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CENTRAL KENTUCKY MARKET REVIEW 2020

A COMMUNITY UNITED

Businesses team up to help
survive challenges of COVID-19

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CENTRAL KENTUCKY MARKET REVIEW 2020

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ON THE COVER

A community united: Central Kentucky businesses, nonprofits and other organizations responded to the challenges of COVID-19 by working together to find ways to help each other navigate the uncharted waters of a global pandemic. The efforts are paying off: WalletHub ranked Lexington No. 1 on its list of Cities Whose Unemployment Rates are Bouncing Back Most.

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Vibrant Heartland

Central Kentuckians enjoy an inclusive region's beautiful life



UK photo



▲ **TAKING IN THE SCENERY** Outdoor recreation is a big attraction in beautiful Central Kentucky, where residents and tourists alike enjoy hiking, camping, biking, kayaking, fishing and more.

◀ **NO SITTING, NO SLEEPING** More than 900 University of Kentucky students participated in DanceBlue 2020, a 24-hour dance marathon that raised over \$2 million to support the children and families battling pediatric cancer in the DanceBlue Kentucky Children's Hospital Hematology/Oncology Clinic. The annual no sitting, no sleeping dance marathon has raised more than \$17 million since the organization launched in 2006.



Photo by Jeff Rogers.com

Photo courtesy of Lexington Opera House



▲ **HISTORIC THEATER** Lexington Opera House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of the premier performing arts centers in the region. It hosts shows for everyone – ballet, opera, children’s productions, family shows, comedy, Broadway shows and national music acts, like Black Jacket Symphony, shown here.

◀ **VIBRANT DOWNTOWN** The second largest city in Kentucky, Lexington is the epicenter of the stunning Bluegrass region, home to a thriving business environment, excellent schools, a vibrant downtown and small-town charm with big-city amenities.

▶ **AWARD-WINNING DESIGN** Dubbed the “Cathedral of Bourbon,” the Wild Turkey Visitor Center is a mecca for bourbon lovers and Wild Turkey fans across the globe. A ramp leading to the center’s tasting room, shown here, echoes the structure of a nearby railroad trestle visible from the windows above.



Photo courtesy of Centre College



▲ **SWEET SMALL TOWN** In 2019, MSN named Danville to its list of most beautiful college towns. Danville is home to Centre College, a private liberal arts college founded in 1819 that has about 1,400 students. MSN said it was a “sweet, small town” with charming neighborhoods and a close-knit community.

▶ **FENCE-LINED PASTURES** There are more than 450 horse farms within 10 minutes of Lexington, the Horse Capital of the World. Central Kentucky is a center for Thoroughbred breeding, and is home to the Kentucky Horse Park and the historic Keeneland Racecourse.



►AUTUMN LEAVES

Fall is a perfect time to visit Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, a 3,000-acre restored Shaker community near Harrodsburg, Kentucky's oldest town.

▼WELCOME HOME

The city of Versailles in early 2020 renamed a road in honor of acclaimed country music artist Sturgill Simpson, who grew up there. He made a stop in Versailles before performing at a sold out show at Rupp Arena in Lexington.



Cooltucky Creative photo



▲SANGRIA SUNDAY Wildside Winery in Woodford County hosts Sangria Sunday, which combines music, wine and fun.

▼PROFESSIONAL THEATER The Lexington Theatre Co. (The Lex) brings together seasoned Broadway professionals, top-notch college students from around the country and local artists to deliver the professional theater experience to Central Kentucky, like its 2018 production of "A Chorus Line," shown below.

Steve Shaffer photo





Kentucky Department of Tourism photo

▲ **VINTAGE VIEW** Visitors to Danville, Ky., can enjoy a scenic stroll down the city's historic Main Street, which has been recognized with the Great American Main Street Award. The city's quaint downtown offers numerous shops and restaurants in vintage storefronts.

◀ **CLIMBER'S PARADISE** Known for its sandstone arches and towering cliffs, the Red River Gorge is a unique scenic natural area that attracts thousands of visitors each year. It is popular year-round with climbing, hiking, camping and canoeing enthusiasts.

▶ **MURAL MAGIC** Central Kentucky is decorated with several outdoor murals, including this "I love Kentucky" mural on Woodland Avenue in Lexington.



◀ **UP ON THE ROOF** The iconic Kentucky Castle, formerly known as Castle Post, is east of Versailles, not far from Blue Grass Airport. The Central Kentucky boutique hotel and restaurant plays host to conferences, weddings, a concert series and many other community and upscale events. The castle is 16,000 s.f. and sits on 55 acres. *Architectural Digest* recently named as "The Most Beautiful Hotel in Kentucky."

▼ **HIDDEN GEM** The Kentucky Native Café at Michler's in Lexington allows visitors to dine and relax in its urban oasis.



Photo courtesy of VisitLEX



▲ **SOCIAL SCENE** Locals and visitors alike enjoy a variety of restaurants, entertainment options and bourbon tours in the popular Distillery District in Lexington. It's also a growing residential area.

► **HORSE HAVEN** A signature Central Kentucky industry, equine businesses continue to strengthen the region's diverse economy through new business and tourism.

▼ **DINING DOWNTOWN** Lawrenceburg residents and visitors gathered in August for Dining Downtown, which celebrated the completion of a major downtown sidewalk replacement project that has helped restore the city center.

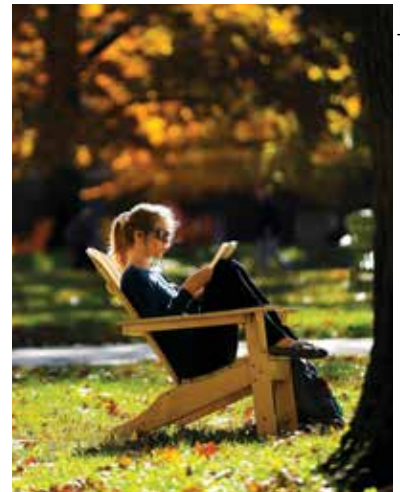


Photo courtesy of VisitLEX



▲ **BACK IN BUSINESS** Abandoned since the 1960s, the James E. Pepper Distillery was completely restored and began distilling spirits again in December 2017. Tours of the distillery include the story of the historic brand and offer a visit to its museum, a tour of the working distillery and a taste of Pepper's award-winning spirits.

► **SERENE STUDY** Fall in Lexington offers the perfect opportunity for University of Kentucky students to study outside while enjoying the cooler weather and the colors of autumn.



UK photo

Photo by Lawrenceburg/Anderson County Tourism Commission



Kentucky Department of Tourism photo



◀ARTS AND CRAFTS CAPITAL

The 25,000-s.f. Kentucky Artisan Center in Berea celebrates Kentucky’s artisans by offering crafts and fine arts sales, special exhibits and events, Kentucky cuisine and hospitality, demonstrations and information about Berea, Kentucky’s Folk Arts and Crafts Capital.

▶EXQUISITELY PRESERVED

The Gratz Park Historic District of downtown Lexington is home to beautifully maintained historic homes, including the Alexander Moore House built in 1836, at right, and the Federal-style Peter Paul House, built in 1816.

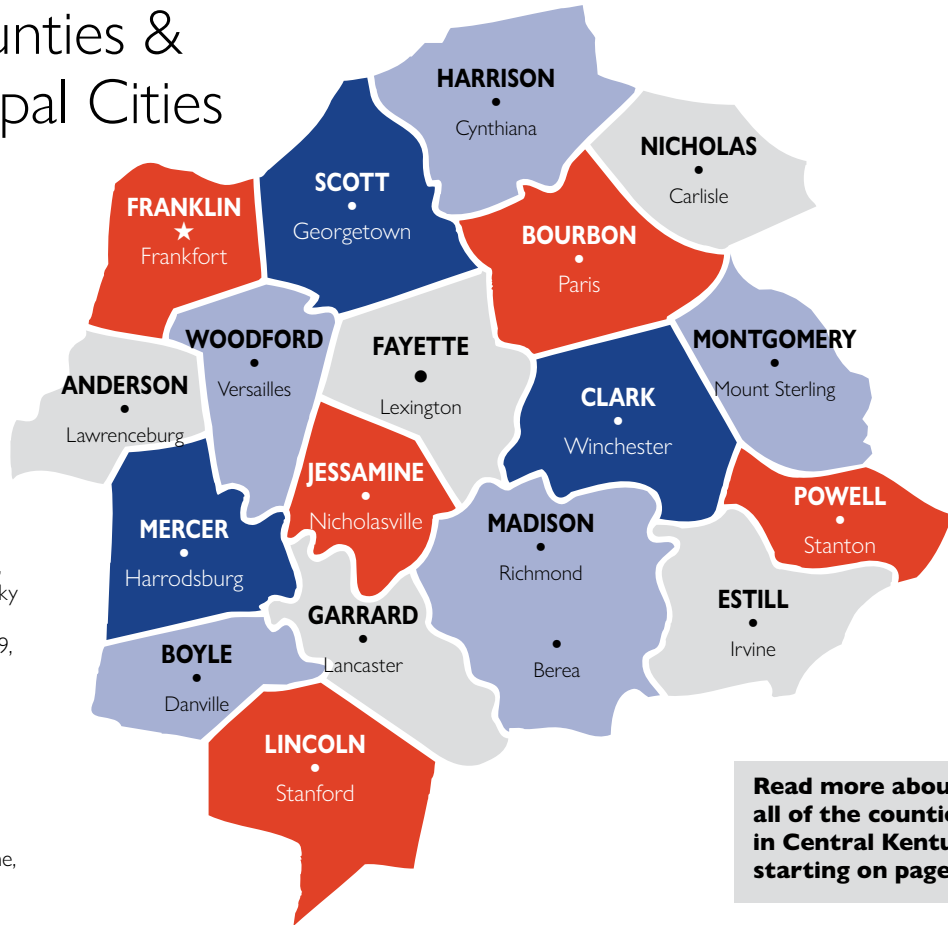


▲FULLY RESTORED Castle & Key’s owners restored the abandoned Old Taylor Distillery, including its iconic castle, where the gift shop is now located. Touring the restored property, its springhouse and gardens is a beautiful way to spend a day Central Kentucky.

◀EVENTS EPICENTER Rupp Arena, opened in 1976, is being renovated as part of a \$241 million project to build a new Lexington Convention Center. Rupp Arena hosts hundreds of events each year, including UK basketball games, exhibitions and concerts by national artists like Luke Combs, who played a sold-out show in February (left).

Central Kentucky Counties

Counties & Principal Cities



Population Growth

- Between 2015 and 2040, the population of Kentucky is projected to increase 10.4% – a gain of 461,289, according to Kentucky Data Center.
- Of these 18 Central Kentucky counties, 10 are projected to exhibit population growth: Anderson, Boyle, Clark, Fayette, Franklin, Jessamine, Madison, Montgomery, Scott and Woodford counties.

Read more about all of the counties in Central Kentucky starting on page 72.

Population

Actual

Estimated

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2025
Anderson	9,358	12,680	14,571	19,111	21,421	22,821	23,617
Bourbon	18,476	19,393	19,296	19,360	19,985	20,090	20,027
Boyle	21,090	25,054	25,641	27,697	28,432	30,550	31,232
Clark	24,090	28,294	29,496	33,144	35,613	36,206	36,508
Estill	12,752	14,478	14,614	15,307	14,672	14,059	13,654
Fayette	174,323	204,415	225,366	260,512	295,803	333,580	354,318
Franklin	34,481	41,861	44,143	47,687	49,285	50,386	51,123
Garrard	11,579	10,852	11,579	14,792	16,912	17,476	17,571
Harrison	14,158	15,157	16,248	17,983	18,846	18,751	18,674
Jessamine	17,430	26,736	30,508	39,041	48,586	56,126	60,271
Lincoln	16,663	19,030	20,045	23,361	24,742	24,324	23,035
Madison	42,730	53,557	57,508	70,872	82,916	91,774	95,773
Mercer	15,960	19,019	19,148	20,817	21,331	21,389	21,255
Montgomery	15,364	20,046	19,561	22,554	26,449	29,421	31,241
Nicholas	6,508	7,112	6,725	6,813	7,135	7,070	6,997
Powell	7,704	11,171	11,686	13,237	12,613	11,753	11,192
Scott	17,948	21,898	23,867	33,061	47,173	63,984	67,570
Woodford	14,434	17,754	19,955	23,208	24,939	26,953	27,421
Totals	475,048	568,507	609,957	628,557	796,853	876,713	911,479

Source: Kentucky State Data Center (ksdc.louisville.edu)

One-stop, super-service provider

Partnership helps existing and prospective businesses connect to Lexington's resources



Photo by Mark Mahan Multimedia, Courtesy of Commerce Lexington

Supporting minority businesses

In 2013, Commerce Lexington's Community and Minority Business Development launched a minority business accelerator. The mission of Commerce Lexington's Minority Business Accelerator is to accelerate the development of sizable minority business enterprises (MBEs) and to strengthen and expand the regional minority entrepreneurial community. Created from the findings of the 2009 study commissioned by Commerce Lexington and the Lexington-Fayette Urban League, and the analysis of a year-long strategic plan, the MBA actively seeks to improve the readiness of minority businesses while increasing the recognition of the value of Ethnic-Minority-owned businesses as suppliers, customers, and investment opportunities. This program has produced direct business to the MBA members totaling over \$7.4 million.

THE Bluegrass Business Development Partnership (BBDP) is a "one-stop shop" to provide assistance and resources to existing and prospective businesses in the Central Kentucky region. The BBDP is a collaboration of Commerce Lexington Inc., the University of Kentucky (UK), and the City of Lexington. Each partner in the BBDP brings a variety of strengths to the table for assisting businesses. They work with companies of all sizes, from small startups to Fortune 500 corporations, connecting them to the resources available to them throughout the city and state.

Commerce Lexington's economic development team provides assistance to businesses in specific sectors that are

▲ INNOVATIVE IDEAS Members of SPARK, an initiative of the Commerce Lexington's Bluegrass Business Development Partnership, celebrate the accomplishments of the entrepreneurial community each year with an awards dinner. In Fiscal Year 2019, the community created 260 new jobs and raised \$74.4 million in capital funds.

interested in locating to or expanding in the Lexington/Bluegrass area or are a startup in the early stages. The City of Lexington, represented by the mayor's office, provides seamless connections to businesses needing information and services from local government. Two of the UK partners are the Bluegrass Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC). The SBDC provides business advising services to

existing and startup businesses, including strategic business planning, financial analysis, capital formation and market research and analysis. The OTC helps startup entrepreneurs with goals ranging from ideation to establishing product-market fit, and securing intellectual property and funding.

The BBDP provides consistent service to clients, knowing when a company should receive assistance from another partner. Beyond assisting individual companies, the BBDP organizes and sponsors entrepreneurial initiatives such as the Who Got the Money celebration, 5 Across pitch competitions, and the Awesome Fellowship. ●

Investing in Central Kentucky

Between 2005 and 2020, companies invested nearly \$4.4 billion in Fayette County business development. In 2019 and early 2020, several companies made large investments in Central Kentucky. Here are some of the biggest investments:

YEAR	COMPANY	COUNTY	TYPE	PRODUCT	INVESTMENT	JOB
2019	Toyota Motor Mfg. Ky.	Scott	Expansion	North American product support	\$238M	0
2019	Faneuil Inc.	Fayette	New	Customer contact service center	\$12.2M	450
2019	SPARK	Fayette	New	Entrepreneurial companies	\$74.4M	260
2020	Quality Logistics (Longship)	Fayette	Expansion	Third-party logistics, over-the-road trucking	\$4.3M	155
2019	Anixter Inc.	Fayette	Expansion	Sales center for global network/security distributor	\$4.23M	103
2019	Lakeshore Learning	Woodford	Expansion	Distribution center for educational materials	\$27.5M	100
2020	Summit Biosciences	Fayette	Expansion	Develops, manufactures prescription nasal spray products	\$20.4M	78
2019	CLARK Material Handling	Fayette	Expansion	Corporate HQ, forklifts manufacturing and assembly	\$4.6M	40
2019	Blue Star Plastics	Fayette	Expansion	Custom plastic injection molding	\$5M	25
2020	NX Development Corp.	Fayette	Expansion	Life sciences company (Gleolan for tumor visualization)	\$1,225,000	20
2020	Fresh Bourbon (Edwards Spirits)	Fayette	New	African American-owned premier bourbon distillery	\$5.4M	15
2019	Tech29 LLC	Fayette	Expansion	Blockchain software development company	\$383,000	10

It's all about the bounce back

Diverse economy, low business costs and entrepreneurial spirit lead the way for recovery



BLUEGRASS BUSINESS Lexington remains a very affordable place to do business compared to other cities across the country because of its low utility costs, educated workforce, location and logistics advantage, and below-average cost of living.

financial crisis. Both times, Lexington recovered faster and stronger than many other comparable U.S. cities.

The Lexington region's economic success comes largely from its diverse economy, which has been cited by multiple national sources. Labor-market analytics firm Emsi recently ranked the Lexington metropolitan statistical area (MSA) among the top

10 "Most Diversified Metro Economies in the U.S.," adding that

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"These economies [on the list] have the range of industries, depth and nimbleness needed to overcome turbulent times and come out the other side even stronger."

LEXINGTON, Ky., is often known as the center of the college basketball universe, but in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and economic decline not seen in about 100 years, the city is already poised for one heck of

a rebound. In the past, Lexington has been among the most "recession-proof" and "recession-recovered" cities. Our city has been here before – albeit not to this extreme. There was the post 9/11 economic downturn and then the 2008

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-Money
- #11 Percentage of Population with an Advanced Degree
-US Census Bureau
- #14 Percentage of Population with a Bachelor's Degree
-US Census Bureau
- #24 World's Smart Cities
-National Geographic

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Lexington's economic sectors are evenly distributed among government, education, health care, retail trade, manufacturing, professional and business services, and construction. Another stabilizing force for the economy is the large number of colleges and universities, as well as hospitals, within the Bluegrass region. With 10 higher education institutions within a 40-mile radius of Lexington graduating more than 17,000 students annually, Lexington has maintained a foothold on its title as one of the most highly educated communities in the country.



Bob Quick, CCE, President/CEO, Commerce Lexington Inc.

Central Kentucky has remained a very affordable place to do business compared to other cities across the country because of its low utility costs, location and logistics advantage, and its below average cost of living. Lexington has been named among the best cities for college graduates (No. 1 – SmartAsset), first-time homebuyers (No. 4 – WalletHub), and economic growth potential among mid-sized cities (No. 5 – Business Facilities).

Already home to more than 100 biotech companies, Lexington has leveraged its

culture of innovation, top-ranked research programs, and expansive network of medical centers to create an environment where any market niche in the life sciences and biotech industries can grow. Lexington's thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem created 260 new jobs and raised more than \$74 million in capital funds in 2019.

Lexington's central location and excellent transportation system have been major factors in its growth and development. Not only is Lexington 600 miles from 50% of the U.S. population, it has a rapidly growing airport and it sits at the crossroads of two major interstates, I-75 and I-64, giving companies here a logistics and workforce advantage.

Thanks to a multitude of factors, Lexington is already beginning its rebound. According to WalletHub, Lexington is tops in the nation among cities where the unemployment rate has bounced back the most. As the pandemic continues, local officials are doing everything they can to assist businesses during this challenging time, so that when all industry sectors are at full capacity, Lexington will come out stronger and prepared for the future. Find out how Commerce Lexington helps businesses grow at CommerceLexington.com or LocateInLexington.com. ●



▲BEST TO INVEST Commerce Lexington, Lexington's Chamber of Commerce and economic development organization, in 2020 received *Site Selection* magazine's Mac Conway Award for Excellence in Economic Development, which is awarded to the top local and regional U.S. economic development groups based on an index of corporate job creation and facility-related capital investment data. The award is part of the magazine's annual rankings of the Global Best to Invest locations and Top Investment Promotion Agencies.

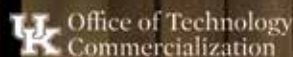
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FRANKFORT garners much-deserved attention around the country for its burgeoning manufacturing sector and well-known bourbon industry. Automobile parts, welding equipment and fixtures, polyolefin and elastomer products, building panels, fans and much more are built here, employing thousands with high-paying jobs and adding billions of dollars in local and state revenue.

The Kentucky Capital Development Corp. (KCDC) is committed to creating and maintaining a business climate that allows businesses and employees to maximize their potential. Working with hundreds of partners and businesses, including regional economic development organizations, academic institutions and industry groups, KCDC is enhancing the community, supporting business development, advancing industry innovation, tapping global markets and developing a talented workforce to help Frankfort realize its full economic potential.

If any good has come of the pandemic, it is that the challenges have spurred and

inspired a fierce spirit of collaboration, cooperation and innovation in the fight against the pandemic and the initiative to recover our economy. Many partnerships have been formed.

KCDC and its community partners continued to remain laser-focused on taking care of existing businesses of all sizes. While business attraction is important, it is equally important to support the businesses that already call Franklin County home. The best marketing campaign for new attraction is having existing businesses tell their stories of success. Supporting existing businesses as they diversify and expand, or helping them remain in Frankfort, is more important than ever.

By providing Gazelle.ai, an investment attraction platform, to member organizations and SizeUP KY to local businesses, through a partnership with the Kentucky Association of Economic Development, KCDC continues to gather data describing how the pandemic is

impacting local businesses. The data will enable them to act strategically in future planning – because the work of the KCDC team is never confined to what the community needs today, but rather a vision for the next decade.

There are several reasons why Frankfort was chosen for five consecutive years by *Area Development Magazine* as one of the top micropolitans in the U.S. to locate or expand a company. The central location, access to airports and major highways, some of the lowest electric rates in the country, a qualified workforce and excellent quality of life make doing business in Frankfort and Franklin County affordable and profitable.

And while more than 40 national and international manufacturing facilities call Franklin County home, the business sector and thriving downtown continues to grow, inspired by a recent application for an Entertainment Destination Center designation and the proposed new mixed-use development of 12 acres in the heart of downtown. ●

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A Community United

Businesses and organizations team up to survive economic challenges of COVID-19

BY LORIE HAILEY

UNITY and action. That's how the Central Kentucky business community responded to the biggest challenge it had ever encountered. Within days of the news that Kentucky had its first COVID-19 case, businesses, organizations and individuals joined forces to find ways to help each other navigate the uncharted waters of a global pandemic and the necessary shutdown to help slow the virus' spread.

What followed was a testament to the community's strength, compassion and ingenuity. Right away, multiple response funds were established, programs were created to address the needs of workers affected by the shutdown of nonessential businesses, and community agencies had refocused their missions to offer resources to those in need.

The hospitality industry was one of the sectors most affected by the governor's



Photo courtesy of FoodChain

executive order closing Kentucky's nonessential businesses. In March, a restaurant workers relief program was created to help restaurant workers who had been laid off.

The Restaurant Workers Relief Program, spearheaded by the LEE Initiative, offered no-cost meals and supplies to restaurant workers who had been laid off or had their hours or pay significantly reduced. It was a partnership between Makers Mark, the LEE Initiative and LexUNITE.

"Lexington is a shining example of what happens when the small business

▲TEAMING UP Rebecca Self, executive director of FoodChain, created Nourish Lexington at the beginning of the pandemic with the help of VisitLEX, Keeneland and the E. E. Murry Family Foundation. Nourish hired laid-off hospitality workers to prepare meals at FoodChain's kitchen facility on West Sixth Street. The meals were delivered to hospitality industry families and others in need, including children and their families and seniors in affordable housing apartment complexes.

community comes together with one common goal: unity," LexUnite says on its website.

LexUNITE served as a centralized resource to provide the community answers as to how and when they could help, and to see how their support of the local economy was making an impact in real time.

FoodChain, a nonprofit that forges links between community and fresh food through education and demonstration of sustainable food systems, also set its sights on helping displaced food service workers. It teamed up with VisitLEX, Keeneland and the E.E. Murry Family Foundation to create Nourish Lexington, an initiative to utilize the skills of

◀UNPRECEDENTED NEED FoodChain and Nourish Lexington provided more than 100,000 fresh meals to those in need between April and July, and it hopes to provide at least 100,000 more before the end of 2020. The initiative also paid displaced food service workers \$60 per four-hour shift.



Photo courtesy of Nourish Lexington

► CORONAVIRUS CONVERSATION

Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton (right) participated in a September roundtable discussion with University of Kentucky President Eli Capilouto and Dr. Deborah Birx (left), the coronavirus response coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force. They discussed COVID-19's effect on the community and ways to curb its spread.

hospitality workers unemployed due to the COVID-19 closings to provide prepared meals to those in need of immediate access to food. In exchange for preparing and delivering meals, food service workers received a \$60 payment for a four-hour shift in FoodChain's kitchen facility at the corner of Jefferson and West Sixth streets in downtown Lexington. Meals were distributed to hospitality industry families, other families in need, seniors in affordable housing apartment complexes, and children and their families through family resource coordinators.

FoodChain and Nourish Lexington provided more than 100,000 fresh meals to those in need between April and July, and it hopes to provide at least 100,000 more before the end of 2020.

Many businesses and restaurants donated food. Lexington Marriott City Center's culinary team donated food to FoodChain and Glean Kentucky. The Lexington restaurants that make up the Bluegrass Hospitality Group teamed up with local businesses to feed first responders. Gluten Free Miracles and Azur Restaurant provided free meals to people with food allergies and sensitivities. The Jeff Ruby Foundation donated \$50,000 to the Restaurant Workers Relief Program.

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With experts in Europe, Asia and throughout the Bluegrass, Team Kentucky responds quickly, builds long-term relationships, assists with workforce training and assures companies get the resources they need for success.



United Way of the Bluegrass and Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF) joined forces to launch a Coronavirus Response Fund to help provide critical support to vulnerable populations across Central Kentucky and Appalachia. The two agencies worked closely with the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) to streamline fundraising and impact efforts. The fund was announced on March 19, days before the governor's "Healthy at Home" executive order took effect.

"As a coalition we can leverage and combine resources to assist more people and make meaningful impacts," said Timothy Johnson, UWBG president and CEO, when the fund was announced.

The groups worked together to deploy rapid-response grants to community-based organizations providing relief and essential resources to communities that were disproportionately impacted by the crisis. As of September, the fund has awarded more than \$830,000 in charitable grants to 47 partners across 14 counties, according to BGCF.

In May, Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton created the Mayor's Fund for the Greater Good to support key social service agencies that serve the most vulnerable individuals and families in Lexington. The city also worked with God's Pantry Food Bank and United Way of the Bluegrass to prepackage food boxes for families in need.

"Lexington has shown during the pandemic how our business community comes together when faced with crisis," Gorton said.

Across every sector, businesses and organizations are helping their fellow Central Kentuckians weather the storm. The region's chambers of commerce and economic development agencies,

meanwhile, have been working behind the scenes to secure the resources that those businesses need to survive.

Taking action to meet businesses' evolving needs

For Central Kentucky businesses, social distancing requirements meant adapting to a new reality: implementing remote work strategies, enforcing strict measures to limit interaction between employees, or shutting down for an undetermined amount of time – all while finding ways to sustain their businesses in time of economic uncertainty unmatched in modern history.

The simultaneous fear of infection and financial disaster blurred the view of the path forward. There was no playbook for how to survive the COVID-19 pandemic. So Commerce Lexington (CLEX) and its partners wrote one.

On March 4, when the first case was confirmed in Lexington, the city's chamber of commerce and economic development organization mobilized its personnel to help meet the evolving needs of its members and the community. CLEX had a new mission: help businesses weather the storm.

"Our team's immediate focus shifted to helping existing businesses in the region navigate the abrupt stoppage in the economy and providing support to the City of Lexington in efforts to find available personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline workers," said Gina Greathouse, executive vice president of economic development.

CLEX surveyed its members about their biggest concerns and used the information to determine how to best serve the needs of Lexington businesses. Most members said worries about the financial future of their business was the

biggest concern, followed by employee safety, hours, payroll and layoffs, said Bob Quick, CLEX's president and CEO.

The organization began distributing business-related COVID-19 information and resources via its website and email newsletters. The website was later expanded to include a collection of helpful materials, including resources for business owners, information about small-business assistance, unemployment insurance claim instructions and other aid for individuals, a list of member restaurants with links to order carryout and gift cards, and a list of member banks for easy access to loan and financial assistance.

CLEX staff reached out to as many of its 1,900-plus members as possible to connect them with resources, elected officials and their staffs to "ensure that their voices are heard as state and federal assistance programs have been developed," Quick said.

Because COVID-19 is a new infection, information about it and the plans to help stop its spread are constantly evolving. Businesses trying to make it through one day at a time sometimes struggled to keep up with the almost-daily changes. That made CLEX's outreach critical to many business owners.

The team also worked to get Fayette County added to the Small Business Administration's disaster declarations list so that Lexington businesses could apply for business disaster loan programs. And, using an online database, CLEX helped match individuals looking for jobs with companies that still had openings.

The chamber launched its 4 O'Clock

Focus webinar series in an effort to evolve with the new "ever-changing" business landscape and assist businesses during the reopening of the economy. The series features local business experts discussing topics like legal guidance and compliance in the new workplace, the new face of retail, IT management during a pandemic, the future of real estate after COVID-19, Small Business Administration (SBA) loan guidance, and perseverance and flexibility in times of crisis, among others.

CLEX published an "Introductory Guide to Reopening Your Business in the Era of COVID-19" and offered sample communication and reopening business plans to members, including separate templates for manufacturers. It also participated in and helped provide guidance for the economic sectors selected for "Mayor Gorton's Economic Recovery Blueprint," released in May.

The Scott County-Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and other organizations shared Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky's back-to-work playbook, which included recommendations based on guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and best practices developed by Toyota Working Groups.

In addition to links to COVID-19 information sources, the chamber also posted a list of local PPE vendors, testing links and a link to the state chamber's Who's Hiring database.

The Jessamine County Chamber of Commerce listed PPE vendors on its

website. It also continued to host and promote ribbon-cutting ceremonies for member businesses, masks included, of course.

The Winchester-Clark County Chamber of Commerce took on several social media-based initiatives to help businesses stay afloat, including Takeout Tuesday and Fast Food Friday, during which participants could win prizes for patronizing local restaurants.

The Frankfort Area Chamber of Commerce offered COVID-19 resources on its website, including a job bank, mental health information, unemployment handbooks and a community tip jar, an online fund to help support the Frankfort community's service industry workers. The Kentucky Capital Development Corp. in Frankfort also offered assistance, providing videos about reopening, a list of COVID-19 supply vendors, and other tips.

Extending a financial lifeline to small businesses

In July, CLEX's role in helping businesses survive the pandemic evolved from providing information about business assistance to administering the assistance.

While more than 5,200 Lexington businesses received funding from the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), many of the city's small businesses did not receive it. To encourage economic development, LFUCG created the Small Business Economic Stimulus Program. CLEX's Access Loan Program was contracted to manage the \$2.5 million program, which aimed to help companies affected by revenue losses and incurred expenses from the coronavirus pandemic.

Fayette County businesses and nonprofits with 50 or fewer employees and restaurants with fewer than 100 employees were eligible to receive up to \$25,000 as a reimbursement for actual expenses incurred. The program had a goal of using at least half of the funds to help minority- and women-owned businesses. It surpassed that goal.

About 250 businesses applied for the grants, and 167 of them were funded – 67% owned by women and minorities,



God's Food Pantry photo

◀ **FIGHTING HUNGER** God's Food Pantry distributed fruits, vegetables, milk and eggs from Southland Christian Church on Richmond Road in Lexington. The City of Lexington partnered with God's Food Pantry and United Way of the Bluegrass to help feed Lexington residents in need during the pandemic.

Compassionate cooperation

Local agencies work to help displaced hospitality workers, artists, environment

COMMUNITY is one of the most important concepts and practices of all. When people belong to a community, they know it, they feel it, they understand it. And if any Lexingtonians didn't know they belonged to a compassionate community before March 2020, they soon found out. Community leaders and members stepped up when the coronavirus hit and they haven't slowed down. Collaboration is the key.

Becca Self, executive director of FoodChain, got together with VisitLEX, Keeneland and the E.E. Murry Family Foundation to create Nourish Lexington (nourishlexington.org) in late March. By early April, hospitality workers who had been laid off because of restaurant closures were hired by Nourish Lexington to prepare meals at FoodChain's kitchen facility on West Sixth Street and deliver the meals to those in need. When forced to cancel its spring race meet, Keeneland donated 1,500 pounds of food to the program.

When the directive "Healthy at Home" included ordering takeout from local restaurants, the Lexington Parking Authority established "Curbside Pickup" locations to help out. These spaces provide 15 minutes of free parking at downtown restaurants, and they will remain in place until further notice. The Parking Authority took in \$11,600 from parking meters during the last two weeks of May and donated that revenue equally between God's Pantry and the Bluegrass Community Foundation's COVID-19 response funds.

The Kentucky Economic Recovery and Resilience Project began as a collaboration between the Kentucky Association for Economic Development and the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) at the University of Kentucky. Phase 1 of the project provides Kentucky businesses with free access to SizeUp, a market research and competitive analysis tool (company.sizeup.com). CEDIK is housed within the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and has helped develop programs to support businesses during the pandemic.

The Henry Clay Center of Statesmanship appointed Tom Shelton as executive director in August. A former superintendent of

Fayette County Public Schools, Shelton was most recently director of external relations and partnerships for the National Center for Education and the Economy in Washington, D.C. and will continue to serve as a visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Founded in 2007, the Henry Clay Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization teaching civil discourse to high school and college students.

Even the environment got a little TLC during the pandemic, thanks to Live Green Lexington, a program within the City of Lexington's Department of Environmental Quality and Public Works. Live Green Lexington created Creek Sweep, a litter cleanup event held Aug. 1-16 where 145 volunteers collected 108 bags of trash plus larger pieces of debris from Fayette County creeks, parks and in their own neighborhoods and backyards. Creek Sweep kits containing trash bags and disposable gloves were available at partner locations throughout Lexington, including Boone Creek Outdoors, Good Foods Co-op, J&H Lanmark, John's Run/Walk Shop, Lakeside Golf Course and Tates Creek Golf Course.

"People found out from going to a business about the event. It was a good way to get the attention of people that wouldn't normally seek out environmental information in Lexington," said Jennifer Myatt, environmental initiatives specialist with the city's Division of Environmental Services.

Anything thrown on the ground can get washed into a storm drain, which goes into local streams, which in turn feed into the Kentucky River. Every summer since 1991, multiple counties have participated in the Kentucky River Clean Sweep. Until 2020.

"There's no way to get down to the Kentucky River easily unless you go out on a boat, and you can't send people out on a boat during a pandemic," Myatt said. "It's not something we felt we could do and keep social distancing. We came up with the Creek Sweep."

In mid-April, LexArts and the Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF) created the Arts Resilience Initiative to provide financial relief for artists and arts organizations impacted by the pandemic in Fayette, Bourbon, Clark, Jessamine, Madison, Scott and Woodford counties.

said Tyrone Tyra, senior vice president for community and minority business development, who led the program.

A total of \$2,377,980 was awarded. The smallest grant was \$500 for PPE, Tyra said. A volunteer committee of banking and economic development leaders helped him review the applications. The goal was to quickly assist as many businesses as possible.

"It was a massive undertaking," he said. "Our seven volunteers spent over 150 hours reviewing the applications over a six- to seven-week period."

The business owners who were awarded grants were very grateful for the assistance, Tyra said. He received numerous thank-you notes from people who said the grants had saved their businesses.



Photo courtesy of Allegro Dance

▲ DANCE DAYS Allegro Dance Project, which has adaptive dance classes for children with special needs, offered sidewalk outreach dance classes during the pandemic, thanks to an Arts Resilience Initiative Grant from the Blue Grass Community Foundation.

"Many artists and arts organizations need support right now to sustain them through this crisis. To help do just that, generous donors stepped forward to help us create the Arts Resilience Initiative," said Lisa Adkins, BGCF president and CEO. "Someday, hopefully soon, we will be able to once again gather to hear a poem, visit a museum, take in a performance and enjoy a concert. We need to make sure that when that day comes, there is something to hear and see and celebrate."

Among the initial funders of the Arts Resilience Initiative were the Jenna and Matthew Mitchell Family Foundation, the E.E. Murry Family Foundation, Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund at BGCF and the Fund for Greater Lexington, a community endowment at BGCF. Because the program is a resources-in, resources-out fund, the Arts Resilience Fund will continue providing financial relief to artists and arts organizations as long as contributions keep coming in (bgcf.givingfuel.com/artsresilience).—Kathie Stamps

Looking to the future

The pandemic has paused many normal activities, but local leaders have stressed the importance of looking toward the future.

In Gorton's Blueprint for Economic Recovery, the mayor outlined the path forward suggested by the city's COVID-19 economic recovery committee, comprised of local business and economic development leaders.

“It is important that we get our economy moving and get our people back to work in a safe and healthy way. This is the challenge of our times – a challenge we will meet and overcome,” she said in the plan’s introduction.

Recovering from the pandemic will no doubt be difficult, she said, but not impossible.

“Opportunity is often missed because it comes dressed in overalls and looks like work,” Gorton said. “In Lexington, we’re not afraid of work, and we don’t miss opportunities for our city.”

CLEX’s economic development team agrees. Though COVID-19 continues to be a health threat and an economic factor, the immediate needs of local companies trying to survive the economic fallout of the pandemic remain a priority. But that doesn’t mean economic development efforts have been left behind.

In May, Greathouse’s economic development team hosted its first virtual client visit. As technology becomes increasingly more important, Greathouse expects that economic development officials will need to become experts in using virtual and geospatial programs, and will sometimes need access to drone footage.

“Although personal relationships with consultants will take longer to develop, they will remain critical, and we still expect in-person meetings for the final community rounds of project recruiting,” she said. “And while many companies are seeing a decline in revenue this year, economic incentives will remain an important factor for those making decisions on business relocation and expansion.”

CLEX continues to call on existing



Photo courtesy of Awesome Inc.

▲ **PITCH CONTEST** Awesome Inc., in partnership with Commerce Lexington and other partners, held a socially distance 5 Across pitch contest in August at Whitaker Bank ballpark. 5 Across is a business pitch content for Kentucky entrepreneurs.

Making a difference

Commerce Lexington received dozens of thank-you notes from business owners who said grants from the Small Business Economic Stimulus Program had a big impact on their companies. Here are a few:



Thank you so much for the generous grant for my small business. It has helped us so much & is greatly appreciated!

...this grant will help us to continue to pay our employees while we rebuild our business! We are so grateful for this assistance!

This cash award has infused us with a much needed boost in funds and a mental uplift as well. We feel like we hit the lottery.

THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH FOR YOUR LEXINGTON SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC STIMULUS GRANT! WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR KINDNESS AND THIS WILL HELP US SERVE OUR VULNERABLE CLIENTS. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP!!

companies and remains in close contact with site-section consultants. The organization is optimistic about new clients who were in the pipeline before the pandemic began.

“For the longer term, many of our industry association experts are anticipating the reshoring of production for items that are key to our national security, such as medicines, pharmaceuticals, auto parts, aerospace, defense and others. This will impact the commercial real estate market, so communities will need to be prepared with appropriately zoned land and available buildings,” Greathouse said. “As the U.S. economy continues to restart, greater access to capital, job training and infrastructure will be necessary.”

As of September, CLEX’s economic development division has responded to 33 calls from prospects interested in finding a new location or expanding an existing location, and has had 14 client visits to the Lexington area. It also has had 87 existing business visits, and there are 48 active projects.

The path forward, though seemingly littered with obstacles, is navigable. Economic development investments continue in Central Kentucky.

Summit Biosciences, a Lexington-based pharmaceutical company focused on nasal spray medicines, announced in late September that it is expanding its operation at the University of Kentucky

Coldstream Research Campus. The \$19 million-plus investment is expected to create up to 78 full-time jobs. Also in September, Wilde Brands Inc., a producer of high-protein, keto-diet-friendly snack chips made from all-natural chicken breast, announced plans for a \$9.78 million, 50-job production and distribution facility in Clark County.

Liquidation company The Recon Group announced plans in August to expand its Frankfort facility and create 90 new jobs, said Terri Bradshaw, CEO of Kentucky Capital Development Corp.

In July, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear announced the creation of Kentucky Commercialization Ventures (KCV), a new public-private partnership unique in the U.S. that aims to develop academic innovations into job-creating tech companies. And dozens of new small businesses have opened their doors since COVID-19 first struck the commonwealth. In Woodford County alone, five new businesses have had ribbon-cutting ceremonies since the end of August – a bakery, an exercise facility, an automotive repair center, a therapeutic equine facility and an insurance company.

COVID-19 may be the biggest challenge businesses have faced in modern history, but Central Kentucky’s communities have shown that when everyone works together, there is nothing they can’t handle. ●

Expanding medical options

Baptist Health plans new hospital; CHI partners with Cleveland Clinic



BY ROBERT HADLEY
AND LORIE HAILEY

LEXINGTON has a cluster of medical facilities in the center of the city, but a new project will bring a \$1 billion medical campus to the Hamburg area, which has been exploding with both residential and commercial growth.

Baptist Health Lexington is partnering with the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government to bring a new hospital and 600 to 700 new, high-paying jobs to Lexington, Mayor Linda Gorton announced in May. Long-term plans for the new, 129-acre medical campus call for a multi-story hospital, a surgery center, 12 other buildings containing a combination of retail and medical office space, and two parking garages. It will be located off Polo Club Boulevard.

“Our goal in the development of this ambulatory campus is to envision the health care delivery system of the future, while maintaining the caring and quality Baptist Health Lexington is known for,” said William Sisson, president of

► **SHOW OF SUPPORT** Led by UK Police and organized by Gooch Construction, a parade of nearly 30 vehicles slowly made their way down South Limestone and back April 10, pausing briefly at both UK Chandler Hospital and UK Good Samaritan Hospital to support and honor front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Baptist Health Lexington. “We are proud to be able to re-invest back into this community and region to support health and wellness.”

As part of the project, Baptist will give the city three acres of land, valued at \$2 million, for the construction of a new fire/emergency medical station. Baptist also will provide annual flu shots to city employees for 20 years. Flu shots for city employees cost about \$40,000 a year.

“It’s exciting to announce a huge construction project and plans for jobs ... new jobs, good jobs, home-grown jobs ... at a time when our economy is just starting to recover from the fallout from COVID-19,” Gorton said. “These are jobs with a future for hundreds of citizens. And for the city, this will create new

► **NEW CAMPUS** Baptist Health Lexington plans to build a new medical campus in the Hamburg area of Lexington. Long-term plans call for a multi-story hospital, a surgery center, 12 other buildings containing a combination of retail and medical office space, and two parking garages.

revenue to continue to maintain a high quality of life that grows our economy and serves our citizens.”

Baptist Health Lexington also recently acquired the Kentucky Surgery Center, a 28,000-s.f. facility in Lexington that features seven operating rooms and two procedure rooms.

The newly formed venture, Baptist Health Surgery Center, has approximately 100 credentialed surgeons and 65 employees and will offer a variety of



Photo courtesy of UK



◀ **TESTING LAB** University of Kentucky lead molecular biologist Ben Cobb processes COVID-19 tests at the clinical microbiology lab at UK HealthCare.

outpatient procedures such as joint replacements and colonoscopies. Baptist Health administrators said they anticipate the center will handle around 7,000 procedures in 2020. The surgery center will eventually become part of the Hamburg campus.

Hospitals say nimble response key to pandemic success

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Central Kentucky, area medical professionals took quick action to care for the sick and help prevent the spread of the virus.

Early on, UK HealthCare was an epicenter for COVID-19 care. Pavilion A of Albert B. Chandler Medical Center was designed so that every room in that part of the hospital could convert to a negative-pressure room, where they could take care of people who were potentially infectious.

“Every room in that hospital also can convert to intensive care and every room in the hospital was set up so we could run, if we needed, two patients on ventilators,” said Dr. Mark Newman, executive vice president for health affairs at UK HealthCare. “The design was forward-thinking and fortuitous because it allowed us surge capacity as well as capacity to be able to manage big groups of these COVID-19 patients who would need negative-pressure isolation and other things.”

UK also converted the football team’s practice facility into a temporary, 400-bed field hospital in preparation for a potential surge in COVID-19 patients.

“The field hospital was up and running in six or seven days using

external resources,” Newman said. “We set that up negative-pressure also so we could put COVID-19 patients there as well as have throughput for patients who were getting better because they may still be infectious for some period of time.”

Fortunately, the extra beds were never needed, and the field hospital was dismantled in May.

For UK HealthCare, good communication with patients proved crucial in mounting an effective coronavirus response. Many of UK’s clinics transitioned to UK TeleCare appointments to promote social distancing and help slow the spread of COVID-19. UK also initiated a new way of caring for patients during the outbreak, the GetWellLoop, a service for patients who have been tested for COVID-19. The system allowed UK HealthCare nursing staff to check in twice daily with those patients to monitor their symptoms.

In the wake of the pandemic, UK researchers across many disciplines began working to help address the medical challenges of COVID-19, including developing personal protective equipment materials, designing and testing diagnostic equipment, and examining the wider implications of the pandemic.

A clinical-stage immunotherapy company has been conducting preclinical testing of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate at the UK College of Medicine. In August, PDS Biotechnology announced that the vaccine candidate showed positive preclinical results.

“We’re optimistic an effective COVID-19 vaccine will be available relatively soon. There are probably over a hundred companies working on different

vaccines and a lot of them are probably going to work,” said Jerry Woodward, a professor of Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics who led the preclinical study at UK.

UK HealthCare has been offering free COVID-19 tests at two campus locations. To facilitate the testing, UK is continuing its partnership with Wild Health, a Lexington-based company conducting COVID-19 testing for university students and employees.

Bruce Tassin, CEO of CHI Saint Joseph Health, credited adaptability and speed as hallmarks of the hospital system’s response to the COVID-19 crisis. These qualities allowed delivery of care to flow uninterrupted, he said.

“During the early months, we were reacting and updating procedures daily to the information we were receiving from the state, CDC and other health officials,” Tassin said. “We have also changed visitation policies at our hospitals, added virtual care through our physician offices and clinics, and enhanced safety precautions to ensure a safe environment for our patients, staff and community.”

CHI Saint Joseph also embraced telehealth options, increasing virtual visit options.

“Our medical group moved to rapidly expand our virtual care capabilities in the spring, and the number of patients who utilized this method surged almost immediately,” Tassin said. “Our patients



▲ **TEAMING UP** Saint Joseph Hospital has 433 beds at its Lexington location. Founded in 1877, it was Lexington’s first hospital. CHI Saint Joseph Health recently launched an affiliation with Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center to expand access to highly specialized cancer treatments, clinical expertise and research studies for patients in Central Kentucky.

► **CORONAVIRUS CARE** Staff at the University of Kentucky's Albert B. Chandler Hospital work with COVID-19 patients during the beginning of the pandemic. UK HealthCare began screening patients in mid-January who had traveled to China over the holidays and had returned to UK's campus, according to Dr. Mark F. Newman, UK's executive vice president for health affairs.

really appreciate this method of care, and we expect to continue offering these visits as a method of safety and preference during the pandemic, and for convenience after the pandemic has passed.”

Baptist Health System, which operates Baptist Health Lexington, released a series of six podcasts to discuss various aspects of the coronavirus response. Topics included cooperation between health care professionals, the use of telehealth to treat patients, the financial impact on hospitals, and lessons leaders learned from managing through the threat.

They also released a list of steps to address mental health issues related to combatting isolation and stress related to the pandemic.

Although COVID-19 has taken its toll on health care workers, at CHI, collaboration and team spirit have lifted staff morale, CHI's Tassin said.

“Even though there was some anxiety in the beginning because the virus was so new, everyone remained focused on delivering the best care for our patients in the safest manner possible,” he said. “I know the term has been used a lot in the past months, but we truly have health care heroes who work here, from the front-line caregivers to all of the support staff.”

Hospitals recognized for performance; area facilities expand offerings

Kentucky's health care system has long occupied a prominent position on the state's list of bragging rights, an accolade that held even during the pandemic year. Two of Catholic Health Initiative's facilities earned the honor of High Performing Hospitals for 2020-21 by *U.S. News & World Report*. Saint Joseph Hospital was recognized for three specialties: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), colon cancer surgery and heart failure. Saint Joseph East was recognized for two specialties: hip replacement and knee replacement.

The University of Kentucky Albert B. Chandler Hospital took the No. 1 spot on *U.S. News & World Report's* list of top hospitals in Kentucky (ranked on patient care and other metrics), joined by No. 4 ranked Lexington Baptist Hospital.



Photo courtesy of UK

Lexington Clinic passed a milestone in July, celebrating 100 years of treating patients in the Central Kentucky area. Since its founding on in July 1920, Lexington Clinic now has more than 200 providers in 30 different specialties and more than 25 locations throughout the region. A new building, which will replace the current LC flagship building built in 1957, is set to open in early 2021.

In late October 2019, CHI Saint Joseph Health launched an affiliation with Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center to expand access to highly specialized cancer treatments, clinical expertise and research studies for patients in Central Kentucky.

The affiliation follows a rigorous review process of the care and services provided by CHI Saint Joseph Health – Cancer Care Centers. Among the benefits are a streamlined referral process and consultation on treatment options with Cleveland Clinic physicians. Oncologists with CHI Saint Joseph Health will present cases to the Cleveland Clinic tumor board, which will provide a consensus opinion to the Lexington physicians to incorporate into the treatment plan.

“This affiliation, which we will be expanding, gives patients in central Kentucky access to physicians at Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center, which is ranked in the top 10 hospitals for cancer care nationally by *U.S. News & World Report*,” Tassin said.

Construction of a new CHI Saint Joseph Health medical office building in Winchester was completed in March. The one-story, 24,693-s.f. facility houses a variety of health care services, including primary care, orthopedics, cardiology, imaging, laboratory services and physical therapy.

“We are excited to continue to expand health care services into central and eastern Kentucky and offer these services

in one location for patients in Winchester,” said Dr. Viren Bavishi, president of CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group. “This is a much-needed addition to the community that will help local patients access quality medical care even easier. Our long-term goal is to continue to expand our services within this building.”

Frankfort Regional Medical Center and UK HealthCare have announced a collaboration to enhance and expand the scope of cardiovascular services offered at Frankfort Regional. Physicians from UK HealthCare's Gill Heart & Vascular Institute now provide 24/7 coverage for cardiac emergencies, including elective procedures in FRMC's cardiac catheterization lab. UK cardiologists also will provide services to inpatients and outpatients, including electrophysiology consultations and patient education and training.

In May, veteran administrator Matt Smith was named CEO at Clark Regional Medical Center. Smith had been serving as CEO of Bourbon Community Hospital in Paris, Ky., since 2017 and formerly held the post of chief operating officer at Clark Regional.

In July, Tommy Haggard was named CEO of Bourbon Community Hospital. He previously served as CEO of Bluegrass Community Hospital in Versailles, Ky. Bourbon Community, Bluegrass Community and Clark Regional Medical Center are all part of the LifePoint Health system.

During his tenure as CEO of Bluegrass Community Hospital, Haggard added new service lines, led the successful implementation of a new electronic medical records system, and spearheaded efforts to make the hospital a preferred provider with UK for post-acute patients. Bluegrass also was recognized for quality cardiac care for patients with heart failure, its ER performance, and improvements in patient and employee satisfaction. ●

Searching for solutions

CURE Alliance united full range of COVID-19 research at UK



◀ **PILOT PROJECT** University of Kentucky researchers Jerry Woodward and Siva Gandhapudi have received a CURE Alliance/CCTS pilot project grant to support their research on COVID-19 antibodies.

selected faculty leader who works with an interdisciplinary team of experts appointed to help achieve the goals of the research. The Health CURE Alliance, led by Rebecca Dutch, is focused on advising COVID-19 patient care and clinical trials based on emerging research and potential treatment options. The Materials/Methods CURE Alliance is focused on the materials and tools that address emerging COVID-19 needs as well as technological advancements in diagnosis, treatment and prevention. The Social Sciences CURE Alliance aims to examine COVID-19's impact on mental health, family and interpersonal relationships, as well as health communication and health literacy. Additional priorities of this core include COVID-19-related health disparities and how new laws and policies will impact service providers and essential workers.

The Office of the Vice President for Research is also supporting a pilot program through the CURE Alliance and UK's Center for Clinical and Translational Science to rapidly fund and establish COVID-19 research projects. Proposals are assessed for their viability to garner external funding as well as their potential to expand or develop new knowledge of SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, University of Kentucky experts quickly mobilized and pivoted their research to unite in the fight against the novel coronavirus.

UK researchers across many disciplines are addressing COVID-19's medical challenges and beyond – including developing new personal protective equipment (PPE) materials, designing testing and diagnostic equipment, and examining the wider societal, economic and legal implications of the pandemic.

UK's COVID-19 Unified Research Experts (CURE) Alliance team has expanded to represent and support this full range of COVID-related research taking place at the university.

The first CURE Alliance was launched to organize and support COVID-19 related medical research. UK now has two additional CURE Alliance structures in other COVID-19 research areas: Materials/Methods and Social Sciences. Together, these CURE Alliance groups are working to foster innovative, interdisciplinary COVID-19 research.

“The CURE Alliance teams reflect the University of Kentucky's breadth of research expertise and collaboration and will support our experts as they identify new innovations

to help us today and to help us respond to future pandemics,” said UK Vice President for Research Lisa Cassis, who has guided the campuswide effort.

The three CURE Alliance teams will facilitate and coordinate research within their given areas and connect projects to funding opportunities. Each includes a

UK Office of Technology Commercialization by the numbers

Research awards for FY 2020

- Research awards (grants and contracts) to UK totaled a record **\$429.2 million**, an increase of **\$12.1 million** from FY 2019
- Federal agencies awarded UK **\$272.2 million**, including National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants of **\$163.7 million**, and National Science Foundation (NSF) grants totaling **\$22.1 million**
- State agencies awarded **\$87.1 million** to UK
- Industries awarded **\$16.8 million** to UK

IP development, patents, licenses in FY 2020

- **117** invention disclosures
- **165** patents filed
- **33** new patents issued
- **643** worldwide patent assets
- **29** licenses and options executed

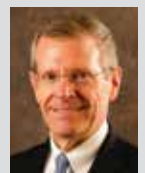
- **\$2.9 million** royalty income
- **6** new startups

Coldstream Research Campus

- **735** acres
- **50** organizations
- **2,250** employees
- **22** buildings totaling **1.37 million** square feet
- **93.7%** occupancy

ASTeCC Campus Incubator

- **22** companies located on-site
- **65** private company employees
- **10** faculty R&D labs
- **4** university centers
- **64** graduate companies since 1994



George Ward, Executive Director, Coldstream Research Campus, University of Kentucky

COVID-19 vaccine candidate shows positive preclinical results

PDS Biotechnology, a clinical-stage immunotherapy company, in August announced positive results from preclinical testing conducted at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, PDS0203.

PDS0203 stands out among COVID-19 vaccines currently in development because it includes a vaccine technology pioneered by PDS Biotech called Versamune, which activates an important immunological signaling pathway known to be essential in the induction of both antiviral and anti-tumor immune responses. It also more efficient at presenting the disease-associated protein to immunological pathways that activate both CD8 (killer) and CD4 (helper) T cells that can recognize, kill and protect against a specific disease.

“The most effective vaccines stimulate both antibody and T cells because both of those arms of the immune system are important to eliminate different viral infections,” said Jerry Woodward, a professor of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics who led the preclinical study at UK.

PDS0203 combines Versamune nanoparticles with a protein recognized

by the human immune system that is derived from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Prototype vaccines were tested at UK based on various recombinant SARS-CoV-2 proteins, including protein constructs created by UK’s Protein Core lab.

“We’re optimistic an effective COVID-19 vaccine will be available relatively soon. There are probably over a hundred companies working on different vaccines and a lot of them are probably going to work,” Woodward said.

Supporting and connecting researchers

As COVID-19 has changed the way we work, live, research and communicate, the UK Office of Technology Commercialization team has given considerable thought as to how it can best assist in the fight against COVID-19. OTC has taken steps to support its researchers, connect potential research partners, move COVID-19 relevant technologies into the marketplace more

Photo courtesy of the University of Kentucky



▲ **VACCINE VETTING** Marty Ward, a research analyst in microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, analyzes data from preclinical testing of PDS Biotech’s COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

quickly, and help facilitate and showcase activities by UK startups, innovators and regional companies in support of front-line health care workers, said Ian McClure, OTC executive director.

The COVID-19 technology portfolio includes projects on therapeutics, PPE and technology (as of September 2020). The OTC is actively looking for ways to leverage its network of startups, entrepreneurs, innovators, venture capitalists and industry partners in the fight against COVID-19. ●

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A bright spot during the pandemic

Construction, real estate sales continue despite slowdown in other sectors



BY KATHIE STAMPS

SINCE brothers Dudley Webb and the late Donald Webb formed The Webb Companies in 1972, the development company has brought to fruition quite a few commercial enterprises in Lexington, including Vine Center, Perimeter Office Park, Regency Centre, Tates Creek Centre, Lexington Financial Center, Festival Market, the Mall at Lexington Green, Palomar Centre, the new 13-acre mixed use project across from Palomar called The Fountains, and of course, the \$220 million City Center mixed-use complex in downtown Lexington.

Nine floors of the 12-story City Center tower are dedicated to businesses leasing space at “The Offices at City Center.” The top three floors house 13 condominiums known as “The Penthouses at City Center.” Listed with Bluegrass Sotheby’s International Realty and priced from \$995,000 to \$3.66 million, seven of the condos have been

► **CONCRETE PLANS** Gate Precast Co. of Winchester manufactured 8,000 s.f. of granite inlaid precast panels for Jeff Ruby’s Steakhouse at City Center, which was completed in April 2019. The company, which manufactures prefabricated concrete systems for building structures, has worked steadily throughout the pandemic, thanks to a backlog of projects, said Steve Schweitzer, vice president of operations.

sold already. Homeowners have a private elevator; access to the Marriott Hotel’s housekeeping services, its health club and swimming pool; and room service from Marriott, Jeff Ruby’s Steakhouse and ItalX by Jonathan Lundy.

A grand opening was held in January for the 218-room Lexington Marriott City Center and 119-suite Marriott Residence Inn.

Home2Suites Lexington Hamburg is a new 63,000-s.f. hotel near Malone’s and Drakes in Hamburg, owned by Lexington Hotel Partners LLC and managed by Superhost Enterprise. Built by Envision Contractors out of Owensboro, construction started in October 2018 and the anticipated

◀ **DYNAMIC DOWNTOWN** The long-awaited City Center in downtown Lexington had its grand opening in January 2020. The residential, commercial and retail development includes an office tower, two hotels, a Jeff Ruby’s Steak House, retail units, a 700-car below-ground parking garage and three levels of luxury condominium residences. The completion of the project has helped revitalize the appearance of downtown Lexington.

opening date is Nov. 1, 2020. Home2Suites has an indoor pool, fitness center, fireplace and gas grills and each of the 106 suites has a fully equipped kitchen.

The coronavirus shutdown in March, while devastating to the events calendar of Central Bank Center (the new name of the Lexington Center), turned out to be a boon for the construction schedule of the \$300 million expansion project: Messer Construction is expected to complete construction a full two months earlier than the projected date. The new opening date is expected to be January 2022.

The completed Central Bank Center will have 100,000 s.f. of exhibition space, 24,330 s.f. of ballroom space, and 29,000 s.f. of meeting space. Inside Rupp Arena, the project includes upgrades to the upper seating bowl of Rupp Arena, approximately 50,000 s.f. of club space, expanded concourses and new sustainability features that will target LEED certification.

Construction crews placed the final structural steel beam atop the new exhibit hall space during a topping out ceremony in early September. About 300 people work onsite daily, according to a Rupp Arena news release.

“We are honored to be leading the expansion of this Lexington landmark,”



Photo courtesy of Gate Precast

► **AHEAD OF SCHEDULE** Messer Construction expects to complete construction of Central Bank Center two months early. The \$300 million convention center is expected to open in January 2022. It replaces the former Lexington Center, and will have more than 200,000 s.f. of flexible meeting and event space.

said Mark Hill, vice president of Messer Construction.

In nearby Frankfort, Buffalo Trace Distillery, a 247-year-old bourbon distillery, is in the midst of a \$1.2 billion infrastructure investment. The project includes the 2019 installation of four new 22-foot tall cookers, four new 93,000-gallon fermenters, a new \$50 million high speed-bottling hall and the construction of six more barrel warehouses, three of which were completed last year. Eight more fermenters are in the works, as are a new dry house, water treatment facility, an additional still house and more barrel warehouses. On March 27, Buffalo Trace began producing and packaging hand sanitizer for government, military, health care, retail and other industries, with plans to continue this production as long as necessary.

Precast concrete companies busy with construction projects

Gate Precast Co. in Winchester recognized that COVID-19 was creating an emotional and financial strain on many of its 75 employees. So in March, GPC employees were given local restaurant gift cards “to help both our employees and local businesses in Winchester,” said Steve Schweitzer, vice president of operations for the Winchester concrete plant, one of nine facilities owned by Jacksonville, Fla.-based Gate Precast Co.



“In April, we increased pay by 10% for all hourly employees in appreciation for them showing up during one of the more stressful months. In May, we had weekly giveaways and breakfast at our weekly safety meeting,” he said.

Gate Precast entered 2020 with a good backlog of projects, “so when the pandemic hit in March we continued to produce and ship architectural precast panels from our facility in Winchester,” Schweitzer said. “It was beneficial to have facilities across the Southeast that could share information and safety procedures about how different regions were handling COVID-19.”

GPC supplied 15,000 s.f. of brick inlaid precast panels for UK’s garage on South Limestone, the parking structure known as PS5 that’s currently under construction. Other recent projects have included 8,000 s.f. of granite inlaid precast panels at Jeff Ruby’s Steakhouse in City Center and 50,000 s.f. of red acid-washed insulated precast panels at the Capital Plaza office building in Frankfort, as well as the new colonnade at Churchill Downs and Moxy Hotel in Louisville.

Lexington-based Bristol Group, a design, engineering and construction contractor – and manufacturer of precast concrete structures – is seeing “a strong demand for insulated precast wall panels (in excess of 2 million s.f.) for on-line distribution facilities into Q1 of 2021,” said President Todd Ball.

Some of the company’s recent key projects within the manufacturing sector have included CMWA in Paris, Hyster-Yale in Berea and Link-Belt CE in Lexington. Founded in 1997, Bristol Group has produced over 1 million s.f. of precast concrete products for industrial warehouses in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.

Commercial real estate market undergoing ‘transformation’

The Commercial Property Association of Lexington (CPAL), founded in 1977, is a nonprofit organization serving commercial real estate owners, developers and those with related expertise. The association has almost 250 members who collaborate and share information at monthly meetings, which moved to an online platform in the spring.

“Certain aspects of the commercial real estate market, such as office and retail properties, have been significantly impacted and are undergoing a transformation,” said Jake Michul, president of CPAL and a partner at the law firm of Dentons Bingham Greenebaum. “As a group, CPAL has been discussing the impact of the pandemic and government responses on real estate and the economy, both locally and

Photo courtesy of Buffalo Trace Distillery



◀ **MORE BOURBON** Four new barrel warehouses, shown here, have been constructed at Buffalo Trace Distillery in Frankfort as part of a \$1.2 billion infrastructure investment. Each warehouse costs about \$7 million to build and another \$21 million to fill to capacity. Two more warehouses are in the works.

nationally, and has heard from a variety of business leaders at recent meetings.”

Michul also noted that CPAL has an established history of contributing to local charitable causes, “including recent donations to COVID-19 relief efforts through God’s Pantry and Blue Grass Community Foundations,” he said.

Lexington’s industrial, office and retail vacancies have remained steady through the second quarter of this year, said Al Isaac, president of NAI Isaac, a Lexington-based commercial real estate company that manages 3.2 million s.f. of commercial property.

“Most sectors continue to adjust to the economic impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with the retail market being the most affected,” Isaac said.

He foresees Lexington’s industrial vacancy rate remaining at a low 3.6% “as industrial properties have been the least impacted by COVID-19 pandemic,” he said, noting that moving overseas manufacturing plants back to the U.S. is “being strongly considered by many companies as a way to strengthen supply lines” and that with the “current significant increase in online purchasing, industrial is likely to see increased demand for the foreseeable future.”

Record real estate sales continue despite low inventory

On the home front, real estate sales hit a record high in July 2020, up 13% from the previous month and up 13% year over year, according to the Lexington-Bluegrass Association of Realtors (LBAR). New construction in July was up 53% from June of 2019. Since July 2019, new construction sales have increased year-over-year in each month except one, February 2020, LBAR said.



BIA trains students for high-paying construction jobs

In response to a shortage of skilled workers because of the Great Recession, the Building Industry Association (BIA) of Central Kentucky in September 2014 created an educational program to train individuals for careers in construction. It began with two areas of study – HVAC and carpentry – and later expanded to offering electrical and plumbing courses.

“In 2012 and 2013 our industry, locally and across the U.S., realized that our tradespeople did not return to the industry after the recession as they had done in the past. We felt it was our responsibility to create an avenue to promote the trades and highlight the career potential it offers to our young people,” said Todd Johnson, executive vice president of BIA of Central Kentucky. “The institute is state approved and provides an accelerated path to licensure for our students.”

The school offers two-year programs in all four courses of study. Students who attend classes four nights a week can complete the plumbing and HVAC programs in one year, Johnson said. It is designed to prepare participants for Kentucky’s journeyman license exams.

“Since 2014, our students have a very high rate of passing the test on the first try ... over 80%,” Johnson said. “The average across the state for the exam is a 50% passing rate.”

Because the school is associated with the trade association for the construction industry in Central Kentucky, member companies provide an almost-direct path to employment for students, he said. More than 100 students have graduated from BIA’s programs.

Though tuition is affordable, Johnson said, the program has never turned away a student for the inability to pay. Some BIA members have donated funds to create a loan program for students, Johnson said.

The building institute also hopes to smash some of the stereotypes associated with the construction industry, including that the trades are something you “have to do” if you don’t attend college. The trades pay well and have opportunities for growth, Johnson said.

“These are jobs that cannot be outsourced and are always going to be in demand,” he said. “We saw that this year through the pandemic where our folks not only kept working, most were working all the overtime they wanted.”

The construction industry also welcomes female tradespeople. “It’s no longer a man’s world,” Johnson said. “Our companies are looking to hire women who have the skills and we do all we can to encourage ladies to consider the trades for their career.”

To learn more about the program, visit buildinginstituteuky.com.—Lorie Hailey

Photo courtesy of BIA of Central Kentucky



HANDS-ON LEARNING The Building Industry Association of Central Kentucky’s Building Institute offers courses in HVAC, plumbing, electrical and carpentry, and prepares students for the state licensing exams and well-paying construction careers.

Inventory, however, is seeing the opposite. There is far more demand than supply in Central Kentucky. July 2020’s inventory was 47% lower than July 2019. Typically, a balanced market has a six-month

supply of inventory; LBAR’s 26-county region was 1.3 months in July. Fayette County has two weeks’ of homes for sale in the \$100,000 to \$250,000 price range.

“More homes are going under contract each month than are coming available,” said LBAR President Greg Buchanan. “The relationship between supply and demand is causing our months of inventory to drop to historic levels and prices to rise. Central Kentucky is obviously a place where people want to be so we need inventory to accommodate consumer needs.”

Agents have adjusted their sales protocol as the pandemic has progressed, incorporating social distancing measures,

◀ **RECORD SALES** Real estate sales were a record high in July 2020, despite the pandemic and fewer homes for sale, according to Lexington-Bluegrass Association of Realtors (LBAR). Home sales have bounced back after declines at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

limiting in-person activities as much as possible, utilizing digital platforms to send documents to clients and using digital signatures for contracts. Agents are conducting video meetings and offering digital presentations to clients. Some agents and brokerages are investing in 3D imaging and virtual reality “where buyers can walk through a house and see all the details without physically touring the home,” Buchanan said.

“Real estate was deemed essential at the on-start of the pandemic and has been a bright spot for the economy throughout the crisis,” said Greg Buchanan, president of LBAR. “In Central Kentucky and throughout the region, demand for housing has continued to grow and interest rates have been, and should remain, low. These two factors will keep the real estate market strong in 2020 and into the foreseeable future. We don’t anticipate a slowdown anytime soon as this area continues to attract more and more people who want to make the Bluegrass region their home.”

Year-to-date, home sales have bounced back after seeing declines at the start of the pandemic. With the increase in July, sales through 2020 jumped to the black

with 8,223 sales compared to 8,055 in July 2019, LBAR said.

The MET opening this fall

Scheduled for an October opening, Community Ventures’ \$22 million mixed-use project, The MET, has added 67,000 s.f. of new construction to an existing 8,000 s.f.-building on Midland at East Third (thus the acronym MET). Of the total 75,000 s.f., 30,000 s.f. is for commercial space, about half of which has already been leased to DV8 Kitchen for a restaurant and a bakery, Art Inc. Kentucky for a retail art gallery and 24 individual artist studios, and Carolyn’s Crown and Glory for owner Carolyn Dunn’s salon. Other retail tenants are in the process of retrofitting their spaces.

The three-story facility, which greets drivers as they come into Lexington from Winchester Road, has 44 residential units and 130 parking places. The MET connects to the Legacy Trail at the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden across the street, and continues all the way to the Kentucky Horse Park. Finance partners with Community Ventures on The MET include the City of Lexington, Limestone Bank, Republic Bank, Traditional Bank,

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Seizing the opportunity

Logistics firms busier than ever during pandemic; airport uses downtime to finish projects

Photo courtesy of Blue Grass Airport



BY GREG PAETH

IT'S nearly impossible to find any tangible upside to the worldwide pandemic that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and infected millions of people.

But at Lexington's Blue Grass Airport, the substantial decline in passenger travel that's linked directly to COVID-19 has at least provided the staff and its contractors a chance to catch their collective breaths and focus on some major capital improvements at one of the region's primary economic drivers.

"We have quite a few projects that we recently have completed," said Amy Caudill, director of marketing and communications for the airport. "Being that this is a slower time for us, we are at least trying to take

▲AIRPORT ENHANCEMENT A new \$15 million aircraft rescue and firefighting facility at Blue Grass Airport was constructed to replace one that was demolished to clear the way for a \$66 million taxiway improvement and expansion project. The 23,196-s.f. facility, which opened in June, accommodates 18 full-time officers and four bays for aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicles. While passenger travel was down during the early days of the pandemic, airport officials focused on major capital improvement projects.

advantage of being able to construct some new facilities while not having much of an impact on our customers."

A couple of the projects involve major overhauls of at least two of the dining and drinking establishments in the terminal, she pointed out.

"If we have to close down a restaurant (for example), it doesn't have as much

impact on passengers as it might have had previously, so it gives us a little more flexibility to get these projects completed," Caudill said.

Capital improvements that are either completed or underway include the 345-space expansion of the long-term parking lot to just under 1,000 spaces, a \$5.8 million project, as well as a covered walkway between that parking lot and the terminal, and a \$15 million aircraft rescue and firefighting facility to replace one that was demolished to clear the way for a \$66 million taxiway improvement and expansion. The new firefighting facility



Photo courtesy of Amazon



◀SAFETY FIRST To keep employees safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, Amazon has made over 150 process updates, from enhanced cleaning and social distancing measures to piloting new efforts like disinfectant fog in a New York fulfillment center. Amazon employs 2,700 people in Lexington and seven nearby counties. The retail giant provides its employees with protective gear and requires employees to wash their hands often.



has been completed and the taxiway project is slated to be finished by the end of the year, Caudill said.

The airport, which handled nearly 1.5 million passengers last year, was on pace before the pandemic to set a ninth consecutive record for air travelers, said Caudill, who added that air traffic has “decreased considerably,” although no numbers were available in late August.

In September, the airport announced it will begin offering seasonal, nonstop flights to Miami between the months of November and April.

While the airport reported a decline in its passenger numbers, other businesses in the transportation and logistics category in the central part of the state reported some unexpected spurts in demand for their services.

One vitally important factor for logistics and transportation industries is Kentucky’s location. Situated at the crossroads of I-75 and I-64, two major interstates, the Bluegrass State is within a one-day drive of 34 states and 65% of the U.S. population.

“Because of our multi-modal infrastructure, we’re very fortunate that we stay connected to the globe with our products, our manufacturers and our location,” said Gina Greathouse, executive vice president of economic development for Commerce Lexington, the city’s chamber of commerce. Lexington’s location is vitally important, she said.

The presence of Amazon Prime, the region’s infrastructure and the sophisticated supply chain and logistics networks put the region in a “good position” compared to other metro areas when the pandemic peaked, said Bob Quick, president and CEO of Commerce Lexington.

At W.T. Young Storage Co., one of the largest distribution organizations in the Lexington area, about 65 employees were routinely working 50-60 hour weeks when grocers and other retailers couldn’t

keep their shelves stocked, said James Pierce, vice president and chief operating officer.

“We were extremely busy with outbound shipments from mid-March into May,” said Pierce, whose company owns some 3 million s.f. of warehouse space and whose clients include the Kroger grocery chain, International Paper and J.M. Smucker’s. Grocery business increased by 50% from mid-March until the end of April, he said.

At Lexington’s Longship, a logistics company that matches truckers with shipments all over the country, restaurant and school business declined substantially while superstore and grocery business increased, said Thomas Kinder, general sales manager.

“Some areas slowed down and some picked up. I think it will kind of balance out (for the year),” Kinder said.

Because some trucking companies and independent truckers shut down during the pandemic, demand increased for those that were still on the road, which drove up the rates, Kinder said.

Online shipping behemoth Amazon Prime did not offer any specific information about its operations in Central Kentucky, but the company did provide some big-picture information about its business in the state.

Since 2010, Amazon has invested more than \$15 billion in Kentucky through its customer fulfillment and cloud infrastructure, and compensation to its employees, a spokesman said in an email.

Those investments contributed \$12.9 billion into the economy and created 23,000 indirect jobs in addition to the 14,500 Amazon employees in the state. Some 2,700 of those jobs are in Lexington and seven nearby counties, according to Commerce Lexington.

Earlier this year, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to grip the U.S., Amazon hired 1,700 workers in Kentucky who were considered “seasonal” employees.

▲RELIABLE RIDES Lexington’s public transportation system, Lextran, operates 26 fixed routes, a door-to-door paratransit service and a vanpool/ridesharing program. Its 71-vehicle fleet includes compressed natural gas, battery-electric, hybrid electric and diesel buses. Lextran also has routes that serve the University of Kentucky campus.

Since then, 1,400 of those jobs have been reclassified as full-time positions, the company spokesman said.

Like Amazon, FedEx declined to talk about its substantial operations in Lexington, but did comment generally about how business has increased companywide during the COVID-19 crisis.

“FedEx Ground continues to experience a surge of package volume due to e-commerce growth ... during this pandemic. Throughout our network, the average daily number of packages delivered for the quarter ending May 31 increased 25% over the same period a year ago,” David Westrick, a FedEx spokesman, said in an email.

“Since March, FedEx Ground has hired tens of thousands of package handlers and service providers have onboarded thousands of drivers in targeted markets. The pace of hiring continues as we manage ongoing demand for our services and prepare for the coming peak season,” Westrick added.

Increased demand for consumer packaged goods and an uptick in online ordering led to a flurry of activity at Verst Logistics in Northern Kentucky, which ships products all over Kentucky and the rest of the U.S., said Paul Verst, chairman and CEO. Verst’s core businesses of warehousing, transportation, contract packaging and e-commerce fulfillment have all seen increased growth, he said.

“Our customers tend to be in key verticals of consumer durables and light industrial packaging and e-commerce,” Verst said. “Verst has seen huge growth of volume with our customers during COVID-19.”

The company employs 1,900 people at 23 locations in Northern Kentucky, Alabama, Arizona, Indiana and Ohio. During the pandemic, Verst has hired additional workers and plans to hire more, but has faced staffing challenges.

“The biggest challenge we’ve faced is finding employees to fill our openings,” Verst said. “The increased unemployment benefits had many potential candidates sitting on the sidelines.”

Verst provides contract packaging services, fulfillment and distribution, warehousing and transportation solutions. Its fully automated fulfillment center serves customers across the nation through its live portal with real-time notifications.

Like the airport on a smaller scale, Lextran has seen bus passenger volume plummet during the pandemic. The city’s transportation system made a long list of changes in its network when businesses shut down and the number of work-bound commuters decreased dramatically.

On a year-to-year basis, the bus system had 500,000 fewer trips for the fiscal year that ended June 30, according to a report that was presented to the Lextran board in July.

For July, the first month of the current fiscal year, ridership was up 10 percent over the numbers for June but down 38 percent to 173,700 when compared to July of last year.

Numbers for the second half of last year as well as the early part of this year were encouraging, according to Emily Elliott, who handles community relations for the bus system.

“We were actually up from the previous year and then they took a dramatic dip when COVID-19 really started to hit us,” Elliott said.

In 2019, Lextran had 4.5 million passenger trips – 14,277 trips per day.

The bus system didn’t shut down during the pandemic, but it did take

Photo courtesy of Verst



extraordinary measures that included eliminating fares in mid-March, a policy that continued well into August. Lextran also trimmed bus capacity by half and allowed passengers to board through the back door to enhance social distancing, Elliott said.

Buses were cleaned using an electrostatic system overnight and spot cleaned during the day, Elliott said. Some routes and schedules were altered during the pandemic, and in late August, two routes had been shut down temporarily.

Meanwhile, two major highway projects designed to improve traffic flow in the region are nearing completion.

In Madison County, the I-75 project at the KY 627 interchange – which calls for reconstruction at Exit 95 – is scheduled for completion at the end of September or early October, according to Natasha Lacy, public information officer for District 7 of the Kentucky Department of Highways.

The New Circle Road widening project that began in May of last year and runs for 1.3 miles between Georgetown Road and Boardwalk is scheduled for completion by the end of the year. Pouring the deck for the Georgetown Road bridge deck is expected to take place in September, Lacy said.

AIRPORTS

Blue Grass Airport

bluegrassairport.com

Capital City Airport

Frankfort – cca.ky.gov

▲ ON THE CUTTING EDGE Verst Logistics, a large third-party logistics company headquartered in Walton, Ky., uses fulfillment distribution network planning technology and specialized robotics. In 2020, Verst installed a new Fuji shrink sleeve label application to satisfy increasing customer demand.

Central Kentucky Regional Airport

Richmond – madisoncountyky.us/airport

Cynthiana-Harrison County Airport

ky018.com

Georgetown-Scott County Regional Airport

Georgetown – georgetownscottcountyairport.com

Stanton Airport

Stanton – airnav.com/airport/150/

Stuart Powell Field

Danville – airnav.com/airport/KDVK

GENERAL AVIATION

TAC Air

thearnoldcos.com/tac-air/lex

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Greyhound

greyhound.com

Lextran

Lextran.com

RAIL SERVICES

Norfolk Southern Corp.

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Supporting the region's industries

Central Kentucky is home to world-class professional services firms

Photo courtesy of Next Century Technologies



BY LORIE HAILEY

FROM accounting and IT services to back-office support, Central Kentucky is stocked with business and professional services talent to help meet the needs of the region's industry leaders.

The region's business and professional services industry provides services and support for other businesses in various key industries – legal, architectural, engineering, and consulting services – and basic services that support daily activities, such as back-office support operations, accounting, shared services and processing facilities. Lexington is home to more than 70 headquarters operations, many of which require business services firms to help them operate.

A strong professional services sector is crucial to the region's economy. About 33,000 people are employed in Lexington's business and professional services industry, earning an average of about \$50,000 a year.

One of the largest business services firms in Central Kentucky is Conduent, a leader in business process and IT outsourcing across a variety of industries and the public sector.

"Thousands of companies rely on Conduent to help improve their processes, manage client operations, and focus on their core business," Commerce Lexington said in 2019.

Conduent also specializes in IT solutions for levels of government. Its services include data center management, disaster recovery, network management services or help desk operations, and high-volume solutions support, both statewide and worldwide. Conduent is an industry leader, anchoring the Lexington professional services industry and employing 2,500 people (as of 2018).

Branch offices of IBM, a leader in IT services and business products, are located in Lexington. The company has been a staple in the community since its days as a typewriter manufacturer. It now operates an information technology services data center for outsourced business clients, and its staff supports sales and software development.

Lexmark was created from a section of IBM's business in 1991. Lexmark manufactures laser printers and imaging products, software and services. The company's Lexington headquarters employs 1,600 (as of 2018).

Some other business services firms include: CLC Lodging, business travel consulting, 330 employees; Total Quality Logistics, freight brokerage, 208 employees; and Associations International, business management consulting, 145 employees.

Business services firms choose Lexington because of its productive workforce and central location, Commerce Lexington said.

◀SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Next Century Technologies of Lexington supports small- to medium-sized businesses, offering a broad range of IT services, including managed services, web design and hosting, business continuity and offsite hosting, and compliance.

"Lexington provides an excellent business environment that encourages and supports growth in a variety of sectors," the economic development agency said.

Business consulting

MCM CPAs & Advisors, one of the largest CPA firms in Kentucky, has six offices in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, and expects to expand its regional footprint. The firm has 27 employees in its Lexington office.

From accounting to business management, MCM has transformed over the years from a CPA firm to a business solutions and advising firm with a full range of services for businesses and organizations large and small. MCM offers expertise in accounting, audit and tax-related services, as well as risk advisory, tax services and technology solutions. Its expanded services include business valuation, litigation support, fraud examination, and business start-up and advisory services.

MCM expanded its brand lines to include MCM Capital Markets Group, MCM HR Solutions and MCM Technology Solutions.

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Jon Stewart,
President/CEO

Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance (KEMI) is the largest provider of workers' compensation insurance in Kentucky, providing coverage to more than 20,000 policyholders in all 120 counties of the state. We provide exceptional underwriting, safety education and claims services to our policyholders. This, combined with our competitive pricing, responsible financial management and a focus on innovation makes KEMI the provider of choice for Kentucky businesses. We are proud to have earned and maintained an "excellent" rating by A.M. Best.

MCM CPAs & ADVISORS

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Brad Smith,
Managing
Partner

As the largest CPA firm in Kentucky, MCM CPAs & Advisors provides highly specialized tax, audit and advisory services to a broad range of clients and industries. Privately and publicly held businesses, not-for-profits, small businesses and individuals across the region and throughout the country receive personalized attention and local access from national-level talent.

MCM combines the technical and industry expertise of larger firms without sacrificing the attention and personal service of a local firm. MCM has offices in Louisville and Lexington in Kentucky, as well as in Jeffersonville and Indianapolis, Ind., and Cincinnati.

Since mid-March, MCM has been working overtime to help its clients navigate the impact of COVID-19 and forge a path forward. The company created the COVID-19 Solutions Group to “assist clients on accounting and business matters in the

wake of implications from the coronavirus pandemic,” said CPA Henry Hawkins, who leads the group. Services are customized to each client, and range “from advising on how to understand and implement new legislation, to adapting human resource operations for an office reintegration, to evaluating technology and security needs for a newly remote or blended workforce and advising on planning for the future,” said Brad Smith, MCM managing partner.

The company also developed an online resource center for its clients and has been offering regularly scheduled webinars to provide guidance on best practices during the pandemic.

MCM was ranked No. 77 on Inside Public Accounting’s 2020 top firms list. It also won the Best Places to Work award in multiple cities and states in 2020, as well as the Best Accounting Firm for Women by the Move project.

Dean Dorton, headquartered in Lexington, offers accounting, tax, and business consulting services from its locations in Lexington, Louisville and Raleigh, North Carolina. The firm helps

▲BUSINESS SOLUTIONS During its annual Sharpening the Saw day, MCM CPAs & Advisors celebrated the legacy of its founders Diane Medley, John Chilton and Mike Mountjoy as the company transitioned to having its first non-founding managing partner, Brad Smith, at right. MCM has six offices in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, and offers a full range of business solutions.

clients strategize, adapt and change in every stage of business, from startup to growth and proper succession planning. Dean Dorton was ranked No. 114 on Inside Public Accounting’s 2020 top firms list.

Throughout the pandemic, Dean Dorton has been using state-of-the-art accounting and financial outsourcing services to assist its clients with an array of challenges, from

Photo courtesy of MCM



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navigating the Paycheck Protection Program to helping businesses secure their private information as employees began working from home.

Dean Dorton has also been sharing re-opening strategies and other COVID-19 resources.

Information technology, other business services

Central Kentucky has a unique mix of software and technology companies that provide business and professional services to companies of all specialties and sizes.

In today's business world, rapidly changing technology – and circumstances – requires IT experts to help companies stay on top of their game. This was no more evident than when thousands of employees across Kentucky began working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. As companies began using online technologies to stay in touch with their employees and keep their businesses running, many faced a host of issues they had never encountered.

Employees had to learn how to use platforms such as Zoom conferencing or Teams, while also learning the best ways to keep their company's data safe

while working off-site. Several Central Kentucky IT providers assisted companies with resources to make the transition easier and safer.

Central Kentucky's IT managed service providers include SIS, The AME Group (formerly called Integrity IT), NetGain Technologies, Intelligent IT, SimplifIT, Unified Technologies, Next Century Technologies and TeamLogic IT, among others. MCM and Dean Dorton also offer a full range of cybersecurity services.

Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance, the largest provider of workers' compensation insurance in Kentucky, also is located in Lexington. KEMI provides coverage to more than 22,000 policyholders in all 120 counties of the state, educates Kentucky businesses about workplace safety and invests in building community partnerships.

Central Kentucky is an ideal location for business services firms. It has an educated workforce and the infrastructure to support businesses of all sizes, and it is one of the lowest cost-of-business locations in the United States. More than 41% of Lexington residents older than 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, making the city the 14th most highly educated city in the country.

DEAN DORTON

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David Bundy,
CPA, President
& CEO

Dean Dorton provides an integrated suite of audit, tax, business management, consulting, and technology solutions. The firm helps clients strategize, adapt, and change in every stage of business, from startup to growth and proper succession planning. Dean Dorton emphasizes smart technology, leading a cloud revolution of financial, operational, and compliance tools that are transforming the way companies do business. Dean Dorton has roots dating back to 1921, serving clients throughout Kentucky and the nation.

Lexington has consistently been ranked as one of the best places to live and work. WalletHub named it one of the 10 most diversified metro economies in the U.S. and No. 1 on its list of Cities Whose Unemployment Rates Are Bouncing Back Most. SmartAsset named the city to its list of Top 10 Best Cities for Young Professionals and the second-best city for college graduates. ●

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Services may be performed by others.

A lifeline for business leaders

Legal firms help companies navigate rough waters of COVID-19



BY GREG PAETH

LEXINGTON attorney Gregg Thornton and other members of Ward, Hocker & Thornton have had to wrestle with hundreds of tough questions since the coronavirus pandemic began to emerge in February and March.

But throughout the worldwide health crisis, the only certainty was perpetual change for law firms in Central Kentucky, where responding to the virus overshadowed far more sophisticated transactions that lawyers in the region handle every day of the week.

“The one thing that constantly we get questions about is how it’s a moving target. The standards change on almost a daily basis for some businesses so that, for instance, a business has a standard one day and it may not be the same the next (day),” said Thornton, referring to rules, regulations and guidelines that sometimes seemed to be chiseled in stone for all of about 20 minutes.

One example he mentioned focused on gatherings of people and whether as many as 10 people could get together for a backyard birthday party or whether 10 people could cluster together for drinks

at a restaurant or bar without violating regulations.

“At the very beginning, all we did for four weeks was COVID questions,” said Thornton, managing partner of the law firm that has 34 lawyers divided between offices in Lexington and Louisville.

Although they may be rivals both inside and outside the courtrooms, attorneys in Lexington and Fayette County shared plenty of information during the pandemic through online conferences, Thornton said.

For a couple of months, attorneys from about 15 law firms participated in virtual forums about some of the issues that were emerging because of the pandemic, including how they would reopen their offices and how to work from home, said Dana Arnold, executive director of the Fayette County Bar Association, which has about 1,000 members.

Members of the association have told her that in the wake of the pandemic they’re bracing for a flood of business related to evictions, unemployment and bankruptcy, Arnold said.

One broad category of inquiries directed to Ward, Hocker & Thornton focused on insurance companies and whether business

LEGAL AND LEISURE Downtown Lexington’s Robert F. Stephens Courthouse Plaza is flanked by the courthouses of U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, Fayette County District Court and Fayette County Circuit Court. The plaza and its system of fountains also serves as a popular event and gathering space in the center of downtown.

interruption coverage would kick in once an enterprise closed because of the coronavirus.

“We won’t see the impact of COVID for six months to a year or longer,” said Thornton, adding that his firm had not yet heard about lawsuits filed by people who claim they contracted the virus at, for example, a specific business location.

“We haven’t seen those type of lawsuits filed yet . . . I think those are going to be very difficult to prove (with) the presumption that they caught it at one place versus the other place. It’s going to be very hard to prove . . . unless there’s some sort of (contact) tracing,” Thornton said.

Stephen G. Amato, a member of the McBrayer law office in Lexington, said a relatively obscure clause that’s spelled out in many contracts is beginning to get plenty of attention because of the coronavirus.

“We’re seeing a relatively standard contract provision called ‘force majeure’ come into play quite a bit in a way that most folks never anticipated. This is a part of most contracts that governs the responsibilities of the parties should there be some sort of unforeseen intervening event out of the control of either party. It’s not unheard of, but it’s rare that we’ve seen it arise with such a frequency . . .” Amato said.

“The biggest concerns our clients face lately have to do with returning to business as usual and mitigating the repercussions if they can’t,” said Cindy L. Effinger, another member of the McBrayer law firm. “We’re seeing a huge spike in issues related to COVID-19, such as the complicated web of regulations surrounding employee confidentiality and medical inquiries in the workplace, the circumstances surrounding paid sick leave under the FFCRA (Families First Coronavirus Relief Act), impending child care issues related to virtual schooling, and new safety rules that must be implemented and enforced as a result of the pandemic.”

Clients have been seeking advice on similar issues at the Lexington office of Dentons Bingham Greenebaum.

McBrayer forms Corporate Deals team to enhance client service

LEVERAGING its status as a full-service law firm, McBrayer PLLC has assembled a team of corporate lawyers who are experienced in all aspects of complex business transactions. Spearheaded by Corporate Department head Keeana Sajadi Boarman, the Corporate Deals Team operates in a coordinated fashion to efficiently and effectively manage every type of corporate deal, from small sales of closely held companies to large-scale mergers and acquisitions.

This powerhouse team – consisting of Boarman, Managing Member James H. Frazier, III, Maria C. Doyle, and Kenton L. Ball – has an impressive pedigree and works to ensure that all deals proceed with the utmost ease. Each member brings a wealth of knowledge and an impressive history of negotiating and finalizing deals of all sizes. The team approach allows each attorney to focus on their particular transactional strengths and areas of expertise, bringing their own individual skillset to the table.

“The McBrayer firm has always made our clients the primary focus of everything it does, but in forming a group that can pull a transaction apart and focus on every aspect of it in granular detail, it is upping the ante,” said Frazier. “This takes McBrayer to a new level.”

The move comes on the heels of a major and continuing expansion of the firm’s Louisville office, giving the team a footprint that spans Kentucky’s primary business regions.

“We’re serious about business,” said Frazier. “This team has been hand-picked to ensure that there is no deal too big to receive high-quality attention and dedication from the best McBrayer has to offer.”

“COVID-19 has moved our practice into a new dynamic. We understand that there will be no ‘normal’ for quite some time. Change is accelerating and we are adapting to a constant state of change,” said P. Branden Gross, managing partner of the Lexington office. “Our clients are facing an incredible range of challenges due to the outbreak of COVID-19. They are seeking our guidance in identifying and securing funding to maintain operations, understanding the various relief packages Congress has implemented and how those impact their business and employees, the implications of local ‘stay-at-home’ orders ... and a host of other issues.”

Dentons Bingham Greenbaum was formed in January 2020 when regional

law firm Bingham Greenebaum Doll was acquired by Dentons, a huge firm with locations worldwide. The firm has a substantial presence in Lexington, Louisville and Northern Kentucky, where it has its metro-market office in Cincinnati, as well as offices in Indianapolis, Evansville and Jasper, Ind.

In terms of altering the competitive landscape for legal services, the Dentons-Bingham agreement has plenty of potential. But the presence of the mega-firm didn’t discourage West Virginia attorneys from opening an office in Lexington in July. Flaherty Sensabaugh Bonasso, which describes itself as West Virginia’s largest litigation firm, is venturing outside its home state for the first time with its central Kentucky office.

Across the state and the nation, COVID-19 has changed how firms practice. Thornton, Gross and attorneys from the McBrayer law office all commented about how firms have employed more technology to keep staff members and their clients safe and minimize person-to-person interactions.

Because one of its clients needed an unusually high level of security to protect financial data, Thornton said his firm was immersed in an extensive upgrade of its in-house technology early this year and purchased new laptops that were vitally important when most staff members were told to use those laptops at home.

“So many of our processes have moved to remote technology such as videoconferencing. We’ve been in court hearings via videoconference, held depositions remotely, conducted board meetings remotely and worked with clients to sign and execute documents through videoconference technology,” said Luke Morgan, a member of the McBrayer firm. “We are using videoconferencing for some things as a stopgap until we can meet in person again, but I expect we will continue to use videoconferencing going forward for a lot of meetings because it is a great time saver.”

Dentons Bingham Greenebaum attorneys have attended Zoom, Teams, Webex and other videoconferencing meetings for years now, Gross said, but the use of such software increased during the pandemic.

“As for changing the profession as a whole, I would imagine that the rare large corporate transactions that were in person a year ago would almost certainly be digital now and perhaps will remain that way going forward,” he said.

At McBrayer, Managing Member James H. Frazier III said the firm “... put a high



priority on keeping our staff, attorneys and clients safe, and we’ve transitioned as best we can to conducting business remotely wherever possible. There are still bumps in the road, but a lot of these changes have made us operate more efficiently, and some of them will be permanent.”

Gross and Thornton agreed that some of the work-from-home emergency measures may outlive the coronavirus.

“Many courts closed temporarily and others have shifted to videoconference or teleconference hearings. I believe these will continue well after the pandemic in some general fashion,” Gross said.

“I think before COVID-19, everybody was afraid that you really couldn’t function and be productive as an attorney without being in the office, and I think we’ve learned that you can be (productive) without being in the office,” Thornton said. ●

McBRAYER

201 E. Main St., Suite 900
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With a team of more than 50 attorneys, the McBrayer law firm continues to serve clients throughout Kentucky. Its recent growth has served to bolster its already robust client services as it simultaneously strengthens infrastructure to improve efficiency.

McBrayer delivers exceptional personal attention and responsiveness that is its hallmark. The firm remains committed to clients and the community through multifaceted charitable and community involvement, the pillars of its organization.

The firm’s diverse practice includes healthcare, banking regulations, employment, corporate, intellectual property, professional malpractice defense, real estate, estate planning, litigation and mediation, among others.

In addition to offices in Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky, the firm is recognized for its exceptional lobbying group, MML&K Government Solutions, which has an office in Frankfort, Kentucky, and a presence in Washington, D.C.



James H. Frazier III,
Managing
Member

Vital role in economic recovery

Banks assisted clients with pandemic questions, administered \$5.3 billion in PPP loans

BY GREG PAETH

It wasn't that long ago when walking into a bank while wearing a mask might have prompted a teller to hit the panic button and alert the security guard on duty.

My, how times have changed.

Banks that opened their lobbies during the COVID-19 pandemic often required customers to wear a mask, sanitize their hands, social distance while standing in line, and then transact bank business through a plexiglass shield and/or a face mask.

Throughout Central Kentucky, staffing levels and hours of operation varied widely from bank to bank.

Indiana-based German American Bank, which has grown quickly in Kentucky in just two years, said roughly half its 800 employees nationwide worked from home during the peak of the crisis. A smaller fraction of employees at Central Bank and Forcht Bank worked remotely.

Regardless of where bank employees created a workspace, one thing was consistent: Throughout Central Kentucky, elsewhere in the state and all over the country, banks answered thousands of questions about the financial impact of COVID-19 over the last few months and completed much of their work on two rounds of the federal government's Paycheck Protection Program.

WESBANCO

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Founded in 1870, WesBanco Inc. is a diversified, well-balanced financial services institution that delivers large bank capabilities, including a full range of digital services, with a community bank feel.

WesBanco has meaningful market share across its six-state footprint, supported by a century-old trust and wealth management business, an insurance agency, and a full-service broker/dealer. WesBanco Bank has again been named to *Forbes* magazine's second annual ranking of the World's Best Banks, which was based on customer satisfaction and consumer feedback.



Jeff Koonce,
Central &
Southern
Kentucky
Market
President



Photo courtesy of Traditional Bank

As fall arrived, they tried to assess the pandemic's long-term impact on their surrounding communities and the short-term impact on their bottom lines.

Based on interviews with a cross section of bankers in and around Lexington, it's clear that COVID-19 and its impact influenced nearly every phase of the financial services industry in Central Kentucky.

One exception was a huge merger that may reconfigure competition for financial services throughout the state.

Last December, the \$66 billion combination of BB&T and SunTrust created Truist Bank, which has 80 offices in Kentucky and ranks sixth in the country, with assets of \$495 billion. In the PPP loan program, Truist ranked fourth nationwide by handling some 82,000 loans with a value of \$12.6 billion, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Several banks reported that the pandemic forced them to rely more and more on technology because of the risks associated with in-office transactions.

Many customers opted to use "contactless cards" that don't have to be swiped or inserted, while mobile and online banking continued to grow faster than brick and mortar transactions at Central Bank, said Paul R. Thornsberry, executive vice president and director of lending for the Lexington-based

▲WELCOME BACK Traditional Bank, a community bank with 16 locations in six Kentucky counties, shifted in-person service efforts to drive-up banking when the pandemic hit Kentucky, said CEO Andy Baker. In June, the bank reopened the lobbies of one bank in each of the six counties it serves to provide in-person access to its customers. Employees at the Palumbo branch in Lexington greeted customers with signs and colorful masks.

institution. "I think this (the pandemic) may have accelerated that some," he said.

Pittsburgh's PNC Bank, seventh largest in the country, said it developed software that dovetailed with that of the SBA, which teamed with the Treasury Department to administer the loan program. The software must have been vital to PNC, which ranked third in the country when it handled nearly 74,000 paycheck protection loans for about \$13 billion.

PNC Bank, which has a substantial presence in Kentucky, handled nearly 2,300 loans in Kentucky for more than \$432 million, said John Gohmann, PNC regional president for Lexington.

"Small businesses are the heartbeat of our economy. Many do not have the reserves they need to stay afloat and this grant will provide them the relief they need at this critical moment," Gohmann said. "We know Kentucky residents and small businesses are hurting right now."


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RANKED #7



Forcht Bank in Lexington expanded its hours and encouraged use of integrated teller machines, which allow customers to interact with a teller on a screen as opposed to one who's in the bank, according to Mike Noftsger, executive vice president for administration.

Noftsger also said the pandemic prompted his bank to ask some thorny questions about its offices of the future.

"If I've got a bunch of desktop computers reaching end of life, do I replace them with desktops or a laptop or some sort of tablet or something similar so that down the road, I've got at least the capability of people working remotely?" Noftsger asked.

Traditional Bank, which handled 1,102 PPP loans for a total of \$139.5 million, immediately closed its lobbies and shifted in-person service efforts to drive-up banking when the pandemic hit Kentucky, said CEO Andy Baker. The bank also separated its staff to different locations to limit exposure, offered at-risk employees the option to work from

◀ **FIVE-STATE FOOTPRINT** WesBanco operates more than 200 financial centers throughout Southern Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, including three in the Lexington area.

home, and allowed branch supervisors to rotate their staffs from week to week to help limit exposure.

The bank used email, its website and social media platforms to help educate customers about safety measures and its online and mobile banking options.

"One of the biggest impacts was losing the day-to-day, direct in-person contact with our customers. We are all about personal relationships and that is harder to maintain over the phone," Baker said. "However, our team members have found amazing ways to connect with customers in the drive-ups – even from behind a mask."

While much remained unknown about the virus late in the year, there were at least two certainties about the forgivable PPP loan program that was designed as an economic ventilator for businesses that were flat on their backs because of the virus.

One certainty was that the federal government had paid many of the banks for their work in processing PPP loan applications that were filed no later than

▼ **BILLIONS IN ASSETS** Lexington is home to dozens of banks and is a financial services hub for much of the state of Kentucky. Leading bank entities located in the downtown financial district include Chase, Central, Fifth Third, Traditional, PNC, WesBanco and many other powerhouses that account for billions of dollars in assets.

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Elmer K. Whitaker, CEO/President, Whitaker Bank, Inc., President, Whitaker Bank Corp. of Kentucky

Whitaker Bank Corp. of Kentucky is a family-owned bank holding company with \$1.78 billion in assets, 400 employees and 45 locations in 17 Kentucky counties. Whitaker Bank Corp. offers retail and commercial bank services through its two banks, Whitaker Bank and Peoples Bank of Madison County. Wealth management and insurance products are also offered through Kentucky Trust Co. and Whitaker Insurance Group. Whitaker Bank Corp. understands the personal and business needs of fellow Kentuckians, which is why they offer a wide range of financial products. From business loans to mobile banking, their goal is to make customers' lives easier. They also understand the importance of building relationships with customers. These factors have made Whitaker Bank a staple throughout Central and Eastern Kentucky.



the Aug. 8 deadline. Those payments represent an unexpected infusion of revenue for banks that have received – or will receive – billions of dollars for processing loan applications all over the country.

Just over 300 Kentucky lenders handled 50,655 loans for a total of nearly \$5.3 billion, according to the SBA, which processed loans totaling \$525 billion for more than 5.2 million American businesses.

“It’s helped us from the standpoint of fee generation and we’ve gained some new clients. We did not shut ours (the lending program) down to (existing) customers only. We opened it up to non-customers as well, so we have benefitted



Kentucky Bank photo

KENTUCKY BANK

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Louis Prichard,
President
and CEO

During 2020, both the national and state economies have experienced dramatic increases in unemployment and significant declines in our respective economies. Kentucky Bank’s 250 dedicated representatives have been working hard to help both the bank’s retail and commercial clients and customers. The bank successfully helped its business customers obtain Small Business Administration PPP Loans. Kentucky Bank has helped its retail customers manage this downturn in the economy.

“As we have been in the past, we will be here for our customers in the future,” said Louis Prichard, president and CEO.

with some additional relationships out of that,” said Central Bank’s Thornsberry.

“It is kind of one of those things that was the right thing to do, so I certainly don’t see it as something that would be detrimental to us at the end of the day, but I wouldn’t say at the same time that it was a lucrative endeavor for us,” said Forcht’s Noftsgger.

Processing fees ranged from a high of 5% for loans under \$350,000; 3% for loans between \$350,000 and \$2 million, and 1% for loans over \$2 million. If fees in Kentucky averaged 3%, participating banks would have received \$159 million for handling \$5.3 billion in loans.

The second certainty is that executives with both big banks and smaller ones in the region believe their institutions played critical roles in processing emergency loans that helped businesses – especially small businesses – survive at a time when they made the decision to shut down or closed because of government mandates.

▲BRANCHING OUT Kentucky Bank, a community bank that traces its roots back to 1851, recently opened a new branch in Lexington’s Bates Creek Center. Headquartered in Paris, Ky., the bank has 19 locations in 11 Kentucky communities.

Those loans helped thousands of businesses in Kentucky maintain their payrolls for thousands of employees who faced financial peril.

“We had tremendous success, I think, being part of the solution,” said Michael Beckwith, who heads the Kentucky division of German American Bank, which is based in Jasper, Ind., and has established a substantial footprint in Kentucky with 17 offices in eight cities since October 2018.

“As a company we did over 3,000 loans totaling over \$355 million, which impacted over 40,000 employees and that was from a companywide perspective,” said Beckwith, adding that the dollar amounts ranged from \$1,000 to more than \$3 million and that 87% of them were less than \$150,000.

A STRONG HISTORY

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LOUIS PRICHARD
President & CEO



▲STEADY AND STRONG Downtown Lexington is home to dozens of major banking operations. Growing businesses and a busy home market have kept financial institutions healthy in Central Kentucky.

“Those small businesses are what makes everything work. At the end of the day, if they’re closed down and not

making payroll ...” it hurts the entire community, Forcht’s Noftsgger said.

WesBanco made 6,772 PPP loans totaling \$837 million in the six states in which it does business, said Jeff Koonce, WesBanco’s market president for all of Kentucky aside from the Louisville market. The bank has 22 branches in Central Kentucky.

TRADITIONAL BANK

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Andy Baker,
CEO,
Traditional
Bank

Traditional Bank is focused on providing Kentucky business owners strategic banking solutions based on individual goals – and has been since 1902. Straightforward loan and deposit products are personally delivered by experienced local bankers throughout its six-county market area, with support from digital tools that save customers time and money. By asking the right questions, and relying on decades of commercial banking expertise, the bank builds meaningful relationships with clients to help them reach their goals. See its growth story at traditionalbank.com/about-us.

“As of June 30, 2020, for the state of Kentucky, we funded more than 1,000 loans for approximately \$115 million, with 85% of these loans [being] less than \$150,000,” Koonce said.

WesBanco employees dedicated about 40,000 hours to helping businesses get PPP loans, he said, with teams “who

MAKE THE SWITCH



“My favorite thing about **Traditional Bank** is that even though we are a small client, when we walk through their door, it’s like we are the only

client they have. When our phone call comes in, they are not too busy. The phone rings, they answer it right then. They are there for me.”



PATRICIA J. KNIGHT, CPA
VP of Finance and Operations, VisitLEX



traditionalbank.com/maketheswitch

► **LIVE VIDEO CHAT** Republic Bank has nearly 50 interactive teller machines in its service footprint in greater Louisville and Central and Northern Kentucky and plans to add more this year. They provide access to live video chat customer service with bank representatives into the evening and on weekends to assist clients with transactions.

REPUBLIC BANK

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Todd Ziegler,
Central
Kentucky
Market
President

Over the last 35 years, Republic Bank has grown to become the largest locally owned community bank in Kentucky, offering a full array of banking and financial services for individuals as well as small and large businesses. Its goal is to make banking easier than anyone else for its clients and exceed their expectations.



Photo courtesy of Republic Bank

literally worked around the clock during the first round of PPP.”

“I can’t tell you the number of customers that have reached out to say ‘thank you ... we would not be here if you had not provided this service and helped us get these loans,’” Koonce said.

WesBanco took action early in the pandemic to protect its clients and employees. The bank immediately limited access at its financial centers to drive-up, ATM and in-lobby by appointment only, he said. Non-financial center employees were encouraged to telecommute, and 90% of non-branch personnel continue to do so (as of September).

Among other measures, WesBanco

“immediately offered payment relief options to affected residential mortgage, consumer, small business and commercial customers,” Koonce said.

Republic Bank helped retain 39,488 jobs in Kentucky through PPP loans, “the most of any bank in the commonwealth, according to the Small Business Administration,” said Steve Trager, chairman of the bank.

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Mike Beckwith,
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“Across all our communities, we are so proud to have been able to help small businesses retain over 62,000 jobs. We did this by securing over \$520 million dollars in PPP loans for 3,700 small businesses,” said Trager, whose



Louisville-based bank has six locations in Central Kentucky and does business in five states.

Central Bank, headquartered in Lexington, helped some cash-strapped borrowers by approving “modifications” to existing loans while it processed about 9% of the PPP applications that were filed by Kentucky businesses.

“We got out front of that (the PPP program) early on so we were prepared for that,” said Thornsberry, whose bank made 2,526 loans for more than \$412 million.

▲BRANCHING OUT German American Bank has two Lexington locations. It also has branches in Bowling Green, Franklin, Owensboro and the Louisville metropolitan area.

Like nearly every bank executive who was interviewed, Thornsberry said processing PPP applications provided a valuable introduction to his bank for many business owners who hadn't banked there before.

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As a Main Street bank, PNC is focused on helping businesses receive the assistance they need during these difficult times. The challenges presented by the pandemic have been augmented by the emergence of one of the most important civil rights movements in modern times. PNC also is committed to doing our part to address systemic racism and support the economic empowerment of African Americans and low- to moderate-income communities. Specifically, PNC has announced a \$1 billion commitment, which will come to life largely through its work in community development banking. PNC's community development banking team works to boost the quality of life in low and moderate-income neighborhoods through financial education, consumer programs, and community development lending and investing.

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▲ **LARGE IN LEXINGTON** Tracing its roots back to 1938, Central Bank today has about 540 employees serving more than 100,000 customers with a full range of banking, insurance, investment and wealth management services. It is well known in the region as the official bank of UK Athletics.

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Luther Deaton Jr., Chairman, President and CEO, Central Bank

Central Bank remains one of Kentucky's leading community banks, with assets now in excess of \$3 billion. Maintaining a focus on the needs of the people and businesses of Kentucky, the bank provides banking, investment, insurance, mortgage and wealth management products. Having grown significantly from humble beginnings at the corner of Short and Upper streets in downtown Lexington, the bank now operates 28 full-service banking centers serving Central Kentucky, Northern Kentucky and Louisville. Known statewide for excellent customer service, Central Bank is also honored to be one of Kentucky's Best Places to Work and the Official Bank of UK Athletics.

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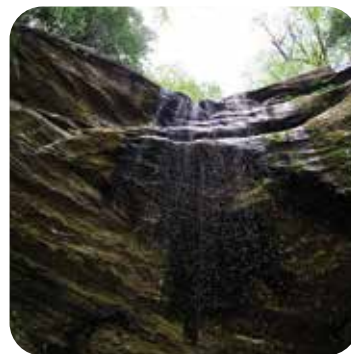
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◀ **LONG HISTORY** Cumberland Valley National Bank has 14 locations in Kentucky, including four Central Kentucky offices – one in Berea and Richmond, and two in Lexington. The bank traces its history back to 1904, when it opened as East Bernstadt Banking Company in Laurel County.

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‘Manufacturing makes the world go ’round’

From Gorilla Glass and Toyota vehicles to Tiffany jewelry, in-demand products are made here

BY LORIE HAILEY

MANUFACTURING is more than gears, oils and metal, and it's more than doing something a robot can do, says Lee Lingo, president of the Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (KAM). It's about using materials in one form and changing them into another form, he said. Creating.

Bourbon is created, and so is energy, he said. And Kentucky is really good at creating.

Take mobile phones, for instance. The screen you touch hundreds of times a day to make it work was probably made in Central Kentucky.

“If you have an iPhone or a high-end Samsung phone, the glass came from (Corning Inc.’s plant in Harrodsburg),” Lingo said. “We create a kind of glass that in many cases doesn’t break and cannot scratch. Who would have even thought of that to start with? That’s a different kind of manufacturing, and it’s pretty special that Kentucky has areas like that we can lay claim to.”

There’s also good chance that your current vehicle, or one you have driven in the past, was created here in the commonwealth. Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) in Georgetown builds the Camry, Avalon and Lexus, the RAV4 Hybrid, and hybrid

versions of the Avalon and Camry. Ford Motor Co. in Louisville makes super-duty pickup trucks (F-250 through F-550), the Ford Expedition, Lincoln Navigator, Ford Escape and Lincoln MKC.

Other items made in the Bluegrass: Post-It notes, Woodford Reserve and Jim Beam bourbon, Jif peanut butter, Hot Pockets, Tiffany jewelry, airplane brakes, lift trucks, automotive brake and suspension systems, safety hard hats, porcelain and ceramic wall tile, animal health care products, soft drinks, forklifts, rattan and wicker furniture, industrial paint, fluorescent lamps ... and the list goes on and on.

More than 260,000 people are employed in Kentucky’s manufacturing industry at 4,500 facilities. Manufacturing is the economic engine of the commonwealth, representing over \$33 billion in annual gross domestic product (GDP), according to KAM. Thirteen percent of Kentucky’s workforce is employed in manufacturing.

“Manufacturing is one of the most important industries that any country, any state, has,” Lingo said. “It pays well, it’s interesting. It makes the world go ’round.”

Advanced manufacturing is key to the Bluegrass region’s economy and is a targeted industry for Lexington’s economic development efforts.

In 2019, more than \$3.94 billion in Kentucky manufacturing projects and 5,356 jobs were announced, according to data from the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development. More than 70% of all projects announced in 2019 were manufacturing.

New production line

In January 2020, TMMK began producing another vehicle: the RAV4 Hybrid. With the addition of the RAV4 Hybrid to its manufacturing mix, TMMK now makes four electrified vehicles, including the Avalon Hybrid, Camry Hybrid and Lexus ES 300h. (It also makes the non-hybrid versions of the Avalon and Camry.)

By 2025, Toyota’s global goal is to offer an electrified option (hybrid, plug-in, fuel cell, battery) on all Toyota and Lexus models. Currently, Toyota sells more alternative powertrain vehicles than the rest of the industry combined, with sales reaching around 13 percent of volume in the U.S.



Photo courtesy of Corning

▲GORILLA GLASS Corning Gorilla Glass was launched in September 2007 and has since become the glass of choice for mobile consumer electronics manufacturers around the globe. The patented, durable glass technology has been designed into more than 7 billion consumer electronic devices by more than 45 major OEMs. Gorilla Glass is manufactured at Corning’s plant in Harrodsburg.

TMMK is Toyota’s largest plant in the world with more than 9 million s.f. of floor space and more than 8,000 full-time team members, representing a \$7-billion investment. The plant can produce 550,000 vehicles and more than 600,000 engines each year.

Pandemic partners

Though the pandemic required many companies to make changes in their plants, and perhaps rethink their supply chains, manufacturers are still investing in Kentucky. Many Bluegrass region companies also found ways to pivot production to make personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitizer to aid in the fight against COVID-19.

Two Central Kentucky powerhouse companies – Toyota and safety equipment maker Bullard – teamed up to speed up PPE production.

BULLARD

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Bullard proudly manufactures personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects workers in hazardous environments. A 122-year, fifth-generation, family-owned company, Bullard’s product lines include head and face protection, respiratory protection, fire and rescue helmets, and thermal imaging cameras. Bullard invented the hard hat in 1919 and since then the company has developed the most innovative product solutions for protecting workers worldwide. Headquartered in Cynthiana, Kentucky, with offices in Lexington, Kentucky, Europe and Asia-Pacific, Bullard stands committed to providing PPE to the brave men and women on the frontlines of COVID-19.

Shortages of face shields, respirators and hoods – all critical to caring for patients with COVID-19 – led to increases in demand for Bullard's products, reaching as much as 30 times the normal orders. The Toyota Production System Support Center (TSSC) worked with Bullard team members in Cynthiana to apply the well-known Toyota Production System (TPS) to its increase PPE production. TPS is a production system based on the philosophy of achieving the complete elimination of all waste in pursuit of the most efficient methods.

"Considering the urgent need to supply medical gear to caregivers on the front lines of the fight against COVID, we were very eager to share our know-how to help increase output as fast as possible," said Jamie Bonini, vice president, TSSC.

Using the TPS, the Toyota-Bullard team eliminated a backlog of face shield orders, increasing output by 700% from March to April; doubled production capacity for respirators, delivering them 85% faster; created a new hood line and doubled production capacity; and cross-trained employees, developing a more flexible workforce.

"I'm proud of our team, not just for changing the way we do things to protect more workers, but for doing it while also putting in strict COVID-19 prevention protocols, including social distancing and mandatory face masks, to ensure their own health and safety," said Wells Bullard, CEO of Bullard, who is the great-great granddaughter of the founder, Edward Dickinson Bullard.

Bullard is a fifth-generation family-owned enterprise that makes head and face protection, powered air-purifying respirators and supplied air respirators, fire and rescue helmets, and thermal imaging cameras. It was founded in San Francisco in 1898 as a supplier of carbide lamps and other mining equipment. About 20 years later, the company invented the iconic construction hardhat.

One of Kentucky's signature industries, bourbon distilling, also took quick action to help aid in battling the spread of COVID-19. Several distilleries retooled their facilities, sourced necessary supplies, and battled regulatory and tax hurdles to produce and donate hand sanitizer to front-line workers, hospitals and health care facilities. By April, Kentucky Distillers' Association (KDA) member distilleries had produced and donated nearly 125,000 gallons of hand sanitizer across the commonwealth, according to KDA.

Investments continue

From July 2019 to July 2020, 32 manufacturing investment announcements were made in the 13 counties that make up the Central Kentucky region. That's a bit less than previous years, but still impressive given that the nation is battling the COVID-19 pandemic. The combined \$547.1 million investment will create 672 new jobs in the region when total employment is reached.

Here's a look at some of the manufacturers' plans.

• **Toyota to produce all-wheel drive vehicles** – Toyota unveiled plans in early 2020 to produce new all-wheel drive versions of its popular Camry and Avalon sedans, both of which will be manufactured at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky plant in Georgetown. According to Toyota, market demand for AWD vehicles has increased significantly but few midsize sedans outside the luxury category have offered the feature. The Camry AWD is available at dealerships now. The Avalon AWD will be for the 2021 model year and will be available for sale this fall.

• **Apple invests in Corning, again** – In the fall of 2019, Apple awarded \$250 million from its Advanced Manufacturing Fund to Corning Inc. in Harrodsburg, the supplier of precision glass for its iPhone, Apple Watch and iPad devices. The award builds on the \$200 million the company received in 2017. The combined investment supports Corning's research and development into state-of-the-art glass processes, equipment and materials integral to the delivery of next-generation consumer devices.

Corning has been part of the Harrodsburg community for 65 years. The plant, which employs 400, is Corning's longest-running U.S.-based manufacturing facility.

Apple and Corning have been product development partners for more than a decade, and the Harrodsburg facility has played a key role in delivering glass solutions for the iPhone since its inception in 2007, when Gorilla Glass revolutionized the industry. Some of the most important innovations in glass have happened at the Kentucky plant — glass for every generation of iPhone and Apple Watch, and many generations of iPad, have all been made in the Harrodsburg facility. Since iPhone launched in 2007, Apple has spent nearly \$3 billion with Corning on the glass used in iPhones, Apple Watches and iPads.

• **Meggitt investing in Danville brake plant** – Meggitt is investing over \$90 million in two projects to expand its

TMMK pandemic response rooted in core value: 'respect for people'

BY SUSAN ELKINGTON
TMMK PRESIDENT



Susan Elkington, TMMK President

DECADES from now, historians will say the coronavirus pandemic defined this era and many will ask what we did to make a difference.

At Toyota, and specifically at our plant in Georgetown, Ky. (TMMK), our response has been rooted in our core values of "respect for people" and "mendomi," or "care for others like family."

It is this concern and care for others that moved us to partner with and support many local charities, including food banks and the United Way of the Bluegrass' Coronavirus Response Fund, to help those in need during this time. Additionally, our Toyota Kentucky team has been hard at work producing and distributing more than 86,000 face shields for frontline health care workers.

As president of Toyota Kentucky, I consider our employees family and take seriously their health and safety. That is why, during our temporary production shutdown, we worked with state and federal health and safety experts to develop more than 100 robust, new safety protocols. I am proud of what our teams accomplished and the innovative solutions we created to keep each other safe.

As businesses and communities continue to reopen, we take seriously our role in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. In fact, in the Toyota spirit, we are now sharing our best practices with other organizations. We have even gone a step further by creating the "Safe at Home" and "Safe Anywhere" campaigns. These initiatives encourage our team members to follow Toyota's "respect for people" philosophy and take the lessons and safety protocols practiced at TMMK with them wherever they may go.

With the uncertainties facing the health and well-being of our communities, we must all continue to do our part in moving our commonwealth forward.

commercial and military aircraft carbon-brake manufacturing facility in Boyle County, creating 128 full-time jobs.

The new facility also will serve as a maintenance, repair and overhaul hub to meet rising demand for aircraft maintenance. The 95,000-s.f. expansion will include new carbon furnaces plus

Rising to the challenge

Amid COVID-19 shutdown, TMMK officials were focused on how to help community

WHEN COVID-19 forced Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) in Georgetown to suspend production, the plant's management was thinking about more than its own needs.

Even before the first day of shutdown, TMMK's management team was discussing how to give back to its community, said Susan Elkington, plant president.

The plant had an inventory of personal protective equipment, such as face shields, masks, gloves and protective coveralls, and these were donated to local hospitals, clinics, first responders and other health care providers.

TMMK also donated \$155,000 to United Way of the Bluegrass, God's Pantry Food Bank and other agencies to assist those in need.

"Then we asked, 'How can we safely come back to work and restart production?'" she said. The answer came in a "Safe at Work Playbook," developed in collaboration with Toyota management teams across North America and in Japan.

Adapting Toyota's manufacturing processes to meet anti-infection protocols was fairly straightforward.

"When you build a vehicle, a team member does the same thing over and over, following the work instructions. The patterns are very predictable," she said. "We were able to modify these to include face shields and face coverings as well as barriers between processes."

Two additional versions of the guidebook were produced. One was for Toyota suppliers, because as an assembly operation, the plant depends on its supply chain. Another more generic version was made available to other businesses and the public on the Georgetown-Scott County Chamber of Commerce website, among others.

Revising workstations was the only issue inside the plant. Before the pandemic, about 20 people would typically congregate in Toyota break areas for lunch and mid-shift breaks. To comply with the state's Safe at Work guidance, the plant built line side locations in break areas, where team members could be 6 feet apart and safely take off their masks to eat.

Toyota production employees are organized in teams of about five and groups of about 25 to 30. Because routine group meetings would exceed the numbers allowed

by state health guidance, meetings were limited to the team level.

Management kept in touch with employees during the shutdown. Each team member received a weekly call from his/her group leader. They were told of changes being made so they could return to work safely, and they could see the changes in videos Toyota provided.

This helped assure team members and their families that the company was looking out for their welfare, Elkington added.

When team members returned, the plant eased them gradually into the new routine. The first day back, the plant completed production of just one vehicle. The first day "was all about the new protocols, making sure we could build a quality product from day one," Elkington said. The transition was necessary, not only because of the new restrictions but because team members had been off work for nearly two months.

After several weeks, the plant was back to normal levels of production.

A crisis like COVID-19 reveals true leaders throughout an organization, Elkington said. She defines those leaders as people who can read a situation and make quick, good decisions based on Toyota's philosophies and priorities.

Difficult times force people to realize they can do things once thought impossible, Elkington said.

Toyota has always had great cooperation between its plants across North America, Elkington said, but the pandemic has drawn their interdependence into clearer focus. Employees and managers across Toyota's many operations have come to rely more on each other and use digital media to share information. That has made them all stronger and more efficient.

In normal times, Elkington said she typically visited Toyota headquarters in Japan every quarter to give an update. She can't do that now, but she can go onto the production floor with a cell phone and provide live video to show what's going on.

Despite the diminished travel and uncertainty consumers face during the pandemic, Toyota continues to enjoy strong sales, especially in Kentucky, Elkington said. The plant's return to full production was



▲ROLLING OUT Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) added the 2020 RAV4 Hybrid to its production lineup in January 2020. TMMK is Toyota's largest plant in the world with more than 9 million s.f. of floor space and more than 8,000 full-time team members.

needed to replenish inventories depleted during the shutdown.

The national automobile market's near-term future remains uncertain, but one bright spot for TMMK is the RAV4 Hybrid, which the Georgetown plant began assembling at the beginning of 2020. The RAV4 Hybrid has been selling well and accounts for about 30% of the plant's output, Elkington said. And at a time when sedans appear to be waning in popularity, the introduction of all-wheel-drive in the Camry and the Avalon models, both made in Georgetown, has given these sedans an added dimension.

Toyota is heavily invested in emerging technologies, especially innovative powertrains, Elkington said, but implementation of such changes will be consumer driven. Toyota research and development will allow the company to meet consumer needs as they evolve. In the near term, however, the Georgetown plant appears to be more focused on transitional technologies such as hybrids.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges and difficulties," Elkington said. "But in the end, our team members and our communities will come out stronger than we are today. And we continue our commitment to our customers and to central Kentucky."

—Bill Robinson

ancillary equipment, as well as upgrades to existing machinery.

• **3M to upgrade, expand Cynthiana plant** – 3M Co.'s plant in Cynthiana manufactures the iconic Post-it Notes, Post-It Easels and Scotch package-protection tapes. The company is spending \$50.6 million to upgrade/renew the plant's roof, add new production lines and upgrade its

Post-it Note and Scotch tape production lines. The investment will also pay for various infrastructure improvements to the facility. 3M also plans to add 20 new jobs.

• **Waste handling equipment maker to create 100 jobs** – Wastequip, a waste handling equipment manufacturer, recently invested nearly \$7.3 million in a new distribution facility in Mt. Sterling.

The new facility spans nearly 100,000 s.f. and features a warehouse inventory of over 30,000 SKUs (stock keeping units) of tarping equipment, OEM and aftermarket parts, as well as a shipping center and offices for corporate and customer service staff.

The company plans to create 100 new jobs over the next 15 years.

STRONGER TOGETHER



From creating a safer workplace, to supporting local nonprofits, and manufacturing protective equipment for use by front-line workers across the Commonwealth, Toyota Kentucky remains committed to the health of our community.

Together, we'll fight for a better tomorrow.

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TOYOTA



• **Electric motors, lift truck manufacturing expansion in Berea** – Hitachi Automotive Electric Motor Systems America Inc. announced plans in June 2020 to open a new facility in Berea and add 162 new jobs. The company plans to invest \$94.8 million to renovate and purchase equipment to develop, manufacture and sell electric vehicle motors.

Forklift manufacturer Hyster-Yale Group broke ground in late 2019 on a \$25.7 million expansion that will add 160,000 s.f. to its Berea facility. The Cleveland-based company opened its Berea plant in 1973 with annual production of approximately 5,000 trucks. The consolidated Hyster-Yale business has since grown to become an international company that shipped over 100,000 units globally in 2018, and currently employs approximately 7,900 people worldwide.

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corning.com

Essity (formerly Wasau Paper)

Paper towels, toilet paper, tissue
essity.com

Hitachi Automotive Systems America

Auto electronic control units, sensors, actuators, fuel systems and components
hiams-am.com

IRVINE

Carhartt

Dungarees
carhartt.com

LANCASTER

Mom Blakeman's Pull Candy

Creamed pull candy and potato candy
momblakemanscandy.com

LAWRENCEBURG

Algood Food Co.

Jams, jellies, preserves
algoodfood.com

Diade USA

Mosaic tile
diade-usa.com

Florida Tile

Porcelain and ceramic wall tile, natural stone and decorative glass/metal tiles
floridatile.com

Four Roses Distillery

Distilled spirits
fourrosesbourbon.com

General Cable

Telephone, datacommunications cable
generalcable.com

Wild Turkey Bourbon

Distilled spirits
wildturkeybourbon.com

MT. STERLING

Greif Inc.

Plastic drums
greif.com

Nestle Prepared Foods

Hot pockets
nestleusa.com

Ruth Hunt Candy Co.

Chocolates, creams and novelties; Blue Monday chocolate bar
ruthhuncandy.com

NICHOLASVILLE

Alltech

Natural animal feed additives; corporate HQ
alltech.com

Aviation Safety Resources

Emergency recovery systems for aircraft
aviationsafetyresources.com

Berry Global

Flexible packaging stretch film
berryglobal.com

Classic Rattan

Rattan and wicker furniture
classicrottan.com

Sargent & Greenleaf

High-security locks
sargentandgreenleaf.com

WestRock

Paperboard folding boxes
westrock.com

PARIS

AgTech Scientific

Hemp and CBD products
agtechscientific.com

Hunt Bros. Pizza

Pizzas for convenience stores, stadiums, etc.
huntbrotherspizza.com

Mingua Beef Jerky

Beef jerky
minguabeefjerky.com

RICHMOND

EnerSys

Lead acid industrial batteries
enersys.com

Gill Industries

Automotive stamping
gill-industries.com

The Okonite Co.

Insulated electrical cable
okonite.com

Sherwin-Williams Co.

Automotive coatings and finishes; Thompson's Waterseal
sherwinwilliams.com

VERSAILLES

More Than a Bakery

Commercial bakery (cookies, snack crackers, cracker crumbs)
morethanabakery.com

LEDVANCE

Fluorescent lamps; glass tubing for auto lighting industry
ledvance.com

Woodford Reserve

Distilled spirits, primarily bourbon
woodfordreserve.com

WILMORE

Highbridge Springs

Bottled distilled water
highbridgesprings.com

WINCHESTER

Ale-8-One Bottling Co.

Soft drink beverages
ale-8-one.com ●

Big names in the Bluegrass

Many major companies call Central Kentucky their home

CENTRAL Kentucky has a highly educated workforce, a culture of innovation and the infrastructure to support entrepreneurs and established businesses alike. It is located within a day's drive of two-third of the nation's population – and it is at the crossroads of two major interstates, Interstates 75 and 64. Combined with the allure of horses and bourbon, it's no wonder that the region is home to more than 70 company headquarters that are key to the nation and the world's business climate.

Some of the headquarters located in Central Kentucky include:

A&W Restaurants, burger franchise

The Allen Co., road construction and asphalt paving

Alliance Coal, coal mining services

Alltech, animal nutrition

Appalachian Regional Healthcare, hospital system

Apollo Lubricants, auto oils and chemicals

ArchVision, software development

Asphalt Institute, petroleum asphalt trade association

Burkman Industries, animal feed

Columbia Gas Kentucky, natural gas distribution

Corrisoft, electronic monitoring software

CSI Group, consulting services and automation

Delta Natural Gas, natural gas

East Kentucky Power Cooperative, electric power generation

Fazolli's Restaurant Group, restaurant franchise

Florida Tile, porcelain/ceramic tile manufacturing and distribution

Friesian Horse Association of North America, equine association

Frogdice, video game maker

Galls, public safety equipment and uniforms



General Rubber and Plastics Co., industrial distribution

Global Information Systems, software development to track pipelines

Gray Construction, design-build firm

Heartland Automation, mobile robots and custom automation equipment

Innovative Mattress Solutions, mattress retailer

Intech Contracting, bridge painting and repair

Kinetic Technologies, equine and companion-animal health

Lexmark International, printers and related supplies, software

Minova USA, mine roof stabilization

MosquitoMate, R&D mosquito control and prevention

Mountain Enterprises, highway construction and paving

Nally & Gibson, asphalt and paving materials

Phoenix Transportation Services, trucking

▲NUTRITION IN NICHOLASVILLE

Mark Lyons, president and CEO of Alltech, shared the 2020 Global Feed Survey results via public livestream from the animal nutrition company's headquarters in Nicholasville, Ky. Alltech was founded in 1980 by his father, Pearse Lyons, with the mission to improve the health and performance of people, animals and plants through natural nutrition and scientific innovation. It now has a team of more than 6,000 employees in over 120 countries.

Rhino Resource Partners, coal

R.J. Corman Railroad Group, rail services

Self Refind, drug treatment clinics

SIS Holding Co., technology solutions provider

Tempur Sealy International, mattress company

Thoroughbred Aviation Maintenance, aircraft maintenance

United States Dressage Federation, equine nonprofit

The United States Pony Clubs, equine club

Vasco Ltd., logistics supply-chain service

The Walker Co., highway contractor, asphalt producer

Xact Communications, telecommunications

The Zenith Co., restaurant operator ●

◀**1,500 EMPLOYEES** R.J. Corman Railroad Group is a privately owned railroad services and short line company headquartered in Nicholasville. It has divisions in 23 states and serves all seven North American major railroads, along with many regional and short-line railroads.



Smooth graduation to distance learning

Kentucky schools had technology ready to pivot to a hybrid new normal in education



UK photo

BY ROBERT HADLEY

After more than a decade of developing and touting the benefits of distance learning, colleges and universities and faculty and students jumped in with both feet in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic changed life. And it went well.

In early fall as educators, students and public officials slowly and cautiously eased in the return to campus, which it is doing with the knowledge that getting the education you want from the comfort of your home is a realistic option. Technology upgrades everywhere underlie the new normal.

This shifting dynamic already was slated to evolve further in 2020, when three months into the year, the momentous pandemic struck. Then classrooms had to become virtual, and Plan B distance learning was now Plan A, ushering in a way for college life to go on across the Bluegrass region where a dozen postsecondary schools and tens of thousands of students made a pivot that looked well lubricated.

For the 2020-21 academic year, face-to-face in-the-classroom instruction is the expectation, eventually, but all parties are embracing hybrid distance learning practices as they prepare for success in a “real world” that grows more digital by the day.

University of Kentucky

At the 31,000-student University of Kentucky, the initial response to the need for social distancing followed a guiding theme of Did We Care?, said Jay Blanton, UK chief communications officer.

“It has meant, in many cases, changing old habits and thinking of different ways to accomplish long-standing goals,” Blanton said.

The university distributed 550 mobile internet hotspots and 650 iPads, granting students access to virtual classrooms “to ensure equity and level accessibility in the classrooms – whether they were in-person or online,” he said.

The fall 2020 semester started with more than 90% of 350-plus classrooms on campus having received technology upgrades to enable hybrid delivery of material. Cameras live stream for those opting out of in-person learning; recorded lectures then are available for review later, an option instructors say they wish were available when they were students.

UK based its plans on input from 500 members of the campus community, resulting in a playbook released in June.

“Our data showed us the importance of reopening and returning to the distinctive residential and classroom experience we provide,” Blanton said.

◀SAFETY STRATEGIES University of Kentucky’s fall 2020 semester started with more than 90% of its 350-plus classrooms on campus having received technology upgrades to enable hybrid delivery of material. Cameras live stream for those opting out of in-person learning; recorded lectures are available for review later. UK reminds students daily to wear masks, wash their hands, use physical distancing, and complete daily screenings. The university is conducting required random COVID-19 testing among its student population, at no cost to the students.

Fortunately, UK had positioned itself to make that goal possible. Over the past decade, UK has spent \$2.7 billion on construction of 6 million s.f. of state-of-the-art space all over campus, replacing housing, instruction space, offices and more that were decades old.

For example, the Gatton Student Center boasts five large ballrooms that, if needed, each could hold more than 100 students with standard 6-foot social distancing for instruction or other purposes.

Messaging from university personnel and student peer leaders focuses on the Daily 4.0: wearing a mask; washing your hands; practicing physical distancing; and completing a daily screening.

Testing is a key aspect of safety strategy, especially in fraternities and sororities, Blanton said, because data showed their positivity rate was triple that of the general population (3% vs 1%).

Meanwhile, UK established a diversity and inclusion plan based on faculty and student input, similar to the process used for their reopening plan.

“Work team projects span a facilities master plan centered on diversity, equity and inclusion, anti-racism training for faculty, staff and students, responsible speech and ensuring a more diverse pipeline for faculty, staff and students, among others,” Blanton said.

Outcomes include recognition of Juneteenth as a campus holiday; partnership with the NAACP to address racial inequity; a \$10 million, five-year UNITE research project on systemic racism; and \$250,000 to fund further civil rights projects in UK’s African American and Africana Studies Program.

Transylvania University

Transylvania University is a 240-year-old liberal arts college in the heart of Lexington enrolling 968 students. Well known in the U.S. education community, it offers 46

majors, with preparatory programs in law, engineering and medicine.

Its strategy for handling COVID-19 “prioritized individual empowerment and community responsibility for our students, faculty and staff,” Transylvania Vice President of Marketing and Communications Megan Moloney said.

Students themselves choose between returning to a residential campus or transitioning to remote learning, Moloney said. Professors and instructors determine individually whether their classes meet in person or online or in a hybrid manner.

The university assembled a team of technical specialists from its Digital Liberal Arts initiative to refresh faculty members on the technology available for online and hybrid learning and provide well attended workshops on its effective use.

The university invested in a learning management system with “a richer suite of tools and better user experience,” Moloney said.

There is a free tuition option program for undergraduates.

In keeping with its education self-determination principle, Transylvania unveiled its Pioneer Plus initiative, offering students “registered for the 2020-21 academic year a number of choices to continue their education, athletics and activities at Transylvania while making the best decisions for themselves,” Moloney said.

Transylvania also based its response to the pandemic on faculty input. Whether learning models were conducive to online presentation depending on several factors.

“Many of the educational environments Transy is known for, like small group discussions, are difficult to carry out in person but are relatively easy to adapt to online learning,” Moloney said.

Transylvania has been ambitiously modernizing its campus in the past decade also. It is promoting new residential space, special projects and initiatives destined to benefit students going forward.

For example, Transylvania has finalized the \$30 million W.T. Young Campus Center, a blend of 36,000 s.f. of renovated space and 61,400 s.f. in new construction that

► **TAKING PRECAUTIONS** Eastern Kentucky University is promoting social distancing in all on-campus activities. As part of its Colonels Comeback Plan, ECU reduced dorm room capacity, spread classes out across days and times to reduce in-person class size, is using online and virtual learning options, and implementing many other safety precautions. Students are required to wear face masks/coverings while attending class or within classroom buildings.

opened in September 2020. The building houses areas for dining, fitness, student services, a bookstore, community outreach and more from its more than 97,000-s.f. overall footprint.

Eastern Kentucky University

The Colonels Comeback Plan at Eastern Kentucky University was designed to address every possible scenario that might affect student or employee health, said Lanny Brannock, ECU’s director of communications.

“We took a serious approach in trying to understand if coming back on campus was feasible, and if it was, what that would look like,” he said.

In addition to promoting social distancing in all university activities, the plan included reducing capacity of classrooms, placing social distancing reminder signage in buildings, shielding, cleaning of air handling systems, dorm room capacity adjustments, spreading classes out across days and times to reduce in-person class size, using online or virtual instruction for on-campus students, virtualizing laboratory work where possible, revising semester schedules, and many other safety precautions.

Response from students has been positive.

“The reason we came back to an on-campus, in-person learning environment was because students asked for that. College is a transformative experience for so many of our students, and they wanted the most robust experience we could safely give them,” Brannock said. “Our faculty and staff know that if we follow the recommended guidelines for handwashing, mask wearing, social distancing and being mindful of our own health for ourselves and our peers, that we could come back to campus safely.”

PreK-12 public schools

Public school systems across Central Kentucky have delivered innovation whether in pandemic mode or normal conditions.

Elkhorn Crossing School in Scott County divides its clusters of specialization into “villages,” according to Principal John Noll. These are engineering; biomedical sciences; health science; media arts; freshman media arts; and law and justice.

“Every day we will encourage students to work harder and reach outside their comfort zone to achieve greatness,” Noll states on the school website. “We believe each experience awards students the opportunity to stretch a bit higher and ultimately soar to new heights.”

The Fayette County Public Schools offer their 42,000 students a magnet program featuring science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics at certain schools, as well as a biomedical and college preparatory program, the International Baccalaureate.

Responding to COVID-19, FCPS established a website organized around the concept of resilience that includes self-care and mental health tips for the disruption of social isolation and limited classroom time.

Fayette County Public Schools, along with those in neighboring Madison and Woodford, began the 2020-21 year’s classes exclusively online and remained so as of late September. Woodford County schools’ said online classes would continue until at least Sept. 28, following guidance from Gov. Andy Beshear.

Madison County Schools started with online learning but began in-person classes on Sept. 25, following enhanced safety measures. ●

EKU photo



Providing essential tools

Internet access more important than ever, utilities earn accolades for green growth, clean water



◀ **SOLAR SHEEP** A flock of 25 Shetland sheep grazing on 10 acres at LG&E/KU's E.W. Brown Generating Station in Harrodsburg. "Mowing grass that grows under and around our solar arrays is extremely difficult to do, but grazing sheep help naturally to alleviate that problem," said Jeff Fraley, manager of E.W. Brown.

10-megawatt E.W. Brown Generation Station in Harrodsburg operating with clear, unobstructed exposure to the sun. The output is enough to juice 1,500 homes with 1,000 kilowatt hours per month.

It seems the sheep's natural habit of grazing keeps the native brush and shrubbery under control. There's no crew to hire (a cost saving), and no gas-powered mowers that could undercut the benefits of solar by sully the air with emissions.

"Mowing grass that grows under and around our solar arrays is extremely difficult to do, but grazing sheep help naturally to alleviate that problem," said Jeff Fraley, general manager of E.W. Brown. "They're generally docile, small and, through their grazing, can keep vegetation at the site to a minimum, which will reduce maintenance costs over the long-term."

But where the utility is reducing the flora in some cases, it is increasing it in others. At the same plant, the company will seed the ground with more than three dozen species of grasses and flowers, all native to the commonwealth.

The idea is "to create a natural habitat that will attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators," according to a release from LG&E/KU. "Not only does this help address population decline among pollinators, it will also help reduce water runoff, soil erosion and overall maintenance costs."

The story of LG&E staking a green position points to changes underway in Kentucky's energy sector. Currently, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) ranks the state as the nation's fifth-largest coal producer. About one-fifth of all operating U.S. coal mines are located in Kentucky, more than any other state besides West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

The abundant coal production fuels the electric grid: 73% of all the state's electric power generated is derived from coal.

The coal output also supplies 59 plants in 13 states, according to the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet's Office of Energy Policy.

BY ROBERT HADLEY

THE year 2020 will forever prompt memories of the COVID-19 crisis and the changes it ushered in, and nowhere was it more visible than in the world of work. Employees in industries ranging from business administration to health care and education faced a sea change in the way they conducted their jobs.

The primary impact was physical. Social distancing mandates and quarantines meant that the office was off limits until further notice. But whether it was due to old standbys like phone and email or newer technologies such as Skype and Zoom – and high-speed internet access – many businesses found a way to meet customer needs and stay in business while keeping employees safe. And thanks to fast and reliable at-home internet access, Central Kentucky students are able to participate in virtual classrooms in lieu of attending school to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In Kentucky, telephone and high-speed internet service is provided by AT&T, Spectrum, Windstream and MetroNet. For wireless service, Central Kentucky customers turn to Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, Sprint and Bluegrass Cellular.

Broadband Now reports that 82% of Kentuckians can log on to high-speed

internet with an average available speed of 60 mbps, ranking the commonwealth 40th nationwide in terms of coverage. Over 91% of residents can surf the web at speeds of 100 mbps or greater. Kentucky providers include AT&T, Charter Spectrum, Mediacom, Windstream and All Points Broadband.

The state's telecommunications network has grown over the past decade, when \$5.3 million in federal grants helped fund the Commonwealth of Kentucky Office of Technology. Over half a million dollars in federal grant funding has gone toward expanding broadband infrastructure within the state.

One of the biggest initiatives is KentuckyWired, a state program whose goal includes "constructing over 3,000 miles of high-speed, high-capacity fiber optic cable in every county in Kentucky," according to its website. The project reports 95% completion as of June 2020.

Changes in the energy sector

This year, Kentucky's energy sector experienced a herd mentality.

Actually, it was a herd of sheep that made the difference, and they definitely constituted a remote workforce.

LG&E and Kentucky Utilities Co. has commissioned a herd of sheep to keep the solar panels at its 50-acre,

Photo courtesy of LG&E/KU

LG&E AND KU ENERGY LLC

220 W. Main St.
Louisville, KY 40202
lge-ku.com



Paul W. Thompson,
LG&E and KU
President
and CEO

Consistently ranked among the best companies for customer service in the U.S. and recognized nine times as one of the top utilities for economic development by *Site Selection* magazine, Louisville Gas and Electric and Kentucky Utilities are committed to attracting and keeping businesses in the bluegrass and making the commonwealth a better place to live.

As the energy landscape continues to evolve, LG&E and KU are evolving with it. The utilities continue to create programs and offerings to help meet the goals of business and residential customers – including empowering customers with energy data to help better manage energy usage, providing opportunities to support and grow renewable energy and installing publicly accessible charging stations to support electric vehicle adoption. Comprised of coal, natural gas, hydroelectric and solar, LG&E and KU maintains a diverse generation mix and rates among the lowest in the nation.

“Kentucky’s low energy costs stimulate economic growth by lowering the costs of doing business. Kentucky maintained the seventh-lowest industrial electricity price in the United States in 2019 and the lowest east of the Mississippi River,” the cabinet’s report said.

Those lower costs impact the bottom line. Manufacturing, which remains Kentucky’s largest source of revenue and a leading source of employment, consumes 38% of the power grid, the report said.

Kentucky is adopting greener and more sustainable energy sources, even when it comes to fossil fuels. The EIA reports that natural gas provided 20% of Kentucky’s electric power, comprising 14.8 million megawatt hours of energy in 2019. BSR, a global energy analyst, pegs natural gas as a safer alternative to coal, producing less greenhouse gas.

Besides LG&E, other key providers for electric power include Kentucky Utilities (KU) and the Touchstone Energy and East Kentucky Power cooperatives. Natural gas originates from LG&E, Columbia Gas of Kentucky and Delta Natural Gas.

Award-winning clean water supply

In August, the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet reported the state’s “434 public water systems consistently produce excellent quality water, and

have a high rate of compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements.”

A key player in the water supply locally is Kentucky American Water (KAW), which has undertaken several improvement projects over the past two years. First, July 2020 saw the completion of a 9,900-s.f. facility in Owen County, the culmination of a yearlong, \$1.4 million project. In a release, KAW said the new building offered more efficient material handling, plus training facilities for employees.

“This facility also enables our employees to perform their roles more safely, efficiently and cost effectively, ultimately benefiting our customers, too,” explained Dorothy Rader, KAW’s senior superintendent for operations in the Northern Division.

Local officials lauded the company’s commitment to improving the water supply. In the release, Owenton Mayor Adam Gaines welcomed the investment, while Owen County Judge Executive Casey Ellis added, “We appreciate businesses like Kentucky American Water who make a positive impact on Owen Countians’ quality of life.”

Also in July of 2020, the company unveiled \$35 million worth of upgrades to its two water treatment plants in Lexington, as well as a facility at Jacobson Reservoir. Two years in the making, the project improves chemical storage capacity, pumping systems and chemical piping at the two plants and replaces their respective gaseous chemical systems with liquid chemical systems. The company also constructed a new facility at its Jacobson Reservoir that will enhance the

► MODERN AND EFFICIENT

Kentucky American Water in 2020 completed a \$35 million project to upgrade its two water treatment plants in Lexington as well as a facility at Jacobson Reservoir. The effort will create more modern, efficient and safe treatment-plant operations. Kurt Stafford, director of engineering at Kentucky American Water, is shown here at one of the company’s new chemical buildings at its Richmond Road Station in Lexington.

company’s effectiveness of addressing taste and odor issues that sometimes occur in still bodies of water.

“Using liquid forms of chemicals instead of gaseous versions helps provide safer working conditions for our employees,” said Dave Farrar, vice president of operations for Kentucky American Water.

Over the next year, KAW will undertake \$8 million in water main replacements the Kentucky Public Service Commission authorized in June 2020.

“We appreciate the PSC supporting a new and progressive approach toward funding water infrastructure improvements in the commonwealth, and we are hopeful that this program will continue to evolve in the future so that we are able to replace more critical water infrastructure at a faster pace,” said Nick Rowe, president of KAW and senior vice president of American Water’s Southeast Division.

To help customers maintain service during the pandemic shutdown and resulting job layoffs, KAW implemented an assistance program. Customers can work out deferred payments or make other arrangements, depending on circumstances. ●

Photo courtesy of Kentucky American Water



‘Stay close. Go far’

Central Kentucky region is a perfect pandemic tourist destination



Photo courtesy of VisitLEX

BY KATHIE STAMPS

In late August, the Kentucky Department of Tourism announced its new marketing campaign, “Stay Close. Go Far.” Targeted toward travelers who are driving, particularly within the state, the media campaign will continue through the spring of 2021 to focus on promoting Kentucky’s outdoor recreation and camping, culinary tourism, and arts and cultural attractions and experiences.

Of the nine regions designated by the Kentucky Department of Tourism, the 15 counties comprising Central Kentucky are known as “Bluegrass, Horses, Bourbon & Boone.” This region had an economic impact of \$1.4 billion in direct spending in 2019; tourism generated \$8 billion in direct spending statewide.

Visitor spending in Kentucky has grown 17% over the past five years in the categories of food and beverage, lodging, retail, recreation and transportation. The 2019 numbers were up, up, up in every category from the previous year: total business sales (\$11.8 billion), state and local tax revenues (\$823 million), tourism-sustained jobs (95,803) and number of visitor trips (74 million). Fayette County’s 2019 economic impact of \$904.24 million was up 2.7% over 2018.

“The tourism industry enjoyed a strong 2019,” said Mary Quinn Ramer,

president of VisitLEX, Lexington’s Convention and Visitors’ Bureau.

“Tourism means more to our everyday lives than most might realize.”

Total hotel room revenue topped \$196 million, an increase of \$5 million from 2018. Transient room tax revenue for the Bluegrass region grew in 2019 to exceed \$16.6 million, which was reinvested in the community.

Attractions in Lexington earned 1.1 billion media impressions nationwide from *Architectural Digest*, *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Southern Living*, the “Today Show,” *Town & Country* and *USA Today*, among others. *Entertainment Weekly* named the new Railbird music festival to its “Ultimate 2019 Summer Music Festival” list and *Country Living* put Lexington on its “30 Best Weekend Getaways in the South.”

The first 20 weeks of the 2020 pandemic showed a \$63 million shortfall in hotel room revenue and \$32 million in lost revenue due to the cancellations of

► **ROYAL TREATMENT** The Kentucky Castle, a landmark hotel and event center in Versailles, hosted more than 500 events and 20,000 visitors in 2019. Among its most popular events are its daddy/daughter princess dances, storytime lunches, superhero events and tea parties. The castle also hosts weddings, concerts, murder mystery dinners and other events.

◀ MASTER BREWERS AND DISTILLERS

Thirsty travelers seek out locally made beers in addition to sampling Central Kentucky’s classic bourbons. The Brewgrass Trail showcases the craft breweries in Central Kentucky, like Country Boy Brewing, left. Brewgrass Trail passports can be picked up at any of the 20 participating breweries or at the VisitLEX visitors center in downtown Lexington.

183 groups. Even so, the VisitLEX sales team has booked at least 135 meetings and events in Lexington for future business, and has engaged in virtual meeting planner events in order to create new business leads for the city.

Over the spring and summer, VisitLEX used its Facebook page to promote virtual experiences from quite a few partners, such as quarantine concerts from Manchester Music Hall, distillery tours from Buffalo Trace and Castle & Key, horse farm tours facilitated by Horse Country, and performances and events from the Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington Art League, Lexington Public Library and Lexington Theatre Co.

“This year, COVID-19 has devastated the travel and tourism industry across the nation and right here in Lexington,” Ramer said. “VisitLEX is fully committed to the industry’s recovery and is working collaboratively with our partners to withstand the impact of this pandemic.”

Zeroing in on experiences for couples and very small groups, VisitLEX proclaimed “Lexington is a safe bet for travel” on its



website (visitlex.com), highlighting small-batch experiences, bourbon tours, horse farm tours, canoeing, hiking and other outdoor activities.

The Bluegrass Hospitality Association (BHA) represents hotels, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, tourist attractions and other hospitality professionals with the mission of being the unified voice of the hospitality industry.

“We remain committed to bringing events, groups and individual travelers to our community. We are actively working to support VisitLEX in all of their efforts to continue to market our area,” said Pam Avery, president of BHA and general manager of Embassy Suites Lexington Green. “The hotel, restaurant and events industry is comprised of passionate people creating positive experiences for all of our guests and team members. We encourage the public to travel and eat out again. The industry has taken its role in the care and health of our guests very seriously and is engaged in new cleaning protocols in every area of their business. We are open and ready to welcome visitors.”

In January, the nonprofit Lexington Center Corp., a corporate agency of city government, announced a 14-year naming rights agreement with Lexington-based Central Bank. The entertainment complex formerly known as Lexington Center is now Central Bank Center, and Rupp Arena’s new name is Rupp Arena at Central Bank Center. The complex is undergoing a \$300 million expansion project, expected to be completed in the spring of 2022, at which point Central Bank Center will have 200,000 s.f. of meeting and events space. An exhibit hall will take up half of that square footage and the other half of the flexible space will contain a ballroom, hospitality areas and meeting spaces.

Construction workers have been busy on Versailles Road at The Kentucky Castle, where a pool and pool house, spa and three-bedroom guest cabin were completed in the fall of 2019 and work on a “glamping” chalet was finished in April 2020. Last year, the landmark hotel and event center hosted more than 500 events and 20,000 visitors. Guests come from Chicago and New York, but the top two markets providing visitors are Lexington and Louisville, respectively, followed by Cincinnati, Nashville and Frankfurt.

“The Kentucky Castle is going above and beyond to make sure our facilities are safe for guests. We have cut capacities and are following all state guidelines for each facet of our business,” said CEO Christie Eckerline. “We are continuing to host guests in our hotel, Castle Farm restaurant, The Kentucky



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Department of Tourism

Castle Spa, and our event venues. We have revamped our plans for this year, including adding additional restaurant spaces, indoor and outdoor, and utilizing more of our outdoor areas for events.”

Outdoor adventures

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill near Harrodsburg held its “Music on the Lawn” series on Friday and Saturday evenings over the summer, with no admission charge for the scenery and live music. The music accompanied outdoor dining, drinks and specialty cocktails around the fire pit. Now a tourist destination, Shaker Village was home to the third largest Shaker community in the United States between 1805 and 1910. It has 34 of the original Shaker structures, 36 miles of trails, seed-to-table dining, 72 hotel rooms, shopping and more.

The Legacy Trail is a shared-use greenway trail that connects downtown Lexington to the Kentucky Horse Park. The final two miles of the trail, a \$3.9 million project, will be completed this fall from Fifth St. at Jefferson St. to the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden at Third St. and Midland Ave.

By the end of the year, the 15-year Town Branch Trail project is slated to be complete, a \$3.8 million project connecting downtown to the Distillery District, McConnell Springs and Masterson Station Park. And within a couple of years, tourists and residents will enjoy biking and walking through downtown Lexington on the Town Branch Commons Trail, a \$20.1 million project funded by local, state and federal funds. The two-mile trail, expected to be complete in 2022, will run along Midland

▲ **WALK THROUGH THE PAST** Hopemont, the Hunt-Morgan House, is located in the Gratz Park Historic District in downtown Lexington. The house, designed in the Federal style, exhibits elegant proportions and remarkable craftsmanship. Hopemont’s striking entryway is flanked by leaded side lights and topped by a large, leaded elliptical fanlight. A Palladian window centered above the entryway punctuates the primary façade, as well as a large spiral staircase at the front entryway. It now operates as a museum and event rental space.

Ave. from Main St. to Third St., along Vine St. from East Main St. to Central Bank Center and will include three times as many trees on Vine and Midland. Town Branch Commons Trail will link Town Branch Trail and the Legacy Trail for a total of 22 trail miles.

Horse farms provide beautiful scenic views and tourism attractions. Going into 2020, Horse Country Inc., an agency that connects visitors and equine attractions, had made major investments in its website, user experience and marketing. Their aggressive projections to increase sales 36% year over year were actually being exceeded, as the organization was trending at 40% growth halfway into its July to June fiscal year.

“Our members had been consistently investing in elevating experiences and adding tour inventory,” said Anne Hardy, executive director of Horse Country.

The pandemic has been financially devastating, however.

“We missed out on our most profitable months (March to June) for touring and simultaneously incurred significant refunds from pre-sold admissions. That said, it’s been incredible to see our members and community respond to these challenges with mission-focused

activities like free virtual tours that have reached millions of views from around the world,” Hardy said.

Horse County started a C3 fund with Bluegrass Community Foundation to support the education and scholarship elements.

“We are grateful for the contributions of support and that people continue to share our experiences, engage with our online channels and grow their love of the Bluegrass and our horse country,” she said.

Safety protocols are in place for the horse farm tours that have started back, requiring masking and limited capacity. More options are available for private tours for those who want to tour a farm with their own closed groups.

Kefah and Tessa Habash own Lavender in Bloom, a u-pick lavender farm in Georgetown. Their 15-acre property features 11 varieties of lavender on two acres. They planted 2,000 lavender plants in 2017 and held their first u-pick the next year. The Habash family welcomed over 1,000 visitors to the farm in 2020 from all over Kentucky, as well as southern Indiana, Ohio and New York. “Although lavender isn’t what you typically envision when you think of Central Kentucky tourism, I believe it’s a wonderful draw for tourists and a great way for people to experience something new,” said Tessa Habash. “Who knows, maybe one day people will come to Kentucky just for the lavender.”

The Frankfort Public Art Tour is a self-guided tour for walkers or motorists throughout downtown Frankfort and Franklin County. Attractions include architecture, murals, sculptures and other pieces of public art, and each piece is described online (visitfrankfort.com/art) to include the artist and medium, and a history of the artwork.

Kentucky River Tours is a privately run attraction (bourbonboat.com) taking guests on different types of boat trips on the river in Frankfort. Options include bourbon-themed tours from Buffalo Trace and historical tours along the Kentucky River, as well as private boat tours.

There are 15 bourbon distilleries within 45 miles of downtown Lexington. Brewgrass Trail has 20 craft breweries for tours.

Wise Bird Cider Co. in Lexington’s Distillery District hosted a weekly farm-to-table dinner series outside on the patio in late summer and fall. Featuring a three-course meal and cider pairings, the series was sponsored by VisitLEX and Guide Realty with organizing partner Black Soil. Our Better Nature. Black Soil’s network of chefs connected participants to the legacy

of Black agriculture in Kentucky through their dishes and stories.

“Because of tourism, we have a stronger revenue base that saves taxpayers money,” VisitLEX’s Ramer said. “Because of tourism, we have thousands of jobs. Because of tourism, we have enhanced quality of life through increased offerings in culinary, music, arts and entertainment.”

As the Bluegrass Hospitality Association says, “The hospitality of the Bluegrass will shine on, extending to our neighbors, perfecting until our visitors return. Our visitors will return. And when they do, we’ll be ready.”

EVENT VENUES

Apiary Catering & Events
the-apiary.com

Base 110
base110.com

Blue Grass Airport
bluegrassairport.com/meetingrooms.html

Boone Tavern Event Center (Berea)
boonetavernhotel.com/events

Buffalo Trace Distillery (Frankfort)
buffalotracedistillery.com/events

Carrick House
carrickhouse.com

Central Bank Center
centralbankcenter.com

Fasig-Tipton
fasigtipton.com

Headley-Whitney Museum
headley-whitney.org/events

Hilary J. Boone Center
boonecenter.uky.edu

Keeneland/Keene Barn
keeneland.com

Kentucky Castle
thekentuckycastle.com

LexArts
lexarts.org/about/rental-space/

Lexington Opera House
lexingtonoperahouse.com

Limestone Hall
limestonehall.com

Mane on Main
themanonmain.com

Signature Club of Lansdowne
signatureclub.org

Spindletop Hall
spindletophall.org

Thoroughbred Center
thoroughbred-center.com

Venues of the Grand Reserve
grandreserveevents.com

HOTELS

Beaumont Inn (Harrodsburg)
beaumontinn.com

Bluegrass Extended Stay
bluegrassextendedstay.com

Boone Tavern (Berea)
boonetavernhotel.com

Bright Leaf Golf Resort (Harrodsburg)
brightleafgolfresort.com

Campbell House Lexington, Curio Collection by Hilton
thecampbellhouse.com

Capital Plaza Hotel (Frankfort)
capitalplazaky.com

Clarion Hotel Conference Center North
clarionhotelllex.com

DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel
doubletree3.hilton.com

Embassy Suites Lexington
embassysuites3.hilton.com

Griffin Gate Marriott Resort & Spa
marriott.com

Hilton Lexington/Downtown
lexingtondowntownhotel.com

Hyatt Regency Lexington
lexington.hyatt.com

Kentucky Castle
thekentuckycastle.com

Lexington Marriott City Center
marriott.com

Origin Lexington
originhotel.com

Ramada Lexington North Hotel & Conference Center
wyndhamhotels.com/ramada

Residence Inn by Marriott City Center
marriott.com

21c Museum Hotel
21cmuseumhotels.com/lexington

Woodford Inn (Versailles)
Woodfordinn.com

ATTRACTIONS

Arboretum State Botanical Garden of Kentucky
arboretum.ca.uky.edu

Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate
henryclay.org

Aviation Museum of Kentucky
aviationky.org

Distillery District
lexingtondistillerydistrict.com

Horse Country Tours
visithorsecountry.com

Hummel Planetarium (Richmond)
planetarium.eku.edu

Keeneland
keeneland.com

Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea
kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov

Kentucky Horse Park
kyhorsepark.com

Mary Todd Lincoln House
mtlhouse.org

McConnell Springs
mcconnellsprings.org

Old Fort Harrod State Park (Harrodsburg)
parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/fort-harrod

Pioneer Playhouse (Danville)
pioneerplayhouse.com

Red Mile
redmileky.com

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill (Harrodsburg)
shakervillageky.org

Yuko-En On the Elkhorn, the Official Kentucky-Japan Friendship Garden (Georgetown)
yukoen.com ●

A bourbon-lover's paradise

Experience America's native spirit at Central Kentucky's distilleries

BY LORIE HAILEY

VISITORS come to Kentucky from around the globe to experience America's native spirit, bourbon. The commonwealth is the birthplace of bourbon, crafting 95% of the world's supply.

Bourbon is an \$8.6 billion signature industry in Kentucky, generating 20,100 jobs with an annual payroll of \$1 billion. Spirits production and consumption pours more than \$235 million in state and local tax coffers every year, according to the Kentucky Distillers' Association (KDA), a nonprofit trade group.

There are 14 bourbon distilleries located within 45 miles of downtown Lexington, making Central Kentucky the perfect place to start your bourbon experience. Lexington's historic Distillery District is home to Barrel House Distilling and the James E. Pepper Distillery, which offers tours that tell the lost story of an iconic American brand and includes a tasting of their award-winning whiskeys. Town Branch Distillery, Alltech's modern facility located on the edge of the Distillery District, opened in 2012, becoming the first new distillery to be built in Lexington in nearly 100 years.

Lexington is also home to Bluegrass Distillers and Lexington Brewing and Distilling Co.

Woodford Reserve, in Versailles, is the only facility in the state making bourbon using the original Scottish "pot still"

KDA Quick Shots

- More than **\$2.3 billion in capital projects** have been completed or are planned over the next five years, from new distilleries and aging warehouses to state-of-the-art bottling facilities and innovative tourism centers.
- Bourbon production has **skyrocketed more than 360%** since the turn of the century, with premium small batch and single barrel brands driving the bourbon renaissance.
- Total bourbon inventory was **8.5 million barrels** as of January 2019, the highest it has been since 1970. The number of aging bourbon barrels has **increased nearly 85%** in the last 10 years.
- Kentucky exported more than **\$520 million** in bourbon and other spirits in 2018 – an export value that has tripled in the last 20 years.

Source: Kentucky Distillers' Association



method. The historic distillery has been restored and offers exhibits on the history and heritage of bourbon, tours of the facility and more.

Buffalo Trace Distillery, one of America's oldest continually operating distilleries, is located in Frankfort. Castle & Key Distillery, also located in the capital city, stands on the grounds of the Old Taylor Distillery built in 1887. Castle & Key features a limestone castle, elaborate gazebos and sunken gardens. Also in Frankfort are Glens Creek Distillery and Three Boys Farm Distillery.

Lawrenceburg is home to iconic brands Wild Turkey and Four Roses, and Georgetown has Bourbon 30 Spirits, a small, family-operated business with handcrafted products.

There's also Hartfield & Co. in Paris and Wilderness Trail Distillery in Danville. Wilderness Trail produces handcrafted bourbon using grain grown less than two miles away.

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail adventure, created by KDA in 1999, gives visitors a first-hand look into crafting the world's finest bourbon. In 2012, the Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour was created to showcase emerging boutique distillers. Trail visitors can get their passports stamped at distilleries across the state, including several Central Kentucky locations. (Hours of operation and tour processes have been altered by COVID-19 precautions, but many

▲ BOURBON EXPERIENCE Woodford Reserve opened in 1996 in Versailles, Ky, on land where distilling began in 1812. It was one of the first distilleries to welcome tourists, and it helped launch the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, a road-trip style experience for bourbon lovers to visit the state's signature distilleries. Woodford Reserve temporarily suspended tours and closed its welcome center in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, saying its goal is to "help lower the probability of the spread of the virus in our surrounding communities."

distilleries are still welcoming guests. Learn more at kybourbontrail.com.)

Kentucky Bourbon Trail visitors spend between \$400 and \$1,200 on average during their trip. More than 70% of visitors are from outside Kentucky.

A number of bourbon bars and other attractions also add to the fun. From Bluegrass Tavern, which caters to the serious bourbon lover, to Arcadium, a Lexington bar lined with retro arcade video games, there's something for everyone. (Learn more at VisitLex.com.)

Remember: Not all whiskey is bourbon. To be called bourbon, it must be made with a minimum of 51% corn, aged in charred new oak barrels, stored at no more than 125 proof and bottled at no less than 80 proof. And, as KDA often claims, only Kentucky has the perfect natural mix of climate, conditions and pure limestone water necessary for producing the world's best bourbon.

Drink up! ●



Horse Country

Equine industry is a regional economic driver and major tourism draw

NO other place in the world is as synonymous with horses as Kentucky, home to both the Kentucky Derby and the Horse Capital of the World, Lexington. The signature equine industry generates \$6.5 billion in annual cumulative direct, indirect and induced economic activity and a total of 60,400 jobs in Kentucky, according to the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association/Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders' Economic Impact of the Equine Industry in Kentucky report.

There are more than 238,000 horses in Kentucky, about one for every 18 people.

In Central Kentucky, you'll find all things horses. Keeneland, the internationally renowned racecourse and the Thoroughbred industry's leading auction house, is located in Lexington. It is open year-round and welcomes visitors at any time. Fans can watch horses training on Keeneland's main track and adjacent training track from 6 to 10 a.m. Auctions, held in the Sales Pavilion, are free and open to the public.

The Kentucky Horse Park, the only park in the world dedicated to the relationship between man and horse, also is in Lexington. The world-renowned park sits on 1,224 acres of land, located in both Fayette and Scott counties, that has been used to raise Thoroughbreds since the early 1800s.

The Kentucky Horse Park attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. In 2018, the Kentucky Horse Park commemorated its 40th anniversary. The park features a visitor center with two theaters, the International Museum of the Horse, horseback trail and pony rides, park statues and memorials, and many opportunities to interact with the park's equine residents.

Drive in any direction from Lexington and you'll be met by the rolling hills of the picturesque Bluegrass countryside, where horses graze in the fields.

There are approximately 450 horse farms in the region, 150 of which are in Fayette County alone. Many of the farms can be booked through Horse Country,

an agency that connects visitors and equine attractions, or through one of several local tour companies that offer friendly, knowledgeable, private guides for custom tours. VisitLex, Lexington's convention and visitors bureau, offers a list of farms that offer tours.

In horse country, there are many other options for getting a closer look at the ins and outs of the equine industry.

The Old Friends Equine Retirement Center in Georgetown provides a dignified retirement to Thoroughbreds whose racing and breeding careers have come to an end. Nearly 20,000 guests tour "horse racing's living-history museum" each year. Some of its champion residents include Kentucky Derby and Preakness winners Silver Charm and War Emblem, Belmont winner Sarava, three-time Santa Anita Handicap winner Game On Dude, Seabiscuit movie star Popcorn Deelites, Breeders' Cup champion Amazombie, and Hollywood Gold Cup winner Rail Trip. Old Friends also is home to some very deserving retired mares and geldings.

To see the equine industry from another angle, visit Fasig-Tipton, headquartered in Lexington. The company serves as the "trading post" for breeders, buyers and sellers. Tour the world-class facility in the days leading up to an actual sale and get a rare look at the auction process.

◀ **DIGNIFIED RETIREMENT** Old Friends Equine Retirement Center in Georgetown is home to Thoroughbreds whose racing and breeding careers are over. It also is home to some retired mares and geldings. Old Friends bills itself as "horse racing's living-history museum" and aims to raise awareness of all equines in need.



◀ **EQUINE EXCELLENCE** Within minutes of the area's urban centers are dozens of picturesque horse farms known around the world for the racetrack winners they produce. Always easy on the eyes, in spring and fall they are especially worth a leisurely drive.

Other attractions include: Kentucky Equine Adoption Center in Nicholasville; Blackwood Stables in Versailles, a training facility with a 6-furlong dirt track and mile-long turf course; the Maker's Mark Secretariat Center at the Kentucky Horse Park; and equine clinics Hagyard Equine Medical Institute, which has been caring for horses for more than 140 years, and the Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital, a full-service hospital that focuses on the advanced treatment of horses with specialized medical care needs. Rood and Riddle also offers preventative care, surgery, a specialized reproductive center and more.

ORGANIZATIONS

Fasig-Tipton

Thoroughbred, Standardbred sales
fasigtipton.com

Festival of the Horse

Parades, entertainment
Georgetown
festivalofthehorse.org

Keeneland

Thoroughbred racing, sales
keeneland.com

Keeneland Library

Collection of racing archives
keeneland.com

Kentucky Three-Day Event

Prestigious equine competition
kentuckythreedayevent.com

Lexington Junior League

Charity horse show and historic Saddlebred event
lexjrleague.com

The Red Mile

Harness racing
theredmile.com

Tattersalls

Standardbred sales
tattersallsredmile.com



EDUCATION

Asbury College Equine Studies

Wilmore
asbury.edu

Georgetown College Equine Scholars Program

Georgetown
georgetowncollege.edu

Kentucky Equine Management

Internship program
kemi.org

Kentucky Horseshoeing School

Richmond
kentuckyhorseshoeingschool.com

Midway College Equine Studies

Midway
midway.edu

North American Racing Academy

Equine workforce education
bluegrass.kctcs.edu

The Race for Education

College scholarships
raceforeducation.org

University of Kentucky Ag Equine Programs

uky.edu

EQUINE RESCUE & ADOPTION

Kentucky Equine Humane Center

Nicholasville
kyehc.org

Old Friends Farm

Georgetown
oldfriendsequine.org

▲ **BLUEGRASS BEAUTY** Keeneland Racecourse

is a timeless Central Kentucky destination that draws hundreds of thousands of spectators for racing meets every spring and fall as well as sales of the top performing Thoroughbreds in the world.

RESEARCH

Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center

University of Kentucky
uky.edu

VETERINARY CLINICS

Hagyard Equine Medical Institute

Lexington
hagyard.com

Park Equine Hospital

Lexington, Versailles
parkequinehospital.com

Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital

Lexington
roodandriddle.com

Woodford Equine Hospital

Versailles
parkequinehospital.com ●



Photo by Mary Jane Speer, courtesy of VisitLEX

▲ **EQUINE EXCELLENCE** From the 1,200-acre

Kentucky Horse Park to the hundreds of horse farms in operation here, calling Lexington the Horse Capital of the World is not an exaggeration. There are more than 238,000 horses in Kentucky, about one for every 18 people.

◀ **SADDLE UP** The Kentucky Horse Park offers

visitors a chance to see, touch and experience the Horse Capital of the World's most famous residents up close. The park has numerous attractions, including museums, a campground, a walking barn tour, horse and pony rides, equine events and more.

Photo by GLINT Studios, courtesy of VisitLEX



Connecting with the community

Region's resilient artists and arts groups finding new ways to share their crafts



◀ **A TASTE OF BROADWAY** The Lexington Theatre Company (The Lex) presented "Disney's Newsies" at the Lexington Opera House in 2019. The Lex brings together seasoned Broadway professionals, top-notch college students from around the country and local artists to deliver the professional theater experience to Central Kentucky while serving as a training ground and performance platform for the next generation of theater artists.

Photo courtesy of The Lexington Theatre Company

dozens of smaller arts organizations, both established and emerging. LexArts is an advocacy and fundraising organization formed originally in 1989 as the Lexington Arts & Cultural Council by the merger of the Lexington Council of the Arts (founded in 1972) and the Fund for the Arts (from 1984). The name was shortened to LexArts in 2005.

In mid-April, LexArts and Blue Grass Community Foundation created the Arts Resilience Initiative.

"The arts inspire and sustain us in good times and in bad. Theaters, studios and galleries may now be closed, but art has never been more essential," said Lisa Adkins, president and CEO of Blue Grass Community Foundation. In its first four months, the resilience initiative provided funds to 46 individual artists, 18 arts organizations and six LexArts general operating partners.

▼ **CENTER OF CULTURE** Norton Center for the Arts hosts world-class performing arts acts and serves as a focal point for the Centre College's academic programs in dramatic arts and music. The 85,000-s.f. complex in Danville has hosted two vice presidential debates, and showcased top national acts and Broadway musicals.

BY KATHIE STAMPS

NO matter the challenge, hardship, pain or pestilence, art can always be created. The medium and materials may change, but art prevails.

The arts contribute to quality of life in Central Kentucky – and the economy. The total economic activity attributed to the arts in Lexington is an estimated \$32.1 million, according to Americans for the Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity report released in 2017.

"This spending by organizations and their audiences supports over 1,200 full-time equivalent jobs," said Maury Sparrow, communications director of LexArts. "The arts are also a big factor in our quality of life and sense of place. Our great public art, the LexArts Hop, theater and dance for all ages, music for all tastes – our culture attracts people to Lexington and keeps them here."

With an annual budget of approximately \$1.8 million, LexArts financially supports six major partners: Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning; Central Kentucky Youth Orchestras; Lexington Art League; Lexington Children's Theatre; Lexington Philharmonic; and the Living Arts and Science Center, as well of



▲ **BRIGHT LIGHTS** Lexington Opera House unveiled its new marquee in 2020. Built in 1886, Lexington Opera House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Photo courtesy of Centre College



Lexington Opera House, built in 1886, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On March 4, the lights of Broadway (and Short Street) became bright, indeed, with a new exterior marquee. Jointly funded by Lexington Center Corp. and the Opera House Fund, the two pieces of the marquee weigh a total of 9,550 pounds. The lighting system has 1,100 LED light bulbs. The electronic message displays are almost 12 feet wide and over 4 feet tall. The Opera House marquee was built and installed by Elyria, Ohio-based Wagner Electric Sign Co. that specializes in marquee signage for historical theaters. Lexington Opera House, along with Triangle Park, Rupp Arena and the newly named Central Bank Center, is managed and maintained by the nonprofit agency Lexington Center Corp.

Lisa Higgins-Hord was elected chair of the Carnegie Center's board of trustees in July. She is an assistant vice president at the University of Kentucky and the first Black woman to lead the board of the 28-year-old literacy and learning center. A month later, the Carnegie Center held its "Kentucky Great Writers Series" via Zoom, as poets Savannah Sipple, Ron Davis and John James read their work in the event, promoted as "Carnegie from your couch."

The Lexington Theatre Co., known as The Lex, developed a line of programming called Creative at Home in lieu of its regular summer performance season at the Lexington Opera House. Offerings included a series of online bilingual music and storytelling, a lecture series exploring musical theatre, three digital productions, a podcast called "Creative Conversations" and "monthly



Photo by Joe Lyman Photography

motivations" classes for theatre artists from third grade to professionals.

In Versailles, Woodford Theatre produced scenes and showcases virtually during the spring. Central Music Academy announced it will hold classes and music lessons in the fall via Zoom.

"Saturdays at the Lyric" was a summer program with weekly take-home art supply kits from the Lyric Arts & Cultural Center and online video tutorials on how to build things like popsicle stick birdhouses, recycled paper beads and Chinese paper knots. The popular program was extended for young artists and their families to take advantage of monthly take-home packages September through December.

In mid-September, Passions for the LatinX Arts held a virtual art exhibition opening on YouTube and Facebook during LexArts HOP. Titled "ApART," the 2020 exhibition highlighting Latin art in Lexington would have been on display at the Lyric Theatre Gallery, but now will be online for the foreseeable future.

▲ **OVER THE RAINBOW** Kentucky Ballet Theatre, Central Kentucky's premier professional ballet company, presented "The Wizard of Oz" in 2019 at the Lexington Opera House

Red Barn Radio is in its 19th broadcast season of presenting "Roots Music, Southern Style." The in-person concert series was suspended from March 18 until the end of May, at which time weekly musical guests began performing without a live in-studio audience at the performance hall at ArtsPlace. In August, Red Barn Radio held its 700th concert recording.

The UK Art Museum reopened in late August with an online ticketing system to schedule hourly appointments, for a maximum of 20 visitors per hour. Other safety protocols include temperature checks, masks, social distancing, signs for directional foot traffic and revised museum hours.

Kentucky Ballet Theatre, founded in 1998, supports a professional ballet company of 10 to 12 dancers and the KBT Academy, with year-round classes for 100 students ages 4 to adult. A typical performance season includes four fully staged productions at the Lexington Opera House and the Pam Miller Downtown Arts Center, as well as the Center for Rural Development Theater in Somerset and the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg. The KBT Academy continued classes virtually in the spring of 2020 and began a hybrid model for the fall semester with small on-site dance classes.

◀ **BREAKING THE BRONZE CEILING** The 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was commemorated in downtown Lexington with the installation of a bronze statue called "STAND" by artist Barbara Grygutsis.



► **ART IS EVERYWHERE** The Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist and Convention Commission developed the Frankfort Public Art Tour in 2012, a self-guided walking or driving tour of public art. The tour features murals, sculpture, stained glass windows, historic architecture and more.

In June, the National Endowment for the Arts announced a total of \$215,000 “Our Town” grants to be awarded to six Lexington-based projects: \$75,000 each to CivicLex for its Civic Artist in Residency program and to Community Ventures, for art works in Lexington’s East End neighborhood and at the new mixed-use development known as The MET; \$20,000 each to Breaking the Bronze Ceiling and the Lexington Public Library; \$15,000 to Lexington Children’s Theatre; and \$10,000 to the Living Arts & Science Center.

On Aug. 18, 1920, ratification of the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote and 100 years later, the event was commemorated in downtown Lexington with the installation of a bronze statue called “STAND” by artist Barbara Grygutis. “This monument is a fitting and engaging tribute to the lives of so many exceptional and tenacious women,” said Jennifer Mossotti, chair of the Breaking the Bronze Ceiling initiative. “It is a long overdue piece of public art for Lexington and will serve as constant reminder to current and future generations of women’s perseverance in the suffrage movement and the importance of exercising your right to vote.”

Public art is abundant throughout the capital city of Frankfort. The Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist and Convention Commission developed the Frankfort Public Art Tour in 2012, a self-guided walking or driving tour of public art, and devoted a website to it with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Funds were allocated in 2019 for an upgrade of the digital infrastructure, and in June 2020, public art was integrated into the main tourism site (visitfrankfort.com). Details and a mobile-friendly map are curated in collaboration with Josephine Sculpture Park and FrankArts, the Franklin County Arts Council.

When you think of The MET, do you think New York or Lexington? Where Winchester Road becomes East Third Street at Midland Avenue, The MET is on track to be completed in the fall of 2020. The mixed-use complex, a community development project of Community Ventures, has residential units, a bakery, a coffee shop, hair salon and other commercial businesses. There’s an art



gallery on the first floor, 24 studios on the second floor for artists in the community to lease, and a series of public art pieces are being installed on and around The MET. The first art installation went up on Sept. 8, a 25-foot canvas on the Midland Avenue side of the building with a poem written by Frank X Walker, titled “Ode to the East End.”

Art already is and will continue to be a big presence at The MET, thanks to Art Inc. Kentucky, a Community Ventures social enterprise led by artist and photographer Mark Johnson.

“Art Inc. Kentucky was designed to be an incubator for artists to make a living with their craft. It has grown,” said Jonah Brown, president of marketing for Community Ventures.

A block away from The MET is the Artists’ Village, a shared community planned by Community Ventures and Art Inc. Kentucky.

“The village was a unique concept that took everything to the next level,” Brown said.

Each artist’s home will have a garage converted into a studio, and an open space connected to the homes will have a track and green space to host poetry readings, concerts, festivals for kids and art shows.

“Not only does the East End community have a rich history in arts and culture, this is an opportunity to introduce a new generation to the arts, and a way for them to see people who look like them from their neighborhoods to go on and become successful artists,” Brown said. This is a huge investment into the arts community for Central Kentucky.”

The Lexington Philharmonic, founded in 1961, employs 80 full- and part-time musicians and employees. The organization generated over \$195,000 in federal, state and local taxes during its 2019 fiscal year (July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019) with an annual budget of \$1.3 million, the largest economic impact of any performing arts institution in the region, and produced 130 educational programs, 85% of which were free to attendees. The majority of LexPhil’s annual operating budget comes from grants, sponsorships and individual donations, with a small percentage from ticket sales.

The 2020-21 season, named “Connect,” pivoted from its previously scheduled traditional orchestra venues to one of bringing music directly to community neighborhoods and other outdoor venues, as well as virtually through a “LexPhil Living Room” series. LexPhil also established an IDEA task force for inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

“The pandemic is pushing everyone, including the Lexington Philharmonic, to reimagine how we connect with our community,” said Colmon Elridge, III, board president of the Lexington Philharmonic. “For decades we have been honored to convene audiences to experience live orchestral music, but now we are honored to bring great musical experiences to our community wherever they may be. The upcoming season, like so much of our lives, will be different. We are committed to safely connecting with our community through unconventional and exciting programs. As president of the board of directors, I invite you to come on this journey with us. I promise you, the best is yet to come.” ●

Finding new ways to play

Esports gaining popularity; area organizations adapts to new COVID-19 guidelines

BY SHANNON CLINTON

SINCE spring's emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, popular sports programs and recreational pursuits have experienced disruptions, but many are reemerging with new ways of operating.

While these activities won't be back to normal for the foreseeable future, sports and recreation officials shared ways they're keeping facilities and programs open – even if to a limited extent – to provide a social and recreational outlet for all ages during this challenging time.

Based at Centenary United Methodist Church in Lexington, the I Am 3rd program provided youth basketball, soccer, horseback riding and tennis opportunities last year for about 6,500 participants ages 3 to 17, said Executive Director Jeremy Hobbs.

While spring sports were canceled in 2020 and refunds were given, he said, fall teams were formed, with an enrollment decline of about 25%. Fall practice times have been shortened and field numbers were halved to allow for greater distancing.

“We're hopeful that we can have a season that's not limited or doesn't have any cancellations,” he said.

Lexington Parks and Recreation transitioned some fitness programs to virtual classes, resumed limited equestrian classes and announced Kiddie Kapers dance classes would resume in late September, with masks, distancing, sanitizing and limited enrollment.

Though all city pools and aquatic centers were closed for 2020, and many



Photo courtesy of VisitLex

sports seasons like adult kickball, softball and tennis were canceled, the Jacobson Boat Dock welcomed visitors to use kayaks and pedal boats, and parks like McConnell Springs and Raven Run Nature Sanctuary remained open to limited numbers of walkers and hikers. Golf courses also remained open with added safety measures.

For Eastern Little League in Lexington, it was game on with about 510 players this season, according to President Brad Oakley. He said typically there are around 600 players, and he attributes only half of the decrease to COVID-19 concerns,

▲ **SOARING THROUGH THE SKY** Boone Creek Outdoors in Lexington is a zip line canopy tour that showcases the spectacular Boone Creek limestone gorge, a privately owned natural wonder previously inaccessible by the public. It features six zip lines, three sky bridges, a rappel, a spiral, and a floating staircase.

with the remainder to scheduling conflicts resulting from the altered season calendar.

New safety measures included players not being allowed in dugouts, the relocation of the home plate umpire and staggered game and practice times to lessen the numbers of teams using the park at once. Equipment sharing was banned unless sanitized between uses; social distancing, face coverings and minimal spectators were encouraged; and hand sanitizer was supplied.

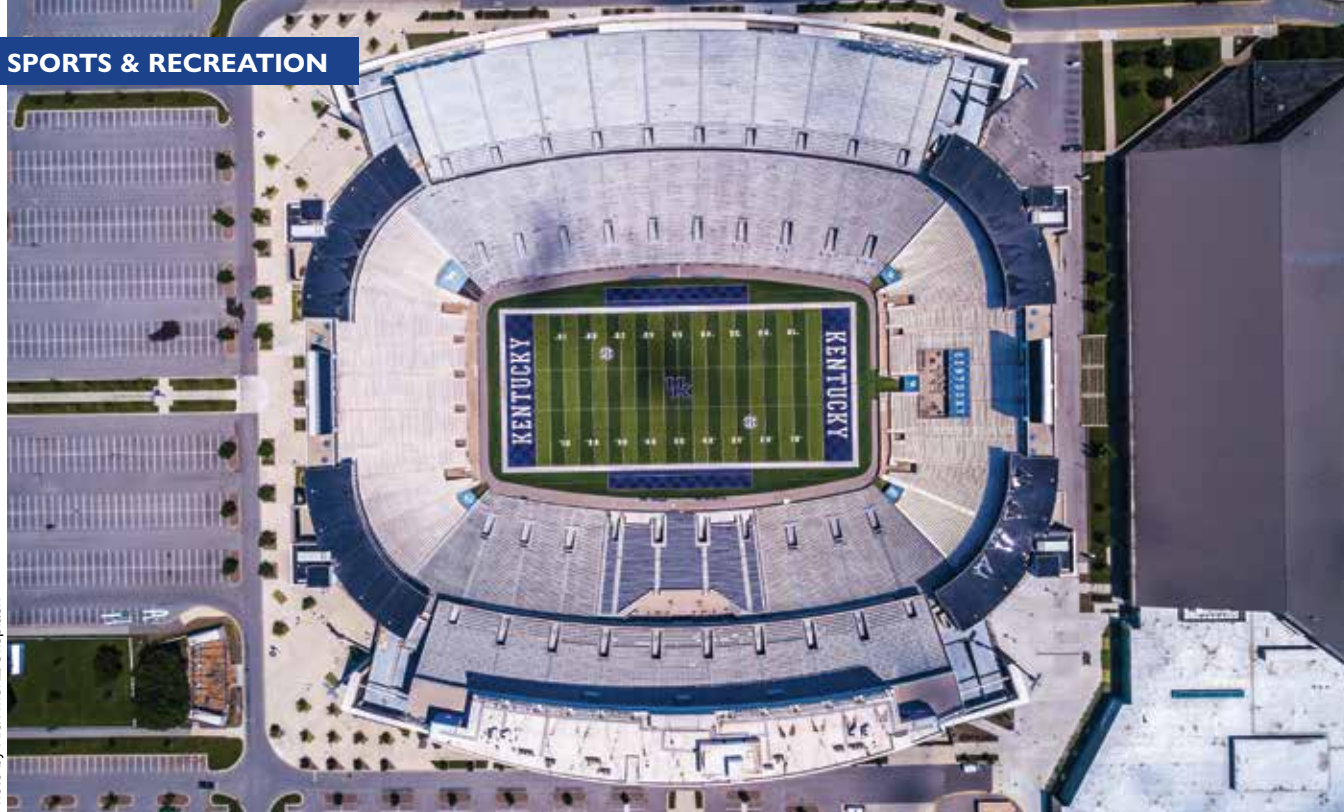
The postgame handshake tradition changed to tipping hats to the opposing team as a sign of respect.

“I consider our season a huge success under the circumstances,” Oakley said.

◀ **FUN IN THE SUN** Jacobson Park, a 216-acre park located in east Lexington, has the city's largest and most accessible playground. It was built in 2016, when it replaced an older, wooden structure.



Photo by Alex Mertz/Unsplash



▲**SMALLER CROWDS** Kroger Field, where the University of Kentucky football team plays its home games, can seat up to 61,000 fans. The stadium is only able to seat a third of those fans this fall because of COVID-19-related social distancing restrictions.

Adapting to new safety guidelines

Since 2000, The Academy has provided gymnastics, cheerleading, trampoline, camps and parties from its Lexington facility for ages 2 through adult, said owner John Ireland.

Programs experienced annual growth and Ireland said he assumed this year would be no different ... until the pandemic hit. He was closed from March 16 to mid-August, and in the interim relocated the business to National Avenue.

Still, things aren't back to normal. Birthday parties are a no-go and open gym and toddler time activities are on hold. Small classes of five to six mask-wearing students are being held, and parents can no longer linger in the waiting room. There's

►**THE GREAT OUTDOORS** McConnell Springs, a 26-acre natural pocket within an industrial area of Lexington, once served as the location of a mill, a gunpowder factory, a distillery and a dairy farm. The nature sanctuary — a National Registered Historic Place — provides a great escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. McConnell Springs has paved and natural walking paths, natural springs, a farm site, wildlife and a large Bur Oak tree that is estimated to be at least 250 years old.

plenty of extra cleaning and hand sanitizing going on as well.

Some creative new supplemental programs have been added, Ireland said, like NTI (non-traditional instruction) programs allowing school-aged children to bring laptops into a socially distanced classroom environment to work on virtual lessons while their parents work.

For the past 35 years, Kentuckians

have participated in the Bluegrass State Games, but it was announced in mid-June that this year's games would be canceled because of the pandemic.

Still, other programs are adapting to new guidelines and moving forward. In late August, the Central Kentucky Hockey Association announced registration was open for five Learn to Play sessions. According to the group's Facebook



page, sessions are being limited to 30 participants.

And the Lexington-based Commonwealth Kings youth lacrosse fall season is getting underway with safety measures that include temperature checks, distancing for water breaks, and players wearing masks at all times except during game play, according to the group's website.

The YMCA of Central Kentucky has posted its safety protocols online, including masked staff, contactless check-ins and redesigned spaces that enhance social distancing. Members over age 5 must wear masks unless in the process of exercising, and facility capacity is limited.

Nicholasville/Jessamine County Parks and Recreation Director Duane McCuddy reports that after all spring sports were canceled, youth baseball, girls' softball and youth football fall leagues have started up, using guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A youth soccer league is on hold per the advice of Kentucky Youth Soccer Association officials, McCuddy said.

In Versailles, Executive Director Richard Pictor said now, after facilities were shuttered from March to early June, "Really everything is open; some things are just being done differently."

The outdoor pool was open all summer and only closed once students returned to school, he said. Now, swimmers can use the indoor pool but must sign up for a designated lap lane in one-hour blocks.

Fitness equipment was reconfigured to facilitate distancing. Youth flag football was slated to begin in September and officials are still contemplating the fate of basketball leagues.

Richie Walsh, owner of Kentucky Indoor Soccer and Sports in Lexington, said he's taken the time while being closed due to the pandemic this spring to reevaluate the facility and its future, including finding an updated building.

When he does reopen, he said, he will have abundant sanitation controls, but he doesn't see how masks could be incorporated during vigorous exercise.

"If we open up, we open up because we're confident that the whole country understands what we're living with," he said.

Sports have resumed at the University of Kentucky, with reduced schedules and safety measures in place. UK Athletics reduced capacity guidelines for the fall 2020 football season and designed a distanced seating plan at Kroger Field. ●



▲GLOBAL GAMING The University of Kentucky is partnering with the global esports company Gen.G to build a first-of-its-kind global gaming and esports program. The university aims to leverage technology to maximize student success and build community. Its new building, The Cornerstone, will house the UK Federal Credit Union Esports Lounge and Theater.

Esports gaining popularity; UK creates program

WHILE some sports programs are limiting activities and canceling seasons, esports leagues in Central Kentucky are going strong, thanks in large part to their virtual capabilities.

The billion-dollar competitive, organized video gaming industry has risen in popularity in over the past several years. Esports also has been embraced by college and universities, including some in Central Kentucky, as a way to build community among their students and leverage technology to maximize student success. More than 50 colleges in the United States have varsity esports programs.

Michael Hartman is president and co-founder of Bluegrass Esports, which debuted in January 2020 to help grow the genre and connect those who want to play or start new leagues with those who can help. So far, the group has about 1,000 members across multiple gaming platforms.

A live watch party with 70 gamers was held in January at a Lexington restaurant before COVID-19 put a damper on group activities.

Hartman, a video game developer for three decades, said esports are inclusive, as they can be enjoyed by people from "8 to 80." Teams, which can be coed, are assembled for five-on-five or six-on-six play.

Hartman said League of Legends is the biggest esports on the planet, and even has large corporate sponsors. Pro players garner a strong fan base and fans can interact via live chats and social media.

The University of Kentucky in Lexington is working with Gen.G, an international esports company, to build a first-of-its-kind global gaming and esports program at UK. The collaboration is being jointly led by two UK offices: Student and Academic Life and Information Technology Services.

The partnership will develop wholly new pathways for student recruitment, classroom and internship opportunities; research avenues for scholars across a variety of colleges; and professional development for alumni.

The Cornerstone, a new building on the UK campus, will house a new gaming and esports facility, called the UK Federal Credit Union Sports Lounge and Theater. The gaming lounge will be outfitted with high-powered PCs to play the latest games. There will be space for 50 units, but fewer initially to allow for distancing.

During the planning phase, University of Kentucky Associate Chief Information Officer Heath Price solicited wish lists from gaming-savvy students and attended tech conferences to see what others in the country are doing with similar spaces.

This spring and summer a few virtual events were held for gamers, and plans are to open the gaming area in October, Price said. The space will include an innovation area and food hall concept and overall will be one more way to tap into college students' interests, enabling them to interact with others, build relationships, network and feel included.

Several area high schools also have esports teams. —Shannon Clinton

FAYETTE COUNTY

Ideal location for all

From education and employment opportunities to fun things to do, Lexington is really No. 1

WHAT do you get when you add an educated workforce, central location, low business costs, an innovative ecosystem for entrepreneurs, and high quality of life? You get the best place to live, work and raise a family: Lexington, Ky.

Lexington took swift action to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, and its efforts led to being ranked No. 1 on WalletHub's list of Cities Whose Unemployment Rates are Bouncing Back Most. The city has repeatedly been ranked one of the top cities for economic development and quality of life, and 2020 is no different.

SmartAsset named Lexington the No. 10 best city for young professionals and the No. 2 city for college graduates. WalletHub named Lexington No. 9 of the 10 Most Diversified Metro Economies in the United States.

Anchored by the state's flagship university, the University of Kentucky, the Bluegrass region boasts 10 colleges and universities within 40 miles of Lexington. In total, nearly 70,000 students are enrolled in institutions of higher learning in the Bluegrass. Among cities over 300,000 in population, the U.S. Census Bureau ranks Lexington as the 12th most highly educated in the nation, with nearly 43% of the population 25 years or older holding at least a bachelor's degree and 18.6% having a graduate or professional degree.

That's why Lexington is an ideal destination for entrepreneurs, innovators, dreamers, and disruptors. The region's



Photo by Jeff Rogers.com

▲ THE PLACE TO BE Lexington is Kentucky's second-largest city. Its downtown has an amazing arts scene, a thriving business district, a variety of restaurants and shops, modern homes, renovated historic buildings and more.

entrepreneurial ecosystem is equipped with all of the resources that help startups succeed. And its location is second to none: Lexington is located just 600 miles from over two-thirds of the U.S. population and it sits at the crossroads of two major interstates, I-75 and I-64.

Kentucky's business costs are among the lowest in the country and Kentucky's competitive tax climate has frequently been recognized. In 2019, *Site Selection* magazine ranked Kentucky the 14th best business climate in the nation, and Smart Asset ranked Lexington No. 6 on its list of cities with the lowest startup costs in 2019.

And life in Lexington is sweet indeed. Excellent schools, a vibrant downtown, a restaurant to match every taste, a diverse environment, relaxing countryside, UK basketball ... what more could you want? Oh yes, horses and bourbon, too.

Learn more about Lexington life at VisitLEX.com and check out our business amenities at CommerceLexington.com. ●

Estimated 2019 Population: 333,152
No. of households: 128,806

Median household income: \$54,918

Percentage of residents with bachelor's degree or higher: 42.9%

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government: lexingtonky.gov

LexCall Centralized Service and Information Call Center: (859) 425-CALL / 311

Merged City/County: Lexington
Linda Gorton, Mayor
200 E. Main St.
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 258-3100
mayor@lexingtonky.gov
lexingtonky.gov

Fayette County Judge-Executive: Don Blevins Sr.
215 W. Short St., Suite 210
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 351-2266

Fayette County Clerk: Don Blevins Jr.
162 E. Main St.
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 253-3344
info@fayettecountyclerk.com
fayettecountyclerk.com

Top Employers in Lexington

COMPANY	# OF EMPLOYEES
University of Kentucky	17,500
Fayette Co. Public Schools	6,181
LFUCG	2,945
Amazon	2,700
Conduent	2,500
Veterans Medical Center	2,086
Baptist Health	1,852
CHI Saint Joseph	1,847
Lexmark	1,600
Lockheed Martin	1,100
Lexington Clinic	1,000

Source: Commerce Lexington

The heart of horse country

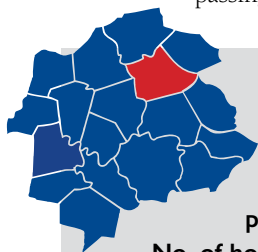
Eclectic downtown, lush countryside among Bourbon County's charms

NESTLED in the heart of Central Kentucky, Bourbon County is known for its lush green pastures, historic homes and, of course, Thoroughbred horses. Bourbon County is one of the leading producers of Thoroughbred horses in the world. More than 50 horse farms are located there, including the famous Claiborne Farm, where Secretariat stood at stud for many years; Runnymede Farm; Sienna Farm; Stone Farm; Rosecrest Farm; and others. It's also home to many state-of-the-art equine facilities.

Known as the Birthplace of Bourbon, the county is home to the first craft bourbon distillery since Prohibition. Hartfield & Co. is open for tours and tastings throughout the year.

The county covers 292 square miles, with much of the land used for farming cattle, corn and tobacco. It also has expansive golf courses, one of Kentucky's oldest drive-in movie theaters, winding waterways and beautiful historic architecture.

Paris, the county seat, exudes small-town charm. Guests can dine on Southern cuisine and custom cocktails at a completely restored 1800s-era train depot, the Trackside Restaurant and Bourbon Bar, as they wave at the trains passing by.



County seat: Paris
– Johnny Plummer, mayor; paris.ky.gov

Estimated (2019) population: 20,206

No. of households: 8,128

Median household income: \$52,552

Percentage of residents who own homes: 63.45%

Total business establishments: 821

Chamber of Commerce:
Lauren Biddle, executive director;
parisbourbonchamber.com

Paris-Bourbon County Economic Development Authority:
Gordon E. Wilson, executive director;
parisbourboncountyeda.org

Judge-Executive: Michael R. Williams;
bourbonky.com

Demographics data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Select Kentucky, the state's online community profile infographic tool.



Photo courtesy of Clover Hill Farm

Main Street is a mecca for eclectic shops, with 10 blocks of antiques, specialty boutiques, coffee shops, restaurants and galleries, all housed in historic buildings. Authentic American, Asian, Italian and Hispanic foods are served at downtown eateries. Step back in time and enjoy lunch at the original 1950 lunch counter in Lil's Coffee Shop. The shop owners are warm and friendly, and ready to tell you all about the quaint community.

This is Paris, Ky., not France, but you might even find an Eiffel Tower at the Kentucky Proud Farmer's Market, open year-round. And, the world's tallest three-story building is also on Main Street; it houses Paradise Café and Inn.

Renowned photographer Bobby Shiflet owns and operates a photography gallery downtown. Custom leather horse halters are made by hand at Quillin's Leather.

Other attractions include fishing and kayaking on Stoner Creek, Wallis House Arboretum, Hopewell Museum, Duncan Tavern, Cane Ridge Meeting House and Shrine, and Colville Bridge in Millersburg. The Bourbon County Courthouse is a must see. Its rotunda is beautifully hand painted with murals depicting the growing seasons in the county.

▲BOURBON COUNTY BEAUTIES Bourbon County is home to some of the world's finest Thoroughbred farms, including Clover Hill Farm, shown above. Visitors can get a glimpse of the majestic animals while driving around the county's country roads, or view Thoroughbreds up close while touring one of its beautiful horse farms.

The community has some of the most charming bed and breakfasts in the state. Visitors can stay on a horse farm, in a treehouse, a castle, a log cabin, a Southern mansion or right in the middle of historic downtown.

Bourbon County has an 85-acre industrial park, which houses the 55,800-s.f. headquarters and distribution center for Hunt Brothers Pizza. AgTech Scientific is developing 10 acres of the park.

Manufacturing is the county's largest industry by number of jobs. There are 23 manufacturing establishments in Bourbon County, employing 1,523 workers. Manufacturer Central Motor Wheel of America Inc. (CMWA), one of the community's largest employers, is expanding its aluminum wheel manufacturing facility in Paris to increase production by 50%. The company expects production to begin in 2021 and plans to add 145 new full-time jobs. ●

Capitalizing on momentum

Clark County is experiencing growth across multiple sectors

BY SHANNON CLINTON

WITH a thriving downtown, expanding industries, and the parks, events and facilities that add to residents' quality of life, the future is looking bright for Winchester and Clark County.

Located about 17 miles from Lexington, Winchester's 18,500 or so residents make up just over half of Clark County's population of 36,000, by U.S. Census estimates.

In 2015, downtown Winchester experienced about \$600,000 in private development in its downtown, said Todd Denham, executive director of the Winchester/Clark County Economic Development Corp.

But then the momentum grew, and by 2019, private development in downtown reached \$10 million, he said.

One downtown newcomer is Wildcat Willy's Distillery, located in a historic, renovated former factory-turned-church that's now a farm-to-table restaurant and distillery. When opening its doors in 2019, the restaurant joined an existing mix of boutiques, cafes, a museum and the Winchester-Clark County Farmer's Market on and near Main Street.

The economic development corporation's original role to help existing industries grow and expand while recruiting new ones has evolved over the past 10 to 12 years to include working with commercial development, retail and restaurants, Denham said.

Businesses and industries find extra appeal in Clark County and Winchester due to their proximity to interstates 64 and 75 and airports in northern Kentucky, Lexington and Louisville. Existing industries' expansions are a testament to the workforce here, Denham said, which also draws from central and eastern Kentucky labor markets.

Whether a new business or industry has one employee or 1,000, "If it's a good fit for our community, we'll work with anybody," he said.

About 75% of new manufacturing jobs stem from existing industries.

Winchester Industrial Park was founded in 1981, and after concluding five phases of development, it's now in its sixth phase, Denham said. The park has 175 to 200 undeveloped acres remaining,



▲ **FAMOUS FOODS** Clark County is known for its beer cheese and the soft drink Ale-8-One, which is bottled in Winchester.

and adjacent privately owned property is being scouted for possible future uses. Privately owned Yeiser Industrial Park also operates in Winchester.

Winchester manufacturer Wilde Brands, which makes protein-based snack chips out of chicken, plans to build a \$9.78 million facility that will ultimately employ about 50 workers.

Meanwhile, Danimer Scientific, located in an 88,000-s.f. renovated industrial facility in Winchester. Inside, biodegradable plastics are made from canola oil that is consumed by soil bacteria, creating a byproduct that's eventually converted into an environmentally friendly material used to make food packaging, drinking straws, shopping bags and more, according to the company's website.

The company opened in late 2019 and is already planning an expansion project.

Small business is also big business here. Of the Winchester Clark County Chamber of Commerce's 368 members, 80% have fewer than 10 employees, said Executive Director Cindy Banks.

The chamber has been doing its part to help local businesses stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic, including their Takeout Tuesday and Fast Food Friday social media-based initiatives in August, during which participants could win prizes for patronizing local restaurants.

Serving the health care needs of the Clark County area is Clark Regional Medical Center, a 79-bed community hospital founded in 1917 that offers diagnostic and emergency services, labor and delivery, a skilled nursing facility and a comprehensive array of medical clinics.

Winchester-Clark County Parks and

Recreation maintains 11 neighborhood and community parks, including an 18-hole disc golf course, community baseball fields, and a large soccer complex. There are fitness and aquatic programs for adults and youth, walking paths and golf courses.

The Leeds Theatre hosts plays and local productions, and the Winchester Art Guild Gallery has artwork on display. The Winchester Opera House offers private, cultural, holiday and community events, and the Bluegrass Heritage Museum, located in a historic building, celebrates the unique culture of this region of central Kentucky with its array of programs, displays and events.

Winchester-Clark County Tourism Director Nancy Turner said pre-pandemic, the annual Beer Cheese Festival and the Daniel Boone Pioneer Festival drew big crowds to town each June and September, respectively, along with the Rock the Block summer concert series.

Turner said a new craft brewery, Abettor Brewing Co., and a multigenerational venture, Harkness Edwards Vineyards, holds tasting events and has on-site event space in a picturesque, rural setting.

The challenges presented by COVID-19 can't dampen the strong sense of community pride that exists here. ●

County seat:

Winchester;
Ed Burtner, mayor;
winchesterky.com

Estimated

population: 36,263

No. of households:
14,427

Median household income: \$52,938

Percentage of residents who own homes: 67.82%

Total business establishments:
1,405

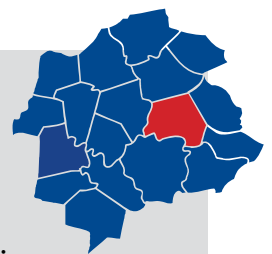
Top industry by number of jobs:

Manufacturing, with 2,390 jobs
at 54 establishments

Chamber of Commerce:

Cindy Banks, executive director;
winchesterkychamber.com

Judge-Executive: Chris Pace;
clarkcoky.com



Friendly, diverse business climate

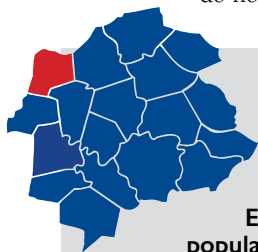
History, arts, education, manufacturing – Kentucky’s capital city has it all

BY KATHIE STAMPS

“**W**E have a rich diversity of businesses in Frankfort,” said Terri Bradshaw, president and CEO of Kentucky Capital Development Corp. (KCDC), citing German, Japanese and Chinese companies, manufacturers of building materials, industrial fans and military equipment, as well as a strong automotive industry. Frankfort’s robust spirits industry is represented by Beam Suntory, Goodwood Brewing Co., Sig Luscher Brewery, West Sixth Farm and four bourbon distilleries: Buffalo Trace, Castle & Key, Glenns Creek Distilling, and Three Boys Farm and Distillery.

Kentucky State Government is Frankfort’s largest employer, with 11,000 employees. The manufacturing industry employs about 4,500, including Montaplast of North America, the city’s largest manufacturing company. Education employs almost 2,000 at the Franklin County Schools and Kentucky State University. The city is home to the corporate headquarters of Candleberry Candle Co. and Rebecca Ruth Candy, among others.

Recognizing that business leaders seeking new locations for their companies do not know where county



County seat:
Frankfort,
William May,
mayor;
frankfort.ky.gov

**Estimated
population:** 50,991

No. of households: 20,875

Median household income: \$55,068

**Percentage of residents who own
homes:** 63.41%

Total business establishments:
2,431

Top industry by number of jobs:
Public administration, with 23,805 jobs
at 313 establishments

Chamber of Commerce: Carmen
Inman, president/CEO; frankfortky.info

**Kentucky Capital Development
Corp.:** Terri Bradshaw, president/CEO;
kycapitaldevelopment.com

Judge-Executive: Huston Wells;
franklincounty.ky.gov

lines end, Bradshaw and her economic counterparts from eight other Central Kentucky counties belong to Bluegrass Alliance, a group that partners on outreach programs and markets the region to site selectors.

“As economic developers, you never want to say, ‘We don’t have what you need,’” Bradshaw said of potential new business. For example, if Franklin County doesn’t have a 50-acre piece of property, Bradshaw will reach out to Bluegrass Alliance to see which county might be the best fit.

“People from this community will benefit from a new business in Woodford County far more than a new business in Paducah, and certainly far more than a new business in Nashville,” Bradshaw said.

Franklin County students who graduate from high school by 2029 can receive a four-year, full-time tuition scholarship to Georgetown College through the college’s recently created Legacy and Legends Scholarship. The college in neighboring Scott County celebrates its bicentennial in 2029.

Last year, downtown buildings were being renovated and new businesses were coming in amid the sound of hammers and sight of scaffolding. When the pandemic hit, city leaders feared small businesses would suffer first.

KCDC and Downtown Frankfort Inc. quickly put together videos and interviews to air on the Frankfort Plant Board’s own cable TV channel to keep the community informed about 30 or so projects that would continue to move forward downtown. (The Frankfort Plant Board is the local municipal utility provider of water, electricity and telecommunications services.)

The city is in the process of obtaining an EDC license, which will designate downtown Frankfort as an “entertainment destination center.” That means the entire allotted area can be treated as a single venue for patrons to walk from one establishment to another with drink in hand.

Frankfort is known for its history, spirits, the arts and natural beauty.

“Most people who come here are pleasantly surprised. Frankfort doesn’t always get as much press as Louisville or Lexington,” said Robin Antenucci, executive director of the Frankfort/Franklin County Tourist and Convention Commission. “We

KENTUCKY CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT CORP. (KCDC)

109 Consumer Lane
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 226-5611
Kycapitaldevelopment.com



Terri Bradshaw,
President
and CEO

KCDC provides opportunities for American and international businesses to move into the heart of the Bluegrass State while ensuring improvement in employment opportunities, private-sector capital investments and the local tax base. Located in the capital of Kentucky, KCDC promotes Frankfort by finding alternative sources of funding for various development projects; promoting quality of life and assisting company locations and expansions by providing current, comprehensive market and property information. Since its inception, KCDC has helped create thousands of jobs in Franklin County.

are a key destination for bourbon. Buffalo Trace is a mile from downtown. Last year they had over 300,000 visitors.”

Since the pandemic, outdoor opportunities have taken off. Because of its mild whitewater, beautiful scenery, plentiful access and proximity to four major urban areas, Elkhorn Creek is fast becoming Kentucky’s most popular canoeing stream. There are also kayak and canoe rentals available along the Kentucky River. Also popular among outdoor enthusiasts are the hiking and mountain biking trails at Capitol View Park and Cove Stream Park, bourbon-based boat tours along the Kentucky River, and the family-friendly Salato Wildlife Education Center, operated by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

In the spring of 2019, the tourism office relocated from Capital Avenue to St. Clair Street in downtown Frankfort, when the city sold the historic Gooch House on Capital to the Kentucky Distillers’ Association.

Downtown Frankfort’s master plan was funded by the City of Frankfort and Franklin County Fiscal Court. The plan was released the same year the state razed Capital Plaza Tower, leaving a 12-acre parcel downtown wide open for redevelopment. The property has been purchased by a developer from Eastern Kentucky for mixed-use projects, including residential units and retail space. ●

Planning ahead pays off

Community experiences growth despite COVID-19 challenges



Photo courtesy of Toyota

BY BILL ROBINSON

IN May, when Kentucky transitioned to “Safe at Work” after two months of “Safe at Home” closures to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, Scott County was ready.

Even as business activities came to a halt in March, local leaders were switching to high gear. Instead of lamenting the shutdown, they started planning to help businesses reopen. The response was led by Scott County United Inc., the nonprofit organization local governments created 35 years ago to foster economic development.

“In partnership with the Wedco District Health Department [which serves Harrison Nicholas, Scott and Bourbon counties], we started developing back-to-work plans for local businesses,” said Jack Conner, who has led Scott County United since 1986.

The result was a 17-page plan that detailed how the COVID-19 virus spreads and how businesses could protect employees and customers, and then resume operation. It included a six-page list of resources from which businesses could obtain personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizers and other needed items.

The document was posted on the website of the Georgetown/Scott County Chamber of Commerce, which works hand in glove with Scott County United because Conner has been CEO of both organizations since 1990.

Conner didn’t just post the information and hope those in need found it. He and Alonzo Allen, a chamber board member who teaches at the University of Kentucky and works as a business consultant, personally called on every business. And the outreach was not limited to chamber members. They also provided signage to mark safe distances and notify customers that masks were required.

Although the situation seems to change from week to week, people are back to work, Conner said, including at Toyota, the county’s largest employer. Most businesses remain open, and some have even seen significant growth, he added.

“If you walk up and down Main Street, you’ll find only one vacant store front,” Conner said.

Online orders, curbside or drive-thru service and marketing via social media have been key to maintaining sales volumes, especially for restaurants, he said.

One downtown retailer that caters to women has seen its internet sales “go through the roof” during the pandemic, Conner said. Restaurants have had strong drive-thru and pickup sales and have found that fewer staff are needed for such operations. While people were forced to stay home, many appear to have used the time to work on their houses, and that is reflected in strong sales at home improvement retailers, he noted.

A long-vacant big-box building on

◀BACKBONE OF THE ECONOMY Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK), located in Georgetown, is America’s first and the world’s largest Toyota manufacturing facility. Known for producing the Camry, the most popular sedan in the U.S. for 18 years in a row, TMMK in January 2020 added America’s most popular SUV to its production lineup.

Cherry Blossom Way was revived in August when a major retail chain store opened for business.

Significant challenges remain, including labor supply, as some remain fearful of going to work, Conner said.

After its unemployment rate spiked in April and May, Scott County’s June unemployment rate was down to 3.9%.

“That’s phenomenal,” Conner exclaimed. “Drive around and you’ll see manufacturing plants and other business that have put up ‘Help Wanted’ signs.”

Toyota remains the backbone of the Scott County economy, and it has been “an invaluable partner in the local COVID-19 response,” Conner said.

Toyota produced and donated 500 face shields for the Chamber of Commerce to distribute to local businesses, he said.

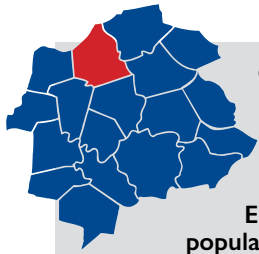
A “Safe at Work Playbook,” based on Toyota’s plan, was posted on the chamber’s website for other businesses to use.

With 57% of its workforce employed in manufacturing, Georgetown is an industrial city, even if good planning has allowed it to retain the charm of a small Bluegrass town. The giant Toyota plant is hidden from view along Interstate 75 and is barely visible from Cherry Blossom Way that passes along its main entrance.

Tucked into the rolling hills off U.S. 62, northeast of town, Lanes Run Business Park managed by Scott County United blends into its grassy surroundings. The park’s most visible building is a branch of Bluegrass Community and Technical College that helps supply skilled employees to the county’s growing industrial base.

Marking milestones

The year 2020 marks three milestones in Georgetown/Scott County: the 40th annual Festival of the Horse; the 30th anniversary of the Sister City relationship with Tahara, Japan; and the 20th anniversary of Yuko-en on the Elkhorn, the Kentucky-Japan Friendship Garden.



County seat:
Georgetown,
Tom Prather,
mayor;
georgetownky.gov

**Estimated
population:** 57,004

No. of households: 20,206

Median household income: \$66,966

**Percentage of residents who own
homes:** 74.02%

Total business establishments:
1,793

Top industry by number of jobs:
Manufacturing, with 6,176 jobs
at 50 establishments

Chamber of Commerce:
Bridget Foster, president; gtown.org

Judge-Executive: Joe Pat Covington;
scottky.com

Scott County United recently completed a \$7 million project to open nearly 130 acres in Lanes Run's third phase, and land is selling for \$35,000 an acre. Property in the park's second phase sold for \$25,000 an acre.

One of Phase III's first tenants is Echofibre, an Australian firm that makes consumer goods such as textiles and furniture from black hemp. It opened in July and is expected to employ 60 people. Conner is optimistic about other hemp-related industries developing in Scott County. That would help diversify an industrial base dominated by the automotive industry, he said.

While Scott County United is always looking for new tenants, the quickest path to job growth is often expansion of existing facilities. International Crankshaft in Lanes Run has expanded four times. Country Boy Brewing has its largest facility in Lanes Run and has gone through one expansion.

Scott County Judge/Executive Joe Pat Covington says the need for high-speed internet in every household has been underscored in recent months, with students learning at home, adults working from home and patients often consulting with their doctors at home via video.

When he took office in January 2019, more than a year before the pandemic, Covington made broadband internet access for rural Scott County residents a priority. He began working with the

► **VICTORIAN STREETScape** Historic downtown Georgetown looks like a picture-perfect postcard with its eclectic art, boutique and antique shops.

Bluegrass Area Development District to explore the potential for a multi-county, public-private partnership similar to one that serves the Green River Area Development District around Owensboro. Talks are being conducted with the Green River vendor as well as a variety of others.

Georgetown Mayor Tom Prather has been focused on a more traditional kind of infrastructure, completion of the bypass extension around the city's northwest quadrant. Looping from KY 32 to Exit 129 on I-75 (Delaplain Road), it will open to development an area one-third as large as the city's currently developed area. It also will provide easier access to west-bound Interstate 64 from the Toyota plant and Lanes Run industrial park, as well as to the new Great Crossings High School.

Georgetown is already one of the state's fastest growing cities and the bypass promises to extend the area's rapid growth for another generation. From 2010 to 2019, the county's population grew by 20.6 percent, according to Kentucky State Data Center.

Future growth in the newly opened area will be a challenge as well as an opportunity, Prather said, reflecting on how the county managed its rapid growth after Toyota opened in the late 1980s, when he served a previous stint as mayor.

"Clearly, we can't let (the as-yet unzoned area) develop all at once," he said. "It will require very thoughtful work with our citizens to determine how that should be developed."

The challenge will be to ensure that development pays for itself and doesn't diminish the small-town charm for which Georgetown is known, the mayor added. Developers pay for streets, utility lines

and other features of new residential or commercial tracts, but other costs such as police and fire protection, parks, schools and emergency services, increase as property is developed.

After voters in the late 1980s rejected a merged city/county government, Georgetown and Scott County still managed to realize efficiencies by merging their planning and zoning authorities, parks and recreation departments and economic development efforts. A joint revenue commission distributes money from the payroll taxes equitably between the county government, Georgetown and the small municipalities of Stamping Ground and Sadieville.

The efficiencies of combined services have helped Georgetown maintain a property tax rate that is one-fourth that of comparable Kentucky cities. Its 1% payroll tax and 5% insurance premium tax are tied with the lowest of Georgetown's peer cities, Prather said.

Both Prather and Covington said revenues for fourth quarter 2019-20 weren't down nearly as much as they feared. County revenue fell by only 1%, according to Covington. Still, both leaders remain cautious.

In August, Scott County government replaced the clock atop the cupola of its courthouse on Main Street, which consists mainly of buildings with beautifully restored Victorian facades. The clockwork used the latest 21st-century technology to turn the hands on a traditional dial.

Judge-Executive Covington said he can't help thinking about the symbolism of the high-tech clock atop the historic courthouse keeping time in Georgetown far into the future. ●



Photo by Karrie Bickert, courtesy of Georgetown-Scott County Tourism Commission

Investing in the future through education

Jessamine leaders explore new workforce development methods to aid in business recruitment



◀ **CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY** All incoming undergrad students at Asbury University in Wilmore receive scholarships. For more than a decade, AU students in math, science and music have had a 95% acceptance rate into graduate schools.

logic controller (PLC), an industrial digital computer used for industrial automation.

“Once we get up and on the ground and through COVID-19, we’re going to now have the capability to teach high school students a digital electronics curriculum with PLCs,” Knight said. R.J. Corman utilizes PLCs to control railroad switching and signaling.

Highly skilled workforce

Another component of Jessamine County’s economic development strategy was becoming a Work Ready Community to assure business and industry that the community was committed to providing the kind of highly skilled workforce required in today’s global economy.

“We met a lot of the metrics right away,” said Mary Newton, executive director of Jessamine County Adult Education. “For example, our high school graduation rate already exceeded the requirements needed, as

BY JEFF MCDANALD

JESSAMINE, a county that has long been rich with scenic beauty, agriculture and history, is lately exploring new pathways into workforce development.

The county is a diverse patchwork of localities and landscapes from the northern boundary, where it seems to blend into Lexington and Fayette County, to the southern border, where it meets the Kentucky River Palisades.

In between you’ll find the City of Nicholasville, Kentucky’s ninth largest according to the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, and the small-town jewel of Wilmore.

Jessamine County is home to Taylor Made Farm, a mainstay of Thoroughbred breeding and consigning for more than three decades, and Alltech, the agricultural technology firm that operates in 128 countries.

The Work Ready Skills Initiative, a partnership between Jessamine County Schools and local industry to prepare high school students for advanced manufacturing careers, is a case in point.

“I think the way our schools are taking a cue from our economic development needs and developing careers in high-demand and technology-related fields is an important step,” said Jessamine County Judge-Executive David West. “Our willingness to embrace the new is a signal that we’re ready and receptive for people to come and do business in Jessamine County.”

Preparing for high-demand jobs

Dexter Knight, principal of Jessamine Career and Technology Center, explains the impetus behind the program.

“A few years ago, the plant manager at Nicholasville’s Donaldson Co. (an international manufacturer of filtration systems and parts) put the word out that he needed 16 welders,” Knight said.

When the positions were all filled by students from a technology center in a neighboring county, Knight was goaded into action.

“We needed to be doing that kind of training here in Jessamine County,” he said.

Knight, who is also a member of the Jessamine County Economic Development board, applied for a Work Ready Skills Initiative Grant from the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

“The \$750,000 that we got has precipitated the start of this whole process,” Knight said. Renovation projects are now being completed at three high schools in Jessamine County to set up classrooms for advanced manufacturing and other high-demand jobs.

Now Knight is spearheading discussions about partnerships between the Jessamine Career and Technology Center and companies like the R.J. Corman Railroad Group, a Nicholasville-based company that serves major railroads throughout North America.

Jobs like the ones at R.J. Corman require familiarity with a programmable

Photo courtesy of Asbury

County seat:

Nicholasville, Pete Sutherland, mayor; nicholasville.org

Estimated population: 54,115

No. of households: 18,773

Median household income: \$56,728

Percentage of residents who own homes: 67.07%

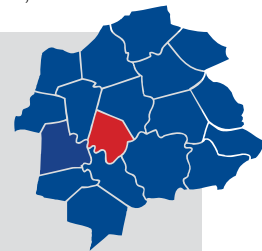
Total business establishments: 1,928

Top industry by number of jobs: Retail, with 3,226 jobs at 246 establishments

Chamber of Commerce: Ronda May, executive director; jessaminechamber.org

Jessamine County Economic Development Authority: Craig McAnelly, executive director; jessamineeda.com

Judge-Executive: David K. West; jessamineco.com



► **SYMBOL OF FREEDOM** Among other attractions, Jessamine County is home to the first commercialized vineyard ever licensed in the United States, multiple horse farms, and the Camp Nelson National Monument. Camp Nelson began as a Union supply depot during the Civil War, but it eventually became a symbol of freedom to enslaved African-Americans in the region. It was the third-largest enlistment center for African American troops, securing freedom for both them and their refugee families.



Kentucky Department of Tourism photo

did our adult education program and our broadband access. We put a plan in place to teach the kind of soft skills that employers are looking for to our high school students, and were able to get fully certified as a Work Ready Community.”

Having Work Ready certification is vital in attracting both large and small business to Jessamine County according to Craig McAnelly, executive director of the Jessamine County Economic Development Authority.

McAnelly is overseeing construction of a new industrial park on the southern end of the I-27 Bypass.

“We’re doing \$1.3 million in construction costs right now with roads, water, sewer, gas, electric and fiber optics,” McAnelly said. “There’s about 80 acres there, with potential to expand to 180.”

McAnelly says there have been some setbacks related to COVID-19, but in the two years he has been there, many positive changes have occurred.

“We’re in the middle of a three-phase transportation upgrade creating an eastern bypass around Nicholasville that will mirror the existing (Route 27) western bypass,” McAnelly said. “This is going to take pressure off of 27 and bottlenecking as you’re coming down 27 and improve the flow on Main Street in Nicholasville.

“We’re hoping someday to see a connector over to I-75 in southern Jessamine County or northern Garrard County,” he added.

Economic development is measured by a different yardstick in Wilmore, a small town of about 7,000 souls and two

colleges, Asbury University and Asbury Theological Seminary.

“We have no industry to speak of,” said Mayor Harold Rainwater. “But we look at our institutions as our economic engine. When you look at the colleges and the Thompson Hood Veterans Center, those three are in the top eight of Jessamine County’s largest employers. There are over 1,200 jobs there.”

A concern developed earlier this year when a barber with a one-seat shop retired after 64 years on Wilmore’s Main Street.

“It might not mean a lot to a big city, but it’s a different story for a small town,” Rainwater said.

After a brief closure, a young barber stepped in to fill the shoes, resume operations and restore order. ●

“OPPORTUNITY ZONE” INDUSTRIAL PARK

Jessamine County, Kentucky, USA

Jessamine County
Joint Economic Development Authority

D. Craig McAnelly
Executive Director
859.533.0413
cmcanelly@jessamineeda.com

201 S. Main Street
Nicholasville, KY 40356
www.jessamineeda.com



A spirit of collaboration

Organizations team up to support county's economic development, tourism efforts



◀ **CITY CENTER** A self-guided walking tour of downtown Richmond features more than 70 historical buildings, homes and churches. Downtown has several shops and restaurants located in classic storefronts.

Or when the City of Berea was selected as a top retirement destination this year by Where to Retire magazine in a feature titled "Eight Cities for Hikers and Walkers."

Or last year when *Outdoor Magazine* rated the trail to the Pinnacles of Berea as the "Best Hike in Kentucky."

These superlatives may have been doled out based on what business and industry regard as soft factors, such as scenic beauty, healthy lifestyles, an active arts scene, low-cost daycare and affordable education. But one of Madison County's strengths is its ability to attract the kind of industry that values these attributes as much as land availability, tech capabilities, infrastructure or a skilled workforce.

Richmond Tourism photo

BY JEFF MCDANALD

THERE'S a real spirit of cooperation on the rise in Madison County. You can hear it in the halls of city government, in county government and in the chamber of commerce. It echoes through the economic development and tourism offices as well.

"Madison County is in the best place it's ever been as far as us working together," said Mendi Goble, executive director of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce. "There's been a lot of competition over the years, and now we're all pulling on the same rope more than we ever have before."

Berea Mayor Bruce Fraley agrees.

"At this moment in time the city governments of Richmond and Berea and the Madison County Fiscal Court are working closely together," he said. "The lines of communication and degree of cooperation between the governments is probably as good if not better than it's ever been."

Most point to an infusion of energetic new leadership over the past few years

as the reason for the groundswell of cooperation.

"We're all meeting together regularly to talk about anything that we can do to help one another to let the world know we have the components business and industry are looking for," said Lori Murphy-Tatum, executive director of Richmond Tourism.

So it feels like justice when accolades begin to roll in from around the country. Like when the City of Richmond was ranked in the top 10 in America on this year's "List of Best Places for Working Families," by Zippia.com, the nationally recognized job search engine.

On the grid with room to grow

Madison County is centrally located in Kentucky's Bluegrass area and is comfortable with saying it is central to most of the nation as well.

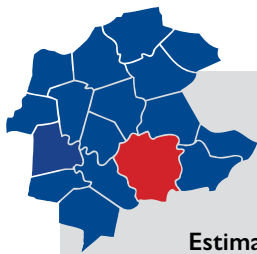
"We're located within 600 miles of 50% of the U.S. population," said David Stipes, executive director of Richmond Industrial Development Corp.

The county seat is Richmond, which is Kentucky's sixth largest city according to the Kentucky's Cabinet for Economic Development. Berea, known as the "Folk Arts and Craft Capital of Kentucky" is Madison County's second largest municipality.



EKU photo

▶ **168 DEGREE PROGRAMS** Eastern Kentucky University, located in Richmond, Ky., was founded in 1906 and serves about 16,000 students a year. Its four-year graduation rate has risen in recent years.



County seat:

Richmond,
Robert Blythe,
mayor;
richmond.ky.us

Estimated population:

92,987

No. of households: 33,229

Median household income: \$48,697

Percentage of residents who own homes: 60.62%

Total business establishments: 3,297

Chamber of Commerce:

Mendi Goble, executive director;
richmondchamber.com

Richmond Industrial Development Corp.:

David Stipes, executive director;
richmondkiindustrial.com

Judge-Executive: Reagan Taylor;
madisoncountky.us

The county is home to Eastern Kentucky University and Berea College, which help provide an educated and abundant workforce.

“We’re working not only to attract new manufacturing but to support existing industrial business to make sure they are thriving and continuing to hire people,” Stipes said. “Our main focus is jobs and supporting the economy through job creation.”

“Our county is approaching 90,000 people and a large percentage of our population are working-age people,” he said. “We have a really good workforce base in this area and that makes us attractive.”

An abundance of industrial land boosts the county’s competitive position in the site-selection process. The county has about 152 acres available for sale in one of its industrial parks, Stipes said.



Richmond Tourism photo

▲ADVENTURE AWAITS Lake Reba is a popular fishing destination in Richmond. The 450-acre recreational complex also has nature trails, a golf course, batting cage facility, baseball, softball, football and soccer fields, picnic pavilions, a water park and more.

“We’re very competitive on projects when they come looking,” he said. “And we make the short list in a lot of cases.”

A recent success story is the Asahi Bluegrass Forge factory, currently under construction. It is the third plant the automotive parts and accessories manufacturer has located in Richmond’s industrial parks. The plant hopes to have \$50 million in annual sales by 2023.

Although Berea might be well-known as a tourism center for folk artisans with small shops like broom-making, blacksmithing, woodworking, pottery and the like, the city has also proven to be adept at fostering growth in industrial development.

“Berea is very fortunate to have several large industries, including the Hyster-Yale Group where they manufacture forklifts and Hitachi, which employs over 1,000 people and supplies parts for the automotive industry,” Fraley said. “Hyster-Yale just announced a large expansion that will increase their plant by about 30%.”

“We also expect that there will be suppliers for Hyster-Yale group that will be locating here as Hyster continues to expand and grow,” the mayor said.

Berea is working with Kentucky’s Cabinet for Economic Development to bring in other advanced manufacturing plants, and he expects there to be an announcement soon for an agri-tech business that is being recruited, Fraley said.

Supporting business large and small

To engage small businesses, Fraley said the City of Berea has partnered with the Mountain Association, a nonprofit based in Berea. The Mountain Association helps established businesses and startups succeed by providing workshops, training, website development, professional photography, energy-use analysis, financial assistance and other services.

The City of Berea has also aided small businesses by providing Kauffman FastTrac, a training course that equips aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and resources necessary to start and grow a successful business.

“We’re really excited about the future of Berea and you can quote me on that,” said Fraley.

“In Madison County, both Richmond and Berea are served by CSX Railroad, so we can get freight moved in and out,” Stipes said. “And with our interstate location, we’re primed for truck traffic.”



EKU photo

▲A CAMPUS CUSTOM This statue of American pioneer Daniel Boone has stood in front of the Keen Johnson building at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond since 1967. A fun tradition among students and faculty alike is rubbing the statue’s golden toe for good luck in one’s own explorations.

With I-75 bisecting Madison County north to south, the county has been blessed with a total of seven interstate exits – two in northern Madison County, three in Richmond and two in Berea.

“We’re in a good place and we’re proud of what we have to offer,” Stipes said.

Looking to the future, Stipes says they are closely watching the Blue Grass Army Depot, a 15,000-acre munitions storage facility.

“It’s a big thing on all of our minds right now,” Stipes said. “There’s about 1,800 to 2,000 jobs that are supported by operations at the Army Depot and in the chemical demilitarization activity. Some of those jobs may go away at some point in the future. We’re working really hard in this community as a team to bring in new employers and to increase the employment base so that those folks that are working here will stay here.”

Madison County’s small-town charm is attractive to companies looking for places to locate their companies.

“I love that there are still parts of Madison County where you can drive on a country road and somebody will wave at you,” Murphy-Tatum said. “We hear that from visitors from Canada or Michigan who say they didn’t know this still existed any more. We have wonderful friendly folks who show you their Southern hospitality. That’s special.”

She draws inspiration from the team spirit found in Madison County. “It’s so important for tourism and economic development to work together,” she said. “Tourism is economic development, because the very first thing that somebody has to do is visit.” ●

Wonderful Woodford

County has high-profile equine industry, top-notch bourbon, business-friendly climate



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Tourism

BY SARAH JANE HERBENER

WHEN Kentucky gained its statehood in 1792, settlers arrived on horseback from the east, establishing Woodford County and its county seat of Versailles that same year. Today, Woodford County honors that heritage with a thriving equine industry that has contributed to the largest total county farm income in the state.

High-profile breeding operations are the calling card of the county. Some are historic farms such as Airdrie Stud, where former Kentucky Gov. Brereton Jones and first lady Libby Jones carry on a legacy Libby's family established in the 18th century. Others, such as standout WinStar, are blazing new trails in the industry.

And breeding isn't the only equine game in town. Woodford County is also known for providing specialized equine health care at such clinics as Park Equine Hospital, and horses around the world benefit from feed and supplement solutions developed by Woodford Feed, Kentucky Performance Products and McCauley's.

The community's equine traditions help to draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, eager to catch a glimpse of such racing luminaries as Triple Crown champions Justify and American Pharoah; both stand at Coolmore Ashford Stud.

Tourists also flock to Woodford County to enjoy local bourbon, craft beer and wine. Woodford Reserve, the county's

stop on the popular Kentucky Bourbon Trail, is a standout as the oldest bourbon distillery in the state. Its popularity carries into the popular walking tour Woodford UnReserved, during which guests enjoy a drink while exploring the vibrant history and architecture of downtown Versailles.

Another Versailles jewel is the Kentucky Castle, which *Architectural Digest* recently named as "The Most Beautiful Hotel in Kentucky." In addition to its luxury accommodations, the Kentucky Castle offers a farm-to-table restaurant, a spa, and extensive meeting and banquet spaces. For those seeking smaller and more intimate lodgings, historic inns and bed-and-breakfasts also abound in the county.

The smaller Woodford County town of Midway, whose Main Street was revitalized in 2003 as part of the Main Street Kentucky project, is a major tourist draw as well. Its Midway Fall Festival is an eagerly anticipated autumn treat for many. Midway is also especially known for its Kentucky foodways, thanks largely to world-renowned Chef Ouita Michel, who with her husband, Chris, owns a family of restaurants throughout the Bluegrass. Their flagship restaurant, Holly Hill Inn, offers prix fixe menus with in-season local ingredients. The Ouita Michel family of restaurants also includes casual eateries like Wallace Station and Midway Bakery & Café.

Midway Bakery & Café uses flours from nearby Weisenberger Mill, owned

◀EQUINE EXPERIENCE Stonestreet Farms spans a total of 1,800 acres in the heart of the Bluegrass. Its broodmare band produces an average of 80 foals per year. Guests who tour the farm get to see horses up close and personal as they walk through the barns, as well as enjoy a short driving tour through the property.

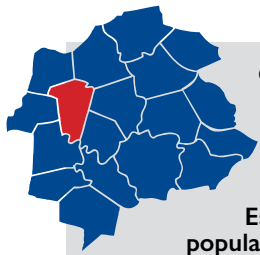
and operated by six generations of the Weisenberger family. The mill is still powered by water turbines on adjacent South Elkhorn Creek, producing more than 70 Kentucky Proud products for sale throughout the state and by mail order.

Weisenberger Mill is one of many companies enjoying all that Woodford County has to offer. The county was recently designated a Kentucky Work Ready Community, having met high standards in high school graduation rates, community commitment, educational attainment, soft-skills measurement, internet availability and National Career Readiness certification. There are more than 50 higher education and workforce training centers within an hour's drive, contributing to a potential workforce of more than 400,000 individuals in the region.

Woodford County is served by short-line railroad and is located right next door to Blue Grass Airport. It's also just minutes from Interstates 64 and 75,



▲HISTORIC DISTILLERY One of Kentucky's oldest and smallest distilleries, the present-day Woodford Distillery in Versailles is built on Kentucky's oldest distilling site. It has a 500-foot long gravity-fed barrel run, iconic copper pot stills, and 100-year-old cypress wood fermenters.

**County seat:**

Versailles,
Brian Traugott,
mayor;
versailles.ky.gov

**Estimated
population:** 26,734

No. of households: 10,198

Median household income: \$62,629

**Percentage of residents who
own homes:** 71.9%

Total business establishments:
1,057

Top industry by number of jobs:

Manufacturing, with 1,591 jobs
at 34 establishments

Chamber of Commerce:

Emily Downey, president/CEO;
woodfordcountyinfo.com

**Versailles/Woodford County
Economic Development Authority:**

John Soper, woodfordeda.com

Judge-Executive: James Kay;
woodfordcountyky.org

giving businesses in the area exceptional access to most of the country's population within a day's drive.

"This gives us a significant advantage in a world where delivery is expected quickly and thus logistics is crucial to success," said Midway Mayor Grayson Vandegrift.

Because of these benefits, many thriving manufacturers call Woodford County home. Lakeshore Learning, Midway's largest-ever job provider, built its first center a few years ago and has already embarked on a significant expansion. Yokohama Industries America Inc., manufacturer of automotive and industrial products, has its headquarters in Versailles. Ruggles Sign Co. employs a workforce of 100 in its state-of-the-art facility. CJK Group recently seized an opportunity in the area by acquiring the million-square-foot Quad/Graphics book printing factory. More Than a Bakery bakes up cookies and crackers at its 200,000-s.f. facility on 113 acres of bucolic bluegrass. And Pilkington North America recently made a \$7.5 million upgrade to its Versailles plant.

Pilkington's upgrade was made possible because the Kentucky Economic

► **EARLY LEARNING** Lakeshore Learning, a developer and retailer of high-quality educational materials for early childhood programs and elementary schools, opened a distribution center in Midway in 2017, employing nearly 250 people. In addition to its e-commerce business, Lakeshore Learning also has a national sales division, catalog sales and 60 retail locations across the country.

Development Finance Authority approved the company for up to \$700,000 in tax incentives through the Kentucky Reinvestment Act. Kentucky excels in welcoming new businesses and helping cultivate established ones, and Woodford County, Versailles and Midway go one step further.

"Between the chamber, our economic development authority, and our Midway, Versailles and Woodford County team of leadership, every new business will be personally introduced from the beginning with individual access to these resources," said Emily Downey, president and CEO of the Woodford County Chamber of Commerce. "It is the rule, not the exception, that this team works well together and is available to businesses throughout the whole process."

Versailles Mayor Brian Traugott added, "I want to focus on attracting companies that are innovators in their fields, invest in enough research and development to sustain their businesses into the future, and provide quality jobs. We are also going to be aggressive in recruiting agritech businesses."

When considering Woodford County, business leaders also know their employees will enjoy living and raising their families there. The natural beauty of the county is second to none, the public school system is nationally ranked, health care is excellent and readily accessible, public safety is paramount, and traffic jams are nonexistent. And since the large and vibrant city of Lexington is next door, the county's tourism commission points out that Woodford County offers a "small town feel when you want it, urban access when you need it."

Best of all, Woodford County is a community with heart. For instance, Versailles is home to Spark Community Café, which started as a way for a community activism class at Woodford County High School to help food-insecure people in the area. Today, locals have boosted Spark into a full-service, farm-to-table restaurant whose motto is, "If your pockets are full, pay it forward. If your pockets are light, pay what you can. If your pockets are empty, volunteer your time with us."

The community's kind and welcoming nature is also demonstrated by the recent passage of fairness ordinances, first by Midway, then by Versailles and Woodford County as a whole. These ordinances ensure that LGBTQ residents and visitors enjoy full access to housing, employment and public accommodation.

"What this says about the community and its leadership is that we're for all people," Downey said. "While it was a first, it was to some 'bold' and it may have been a milestone, to us it was a simple reminder and reflection of who we are as a community here: we're welcoming, we're kind, and we're all in this together."

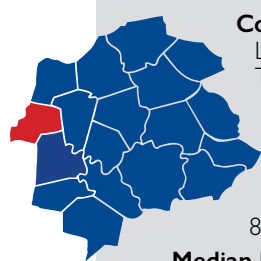
Woodford County is growing every day as a business and economic center. Spring 2021 will see the opening of the Rickhouse Hotel, a luxury boutique hotel and distillery in a beautifully renovated 19th-century building on Main Street in Versailles. A new distillery is in the works, with a land contract near I-64. Midway is even looking forward to an RV resort park, with a lazy river, a bourbon tasting room and more.

Any business, large or small, local or international, is sure to thrive in this little pocket of Bluegrass paradise. ●



Photo courtesy of Lakeshore Learning

ANDERSON COUNTY



County seat:
Lawrenceburg,
Troy Young, mayor;
lawrenceburgky.org

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 22,747

No. of households:
8,627

Median household income:
\$56,774

Percentage of residents who own homes: 75.5%

Total business establishments: 665

Top industry by number of jobs:
Manufacturing, with 1,206 jobs at 33 establishments

Some of the largest employers:
General Cable and Florida Tile

Chamber of Commerce:
Pam Brough, president;
andersonchamberky.org

**Lawrenceburg/
Anderson County Tourism:**
Kendall Clinton, executive director;
visitlawrenceburgky.com

Judge-Executive: Orbrey Gritton III;
andersoncounty.ky.gov

Bourbon, burgoo and beautiful Bluegrass

If you haven't visited Anderson County and Lawrenceburg in recent years, you will find some refreshing changes.

The long-time home to the Wild Turkey and Four Roses bourbon distilleries has capitalized off momentum from the growth of the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, witnessing an organic movement to revitalize the downtown area with new, locally-owned shops and restaurants.

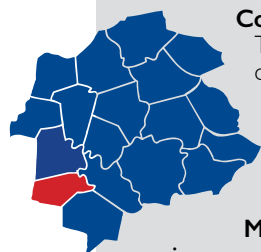
In August, a long-awaited downtown sidewalk replacement project was completed, further adding to efforts to restore what was once a city center in decline. Now there are regular events downtown and on the adjacent Lawrenceburg Green. During warm months and into the fall, you'll find live music, food trucks, classic car cruises, and festivals, including the relatively new Wild Man Days festival, which celebrates the town's connection to Bigfoot. Believe in him or not, this unique festival is still a good time.

Bourbon tours and tastings, though temporarily altered due to COVID-19 precautions, remain the largest visitor draw for Lawrenceburg, attracting tens of thousands of people a year. Two wineries in town – Rising Sons and Lovers Leap – are also important attractions, though their tasting and tour schedules also are temporarily altered. Throw in Vertigo Bungee jumping and the 118 American flags flying at the Healing Field and you have a unique slice of Americana that is hard to beat. ●



▲ **KENTUCKY TRADITION** The Anderson County Burgoo Festival is one of the longest-running events in Lawrenceburg, attracting thousands of people each September.

BOYLE COUNTY



County seat: Danville,
Troy Young, mayor;
danvilleky.org

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 30,060

No. of households:
10,984

Median household income: \$43,274

Percentage of residents who own homes: 68.5%

Total business establishments:
1,484

Top industry by number of jobs:
Health care and social services, with 3,558 jobs at 327 establishments

Chamber of Commerce:
Jeff Jewel, executive director;
danvilleboylechamber.com

Danville-Boyle County Economic Development Partnership:
Jody A. Lassiter, president and CEO;
developdanville.com

Judge-Executive:
Howard P. Hunt III; boyleky.com

Best small town in America

BOYLE County has much to offer businesses, residents and tourists – small-town friendliness, big-city culture, world-class education, picturesque countryside and more.

The community is steeped in heritage: The first Kentucky constitution was written and signed in Danville, which was the first capital of the commonwealth. Danville also had the first courthouse in Kentucky and the first U.S. Post Office west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Danville has been named one of the best small towns in America. It is home to Centre College, an acclaimed liberal arts institution that offers more than 50 majors, minors, pre-professional and dual-degree programs, and graduate partnerships. In 2019, MSN named Danville to its list of most beautiful college towns. MSN called Danville a “sweet, small town” with charming neighborhoods to explore, a close-knit community and a variety of local events throughout the year.

The Perryville Battlefield in Boyle County was the site of an epic Civil War clash. The battlefield has been preserved alongside a thousand acres of rolling grass and shaded woodlands. The county also has an Abraham Lincoln Museum, a Civil War Driving Trail, the African American Forgotten Landmarks driving tour, the Boyle County Veterans Memorial and more. ●



▲ **MOST BEAUTIFUL** Centre College in Danville, founded in 1819, has been named to *U.S. News and World Report's* list of top 50 national liberal arts colleges and to *Forbes'* list of top 15 colleges and universities in the South. Danville has received many accolades for being a beautiful small town, including MSN's 2019 list of the most beautiful college town in every state.

Natural beauty, frontier history



▲CELEBRATING CULTURE The annual Mountain Mushroom Festival in Irvine celebrates Appalachian culture. Hunting for morel mushrooms is a tradition for many Appalachian families. The mushrooms are loaded with minerals, vitamins and antioxidants, and have a unique taste and texture.

the Battle of Little Mountain during the American Revolutionary War.

Estill County is home to amazing scenic valleys – Red Lick Valley, Sweet Lick Knob and Estill Springs. It boasts several wonderful restaurants, a plethora of outdoor adventure options such as hiking and cycling, and a rich heritage and history to explore. Visitors can tour the Cottage Furnace and the Fitchburg Furnace, two old iron furnaces that were built in rural Estill County in the middle to late 1800s.

Several events are hosted each year in Estill County, including the Mountain Mushroom Festival, a celebration of all things Appalachia – the morel mushroom, Kentucky agate, arts and crafts, the Daniel Boone National Forest and mountains.

The county's largest employer is Carhartt, which operates a corporate office and a manufacturing plant that makes dungarees. The two facilities employ 212 workers. ●

FROM gently rolling hills and creeks winding their way through the landscape to the banks of the Red River and Kentucky River, Estill County, Ky., is a scenic treasure. Nestled between beautiful mountains and 40 miles of the Kentucky River, Estill County is an outstanding place to live, raise a family or retire.

Irvine, the county seat, is on the Kentucky River at Station Camp Creek. Legend has it that this is where Daniel Boone first looked over into the Bluegrass country. Estill County was formed in 1808 and named for Capt. James Estill, a Kentucky militia officer who was killed in

County seat:

Irvine,
James Gross, mayor

Estimated (2019)

population:
14,106

No. of households:
5,503

Median household income: \$31,337

Percentage of residents who own homes: 71.32%

Total business establishments: 406

Top industry by number of jobs:

Health care and social services, with 618 jobs at 62 establishments

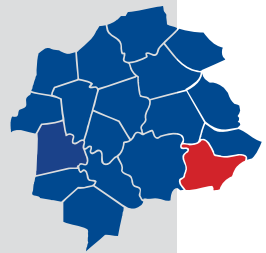
Estill Development Alliance:

Joe Crawford, executive director;
estill.org

Judge-Executive:

Donnie Watson; estillky.com

Demographics data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Select Kentucky, the state's online community profile infographic tool.



GARRARD COUNTY

Opportunity lives here

Photo by Eric Comley



▲CENTRALLY LOCATED Garrard County, home to more than 16,900 residents, is located just south of Lexington. The Garrard County Judicial Center, which houses the county's courts, court clerk offices and other judicial staff, is located in the county seat, Lancaster.

in Garrard County while gathering material for her famous book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," an anti-slavery novel that had a profound effect on attitudes toward African Americans and slavery in the United States. The legendary cabin of Uncle Tom was supposedly located behind the mansion of Gen. Thomas Kennedy near Paint Lick in Garrard County. A historical marker marks the site as having been an inspiration for the novel, though the accuracy of the claim has been argued by literary historians.

Home to nearly 18,000 residents, Garrard County is a rural community where agriculture plays a big role. It is known for friendly people, country cooking, the Kentucky River Palisades, hiking, fishing and many other outdoor adventures.

Nestled around Herrington Lake are several marinas and a host of accommodations and businesses that take advantage of the natural gifts the scenic destination has to offer. ●

WITH its central location and commitment to economic development, opportunity abounds in Garrard County.

Located just south of Lexington, Garrard County is at the crossroads of history and opportunity. It is home to several important historical sites. Because prohibition crusader Carrie Nation was born there in 1846, Garrard County is known as the "birthplace of prohibition." Her birthplace still stands, but it is not open to the public.

Author Harriet Beecher Stowe is said to have visited the Kennedy mansion

County seat: Lancaster,
Chris Davis, mayor

Estimated (2019)
population: 17,666

No. of households:
6,823

Median household income: \$49,888

Percentage of residents who own homes: 77.53%

Total business establishments: 408

Top industries by number of jobs:

Education, with 439 jobs at 10 establishments

Garrard County

Chamber of Commerce:

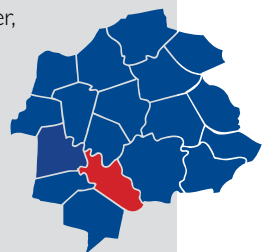
Dewayne Holland, interim executive director; garrardchamber.com

Lancaster/Garrard County Industrial Development Authority:

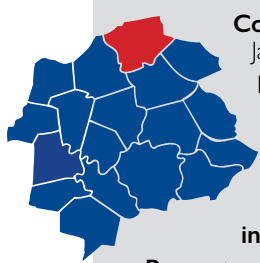
Kenneth Parsons, director;
garrardida.com

Judge-Executive:

John Wilson; garrardcounty.us



HARRISON COUNTY



County seat: Cynthiana,
James D. Smith, mayor

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 18,886

No. of households:
7,149

**Median household
income:** \$49,696

**Percentage of residents who
own homes:** 70.7%

Total business establishments: 564

Top industry by number of jobs:
Health care and social services,
with 1,153 jobs at 96 establishments.

**Cynthiana/Harrison County
Chamber of Commerce:**

Tomi Jean Clifford, executive director,
cynthianakychamber.com

**Cynthiana/Harrison County
Economic Development Authority:**

Garrett Furnish, executive director,
harrisoncokyeda.com

Judge-Executive: Alex Barnett;
harrisoncountyfiscalcourt.com

Perfect getaway

LOCATED in the center of Kentucky's bluegrass region, Harrison County is characterized by its fertile farmland and gently rolling terrain. It also has a friendly climate for all types of businesses. Harrison County is located 15 miles from Georgetown, 30 miles from Lexington and 55 miles from the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati area.

Cynthiana, its county seat, boasts several manufacturing companies, like the E.D. Bullard Co., which makes hard hats and other safety equipment. Cynthiana also is home to the world's only Post-It note manufacturer, 3M.

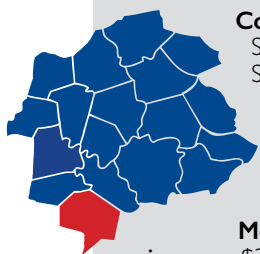
Cynthiana is a perfect getaway. Its unique boutiques and restaurants, historical downtown and haunted tours add to the flavor of small-town life. The town has more than 30 outdoor murals, including the world's largest "Walking Dead" mural.

"The community supports our local businesses and we have seen growth even in the face of adversity with the pandemic," said Tomi Jean Clifford, executive director of the Cynthiana-Harrison County Chamber of Commerce. "Cynthiana is Kentucky's best-kept secret." ●



▲ **ZOMBIE LOOKOUT** The largest "Walking Dead" mural in the United States is located in Cynthiana, Ky., hometown of "Walking Dead" creator Robert Kirkman.

LINCOLN COUNTY



County seat:
Stanford,
Scottie Ernst, mayor

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 24,549

No. of households:
9,706

**Median household
income:** \$39,833

**Percentage of residents who own
homes:** 76.36%

Total business establishments: 576

**Top industry by number
of jobs:** Retail, with 762 jobs
at 88 establishments

Largest employers: DecoArt Inc.,
154; Lincoln Manufacturing USA
(auto parts manufacturing), 132

**Lincoln County
Chamber of Commerce:**

Andrea E. Miller, executive director,
lincolncountychamber.com

**Stanford/Lincoln County Industrial
Development Authority:**

George Leamon, executive director,
lincolncountyeda.com

Judge-Executive:
Jim W. Adams Jr.; lincolnky.com

'The Land of Firsts'

ONE of Kentucky's three original territories, Lincoln County is located in south-central Kentucky in the southern part of the ring of knobs around the Bluegrass region. The original territory of Lincoln County comprised about one-third of the state, but it was reduced to its present area of 450 square miles as sections were cut off to form other counties.

Lincoln County is "The Land of Firsts." It is home of Kentucky's first governor, Isaac Shelby; had the first chartered school in the state; the first brick house in Kentucky; the first courthouse west of the Alleghenies; the first bank west of the Alleghenies; and it had America's first circular race track.

There's much to see and do in Lincoln County. Downtown Stanford, the county seat, offers a selection of handmade items, home décor, antiques, farm-to-table dining and Southern charm. Nearby Cedar Creek Lake is ranked 30th in the nation for bass fishing by *Field and Stream* magazine.

Lincoln County is within an eight-hour drive to approximately 50% of the nation's population. It has some of the most affordable utility rates in the United States. ●



▲ **NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED** Cedar Creek Lake, a 780-acre sportsman fishing lake in Lincoln County, has been ranked 30th in the nation for bass fishing by *Field and Stream* magazine.

History and progress abound



▲RICH HERITAGE Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in Mercer County was home to the third largest Shaker community in the United States between 1805 and 1910. Now a tourist destination, it has 34 of the original Shaker structures, 36 miles of trails, seed-to-table dining, 72 hotel rooms, shopping and more.

Mercer County is home to Beaumont Inn, the state's oldest family-operated country inn, and Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, a 3,000-acre restored Shaker community. A full-scale replica fort in Fort Harrod State Park commemorates the first permanent settlement west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Harrodsburg is home to major global industries, including Hitachi Automotive Systems Americas, which employs nearly 1,300 at its automotive parts manufacturing plant, and Corning Inc., which makes scratch-resistant glass used in portable and handheld devices, such as mobile phones.

"We are a friendly, safe and healthy town, and folks come from all over the world to visit Herrington Lake, Beaumont Inn and Shaker Village," said Mayor Art Freeman. "It's a great place to grow up, live, work and retire." ●

MERCER County, located 32 miles from Lexington and 75 miles from Louisville, is centrally located in the Bluegrass region. Its county seat, Harrodsburg, was established in 1774 by a band of pioneers led by James Harrod of Pennsylvania, making it Kentucky's oldest town.

The community offers a variety of opportunities. It is both agricultural and industrial, with a rich heritage, progressive schools and numerous tourist attractions. One popular destination is Herrington Lake, which is about 35 miles long and meanders through three Kentucky counties – Mercer, Boyle and Garrard.

County seat:
Harrodsburg,
Art Freeman, mayor

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 21,933

No. of households:
8,571

**Median household
income:** \$50,475

**Percentage of residents
who own homes:** 73.89%

Total business establishments: 707

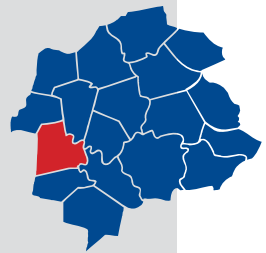
Top industry by number of jobs:

Manufacturing, with 1,515 jobs
at 18 establishments

**Mercer County Chamber
of Commerce:** Jill Cutler, executive
director, mercerchamber.com

**Harrodsburg/Mercer County
Industrial Development Authority:**
Mike Willand, executive director;
hmcida.com

Judge-Executive:
Milward Dedman; mercercounty.ky.gov



Fast growing community



▲SUMMER FUN First Friday Market is held in downtown Mt. Sterling each summer, featuring local food, shopping, live music, art exhibit openings and more.

The county's largest employers include Nestle Prepared Foods (1,137 jobs) and Kyosan Denso Manufacturing Kentucky, an auto parts manufacturer with 651 jobs.

Mt. Sterling is also a vibrant community that is a fun place to live and visit, offering many attractions, events, recreational activities, plenty of shopping and dining options, and a beautifully renovated historic downtown district. It is also home to the Ruth Hunt Candy Factory, famous for its Blue Monday pulled cream candy bars and Woodford Reserve Bourbon Balls. Founded in 1792, Mt. Sterling has retained the charm of a small town but with a modern vibe.

A historic downtown walking tour includes historical sites and restored buildings, some dating back to over 200 years. Downtown is also the location for a variety of outdoor events, including Kentucky's oldest festival, October Court Days; the Small Town America Festival in August; and the First Friday Markets on summer evenings from June through September. Visitor spending grew by 6.4% in 2019 to \$42.57 million. ●

MONTGOMERY County is one of the fastest growing communities in the commonwealth. It has two major industrial parks with more people commuting into the county than traveling out to work.

Its county seat, Mt. Sterling, is home to 30 manufacturers and is a certified Work-Ready Community located on Interstate 64. A strong work ethic, affordable land prices and a central geographic location with labor availability makes the county a great place to do business. Some of the

County seat:
Mount Sterling,
Al Botts, mayor;
mtsterling.ky.gov

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 28,157

No. of households:
10,472

**Median household
income:** \$41,974

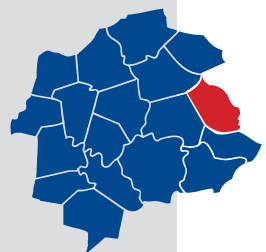
**Percentage of residents
who own homes:** 68.21%

Total business establishments:
1,119

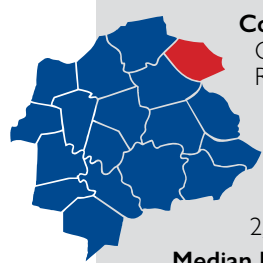
**Top industry by number
of jobs:** Retail, with 1,934 jobs
at 181 establishments

**Mount Sterling
Chamber of Commerce:**
Sandy Romenesko,
mtsterlingchamber.com

Judge-Executive:
Wally Johnson,
montgomerycounty.ky.gov



NICHOLAS COUNTY



County seat:

Carlisle,
Ronnie Clark, mayor;
carlisle.ky.gov

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 7,269

No. of households:
2,684

Median household income:
\$41,354

**Percentage of residents
who own homes:** 68.21%

Total business establishments: 145

Top industry by number of jobs:
Health care and social services,
with 254 jobs at 18 establishments

Chamber of Commerce:
carlisle-chamber.com

**Carlisle-Nicholas County
Economic Development Authority:**
Jim Galbraith and Rusty Lawrence,
co-chairmen; nicholascounty.ky.gov

Judge-Executive:
Steve Hamilton, nicholascounty.ky.gov

The little town with a big heart

NICHOLAS County was formed in 1799 from Mason and Bourbon counties and was named for Col. George Nicholas of Fayette County, a Revolutionary War veteran and popular lawyer in early Kentucky.

The county seat of Nicholas County is Carlisle, located about halfway between Lexington and Maysville. The town calls itself “the little town with a big heart.”

Main Street in Carlisle offers an impressive medley of quaint 19th- and 20th-century architecture, an enchanting collection of historic homes and churches. Most of the buildings along Main Street and Courthouse Square were built in the 1890s and early 1900s and remain in use.

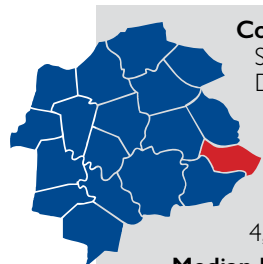
Among Nicholas County’s tourist attractions are the Hildreth One Room School House, a 100-year-old school used in the filming of “Huckleberry Finn;” Blue Licks Battlefield State Park; Daniel Boone’s Cabin, the last standing Daniel Boone cabin in Kentucky; Abners Mill Free Chapel; the Carlisle Passenger Depot, a former focal point for travelers that now serves as an event space; and the Kentucky Doll & Toy Museum. Nearby Lake Carnico has 150 acres of prime lakefront property featuring recreational boating and fishing and a public sandy beach for swimming. ●



▲ATTRACTING ATTENTION

Abner’s Mill Fellowship Chapel, featured on the DIY Network hit show “Barn Builders,” is a popular attraction in Nicholas County.

POWELL COUNTY



County seat:

Stanton,
Dale Allen, mayor;
cityofstantonky.com

**Estimated (2019)
population:** 12,539

No. of households:
4,831

Median household income:
\$36,958

**Percentage of residents
who own homes:** 72.19%

Total business establishments: 426

Top industry by number of jobs:
Retail, with 458 jobs
at 71 establishments

**Powell County Industrial
Development Authority:**
Craig Dawson, executive director;
powellcountyindustrial.com

Judge-Executive:
James D. Anderson Jr.,
powellcounty.ky.gov

Outdoor adventure capital

POWELL County offers the best of both worlds: small-town charm and quick access to Central Kentucky’s largest city, Lexington. The four-lane Mountain Parkway traverses the county, offering excellent access to the community. Interstate 64 is also accessed 16 miles east of Powell County. There’s a local airport with a 3,000-ft. runway.

Powell County is home to Red River Gorge, a 29,000-acre outdoor wonderland featuring more than 100 natural stone arches. It’s also one of the country’s few National Natural Landmarks and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Red River Gorge is a rock climber’s paradise with miles of sandstone cliff lines, rock shelters and waterfalls.

Natural Bridge State Park, a 2,370-acre Kentucky State Park, is also located in Powell County. The bridge is a natural arch with more than 15 million pounds of rock in suspension.

There are two incorporated cities in Powell County: Stanton and Clay City. The county has updated city parks, quaint shopping opportunities, affordable housing and an excellent school system. ●



▲OURDOOR WONDERLAND

Visitors from around the world flock to Red River Gorge in Powell County for its world-renowned climbing and hiking opportunities.

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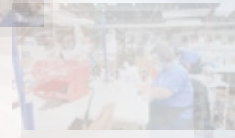
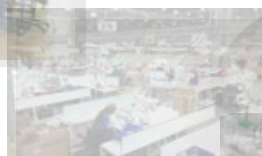
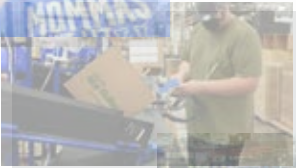
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