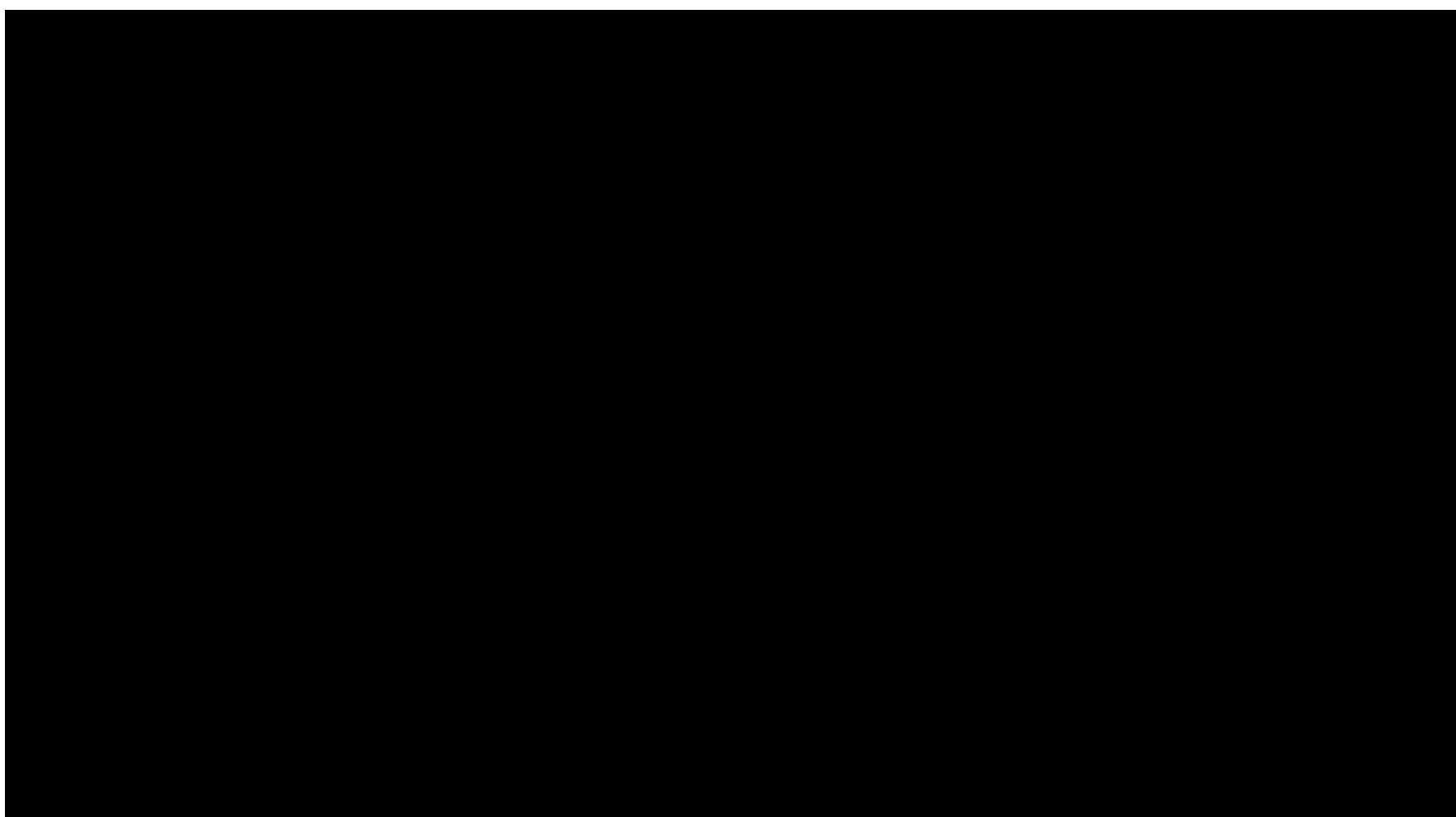


LETTERS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

We should bridge the divide between us by truly listening | Letter

Alexia Georghiou Letter to the editor

Sept. 9, 2026, 5:09 a.m. ET



Watch the Pride of the Southland honor Dolly Parton at Neyland Stadium

The Pride of the Southland Band honored the late Dolly Parton during its halftime performance at Tennessee's season opener.

It’s fall in East Tennessee and with our Labor Day holiday and the first Vols football game of the season we celebrate, awaiting the weather to chime in. I’m done with the heat and am awaiting the brisk cooldown, cold snaps and changing colors of the trees. Neyland Stadium packed with tributes to Dolly and the tunes of Rocky Top. Fans cheering with hope of wins.

One of my favorite analogies when I speak on human nature is that football player who gets hurt. What does the whole crowd do in unison? “Ouch!” This isn’t something we could ever practice enough if we tried. This unified response points to how closely we are connected as human beings.

In the late 1900’s researchers discovered mirror neurons as they found the same part of the monkey's brain activated when it picked up objects and observed others completing similar tasks. We began to understand how our brain responds to what others around us experience.

Our culture is one of individualism and there is such a divide between us. We focus on differences, vilify one another for belief systems, and have lost the art of listening to others, fearing it may signal agreement.



See fall sunsets light up high school football fields across Knoxville

As the sun starts to fall a little earlier, it's a great time of year to see beautiful sunsets. See what Knox News sees at high school football games!

Our biology tells a different story. What happens to me happens to you. Not literally. But something happens in you when something happens to me. We are social beings created to respond to one another’s joy, pain, and experiences.

Need a news break? [Check out the all new PLAY hub with puzzles, games and more!](#)

This fall season opening could we look around at the people around us, in the eyes, say hello, and without the phone in our vicinity spark a real conversation? Not the generic, “How are you,” that we all default to. Deeper. Ask a real question. How about, “What brings you joy these days?” Then listen, become curious, ask real questions. The benefits to our own health are immense, including our brain health, and for those around us naturally boosting happiness. And this is something we are all in pursuit of.

Alexia Georghiou, Knoxville, 37912

Agree or disagree? [Send your letter to Knox News](#)