion people in the world, so we have to take great care with the decision we make," Saheli said.

— *Kristi Luther*

9:48 a.m.

Open Heart Baptist Church, Columbia

Early Tuesday morning, drivers looked for parking near Open Heart Baptist Church.

"We had intense lines down the hall and doubling back from open until 8:30. We didn't have any breaks," Linda Cheatham said. Cheatham, 64, was working as a Republican supervisor at the location for Election Day.

Inside, the worship room has been converted to a polling place. The pew chairs, with hymnals and Bibles stashed underneath, were stacked and pushed aside. The chairs were replaced by tables for sign in and ballots, a center section for private voting cubicles and an electronic ballot machine sat in the corner.

"Everybody has been very nice. We had a bunch of first-time voters that were very energized, but overall it's been less energized than 2008," Cheatham said. "Lots of people have brought their children, including newborns or unregistered voters as we like to call them."

— *Dani Vanderboegh*

9:13 a.m.

Woodcrest Chapel, Columbia.

As they walked into the polling location at Woodcrest Chapel together, Kynya Atkins, 8, told her mother how she learned how to vote at school.

"I learned that you have to wait in a long line," Kynya said. She also learned that you have to color in the little boxes on the ballot and be careful no one sees. Her mother, Cassandra Atkins, 39, listened with an amused smile on her lips.

A daycare provider, Cassandra Atkins sees voting as a teaching opportunity. Although Kynya "doesn't fully understand all of the issues," when she "votes" at school or attends her mother's real voting at 7:30 a.m., voting is still a learning experience.

Above all, Cassandra Atkins wants Kynya to be an informed voter.

"Just kinda listen really closely," Cassandra said. "Then, I want her to go with what she thinks is best."

In the end, Kynya promised that she would vote when she was old enough, and Cassandra led her into the building.

— *Justice Gilpin-Green*

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