



# Westview

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### \$200K WEST END HEIST

**DAYLIGHT ROBBERY** of jewelry salesman at West End-Bowling intersection mirrors similar six-figure heists across country.

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### FIGHT OF HER LIFE

**PHYSICAL RECOVERY** has paled in comparison to one local woman's struggle to recover her legal rights.

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### ENDANGERED SPECIES

**BLUE DOG** Congressman Jim Cooper looks ahead to a House increasingly dominated by idealogues.

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# Merry & Bright

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*Trend reversal seen*

## Christmas Tree sellers optimistic

By Judy Sarles  
Correspondent

This holiday season is predicted to be merry and bright for Tennessee's Christmas tree sellers.

Across the state, many people are staying close to home and spending time with their families, so there is expected to be a strong demand for Christmas trees. Overall sales are projected to be equal to or better than last year, despite some troubles at the state's Christmas tree farms.

"All the farms have had various shares of problems with the newly planted seedlings this year because of the extreme heat we experienced here in Tennessee," says Art Landrigan, president of Tennessee Christmas Tree Growers Association. "But all of the established trees that are available for sale this year are all in fine shape."

Nationally, Christmas tree sales have declined during the past two years, reflecting consumer belt-tightening during the recent recession. National Christmas Tree Association Consumer Survey results show U.S. households purchased 28.2 million real Christmas trees and 11.7 million artificial trees in 2009, the same amount as in 2008. In 2007, the households purchased 31.3 million real trees and 17.4 million artificial trees. This holiday season, 31 percent of U.S. households plan to purchase a real tree, while 8 percent plan to buy an artificial tree.

Factors affecting the total number of trees purchased include weather conditions, number of consumers traveling for the holidays and number of days between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Beginning the day after Thanksgiving, Tom Allison is selling Christmas trees for the second year in a row in the Harpeth Village retail center at Temple Road and Highway 100 in Bellevue. Allison, who owns a landscape business and manages a farm in Bellevue, had a successful year for tree sales in 2009. Although he isn't sure how good his sales will be this year, he's still preparing to do even better this year than last.

"It's hard to tell," Allison says, "but we ordered a few

more trees than we had last year thinking that once people get to know that we're here, we'll have some more people come by."

Allison had 350 trees on the lot last year; this year he has 400. The trees are Fraser firs, which he acquires from a grower in North Carolina.

"We knew someone that had been in the business before," he says, "so we got connected with this grower."

Allison's trees range in price from \$20 to about \$250. Last year, he made a donation to the Bellevue Family YMCA based on what he sold. He plans to do the same this year.

Not far from Bellevue is a Christmas tree farm that offers organically grown Virginia pines for sale through Eaton's Creek Christmas Trees, which has been in business for about five years.

"People have to come to the farm," owner Robert Workman says. "We don't bring the trees to any market. People come and pick out a tree and then we cut it down for them to take home using their vehicles."

He says his trees survived the summer droughts and are very healthy. In 2008, he sold 25 trees. Last year, he sold 30.

"Last year was the first year we had a website," Workman says. "It attracted more people I think."

He anticipates he will have higher sales this year than last year because the farm will be open for business on more days than it was in 2009. Any size tree at the farm costs \$35. Workman will trim larger trees to meet customer requirements.

Starting Nov. 27, trees will be sold at the farm on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and at other times by appointment, up until Christmas Day. On Christmas Day, Workman's daughter, who works at Oasis Center, a nonprofit youth support center, will bring some of the kids from the center to the farm. Workman will cut down a tree so the kids can make wreaths.

Eaton's Creek Christmas Trees is at 4870 Eaton's Creek Road off of Briley Parkway in Nashville. For information, call 615-969-9964.



Green Business

## Gowdy finds own way, helps companies find greener path

By Hollie Deese  
Correspondent

Jeff Gowdy's first job out of college was at a big consulting firm in Washington, D.C. The University of Virginia graduate put in a few years but soon realized he wanted his work to mean something more.

"I wanted to do something different than big, massive corporate accounts," says Gowdy, 35. "I was working on things that didn't align with what I wanted to work on day to day. I decided I wanted to make a career switch and focus on sustainability."

Gowdy did some research about the best way to approach the industry and decided returning to school for business was his best option for success. He enrolled at Vanderbilt's Owen Graduate School of Management where he got an MBA in strategy and environmental management in 2005.

"But when I was looking for jobs, the market wasn't where it is today," he adds. "At the time there were only a handful of cutting edge companies who were hiring for particular positions for consul-

**Name:** Jeff Gowdy, 35  
**Business:** JGowdy Consulting, which works with companies with strategy development, implementation and marketing/communications of sustainability initiatives, jgowdyconsulting.com  
**Launched:** 2006  
**Hometown:** Clemson, S. C.  
**Clients:** World Wildlife Fund, Ingram Marine, Wal-Mart, Wildlife Habitat Council, Bridgestone

tants to work on sustainability. So my hand was forced to do it on my own."

He launched JGowdy Consulting in 2006, and in the past five years has grown his client list to more than 30 companies. He is able

to take on the work thanks to a network of contractors, consultants and interns that varies depending on his current workload.

Gowdy's goal is to guide his clients

through the process of saving money and improving the environment at the same time.

"You create an initiative that finds the sweet spot of driving financial improvement while at the same time improving environmental performance for a company," he says of his services. "If it is just financial it is business as usual, whatever will maximize profits and the environment takes on those externalized costs. If you only get environmental improvement then you are kind of a mission-driven company, existing only for the environmental adventure."

"The key is to find both, so you are either driving revenue or saving costs and at the same time lowering energy input, lowering water usage and cutting your waste recycling rate."

That's the crux of sustainability consulting. He has worked with clients in consumer products, transportation and distribution, automotive, office products and corporate and residential real estate development. Clients include Vanderbilt, World Wildlife Fund, Ingram Marine, Wildlife Habitat Council and Cumberland River Compact. He is also a board member of Clean Air Partnership of Middle Tennessee.

"The value I communicate to potential clients is that I am here to help you make a better decision about your entire company and figure out what makes sense for you from a sustainability standpoint that aligns with your business model," Gowdy says.

In 2001, he will be focusing more on education, continuing to teach at the Owens School's executive development institute on sustainability.

"I think that is a virtuous cycle," he says. "The more outlets there are for executives to learn about this, the more companies are aware, the more they will hire sustainability consulting firms."

