

NEWS in a NUTSHELL

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF MARYVILLE



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Jason Chai Travels to South Korea to Meet his New Wife's Family

Jason Chai, Traffic Operations Manager, accomplished a long-term goal last summer. Since December 2018, he has been planning a trip to South Korea. Last June, he made it happen.

Jason met his wife, Emily, at a restaurant in Knoxville where they worked together almost five years ago. Emily moved to the United States from Seoul, South Korea with her family in 2005.

Jason knew soon after he met Emily that he would ask her to marry him one day, so he began making plans for a memorable proposal. Over the years of their courtship, he set out to learn things about Emily that he could incorporate into his elaborate scheme. Emily's love of poetry, her preferences in jewelry, and her desire to get to know the family members back in the country of her birth were just a few of the things he had on his radar. Over the next four years, he taught himself the basics of the Korean language. He claims he has a toddler-level vocabulary. He can speak and read just enough to survive in a foreign country. In the years leading up to the proposal, he also wrote several poetic letters to Emily that each included small pieces of his proposal. The last poem explained the puzzle. A special message would be revealed by lining up the first letter of the first word of each one, "Will you marry me?" Jason followed his proposal

with a beautiful ring that met and exceeded Emily's vision of the perfect engagement ring.

Ultimately, on April 6, 2022, Jason and Emily were married. Just two and a half months later, the Chai's boarded a plane for a two-week trip to South Korea, and the last part of Jason's plan came to fruition.

Emily and Jason flew from Dallas, Texas to Seoul, South Korea on a 14-hour flight. Jason expected to encounter some culture shock, but being a Traffic Engineer, he noticed right away the Korean driving habits were different than ours, and the lack of traffic on the roads during what is considered peak hours in the States.

One entire wall in Jason's office is covered with a real-time video feed of several of the traffic lights in Maryville and Alcoa. His job is focused on traffic lights, timing, and smooth transitions on our roadways. Imagine his surprise when he first realized that traffic lights in South Korea are merely a suggestion for mopeds, scooters, and motorcycles. For the most part, two wheeled vehicles disregard red lights. Proceeding through the intersection with caution and most of the time, good timing, they weave in between oncoming cars almost seamlessly. He also witnessed first responder vehicles navigating their course in spite of other vehicles on the road. No one tries to get out of the way of fire trucks or ambulances. Rescue vehicles do not use sirens to warn other drivers of their presence because the citizens find them upsetting.

In Seoul, you can have food delivered to your door 24 hours a day. The delivery drivers break all the rules. Several times Jason and Emily witnessed delivery drivers who aggressively darted in and out of traffic and even jumped the curb to navigate onto the sidewalk when the street became too congested. It's not just a free-for-all however, speeding is not tolerated. Speedsters are caught by overhead cameras. In Seoul, if you don't pay your fine, the police will come to your door and take your car away until you do pay it.

Jason saw parking spaces reserved for women like the handicapped parking spots in the States. According to Bloomberg.com, there are more than 4,000 of these parking spots in Seoul. In 2009 a



A photo of traffic in downtown Seoul at 4 p.m.



Jason and Emily Chai

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People are the Key

JASON: from page 1

\$75 million campaign to make the city more accessible to women was launched. All the “Female Parking First” spots are closer to the entrance and are well-lit, some are larger, and all are marked with bright pink overhead signs in English and Korean. One of Emily’s relatives explained that women do most of the shopping and the designated parking makes it easy for them to take their children along.

In Seoul, there are lots of buildings that boast several floors above ground and several below ground. Escalators provide easy access to all levels. The Chai’s saw that the steps of the escalators look very similar to ours, with a series of grooves that fit together with the steps in front of and behind each step. Shoppers in S. Korea roll their shopping cart (buggy) onto the escalator steps where the wheels of the cart fit perfectly into the grooves. The specially designed grooves lock the cart in place as it proceeds up or down the escalator without assistance from the humans.

The subway is also underground. An elaborate but very efficient subway system carries more than 7,200,000 commuters every day. Nearly 2.73 billion passengers used the subway last year according to the Korean Herald. This is most likely why “rush hour” in Seoul is pretty much non-existent. Jason was shocked to see that there weren’t significantly more cars in the early morning and late afternoons in downtown Seoul.

Jason found the food to be exceptionally good. He went so far as to say their pizza, fruit, and meat are all better than ours. He



On the lower half of the plate pictured above, is the live octopus that Jason enjoyed on the trip.

claims the Korean Whopper, made to have a similar flavor to Bulgogi, a well-known Korean Entrée, is a game changer. Koreans eat a lot of shrimp, eel, mushrooms, and rice. They also eat octopus. Live octopus. He reports that eating live octopus, while a little weird at first with the moving around in your mouth, tastes amazing! For the most part, restaurants in Korea do not display pictures of the food on their menus, only words

in Korean. This is when his four years of teaching himself the language came in handy. (Plus, Emily is 100% fluent in Korean, so that helped tremendously). He was able to navigate signs enough to get around in restaurants and coffee shops.

According to the Korean travel blog, Seoulinspired.com, Korea is one of several overshadowed coffee cultures in the world. Not as established, traditional, or as famous as Italy, Brazil, or Ethiopia, but a unique and interesting culture all the same. Koreans (on average)

drink 12.3 cups of coffee per week. Seoul has over 18,000 coffee shops and more Starbucks than any other city in the world. Jason said Emily’s family and other families in Seoul often have coffee for dessert.

While the Chai’s were in Seoul, Jason got a tattoo on his forearm. This doesn’t sound earth-shattering or even odd to us in the U.S., but in South Korea, tattooing is a crime. Under a ruling that has been in place since 1992, tattooing without a medical license can result in fines of up to \$40,000 or even imprisonment. In Seoul, tattoo shops are hidden in plain sight. They tend to exist in rented upper-floor office spaces across the city. It’s easy to find tattoo artists in Seoul on Instagram. Jason found his tattooist on a small sign at street level. A bold move by the artist considering the consequences.

Jason plans to keep writing letters to his wife but has warned her that she probably won’t receive as many now that he doesn’t have a deadline in mind for their delivery. Jason and Emily do plan to return to Seoul every couple of years in the future. They want to stay in touch with family there and they can’t wait to have the live octopus again!



Jason and Emily dressed in traditional outfits that would be worn by a Korean King and Queen.

Citizen Calls in Her Compliments

Cecelia Heath who lives in Royal Oaks called and left a message on Brad Hurst’s phone recently.

“This is Cecelia Heath. I live in Royal Oaks. I need to compliment Michael Alexander, (EPW). He is outstanding, kind, sweet, and just nice to everybody. I don’t know of anybody who doesn’t love him or appreciate all the things he does for us. He’s just a bright ray of sunshine out here! I just wanted to compliment you all on a great employee!”

Way to go Michael Alexander!

Tree Lighting Event Set

This year the Christmas Tree Lighting event will be held downtown on Monday, December 5, 2022 from 6 - 8 p.m. Mark your calendar and bring your kids and grandkids to visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, see live reindeer, and ride on the trackless train. More information will follow soon.



2023 Holiday Calendar Announcement

In 2023 the City will observe the following 10 holidays.

- New Year’s Day** - Monday, January 2
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day** - Monday, January 16
- Good Friday** - Friday, April 7
- Memorial Day** - Monday, May 29
- Independence Day** - Tuesday, July 4
- Labor Day** - Monday, September 4
- Thanksgiving** - Thursday, November 23
- Thanksgiving** - Friday, November 24
- Christmas Eve** - Friday, December 22
- Christmas** - Monday, December 25

Congrats are in Order



New Employee
Sarah Benderman
 MPD
 General Worker



New Employee
Caelan Evans
 Electric
 GIS Technician



New Employee
Art King
 MPD
 Detective



New Employee
Joseph McCall
 MFD
 Part-time Firefighter



New Employee
Collin Ross
 MFD
 Part-time Firefighter



New Employee
Travis Ryan
 EPW
 Grounds Maintenance
 Worker



New Employee
Nicole Spitzer
 W&S
 Wastewater Treatment
 Plant Technician



New Employee
Rose Woods
 MFD
 Part-time
 Firefighter



Current Employee
Chase Green
 MFD
 Reserve
 Firefighter



Promotion
Amy Woody
 Public Services
 Administrative
 Assistant



Promotion
Riley Huff
 EPW
 Street Construction
 Worker

2022 Golf Tournament in the Books

The employee golf tournament was held on October 3 at Green Meadow Country Club. This year the tournament was open to employees, retired employees, and family members as well. Tee time was at 1 p.m. The weather was perfect and everyone had a great time! Results are listed below.



1. Tim Phillips, Jamie Hipps, Brandon Nichols, and Jordan Marshall (EPW) Score: 57
2. Baron Swafford, Mike Large, Kent Roberts, and Don Meyers (Electric) Score: 66
3. Junior Hess, Ryan Rodgers, Keith Church, Terry McCoy (MPD, IT) Score: 66
4. Tony Crisp, Greg Cooke, Mark Taylor, Bill Garner (MPD) Score: 68
5. Kyle Reimer, Reid Walker, Daniel Fipps (MPD, MFD) Score: 68
6. Jay Parrott, Keith Brewer, Kendell Brewer (EPW-Retired, Engineering) Score: 71
7. Sherri Phillips, David Graves, Kevin Bailey, Wyatt Snow (Finance, Admin, IT, Electric) Score: 72
8. Todd Burchett, Randy Cupp, Kyle Newman, Jordan Cupp (W&S, Finance, MACTO) Score: 74

Tips From the Safety Manager

With the shorter days of fall and winter quickly approaching, it is important to remember when vehicle headlights are required in the state of Tennessee.

Our state law requires vehicle headlights to be turned on 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise. Headlights must be turned on when daylight is not good enough for you to see people or vehicles clearly at a distance of 200 feet, and when rain, mist, snow, or other precipitation requires constant use of windshield wipers.

Stay safe when driving a City of Maryville vehicle and your own personal car or truck!

ACTION REQUIRED BY NOVEMBER 25! City Policy Acknowledgments

City employees are required to acknowledge certain policies on an annual basis. You can do so by going to the employee page on the website (maryvillegov.com/employees). At the top of the page under the title, Important Message! Action Required, click on the Ethics Policy & Drug-free Workplace Policy Agreement links if you would like to read them. To acknowledge that these policies were provided to you, enter your name and department, click on Yes, I confirm, and then Submit. It's as easy as that! The deadline to complete the review is November 25, 2022.

Applause Please

November Birthdays

- 2 Chuck Rowan, Engineering
- 3 Jerry Hall, W&S
- 4 Brad Poplin, Electric
Caelan Evans, Electric
- 5 Tom Bible, W&S
- 6 Jana Brown, Engineering
- 8 Josh Richards, MFD
Cory Tindell, EPW
- 9 John Roberson, EPW
Kyle Reimer, MPD
Mike McClurg, W&S
- 13 Matthew Tipton, MPD
- 16 Josh Ludtke, MPD
Derrick McMurray, MPD
- 18 Sarah Harris, MFD
- 21 Jill Ridings, Finance
- 22 Matthew Gagnon, MFD
- 24 Brandon Nichols, EPW
- 25 Scott Brown, Electric
Aaron Inman, Electric
Chandra Pickering, Finance
- 27 Rom Everett, MFD
Timothy Lane, EPW
- 29 Jarod Shudan, EPW



November Anniversaries

- Gary Walker, Dev. Services 32 years
- Kelly Hembree, EPW 28 years
- Randy Teffeteller, Electric 24 years
- Debbie Yarnell, Dev. Services 22 years
- Jeremiah Morton, EPW 18 years
- Mike Hicks, MPD 17 years
- Eric Bailey, EPW 16 years
- Kim Walker, Finance 16 years
- Stephanie Perkins, MPD 16 years
- Ben Belitz, MPD 11 years
- Daniel Rogers, MFD 8 years
- Brandon Riggs, MFD 8 years
- Leslie Crawford, HR 7 years
- Alex Steele, MFD 6 years
- Ryan Spencer, MFD 3 years
- Robbie Fox, IT 3 years
- Chad Loveday, IT 2 years
- Conner Brown, MFD 1 year
- Matthew Stewart, EPW 1 year

Water & Sewer Praised for Teamwork

Good Afternoon, Jessica

I had the opportunity to come out and observe your Water Team work on the main break on Broadway this past Sunday. To say the least, I was very impressed! Team, team, team is constantly pushed in the city, working together to accomplish goals. I have to say, I witnessed one of the best displays of teamwork I have ever seen from your group. From the very start the multitude of tasks that were coordinated and synchronized was amazing. They were all hustling to provide equipment and tools needed prior to actions, so that no time was wasted. I admired how they looked after each other from safety to passing on knowledge to aid the less experience personnel. They were teaching and in a manner that was respected and appreciated. Even down to clean up, it was obvious that they take great pride in their work and it showed. Even though this was physically very strenuous work, never once did I hear a complaint from anyone. I just wanted you to know how good they make you and the city look.

David Graves,
Workplace Safety and Risk Manager



Flexible Spending Accounts for 2023 Due by December 5

Don't let this excellent benefit pass you by!

Information regarding the medical reimbursement and dependent care accounts will be distributed soon!

If you have any consistent medical, dental, or vision expenses that you know you will incur in 2023, you can apply those dollars to the pre-tax Flexible Spending Account (up to \$2,500). The money you pledge to put in the account during the year will be available to you on January 1st. You can spend it throughout the year.

You can also pay your child care expenses (up to \$5,000) on a pre-tax basis if you would like to take advantage of the Dependent Care benefit.

The enrollment form for 2023 deductions must be turned in to Patty Cox in Human Resources by December 5th. Remember, your previous election will not carry over. A new FSA enrollment form is required.

Reimbursements will be processed through the payroll system and will be applied to your pay check. Documentation of your expenses must be submitted to Patty Cox in Human Resources by the Friday before the next pay date.

If you have any questions about how this program works, call Patty at 273-3427.